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**Urban Research in the  
Developing World : From  
Governance to Security**

*Richard Stren*



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# **Urban Research in the Developing World: From Governance to Security**

Richard Stren  
Director, Center for Urban and Community Studies  
University of Toronto  
Toronto, Canada

## **Introduction: Building an Urban Research Agenda**

Against the backdrop of a major demographic shift from rural to urban in most parts of the world (a shift that has already been largely accomplished in Europe, North America, and much of Latin America), the research literature on urban questions has shown a number of distinct patterns over the years. One pattern is the continuing influence of international disciplinary perspectives. In spite of the fact that urban questions cut across disciplines, and that solutions to urban problems involve ideas and coalitions of interests that are usually very broad and projects that are very practical, researchers--and the research literature--tend to be specialized. Thus, an economist in Bombay is likely to choose themes and a methodological approach to her urban problems that are more similar to her economist colleagues in Santiago than to her sociological colleagues in Delhi. In spite of some tendencies toward interdisciplinary research in urban studies worldwide, the disciplines--which are organized at a global level with common standards of approach, journals, conferences, and professional behavior--are still very powerful. Urban research in the three major regions tends to be influenced by different disciplinary perspectives: Asia by economists and regional planners, Africa by urban geographers, and Latin America by sociologists. The other social science disciplines are present--sometimes very volubly--in the regions, but the preeminent questions discussed (or what might be called the "dominant narratives") tend to be related to the interests of the key disciplines. Thus, in the 1990s, the study of social policy is a key theme in Latin America (influence of sociology), the finance of urban infrastructure a key theme in Asia (influence of economics), and the spread and management of urban services is a key theme in Africa (influence of urban geography). Although the clustering of disciplines by region has important implications for the kinds of questions that tend to receive attention, the relatively marginal role played by economists in comparison with other social scientists (at least in Africa and Latin America) may create some distance between an urban research discourse and the everyday world of local and international policy agencies. On the other hand, in the case of Latin America, the importance of sociological discourse in the urban field may ensure that a gender perspective and the social effects in cities of structural adjustment and economic reforms receive more attention than in other regions.

A second pattern that is equally visible is that themes of research have been heavily influenced by worldwide trends, both in spite of and in addition to disciplinary forces. Thus, during the 1960s, when the predominant approach to development was the so-called "modernization" approach, which stressed the polarity of traditional and modern life, a great deal of attention was focused everywhere on rural-urban migration and on the effects of this process on the integration of migrants into "modern" urban society. By the 1970s, emphasis had shifted to more global economic models--to include such transcendent ideas as underdevelopment and dependency--and the structural conditions that produced and reproduced low-productivity employment in cities of the south. A focus on the "informal sector" and then on programs to support the "basic needs" of the poor were prominent during this decade. This was followed by a period of greater research diversity worldwide, with attention being given to such themes as urban social movements in Latin America and South Africa, urban management and urban services distribution in Asia and Africa, and, in Latin America and to a lesser extent, Africa, the effects of structural adjustment on the poor. The 1990s have seen more attention to studies of urban local government (or "governance," defined by researchers as the relationship between civil society and the state) and decentralization, as central governments "disengage" from many of their functions for economic reasons, passing on their responsibilities to newly empowered bodies at lower political levels. As this happens, social policy becomes a more important variable for regional and municipal authorities, and the local effects of globalization become a subject of great interest. By the latter part of the 1990s, protection of local space became both a major policy issue and a growing research theme, as we shall see later in this paper.

A third trend has to do with the increasing quantity of research and its localization. Notwithstanding all the difficulties attendant on obtaining funding in a world in which support for social science research has been declining almost everywhere, there has been a recrudescence in urban studies in most regions of the developing world during the 1980s and 1990s. For Indonesia, for example, Nafsiah Mboi and Karen Houston Smith report that "the volume and diversity of work on urban issues virtually exploded over time." Of the 1,126 urban titles that their bibliographic research unearthed in Jakarta, 989 (or 88 percent) fell between the years 1960 and 1989. Of these, 1 percent were from the decade 1960-69, 28 percent were from the decade 1970-79, and 71 percent were from the decade 1980-89. The authors state that "the history of policy and programming related to urban Indonesia confirms the dramatic rise in attention to urban issues in the decade of the 1980s" (Mboi and Smith 1994:184). This trend continued in the 1990s. There has also been a tendency for the bulk of more recently published work to be written in the local language--Bahasa Indonesia. Of the material published in the 1980s, for example, only 25 percent were produced internationally in European languages, while 75 percent was published locally in Bahasa Indonesia. For Brazil the pattern is similar: out of 5,598 citations to 21 research themes over the period from "pre-1950" through the 1980s, Licia Valladares and Magda Prates Coelho found that 31 percent of the citations were from the 1970s, 61 percent were from the 1980s (Valladares and Coelho 1995:119). As the quantity of circulated research studies rose, the proportion written in Portuguese became

larger. This language factor (which does not apply to the same degree in countries for which the local written language is also a major European language) tends to restrict international access to this work, in spite of the increasing involvement of local researchers.

This apparent "localization" of urban research in many countries has also led to the development of problematiques for research and policy that maintain a certain individual quality, away from the international influences of disciplinary perspectives and worldwide trends. On the other hand, as our researchers have pointed out, the gradual withdrawal of national governments from support of university (and other scientific) research has increased the relative importance of international agencies and foundations in the support of all kinds of social science research. Thus, Zimbabwean researchers observed that urban research in their country has been "shaped by the project objectives of foreign donors" (Swilling 1994:308). Overseas donor support has had the effect in some countries of further "projectizing" urban policy, since donors operating overwhelmingly in the project mode and donors operating in the same country--even in the same field--rarely coordinate their activities. For better or for worse, donor support for research in such areas as poverty, gender, governance, human rights, environmental sustainability, and decentralization have undoubtedly led to more work in these fields than might otherwise have been supported by national governments. These agenda-setting influences must be seen as an increasingly important aspect of globalization in the urban policy area.

### **The Global Urban Research Initiative (GURI)**

These changing patterns of urban research have been examined by The Global Urban Research Initiative (GURI), a network of urban researchers looking at challenges and opportunities in the urban field in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. GURI functions in "southern" countries, with some participation of researchers in Canada and the United States. Funding for GURI's activities over the years has come largely from the Ford Foundation in New York and many of its overseas offices, with supplementary funds supplied by (in order) the World Bank, International Development Research Center (IDRC) (in Ottawa), and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The focal points of the GURI system have been "subregional coordinators," who most recently have been located in Mexico City, San Salvador, Santiago de los Caballeros (Dominican Republic), Santiago de Chile, and Rio de Janeiro (for Latin America and the Caribbean); Johannesburg and Dar es Salaam (for Africa); Rabat and Cairo (for the Middle East and North Africa); and New Delhi, Dhaka, and Manila (for Asia); until 1995, China and West Africa were also included. As for the active members of the network, professional researchers in university institutes are prominent, but a considerable number operate within the NGO sector (broadly defined) and are not directly affiliated with universities.

Out of the twelve research leaders currently, six are university professors, and six operate outside the university system; six are sociologists or anthropologists, three are planners or architects, two are political scientists, and one is an economist. In addition to the countries in which they themselves work, the GURI subregional coordinators include researchers from twenty-nine other countries in their regular meetings and consultations. At the last major meeting of the network (held here at the Woodrow Wilson Center in November, 1997), some twenty southern countries were represented in addition to participants from the United States, Britain, France, and Canada.

GURI has been preoccupied with two major objectives: tracking and analyzing the urban research agenda in the developing world; and carrying out limited research projects based on a policy-oriented, comparative framework. Understanding the urban research agenda--how it changes over time, how it varies between major world regions, and which major factors seem to influence these changes--is not simply an academic exercise. Just as in politics, where issues that reach the top of the public agenda have an important influence over what is discussed and, ultimately, the range of decisions that are taken in the policy arena, issues that are important in the urban research agenda, tend to structure and add focus to the public discourse and debate on cities. In GURI's work around the world, it has become clear that there is a complex interplay of institutions and influences in the agenda-setting process. Thus, the role of academic institutions has been, in general, receding as community groups, NGOs, and international agencies (at least in the southern countries) play an increasing part in shaping the universe of issues that receive public attention. As in the north, the local media (both television and the press) have grown in importance, and as democracy has returned to many countries and become more institutionalized in others, political groups (not always political parties) are offering choices to local urban electorates. As issues emerge in the urban research agenda they not only reflect the balance of local forces and events but structure the interpretation of these forces and events as well.

## **An Emerging Theme: Protection and Reconstitution of Urban Space**

As of the mid-1990s, then, there was ample evidence from the work of the GURI network that the study of cities and urbanization was alive and well, and that a certain indigenization of themes and ideas was taking place, even though strong influences from internationally-based disciplines, global research and development agencies, and global economic trends were also present. By the second half of the decade, one theme was becoming more prominent: the concern for the protection and reconstitution of urban space in countries both in the industrialized north and the less industrial south. Indeed, the linking and relating of the literatures for the north and the south--hitherto relatively separate both in terms of mutual citations and the practice of research--is becoming more and more a feature of the urban research protocol in the late 1990s. The five factors that combine to activate the theme of urban security include the following:

(1) Environmental activism, which has spread the ideas of local empowerment and the protection of the natural environment. This activism has incorporated positive aspects--such as concern for the ozone layer, biodiversity, and forests--and more negative aspects such as concern to protect local neighborhoods from pollution, wastes, and even community facilities seen to emanate from other jurisdictions.

(2) The rise of women's local and community organizations, often concerned with improving and protecting health and educational services, both of which are usually (at least to a large extent) local concerns.

(3) The decentralization of government functions from the central government to lower levels, which is often linked to a weaker and more constrained state as a result of structural adjustment programs (SAPs), but sometimes taking effect (as in France in 1981) for local political reasons.

(4) The increasing power of cities as economic actors in a global economy.

(5) The fragmenting effects of the decline in national social and economic policy supports, which has created the need for group and horizontal solidarity in dealing with a threatening economic environment, as well as with violence, crime, and personal security.

The combined effect of these factors has, in complex and often unanticipated ways, led to a rich variety of political initiatives at the subnational political level in many countries. Although in the late 1980s a leading American scholar could write a major study entitled *The Decline of Urban Politics* in which it was stated that “the very heart and soul of local politics has surely died” (Gottdiener 1987:13), the situation has changed dramatically in the 1990s, both in the United States and elsewhere. Four important approaches to the analysis of the new political reality at the local--usually urban--level are worthy of attention, since they illustrate sharply the reasons why cities, and the patterns of urban politics and policies that swirl around them, remain in the forefront of our thinking. In our discussion of each of these approaches, we will look at the relation between new political and urban realities on the ground, and the construction of ideas and research approaches in response to these emerging challenges.

1. *The new "political space."* Since the 1980s, an increasing quantum of political activity--defined as open contestation of existing structures and policies--has been taking place at levels other than the national. This trend is not confined to southern countries, many of whose central governments have accepted the need for a decentralization of powers to more local levels of government in order to cope with financial penury and to reduce and disperse governmental functions in response to the insistent demands of international development organizations. Local political battles by women's groups, environmentalists, and property owners resisting various kinds of (perceived) development seem to have multiplied in northern countries; in southern countries, a great deal more political activity has been possible with the gradual lifting of military rule in many countries and the encouragement of democratic, multiparty politics. Political scientists, says Warren Magnusson (1996), have been insensitive on the whole to these new forms of political activity, preferring to fit them into overall models of state-centered politics in which the local arena is secondary or subordinate. But the emergence of a politics based on local political spaces--such as the undeniable movement of "municipal foreign policy," or "decentralized cooperation," which originates in municipalities in the north and makes direct connections with municipalities in the south, in the process effectively bypassing central state structures (Gilbert et al. 1996:ch. 4)--does not fit into the old paradigm. As Magnusson puts it,

There is a huge gap . . . between the politics that engages people practically and the politics that is described in most contemporary writings. . . The what, where, why, and how of the politics that most affects us are usually pushed aside in favor of an analysis that focuses on what people have long thought 'politics' has to be about. . . . {Moreover} [t]here is a disjuncture between the political spaces that are being claimed democratically and the ones that are offered to people as sites for public participation (1996:8-9).

In other words, politics is not only a contest around formal national structures or local formal municipal council decisions; it takes place, in addition, in very intimate and familiar places, often where families or commercial associations are involved, and often where one's (or one's family's) personal space or even cultural integrity is being threatened. A recent study of the central market in downtown Kampala, Uganda, explained the difficulties faced by a World Bank institutional reform project by way of the notion of "the politics of everyday life" that interceded, through the market vendors' response to city council initiatives, to undermine higher level plans to redevelop the market site (Gombay 1997). Another study, of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, shows how the massive response of poor women in informal trade to the discriminating regulations of both the central government and the municipal council eventually resulted in major changes in government policy regulating income-earning activities (Tripp 1997). Finally, a detailed comparison of two major resistance movements in Nigeria--the Maitatsine rebellion in Kano in 1980 and the Ogoni resistance spearheaded by Ken Saro-Wiwa in the early to mid-1990s--suggests some important similarities within the overall rubric of "geographies of resistance." Michael Watts (1997) argues that the ferocious response of the Nigerian state to both resistances--involving the killing of from five to ten thousand people (and the injuring of a further fifteen thousand) in the case of the Maitatsine rebellion; and the brutal execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and seven of his colleagues in 1995--have a major common element: the desperate attempt of the Nigerian state to obliterate powerful expressions of local community identity, in a context of declining national legitimacy and robust regional subnationalisms. Although these studies do not explicitly acknowledge the "political space" approach, they nevertheless illustrate the variety of new, nontraditional political spaces that have emerged with the relative decline in legitimacy, effectiveness, and sovereignty of central governments in many countries. A significant part of this movement to redefine political space takes place within cities, often contesting urban and municipal regulations and policies.

2. *The "new localism."* If the political space approach looks at local politics as an arena for the redefinition of community values and the reformulation of social policy and local political institutions, the new localism approach looks at the way cities organize to position themselves within the new globalized economic system. Thus, in the context of new political opportunity structures (Tarrow 1991), local officials are compelled "to reconstruct relations between the public and private sectors at the local level as well as to reconsider the most basic governance issues" (Clarke 1993:1-2). Features of the new localism include shifts in central-local relations, more privatization of local authority functions and the rise of local public entrepreneurs, and the construction of new development coalitions. That the city does not respond in a mechanical or automatic fashion to international forces, in spite of the economic logic behind these changes, however, is also made clear. In a recent article, Susan Clarke and Gary Gaile (1997) argue that this new localism gives a lot of leeway to local political coalitions and leaders, along with associated "epistemic communities" to interpret the correct approach for a local definition of a policy agenda. One of the important reasons for the new emphasis on local coalitions and competitive urban strategies, they point out, is the cutting of national

funding to community programs and their (indirect) replacement by "performance partnerships" and transfer payments to individuals--particularly the nonurban middle class and elderly (ibid.:33).

There are two sides to this approach. First, some writers stress the strategic choices available to cities within the context of the emerging global economic system. In her widely-read book, *World Class*, Rosabeth Moss Kanter explores (mainly within the American experience) the varieties of responses that local governments in partnership with businesses have been promoting since the 1980s. Based on thousands of interviews with business leaders, public officials, and community leaders in five major urban areas of the United States, Kanter argues that the cities that are successful in meeting global challenges (i.e., those that are "world class") must excel in at least one of three main roles: as "thinkers" (as developers of concepts and ideas), as "makers" (manufacturers or producers), or as "traders" (making connections between cultures and countries). In the process of developing these abilities, cities need certain successful core institutions that attract business (or develop it locally) in the first place, but they must also create and maintain a civic and social infrastructure that will hold businesses in place. To Kanter, successful cities must achieve a balance between the needs of "locals" and "cosmopolitans":

The need is urgent in many places. America's cities and surrounding regions must strengthen their infrastructure for collaboration in order to solve pressing urban problems of crime, education, housing, and welfare that trap local isolates in a cycle of disadvantage. Deteriorating quality of community life not only hurts locals directly, but also encourages cosmopolitans to take their concepts, competence, and connections--and their jobs--elsewhere. Cities and their regions must strengthen their community problem-solving and skills-building capacity in order to compete in the global market for investment (1995:364).

Second, although the world market in which the successful compete is not completely fixed, the successes of some must imply the failure or even marginalization of others. Thus, many writers have pointed to the decline of certain regions (even within the United States) as a result of global competition; but decline extends also to major groups of countries, and even to large parts of continents such as Africa. In the end, the new

localism model of urban strategic choice cannot embrace all cities, since all do not have the required resources and institutions that can respond to the challenges of the larger market. There is also a more subtle point, which is well expressed in an article by John Kincaid on what he calls "global consumer integration and local civic fragmentation." He argues that the worldwide consumer culture, which is both reflected in and produced by the globalization of business, has integrative effects at the international level, but disintegrative effects at the local level. Although global economic integration gives, in the end, more initiative to local governments to compete for investment, the rules of international agreements also subvert the freedom of regional and local governments to plan on their own, and they encourage the mobility of both transnational corporations and their employees. Thus,

global integration also poses problems of civic fragmentation in cities. This experience is already evident in the case of highly mobile corporations that have few or only lukewarm civic commitments to their current locations. Corporations often extract concessions from cities as the price of locational choices, and cities that fail or refuse to meet corporate needs experience business losses. Global competition and mobility exacerbate these patterns of behavior. Thus, although business is a key element of a city's civic infrastructure, the city itself may be a disposable item for its major businesses. In turn, corporate mobility disrupts residential stability and further weakens the civic infrastructure by requiring citizens to be mobile or by leaving them behind in less favorable economic circumstances (Kincaid 1995:83).

If for some cities and individuals the appropriate challenge is to seek "world class" ranking in order to promote outside investment and employment creation, for others the very idea of "world class" "signals an erosion in links among people, place, and identity; it contributes to an increased civic fragmentation because there are fewer incentives to invest in a community's civic society" (Clarke and Gaile 1997:32).

3. *Urban fragmentation and social policy.* As the above passages show, the literature and discussion of the new localism overlaps at some important points with the question of urban community and social coherence. In his massive three-volume trilogy on what he calls "The Information Age," Manuel Castells pays particular attention to the links between "global informational capitalism" and local identities. He argues, for example, that there is an increasing disjuncture between the new economy and social structures based on "flows" (involving the rapid movement of capital, technology, labor, and information) and an earlier economy based on "space" (in which horizontal relationships are more prominent and meaningful):

people do still live in places. But because function and power in our societies are organized in the space of flows, the structural domination of its logic essentially alters the meaning and dynamic of places. Experience, by being related to places, becomes abstracted from power, and meaning is increasingly separated from knowledge. . . . Unless cultural and physical bridges are deliberately built between these two forms of space, we may be heading toward life in parallel universes whose times cannot meet because they are warped into different dimensions of a social hyperspace (1996:428).

This disjuncture, or conflict of "the logic of the space of flows" and "the logic of the space of places" has, for Castells, two results that are relevant for our discussion. One is a more pronounced marginalization and social exclusion process by which certain regions and groups are increasingly bypassed by the dynamic new informational economy--such as the American prison population, American inner cities, child labor and prostitutes outside North America, and most of the continent of Africa. Castells refers to these disadvantaged groups, neighborhoods, or regions as "the black holes of informational capitalism" (ibid.:161). A second result is more of a process--the process of polarization and increased differentiation between those who are connected and those who are not. This process, which is marked by an increasing (but far from total) overlap of spatial segregation and economic differentiation, results in cities that are spatially and socially fragmented. Those excluded from "connectivity" to the dynamic new sectors (whether by lack of education or lack of infrastructural access) are much more likely to turn to crime, violence, and a drug culture (Castells 1998:144). Although the drug culture selectively creates wealth, it also thrives on violence.

Castells' argument about the effects of the new global informational economy on urban fragmentation must be seen in the context of more traditional formulations. For example, the notion of the "dualist" colonial city (split between the "formal" or metropolitan economy and the "informal" or "bazaar" economy) has a long and distinguished patrimony from the early writings of J. S. Furnivall (1948) through Clifford Geertz (1963), Keith Hart (1973), and, recently, the work of Mahmood Mandani (1996). In a classic article on urban planning in developing countries, Marcello Balbo points out that, although Western industrial cities are characterized by a certain coherence that is amenable to master planning, almost all Third World cities are more complex, both spatially and socially:

the city of the Third World is a city of fragments, where urbanisation takes place in leaps and bounds, creating a continuously discontinuous pattern. In the fragmented city, physical environment, services, income, cultural values and institutional systems can vary markedly from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, often from street to street. An aerial view of the city shows a spatial structure made of many different pieces drawn together in a rather accidental way. There are more of some kinds than of others. Those in the periphery are incomplete and more "fragile," while older areas are well established with clearly-defined boundaries.

Even in Latin America, where most cities date from the sixteenth century, a process of "tribalisation" seems to be under way: the city is splitting into different separated parts, with the apparent formation of many "microstates." Wealthy neighbourhoods provided with all kinds of services, such as exclusive schools, golf courses, tennis courts and private police patrolling the area around the clock intertwine with illegal settlements where water is available only at public fountains, no sanitation system exists, electricity is pirated by a privileged few, the roads become mud streams whenever it rains, and where house-sharing is the norm. Each fragment appears to live and function autonomously, sticking firmly to what it has been able to grab in the daily fight for survival . . . (1993:24-25).

According to Balbo, urban fragmentation is largely a function of colonialism (even though it may be reinforced by postcolonial factors), and in its spatial aspects may represent a form of redistribution, particularly with respect to the close relationship between the informal economy and the participation of women in urban life.

Although Balbo referred only occasionally to crime and security as a cause or consequence of urban fragmentation, the connection has been much more forcefully proposed by a number of Latin American scholars. Thus, Teresa Caldeira (1996) discusses the development of social and spatial segregation in São Paulo from the early twentieth century to the present. During this period, São Paulo went from being a "concentrated city" (from the early part of the century to the 1930s); through a city with "a rich centre and a poor periphery" (from the 1940s to the 1980s); to its present form in the 1990s, which she describes as "proximity and high walls." Her study of a rapidly growing wealthy suburban neighborhood (Morumbi) shows that fear of violence and crime is a pervasive subject in everyday conversation. However, talk of crime is common

throughout all social groups in the city, as "people from all social classes fortify their homes, change their habits, and end up transforming the city and its public areas" (1996: 63). The result is a new urban landscape made up essentially of "fortified fragments" from which the poor and marginalized are excluded:

As the spaces for the rich face inwards, the outside space is left for those who cannot afford to go in. In fact, the public is treated as leftover both by the design of the enclaves and by the citizens who create the new private order. The modern public space of the streets is increasingly the area abandoned to the homeless and the street children . . . fragmentation enforces separation and expresses not simple differences but irreconcilable inequalities (1996:64-65).

What Caldeira observes in São Paulo is reflected--at least to some degree--in many other large Latin American cities. Not only have homicide and violent crime rates (however they are calculated) been going up in most Latin American countries, but some countries--such as Colombia, Brazil, and Mexico--have among the highest rates in the world (Ayres 1998:3). Homicide rates, as are well known, are particularly high for young males and have reached alarming proportions among women and children. A recent paper prepared for the World Bank concluded that "the 'net accumulation of human capital' in Latin America and the Caribbean had been cut in half because of the increase in crime and violence over the past 15 years" (ibid.). A study on Colombia prepared for the IDB in 1996 concluded that the effect of crime and violence to the country is about one-third of its per-capita income (cited in ibid.:8). The IDB has called violent crime "the principal barrier to regional economic development," and estimates that its annual cost is 14 percent of regional GNP (*Newsweek* 1998:12). Except in Chile, Uruguay, and Bolivia, personal safety is the "top public concern throughout Latin America" (ibid.).

In response to the deteriorating crime and homicide situation in Rio de Janeiro--and in particular the problem of street violence against marginalized people and youth--a major social movement known as Viva Rio began in late 1993. A study of this movement by Hilda Maria Gaspar Pereira (1996) points out some of the connections between urban form and violence. For example, the structure of the drug trade (involving control over various *favelas* by different criminal groups) in one of exaggerated spatial fragmentation. Alba Zaluar, a sociologist who has studied this problem for years, argues that the drug trade is a form of war, but

[i]t is a peculiar war in which all sides finish behind bars: law-abiding bourgeois behind the bars of their condominiums and houses, surrounded by vigilantes and bodyguards; peaceful workers at the hands of bodyguards, soldiers and the terror of the drug gangs in shanty towns, or at the hands of extermination groups in Rio's poor periphery; poor bandits in penitentiaries or in the vicious circle of the eternal debts with their enemies, the gangs, the criminal organisation (Zaluar in Pereira 1996: 6).

As for the movement itself, its members decided at the outset that violence was closely related to social inequality (a major concern in Brazilian cities). As a result, many of Viva Rio's major activities involve strengthening social ties at the community level through projects of community policing, reuniting street children with their families, establishing a community center for poor youth, and training of the unemployed as well as providing health services at the local level (Pereira 1996).

Just as Brazil is the largest and most populous country in Latin America, South Africa is among the largest in Africa, and at the same time, the wealthiest country on its own continent. One of the most urbanized countries in Africa, South Africa is home both to very large cities and a very fragmented and even polarized social structure. Based on the 1991 census, the greater Johannesburg area is home to some 6.8 million, followed by Cape Town metropolitan area and Durban with its surrounding areas, both at 3.2 million, and the large cities of the Eastern Cape Province (East London and Port Elizabeth) at 2.6 million. Although the legislative framework of apartheid no longer exists in a democratic South Africa, the extreme distribution of wealth and political power that was formalized by apartheid has not disappeared from either the urban or rural areas of the country. Formerly "white" areas of the major cities are still typically well maintained and well serviced, with housing interspersed with public and private amenities like parks and shops. The other side of this picture is that of lower-income residential areas (mostly formerly "black" areas), notably the so-called former "townships" and informal settlements. These neighborhoods are usually located far from major centers of employment, in the periphery of the major towns and cities, and are marked by poverty and squalor. They are simultaneously overcrowded and underserved, lacking both formal retail facilities and community and recreational services, particularly open space. Violence and crime are widespread in these areas.

Partly for political reasons (for example, a long-standing struggle between the ANC and the Inkatha Freedom Party) but for many other complex reasons, violence has become a central fact of life in South African cities. Overall, South Africa has one of the highest rates of homicide in the world, with a murder rate in 1994 of 53.5/100,000 (Gilbert 1996:876)--this is exceeded only by Colombia at a rate of 89.5/100,000 in the early 1990s (Ayres 1998:3). Although political violence may be receding in importance since the 1994 election, criminal violence has spread outward from its earlier confines in the black townships and shantytowns. The *Economist* described the situation in mid-1995:

Like the nobles of feudal Europe, white South Africans are retreating behind fortifications. In the leafy avenues in Johannesburg's rich suburbs, defensive walls around the houses are climbing upwards, usually topped off with what South Africans call siege architecture: crenellations, electric fencing or just plain razor wire. Since the election of Nelson Mandela's government in April 1994, political crime has fallen sharply. In its place has come an upsurge of common-or-garden criminal violence. At 110 per 100,000, Johannesburg (now including Soweto) has a higher murder rate even than Washington, DC (*Economist* 1995:28).

Whatever the escalating situation in the wealthier areas of South African cities, exposure to violence of all kinds is, and has been, endemic in the poorest areas. In what was--even for South Africa--an unprecedented run of political violence in the East Rand townships from 1990 through 1994, approximately three thousand people were killed (Hudson 1997). A study of groups of secondary school students in their penultimate and final years in a black Johannesburg township (Alexandra) shows that a very high proportion had a direct exposure to physical assault or killing. In 1992, for example, 83 percent of the students had seen or experienced assault, and the same proportion had seen or experienced murder. These proportions stayed relatively stable over the observational years of 1987, 1989, and 1992 (Straker et al. 1996:52). As observers have pointed out (Hindson, Byerley, and Morris 1994; Hindson 1996; Adam and Moodley 1997), the rise in political violence after the mid-1980s and the high level of violent crime that has plagued South African cities are structurally related to structural cleavages and extreme inequality in the society in general, and to the physical separation of groups from each other--a pattern that is not receding quickly with the end of apartheid. Describing Durban in the mid 1990s, Michael Sutcliffe (1996) talks in turn of the city of survival, the city of hope, the city of entitlement, the city of superfluity, and the city of death. The city of death "includes at least 10 percent of the residents of Durban, people who are the most marginalized, living in absolutely terrible conditions of squalor, poverty and violence in

migrant worker hostels . . . and . . . informal settlements (such as Bambayi and Mshayazafe- which means literally to 'hit him with a stick until he dies')" (1996:68). The extreme inequality that this violence at least partially reflects is indicated in the fact that South Africa--along with Brazil--is among the most unequal societies in the world, as measured by Gini coefficients (World Bank 1998:Table 2.8).

4. *Social capital*. In what must be one of the recent classics of modern social science, Robert Putnam (1993) and his collaborators look at the differences in the effectiveness of regional decentralization policies in the northern and southern parts of Italy. They conclude that for democracy to work best through these structures, a strong tradition of civic community engagement must be in place. But for this to develop, "social capital"--which involves the accumulation of social experience based on neighborhood associations, choral societies, cooperatives, sports clubs, mass-based parties, and other forms of association--is needed. Successful involvement by many people in these kinds of local groups helps to foster trust, reciprocity, community cooperation, and mutual help. Subsequently, and using the same logic, Putnam (1995) has argued that a decline in civic engagement in the United States may very well be associated with a parallel decline in participation in a wide range of associational activities, due at least partly to the advent of television. The same line of argument is subtly deployed by the late Christopher Lasch (1996), who suggests that American democracy is being undermined by the behavior and value of its elites. While Lasch's larger argument is complex, one important element in his analysis is the decline of "institutions that promote general conversation across class lines." But, he continues,

Civic life requires settings in which people meet as equals, without regard to race, class, or national origins. Thanks to the decay of civic institutions ranging from political parties to public parks and informal meeting places, conversation has become almost as specialized as the production of knowledge. Social classes speak to themselves in a dialect of their own, inaccessible to outsiders; they mingle with each other only on ceremonial occasions and official holidays. Parades and other such spectacles do not make up for the absence of informal gatherings. Even the pub and the coffee shop, which at first appear to have nothing to do with politics or the civic arts, make their contribution to the kind of wide-ranging, free-wheeling conversation on which democracy thrives, and now even they are threatened with extinction as neighborhood hangouts give way to shopping malls, fast-food chains, and takeouts. Our approach to eating and drinking is less and less mixed with ritual and ceremony. It has become strictly functional: We eat and drink on the run. Our fast-paced habits leave neither time nor--more important--places for good talk, even in cities the whole point of which, it might be argued, is to promote it (1996:117-18).

This general approach has been applied to development studies with some very interesting results. In a World Bank comparative study directed by Caroline Moser, detailed studies of low-income households in four major cities were undertaken, in an effort to show how variations in social capital due to macroeconomic factors can have a major effect on the abilities of poor households to cope under difficult circumstances. In her work, Moser attempts to provide measurable indicators of social capital, with a view to suggesting particular policy strategies that could counteract the tendency toward social fragmentation and violence. Since this research is focused on particular neighborhoods, the localized nature of the social networks is very visible. Based on research in Guayaquil, Metro Manila, and Lusaka, Moser notes that

the permanence of social capital cannot be taken for granted. When households are coping, they support others. But when their assets are depleted, they cease to support the community. The case studies show a mixed picture of erosion and consolidation of social capital under difficult economic conditions. . . .

[For example] . . . the study shows that increasing levels of violence, perceived to be associated with economic crisis, have eroded social capital. Residents in all three developing country contexts perceived an escalation in levels of crime and violence, which they attributed to increasing unemployment, particularly among young men, and growing drug and alcohol abuse. In Commonwealth [Metro Manila], six out of 10 women, widowed over a 10-year period, had lost their husbands as a result of violent death--usually associated with drinking episodes, that brought political disagreements, or long-term feuds, to a dangerous head; in Cisne Dos [Guayaquil], in a six-month period, one in five women was robbed on a public bus--attacked by gangs of young men armed with knives, machetes or handguns--and one in two witnessed such an attack; in Chawama [Lusaka], vandalism of property has curtailed community activities. After losing electrical fittings, schools closed adult evening classes, while community centers having lost their recreational equipment, furniture and teaching aids, ceased to offer programs for women and youth.

The rising number of burglaries have eroded long-held reciprocal trust among neighbors and community members. Increasing murder rates, street and public transport crime, and vandalism of public property have all threatened personal safety, exacerbating isolation as people become increasingly reluctant to leave their homes after dark. This in turn has reduced participation in community-based organizations (CBOs). . . . (1998:13-14).

In a separate study of urban violence in Jamaica, Moser and a colleague used Participatory Urban Appraisal (PUA) methodology to map and analyze perceptions of violence among poor communities, and both the causes and effects of this violence. In Jamaica (with a population of about 2.5 million in the mid-1990s, and an urbanization rate of close to 50 percent) there were, on average, three murders per day in 1996 and early 1997. Violent crimes "tend to be geographically concentrated in poor urban communities, with more than half of them occurring in Kingston and St. Andrew, and almost three-quarters of murders and more than 80 percent of shootings taking place in Kingston, St. Andrew, or Spanish Town in 1994" (Moser and Holland 1997:1). Based on discussions and focus groups involving local people, the study shows that violence restricts peoples' movements outside their communities, restricts their access to existing jobs, reduces the incentive for businesses to invest, keeps children from regularly attending school, and prevents the communities from investing in housing and community infrastructure. Not only labor training, but social capital must be supported and strengthened, the authors argue. This can be accomplished if local projects are prepared to work with established community-level institutions such as "integrated community spaces," including sports facilities, teen centers, and training facilities. Other kinds of investments proposed include support for conflict-resolution programs, drug-abuse counseling, family-life education and parenting courses, and career guidance and job-placement services (Moser and Holland 1997:42).

### **Conclusions and Implications for Policy**

Urban research in the developing world has shown a number of distinct patterns over the last several decades. Disciplinary, rather than interdisciplinary themes have predominated, and different disciplines and clusters of related disciplines have tended to influence both the study and the discussion of urban issues in different regions. Worldwide trends are also important, as our understanding of the urbanization and development processes has tended to advance in terms of major approaches and theoretical models that are shared around the scientific world. Finally, there is also a localization effect, which is reflected in the increasingly important literature written in local languages concerning national and subnational problems.

By the early 1990s, one of the central concerns of both development agencies and the scholarly community working in urban areas was governance reform. To the extent that new approaches to "governance" had their origins in the empowering of civil society groups and in the pressure for decentralization and restructuring that was evident in many countries, research was mapping out important new directions for policy work. But by the

late 1990s, it had become evident that urban researchers were increasingly focusing on questions of personal security and on the reform of urban institutions in order to reconstitute citizenship and to overcome severe fragmentation and the threat of crime. This new direction promises to be central in the urban research agenda of the next five years.

If this analysis is correct, it carries certain implications for international assistance policy. First, we need to keep urban research networks in place, particularly if they are local and particularly if they are interdisciplinary. While the GURI network as described in this paper may not survive in its present form, the benefits to both researchers and practitioners of having an open-access, interdisciplinary, policy-oriented urban network, which connects a large number of countries and maintains relationships with similar networks in other major world regions, far outweigh the costs. Not only can local researchers monitor their local case studies over time with rigor and integrity, but their findings--when placed in a comparative framework, and when policy-makers, NGO activists, and project "operators" are involved--can be an important springboard to new policy ideas and project innovations. If the political adage that "all politics is local" has an application in urban research, it would be that "all comparative ideas must be understood and applied in a local context." Local researchers have a unique perspective on what is universal and what is local; and they are in the best position to interpret and to apply each to the other.

Second, we need to develop a more sophisticated understanding of how local communities operate in a globalizing world, where the old horizontal ties and bonds are giving way to competitive relations, and where urban spaces are becoming more and more fragmented. Fragmentation may serve a useful purpose if it allows for creative specialization and freedom; but if it drastically reduces social interaction and support structures to the point that neighborhoods and communities cease to have anything in common except a shared fear of crime and personal insecurity, we must develop tools to reduce its impact. Better public transportation, urban assistance policies that focus on communities and municipalities rather than individual target groups, and more attention to building up what we are now calling social capital will assist in this direction.

Finally, we need to be more open to experience in other countries, whether in the north or the south. Studies of crime and its causes and effects, for example, no longer fit into the old watertight compartments of "north" and "south," "first" or "third" world, and the like. Global influences on both urban societies and on criminal activities have become just as important as local factors. Strategies that reduce crime in New York, for example, may very well be relevant (with allowances made for the context) both in Toronto and Johannesburg. Assistance to cities to "prospect" for solutions and pilot projects in other cities may flow through associations of municipalities, rather than--as has largely been the

case in the past--from international agencies through the medium of national ministries in other countries. Comparative research will assist the free flow of this discussion, but so will the recognition that cities must talk to each other on a one-to-one basis.

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