

Urban Resilience in Situations of Chronic Violence

**Woodrow Wilson Center
Comparative Urban Studies Program
07/12/2012**

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THE CHALLENGES OF URBAN INSECURITY

Cities are now:

- Sites** of “warfare” with ongoing urban violence challenging democratic institutions
- Nodes** in transnational criminal networks of “violence entrepreneurs”
- Fractured landscapes** that reflect the clash between the formal and informal, the planned and unplanned

These problems:

- Hamper** mobility and reinforce spatial segregation
- Create** insecurity and an environment of fear and intimidation
- Strain** budgets and reduce trust local governments
- Require** new ways of restoring urban livability and establishing socio-political order

N.B.: Urbanization patterns have contributed to violence, and are part of its solution. **Planning better cities can help foster resilience by building new spatial and institutional connections** that remedy or counter-balance the exclusions of the past.

URBAN RESILIENCE AS A SPACE-BASED STRATEGY

Standard Sectoral Approaches

vs.

Alternative Spatial Approaches

Crime prevention strategies

- Crime is distributed unequally in space; root causes of crime beyond community control; individual consciousness-raising can only go so far

Security sector reform

- Hard to change cultures of corruption; citizens and communities can foster violence

Employment security and social welfare policy

- Communities are often as vulnerable as individuals; “at risk” communities are key in the fight against urban violence

Infrastructure and design innovations

- Physical interventions are unconnected to governance aims & geared to individual safety and mobility rather than building community

- Identify ***key individuals or groups*** of individuals in specific locales that have been ***better able to cope*** or adapt constructively in the face of violence
- Identify ***institutional context of coping*** strategies (e.g. what street-level public or private institutions support citizen push-back against violence)
- Identify the ***market and employment context of successful coping strategies*** (e.g. role of private sector; role of informality; relationship between employment and community solidarity)
- Identify the ***land use context*** of successful efforts to cope with /adapt violence (creation of new public spaces; land use patterns; transportation access and mobility; residential vs. commercial character)

Successful Adaptations and Coping Strategies = Resilience

- Resilience does not assume a capacity to directly eliminate the roots of violence
- Resilience is understood as the willingness and capacity to cope or adapt to violence
- Resilience is grounded in community actions and networks
- Resilience is measured in (and motivated) by a “return to normalcy” in everyday urban life

DATA AND MEASUREMENT ISSUES

What is Return to Normalcy?

- In distressed cities where poverty, inequality, and exclusion are endemic?
- Where structures and organizations of violence are historically embedded in state and society?

Qualitative versus Quantitative Indicators

- Rising crime rates* can mean a winning strategy or a failed “war”
- Falling crime rates* can mean a re-establishment of criminal hegemony rather than its defeat
- Individual perceptions* are influenced by *subjective* framings rather than objective facts
- Police and justice systems may be implicated in the violence (making *reporting rates suspect*)

The “Robustness” of Resilience

- Resilience is a relative state of affairs (relative to time and place)
- Even small improvements in daily livability can translate into hope and optimism

Requires a New Methodology

- Measuring or resilience requires *deep ethnographic and context-specific examination* of individual mobility, social relations, and daily uses of space
- Collection of cognitive maps* rather than distributing surveys; *constructing qualitative indicators of everyday urbanism* rather than relying on homicide rates

CASE STUDIES



Mexico City

Managua

Medellín

São Paulo

Kigali

Nairobi

Johannesburg

RESILIENCE:

Definition and Assumptions

One working definition of resilience:

“...how people, institutions, and societies **bound back from harm** and **figure out ways** to adapt and thrive. It describes a way to **persevere and move forward** from the past -- to keep calm and carry on -- on issues as far ranging as facing trauma and [recovering] from loss.”

– Juliette Kayem, *Boston Globe*, March 2012

Assumptions:

- Those who face trauma or confront risk know what is possible to change and what is not. The reality of their lives is the starting point for action.
- While a return to normalcy may not be possible, moving forward usually is.
- Resilience, as a concept, invokes *pragmatism* as enlightened by *hope*.

Caveats:

- Citizen adaptations may not always bring positive results.
- It is critical to distinguish between negative and positive resilience, so that subsequent policy actions will disable or circumvent destructive adaptations while encouraging constructive ones.

URBAN RESILIENCE IN MEDELLÍN:

A Positive Starting Point

Medellín, Colombia:



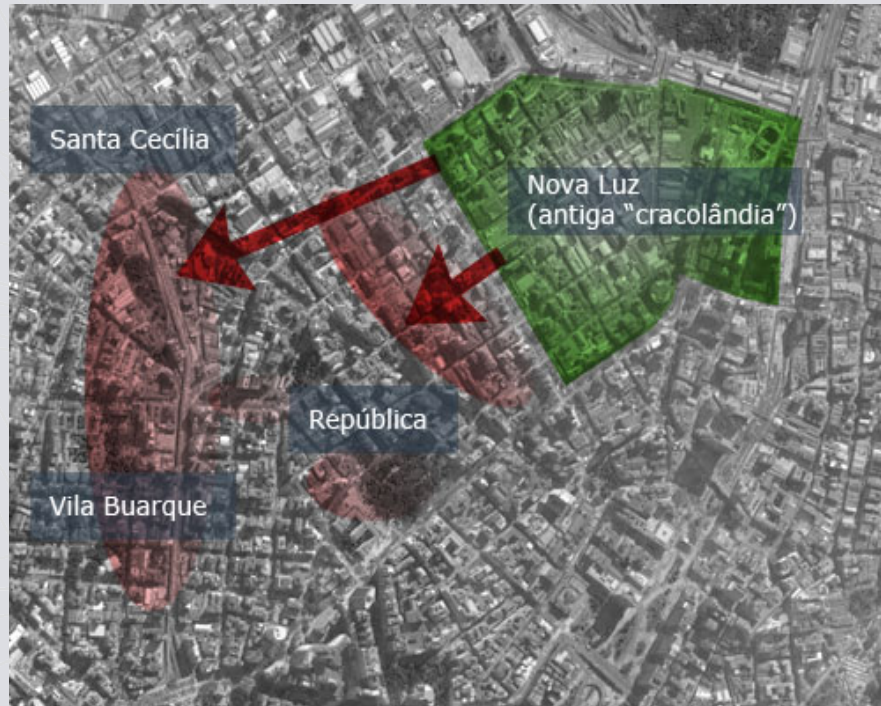
Linking security gains with urban and community interventions in Medellin

- Source of conflict: presence of non-state armed actors, socio-spatial exclusion, and rampant informality
- Push back against violence: community organizations and state policies creating mobility & safe spaces
- Results: closing physical, social, and political distances between authorities and communities; new forms of community solidarity and activism

INTERRUPTED and NEGATIVE RESILIENCE:

Failed Urban Interventions and Incomplete State-Community Relations

São Paulo, Brazil:



- Unsuccessful urban redevelopment downtown because during the day the presence of the police displaces drug addicts but **“at night the streets belong to them,”** thus reinforcing the area’s negative reputation
- **Armed criminal groups** step in to provide security in the peripheries of the city where the poor have self-constructed their own homes and the one service that the state never provided was security

SPACES, AGENTS, AND STRATEGIES OF RESILIENCE

There are multiple pathways to resilience. Some cities – or localities within cities -- do better than others, even when implementing the same policies, while others face persistent obstacles.

Positive Resilience: Medellin, Mexico City

Interrupted or Negative Resilience: Nairobi, Johannesburg, parts of Sao Paolo,

Proactive Resilience: Managua, Kigali

The following programs produced different results in each of the above cities:

- **Urban Revitalization:** Depending on location (**spaces** of resilience)
- **Slum Upgrading:** Depending on who initiates and with what support (**agents** of resilience)
- **Security Reforms:** Depending on degrees of cooperation and trust between citizens and the state (**strategies** of resilience)

RESILIENCE STRATEGIES:

State-supported Urban Interventions

Medellín, Colombia:



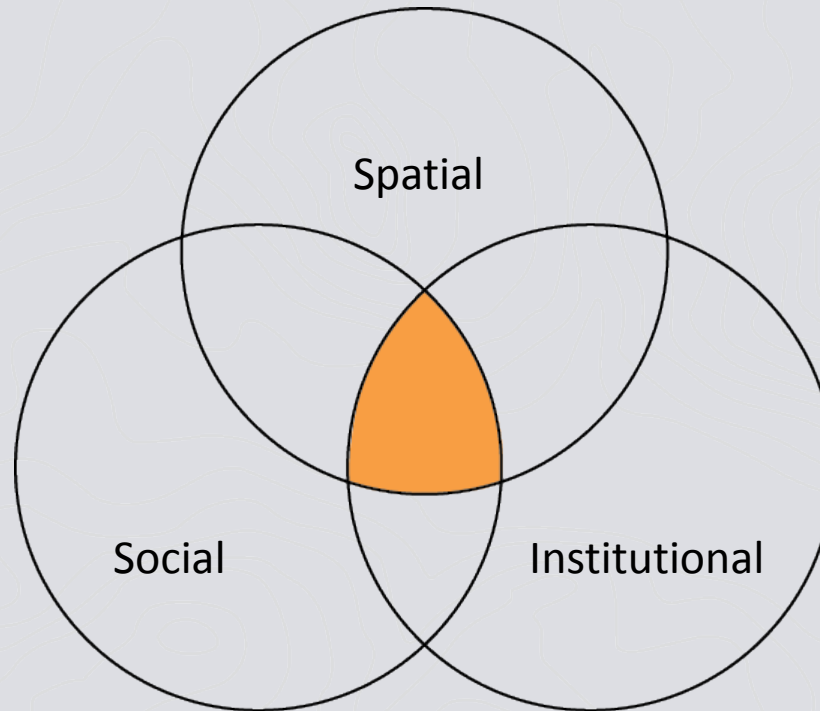
Medellín: Citizen-led improvements with state support

- Participatory urban upgrading integrated informal areas
- Construction of safe public spaces allowed for community gatherings
- Investment in infrastructure improved access and laid the path for the implementation of more effective public policies in the area

ENSURING POSITIVE RESILIENCE:

The Importance of Urban Planning Epistemologies

Threefold Approach to Coping with Violence



- Urban violence has social, spatial and institutional roots; thus, sustainable approaches to urban violence must always include the three dimensions
- Neither urban design, nor security reform, nor good governance, nor community activism *alone* will produce positive resilience

Urban Resilience = Good Governance + Security Reforms + Inclusive Urban Planning

PUTTING RESILIENCE AT RISK :

Extreme Social, Spatial, and Political Segregation

Nairobi, Kenya & Johannesburg, South Africa



Violence and Informality

Nairobi: Extreme **socio-spatial segregation** persists; security providers and housing conflicts remain key sources of violence; **little trust** in governing authorities

- Johannesburg: Multiple community organizations have made progress, but they **fail to provide safe havens** from conflict because of their unstable connections to territory and to state-based institutions, particularly the police. The result is often vigilante justice.

HISTORICAL ROOTS OF URBAN RESILIENCE CAPACITIES:

Social, Spatial, and Governing Dimensions

Social and spatial histories set the stage for positive or negative resilience by affecting relations within and between citizens, states, and violent actors

Social History and Resilience

- Contemporary strategies of resilience are governed by historical *attitudes* in a community *towards violence and informality*, themselves a product of state neglect
- Histories of migration, land tenure, and changing demographics affect how *divided or united* a community is in adapting to violence
- Ethnically, socially, and politically divided communities with insufficient resources are at risk for violence and *prone to allying with whomever offers protection*

Governing History and Resilience

- The community's ability and willingness to fight collectively against violence depends on its relationship with the state and its political history, *with the police as key mediators*
- If the state seeks to impose its will on a community in order to achieve its own aim, citizens are less likely to cooperate

Spatial History and Resilience

- Mixed-use land concentrated in the downtown areas offer more opportunities for sharing space and social networks, while creating the basis for self-sustaining economic vibrancy
- The peripheries of the city host inter-related “risks”: they are sites of informality, residents lack strong ties to the state; spatial, political, and economic isolation leads to alternative loyalties; access is both limited and suspect

RESILIENT STRATEGIES:

State-supported Urban Interventions

Historical Center, Mexico City, Mexico



Urban redevelopment as a strategy to regain control over space

- Urban planning increased police presence, improved street lighting and enhanced local-level civic engagement to **democratize the use of space** so that no one gang could take control
- Citizen and state partnerships with commercial actors was crucial in **bringing back people to these once unprotected spaces** on a 24/7 basis (unlike in Sao Paulo)

RESILIENT STRATEGIES:

State-supported Urban Interventions

Iztapalapa, Mexico City, Mexico



More difficult to undertake urban redevelopment in residential areas

- A similar neighborhood improvement program in a poorer peripheral area was less successful because of limited connections with the government and limited collaboration with the private sector
- Community mobilization targeted security, but without connections to business owners to make neighborhoods safer these interventions were less sustainable in physical and social terms
- Reveals heightened challenges of bridging urban planning with public security goals *in residential areas*

PROACTIVE AND REACTIVE RESILIENCE:

Community Autonomy and Vertical Relationships with the State

Kigali, Rwanda & Managua, Nicaragua:



Community-based Security

Community projects create new or strengthen existing **horizontal and vertical connections**

- Resilience in Managua emerges from **strong neighborhood identities**, which helps communities reclaim their security **with the support of the state**
- Decentralization in Kigali has resulted in community-based policing and enforced community service, and this **greater presence of the state** has created **more public spaces** for community meetings

RESILIENCE AND “COOPERATIVE AUTONOMY”

Communities that connect to the state while also retaining some autonomy are in a strong position to establish and reinforce capacities for resilience

Community Autonomy: Actors who are collectively involved in decision-making processes involving their communities, and who establish reciprocities with each other, are better able to repudiate harmful interventions from the perpetrators of violence

Connections: Whether informal, low-income, or violence prone areas connect to or are embedded within the state and other parts of the city – spatially, economically, politically, socially matters. Connections build trust and enable knowledge transfer in ways that reinforce rather than undermine both community aims and the larger goals of stability, democratic governance, and social order.

What are the implications for public policy?

Programs must foster community relationships and reciprocities within a given territorial area to strengthen community cohesion, and thus community autonomy from the forces of disorder.

More autonomy means more shared responsibility and greater collective efficacy.

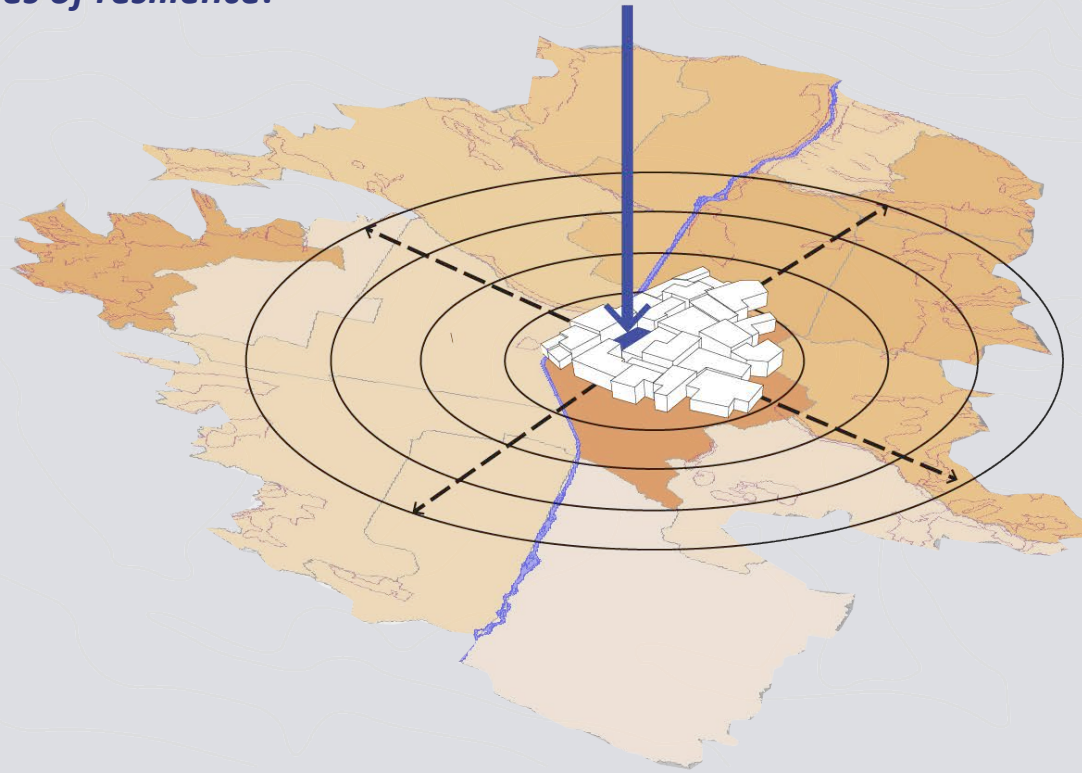
Yet focusing on the community is not enough. Policies must strengthen community **connections to the state and the legitimate forces of order**, so that citizens as collectivities are partly responsible for insuring security, thus taking “ownership” of -- and demanding accountability for -- results. **Co-production of security, both directly and indirectly, must be both goal and the process.**

THE IMPORTANCE OF SCALING UP

Building Resilient Cities through Strategic Spatial Interventions

The incorporation of democratic urban planning and redevelopment strategies will generate positive spillover effects in space, turning individual sites of resilience into catalysts that can create zones and cities of resilience.

Strategic planning objectives: 1) identify physical *sites* most likely to host institutional connections that strengthen “cooperative” or “embedded” autonomy, and 2) network such sites into larger *zones* of safety, with the intent of spatially and institutionally expanding the positive externalities of these successes so as to generate entire *cities of resilience*.



scaling out
site – zone - city

CHALLENGE, OPPORTUNITY, OR BOTH?

INTEGRATING RESILIENCE STRATEGIES INTO CURRENT BEST PRACTICES

I. RETHINKING THE SCALES OF URBAN PARTICIPATION

GOVERNANCE goals should include participatory urban decision-making focused on both the community but in relation to the city as a whole (rather than confining participation to the small scale, finding ways to connect participatory activities of the parts to the whole)

II. PAYING ATTENTION TO EVERYDAY URBANISM IN PUBLIC POLICY

URBAN POLICIES no matter the sector should contribute to the creation of vibrant, institutionally-rich, and socially heterogeneous physical spaces, with efforts made to multiply such spaces all over the city. That is, instead of just investing in infrastructure *or* public space, *or* housing *or* property rights, and so on; and instead of assuming a functional hierarchical division of urban space whereby only some areas get certain investments, all security, governance, social, and environmental policy aims should be triangulated in space, with policy makers identifying new ways to leverage the “cooperative autonomy” gains of building policy programs to serve well-identified spaces and sites.

III. STRENGTHENING SECURITY AIMS BY FOSTERING CO-PRODUCTION AND COOPERATIVE AUTONOMY

SECURITY POLICIES must emphasize *legitimate security* (rather than violence reduction or state authority per se) so as to bring state and citizens together in crime-fighting. More legitimate security at the local level brings more sustained urban resilience, further strengthening the urban foundations of national security while also reducing the citizen-state tensions that let violence flourish in the first place.

EMERGING RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

Facilitators and Barriers to Policy Success

Urban Infrastructural Investments: Where to Start?

How does one change land use in a city with an already established built environment (direct or indirect incentives)?
Who should be involved in such decisions, and how?
When upgrading areas, what incentives or procedures are needed to push back against displacement/gentrification?
Which areas of the city should be prioritized for investment (undeveloped versus developed lands; fixed or ambiguous property rights)?

Community Autonomy: Easier Said than Done?

What is the most appropriate scale for “community” action (street, neighborhood, etc.)
How can natural divisions (class, ethnicity, power) be overcome?
How can the resources of NGOs be better leveraged to help foster community autonomy?
Which policies or programmatic objectives hold the most potential to strengthen community autonomy (public health, gender, environment, etc.)?

Legitimate Security: How to Balance State and Citizen Aims?

How much discretion can communities have and still sustain the rule of law?
How should the process of inviting police into communities be incentivized, managed, or coordinated?

Urban Resilience in Cities in Flux: How to Incorporate Migrants and Refugees?

How does one foster urban resilience in expanding cities where populations are rootless, mobile, & without recognition?
Will a regional context of insecurity bring produce limits on the state’s willingness to encourage community autonomy?

State Institutional Capacities: What Makes Local Authorities Successful?

What balance of centralized versus decentralized governing structures will best facilitate cooperative autonomy?
Do party politics at the local level enhance or inhibit cooperative autonomy?
Which governing departments or institutions are best able to work with urban planning professionals?