

# Violence, Cities, and Prevention: A Conceptual Framework for Reducing Violence in the Urban Realm

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Contemporary urban growth in various cities worldwide has been increasingly accompanied by the occurrence of urban violence. The coalescence of this violence, and the fear it precipitates, exacerbates the unequal spatial, societal, political, and economic structures intrinsic to many cities. Moreover, such insecurity undermines the very foundations of the economic and social development that are offered by concurrent urbanization. Therefore, continued urban violence in its current extent has a strong inhibitory affect on sustainable urban development.

To address the phenomenon of urban violence, many theories and strategies have emerged to confront the multiple expressions of insecurity in various metropolitan contexts. Among others, the physical manipulation of space has received significant attention due to its capacity to “weave together socio-cultural development aspects, economic aspects, as well as operation and maintenance solutions,” and accordingly address the multi-faceted influences that contribute to violence in the urban realm (Krause 2011: 108). However, to sufficiently appraise this capacity, it is first necessary to contextualize violence, its categories, and instigators in urban space. With such a conceptual grounding, it is then feasible to evaluate the various prevention initiatives, which are detailed in the subsequent chapters of this book.

The following work therefore seeks to establish a conceptual grounding in the theory of violence, while likewise providing an introduction to the predominant place-based approaches that have developed to prevent violence in cities. It likewise introduces six fundamental attributes of successful violence prevention that have been developed by the author to complement such place-based approaches.

## Violence: categories and instigators

In order to sufficiently understand the contemporary situation of violence in the urban realm, it is first necessary to conceptualize the theory of violence, particularly in its relation to cities. Despite its significant presence in nearly every metropolitan area internationally, the term violence receives different definitions, based on the intensity of form, contemporary relevance, and cultural norms/perceptions of its existence. Nevertheless, the World Health Organization (WHO) defines violence as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or a group/community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury or death” (Krug et al 2002: 4). Besides these tangible outcomes, the WHO also includes the myriad and often less obvious consequences of violent behaviour, “such as psychological harm, deprivation, and mal-development that compromise the well-being of individuals, families, and communities” (Krug et al 2002: 4). This complexity within the definition of violence alludes to the multiple attributes and influences of the concept, and has provoked social scientists to further distinguishing between the varying forms of violence. In its most encompassing classification, violence is first differentiated into *direct*, *structural*, and *cultural* forms, with *direct* violence composing the most common understandings of the term: direct violence is the direct infliction of physical or psychological harm on another individual resulting in intentional fatalities, assault, and/or sexual harassment (Marc & Willman 2010: 11; Muggah 2012: 19). *Direct* violence is further divided into three subcategories:

- *Self-directed* violence – Which includes suicidal behaviour and self-abuse such as self-mutilation;
- *Interpersonal* violence – Which comprises:
  - *Family and intimate partner violence* - Violence largely between family members and intimate partners, usually, though not exclusively, taking place in the home;
  - *Community violence* – Violence between individuals who are unrelated, and who may or may not know each other beforehand, generally taking place outside the home;
- *And Collective violence* – The instrumental use of violence by people who identify themselves as members of a group against another group or set of individuals, in order to achieve political, economic, or social objectives (Figure 1.) (Krug et al 2002: 5).

These direct forms of violence generate uncertainty -expressed as fear and insecurity- thus promoting the notion that particular institutions or cultural establishments require protection (Moser 2004: 4). To generate such protection, mechanisms are often constructed to negate this threat. Yet, intrinsic to many of these mechanisms are structural or institutional attributes that exclude or inhibit certain portions of a population from achieving a just and equitable lifestyle. In response to this reality, the concept of structural violence was introduced by Galtung (1969) to

01.  
This definition of violence is contrasted with the definition for crime, which is delineated as “an act (usually a grave offence) punishable by law, i.e. the breach of a legal prohibition. Violent crime, in turn, has been defined as any act that causes a physical or psychological wound or damage and which is against the law” (Moser 2004: 4).

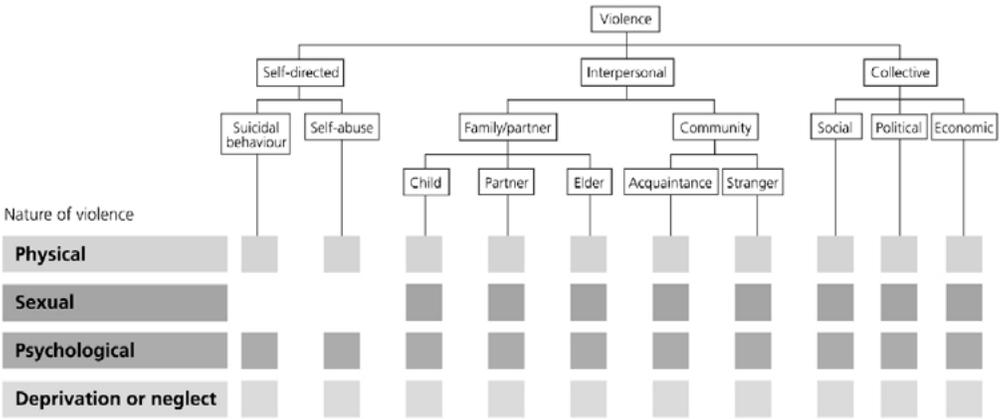


Figure 1: A Typology of Direct Violence. Source: Krug et al 2002: 5

address the issue of “how various institutions and organizations cause harm to others as a normal consequence of the way they are structured and operate” (Santa-Barbara 2007: 234). Recently, Fischer (2007) has elaborated on this designation by further refining structural violence into two categories:

- Structural I Violence– Which is violence derived from injustices such as “the slow death from hunger, preventable diseases, and other suffering, caused by unjust structures of society,” commonly defined as misery;
- And Structural II Violence– Which is violence derived from the “deprivation from freedom of choice and participation in decisions that affect people’s own lives,” which in this sense, is defined as oppression (Fischer 2007: 188).

The injustices (real or perceived) derived from structural violence, “may provoke direct violence as a response to exclusion from social, political, or economic systems” (Marc & Willman 2010: 11). These forms of structural and direct violence, in turn, can be exacerbated by cultural violence, which is the “justification of direct and structural forms through nationalism, racism, sexism, and other types of discrimination and prejudice” (Fischer 2007: 188). Therefore, a situation of violence frequently perpetuates itself through the multi-faceted and interrelated components intrinsic to its origin.

A secondary manner of classification for violence evaluates the motivation behind violent actions. Such motivations fall under three broad characterizations -social, economic, and political motives- which degrade into further forms of violence (social, economic, or political violence) when conflict arises from the incompatible or contradictory goals of individuals or groups. Moser and McIlwaine (2004) provide greater contextualization of the intentionality in these further forms of violence:

- Social violence– Violence, predominantly interpersonal, and motivated by the “will to get or keep social power and control”;

- Economic violence–Violence “motivated by material gain that [takes] the form of street crime, drug-related violence, or kidnapping”;
- And Political violence–Violence “inspired by the will to win or hold political powers” (Moser & McIlwaine 2004: 60).

The final form, political violence, can take a range of violent outcomes, such as “the normalization of violence, [deriving] a system of norms, values, or attitudes which allow, or even stimulate, the use of violence,” and culminate in a form of state violence, perpetrated through a lack of reform within the police and judiciary systems, or the inability to provide legitimate institutional control over violence (Agostini et al 2010: 3). The propensity of violence to grow/diminish in intensity across space and time is a third mechanism through which violence is categorized, ranging along a continuum from “acute”, “endemic”, and “chronic”, to “everyday”, “common”, and “petty”(Muggah 2012: 19).

On account of this multifaceted and interrelated nature of violence, the necessity to evaluate the phenomenon by examining factors that influence behaviour –or aspects which increase the risk of committing or becoming a victim of violence– in a complex and comprehensive fashion, became obvious to many scholars early on in the development of conceptual theory (Krug et al 2002: 9). At the beginning of the 20th Century, The Chicago School proposed the Social Disorganization Theory, which predicted that many risks for violence were aggravated by socio-spatial characteristics of cities themselves, such as their “heterogeneity, inability to absorb surplus low-skill labour, uneven provision of services, and jarring inequalities” (Muggah 2012: viii). “Economic disadvantage, ethnic [diversity], and residential instability,” contributed “to community disorganization and ultimately violence,” purported the Social Disorganization Theory (Ibid). These ideas were further advanced through the Ecological Systems Theory, developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1977), which sought to demonstrate that no single cause determined or explained violence, but rather that multiple types of nested-factors, with bi-directional influences in and between each other at different levels, combined to contribute to violence (Krug et al 2002; Moser 2004). Such factors include:

- The biological and personal history/identity factors that influence how individuals behave and increase their likelihood of becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence ;
- Close relationships, such as those with family, friends, intimate partners, and peers, which might “increase the risk of being a victim or perpetrator of violence” (Krug et al 2002: 9);
- The community contexts in which social relationships occur -such as at schools, workplaces, and neighbourhoods- which might perpetuate the risks for violence ;
- And the broad societal factors that help create a climate in which violence is encouraged or inhibited (Krug et al 2002).

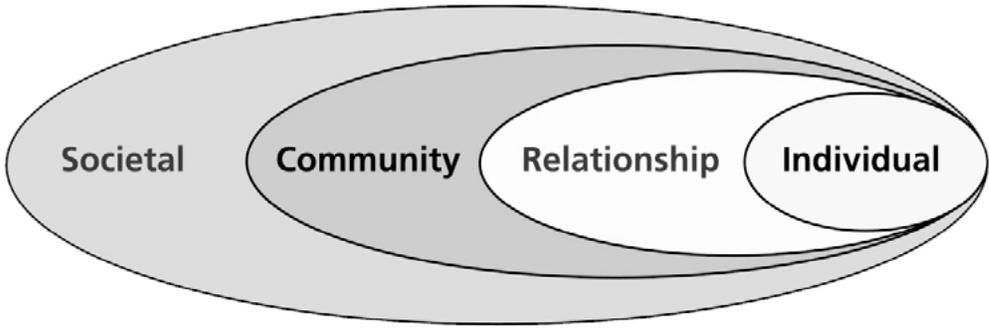


Figure 2: The nested-factors of the Ecological Systems Theory model. Source: Krug et al 2002: 9

Through such an evaluation of violence, the Ecological Systems Theory illustrated how factors were not linear in culminating in violence, but rather strengthened and modified by each other in an overlapping and continuous manner (Krug et al 2002: 9). This concept, illustrated in Figure 2. below, is contemporarily considered as the basic methodology when evaluating situations of violence, independent of the scale or context within which the sample is addressed.

In the vein of the Ecological Systems Theory, urban violence, particularly in the Global South, has recently been prescribed to follow a specific, concomitant pattern across metropolises: “rapid growth of cities feeds the chaotic formation of [marginal areas], in which overcrowding and competition for scarce resources combine with weak state security presence to foster criminality and violence” (Marc & Willman 2010: 15). Within this pattern, the urban growth rate has been expressly attributed to enhanced violence -compared with city size or population density (Ibid: 17) - as rapid urban growth contributes to infrastructure deficiencies that exacerbate the everyday pressures of earning a living and raising a family, thus increasing tensions within families and communities, and making it easier for everyday conflicts to escalate into violence (Ibid: 66). Poor spatial allotments are proposed to contribute to the propensity of conflict by creating “situational opportunities for perpetrators to commit crimes without being seen or pursued by neighbours or police” (Ibid). Similarly, limited service provisions in one community as opposed to another are suggested to exacerbate a sense of social exclusion, itself a driver of violence, which then has the power to convert areas of a city into “no-go zones” for other non-residents and law enforcement professionals (Ibid: 26). In this way, the real and perceived threat of violence combines to generate what Davis (1990) has called “security-obsessed urbanism”: “increasingly higher walls and barriers, more elaborate security systems, the presence of private security, and, often, a stronger [and discriminative] police presence in wealthier areas,” thus, fragmenting public space, breaking down social cohesion, perpetuating widespread insecurity, and diminishing the overall quality of life (Agbola 1997: 26).

Nevertheless, there is nothing inevitable about violence in the urban environment, as evidenced by Moser’s (2004) declaration that the popular concept of poverty as the predominant determinant of violence is “too simplistic” (Moser 2004: 8). Some megacities characterized by informality, such as Cairo and Mumbai , are professed to be among the

safest cities in the world, while others with similarly large quotients of informal populations, such as Bogotá and São Paulo, have seen a remarkable drop in violent crime despite dense and growing populations (Marc & Willman 2010: 15). It has therefore been concluded that, “the relationship between cities and violence is [somewhat more] complex” (Ibid) and accordingly requires greater study.

Indisputable on the urban scale however, are the costs which violence incurs. Direct damage caused by violence includes death, injury, destruction to public infrastructure, loss of personal property, and diminished returns on economic assets, while indirect costs such as psychological trauma, population displacement, the disruption of social services, “brain drain”, and increased spending on law enforcement are also attributed to violence and insecurity (Muggah 2012: iii). Globalizing growth and international connectivity have been proposed to exacerbate these problems, as aspects of globalization contribute to conflict, particularly through “the fragmentation and marginalization of some countries and groups [via] the intense competition for resources and the widening [of] inequalities”(Krug et al 2002: 23). “Though these factors may not be sufficient alone to cause conflict, they may create conditions in which violence will erupt,” particularly relevant in the face of continued urbanization over the forthcoming decades (Ibid).

## Violence prevention

In response to the proclivity of increased urban violence, a number of mechanisms have been developed to deal with the incidence of insecurity. These mechanisms have predominantly followed three general directions of the public health approach, pursuing the prevention of violence through primary, secondary, or tertiary means (Krug et al 2002: 10). Greater description of these mechanisms is provided in Table 1. below.

Within these mechanisms, four major place-based crime prevention approaches have developed since the early 1970s. All of these approaches focus on the role of the physical environment within prevention, though each emphasizes a different scale of analysis. The approaches consider the integration of crime prevention measures into the fields of architecture, urban design, and urban planning, accordingly assuming that certain qualities of the physical environment may reduce opportunities for crime or violence.

The first and possibly best-known of these spatial violence prevention approaches is the concept of “defensible space”, which was formulated by the architect Oscar Newman in 1972. Newman argued that an environment’s physical characteristics –building layout and overall site plan– functioned to allow inhabitants themselves to become key agents in ensuring their own security (Newman 1996: 9). In his studies of public housing estates across the United States, he criticized “the large scale of the buildings, which made it impossible for residents to recognize strangers; the multitude of unsupervised access points that made it easy for offenders to enter projects and escape after committing [a] crime; the location of projects in high crime areas; and their stark appearance, which

Table 1.  
Mechanisms  
for Violence  
Prevention

Mechanism	Description
Primary Violence Prevention	<p>“Primary violence prevention aims to prevent violence before it occurs” (Meade 2009: 13). Such intervention involves strategies that reduce the factors that put people at risk for experiencing violence, while simultaneously acting to increase other factors that protect or buffer individuals from such risk (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention). These mechanisms usually act on the community or societal level and can include a range of social, educational, health, or training programs (Shaw 2010: 12). Yet, such approaches necessitate engagement with the dense and diverse complexities of individuals, communities, cultures, and societies; thus, “primary violence prevention [is] under-utilized, even though [it] holds promise for reducing and ultimately eliminating the trauma and burden of violence” (Meade 2009: 13).</p>
Secondary Violence Prevention	<p>“Secondary violence prevention focuses on treating immediate injury and harm resulting from violent incidents” (Meade 2009: 13). These efforts may include emergency services or medical care for victims; thus secondary prevention concentrates much more on individual or relational attributes than larger group dynamics. Along with tertiary violence prevention, secondary violence prevention mechanisms are acknowledged as more widespread (Meade 2009: 13).</p>
Tertiary Violence Prevention	<p>“Tertiary violence prevention refers to a range of activities aimed at addressing the medium and long-term effects of violence and includes therapy and other rehabilitation efforts” (Meade 2009: 13). Programs focusing on the latter often seek to prevent recidivism by assisting in the social reintegration of offenders, as “those convicted of offences run the greatest risk of re-offending, given that they have already broken the law, have few opportunities and skills to pursue legitimate non-criminal lifestyles, and may have strong links with other offenders and offending lifestyles” (Shaw 2010: 14). Thus, providing previous offenders with life and job skills, training, education, alternative lifestyles and role models, and good support and housing in the community are ways that are purported to assist with reintegration (Ibid). Such mechanisms “form an important part of comprehensive [prevention] strategies, since many of those dealt with by the criminal justice system and who are incarcerated will eventually return to the community” they molested (Ibid: 99). Thus, a number of reintegration programs also include restorative justice components which aim to restore community order and relationships while simultaneously promoting peace, in order to reaffirm community values, encourage change, and reintegrate the offender (Ibid).</p>

contributed to the stigma [attached] to them” (Clarke 1997: 7). Consequently, Newman developed four key characteristics for the production of “defensible space” in North American housing projects, including:

- Territoriality, which referred to an individual’s perceptions of, and relationship with his or her environment ;
- Boundary definition, which alluded to the demarcation and division of spaces in order to differentiate between public and private use;
- Image, which included the capacity of the physical design to impart a sense of security on the resident or intruder;

- And milieu, which referenced other features that affected security, such as proximity to a police station or a busy commercial area.

Simultaneous to the development of “defensible space”, though largely ignored throughout the 1970s, was the multi-disciplinary approach of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED), formulated by the criminologist C. Ray Jeffery. More comprehensive than the concept of “defensible space”, CPTED acknowledged that an urban fabric of highly segregated land uses, unavailability of mixed and diverse urban functionality, badly managed public spaces, inadequate provision for movement and other pedestrian amenities, deficient attributes with which residents could identify, empty buildings, insufficient lighting, and occasionally clusters of night entertainment were some of the factors that isolated, or in combination, contributed to insecurity in cities. Accordingly, CPTED argued for the amendment of the built environment in order to deter criminal behaviour. With the publication of the Broken Window Theory by Wilson and Kelling in 1982, CPTED achieved larger acceptance across the prevention community and was subsequently implemented across North America and Europe for public spaces, private housing facilities, businesses, banks (including automatic teller machines), industry, and other private structures (Rand 1984). Similar to the concept of “defensible space”, the central components of CPTED reflected the work of Jane Jacobs (1961), arguing for an increase in natural surveillance of streets and other public spaces, while simultaneously encouraging an enhanced sense of territoriality or belonging to place. These central components included:

- Surveillance and visibility;
- Territoriality and defensible space;
- Access and escape routes;
- Activity support;
- Image and aesthetics;
- Target hardening;
- And maintenance or management (Coaffee 2003)

Advancing this comprehensive view, the concept of situational crime prevention incorporated management and use issues into the prevention of criminal opportunities that arose from the routines of everyday life. The concept of situational crime prevention strongly relied on the Routine Activity Theory of Cohen and Felson (1979) and the Rationale Choice Theory of Clarke and Cornish (1985). It conceived crime as a specific function of the opportunities and rewards offered by the physical and temporal environment: certain situations and physical forms were argued to provoke individuals to commit particular types of crime (Schneider & Kitchen 2002: 106). Therefore, the concept recommended opportunity-reducing techniques such as the securing or hardening of potential targets, the improvement of surveillance for areas that might attract crime (through, for example, closed-circuit television surveillance), and the deflection of potential offenders from settings in which crimes might occur (by, for example, limiting the access of particular people to

shopping malls and other locales (von Hirsch et al 2000)). Compared to CPTED, situational crime prevention encompassed the entire range of environments (and objects) involved in crime and likewise incorporated legal and management, as well as design solutions; therefore, it has been argued to be broader than CPTED, which tended to be solely focused on the design of the built environment (Clarke 1997: 9).

Resultant from these various approaches to violence and crime prevention, environmental criminology developed in the early 1980s as a scientific study to evaluate crime, criminality, and victimization as they related to 1.) particular places, and 2.) the way that individuals and organizations shaped their activities on account of the spatial form of such places. The environmental criminology approach argued for “objective analysis of the spatial and temporal variation in crime patterns in order to discover aggregate factors influencing [these] patterns” (Brantingham and Brantingham, 1991: 239). Specific focus was given to space, time, law, offender, and target or victim, which were professed to be interdependent factors in producing crime: without one, the other four, even together, would not constitute a criminal incident (Ibid). Environmental criminologists, in line with the CPTED and situational crime prevention approaches, therefore began appraising land usage, traffic patterns, street design, and the daily activities and movements of victims and offenders in evaluating criminal occurrences. Such a focus precipitated the proliferation of statistically-based crime mapping tools, which transformed crime data into spatial crime patterns and trends. Consequently, crime mapping has become an “invaluable” tool in police management across North America, enabling the assessment and replication of prevention ideas which have shown particular success (Schneider & Kitchen 2002).

The review of these approaches and the progression of violence prevention into its current focus communicates three fundamental attributes of violence prevention, namely that successful methods for prevention must incorporate the capacity to:

- Address the comprehensive factors contributing to violence;
- Transform spaces of chronic violence;
- And provide mechanisms, through which programs can be consistently evaluated, and thus, accordingly amended, when necessary.

These attributes are integral in developing, realizing, and continuing violence prevention programs. However, place-based approaches to crime evaluation and prevention have been argued to neglect important social and management vectors. Specific critique has been directed at the deficient linkages between physical intervention, social violence prevention, and community participation (Marc & Willman 2010: 79; CSIR 1997). Moreover, as one of the most common weaknesses in country experiences with violence prevention has been inadequate coordination between the reform of security systems and complementary action to improve justice systems, the necessity to strengthen security and justice functionality, alongside physical upgrading programs, is paramount (World Bank 2011: 18).

Therefore, crime and violence prevention must complement the three attributes above with the capacity to:

- Incorporate social components into prevention;
- Strengthen security and justice institutions;
- And facilitate community interaction and participation in the development of violence prevention programs.

These additional attributes enable prevention to address visible (direct) incidences of violence while simultaneously affording the capacity to attend to the invisible (structural and cultural) occurrences of violence as well. For further contextualization, these additional attributes are expounded upon in the following sections, which likewise communicate practical examples with a spatial (place-based) orientation.

### ***The Incorporation of Social Components into Prevention Initiatives***

Violence prevention programs must sufficiently incorporate social components into programmatic elements, as many situations of urban violence derive from societal discrepancies of poverty and inequality, or exacerbate social functionality such as deficient social control, limited communal cohesion, and perpetual gender disparities. As such, significant attention should be given to the needs of women as well as children and youth affected by insecurity: these groups are disproportionately represented in crime and violence statistics (World Bank 2011: 6) and moreover, show particular capabilities for instilling the mechanisms needed for the long-term reduction of violence. Therefore, prevention mechanisms should focus on improving the ability of individuals, groups, and communities to challenge the problems of crime and violence, while simultaneously advancing the provision of community facilities that endorse the production of social capital (UN-HABITAT 2007: 96). “The outcomes of many social intervention programs indicate that investing in individuals bears greater results than [simply] investing in structures” (Ibid).

Recognition of this is illustrated in the Green Line initiative of the municipality of Aguascalientes, in central Mexico, which introduced spatial mechanisms to directly address social functionality, such as insufficient recreational infrastructure for an increasingly young population, as well as programs to attend to deficient cultural and educational opportunities (Municipio de Aguascalientes 2011: 9). Through the Green Line initiative, the municipality redeveloped 12km of land covering a gas pipeline (60 ha), installing a community centre –with game room, library, medical facilities and spaces to develop citizenship skills –, 10 parks and recreational facilities for children, and areas for social and family life (civic plazas, terraces, and rest areas), all with universal accessibility (Figure 3.) (Ibid).

The short term results of the initiative have been substantial: an immediate decrease of 20% in crimes in the communities neighbouring the Green Line has been experienced, including tangible reductions in the occurrence of fights, homicides, rape, and robberies of homes, cars, and



*Figure 3: A Section of the Green Line Redevelopment in Aguascalientes, Mexico.  
Source: Municipio de Aguascalientes 2011*

automotive parts (Municipio de Aguascalientes 2011: 13). Further examples of the incorporation of social components into prevention initiatives are communicated later in this anthology.

### ***Provisions for the strengthening of security & justice institutions***

Supplemental to the incorporation of social components into violence prevention initiatives, significant provision for the strengthening of security and justice institutions is particularly important, as such endeavours can often be enacted fairly quickly, thus garnering communal support for violence prevention activities. The support of existing security and justice structures reduces the probability that citizens “will take the law into their own hands via vigilante justice or the hiring of private security” (Morrison et al 2003: 11). Both these actions tend to “escalate the degree of violence employed in crimes against people and property that are protected by such [‘institutions’], and concentrates crime and violence among populations who cannot afford private protection, thus increasing [their] vulnerability” (Ibid).

Security and justice reform programs should initially “focus on simple basic functions ; include civilian oversight, vetting, and budgetary/expenditure transparency to dismantle covert or criminal networks; and link the pace of reform between the police and civilian justice systems” (World Bank 2011: 18). As previously noted, one of the most common weaknesses in country experiences has been increasing actions to reform security systems without complementary action to reform justice systems. Such a situation causes several problems, “as increases in arrests by the security forces –not processed by the court– results in either grievances over prolonged detention without due process ” or the direct release of offenders back into the communities they have previously molested (Ibid: 256). Furthermore, “where civilian justice systems are absent in insecure areas, the military and police will end

Figure 4: A Mobile Police Facility in Bogotá, Colombia.  
Source: Ceaser 2011



up performing justice and correction functions beyond their mandate and capacity” (Ibid). This has a high propensity for reiterating perverse individual coping mechanisms to insecurity, and further perpetuating violence.

In response to deficient municipal security and justice coverage, Colombia provides exemplary prevention planning precedent through the delivery of local justice institutions in under-served informal communities. In Bogotá and Cali, one to two room 2 policemen police stations were created in strategic locations to detect and prevent violence and crime (Figure 4.) (Shaw & Carli 2011: 73). In the capital alone, 6,600 of such stations were realized to increase the cooperation between the police and the community, and generate rapid and significant results (Marc & Willman 2010: 92). Also in Bogotá, family police stations (Comisarías de Familia) were similarly created in predominantly informal communities so that families would be “informed about conflict resolution, domestic violence prevention, and child abuse issues” (Ibid). Such institutions incorporated an interdisciplinary team consisting of a lawyer, psychologist, doctor, and social worker, and provided comprehensive familial mediation services to prevent violence in the home (Ibid). Two congruent programs, Houses of Peace (Casas de Paz), in Cali and Houses of Justice (Casas de Justicia) in Bogotá were likewise established “to resolve everyday conflicts, such as disagreements, rights violations, and alimony issues” on the communal level (Ibid: 93). These institutions have achieved substantial success: Houses of Justice alone have assisted over 7.8 million citizens, predominantly from low-income communities, since their inception (World Bank 2011: 155).

### ***The incorporation of community participation***

Perhaps the most important and decisive attribute in the prevention of violence is the capacity to facilitate community interaction and engender participation in violence prevention initiatives. As stressed in the

Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime, governments cannot prevent crime and victimization or develop safe societies without the participation and involvement of citizens. Private citizens, community organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and the business community “offer in-depth knowledge and creative insights [pertaining to violence], based on their experiences and innovative responses” (Shaw 2010: 103). Furthermore, such individuals hold a spatial allegiance to localities, which is key to “creating a sense of community: if residents do not identify with a neighbourhood and view it as a temporary home, it makes it difficult to create meaningful social networks” (Davis 2012: 6). Thus, “participation must be understood as a [key] instrument for effective community organization and management” (Alemán 2009: 17).

“In order to strengthen the bonds of cooperative autonomy, communities should be delegated greater responsibility for management, assessment, and decision making about daily urban conditions in their immediate localities” (Davis 2012: 19). Programs focused on the care and management of public spaces or other shared community infrastructure “can go a long way in keeping sustained connections within and between citizens and governing authorities,” especially in growing metropolises of the developing world (Ibid). Such connections between the state and citizens “links them to each other in ways that allow increased community autonomy from the agents of violence,” and promotes the realization of focused practices, which will in turn, more directly address the origins of violence (Ibid).



*Figure 5:  
Comprehensive  
Attributes of  
Successful Violence  
Prevention. Source:  
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2014*

Understanding this reality, the Instituto Sou da Paz in São Paulo, Brazil, included members of the community, particularly young adults, in discussions and debates about public space. Such activities were realized to engage adolescents in the conception, implementation, control, and management of the public realm (Shaw & Carli 2011: 125). The construction of the space marked the second phase of the project: “young people in the community [were] selected and trained on a range of issues relating to the management and maintenance of the space, [which included] training in accessing resources, building relationships with public authorities and services, and conflict resolution/peace building” (Ibid: 126). Such participation encouraged public spaces of safety –in which community activities could take place– through strengthen community solidarity (Ibid: 125). The experiences of other authors in this volume reiterate this finding; therefore, community participation is one of the most important attributes of violence prevention practice, largely determining the longevity of any violence prevention initiative.

In an attempt to reiterate the affiliation of these individual attributes, along with the previously communicated ones, Figure 5. exhibits the six attributes assembled as a collective unit to represent the corresponding processes through which they work with and across each other in constant development for enhanced security. Though it might be argued that some attributes are more important than others, enhanced violence prevention cannot be achieved without the inclusion of all six: successful provisions for social functionality, the transformation of space, and enhanced security and justice institutions cannot be derived without a comprehensive understanding of a situation of violence; nor can such provisions be sufficiently achieved without community participation or significant evaluation to determine a program’s progress, according to original objectives.

The following works in this volume echo this appeal for more comprehensive and socially-cognizant violence prevention. Moreover, they highlight the need for greater discussion of violence prevention within the context of urban design, development and planning: as metropolitan populations across Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and South and Central Asia continue to grow, the increasing number of individuals exposed to limited resources, competition for employment, dense settlement patterns, and the occurrence of crime has the propensity to exacerbate the incidence of violence. Therefore, mechanisms for the prevention of urban insecurity –particularly in currently violent and urbanizing regions – will be increasingly relevant over the proceeding decades.

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