

WORKING PAPERS

Working Paper no. 87
- *Cities and Fragile States* -

CITIZENSHIP, THE 'RIGHT TO THE CITY' AND STATE FRAGILITY

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March 2011

Crisis States Working Papers Series No.2

ISSN 1749-1797 (print) ISSN 1749-1800 (online)

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This document is an output from a research programme funded by UKaid from the Department for International Development. However, the views expressed are not necessarily those of DFID.

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Citizenship, the ‘Right to the City’ and State Fragility

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Introduction

This paper considers the link between state stability and the provision of social rights in cities. It draws on the body of work produced for the Cities and Fragile States (CAFS) component of the Crisis States Research Centre (CSRC) as well as on the broader work of urban researchers linked to the Centre and to the Department of International Development at the London School of Economics. CSRC research on Cities and Fragile States seeks to assess state fragility, resilience and development against three types of state function: security, growth, and the delivery of basic welfare. The latter function is the main focus of this paper. An overview of CSRC research on the relationship between state fragility, cities and conflict can be found in Beall, Goodfellow and Rodgers (2011), whilst the relationship between state fragility, cities and development is examined in Beall, Fox and Gazdar (2011 forthcoming).

As with the other CAFS papers, the Centre’s distinction between crisis states, fragile states, resilient states and developmental states is followed. A developmental state is defined as one that guarantees the security of its citizens, promotes economic growth, and ensures that this translates into broad-based improvements in social welfare. A fragile or resilient state, by contrast, might match up to some but not all these measures, while a crisis state fails on every count. Transitions from crisis to fragility/resilience are referred to in the CAFS research as *state consolidation* and from fragility/resilience to developmentalism as *state transformation* (Beall, Fox and Gazdar 2011 forthcoming).

The issue of welfare has received less specific attention across the Centre’s broader body of work than issues of security and governance. In part this is due to the tendency to concentrate on control over the monopoly of violence and territory and on issues related to the workings of governance institutions in fragile or resilient states. Moreover, welfare functions are usually associated with more developmental states and many of the cases studied by the Centre are without strong developmental tendencies. This paper examines the city as a site in which care for citizens in the form of public goods and service delivery is demanded and provided through the transfer of central state revenues. The relationship between state and citizens is not conceived simply in the relatively passive and limiting terms of welfare delivery, but rather within the broader arena of *social rights*, understood as a core component of substantive citizenship – an important characteristic of developmental states.

The urban focus of this paper is derived from the recognition that social rights, notably access to land and housing, are of particular importance in cities. Conflicts over the appropriate use of land are more likely to arise in urban areas, and the high value of land combined with its

¹ I am grateful to Jo Beall for her comments and guidance.

potential to contribute to economic development mean that the state almost inevitably becomes involved in these conflicts. This paper's examination of the spatial aspects of social rights in urban areas gives rise to a discussion of the 'right to the city', and how the denial of this right can create increased tension and destabilisation in the cities of fragile states.

An examination of social citizenship in urban areas is particularly pertinent, given the fact that cities are traditionally understood as the 'cradle of citizenship', further expressed through the etymological relationship between the words 'city' and 'citizen'. The anonymity, heterogeneity and dynamism of cities mean that they can be progressive spaces, where new identities can be forged. Indeed, as Crisis States research in the Great Lakes region has shown, the displacement of rural populations to cities can bring about positive change in social relations. Branch's (2008) examination of Gulu town shows how Acholi women have achieved both social and political mobility (albeit fragile) in the urban milieu. Vlassenroot and Büscher's (2009) work on Goma highlights young people's adoption of a new East African identity that looks beyond Congolese borders to the region, rather than back to distant Kinshasa.

However, as other Crisis States research demonstrates, the city can also be a space where citizenship is denied or compromised, for example in slums and informal settlements where life is dangerous, and where the right to a dignified standard of living is undermined. A city's heterogeneity can be a double-edged sword, as Beall points out:

While cities are the source of cosmopolitanism and conviviality, it is also the case that as urban populations grow and become more differentiated, social distance is often magnified (Beall 2007:6).

The following section outlines the theoretical basis for the paper with an examination of social rights and substantive citizenship, illustrated through the case of a housing movement of the urban poor in São Paulo, Brazil. The paper then develops the discussion of the link between social rights and state stability through a reading of a selection of CSRC case studies of cities in fragile states.

Welfare or Social Rights?

Welfare is generally understood as the transfer of government financial assistance for basic material needs: for example health care, shelter, food security and education. However, with the progress of the international human rights agenda over the course of the twentieth century, these basic needs have become enshrined as rights. Whilst internationally accepted human rights are notoriously difficult to enforce, protect and guarantee, in many nation states the same entitlements have been incorporated into national constitutions. As such, they become citizenship rights, which incumbent governments have a duty to protect and realise. The provision for such rights in national legislation may in theory give greater legitimacy to the rights claims made by citizens (Earle 2008).

The concept of citizenship has been usefully deconstructed by T.H. Marshall, in his seminal essay '*Citizenship and Social Class*' (1949). Writing at the time of the emergence of the welfare state in England, with the introduction of legal aid and the National Health Service, Marshall establishes the three core elements that make up the notion of citizenship – civil, political and social. Within each of these elements are a number of basic rights, the fulfilment

of which is key to the acquisition of full citizenship. The civil element is composed of the rights necessary for individual freedom – liberty of the person, freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, and the right to justice. The political element involves the right to participate in the political process, either as a voter or as an elected member of a body invested with political power. Lastly, the social element encompasses:

The whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society (Marshall 1964: 72).

Although some aspects of Marshall's approach have been criticised, his categorisation of rights has been seen by subsequent scholars as largely correct. However, a reading of the citizenship literature that engages with Marshall's work reveals an incomplete understanding of the nature of social rights. These have often been sidelined as welfare, or socio-economic benefits, rather than understood as a core component of full or 'substantive' citizenship. For while narrowly defined notions of citizenship rely on the formal inclusion of an individual in the nation state - crystallised through identity papers, for example - substantive citizenship involves the upholding of an array of social, economic, political and cultural rights (Holston and Appadurai 1993). By promoting dignified standards of living and the reduction of social inequalities these rights can increase an individual's sense of belonging to the nation (Earle 2009).

A closer reading of Marshall reveals that social rights are much more complex than the receipt of benefits and are of considerable significance in the expansion of citizenship. Indeed, one of Marshall's principal achievements was to accentuate the social side of citizenship and show that it was not just a political category. As Barbalet (1988: 5) notes, Marshall contributes to the study of citizenship by 'going beyond the conventional idea that membership of a community is predominantly a political matter'. The provision of social rights such as education, health care, housing and legal aid by the state to poorer members of society reduces real income inequalities. The incorporation of these rights into the status of citizenship creates a 'universal right to real income which is not proportionate to the market value of the claimant' (Marshall 1964: 96). Those with higher money incomes will still have advantages, but in theory, these advantages will only manifest themselves in limited areas of consumption, and will be reduced to 'frills' and luxuries.² Beyond a certain levelling of incomes, social rights will also have an impact on class divisions.

Marshall does not argue that equality of citizenship will remove the inequalities of class and he acknowledges that tension between citizenship and class hierarchy is inevitable. However, he contends that 'the inequality of the social class system may be acceptable provided the equality of citizenship is recognised' (Marshall 1964: 70). For Marshall, the aim of social rights is 'class-abatement' and while this once involved merely abating the problems of destitution amongst the poorest members of society, whose poverty was considered a nuisance or a threat, it has now 'assumed the guise of action modifying the whole pattern of social inequality' (Ibid: 96). While Marshall does not investigate the economic functions of wealth and property, income is not the principal issue at stake:

What matters is that there is a general enrichment of the concrete substance of

² For example, a wealthy patient could pay for a private room in a public hospital, but he or she would receive the same quality of care and from the same doctors treating other poorer patients.

civilized life, a general reduction of risk and insecurity, an equalization between the more and the less fortunate at all levels [...]. Equalization is not so much between classes as between individuals within a population which is now treated for this purpose as though it were one class. Equality of status is more important than equality of income (Ibid: 102-103).

The equalisation of status will render all members of a society able to recognise themselves as ‘first-class’ citizens, regardless of their income differentials, and as able to share fully in the social heritage of their society, living what is generally perceived in that society to be a civilised existence. The provision of social rights, therefore, can have an important psychological component, impacting upon perceptions of status and membership of society. However, it can also impact on the relationship between citizens and the state, as will be illustrated in the next section that draws on a case study of the housing movement in São Paulo, Brazil.

Social rights and citizenship in São Paulo

The choice of Brazil as a starting point for a discussion of social citizenship in the urban context is particularly apt, given that it is one of very few countries in the world where the question of rights in, and to, the city have been promoted by law by means of the 2001 City Statute. As Parnell and Pieterse (2010) argue, there is a general tendency in the urban poverty reduction literature to focus on the realisation of democratic over socio-economic rights. Further, they note that:

Curiously, the notions of urban citizenship, with its assumptions of universality, have been little applied to the fundamental development questions of how cities of the South might be imagined or governed. This lacuna is made apparent by the absence of an articulated rights-based agenda for cities of the South (Parnell and Pieterse 2010:148).

A case study by Earle (2009) of an urban social movement in São Paulo, Brazil that campaigns for low-income housing in the centre of the city, reveals a close relationship between the provision of social rights and the acquisition of full or substantive citizenship. Using a discourse that makes frequent reference to the Constitution, housing movement representatives make plain the importance of the fulfilment of social rights for substantive citizenship. Specifically, a link is made between housing and the acquisition of citizenship by people associated with the movement. The following is a typical example of a response to the question, ‘what do you understand by citizenship?’:

I think that having citizenship means, first of all, having basic things. It means having a house to live in, being respected as a citizen and having the same rights as everybody else.³

This rhetoric has evolved within the movement partly because housing is a constitutional right, but also due to the fact that most people who join the movement are living in inadequate housing in informal settlements or *favelas*, on the city’s furthest peripheries, far from places of employment and bereft of urban services. As such, the adequate housing that they seek comes to be closely associated with dignity and decent standards of living. Reference to dignity is frequently made by individuals associated with the housing movement. Indeed, the expression ‘*moradia digna*’ is in standard usage by movement leaders when talking of the

³ Interview with housing movement executive council member 05.06.07

organisational aims of the housing movement. Although it is best paraphrased as ‘decent’ or ‘adequate’ housing, a literal translation of *moradia digna* would be ‘dignified housing’. In this way, respondents make a distinction between the type of housing they are campaigning for, and that provided by the *favela* or *cortiço* (slum tenement) in which many of their members are housed.

The movement argues that having decent housing will enable an individual or family to live in a dignified manner, to gain access to other social rights (particularly health care, education and access to the labour market) and thus to become a citizen. These ideas are expressed by a member of the movement, whose family had moved to a centrally located building that had been converted into social housing with public funds after it had been taken over by the movement and ‘occupied’⁴:

Today I feel much more of a citizen than I did before. When I came to live here, I ‘rescued’ a bit more of my citizenship. We feel like decent people here [*a gente se sente gente*], and where we lived before, we didn’t.⁵

The phrase ‘*sentir-se gente*’, literally ‘feeling like a person’, implies feeling like someone who is worthy of respect, and who lives in a civilised manner. This idea finds resonance in Marshall’s (1964) definition of social citizenship discussed above, which involves being able to participate in civilised life, according to the standards prevailing in a given society. This concept is similar to that proposed by Sen in his work on the concept of freedom in which he develops the ideas of Adam Smith (Sen 1999). One core freedom is the ability to hold up one’s head in public, without feelings of shame. For leaders of the São Paulo housing movement, having decent housing will allow movement members to achieve this type of freedom, since it will lift them up to the standard of ‘dignified living’ in Brazil. Moreover, by making members of the movement ‘more like everybody else’ it should also reduce inequalities.

However, the expectations that the movement places on the state to guarantee the social rights enshrined in the Brazilian Constitution mean that when the state fails to ensure that huge swathes of the population have a minimum dignified standard of living, it comes to be perceived as ‘the enemy’ that is denying people the chance to become full citizens. This breakdown in trust between the state and society is illustrated by one movement member who denounces the state’s behaviour as criminal, stating, ‘The state steals our rights’.⁶

Brazil, despite high levels of violent crime, is now considered to be a politically stable nation, and the frustration of social movements of the urban poor generally expresses itself in relatively peaceful acts of civil disobedience, such as the building occupation mentioned above. However, in other less stable settings, the denial of basic dignity to urban populations on the part of the state can become dangerously entwined with political violence. The post-election violence that broke out in Kenya in 2008, (notably in Kibera, sub-Saharan Africa’s largest slum) was broadly portrayed in the media as an ethnic conflict. However, other scholars insist that while historic disputes over land and ethnic tensions were important causal factors, the violence that brought the Kenyan state ‘to the brink of collapse and failure’

⁴ ‘Occupation’ is the term used by the movement to describe its high profile strategy of organised mass squatting of abandoned buildings in the centre of São Paulo.

⁵ Interview with housing movement member 09.10.07

⁶ Interview with movement leader 08.10.07

(Kagwanja and Southall 2009: 260) was also a response to the degrading living conditions experienced by Nairobi's poor (see also De Smedt 2009).

Forced evictions in Tanzania and Rwanda

It could be argued that the case of Brazil is somewhat special, given the country's high levels of social organisation and a long history of collaboration between social movements, a progressive Catholic Church and left wing political parties. Together they have helped to develop a sophisticated discourse around the right to decent standards of living. However, the struggles of the housing movement in São Paulo echo those of poor urban populations in other parts of the world. The social and spatial segregation of São Paulo developed over the course of the twentieth century whilst the state turned a blind eye towards illegal building on the outskirts of the city. It was believed that allowing the urban poor to become homeowners through self-building would ensure that they remained quiescent, and would bring down the costs of labour. The link between state resilience and relatively unfettered access to urban land for the poor to construct their own homes is set out by Kombe (2010) in the case of Dar es Salaam. Kombe notes that land has been an important source of livelihoods for poor urban households in Tanzania, including through subsistence farming at times of economic collapse, and 'Land is therefore a crucial shock-absorber and a safety net that helps cushion socio-economic hardships' (Kombe 2010: 24).

Until fairly recently, land located close to consolidated areas of the city was readily available, including to the urban poor and this access has played a key role in contributing towards state resilience in Tanzania (Kombe 2010). Kombe's research on the non-monetary value of land, and the way that access to urban land for shelter has helped to maintain social and political stability has resonance with the link between housing and citizenship in São Paulo discussed above. However, Dar es Salaam is one of the fastest urbanising regions in sub-Saharan Africa, and as Kombe notes, the rising commodification of land is bringing about change. Conflicts over land in the city are now emerging and on occasion have turned violent, undermining peace and security in what has been regarded historically as a haven of calm and stability in East Africa (Bryceson 2008).

As land prices in certain better connected areas of cities rise, lower-income households without secure tenure find themselves under pressure to move to neighbourhoods further from the city centre where land is cheaper. Alternatively they find themselves forcibly evicted. Case studies of land conflicts in the city, in which low-income residents are not provided with adequate compensation and/or land for resettlement only 'underlines the insensitivity among bureaucrats about the strategic role land and especially the protection of private property rights play in maintaining peace and above all, enhancing livelihoods and sustainability particularly among the urban poor' (Kombe 2010:24). Kombe concludes that the loss of property and land suffered by the urban poor is likely in the long run to result in further conflict and erosion of the very basis of state resilience in Tanzania.

The importance of facilitating access to land for shelter as a way of stabilising the relationship between the state and poor urban populations has also been acknowledged in recent years by the Mozambican government. Maputo and Dar es Salaam are experiencing the fastest urbanisation rates in Africa, and clearly *laissez faire* attitude towards land acquisition by the urban poor cannot continue indefinitely. Riots broke out in Maputo in February 2008, sparked by attempts to remove the fuel subsidy for *chapeiros* – the drivers of private minivans that are almost the only form of collective transport in the city. This type of spontaneous collective action was unheard of in the city, and although the protests arose around the issue of

transport, the national FRELIMO government responded by making assurances that the issue of land and housing for young people in the city would become a priority (Sumich:2010). It has since taken steps towards the development of its first National Housing Policy.⁷

Returning to the Dar es Salaam case, Kombe warns that eviction and dispossession may lead to increased destitution amongst an already poor urban population. Although not discussed in these terms, the paper implies that evictions will lead to increased inequality in the city, expressed through entrenched spatial segregation, as the poor are forced to move out to less desirable areas. This suggests a denial of the right to a dignified standard of living, an issue of critical importance in the East African context, and elsewhere in the developing world, as the number of people housed in vastly inadequate conditions in slums continues to increase. Here the issues of social exclusion and injustice take on a critical spatial element.

Goodfellow's (forthcoming) research in Kigali demonstrates how residents of central areas of the city are being evicted to make way for the implementation of its elaborate new master plan, based on a vision of high-rise business and residential compounds. Levels of remuneration for expropriation have varied wildly, and evidence would suggest that in many cases residents who have been expropriated from central parts of the city cannot afford to stay in Kigali, leading some sources interviewed to suggest that 'poor people are being eliminated from the city' (cited in Goodfellow forthcoming). The suggestion that these populations are being 'de-urbanised' is backed up by policy plans to create jobs for evictees in the peri-urban or rural parts of the city where they will be taught to farm sustainably on peripheral estates. As one government official noted, 'there is no plan to urbanise these areas' (ibid). It would appear that in some cases people are being forced not only to leave their homes, but to learn new livelihood skills based on a rural rather than urban existence.

Goodfellow notes that the urban/rural divide appears increasingly aligned to divisions between rich and poor, and there are also perceptions among some people that certain areas of the city are ethnic enclaves, although speaking about issues of ethnicity is strictly prohibited. This perception of an 'unspoken ethnic divide' has the potential to exacerbate latent conflict, and is potentially very dangerous in Rwanda. Forced evictions can in themselves be understood as a type of violence, and clearly contribute to increased citizen mistrust of the state. Indeed, they can even be understood as 'acts of terror' that the state perpetrates on its own people (Beall 2007:10). This was clearly the case with 'Operation Murambatsvina' in Harare in 2005 which saw housing bulldozed and informal traders swept off the streets (ibid; Potts 2007).

Ethnic conflict in India

The 'unspoken ethnic divide' underpinning spatial segregation in the Rwandan case is overt in the conflicts that have impacted on the Gujarati city of Ahmedabad, in India. Decades of urban communal violence have led to increased social segregation and a current situation where the Muslim population is confined to a series of impoverished ghettos. As Chandhoke (2009) notes, the roads separating Muslim and Hindu neighbourhoods are described as 'the border' and Muslim communities as 'mini-Pakistans'. The city has become segmented along religious lines, with Muslim communities experiencing much poorer quality of basic services and housing. Although separate living has been a characteristic of the city for centuries, following extreme violence in 2002, more affluent Muslim families have moved into areas originally home to poorer Muslim families, notably the Juhapura settlement. However,

⁷ Although FRELIMO has been in government since 1975, it has yet to agree upon and formalise housing policy at the national level.

service provision has not increased in the area in line with the rise in population, which now stands at approximately 300,000 people.

As it is what is euphemistically termed in India an ‘unauthorised colony’, Juhapura is not entitled to health facilities, power supply, roads drainage and street lighting. [...] The area is not connected to the city by public transport since it is located on the highway. Therefore, its residents have been deprived of employment, along with access to good schools and health facilities (Chandhoke 2009:11).

As Chandhoke goes on to note, neither the state nor civil society have helped Muslim victims of communal violence to rebuild their lives. Now confined to the poorest areas of the city, ‘an entire religious minority has been downgraded from citizen to subject’ (ibid:12).

Residential segregation has other consequences for citizenship: when neighbourhoods are ‘both spatially and symbolically isolated the distance between the ‘us’ and the ‘them’ becomes much more unbridgeable’ (ibid:13). Difference thus becomes entrenched, and for Chandhoke, this has negative implications for the development of civil society based on identities other than religion that might prevent future violence. The closing off of spaces for social interaction between communities prevents the ‘appreciation of social and cultural differences [that can] contribute to the development of reflective and critical judgement’ (ibid).

The Right to the City

What should be clear from the discussions of cities across three continents – São Paulo, Dar es Salaam, Kigali and Ahmedabad – is the way in which the denial of social rights in cities has an important spatial component. Social and spatial injustice are closely entwined, and may be further entrenched by ethnic division. The lens provided by a theoretical discussion of the ‘right to the city’ is useful in understanding these cases, and in thinking through policy responses to urban poverty. Firstly, because it regards basic needs as rights, but also because it provides a spatial component to the right to a decent standard of living in the city.

The term the ‘right to the city’ was first coined by the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1968). It has since become a rallying cry for urban social movements around the world, particularly in Latin America, but it has also recently been picked up by mainstream development organisations. Notably, it was the tag-line of UN-Habitat’s fifth World Urban Forum, held in Rio de Janeiro in March 2010. However, the diffusion of the term has also led to a wide range of definitions. At its most minimal, the idea is ‘reduced to the right to be maintained in the city – that is, to be housed and serviced’ (Simone 2010: 59). But the original idea was far more transformative, calling for ‘a radical restructuring of social, political, and economic relations, both in the city and beyond’ (Purcell 2002: 101). As Lefebvre defines it:

The right to the city, complemented by the right to difference and the right to information, should modify, concretize and make more practical the rights of the citizen as an urban dweller (*citadin*) and user of multiple services. It would affirm, on the one hand, the right of users to make known their ideas on the space and time of their activities in the urban area; it would also cover the right to the use of

the center, a privileged place, instead of being dispersed and stuck into ghettos (for workers, immigrants, the 'marginal' and even for the 'privileged'). (translated in Kofman and Lebas 1996: 34).

The right to the city prioritises the use-value of urban land, over its exchange value and calls for all city residents to have access to what urban life has to offer. This is captured in Simone's idea of the 'right to use the city as an arena of mutable aspirations' (Simone 2010: 59).

The right to the city also promotes the engagement of all urban residents in the decisions that will impact on the form the future city will take. In Purcell's interpretation the radical nature of the right to the city lies precisely in this reorientation of decision-making, 'away from the state and toward the production of urban space' (Purcell 2002:101). He continues:

Instead of democratic deliberation being limited to just state decisions, Lefebvre imagines it to apply to *all* decisions that contribute to the production of urban space. The right to the city stresses the need to restructure the power relations that underlie the production of urban space, fundamentally shifting control away from capital and the state and toward urban inhabitants (Purcell 2002: 101-2).

Purcell had also drawn attention to the considerable problems of implementing these ideas in the real city. One of the few countries to attempt to 'operationalise' the right to the city through legislation is Brazil, in its progressive City Statute of 2001. Fernandes (2007: 208) sums up the interpretation of Lefebvre in the Brazilian case as 'the right of all city dwellers to fully enjoy urban life with all of its services and advantages – the right to habitation – as well as taking direct part in the management of cities – the right to participation'. This lens is now used to examine further urban case studies produced by the CSRC.

Urban exclusion in Lebanon

Research from the Cities and Fragile States programme highlights the ways in which a lack of transparency and political inclusion in city development strategies can both deny the right to the city for the majority and potentially contribute to the escalation of violent conflict. Höckel's (2007) discussion of post-civil war reconstruction in Beirut examines how this was dominated by a construction company owned by Rafik Hariri - who later became Prime Minister of the country - and was moreover mainly concentrated in the city's Central District. Aiming to create the 'Hong Kong of the Mediterranean', Hariri channelled efforts into the construction of elite office and residential areas in the Central District, with the stated belief that economic prosperity achieved in this zone would 'trickle down' to the rest of the city and country. As such, 'public goods of less immediate economic value such as public transport or urgently needed social housing were not included in Hariri's grand plan' (Höckel 2007: 5).

Moreover, according to Höckel, the plan was financially wasteful, with new centrally located buildings standing empty and high levels of corruption. The strategy is believed to have undone the economic growth initially experienced by the country in the post-war period, but even more crucially, it also contributed to political instability:

The characteristics of the reconstruction process instigated a double effect of disintegration: Vertical disintegration led to a widening gap between rich and poor, spatially mirrored by the contrasting developments of Beirut's Central District and most parts of the city's hinterland. Horizontal disintegration resulting

from distribution of resources along sectarian lines reinforced clientelist networks and hampered national reconciliation and national development strategies. The exclusion of many consumers from the benefits of reconstruction, ignorance towards their demands for democratic participation and neglect of the basic needs of the poor and marginalised led to an atmosphere of disillusionment and discontent (Höckel 2007:8).

The breakdown of the relationship between the state and the urban poor had serious consequences in the politically unstable environment of the Middle East. The ‘loss of a large part of the government’s influence and acceptance amongst its citizens’ (ibid: 9) meant that non-state actors, notably Hezbollah, were able to fill this vacuum, boosting its base of supporters. Ultimately, Hariri’s reconstruction strategy with its focus on a small area of the central city weakened the central state and ‘[prepared] the ground for violent new confrontation’ (ibid), namely the July War between Hezbollah and Israel fought on Lebanese soil in 2006.

In other words, the Lebanese state’s failure to recognise the needs and uphold the rights of the poorest segments of society living on the periphery of Beirut and its focus on the interests of a small, internationally connected business elite, meant that huge swathes of the urban population were excluded from any involvement in the direction that the reconstruction and development of the city would take. This type of infrastructure investment for the minority, in particular for the promotion of business interests, is a widespread problem and prevents the democratic production of urban space outlined in the idea of the right to the city.⁸

Public space and public works in Nicaragua and Colombia

Two further CAFS case studies illustrate the way in which urban infrastructure projects can promote or prevent the right to the city. Indeed, the contrasting experiences of Nicaragua and Colombia also highlight the fact that class and income levels can act as forms of exclusion that are reflected in social and spatial segregation, thus serving as a reminder that urban ghettos are not exclusively formed on the basis of ethnicity, religion or culture.

In a series of articles on the Nicaraguan capital of Managua, Rodgers has shown how a new urban elite is remodelling the city to serve its economic and leisure pursuits. Fear of crime in the city has led those who can afford it to shut themselves off from public space, retreating into the ‘fortified enclaves’ of gated communities and secure shopping and working environments. These have been connected through a skewed municipal investment in road infrastructure. Writing about municipal roadworks implemented in the late 1990s, Rodgers (2008: 11-12) notes that:

The works were ostensibly to speed up traffic and reduce congestion, but when considered on a map, however, a definite pattern emerges whereby the new roads predominantly connect locations associated with the lives of the urban elite, for example linking the (newly re-modelled) international airport to the Presidential palace to the Plaza Inter mall to the Metrocentro mall to the Zona Rosa to Las Colinas to the road to Masaya. This particular pattern of infrastructural development is arguably the keystone to a broader process of socio-spatial ‘disembedding’ that has occurred in the city, whereby a whole layer of Managua’s urban fabric has been purposefully ‘ripped out’ from the general patchwork quilt

⁸ To address this, Peter Marcuse recently advocated the introduction of ‘social justice impact assessments’ before any major investments in cities are made. Presentation at World Urban Forum, Rio de Janeiro, March 2010.

of the metropolis. The living and working spaces of the wealthy – protected by high walls and private security – have been joined together into a ‘fortified network’ by means of the new roads, which the elite can cruise at breakneck speeds in their expensive 4x4 cars, no longer impeded by potholes, crime or traffic lights.

Only those with higher levels of income are able to circulate within these spaces, creating different levels of access to the use-value of the city. Indeed, as Rodgers notes in a separate article, there has been ‘an almost complete neglect of roads that are unequivocally not associated with the urban elites’ (Rodgers 2004:121) in Managua, and with the changes in the traffic system, a steep rise in the number of pedestrian (read ‘poor’) casualties. Whilst the elites and the urban poor in theory continue to inhabit the same city, in practice, wealthier groups have been able to partition off public space for their private use, in the process betraying the ‘social contract of the city’ which is premised upon the sharing of ‘common urban space’ (ibid: 123).

While Rodgers’ studies highlight the way in which elite groups in society are able to alter the fabric of the city in response to their fear of crime, other cases show that such biased outcomes are not necessarily inevitable. For example, a case study by Gutiérrez et al. (2009) of three Colombian cities shows how a combination of strategies to promote *cultura ciudadana* – citizen culture – and infrastructural improvements have helped to reduce violent crime in Bogotá and Medellín, benefiting both rich and poor inhabitants of the city. Here, rather than helping the elites to fence off parts of the city for their own use, the municipal government has taken steps to improve general access to the city, through transport schemes and city clean-ups, taking a ‘universalist approach to social conflict’ (Gutiérrez et al. 2009: 4). This is partly to do with the individuals involved in governing these cities.

Bogotá has had a series of mayors with different political affiliations and leanings since the mid-1990s when the transformation began, who all shared beliefs in the importance of public space, both in terms of peaceful coexistence and infrastructural improvements that improve access to the use-value of the city. Writing about the two mayors, Antanas Mockus and Enrique Peñalosa, Gutiérrez et al. note that they

believed that ‘citizen identity’, a sense of pride and respect in belonging to a place, were fundamental to the defeat of violence. [...] Both believed in the crucial importance of public space for building citizenship (ibid:11).

In Medellín mayor Sergio Fajardo also put forward the *cultura ciudadana* approach whilst rapidly increasing investment in infrastructure to promote ‘urban mobility and urban refurbishment in schools, public libraries and poor neighbourhoods’ (ibid: 12). The focus in both cities was on providing public goods and recovering public space. Municipal governments also increased tax revenues, which can provide ‘public cues that help citizens to develop routines, skills and rules to develop cooperation’ (ibid: 14). While much more could arguably have been done to reduce inequality in these cities, the municipal governments are deemed to have had a significant impact on crime rates through policies that echo the tenets of the right to the city.

Conclusion

The case studies examined here all show in different ways that the denial of social rights to certain sectors of the population, and the very visible spatial divisions that arise in cities as a result of inequality, can lead to conflict. This can have a negative impact on state stability. Denial of the right to a dignified standard of living can produce social, ethnic and political violence and instability. As Bollens (2007:13) notes:

Urban policies are capable of both producing a widely shared sense of deprivation conducive to sustained communal resistance and providing a platform for the purposeful and rational actions of inflammatory ethnic group leaders.

His methodological approach calls for an examination not only of how urban land use and growth policies affect material aspects of poverty, but also how they impact upon ‘social-psychological aspects of urban group identity, and place-specific forms and dynamics of political resistance and mobilisation’ (ibid: 10). Understanding the deprivations of the urban poor as a violation of rights (both of social rights and more broadly of the right to the city) helps to highlight the political and potentially politicised nature of urban social and spatial exclusion. Acknowledgment of the importance of substantive citizenship and the transformative potential of the right to the city should therefore be a critical component of support for state building.

As well as potentially mitigating urban conflict, a state’s willingness and ability to guarantee social rights is also a critical first step in the shift from fragility and resilience to the emergence of a developmental state. This has been understood to some extent by the international development community, as shown for example, by the use of a ‘winning hearts and minds’ approach as a significant component of bringing security to Afghanistan. However, this terminology – much like the idea of ‘welfare’ – casts the provision of basic needs as a ‘soft’ approach and one that is perhaps easily marginalised by advocates of securitisation policies and hard line governance reforms. It can also be reduced to a uniform focus on physical reconstruction, rather than encompassing broader policy approaches that seek to promote social rights. This paper, on the other hand, has attempted to illustrate the critical importance of the realisation of substantive citizenship, *alongside security and growth*, in order to ensure stability and promote the transformation from fragile to developmental states.

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