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Peace in Our Cities in a Time of Pandemic:

City - National Government Relations: Implications for Violence Prevention

This research brief is part of the FCDO-funded project 'Peace in Our Cities in a Time of Pandemic' led by Impact:Peace, Kroc Institute of Peace and Justice at the University of San Diego.

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PEACE IN OUR CITIES

The Peace in Our Cities platform was launched on International Day of Peace in September 2019 out of an urgent demand to reverse trends of urban violence around the world. Peace in Our Cities (PiOC) brings together the political leadership of Mayors, local and international peacebuilders, the imperatives of the Sustainable Development Goals, and a bold assertion that we have the tools and knowledge to build peace and save lives in urban areas. With eighteen cities and more than two dozen organizing partners signed on to date, PiOC represents over 20 million people globally. Working together through evidence-based approaches, PiOC is committed to achieving a 50% reduction in urban violence by 2030.

Peace in Our Cities is co-facilitated by three organizations: Impact:Peace, Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice at the University of San Diego; +Peace; Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, Center on International Cooperation at New York University. Find out more about Peace in Our Cities: www.sdg16.plus/peaceinourcities

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City – National Government Relations: Implications for Violence Prevention

Overview

Reducing urban violence requires concerted focus at the city level but also coordination with national governments. The relationship between city and national authorities creates both opportunities for and impediments to the work of violence reduction. Several cases evaluated in this brief demonstrate the inherent agency of globalized cities in the 21st Century.[1] Yet, in their ascendancy, cities confront challenges in their relations with national governments. This brief identifies three national-local dynamics – coordination, competition and capacity – and demonstrates how cities have effectively sought to navigate these complex dynamics in the context of violence.

The cases speak to common trends but cover diverse manifestations of violence in diverse locales, including violent extremism in North Macedonia, gun and gang violence in the United States and Colombia, migrant vulnerability in Europe, gender-based violence in Argentina, and knife crime in South Africa. The case studies point to challenges and solutions that cut across regime type, wealth and development status, culture and religion, and other conditions. The result is a problem-driven comparative analysis that provides a clearer understanding of national-local competition, coordination and capacity dynamics in violence prevention work.

The next section looks comparatively at the concrete actions city actors (public and non-public) can take to create feedback loops with relevant national-level actors that reinforce resilience. Global organizations, academics, city diplomats and activists all play a role in ensuring better synergy between national and local violence prevention and sometimes enable local governments to bypass intransigent or reactionary national politicians.

Finally, COVID-19 presents a lens to better understand how municipalities and national governments are attempting to overcome the divides between them. In countless cases around the globe, national governments have devolved powers to municipalities to tackle the pandemic. Broader funding mechanisms to support new local programs may prove the new normal post-pandemic and serve as a model for violence prevention. At the same time, however, extended emergency orders, increased government surveillance tools, and police enforcement of public health orders have shown that increased government capacity does not necessarily mean better policy on violence prevention. Many of these same COVID-19 response tools could boomerang back onto vulnerable communities and contribute to escalatory patterns of violence.

Lessons or policy prescriptions make up the final section of the paper. These are tools that municipalities can explore further and tailor to their local needs. At its core, the work of bridging local-national divides is about both strategically internationalizing issues and situating global responses at the neighborhood level.

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Problem Statement

Reducing violence is a geographically nested problem, meaning that while acts and patterns of violence exist in a specific place, that place exists within other jurisdictions and policy environments, each of which add layers of complexity. While acts of violence are felt at the individual level, whole neighborhoods, wards, and cities can be wracked by deprivation or predation, driving patterns of greed, grievance and opportunity.[2] Cities also exist within broader markets of violence, including drug and human trafficking, which produce economic drivers outside of the city and national unit. Furthermore, decisions at the national and global level on issues, such as sanctions, humanitarian interventions, arms deals and refugee flows, shape the conditions of violence locally. Within such nested complexity, we choose to focus here on *relational* constraints in violence prevention, rather than on specific causal drivers of violence. A generalizable context that emerged from the cases in this study, namely – coordination, competition and capacity – helps frame national-local dynamics across cases. While each of these relational constraints is distinct, they do interact with and reinforce one another. Overcoming these systemic relational constraints between national and local governments can aid in tackling discrete causal drivers of violence in specific contexts. A brief set of definitions is provided below to guide case study discussion.

I. Coordination

How can cities and national governments better coordinate on violence prevention?

Coordination challenges confront all levels of government working together to reduce violence. National bureaucracies may prioritize multiple streams of work and communicate divergent messages about how localities are expected to produce results. Uncoordinated government programs can also direct localities to divert resources into lanes of work that may conflict. On the other hand, high-capacity funding situations could lead to funding multiple projects, where a number of agencies are engaged in redundant or competing tactics and accountable to divergent authorities. Too many programs may reduce the systemic capacity and economies of scale that a common workstream provides. More fundamentally, resource conflict aside, local and national governments may agree on a problem-set but fail to coordinate strategic frameworks or theories of change. Many theories of change from national agencies may prove mutually exclusive, resulting in a strategic conflict at the local level, even while the objective or desired outcome is in alignment. Divergent programming from the national government may become counterproductive and lead to internal fracturing and siloed implementation within the city. Such siloed implementation means that various departments pursue competing or overlapping initiatives each with various implementation timelines and monitoring and evaluation standards by the sponsoring national agency. Finally, while cities may be starved for resources, just applying for disparate grants is effectively the "tail wagging the dog" – programs for the sake of getting the funding, without much thought to integrating programs (or not applying for specific programs) according to an underlying theory of change.

II. Competition

In what ways can cities and national governments work around political competition?

The competition identified here is less on the programmatic level and more closely related to interpersonal or political rivalry stagnating progress. A key example of competition is divergent political

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parties jockeying for advantage using their offices as bully pulpits to challenge one another. Political office holders will compete to set the narrative, the strategy and the allocation of resources. As we will explore below, such competition manifests as narrative struggle between national and local priorities. Local officials may use their power to hamper national officials of another political party. Conversely, national officials can redirect resources away from rivals in municipalities or elevate and amplify allies locally. Competition is especially poignant in a resource-scarce environment, where officials can provide necessary survival strategies to constituents through patronage networks.

III. Capacity

How can municipalities amplify their violence prevention initiatives in a resource-constrained environment?

Much of the local-national dynamic centers on the faultline of resource allocation. Even when perfectly coordinated and without competition, lack of capacity remains a constant tug of war between local and national jurisdictions. Capacity concerns both monetary and personnel investments in a project, as well as the struggle to articulate a unified framework for project sustainability. Local efforts to request support and lobby for resources consume a lot of time. Similarly, in order to allocate funds, national governments tend to expect proof-of-concept or scalability-of-model programs, creating a vicious cycle where programs stall due to lack of resources and resources stall due to lack of fundable programming.

Case Studies: City Action Overcoming Constraints in National-Local Relations

I. Coordination

In response to the coordination challenges outlined above, many cities have taken the burden of creating strategic frameworks for violence prevention. The cases of Kumanovo and Chicago illustrate ways in which cities can de-conflict competing priorities.

Case 1: Kumanovo, North Macedonia

Foreign fighters joining violent extremist movements remains a global concern requiring local preventive action. In North Macedonia, the risk environment is threefold: First, there is the task of preventing foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) from traveling to and from war zones in Syria and Iraq. Second, the population suffers from ethnic tensions and political polarization, which makes the work of counter-radicalization also about addressing ethno-nationalism and political violence. Third, the risk of violence is exacerbated by party clientelism along ethnic lines, meaning that the work of preventing violent extremism is about strengthening dialogue and building cross-cutting ties. But a lack of coordination between national mandates and local implementation continues to hamstring efforts.

After the violent conflict in 2001 between the government and Albanian armed forces, the country created “local prevention councils” to directly address ethnic rivalries and political violence.[3] The effectiveness of these councils varies, and in some cases cities have outright refused to comply with the national mandate to adopt them.[4] Coordination issues emerge as national mandates are not supported by clear direction, and the national strategy lacks clear mechanisms for local-national communication. The result is that local councils may pursue projects for the sake of engaging the issue area, but enforcement, funding, or political capital to make meaningful change.

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The mitigating solution in Kumanovo is the establishment of a Community Action Team (CAT).[5] Under the auspices of the local prevention council, the CAT focuses on the FTF threat environment and is institutionalized with permanent members (the mayor, law enforcement, social workers) and invited members from the community. Broader community connections include schools, religious organizations and municipal departments, all of whom help to build coordination horizontally and vertically back up to the office of national coordinator. The day-to-day work is to support implementation of projects and research activities, as well as to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of programs.[6]

The spread of COVID-19 intersected with the central risk environment of ethnic division, political violence, and the problem of foreign fighters. Kumanovo's CAT fulfilled a critical function of implementing a national strategy at the local level by countering the increased polarization that emerged with the COVID-19 pandemic. Disinformation arose along prior faultlines – tropes blaming "Muslims because of Iftar" or "Christians because of Easter" or "Albanians because they are rule-breakers." Many leaders on the CAT turned their attention to the divisive narratives being used throughout the pandemic, taking pandemic response into the daily work of the body.

Case 2: Chicago, United States

U.S. cities encounter divergent expectations flowing from various national agencies to local governments. In the area of violence prevention, hundreds of programs exist – capacity-building grants, incubators, training, curriculum and other initiatives – each housed within one of many departments at the national level.[7] Cities need a framework to ensure that programs fit into the local context. Without such coordination, cities are left with numerous suggestions and mandates to counter violence of all types, stretching their bandwidth beyond realistic capacity.

Chicago's coordinating plan is a useful model for confronting these challenges. *Our City, Our Safety*, utilizes a framework identifying points of risk and resilience within the city specifically related to street violence. Mayor Lightfoot has established a dedicated public safety team along with a new Office of Violence Reduction (OVR), both of which are overseen by the Deputy Mayor of Public Safety. This central figure coordinates various municipal, state and federal programs through a consistent set of principles, goals and objectives for reducing violence. According to the *Our City, Our Safety* plan, the coordination hurdle was a critical issue to overcome: "efforts have largely remained siloed and uncoordinated, foregoing the benefit that can be achieved through improved coordination to minimize duplication and maximize impact."[8] To address this need, Chicago's strategy identified several measurable goals, specifically creating goals to facilitate coordination within Chicago's internal departments and regional agencies to drive data-based decision-making, while also standardizing baseline coordination among local and federal partners. Each of these goals were then divided into deliverables with short-term and long-term agendas, each overseen by the Deputy Mayor.

Battling gun crime in the midst of a pandemic adds complicating layers onto the coordination problem. 2020 proved to be the deadliest year on record in Chicago for gun-related homicides.[9] The poorest African-American neighborhoods have been hit disproportionally hard by both COVID-19 and gun violence. The coordination problem is also similar between local public health agencies and the federal government. Ideally, lessons learned from coordinating the pandemic response, including after-action reports and reviews, can be integrated into the *Our City, Our Safety* plan to inform violence prevention initiatives going forward.

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II. Competition

The challenge of competition (e.g. among levels of bureaucracy, between political parties) presents an opportunity for cities to innovate with alternative programs as well as expand their allies around the world. This local-global bookending of national governments can effectively constrain national agendas while amplifying the work of cities.

Case 3: Medellín, Colombia

Historically high levels of violence in Latin American cities are often associated with drug and gang problems. Compounding these dynamics, repressive "iron fist" policing strategies implemented by national governments result in persistently high levels of violence. Acknowledging the connections between built environment and violent crime,[10] cities have spearheaded innovative approaches to violence reduction that encourage pro-social behavior by building more inclusive and resilient cities. On the other hand, national governments, led by more conservative parties have pursued stringent "law and order" and enforcement heavy strategies. The contrast between the two approaches bore out in the data.

Medellín, Colombia, has come a long way since the 1990s, when it was considered one of the most dangerous cities in the world and the epicenter of the global drug war.[11] In contrast to the national government's repressive law enforcement policies, the city implemented an integrated and multi-sector approach to violence reduction that couples violence prevention programs with a commitment to building an inclusive city.[12] The city adopted a public health approach to the treatment of violence, similar to that already adopted in Cali, focusing on prevention and the provision of basic services such as schools and libraries to address the violence.[13]

In addition to these data-driven and research-based approaches to violence prevention, well known among public health professionals, the municipal authorities also invested in a public transit system to connect isolated low-income neighborhoods to the city's urban center, providing these communities with better access to opportunities and more fully integrating them into the life of the city.[14] The transit investment was accompanied by municipal investment in neighborhood infrastructure, such as schools and libraries, which correlated with reduced levels of violence in the neighborhood.[15] The combination of community-led violence prevention and improved mobility helped cut the homicide rate from 380 per 100,000 in 1991 to 20 per 100,000 in 2015.[16] The work culminated in Medellín's inclusion in the *100 Resilient Cities Initiative*, along with a city-wide strategy for deeply integrating equity and inclusion into violence prevention efforts called *Resilient Medellín.*[17]

While Medellín saw multi-year declines in violence, recent upticks combined with COVID-19 restrictions resulted in serious friction with the national government's heavy-handed response which went back on years of success. Protesters in the fall of 2020 experienced a disproportionate military-led response, and the Ministry of Defense was accused of violating human rights.[18] The right-leaning national government's continued emphasis on "iron fist" strategies threaten to pull Medellín away from the progress it has made as a city. In response, Medellín Mayor Quintero has proposed inclusive alternatives to the national approach, which were almost immediately supported by the United Nations.[19]

Case 4: Barcelona, Spain

The migrant crisis in Europe presents a challenging case of competition. National priorities have emphasized resource constraints and at times echoed xenophobic right-wing rejection of migrant

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humanitarianism. The integration and protection of refugees is at the heart of the human security challenge of protecting vulnerable communities, especially those who are targets of historical patterns of violence.[20] To protect refugees, cities have become increasingly entrepreneurial in searching for partners who will help them challenge the national policy narratives, leapfrogging national restrictions by soliciting the coordination of transnational actors and international organizations.

In direct competition with the conservative Spanish policy on centrally managing (and restricting) migrant flows in 2017, the socialist-led city of Barcelona introduced a program to welcome refugees: *City of Refuge.*[21] The plan was both internal capacity-building in direct defiance of national policy as well as external diplomatic coordination with other cities throughout Europe. As articulated by the mayors of Barcelona, Lampedusa and Lesbos, "The lack of sensitivity shown by Europe's states goes in stark contrast to local initiatives. While governments haggle over quotas, we the cities are building contingency and awareness-raising plans [...] [W]e the local authorities are networking to establish agreements, such as the one between Lesbos, Lampedusa and Barcelona, under which we can share our knowledge, resources and solidarity."

Internally, the city established a new department, with devoted budget and personnel. The added bureaucratic infrastructure resulted in a five-fold increase in refugee resettlement, with 80 percent of clients becoming partially or fully independent.[22] The effort was coordinated by the City Council's Technical Director and the Mayor's office, charged with working across both government and civil society. The budget for the work totaled just over six million euros, meager by some standards, but a sizable portion of the municipal budget.[23] Under the *City of Refuge* framework, the city published a register of all families in the region with resources and willingness to help refugees with their personal wealth. Employment and housing programs also rose to meet basic needs.[24] The city also ramped up rhetorical pressure on their national government. They even installed a "shame counter" – a public display with a running total of migrant deaths.[25]

Barcelona's mayor engaged in city diplomacy around the world to build momentum behind the movement.[26] As members of *Solidarity Cities*, a EuroCities initiative, cities like Barcelona worked transnationally to "counter repressive European border regimes and foster access to rights for non-citizens and cultural pluralism on a local level."[27] Operating in this network, Barcelona officials exchanged information, directed funding in opposition to state programs, engaged in technical assistance, and coordinated relocation efforts among member cities.[28]

Implementing *City of Refuge* seems to have proven a test case for a much broader challenge: the COVID-19 pandemic. Barcelona used a similar model to pursue a municipalist agenda that diverted over 90 million euros to fund social services for refugees, as well as houseless and unemployed people. The same officials who contributed to the refugee response even launched a campaign to enroll undocumented migrants as official residents to enable people without papers access to COVID-19 relief.[29]

III. Capacity

Even when perfectly coordinated and without competition, lack of capacity remains a constant tug of war between local and national jurisdictions. The allocation and development of new resources enables cities to bypass national inaction or supplement an inadequate response.

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Case 5: Buenos Aires, Argentina

The national COVID-19 response and lockdown in Argentina – one of the toughest in South America – has amplified prior existing faultlines of violence and divergent approaches between local and national governments. Federal police have come under extreme criticism for repressive tactics enforcing the lockdown.[30] Evidence shows that lockdown orders have amplified a "shadow pandemic" of gender-based violence, and national police have largely sat idly by in the face of rising femicide.[31] The national government has failed to respond strongly to the growing violence, leaving governments the responsibility of pursuing supplemental capacity.

Public health orders to isolate and stay at home have resulted in a surge in violence against women – reaching a 10-year high during the lockdown.[32] This is staggering, considering that the local government's review of their implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) found that "58.5% of women over 18 years old reported to have suffered some violence by a current or previous partner."[33] Research from the Inter-American Development Bank conducted a survey of women impacted by lockdown orders and those unaffected by them, finding a correlation between health measures and violence.[34]

The challenge for the City of Buenos Aires has become addressing institutional violence and violence against women in the context of a federal government focused on virus prevention and providing little resources toward other priorities. Considering that the spike in gender-based violence has coincided with a noticeable drop in reports to the police, the city government saw the need for alternative, non-law enforcement means for addressing the issue. To fill this capacity gap, the municipal government leaned into promoting "Lina137," a non-law enforcement tip line, which saw success as a reporting substitute. The city also set up a WhatsApp Channel, "Boti," where residents can contact help lines without having to make a call.

The municipal leadership is well positioned to consider the disproportionate impact and escalatory nature of COVID-19 measures because they have already done the work to map systemic vulnerabilities. In 2019, the city adopted a "Gender Indicators System of Buenos Aires," which mapped with data visualization the disparities between men and women. The data provides the city with an evidence-based set of indicators, equipping them to respond to the secondary effects of lockdown policies on women.[35]

Case 6: Cape Town, South Africa

In Cape Town, South Africa, the ravages of gang-driven knife crime are the focal point for the capacity/resource debate between cities and the national government. Chasing resources has been a decade-long enterprise, especially since the police, prosecution and judiciary are all nationally governed, with very little formal authority for localities. After years of violence escalation, in 2013, the Cape Town Mayor and Western Cape Premier sent an urgent communication to the President, arguing that more resources were needed and that the "communities that are most affected by crime and violence are the ones that have a shortage of officers. According to information from [the South Africa Police Service], the most concerning neighborhoods have a ratio of officers to population [that] is three times less than the provincial norm (1:800)."[36]

In an effort to bring systematic changes to resource allocation from the national to the local, the mayor and other local officials launched a series of oversight mechanisms to "intervene" in the policing work

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being done on gang activity.[37] The intervention initiatives created an oversight body to recommend priorities to the national government, track implementation, and conduct training. More directly, the leaders lobbied for the creation of specialized police units and deployment of the armed forces.[38] While both of these requests were met with initial resistance due to the poor track record of armed forces in quelling violence, continued local advocacy resulted in more direct national engagement.

As recently as March 2021, local officials reiterated the strategy that former leaders deployed in 2013, asking the national government to redeploy a newly created unit – Law Enforcement Advancement Plan (LEAP) officers – throughout five gang hot spot locations.[39] This follows the murder of several police officers and a reignited conversation about the national government's jurisdiction over crime hampering the ability of local governments to prosecute.[40]

The Cape Town example shows that solving the resource allocation and capacity problem, especially when legal frameworks hamper local authority to fill the gaps themselves, requires leaders committed to innovation and advocacy. Local leaders have an obligation to create institutional pressure with feedback loops to their national bodies, as Cape Town did in relation to the Zuma Presidency. Such formal feedback supplements the personal advocacy and lobbying of mayors and councilmembers taking their case to the national level.

At the same time that national police and the South Africa National Defense Force have been deployed to respond to gang activity at the request of Cape authorities, they have also been deployed to enforce COVID-19 regulations.[41] The militarization of COVID-19 response has been concentrated in areas most underdeveloped during apartheid, risking a criminalization of the most vulnerable, especially highly impoverished workers who cannot adhere to lockdown regulations. Such nationally driven dynamics in COVID-19 response may have a short-term secondary outcome of addressing knife crime, as local authorities have requested, but very well could result in a longer-term intensification of structural violence and systemic deprivation.

Civil Society, Feedback Loops, and Accountability

In recent decades, cities have emerged as influential actors coalescing around transnational advocacy networks that interact with each other, states and international organizations.[42] As part of an "urban turn" in International Relations, scholars are increasingly recognizing what urbanists like Jane Jacobs argued decades ago – that power is best measured not by the aggregated nation-state but by the cities located within it.[43] Cities are expanding their diplomatic connections, while also engaging in multiple levels of governance and norm elaboration around best practices in city-building, resulting in a form of regime-building.

These city networks are far-reaching in their advocacy and activism, as they operate across nations, and their impact reaches beyond policy change to advocate for and instigate change in institutional interactions between various levels of governance.[44] There are an estimated 300 such networks through which cities cooperate with each other and their national governments on a range of key policy issues such as climate change, public safety, human rights, food insecurity, migration and so on.[45] Engagement in climate change policy provides a powerful example demonstrating cities' role in creating feedback loops with relevant national-level actors by preparing climate change action plans and strategies that address local mitigation and adaptation measures.[46] *Peace in Our Cities* is another organizing body

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creating evidence-based platforms that make progress toward SDG16+, with an initial focus on SDG16.1 (to significantly reduce all forms of violence).[47]

An important avenue through which city transnational actors advocate for change in institutional interaction is through synthesizing and disseminating knowledge on local-level policy issues, as well as functioning as a platform for public and non-public city actors to convene and exchange concerns, information, needs and measures.[48] For example, *C40*, a global network of cities committed to bold climate action, provides a platform for cities to showcase their climate action solutions and inspire their city peers.[49] In violence prevention, the *Strong Cities Network* provides a similar diplomatic platform.

Cities and other subnational governments also engage in international relations via city diplomacy and paradiplomacy.[50] Such was the case in Barcelona, where the city, as a member of *Solidarity Cities*, worked beyond the nation-state boundary to coordinate with other member cities. At times, cities challenge the official foreign policy of their national governments by regularly promoting the subnational government's interests.

Multilateral entities also play an important role in elevating the role of cities on the international stage, hence shaping new local-national dynamics. While there is still hesitation by most multilateral institutions to formally recognize cities in their infrastructure, agendas and projects, there are United Nations (UN) agencies that increasingly incorporate urban concerns and urban agency in their frameworks. For example, UN Habitat, the UN's program working towards a better urban future, collaborates with partners to build inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and communities.[51] Other UN agencies, recognizing the critical role cities play, have explicit urban units that bypass national governments in their frameworks and theories of change.[52] For example, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Framework for the Urban Food Agenda illustrates how the UN agency is strengthening the focus on urbanization in its support to member states.[53] More broadly, SDG11 focuses on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.[54]

Academia and thought leadership also have a role to play in shaping new local-national dynamics by scaling multilateral frameworks to match cities' agency and roles where cities are not acknowledged. For instance, in an effort to localize SDGs to cities, *SDGs Cities Challenge* at the University of Melbourne develops solutions through a collaborative process that brings together academia,[55] local government and the private sector[56] and draws on their knowledge and practical expertise. [57]

COVID-19 Contexts and New Local-National Innovations

The crises posed by the COVID-19 pandemic have pushed many city actors to take action either by stepping in to fill a void left by national leadership or by exploring new avenues to overcome the local-national constraints discussed above that might have hampered effective response to the pandemic. Cities are innovating in the context of COVID-19.[58]

A Shifting Mandate for Transnational Actors

In the face of threats posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, many transnational networks have pivoted their original mandates to address the spread of COVID-19 and the emerging challenges at the city level. An important contribution of these networks has been the availability of established platforms for mayors to convene to share information, ideas, concerns and best practices for addressing the spread of COVID-

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19. For instance, *C40* cities groups have pivoted from climate policy coordination to action to address the emerging threats from the pandemic by hosting regular virtual meetings of mayors and city officials to share best practices representing hundreds of millions of residents from all parts of the globe.[59]

National Cities League (NCL) is another platform that is composed of city, town and village leaders concerned with improving the quality of life for citizens by focusing on advancement of local governments. With a membership of over 2,000 cities across the United States, NCL has leveraged their established infrastructure and methodology to map, analyze and disseminate COVID-19 response resources for local leaders by tracking local initiatives. The NLC COVID Action Tracker is the most complete collection of municipal responses to COVID-19 in the United States.[60]

Complementary Infrastructure

Prior infrastructure to respond to violence has also been used to address pandemic needs. Throughout the United States, law enforcement fusion centers, emergency operation centers in cities, and task forces to deal with violence turned their attention to COVID-19 enforcement and prevention.[61] Note that the case of Kumanovo also indicates that prior structures – combating FTFs, ethnic divisions and polarization in this case – were central in mitigating COVID-19 disinformation. On the other hand, as the South Africa and Chicago cases suggest, the deepening of law enforcement resources in the pandemic may not have a positive effect on violence prevention (Chicago) or may exacerbate disparities causing violence (South Africa). Complementary infrastructure should be carefully tailored to local needs with the sort of local control and innovation displayed by the Barcelona case.

New Urban Funding Mechanisms

National governments can expand and broaden their funding schemes that reflect growing urbanization as well as emerging urban needs. For instance, acknowledging the wide-ranging implications national budgets have for cities, India's national budget has developed enhanced provisions for physical and social infrastructure of cities,[62] tackling water supply, hygiene, air pollution and transportation issues. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the new budget has also announced a centrally sponsored scheme designed to develop the capacities of health care systems, strengthen existing national institutions, and create new institutions to detect and cure new and emerging diseases.[63]

New Data for Broader Purposes

Piecemeal – or sometimes even absent – national government responses to the COVID-19 crisis have forced many cities to build their own capacities and implement public health measures. In many countries, connections between city authorities, universities and tech corporations have enhanced data observatory, information platforms and mapping capacities, as well as rapid infusion of digital platforms across many aspects of urban life including COVID-19 response.

Building new data is a key component of Kampala's response to lack of capacity from the national government.[64] Facing a very dire socio-economic and health situation, local leaders adapted a data-based and equity-based approach to the COVID-19 crisis to assess the susceptibility of local communities to the impact of the virus, as well as to guide decision-making and use of limited resources. By measuring exposure in transport hubs, shopping centers and transactional offices, the city developed a vulnerability framework. The resulting COVID-19 vulnerability index displays COVID vulnerability in an interactive map, which allows decision-makers to take into consideration available resources in relation to the vulnerability of households in the community, including food security, level of income, and access

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to healthcare.[65] The most important aspect of this data-driven approach is addressing existing inequalities as well as new threats to the most vulnerable posed by the pandemic.

But Kampala is not alone. In South Africa, Gauteng has created heat maps of underlying causal variables that fuel transmission, such as unsanitary and overcrowded conditions.[66] Such data has the potential for future use, as variables that fuel transmission of the virus may also at least partially determine violence patterns as well.

Crowdsourcing Mechanisms

Cities have embraced crowdsourcing mechanisms as a way to leverage collective intelligence as well as to devolve governance expertise from traditional sources of authority. For instance, in thinking about post-pandemic recovery, New York City has launched a new initiative called *Challenge to Connect* that seeks to crowdsource ideas to save businesses impacted by COVID-19.[67] Other crowdsourcing mechanisms prior to the pandemic include *Ushahidi*, which was developed in Kenya after the post-election violence in 2008 to map reports of violence.[68] Similarly, in Indian cities, *Safecity* empowers communities, police and city government to prevent violence in public and private spaces by collecting and analyzing reports of violent crime.[69] And in Rio, Brazil, *Fogo Cruzado* is a smartphone app that empowers citizens to navigate dangerous areas by collecting gun violence data.[70] The growing embrace of crowdsourcing mechanisms and other open-source projects brings new opportunities as well as models for urban violence prevention.

Opportunities for Risk Environment Reset

The enhanced enforcement tools under the urgency of COVID-19 bring new opportunities for treating urban violence. In the Northern Triangle, for example, gang activity has unraveled communities, devastated human rights, and resulted in losses of over 6.5 percent of GDP.[71] Governments have responded with police, security and surveillance, and have struggled to provide basic services to residents without much success in curtailing crime. Yet, under conditions of COVID-19, gang activity has slowed. As new research suggests, "The global COVID-19 pandemic has changed the context within which gangs interact with governments."[72] Government responses to the pandemic far and above the status quo have created problems for gangs: newly imposed border closures, checkpoints, curfews and increased police presence have all impeded trafficking. While business has plummeted and gangs are weak, they have also turned to providing public services to win over constituents.[73] This moment of heightened lock-down, and relative pause, could present an opening for government and illicit actors to forge dialogue and working relationships. COVID-19 presents an off-ramp of activity, a reset, where mutual de-escalation can take hold and follow a similar pattern seen in Colombia during Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) reintegration.[74]

Transparent and Accountable Technology Adoption

The concern about police state powers that expanded under COVID-19 is also well warranted.[75] The pandemic has bolstered command and control measures – surveillance and forced isolation – previously anathema to western liberal democracies. Geographic Information System (GIS) contact-tracing technologies, thermal imaging, credit card purchase-tracing, cell tower-locating technologies, and networks of surveillance cameras have truly introduced new tools for state oversight.[76] Such expansive police powers can escalate violence by deepening community resentment and grievances against the state. As capacity increases with public health tools, cities must be careful to adopt frameworks that make the permanent adoption of new technology transparent and accountable.

Lessons for the Future

The work of bridging local-national divides is about both strategically internationalizing issues and situating global responses at the neighborhood level. As the local and global bookend national inaction or competition, several lessons emerge to guide policymakers:

Relational conditions amplify drivers of conflict. The relationship between local and national governments sets the conditions where drivers of conflict take shape. Coordination, competition and capacity each constitute the context where factors like deprivation, access to weapons and war spillover are navigated. Cities should map not only the drivers of violence but also the relational contexts in which they are nested in order to appropriately plan for action.

Entrepreneurship breeds followers. A week after the Barcelona declaration on accepting refugees, 55 other Spanish cities joined the effort. Cities can take risks launching new, innovative programs and policies, especially in a world where global networks of peers can offer assistance and support, amplifying individual contributions of a city. Municipalities can be entrepreneurial, producing novel stopgaps and programs, while seeking global linkages to shore up capacity. In other words, *friends matter* in overcoming national-local dynamics.

"Glocal" leadership is the future of violence prevention. The cases above indicate that even in relationships of conflict with national governments, cities can have transnational impact. Every city can have a platform, through city diplomacy and global linkages, to share their story around the world. The ability to bypass, complement or sideline national governments by the strategic use of global networks means that, as laboratories of policy, cities can experiment with what others are doing, applying others' innovations in a local context.

Persistence and planning solve structural gaps. Chicago and Cape Town illustrate how change in local-national dynamics occurs over time and can go through several iterations. Cities should be persistent in addressing systematic and relational-level gaps while engaging in specific violence prevention activities, not losing focus on solving underlying structural problems.

Violence is an intersectional problem that requires an intersectional prevention strategy. COVID-19 offers an opportunity to build on what the violence prevention field has consistently argued: variables that drive violence also impact other areas of public policy. Violence is an intersectional problem, interfacing with deprivation, poverty, access to weapons, mental health, and ideology and identity grievances. COVID-19 shows that the regulatory innovations, new data collection efforts, and collaboration across global networks can be reassigned to other social scourges at the intersection of public health, inequity and resource scarcity. Violence prevention efforts should further explore how tools in other fields intersect and potentially complement such programs.

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