

Outcome report

Roundtable on plural security provision in the city

13 March 2014 / The Hague



Overview

Date: 13 March 2014

Location: Netherlands Institute of International Relations (Clingendael)
The Hague, Netherlands

Participants:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Institution</i>
Dr Chris van der Borgh	Centre for Conflict Studies, University of Utrecht
Mr Ivan Briscoe	Conflict Research Unit, Clingendael Institute
Dr Lisa Denney	Overseas Development Institute
Dr Rivke Jaffe	Centre for Urban Studies, University of Amsterdam
Dr Oliver Jütersonke	The Graduate Institute's Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding
Ms Megan Price	Conflict Research Unit, Clingendael Institute

Mr Timo Peeters	Conflict Research Unit, Clingendael Institute
Dr Dennis Rodgers	University of Glasgow
Ms Rosan Smits	Conflict Research Unit, Clingendael Institute
Ms Naomi van Stapele	Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research
Mr Michael James Warren	UN-Habitat

Background

Violence is an obstacle to the achievement of development progress. In the fragile and conflict-affected countries of the Global South, an array of non-state coercive actors offer local populations a form of order, especially (but not exclusively) where the state is absent, or its presence deleterious to citizen security. Some non-state actors are characterized by a level of legitimacy, local ownership, effectiveness, proximity, and cost-effectiveness that renders them a feasible alternative to state security provision; many are prone to human rights violations, perverse interface with the state, and inversion of security outcomes. Generally, they are unlikely to deliver long-term positive security outcomes for citizens.

In the informal urban settlements where the population of the Global South is concentrated, non-state actors are the primary providers of security for most people in most circumstances. Over the past decade, interest in the capacity of such actors to deliver citizen security has grown among policymakers and academics frustrated by the failure of fragile and conflict-affected states to establish an effective monopoly of legitimate violence. The state remains an important instrument for advancing security as a public good. This is especially true of local government: it is closer to citizens, more inclined toward non-coercive policy responses to insecurity, and benefits from economies of scale in achieving collective action and resource mobilization.

UN-Habitat proposes to establish a collaborative research and action network in response to the potential for constructive local engagement of non-state security providers described in the previous section. The purpose of the network will be to generate knowledge and inform policy on plural security provision in urban contexts, with a particular focus on the ways and means of effective local government engagement. With a number of world-class research institutions at its core, and the active participation of urban policymakers, the network will enable a variety of stakeholders to engage productively around plural security provision and the challenge it poses to effective urban governance. UN-Habitat proposes to launch this network at a roundtable of researchers hosted by Clingendael Institute in The Hague on 13 March 2014.



Roundtable summary

The roundtable commenced with a substantive overview from each researcher of their interests and expertise, captured below:

Lisa Denney's work has focused on secret societies as non-state security providers in Sierra Leone, and (more recently) community policing, with case studies in Ethiopia and Jamaica. She is interested in the politics of security and justice provision, engaging with the private security sector (for example, in the UK) and problematizing community policing. She touched briefly on how blocked pathways to adulthood for young men in Sierra Leone drive grievance, and the relationship between urbanization, inter-generational power dynamics, and violent conflict. / [link](#)

Megan Price focuses on armed violence reduction and security sector reform programmes, particularly what armed violence reduction offers to SSR, and is now focused on multilateral structures such as the UN-system Global Focal Point for Police, Justice and Corrections. In the coming year, she will focus on informal security providers

and their relationship to the informal economy, as well as the bottom-up construction of legitimacy and understanding security provision from an end-user perspective. Megan briefly outlined the structure and functions of the Knowledge Platform on Security and Rule of Law (KPSRL), which brings together policymakers, academics, and practitioners around frontier issues. / [link](#)

Timo Peeters researched lynching in Ecuador as a means of exploring how the empowerment of communities in the context of security provision can lead to mob justice. He has also worked on the gang truce in El Salvador, and FARC and post-conflict development challenges in Colombia. Currently, Timo is working on a brief involving how community struggles against transnational organized crime institutionalize vigilantism; he also has work forthcoming on Afghanistan. / [link](#)

Oliver Jütersonke started working on urban issues in 2007, via a chapter he authored in the Small Arms Survey Yearbook. He contributed the Kigali case study to the Urban Resilience in Situations of Chronic Violence research project, and the Dili case study for the University of Manchester's project, Understanding the Tipping Point of Urban Conflict. Oliver is currently working on a project that analyzes the relationship between violence and the rapid urban sprawl created by resource extraction industries in Goma and Lubumbashi. / [link](#)

Ivan Briscoe recently completed work on a book that examines state-criminal relations in Latin America through a political economy lens, and how politics in the region adapts to changing illicit economies. He also authored a report on Mali which detailed trafficking patterns and the rules governing the proliferation of non-conventional violent actors in the Sahel, including prospects for their incorporation in to political life. He is interested in the link between the criminal-political nexus and expressions of violence, for example in Guatemala and Colombia; and in questioning whether the trajectories of non-state armed groups can produce more benign security outcomes. / [link](#)

Chris van der Borgh is a long-time El Salvador watcher, and will soon publish on formulation of security policy and effects of the gang truce, especially at municipal level. He has written on how violence transforms over time and is interested in questions of territorial control, how it works at neighbourhood level, and how it affects the behaviour of different actors. Previously, his research focused on Kosovo, and penetration of governance structures in the Serb-minority enclaves by criminal interests. / [link](#)

Dennis Rodgers is involved in the Global Gangs comparative research project, with a book coming out soon comparing gang dynamics in 15 countries. He has conducted longitudinal ethnographic analysis of gangs in Nicaragua, tracking the deterioration of gang members from vigilantes to criminal predators; contributed to the LSE Crisis States Research Centre thematic work on political settlements and cities in fragile states; and co-

led the Urban Tipping Point research project. He seeks to understand the micropolitics of different forms of control and domination, especially over time; urban planning as a tool for the active reorganization and redistribution of violence, as well as a tool for reducing violence; and distinguishing narco-actors from those more rooted in traditional criminal governance. / [link](#)

Rivke Jaffe's work has focused on crime and citizenship in Jamaica, including how local dons become governmental agents and to what extent they provide services like security and justice. She leads a major research project studying the impact on citizenship of blurring between state and non-state in 5 cities (Miami, Jerusalem, Kingston, Rio, Nairobi), as well as research on "security encounters" and the intersectionality of governance actors and security providers that constitute security assemblages. / [link](#)

Naomi van Stapele's field work has been in the ghettos of Nairobi, and she is finalizing a book on the social formation of gangs and interpenetration of the formal and informal. She is currently involved in a community-based consortium working on rehabilitation and reconciliation, and on a project that approaches inclusive community development from a gang perspective. Naomi is involved in a research project on African youth on the move, and interested in the SSR and community policing policies implemented in Kenya. / [link](#)



Key outcomes

The researchers present for the roundtable agreed to constitute a collaborative research and action network. The purpose of the network will be to generate knowledge and inform policy on plural security provision in urban contexts, with a particular focus on the ways and means of effective local government engagement. With a number of world-class researchers at its core, and (eventually) the active participation of urban policymakers, the network will enable a variety of stakeholders to engage productively around plural security provision and the challenge it poses to effective urban governance.

UN-Habitat will convene and act as secretariat to this emergent network. UN-Habitat's support will include:

- coordination and brokering to sustain the engagement of individual researchers with and through the network

- provision of in-kind support to resource mobilization, especially for larger grants requiring a multi-stakeholder research consortium, as well as to select branding, communications, publication, and dissemination costs
- utilization of its existing brand, platforms, and networks to strengthen the visibility, credibility and reputation of products emanating from the research collaboration.

In the early phase of the network, individual researchers will be able to opt-in on specific joint funding opportunities, publications, and other mechanisms for cooperation; in the longer-term, individual researchers and / or their institutions may move toward a more formal and structured relationship. Collaboration via the network will enable researchers to access resources, discover new partnerships, coordinate efforts to increase the stock of policy-relevant knowledge, ensure better coverage of the full range of research thematic, and provide a more holistic understanding of key issues and their interconnections by enabling greater inter-disciplinarity and cross-sectoral teamwork. As a UN agency, UN-Habitat will also enable network members to present a level of neutrality, impartiality and independence that would be impossible for any single entity to convey.

In the long-term, UN-Habitat hopes to support development of a complementary action agenda connected to the network's research collaboration, with areas of concrete action including supporting local governments to engage non-state security providers, through mapping of security functions, stakeholder analysis, dialogue and consultation, and delivering support to local governments to regulate and coordinate the non-state security sector; improving the quality of non-state security provision, by engaging with non-state security providers directly to promote national and international standards around human rights, use of force, and public accountability; and brokering good donor practice relevant to plural security provision.

Guiding research questions

UN-Habitat indicated willingness to support any research and action that is primarily urban, foregrounds the role of local government (among other actors), and produces outputs that are policy-relevant for local government (among other actors). With those parameters in mind, a number of guiding research questions were identified, and have been clustered below around four main areas of interest: envisioning "success", the multiple roles of non-state security providers, the political and statebuilding implications of plural security provision, and legitimacy and ethical engagement.

(1) Envisioning “success”

- What constitutes “successful” engagement with non-state security providers? Who decides what kind of security is provided, and for whom? Is it necessary to problematize the implicit preference for a formal state monopoly of violence?
- Does “successful engagement” with non-state security providers constitute an end-state, or a stop-gap measure?
- How can “successful engagement” be understood in contexts where non-state security actors provide protection for local populations *against* the state? In contexts where individuals and actors migrate back and forth between state and non-state domains?
- If citizen security can be indicative of social stasis or inertia, what are the implications of “successful engagement” for long-term human development outcomes?
- Are there illustrative anecdotal experiences of constructive local government engagement with non-state security providers that can be analyzed for policy-relevant insights?

(2) The multiple roles of non-state security providers

- What is the political economy of non-state security provider linkages with transnational actors? How are they affected by (and themselves affect) illicit trade and markets, and how does that relationship impact the violence of security outcomes?
- What are the internal characteristics of non-state actors (ex. consistency, predictability, internal cohesion, command structures) that can be used to identify viable partners for constructive local government engagement?
- What is the role and impact of the commercial private sector in relation to non-state security provision?

(3) The political and statebuilding implications of non-state security provision

- Is it possible for local governments to forge pacts or deals with non-state entities to reinforce positive citizen security outcomes and, ultimately, state authority?
- How local governments might negotiate implementation of innovative approaches to plural security provision that are incongruent with the policies of other orders of government?
- How can public resources be utilized in ways that enable poor and marginalized communities to realize their collective interests within complex security markets and a fractal security governance landscape?
- What are the implications for engagement with non-state security providers of understanding local government as just one actor in a panorama of local governance, and within the context of multi-level governance?

- Can competitive statebuilding have a positive effect on citizen security and governance outcomes?

(4) Legitimacy and ethical engagement

- How does the consent of the population in relation to security provision (understood as “legitimacy”) evolve in contexts of chronic violence?
- How local understandings of groups’ legitimacy change over time, and accordingly adjust the social expectations brought to bear on non-state actors (“social contract from below”)?
- What is the impact of non-state security provision on state-society relations, and under what circumstances can non-state security provision strengthen or undermine those relations?
- Can the popular sanction underpinning non-state service provision offer sources of legitimacy that might be harnessed for bottom-up statebuilding?
- How can vulnerable constituencies, such as women and girls, youth, suspected and convicted criminals, and households with insecure land tenure, advocate for and realize their rights in the context of plural security provision?
- What are the ethical implications of engaging non-state security providers? Is it possible to “do no harm” or mitigate unintended consequences?

Opportunities and entry points

Participants identified a number of opportunities and entry points to advance the network’s research agenda. Key points for follow-up:

- UN-Habitat will take the lead on identifying grant opportunities and developing and submitting proposals, in conjunction with research network members. The KPSRL research tender announced in March 2014 represent a strong early prospect; an open call will follow shortly. DFID-ESRC; SSRC-DSD; the European Union’s Horizon 2020 programme; the World Bank’s Centre for Conflict, Security and Development; and the German Ministry for Development Cooperation were also identified as potential sources of grant funding.
- UN-Habitat will also seek to integrate the plural security provision research agenda, wherever possible, in to country-level programming. This will represent a significant potential source of research funding. For example: the new Afghanistan urban peacebuilding and statebuilding programme (to launch in Q4 2014) allocates resources to a mapping and stakeholder analysis of plural security

provision in 3-5 cities, which will be made available to researchers involved in the network.

- Roundtable participants were strongly in favour of an occasional papers series, co-branded as network knowledge products and with UN-Habitat. This could provide an opportunity for researchers to publish material that will appear later in peer-reviewed journals, to float new ideas or revisions of previous publications, produce comparative case studies, and (re-)interpret work to align it with the network research parameters. UN-Habitat should be able to cover the cost of publishing an occasional papers series (design, layout, and printing). A collection of papers, published as a single knowledge product; an open-access journal; and a prize for doctoral students were also mentioned as possible initiatives to advance the research agenda. UN-Habitat will follow-up.
- Participants also expressed a strong preference for a follow-up meeting, certainly involving a broader collection of researchers (particularly researchers from the Global South), possibly including local policymakers, and potentially structured around the presentation of new research. Rivke and Oliver proposed the University of Amsterdam and the Graduate Institute, respectively, as possible host institutions for a follow-up meeting; KPSRL is a possible source of resources for a “networking” event.
- Support was also indicated for a one-stop-shop resource clearinghouse that would consolidate journal articles, reports, policy documents, and other materials relevant to the research theme. UN-Habitat will investigate the possibility of establishing a dedicated archive on the Urban Gateway website as an interim measure.
- Participants discussed the need for a clear and consistent network identity, including a name and visual brand. UN-Habitat will follow-up.



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