What and how can urban sociology contribute to understanding the interaction of urban growth and public insecurity in developing-world cities?
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0. Abstract

This paper reviews contemporary urban sociological literature on the social impacts of developing-world urban growth. After giving an overview of spatial, economic and infrastructural trends in developing-world cities, it moves to a critical consideration of mechanisms by which those urban characteristics may be related to social phenomena. In doing so, it draws out several proposals for subsequent research, with a discussion of methodological issues in constructing sociological argument. Thus this paper constitutes a review of urban realities and research, a methodological critique, and a proposal for new work.
1. Introduction

‘Urban sociology’ began to take shape in the 19th and early 20th centuries, at a time of fast urban growth in America and Europe. Writers such as Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Ferdinand Tönnies and Georg Simmel hypothesised about the impacts of such urbanisation on social relations. They highlighted social solidarity, the commodification of social interaction, and a psychological tendency to become blasé in urban environments. These themes were picked up by The Chicago School of sociologists, who were also particularly concerned with America, and subsequently have shaped much other research.

Now, in the early 21st century, urban growth rates in the developing world far exceed the averages in Europe and America; the urban population of the developing world is expected to double in the next 30 years, from two billion in 2000 to four billion in 2030\(^1\). What will be the social impacts of such growth? According to Jenny Robinson, most urban theorists still focus their attention on the cities of the developed world; thus “urban theory has an urgent challenge to meet if it is to remain relevant to the majority of cities and their populations, most of which are now outside the West,” (Robinson, 2006: 2). In researching this paper I have tried to form an idea of the scope of sociological study which does exist, and to assess how it can contribute to our knowledge. These insights are compared and contrasted with the models of urban dynamics posited by the ‘founding fathers’ and the Chicago School, justifying Robinson’s call for urban theory that is configured for developing-world contexts. Given my own interest in possible links between urban growth and state fragility—i.e. the dysfunctional impacts of urban growth—I have focused on the sociology of public insecurity, particularly social incohesion, crime and violence.

\(^1\) In fact, the urban population of the developing world is now almost three times as large as that of the developed world; the difference widens further each year, given an urban growth rate of 0.5% in developed countries but 2.8% in less developed countries (UNDESA, 2003).
A brief disclaimer:

I imagined that it would be helpful to differentiate between ‘characteristics’ of urban growth and its social ‘impacts’. Doing so would give a logical structure to the essay: first, what are the characteristics of urban growth? (similar to the ‘ecological characteristics’ of the Chicago School); second, what impacts might/do they have? But during this research I realised that structure, premised on identifying causalities, makes a key assumption: that urban phenomena would be classified either as ‘characteristics’ or ‘impacts’, but not both. In reality, are not the characteristics and impacts symbiotic? For example, are socially segregated residences a ‘cause’ of diminished social cohesion, or does diminished social cohesion contribute to the desire for social segregation? Can the predominantly informal character of many urban economies, which most studies would deem a ‘characteristic’ of urbanisation in the developing world, not also be accurately be recognised as an impact of population growth which exceeds formal economic growth?

With that proviso in mind, this section and the following one should be read as distinctive emphases rather than genres. In other words ‘characteristics’ and ‘impacts’ are hermeneutic rather than definitive. In the following pages—on ‘characteristics’—I will attempt to create a picture of contemporary forms of urban growth, many of which are interdependent and perpetuated by the ‘impacts’. In the subsequent section—on ‘impacts’—the emphasis is on identifying the mechanisms which may be at work between such characteristics.

2. Characteristics of developing-world urban growth

2.1. Space

The writers of UN-HABITAT’s recent Global Reports on Human Settlements subscribe to a six-tiered stratification of urban existence in cities². But spatial inequalities may not always be grouped so clearly in districts, and it is often misleading to assume socio-economic stratification is neatly manifested in spatial terms. Despite pervasive trends of suburbanisation and villa sprawl—which are concentrating wealthier strata in gated communities and private compounds—informal settlements, for example, are found at the peripheries of cities (in accordance with the classic centre-periphery model), at the decaying centres of cities (which partially inverts that model), and also in scattered ‘slum islands’ in the interstices of formal housing (UNCHS, 2003: 88-90). But while social stratification may not always be manifested in static spatial terms, it has been deemed rather more insightful to look at movement around the city. Dennis Rodgers, for example, in his study of Managua, Nicaragua, finds that shopping malls, freeways and offices are ‘disembedded’ from informal markets, backroads and slums (Rodgers, 2004): urban existences have become stratified through different planes of movement and destinations³—an insight which broadens our

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² These six categories are: (i) the luxury city and the controlling city (involving the groups for whom the city is a locus of power and profit, as well as consumption and relaxation), (ii) the gentrified city and the city of advanced services (involving income-earning professionals and those involve in the ‘knowledge economy’), (iii) the suburban city and the city of direct production (of the better paid blue-collar and white-collar non-professional workers and their factories and offices), (iv) the tenement city and the city of unskilled work (including the immigrant enclaves, the lower paid wage workers and the ‘respectable poor’), (v) the abandoned city and the residual city (for the very poor and the permanently unemployed ‘underclass’ or ‘ghetto poor’, with income based on marginal or illegal activity, direct street-level exploitation, and denial of the public and private services of other parts of the city), (vi) the informal city and the city of illegality (where services are poor or non-existent, residents are invisible to legal status systems, and harassment by authorities is commonplace) (UNCHS, 2001: 32-38; UNCHS, 2003: 22-23).

³ Such analysis latches on to the language of networks and flows which has begun to characterise much writing about the city since Manuel Castells’s influential work on inter-urban relationships, subsequently extended into the city itself by authors such as Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin (Graham & Marvin, 2001).
notion of stratification beyond two-dimensional Cartesian space. With hindsight, authors such as Pedro Pírez have illustrated this point through descriptions of stratified existences even when different socio-economic groups are living in very close spatial proximity (‘micro-fragmentation’ is his term in Buenos Aires) (Pírez, 2002: 149). Sometimes, but not always, stratification is institutionalised through the privatisation of ‘public space’ and enforced through the use of private security.

Few analysts are researching the empirical realities of spatial change in developing-world cities, but Solly Angel, through large-n analysis, has documented five attributes of global urban expansion: extension (beyond walkable ranges and the emergence of ‘endless’ cities), declining densities (in fact a doubling of urban population is likely to entail a tripling of urban land area), suburbanisation (declining share of population living/working in metropolitan centres), fragmentation (i.e. diminished physical contiguity of build-up areas), and infill (from tentacle-line outlines, which initially followed transport arteries, towards morphologically rounded profiles) (Angel, 2007). There is significant regional variation: for example, Asian cities’ development paths are predominantly higher-density than Latin American and African cities; but the trajectories are shared. I explore social impacts later in this paper, but it is worth noting that direct physical fragmentation is exacerbated by indirect effects from transport, which empirical research concludes cannot make a profit if population densities fall below 30-50 persons per hectare (as they will do if current trends continue) (Bertaud, 2004). Thus it seems the fall in density risks physically hard-wiring the segregation of socio-economic classes and stratification of movement, since urban dwellers without cars are excluded from whole areas of the city. Such patterns in the built environment are often the product of urban growth by private project planning which follows market demand, rather than public master-, structure- or strategic-planning according to social objectives. In Lagos, for example, much of the city’s topography can be considered ‘blind’ in the sense that most urban vistas do not represent any design conception beyond the ad hoc vernacular of local construction methods or the self-build of individual dwellings or shelters. A largely spontaneous landscape has evolved in which an uncoordinated and incremental assemblage of structures has gradually spread across all available space.

Relatively less has been written, meanwhile, about the peri-urban character of growth in some countries. In China, for example, peri-urbanisation is forecast to account for a full 40 percent of ‘urban’

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4 Rodgers summarises: “The poor are excluded from these locations by private security, but also from the connecting roads, which are cruised at breakneck speeds by expensive 4x4 cars, and have no traffic lights but only roundabouts, meaning that those in cars avoid having to stop – and risk being carjacked – but those on foot risk their lives when they try to cross a road. In other words, a whole ‘layer’ of the city’s urban fabric was ‘ripped out’ of the fabric of the metropolis for the exclusive use of the elite, thereby profoundly altering the cityscape and the relations between social groups within it,” (Rodgers, 2007: 11).
5 ...rather like the evolution of ‘public spaces’ Mike Davis describes in Los Angeles (Davis, 1992: 221-263).
6 For example, Mumbai’s population is growing annually by 2.06%, while its built-up area grows by 3.05% and density declines by 0.96%; Tehran’s population growth is 2.53%, built-up area 2.81% and density -0.28%; Addis Ababa population +2.85%, built-up +2.52%, density -0.32%; Sao Paulo population 1.71%, built-up 1.78%, density -0.07%.
7 Similar patterns are observed in the developed world. In the UK, which most commentators would regard as having a relatively inclusive transport system, the government published a report which highlights transport and accessibility as reinforcing social exclusion, citing privatisation and service fragmentation as underlying causes (SEU, 2003: 1-4).
8 For example, see (Pírez, 2002: 155).
population growth from 2000 to 2025: i.e. between 140 and 200 million people will become peri-urban dwellers (Webster & Muller, 2002). Much of this is taking shape as villa sprawl and migrants’ districts on the outskirts of cities\(^9\), both of which are researched in existing literature; but growth is also being manifested by vast industrial districts where migrant workers’ dormitories are co-located with factories, in what I have termed a yingzi danwei (‘shadow danwei’) structure: similar to the workers’ living and working compounds of the Communist era (danwei), but without social entitlements and services (Kilroy, 2006).

The details and dynamics of these places are profoundly under-researched.

### 2.2. Economy and Political economy

Since the mid-twentieth century, there has been a global move towards economic liberalism, which has meant not only the marginalisation of spatial planning in deference to land markets (see previous section), but also the inevitability of income inequalities (since all markets are contingent on scarcity: Harvey, 1973: 272, 277; Harvey, 2006: 99). Intra-urban income inequalities appear to be rising in most cities over time, meanwhile, city administrations have a tendency to focus on business incentives rather than social justice\(^10\). This doesn’t appear to be discouraging migrants from rural areas, who still perceive urban life to be economically preferable to that in the countryside (Economist, 2007). The deficiency of formal economic opportunities and formally provided public services means that significant proportions—even a majority\(^11\)—of developing-world urban populations resort to the informal economy. The size and complexity of that informal economy has rendered some fascinating descriptions of networks and linkages within the informal economy, and between it and the formal economy (see, for example, Arif Hasan’s observations in Karachi, boxed on next page).

The recognition of informal economies has begun to add a new dimension to ‘global cities’ and ‘world cities’ literature which highlights the connections, relationships and flows between cities in the formal economy (for example, between businesses and organisations, cross-border investments, international flights). While most informal economic is focused on domestic markets, a highly lucrative section of it is connected internationally (not just to trade in drugs, weapons, human trafficking—Moser & Rodgers, 2005: v—but also in clothing, consumer electronics sold covertly as ‘gifts’ on eBay, and so on – see also MacGaffey & Bazenguissa-Ganga, 2000). Even if one does not subscribe to the nested hierarchy posited by ‘global cities’ literature, the interweaving of local, regional, national and transnational networks,
practices and power relations (Smith, 1999)—both formal and informal—reveal the complexity and breadth of forces acting in/on many developing-world cities today.

2.3. **Infrastructure**

Urban growth in the developing world has often been fastest in the countries with least state capacity to provide concomitant services and utilities. While urban growth rates are 2.8 percent in the developing world as a whole, they average 4.3 percent in the least developed countries, with a median of 4.25 percent in ‘fragile states’\(^{12}\). Developing world cities are often characterised by inadequate sanitation, serious air pollution, overcrowded public transportation, and congested and dangerous roads. Many areas of the city may not have access to running water and/or electricity, and rely instead on illegally or informally provided supplies, or their own generators; this pervasive lack of services means that around 43 percent of the entire urban population in the developing world, and over 70 percent in sub-Saharan Africa, is designated as living in ‘slums’ (UNCHS, 2003: 10-14, xxv). Such staggering statistics prompt a reconsideration of what is ‘normal’ versus ‘extraordinary’: in Lusaka, Zambia, for example, where two-thirds of the population lives in outlying shantytowns, should we identify as ‘peripheral’ the shantytowns or the city proper (Sivaramakrishnan, 1996: 229)? Land is acquired not only through the spontaneous occupation of undesirable sites (which creates the physically chaotic development many

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\(^{12}\) My own calculations, based on UNDESA, 2003.
people associate with ‘slums’\textsuperscript{13}), but also widely through illegal subdivisions of legally acquired land, often creating more orderly gridiron systems (Acioly, 2006). Though the morphology of the latter may render it easier to retrofit services such as sewerage and electricity lines, state capacity is not strong enough to do so at present. “If such a trend continues unabated,” warns Gautam Chatterjee, “we will have only slums and no cities,” (Chatterjee, 2002: 11).

Economic liberalism may, like its role in generating the built environment, be a major factor in deficient transport and services. In Buenos Aires, for example:

> The metropolitan area is served mainly by private [service infrastructure] companies to which the state transferred its institutions in the 1990s, while maintaining control and regulatory functions. ...each [transport] company makes its own decisions regarding coverage, areas of operation and investment, according to their market needs. The result does not always meet the more pressing needs of the population. Although towns and territories are served, operations with faster and greater returns to the companies are developed first. An example of this is the expansion of the water provision system, which was not followed by a corresponding expansion of the sewerage system and sewage treatment plants. (Pírez, 2002: 151, 153)

Nevertheless, reliance on market mechanisms does seem to have avoided the most extreme forms of infrastructure failure; for example, the catastrophic food shortages some authors predicted would follow mass urban growth (Brockerhoff, 2000) do not seem to have materialised, especially because informal supplies have often been formed to fill supply gaps.

### 2.4. Composition of population growth

Urban population growth is a function of three factors: natural growth (the excess of births over deaths within a city), net migration, and reclassification of city boundaries and governmental definitions of urban areas. Of these, natural growth and net migration contribute the most; empirical research concludes that migration generally predominates during early stages of economic development, natural growth predominates during intermediate stages then drops during later stages with net migration predominating once again (Oberai, 1993: 26). Migration can be the result of various ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors, including rural poverty, excess agricultural labour supply, development projects, environmental hardships or conflict and war (all of which ‘push’ people from the countryside), and perceived/real economic opportunities or provision of basic services in the cities (which ‘pull’ people to the cities) — Gizewski & Homer-Dixon, 1995.

\textsuperscript{13} “Squatters...are the pioneer settlers of swamps, floodplains, volcano slopes, unstable hillsides, rubbish mountains, chemical dumps, railroad sidings, and desert fringes,” Davis (2006: 121).
2.5. What’s ‘new’?

Urban growth has been of concern to scholars and governments for centuries, and many characteristics of contemporary developing-world urban growth may have been shared by cities in past eras. Why, for example, would we need to study developing-world slums afresh, when many of their characteristics—inadequate housing, disease, squalor, etc—were shared by those in Dickensian London, Paris and elsewhere? Similarly, why consider developing-world cities as a separate category, given the observations of many authors that there is a trend towards urban homogenisation—with all cities eventually embodying globalised and suburbanised urban culture, with similar built environments and internationalised economies? This is the assumption of the ‘global cities’ literature, which puts all cities on a global hierarchy subject to universal parameters. Would not urban sociology from the developed world shed light on developing-world urban phenomena?

The contrary position is adopted by a number of authors who argue there is some essential ‘newness’ constituted by contemporary urban forms and characteristics in the developing world. Their position is aided by some of the extremes manifested in such urbanisations, including extreme rates of crime, violence and poverty, which are sometimes portrayed as unprecedented (though in most cases they are not). For example,

…the sheer size of these mega-cities presents a situation of which we have no collective experience. No precedent exists for feeding, sheltering, or transporting so many people …, nor for removing their waste products or providing clean drinking water. (Perlman, 1989)

In another instance, Mike Davis’s study of slums in the developing world mirrors his apocalyptic rhetoric about Los Angeles, referring to an “accumulation of the wretched,” (Davis, 2006). With hindsight I read in much developing-world urban literature the same tendency Robert Beauregard identifies amongst developed-world urban ‘theorists’: to adopt superlative styles in order to launch a ‘new’ theoretical understanding. Such styles obscure more than they reveal, especially because their use of description is intended to amplify essential qualities rather than introduce narrative or complexity which might build critical theory (Beauregard, 2003: 189-190).

I tentatively suggest that, while some themes are shared (by contemporary urbanisations in the developed and developing worlds, and by contemporary and prior urbanisations), it would be inaccurate to adopt simple transpositions of social theory from current or prior developed-world contexts to the urban developing world without new research which tests those theories or builds them afresh. Each of the ‘characteristics’ sections above has at least one distinguishing feature from current or prior developed-

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14 Andrew Hamer, an economist at the World Bank, responds to the ‘scaremongering’ of commentators like Perlman by observing: “Size per se is not the issue; instead, it is mismanagement at both the regional and local levels, and wrong-headed national urbanization policies promoted by physical planners with visions of optimal geography and very little sense of economics. ... What we have are polycentric clusters of identifiable and separate cities and towns that require both regional trunk infrastructure and effective local urban management, in much the same way that a province or a small country might need,” (Hamer, 1994: 173).
world contexts, and I venture these may be significant. For example, the advent of the automobile (as opposed to the horse & carriage), prior to contemporary urban growth means that the potential scope of economic exclusion via insufficient access to transport is magnified to a far greater degree than in, say, Dickensian London or Paris. Or, in the sections on ‘economy’ and ‘space’, contemporary urbanisation is distinguished by the pervasiveness of transnational linkages—even in very poor cities—and the pronounced stratification of movement around cities (though arguably this latter one was observed also amongst elite societies of late second-millennium Europe, with members of upper classes moving effortlessly between each others’ mansions, somewhat divorced from the lower strata of society). As for the tendency to assess developing-world urbanisms according to parameters set by studies in the developed-world, I am persuaded by Jenny Robinson’s admonition to “refuse the West’s claim to ownership of modernity”; the concept of ‘urban modernity’ should be reinvigorated as “one that distributes innovation and creativity promiscuously across diverse kinds of cities,” (Robinson, 2006: xi, 9). Urban sociological theory must, in order to be accurate, must be built from the places it purports to describe.
3. Social mechanisms and impacts

3.1. Methodology

Early urban sociologists through to the Chicago School subscribed to a form of environmental determinism, where social impacts were expected to follow from given urban characteristics. While determinism has proven unrealistic in the social sciences, and scholars are turning instead to probabilism and possibilism (Michelson & van Vliet, 2002: 73-74), the rejection of determinism has led some urban theorists toward crass judgements justified by anecdotal evidence. Alan Gilbert, for example, in rejecting a stable relationship between large cities and crime, cites Detroit as more violent than New York, Rio more violent than São Paulo, and Cali and other Colombian cities more violent than Bogotá (Gilbert, 1999: 16). While his anecdotes raise the possibility that other exogenous variables may be significant simultaneously (for example, low incomes and high inequalities in Detroit, or drug gangs and paramilitaries in Colombian cities), they do not single-handedly contradict the idea that some characteristics of larger cities may tend to produce crime and violence ceteris paribus. So even though simple correlations between urbanisation and crime/violence/insecurity are inconsistent over time and across countries, those relationships can actually be tested only using large-n regression analysis (which include many independent variables, such as income inequalities, ethnic heterogeneity, drug economies, etc, in the model) or through qualitative research which traces the mechanisms which may link urban characteristics and social impacts. Given persistent uncertainties over which variables to include in the model, the possibility of missing important detail by quantifying details, and unit heterogeneity in types of social impacts, my own preference would be for qualitative studies. It is to these that I will turn in the next section.

A final word about my focus in this paper: particularly on the social impacts of urban growth related to public security. There are other rich strands of social investigation—for example, to trace the forces of ‘urban culture’ as developed by city-dwellers during urban growth, adopted by migrants or transmitted to the countryside (Kilroy, 2006); but in the interests of developing some theoretical depth, I have concentrated on the social impacts of most immediate concern to development practitioners and governments, concerning crime, violence and social cohesion. As it turns out, this has not been difficult, since these concerns appear to be the predominant foci of urban sociology literature today, just as they were for the ‘founding fathers’ and the Chicago School.

15 ‘Ceteris paribus’ = all other things being equal. Gilbert’s error is most bizarre because it is exactly the one Gizewski & Homer-Dixon (1995) highlight in their critique of earlier literature—a critique which Gilbert actually cites in his own paper before succumbing the identical error!
3.2. Public security: social cohesion, crime and violence

It will quickly become apparent that these three social phenomena are closely linked and even overlapping, but I have approximated observations from social literature into three sub-sections to aid accessibility for the reader.

3.2.1. Social cohesion and conflict

A number of anthropologists (particularly those in the Manchester School) have traced the ways in which “urban dwellers, rather than being blasé [as claimed by Simmel, Park and Wirth], creatively engage with the difficulties and openings that cities present in a number of different ways,” including the creation of fictive kin, nurturing of neighbours, building of new communities and defence of diversity (Robinson, 2006: 9). Others trace opposing, but not necessarily contrary, mechanisms through which spatial fragmentation (at macro- and micro-scales – see section 2.1. on ‘Space’) produces social patterns strikingly like Tönnies’s model of Gesellschaft (Aldous, 1972): “walls, literal or symbolic, prevent people from seeing, meeting and hearing each other... Contact across the walls is minimal, and if it takes place, business-like and commodified,” (Marcuse & van Kempen, 2000: 249).

Given the predominantly informal character of urban growth, I looked for urban sociology of the slum. Echoing Ernest Burgess’s fears about social problems which might result from ‘mobility’ (Burgess, 1925: 59), contemporary scholars worry about the impact of short-term tenancy and boarding houses, where “the constant movement of people in and out of the area inhibits the development of community actions and informal community surveillance that can deter crime or help identify the criminal,” (UNCHS, 1996: 125). But slum residents often—even predominantly—are long-term residents of their neighbourhood, and to these preconceptions may not necessarily apply. Meanwhile, though novelists and earlier social scientists spoke of the ‘culture of poverty’, ‘irrationality’ or ‘despair’ in slums, many would now consider such terms as lazy superlatives (cf. Beauregard in section 2.5 ‘What’s new?’) . As has been said in another context, there exists “no true chaos is in the urban scene, but only patterns and clues waiting to be organised,” (Clay, 1973: 11).

16 Such trends are familiar from developed-world contexts where, for example in the English midlands, there has been a “long drift towards self-segregation among working-class Asians and Whites, barricaded in their own neighbourhoods, socialised through enclave ethnic cultures (Muslim or White preservationist), and educated in local schools of virtually no ethnic mixture,” (Amin, 2002: 962); there are strong parallels also with the trend of ‘white flight’ in the USA.

17 There are a few exceptions, in addition to Mike Davis’s superlatives described above. Sánchez-León, for example, describes Lima as containing “people who know only despair; young people who live alongside criminals, and drug addicts, who may at any moment fall into prostitution; people who carry in their lungs a concentration of smog,” (Sánchez-León, 1992: 201-202). Gilbert (1999: 8-9) cites many more examples.

18 Amongst the unchartered territory, not covered by existing literature, are studies of how the increasing trend of peri-urbanism (more than simply suburbanism) may impact on similar phenomena. What kind of society will be witnessed within (and without) the industrial-districts-as-cities I surveyed in section 2.1 (‘Space’)? I explore related issues facing migrants below in section 3.2.2.1.
The construct ‘social capital’ provides a useful lens to deconstruct social incohesion, to define it, and to suggest ameliorative policies. Simon Snoxell, for example, differentiates ‘bonding capital’ (relationships among people who believe they share a common background), ‘bridging capital’ (relationships among people without a common background) and ‘linking capital’ (relationships among people of different power levels). Citing a survey in Aguablanca—one of the most deprived and violent districts of Cali, Colombia—he finds that:

...youth had high levels of bonding social capital with friends, family and immediate neighbours, but low levels of bridging and linking capital with the wider community and institutions, especially the police. Evidence from the survey also suggested that youth groups could provide the fellowship young people might otherwise seek in gangs [i.e. positive versus negative manifestations of the same type of social capital (in this case, bonding capital)]. ... [Through a policy initiative], youth groups increased their membership, and developed high levels of trust and mutual respect between members and the community. Officials acquired an increasing faith in the contributions of young people to the community, so much so that the local government is now funding some youth groups rather than ignoring them. (Snoxell, 2007: 70).

In the following section I interweave these notions of social capital more fully with an analysis of the causes of crime and violence.

### 3.2.2. Crime and violence

Peter Gizewski and Thomas Homer-Dixon draw a distinction between:

(a) political violence (against the state and by the state),
(b) communal and ethnic violence, and
(c) criminal and anomic violence.

Others, such as Robert Kaplan, do not see these as such distinctive phenomena, because urban crime may “develop into low-intensity conflict by coalescing along racial, religious, social, and political lines” (van Creveld, 1991: 196). Gang violence, for example, has its routes in criminality, but in some cases reaches levels which approach the severity and tribal dynamics of urban warfare (Rodgers, 2007). In the following section, I retain a distinction between (c) and the others in order to explore distinctive causal mechanisms between urbanisation and criminal vs other violence, while drawing attention to links between these categories where present.

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19...which might be manifested, for example, in inter-ethnic peace negotiations or—in international, multi-city human trafficking networks.
20...which might be manifested, for example, in community policing alliances between state authorities and slum residents or—in children being employed as drug-runners by organised criminal cartels.
21 Other examples by which gangs provide an acknowledged identity”, “a sense of belonging, as well as opportunities for economic improvement for gaining a sense of power, acceptance and purpose” in Winton, 2004: 175.
22 Incidentally—but interestingly—most urban sociological research in the developing world, even as late as 1995, has been directed at exploring links between urbanisation and political violence (Gizewski & Homer-Dixon, 1995). Later research, still accumulating now, is focusing on urban criminal violence. Researching the reasons behind this change are outside the scope of this paper.
3.2.2.1. Political, communal and ethnic violence

Despite strongly held theories that ‘slum radicalism’ would lead to political violence by the disadvantaged masses, “few [theories] have met with more consistent rejection from empirical research”; in particular, it has not been in the interest of the poor to kick up a fuss, because they are too busy “earning their living and building their own homes,” (Gilbert, 1999: 9). However, these observations might not be conclusive if, as some theorists think, frustration takes time to accumulate: first-generation migrants, for example, may be unwilling to rebel while they still remember worse poverty in the countryside, but a socialisation period might mean that their children are more likely to become ‘radicalised marginals’, prone to political violence or simply disruption and crime. Over time, one or more of three propositions might be borne out: (i) poverty and blatantly visible inequalities lead to migrants’ consciousness of their relative deprivation, prompting radical political activity; (ii) cultural conflicts and the disruption of past customs cause personal identity crisis and the weakening of traditional social controls on deviant behaviour, also rendering migrants susceptible to recruitment by extremist political movements; (iii) facilitation of social communication in the urban environment produces competition amongst interest groups, and migrants begin to support aggressive protest movements (Cornelius Jr., 1969: 883). The above three processes could occur simultaneously—with the first and second causing grievances (e.g. deprivation, feelings of alienation, anomie, and rootlessness) and the third expanding the opportunities for those grievances to be articulated and acted upon (Gizewski & Homer-Dixon, 1995). Gizewski & Homer-Dixon also posit that grievances are necessary for violence, but they are not sufficient without concurrent economic recession, and/or diminished social cohesion, which might otherwise buffer people from the effects of economic crisis. Thus they introduce the idea of interaction variables, which I explore more fully below in section 3.3.

One question I did not see explored in the literature is whether, or how, the reasons for migration (cf. ‘push’ and ‘pull’, above) might affect migrants’ responses to deprivation in cities. For example, would differing expectations and motivation (e.g. security: safety from war, or economics: rags-to-riches) prompt different responses to the same levels of deprivation? Moreover, a far quicker route to political violence—but not one incorporated by the three propositions above, is the mixing (or not) of ethnic groups which occurs if immigration to big cities draws people from various parts of the country. In Karachi, for example, Muhajirs run much of the city's business and industry while the Pathan make up the majority of the working class and have gained a virtual monopoly over Karachi's transport sector, and the Sindhi minority dominate government and educational institutions through a system of quotas; meanwhile Shia-Sunni confrontations occur with almost ritualized regularity (Hasan, 1993: 4). Might these help explain the

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23 See, for example, (UNCHS, 2003: 76).
24 See for example studies of migrants' confusion when their traditional-religious values are confronted with MTV screened in Karachi’s teashops and cafes (Hasan, 2002: 74).
extraordinarily violent riots which have swept the city several times, prompted by inconvenient but surely not ruinous disruptions in public services? Another new area of study—though one fast accumulating research and of urgent contemporary relevance—is the role of developing-world cities in terrorism, not only as ‘breeding grounds’ for it, but as some of the most vulnerable locations for terrorist attack themselves (Beall, 2007).

3.2.2.2. Criminal and anomic violence

Crime and violence at the individual scale was initially predicted to be correlated with poverty, but more recent studies (which are fairly sophisticated analyses, controlling for many other factors) conclude that income inequalities are actually more significant (UNCHS, 2001: 225). This is unfortunate since, as developing-world cities grow, income inequalities appear to be widening?! ‘Connectivity’, especially to global networks also appears to be a key determinant, with those excluded from ‘connectivity’ to the dynamic new sectors (through lack of education or infrastructure) more likely to turn to crime, violence and drugs (UNCHS, 2001: 225). The terminology is a bit muddy, with some authors illustrating ‘exclusion’ (which leads to crime) in terms of a ‘lack of work’ (Winton, 2004: 167): isn’t ‘lack of work’ synonymous with ‘poverty’, which these studies are meant to be rejecting as a cause? Meanwhile, there are many instances in which ‘connectivity’ to global networks does not soothe but instead facilitates criminal activity, as a ‘dark side’ of globalisation (Moser & Rodgers, 2005: v).

These economic factors could be present across society—urban and rural—but what about any particularly ‘urban’ dynamics in the occurrence of crime and violence? Some scholars believe crime and/or violence has become ‘normalised’, or ‘everyday, in some urban areas (Winton, 2004: 166), and can become so pervasive that living conditions are comparable to being ‘under siege’ (Rodgers, 2007: 5). Those theories are grounded in concepts like ‘community risk factors’ (UNCHS, 2003: 75), where concentrations of unemployment, broken families and drop-out rates increase the likelihood of individuals resorting to crime, but may also provoke a social ‘tipping’ effect (cf. the ‘broken windows’ theory, where visible past crimes make it seem less serious to commit new ones). Social dynamics provoking violence are highlighted by the way urban environments may be particularly efficient at transmitting fear: unbalanced urban media coverage—favouring sensationalism over accuracy and perspective—creates a ‘climate of fear’, which in turn prompts more people to carry guns, more violent police behaviour (both these

25 For example, in the space of 18 months, electricity breakdown caused one incident of social unrest, water shortages caused four (including one death), and transport problems were responsible for 17 incidents and 78 deaths (Hussain, 1990: 189).
26 Not only have formal markets fostered income inequalities (see section 2.2, above); Arif Hasan perceptively observes that informal markets too serve “the better-off and the slightly upwardly mobile residents of old consolidated or consolidating informal settlements. At the same time, this process marginalizes large sections of these settlements and deprives them of employment and access to diminishing government subsidies and benefits,” (2002: 76).
contributing to a continuation of violence—(Briceño-León, 1999; Winton, 2004: 176)), and suburbanisation toward islands of private security (which have social and economic ramifications for the rest of the population as described in section 2.1. ‘Space’). A threat to the state’s monopoly on violence is raised where “a booming private security business, as in West Africa [prompted itself by feared and actual crime], and... urban mafias, especially in the former communist world [i.e. criminal economies], may be better equipped than municipal police forces to grant physical protection to local inhabitants,” (Kaplan, 1994: 74).

Most research on these topics has so far been in Latin America and South Africa (Winton, 2004: 165). Are the patterns and mechanisms, insofar as they have been identified, shared by urban contexts in sub-Saharan Africa, which have a homicide rate on average twice as high as Latin America? Without more research, we are not yet equipped to know.

3.3. Interaction effects in urban environments

One of the key messages from Gizewski and Homer-Dixon’s work is: context matters. It is churlish to expect a robust relationship between urbanisation and public insecurity without taking circumstantial influences into account too. Current research places emphasis on the following three interaction variables:

(i) Policy environment.
This includes the state’s capacity to cope with political challenges, and its subsidiary policies.
For example, my reading of some of the land tenure literature is that secure tenure not only fosters home improvements, it can also change social dynamics within informal settlements through consolidating people’s sense of social identity:

“...the statistics on a global basis show that every dollar invested by the authorities in slum upgrading yields no less than seven dollars of investment from the residents of the slum. ... [But, more fundamentally, land tenure offers] the recognition that the poorest citizens are entitled to a place in society. ... Many of the women I met during my trip to the favelas in Rio were keen to present me with the receipt proving that they had paid their water bill. What they were in fact showing me was the first official document that bore their names. Having such a document meant that they could go down into Rio and buy a bicycle or apply for a bank loan because, for the first time in their lives, they could offer proof of address. It meant that they were, all of a sudden, recognized members of society. ... Secure tenure is the beginning of an end to social division and, with political will, can be implemented with very little cost or difficulty.” (Wolfensohn, 2006: 125)

(ii) National/regional/urban economic context.
In a stark example, violence in Mexican squatter settlements in the 1980s was intensified at a time when IMF and World Bank-induced economic austerity measures were coming into

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28 To me, this land tenure literature also suggests some potential benefits from giving Chinese internal migrants social entitlements in cities, from which the hukou system currently excludes them. Would a legal right to reside in cities obvert some of the social problems some commentators are predicting will result from migrants’ socio-economic deprivation (Kaplan, 1994: 46, 63), consistent with the propositions in section 3.2.2.1, above?
force. Increased economic hardship might have been the missing ingredient in ‘causing’ violence, transforming a fragile situation into an actively violent one (see Winton, 2004: 178 for a full set of references). So economic circumstances are considered as interaction variables which condition the relationships between urbanisation and insecurity.

(iii) Religion and/or social norms.

One of the key ‘take-aways’ from Robert Kaplan’s influential article ‘The Coming Anarchy’ is a belief that social norms, especially those provided by religion, help determine whether violence is manifested in slums:

In the poor quarters of Arab North Africa, there is much less crime,” [according to a Sierra Leonean], “because Islam provides a social anchor: of education and indoctrination.” [Similarly, in a Turkish gecekondu (‘built at night’/slum),]...schoolchildren ran along with briefcases strapped to their backs, trucks delivered cooking has, a few men sat inside a café sipping tea... Crime against persons is infinitesimal. ... My [Kaplan’s] point in bringing up a rather wholesome, crime-free slum is this: its existence demonstrates how formidable is the fabric of which Turkish Muslim culture is made. [Where these social norms are not present, for example in West Africa, which has much more superficial Islamic and Christian traditions... there exist “hoards” of young men] like loose molecules in a very unstable social fluid, a fluid that was clearly on the verge of igniting. (Kaplan, 1994: 46, 63)

Other research has reached similar findings: “strong social control systems can result in low crime rates in slums (for example, in Ghana and Indonesia)” (UNCHS, 2003: 76).

Unfortunately, it is possible that urban environments themselves erode precisely these kind of social norms. In Kaplan’s article, a Sierra Leonean government minister ventures: “in the villages of Africa it is perfectly natural to feed at any table and lodge in any hut. But in the cities this communal existence no longer holds. You must pay for lodging and be invited for food. [This is a vivid resonance of the social commodification feared by Tönnies and Simmel!] When young men find out that their relations cannot put them up, they become lost. They join other migrants and slip gradually into the criminal process,” (Kaplan, 1994: 46).

Once again we are back at the Gesellschaft-type circumstances described above in sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2.2, but country-specific social norms appear to have a path-determinism which differentiates urban circumstances more profoundly than do explanations in terms of generic ‘urban’ influences. More research is certainly required on this topic, namely the negative and positive influences of religion and tradition on public security in urban areas.

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29 (even though his journalistic style doesn’t reach any explicit ‘conclusions’ as such)
30 Additional interaction variables may include the degree of ethnic heterogeneity (on which political science literature puts strong emphasis, positing bimodal groups as particular risks), and the presence of small arms.
4. Evaluation and Extensions

Contemporary urban sociology has become grounded in empirical research across many countries, rather than the a priori judgements and simple models which characterised the writings of Simmel, Tönnies and the Chicago School. The breadth of research has revealed many contrary findings and puts emphasis on interactive variables, which means that cross-case generalisation—or even attempts to attribute quantitative coefficients to independent variables across cases—would be misjudged (cf. Stokols in Michelson & van Vliet--, 2002: 73). However, the fallback of limiting research to the construction of rich descriptions of public insecurity seems too narrow an approach (a fault observed in some Latin American literature by Davis, 2006: 183). Tracing historical genealogies or the dynamics of contemporary processes would allow researchers to theorise the mechanisms by which public insecurity is generated, thus moving from urban anthropology toward a new body of urban sociology which lays a framework for policies to do something about public insecurity.31 In the final few paragraphs I explore some of the suggestions which have been made so far.

From a personal perspective, I became particularly interested in the implications of urban sociological insights for the way we plan the built environment. As early as 1963, Jane Jacobs advocated the social benefits of lively streets—preferably as a continuous network through neighbourhoods and districts—parks, squares and public buildings (Jacobs, 1961: 129), in preference to the emphasis modernism and utopian had placed on economic and functional efficiency. The point of cities, she writes, is the interconnectivity of human activities and the opportunities that these connections provide. Where liveliness (cf. ‘eyes on the street’) and connections are absent, the built environment can act as a facilitator or catalyst for crime and violence, as originally demonstrated in literature on ‘Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design’ (Jeffery, 1971; Newman, 1972) and now posited by Space Syntax literature which suggests streets and whole areas of cities can become ‘disintegrated’ from the urban fabric through fault of their morphology, thus harming movement economies and leading to social problems (Hillier, 1996 and related literature). These insights on the social impact of space, together with the particularities of social dynamics in urban areas discussed in section 3.2, infer that the received wisdom “it is not the city that generates violence” (Pinheiro, 1993) is wrong. Actually, the city, as physical and social form, can have direct impacts on violence.

But there is a stark asymmetry in these insights. While the ability of some built environments to worsen violence is revealed by such analysis (thus removing such negative factors would avert further decline), the role of the built environment in actively building social cohesion seems much more marginal. While the Space Syntax literature suggests social cohesion is fostered via simple ‘co-presence’ of human

31 This action-oriented perspective is usually present in sociology but absent in anthropology.
beings (a view shared by many advocates of public spaces, for example), more sophisticated social studies have found it is not sufficient for people to be physically proximate to each other: they have actually to have reason to interact, preferably as “micro-publics of banal multicultures”\textsuperscript{32}. However, given the obligations such policies place on the state—most of these, after all, are interventions in existing processes (see, for example, Bollens’s suggestions (2006: 134-136) of ‘ethnic impact reports’ and participatory processes)—one wonders whether they are genuinely realistic in many developing world contexts, where state capacity is conspicuously lacking. Thus a large missing component in contemporary urban sociology is the contextualisation of prescription with governance capacities.

5. Conclusion

There is significant social research still needed on many of the urban phenomena I have discussed in this paper. While it will not be possible to identify, with robust integrity, universal, globally valid relationships between urban growth and public insecurity (because those relationships are conditioned by several key interaction variables), research can enrich a vocabulary of social mechanisms and provide a framework for thinking about social problems. Assuming the ultimate aim of social research is not only ‘knowledge’ but also ‘action’, researchers also have a responsibility to think about the use of their research: if urban growth has the potential both to diminish and to build public security, how are policymakers to respond? The question has considerable urgency in the contexts of low state capacity in the developing world. Thus while we move closer to understanding the ‘what’ of urban growth having social impacts, a far more significant chunk of social literature should be devoted to the ‘how’ of combative policies which follow from such insights.

\textsuperscript{32} In the words of Ash Amin: “The contact spaces of housing estates and urban public spaces [fall short of nurturing] interethnic understanding because they are not structured as spaces of interdependence and habitual engagement. ... [Nor is] habitual contact in itself a guarantor of cultural exchange. It can entrench group animosities and identities, through repetitions of gender, class, race, and ethnic practices. ... [Required, in addition, are spaces where] ‘prosaic negotiations’ are compulsory, in ‘micropublics’ such as the workplace, schools, colleges, youth centres, sports clubs, and other spaces of association. ... Cultural change in these circumstances is likely if people are encouraged to step out of their routine environment, into other everyday spaces that function as sites of unnoticeable cultural questioning or transgression,” (Amin, 2002: 969). Occasionally these have been fostered through special initiatives, such as tenant involvement across ethnic groups in community development in Copenhagen (p. 968), or hiring youths in St. Denis (near Paris, p. 971) to create urban murals, establish self-help schools, and in other examples organise public debates and so on. But the most effective measures will somehow blend these mechanisms with everyday existence in the city. A good built environment is necessary but not sufficient (Michelson & van Vliet–, 2002: 87).
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