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Social Conflict and Safety in Urban Areas

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Abstract

This article examines social conflict and safety in urban areas. Cities are productive systems through which most 21st-century challenges, such as poverty, inequality, unemployment, environmental degradation, and climate change, can be addressed. Cities are habitats for people, and urban design with nature at the centre. It is essential to resilience, sustainability, liveability, and justice. The nature of cities is perceived as ecosystems of people, green and blue nature, and biodiversity based on built infrastructure. Social conflict is the struggle for agency or power in society. Social conflict occurs when two or more people oppose each other in social interaction; each exerts social power with reciprocity to achieve incompatible goals whilst preventing the other from attaining their own. Conflict theory was adopted for this article. As conflict is an inevitable aspect of development and change in urban settings, cities are inherently sites of conflict. Still, as concluded in this paper, they can be generally managed through social, cultural, and political mechanisms.
Keynote: *conflict, city, safety, war, resolution*

Introduction

In my simple analogy, the world is characterized by human activities in various social settings. Human society is not devoid of problems because it is a habitable place by higher animal with higher thinking. Social Conflict and safety can also take place in human society. How these are seen and understood and handled are attempted to be x-rayed below. United Nations (2014) stated that city; one of the world's biggest phenomenon of the 21st century has evolved greatly over the centuries, particularly in terms of its size, form, structure and composition, while largely maintaining its importance in local and regional development. In just 65 years, the world has experienced a population shift from rural to urban, as witnessed by an increase in the global population living in urban areas from 29.6% in 1950 to 54% in 2015.

Cities are productive systems through which most of the 21st century challenges such as poverty, inequality, unemployment, environmental degradation, and climate change can be addressed. A study of the city as a unit of analysis is critical to overcoming future challenges and for better positioning of cities as engines of national development. Different concepts are used to understand the city. The City Proper according to DESA (2002) is often the smallest unit of analysis and refers to the area confined within city limits. The single political jurisdiction is part of the historical city centre.

The Urban Agglomeration concept refers to "a contiguous territory inhabited at urban density levels without regard to administrative boundaries". In other words, it integrates the 'City Proper' plus suburban areas that are part of what can be considered as city boundaries. Also, an urban agglomeration sometimes combines two developed areas which may be separated by a less developed area in-between.

The Metropolitan Area concept is much more complicated than the other two concepts. It has statistical, technical, administrative and political meanings.

Theoretical Framework

Conflict Theory (Ralf Dahrendorf Perspective)

Conflict theory will be adopted for this work. This theory has its root to the works of Max Weber who rejected Karl Marx's notion that the division between the owners and non-owners of property was a major issue between groups but argued that there could be numerous divisions within the two major classes based on the market situation of individual. Agu (2011:26) defines conflict theory as a situation where conflict abounds because of conflict of interests which arises as a result of man's interaction with other men in society. Ralf Dahrendorf was credited because he claimed that instead of the two main classes becoming polarized as predicted by Karl Marx the reverse is the case. The proportion of skilled and semi-skilled workers has risen just like the size of 'new middle class' of white-collar workers such as clerk, nurses and teachers. Inequalities in income and wealth had been reduced partially because of changes in the social structure and because of measure taken by the state. He argue that conflict comes from 'authority' and 'quasi-groups'. Those occupying dominant positions have an interest in maintaining a social structure that gives them more authority than others; while those in subordinate positions, on the other hand, have an interest in changing it. Authority does not reside in individuals but in positions, thus the conflict.

Nature of the City or Urban Areas

A city is a large human settlement. It can be defined as a permanent and densely settled place with administratively defined boundaries whose members work primarily on non-agricultural tasks. Cities are complex structures undergoing constant change. They comprise many elements and multidimensional internal and external relations connecting them (Scott & Storper, 2015). Cities are habitat for people and urban design with nature at the center. It is essential to resilience, sustainability, livability, and justice. The nature of cities is perceived to

as ecosystems of people, green and blue nature, biodiversity which are based on built infrastructure. Cities are centres of service provision, places of creativity development, and innovation and knowledge transfer (European Commission, 2011). The nature of cities is an international platform for transdisciplinary dialogue and urban solutions.

Cities are ecosystems of human habitat. A growing movement in urban social-ecology holds that city building requires a green lens that urban design with, and not against, nature improves both the global environment and the lives of people. Numerous amenities offered by cities (better health care, educational and employment opportunities make them a desirable direction for migrants from rural areas (Gosnell & Abrams, 2009), which results in the dynamic growth of cities and in the depopulation of rural areas. Currently, over 55% of the world's population lives in cities, and this percentage is projected to increase to 68% by 2050 (United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2020). Rapid urbanisation makes cities catalysts for economic development at all spatial scales (national, regional and local) (United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2020). According to Scott & Storper, (2014), all cities consist of dense agglomerations of people and economic activities; even though there are strong ambiguities about where and how a lower size limit should be drawn. Even so, recognizing density and agglomeration as general characteristics of cities takes us only so far in the search for an explanation of urbanization or in finding answers to the questions identified above. Any attempt to build a general concept of the city is further vitiated by the fact that cities also typically contain an enormous diversity of empirical phenomena.

The 1980s according to Scott and Storper, (2014) brought several major new arguments about cities and urbanization. The authors posited that special importance should be accorded to three main lines of investigation. First, feminist scholars such as Massey and McDowell established an analytical framework focused on the gender dimensions of cities, while other scholars revitalized long-standing interest in ethnicity, race, and class in urban contexts. Both of these lines of inquiry provided insights into neighborhood development and displacement, and on the different ways in which socially-differentiated classes of people are also spatially sorted in cities. Second, a rapidly growing research thrust on the rise of a global urban system and the effects of globalization on the internal structure of cities. A third major trend has revolved around the re-conceptualization of older concerns about urban politics and governance.

A conflict can be defined as the incompatibility between objectives, interests or needs of

individuals or groups of people. Based on this interpretation, conflicts are a common, if not a necessary phenomenon of any process of social change.

Types of Urban Social Conflict

Social conflict is the struggle for agency or power in society. Social conflict occurs when two or more people oppose each other in social interaction, each exerts social power with reciprocity in an effort to achieve incompatible goals whilst preventing the other from attaining their own. Types of urban social conflicts include religious persecution, political upheaval, communal upheavals, labour-management conflict and war between nations.

- Religious persecution**:** Religious persecution is the systematic mistreatment of an individual or a group of individuals as a response to their religious beliefs or affiliations or their lack thereof. The tendency of societies or groups within societies to alienate or repress different subcultures is a recurrent theme in human history. Religious violence in Nigeria refers to Christian-Muslim strife in modern Nigeria, which can be traced back to 1953. Today, religious violence in Nigeria is dominated by the Boko Haram insurgency, which aims to establish an Islamic state in Nigeria.
- Labour-management conflict: The term "labour-management conflict" generally refers to disputes between an employer and a group of employees, while a conflict between an employer and a single employee acting alone is usually referred to as an "employment" dispute.
- Communal upheaval/conflict: Communal conflict is a conflict between non-state groups that are organized along a shared communal identity. This type of conflict refers to the fact that the parties want to gain control over some disputed and perceived indivisible resource, such as a piece of land or local political power.

Furthermore, common types of social conflicts in urban areas include disputes about financial matters like debt repayment, business related disputes, disputes within or between families, different opinion on policies or aspects of cultural or religious life. Such conflicts are not necessarily negative by nature, but – lacking alternative ways of responding to disputes – violence is often being perceived as the only means to solve them.

City Areas and Urban Social Conflict

Conflict is an inevitable aspect of development and change in urban settings Cities are inherently sites of conflict, but this is generally managed through social, cultural and political mechanisms. Urban conflict and violence affect country and metropolitan-level economic development, and the livelihoods and well-being of poor households and communities. Conflict refers to 'situations where individuals and groups have incongruent interests that are contradictory and potentially mutually exclusive but contained'; violence is the manifestation of that conflict (Moser & Rodgers, 2012: 2). The future of social conflict is urban – because the future of humanity is urban. If we want to prevent future social conflict, we must prevent urban social conflict. More than half of the world's population now lives in cities. By 2050, some 6.4 billion people will be urbanites. Urban governance is integral to the management and resolution of conflict and the mitigation of violence. It involves more than just laws and regulations; it also encompasses the manner in which we live and how challenges are resolved.

Urban areas are prone to a high potential for social conflicts simply because there is a growing number of people with very different values and interests living very close together, being forced to a manifold variety of interactions among each other, and subject to rapid and radical changes of traditional social structures. Yet, neither are the necessary government structures built up quickly enough in order to effectively prevent conflicts or to mitigate their negative effects. Cities are natural targets because of their political, economic, symbolic and logistical significance, which ensures that they are vital nodes to control in relation to trade, transportation and communications.

There are many concepts associated with social conflict. They are:

- the public is inherent in the inevitable social inequality = constant psychological dissatisfaction among its members = tension between individuals and groups (emotional, mental illness) = social conflict.

- social conflict as the tension between what the reality is and what should be in accordance with the views of particular social groups or individuals;

- social conflict as a struggle for the values and claims to a certain status, power and resources, a struggle in which the objectives are to neutralize opponents, damage to or destruction of the opponent.

- All conflicts have common patterns of development = a detailed study and analysis provides the opportunity to create generalizing theory or "a general theory of conflict" that would allow the public to monitor conflicts, manage, predict their consequences;

- Boulding argues that the conflict cannot be separated from the public life (in human nature exists the desire to fight with their fellows);

- Conflict is a situation in which each side seeks to take a position incompatible and opposite to the interests of the other party;

- There are 2 aspects of social conflict: static and dynamic ones. Static is represented by the analysis of the parties (subjects) to a conflict (individual, organization, group) and the relations between them = classification: ethnic, religious, professional. Dynamic aspect examines the interests of the parties as the driving forces in the conflict behaviour. = Determination of the dynamics of the conflict = aggregation of responses of the parties to external stimuli.

The notion of social capital is important in understanding urban conflict, as it is when social networks and bonds break down that conflict tips into violence. The problems associated with urbanization are: high population density, inadequate infrastructure, lack of affordable housing, flooding, pollution, slum creation, crime, congestion and poverty. This problem of high population density is caused due to the heavy rate of migration from rural areas. Conceptions of urban violence have increasingly moved towards overlapping categories that can be simultaneously political, social or economic (Beall, 2011). Muggah (2012) identified risk factors that influence urban conflict and its potential to descend into violence: city density, poverty, inequality, youth population bulges, male youth unemployment, legacies of conflict and governance failures. Gender-based violence (GBV) and violence against women and children are an often overlooked element of urban violence. However, cities can help women cope with violence by providing more tolerance, access to economic resources and institutional support than rural areas. Ultimately, cities do not necessarily generate GBV, and urbanisation offers opportunities for its reduction (McIlwaine, 2013: 65).

Contemporary urban governance usually involves not just formal state and local government authorities, but also a variety of non-state, social, business, religious, labour union, political or hybrid organizations competing to govern territory, populations, flows or simply markets, within the city. Many of these groups avoid formal political roles and associations, but play central informal roles, mediating between the state and populations. Social conflict associated with these forms of informal governance, and the competitions between actors that seek to wield this informal governmental power, can take many forms: strikes, riots, 'crime

wars', protests, neighbourhood rivalries, and vigilantism – even terrorist strikes on civilian targets.

Conflict Indicators/Triggers

Conflict is nothing but a disagreement either between two individuals or among group members. Conflict behaviour is directly caused by some triggers that provoke the will of one or both parties to action, finally disrupting an incongruent structure of expectations. The trigger can be any event fitting into one of two overlapping classes. Opportunity could be indicated by some event displaying the weakness of the other party, such as its withdrawal from a local conflict with an apparently inferior party, mutiny of a garrison, or a coup d'état. Threat may be perceived in an assassination plot financed by the other party, or discovery of the development of a secret weapon, or declared alliance between the other party and another adversary.

The second classes of triggers are those which occur suddenly, provoking surprise, and crystallizing will and opposition. These are the crises creators. The events which were not foreseen, but which cannot be ignored and change or threaten to change the relationship between the parties. The sudden discovery by the United States that the Soviet Union was putting missiles and bombers in Cuba in 1962, threatening to alter the balance of powers was such a trigger. So were the sudden blockade of West Berlin by the Soviet Union in 1948, the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961; and the nationalization of the Suez Canal by Egyptian President Nasser in 1956.

Global Trends in Urban Social Conflicts

Globally, over 50% of the population lives in urban areas today. By 2045, the world's urban population will increase by 1.5 times to 6 billion. City leaders must move quickly to plan for growth and provide the basic services, infrastructure, and affordable housing their expanding populations need. The global trend in urban social conflicts is a war that involves most of the principal nations of the world. This trend examines war, peace, and security on a global and historical scale to reveal the contingent decisions, random accidents, and devious schemes which continue to be at the root of violence around the world.

Globally, the absolute number of war deaths has been declining since 1946. And yet, social conflicts are currently on the rise, with many conflicts today waged between non-state actors such as political militias, criminal, and international terrorist groups. All conflicts are different

with their particular history and reasons. One can think that inequality within societies and between regions has become a key cause for social conflict, exacerbated by rapid information dissemination, as people are now more aware of inequalities. Economic, social and environmental trends come together, for example, looking at resource competition and climate change (the latter intensifying the lack of resources, leading to political conflict). State fragility continues to be a key source for internal conflicts, instability and human suffering.

Impacts of Social Conflict on Urban Safety

Cities provide diverse opportunities for social mobility as they become centers of socio-economic activities. Yet, they serve as arena of violence, which can be attributed to the crisis of governance, especially in developing countries with many years of political instability and poor leadership. Most political decisions are taken in urban areas, and as a result of this practice, general reactions to the quality of governance largely occur there. The syndrome of urban violence has come to limelight with the rapid increase in the rate of urbanisation worldwide. The proportion of the world's population living in urban areas has increased from less than five percent in 1800 to 48 percent in 2002, and it is expected to reach 65 percent in 2030, while more than 90 percent of future population growth will be concentrated in cities in developing countries, and a large percentage of this population will be poor.

Estimates on the rate of urbanisation in Nigeria showed that the proportion of the Nigerian populations living in urban areas increased from 11 percent in 1952 to 31 percent in 1985 and 46 percent in 2002, respectively (Ogun, 2010). It can be deduced from the abovementioned estimates that the crisis of urban violence could affect over 50 percent of the Nigerian populations. As shown in a report from the World Bank (2011), Nigeria's population has increased from 140 million people in 2006 to 154.7 million people in 2011 but its major problems include inadequate infrastructure, corruption and policy instability which have resulted to an increase of insecurity in developing countries like Nigeria.

Enhancing urban safety addresses three major threats to the safety of cities: crime and violence; insecurity of tenure and forced evictions; and natural and human-made disasters. It analyses worldwide trends with respect to each of these threats, paying particular attention to their underlying causes and impacts, as well as to the good policies and best practices that have been adopted at the city, national and international levels in order to address social conflict.

Different waves of urban violence have occurred in Nigeria since the advent of colonialism by the British government. Resistance to colonialism in the Nigerian cities constitutes the bedrock of urban violence exemplified with different records of mass unrest and riots including the 1929 riots in Aba, the 1945 general strike by the Nigerian labour and the 1953 riots in Kano. The trends of urban violence continued in the Nigerian cities even after the 1st October 1960 celebration of the Nigerian political independence from the British government. Cases of urban violence were recorded in the Nigerian cities in the 1960s and beyond.

Such cases include the riots that erupted from political party conflicts in the 1964 general election and the civil war that extended across the Nigerian rural and urban areas between 6th July 1967 and 7th January 1970. Historians have shown that the Nigerian civil war led to the death of many people and damage to property worth billions of pound measured in term of the Nigerian official currency, which was established in 1958 and used till 1973 when the Nigerian pound was changed to the Nigerian naira (Falola & Genova, 2009). Accelerated social and economic changes in cities causes political instability, inequality and unemployment, resulting in alienation, dislocation and the articulation of demands that previously would have been unthinkable. Crime is another major factor contributing to human insecurity in cities. Food can be used as a weapon, with enemies cutting off food supplies in order to gain ground. Crops can also be destroyed during fighting. ... Poverty – when people have less money, they cannot afford food and they become unable to work.

Conclusion

As stated earlier in this paper, conflict is an inevitable aspect of development and change in urban settings Cities are inherently sites of conflict, but this is generally managed through social, cultural and political mechanisms. When the issues of Religious persecution, political upheaval, communal upheavals, labour- management conflict and war between nations are harmoniously addressed, rifles will be subdued to a great extent. No conflict lacks alternative way of resolve but often times violence is perceived as the only way and resorted to. Negotiation is always one of the best options to come around conflict resolution. By so doing, a good time is chosen to plan ahead. At this juncture, no blame game is necessary to avoid more explosive situation and develop an agreement. By this, the parties involved will accommodate compromise and collaborate to achieve a resolve.

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