URBAN NEIGHBOURHOOD DYNAMICS AND THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOUR

Eric Kasper
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ABOUT THIS WORKING PAPER

While the worst forms of child labour (WFCL) is not only an urban phenomenon, evidence suggests that WFCL emerges in cities in unique ways due to the complex structures and dynamics of urban systems. This report, therefore, develops a conceptual framework for WFCL in cities that integrates key understandings of urban systems and evidence about urban WFCL. This report reviews current literature on the complex systemic nature of cities – drawing on literature on the urban land nexus, urban complexity, informality, and inclusive urbanisation. It also reviews studies of child labour (focusing on the worst forms, where possible) in urban contexts. In this way, the report offers an innovative way of understanding the challenge of WFCL, and outlines the premises of a research agenda for responding to WFCL in cities. These contributions are made with the specific cities and neighbourhoods in mind where the CLARISSA programme is being implemented; however, they should be useful more generally.

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The Child Labour: Action-Research-Innovation in South and South-Eastern Asia (CLARISSA) is a consortium of organisations committed to building a participatory evidence base and generating innovative solutions to the worst forms of child labour in Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Nepal.

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CIKD Center for International Knowledge on Development

DRC Democratic Republic of the Congo

EARF East African Research Fund

GRIPS National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies

HCEO Human Capital and Economic Opportunity Global Working Group

IDS Institute of Development Studies

ILO International Labour Organization

IPEA Institute for Applied Economic Research

KISIP Kenya Informal Settlement Improvement Project

STEPS Social, Technological and Environmental Pathways to Sustainability

USAID United States Agency for International Development

WFCL Worst Forms of Child Labour

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Section 1:

INTRODUCTION

1 INTRODUCTION

This report has been developed to support the work of the CLARISSA programme in understanding the drivers of the worst forms of child labour (WFCL) and co-developing innovative solutions with local stakeholders in the implementing countries of Nepal, Bangladesh, and Myanmar. While WFCL is not only an urban phenomenon, evidence suggests that WFCL emerges in cities in unique ways due to the complex structures and dynamics of urban systems. This report, therefore, develops a conceptual framework for WFCL in cities that integrates key understandings of urban systems and evidence about urban WFCL.

This report reviews current literature on the complex systemic nature of cities – drawing on literature on the urban land nexus, urban complexity, informality, and inclusive urbanisation. It also reviews studies of child labour (focusing on the worst forms, where possible) in urban contexts. In this way, the report offers an innovative way of understanding the challenge of WFCL, and it outlines the premises of a research agenda for responding to WFCL in cities. These contributions are made with the specific cities and neighbourhoods in mind where the CLARISSA programme is being implemented; however, they should be useful more generally.

1.1 Conceptual foundations

In developing the conceptual approach of this report, I draw on other related conceptual and empirical work from recent work with IDS. The urban land nexus captures the idea that cities are shaped by the twin forces of agglomeration – the benefits of being in the city that tend to draw people in – and exclusion, due to spatial and social constraints. This particular approach to the urban land nexus was developed by a team at IDS via a 'thinkpiece' on urban market systems (McGranahan, Kasper and Maestre 2017), where the concern was to explore what generates and structures (mostly informal) markets in cities. Our approach to the urban land nexus drew on recent debates in urban studies literature about which aspects of cities could be considered universal (Storper and Scott 2016), with a concern for avoiding imposing conceptualisations of cities based on wealthy Western/Northern countries to developing, rapidly urbanising cities of the global South (Mould 2016; Robinson and Roy 2016).

The concept of the urban land nexus was then further refined via lectures given to IDS students in the Development and Cities module. It became the primary conceptual framework for a DFID-funded project on urban dynamics in East Africa (Three City Land Nexus Research Team 2020a, 2020b). In that context, the urban land nexus was operationalised via a number of empirical tools, including social network analysis, community-driven agent-based modelling, and spatial analysis. Each of these empirical approaches could be used to explore WFCL in urban contexts.

More recently, the urban land nexus has served as one of the primary conceptual frameworks for an FCDO-funded collaborative research with China's Center for International Knowledge on Development (CIKD) exploring what African cities can learn from China's experience with rapid urbanisation and economic growth. This report draws on three report outputs from this Urbanisation in Africa and China project,[1] especially drawing on research on how the everyday functioning of cities leads to the emergence of informality (IDS Urbanisation in Africa and China Team 2021).

This report also draws on recent USAID-funded research by IDS on the systemic nature of trafficking in persons. While not explicitly about cities, we developed conceptual and empirical approaches to understanding the structures and dynamics that drive (and keep entrenched) adult versions of labour exploitation (Kasper and Chiang 2020).

1.2 Empirical foundations

This report builds on the materials developed in the design of the CLARISSA programme and preliminary scoping outputs. I then reviewed 48 secondary literature sources (grey literature as well as academic studies) in detail, which were obtained via Google (for grey literature) and Scopus/Google Scholar (for academic studies). I targeted the literature search to capture evidence on the following key links between child labour and cities:

- **The empirical impact of urban dynamics on child labour, critically considering the potential differences between WFCL and child labour in general.**
- **Conceptual approaches to thinking about urban child labour, including indirect links between urban features and child labour; for example, via informality and exclusion.**

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1   **Urbanisation in Africa and China project page, IDS website.**

- **Methodological approaches to finding out about urban child labour, critically considering the likely differences between being able to find and capture evidence on WFCL as compared to child labour in general.**

1.3 Key contributions

The conceptual approach for understanding neighbourhood dynamics and WFCL developed in this report will help to ask and answer questions about what drives WFCL, with the hope that further research and action may identify opportunities where systemic changes might contribute to eradicating WFCL. Recent work on urban complexities demonstrates that certain development challenges – such as informal settlements, spatial and social inequalities, and political violence – can be driven to emergence by the everyday functioning of cities. This report helps to ask what it might be about the everyday functioning of cities that drives the emergence of WFCL or factors that contribute to WFCL.

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Section 2:

MAKING SENSE OF CITIES

2 MAKING SENSE OF CITIES

People have long had an awareness that cities function differently from other types of spaces, and they possess a buzz, making them something more than the sum of the people living in them. Recent work (see, for example, Preface in Batty 2013; Bettencourt 2015: 219; Ortman, Lobo and Smith 2020) reviews some of this history, arguing that complex systems science finally provides rigorous analytical tools to interrogate the nature of cities and how they function.

Recent advances in the science of complexity have helped develop more precise concepts and empirical approaches to capturing relevant aspects of cities as systems. Deeper treatment of the fundamentals of complexity and complex systems can be found elsewhere (for example, complexityexplorer.org). The following key ideas should suffice to develop a rigorous conceptual approach to urban complexity.

All systems are composed of elements which relate to each other with some structure and according to some dynamics. Complexity occurs in these systems when there is diversity in the kinds of elements, and the dynamics by which they interact are mutually determined (Axelrod 2006; Crossley 2008; Miller and Page 2007); in other words, what each element does depends on what all the others are doing. This creates the potential for non-linear dynamics[2] and emergence.[3]

The concepts developed in this report are based on the idea that to understand cities we need to understand what constitutes 'the system'. That means mapping out the **structures** and **dynamics** that constitute the city – usually some aspect of the city, since cities are massive systems of systems, composed of innumerable parts both physical and intangible. In particular, it means trying to understand how those structures and dynamics work to create the urban order that we observe, because interventions to create change of any kind will be subject to the same forces that have 'grown' the city into its current configuration.
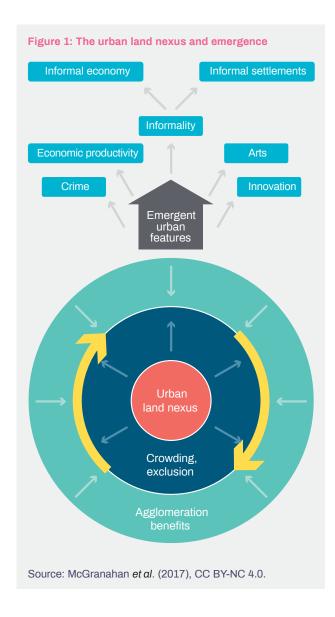
2.1 The urban land nexus

The urban land nexus is the idea that the key forces shaping cities are agglomeration and exclusion. Whatever initially led to the foundation of a settlement, the existence of people clustering in a space for some purpose tends to draw more people in. People are drawn to cities for all sorts of reasons, including the fact that cities tend to have more economic opportunities and offer better quality of life than non-urban areas. However, even as cities tend to draw people in, it is clear that not everyone can be in the same place at the same time. The limitations of space act as a repulsive force countering the attractive force. Those spaces most in demand end up becoming exclusive – either in terms of the price of being there or other forms of cost such as inconvenience or high levels of crime. From a complexity perspective, we can say that the application of these two forces (agglomeration and exclusion) drives the development of the city (spatially and socially), leading to emergent order. Figure 1, reproduced from McGranahan *et al.* (2017: 6), depicts the interplay between agglomeration and exclusion graphically.

At the macro level, order emerges such as the development of a central business district or neighbourhoods with coherent characteristics. But when we look closer, we can identify additional forces, structures, dynamics, and emergent order at other levels. We might ask what caused an informal settlement to pop up in a particular place. The answer is likely to be that something caused the land to be less valuable than you would expect, given the location in the city. This often happens when areas near a central business district are also prone to flooding or at high risk of other natural disasters. People who want to be close to the economic action but can't afford to occupy any other space in the vicinity, may decide it's worth it to deal with the risks and inconveniences of living in such a space. Thus, the agglomeration and exclusion forces can explain how marginalised people come to be sorted into an informal settlement, which can become established as a coherent, permanent feature of the city.

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2 For example, the price of GameStop stock, a company seen by many as on the verge of bankruptcy, recently skyrocketed after a small group of investors started buying it, leading to many others jumping in (Stewart 2021).
3 For example, how a murmuration of birds forms due to the individual birds following simple behaviour rules (Lynch 2019; NOVA 2007).

Figure 1: The urban land nexus and emergence

Source: McGranahan *et al*. (2017), CC BY-NC 4.0.

There may be additional important elements in the story. Once the settlement comes to exist, and once it attains some characteristic features – for example, it may be known to consist mostly of a particular ethnic group or be a market for particular kinds of goods – then others will come because of those things. For example, when Somali refugees began to be settled in Minneapolis in the 1990s, many people settled in the affordable, if run-down, brutalist tower blocks of the Cedar-Riverside neighbourhood. This was due in part to Minnesota's tradition of sponsoring refugees to settle in the state, and a particular neighbourhood which, for a host of historical reasons had often served as the first foothold of migrant populations. However, once Somali refugees began to settle in the neighbourhood, knowledge of this place spread across refugee camps and through Somali social networks around the world until Cedar-Riverside was

as commonly known as any place in the United States. Somalis started to come to Minnesota specifically to settle in Cedar-Riverside. The population of the neighbourhood is now over half Somali, and the Twin Cities metro area now has more Somali people living in it than any place outside of Somalia (Kasper, Fleck and Gardner 2009).

In explaining the role of the urban land nexus on the cities of East Africa, a recent briefing note explains,

> *Cities are largely self-organising systems and can play a pivotal role in a country's economy. Unfortunately, neither conventional markets nor urban plans are very well suited to guiding what goes where in a city efficiently or equitably. As a result, cities are often exceedingly unequal, with certain groups finding it difficult to secure reasonably well-located and liveable homes.*
> (Three City Land Nexus Research Team 2020c: 1)

2.2 Emergent agency and social norms

It is not just the physical and spatial aspects of cities that are complex systems. Urban society is also complex. When thinking about cities as systems, it is important to consider where the boundaries are drawn. There is a 'real' system, but a significant portion of what constitutes that system is made up of constructed or intangible things associated with human experience. For example, people may end up sorted into physical neighbourhoods based on their economic activities, but the meanings ascribed to those neighbourhoods matter as they impact people's behaviour, social dynamics, and the qualitative nature of people's lived experiences.

The STEPS approach seeks to understand complex social systems as a mix of 'hard' systems (i.e. objective, material systems) and 'soft' systems (i.e. conceptual systems or interconnected webs of meaning), where the **understanding** of the system is always constructed from stakeholders' different subjective perspectives (Scoones *et al.* 2007: 35–6). The CLARISSA programme has been designed around an action research methodology, in part, to help ensure that those different perspectives are brought together effectively for sense-making.

In this way, social norms are of interest for any effort to understand the urban WFCL system. Social norms can usefully be seen as emergent forms of social order. Whether they are 'helpful' or not, norms should be understood as having arisen for some purpose, and likely to solve some social problems (Kenrick, Li and Butner

2003). People tend to take action based on their own attitudes (i.e. their values and perceptions) in combination with their perceptions of what other people think and expect of them (Schwab, Harton and Cullum 2014: 405). In their study of how norms shape how people engage in recycling, Schwab *et al.* (2014) draw on Dynamic Social Impact Theory (Latané 1996; Latané and L'Herrou 1996) to suggest that as people influence each other over time, norms emerge with the following characteristics: 'clustering (regional self-organization of distinct groups), correlation (emergent relationships between previously unrelated thoughts, feelings, and behaviours), consolidation (reduction in minority thoughts, feelings, and behaviours), and continued diversity (stable surviving minorities within a population)' (Schwab *et al.* 2014: 407).

Earlier work by the social norms workstream within CLARISSA documented many relevant norms at work in the three project countries around WFCL, including the perceived benefits of child work, gender norms, and schooling (see, for example, Oosterhoff and Hacker 2020). Much of the literature on child labour in cities (reviewed in Section 4) tends to suggest that these same factors help to determine the likelihood that a child ends up in work. It is important to understand the ways such norms come to be and persist in urban society. To the extent that changing norms can contribute to reducing WFCL, this will likely need to be achieved through systemic interventions, requiring an understanding of what perpetuates the norms to begin with.

Just as people end up clustering in particular neighbourhoods, doing particular kinds of work, norms about things like gender, education, and what kinds of activities are appropriate for children to do would have developed in clusters. In this way, we would expect to find evidence that the spatial, social, and economic dynamics of cities (or neighbourhoods) both contributed to existing social norms and continue to be shaped by them.

The key would be to understand how the norms evolved to solve a problem, and the factors that subsequently keep the norms entrenched even if they are no longer desirable or fit for solving the same problems. Quite a lot of literature on child labour in cities argues that children end up in WFCL when families face extreme poverty. Maîtrot, Wood and Devine (2020) explain how certain systemic factors condition how people subjectively experience extreme poverty, and that this

is quite different from less severe levels of poverty. It may be expected that WFCL is seen as necessary for survival, and retrospectively, it can be justified according to subjective values and norms that make it ok to have followed this course of action (see André and Godin (2014) on the context of urban artisanal mining in the DRC and Adonteng-Kissi (2018a, 2019) on the context of urban Ghana). Shoham *et al.* (2015: 71) argue, in their study of social norms around obesity, that what they call 'complex systems tools' should be used to make sense of how norms and behaviours evolve. Namely, they argue that norm formation is similar to epidemiological models, and should be studied using 'social network analysis, agent-based modeling, and system dynamics modeling' (*ibid*.: 71).

In addition to social norms and attitudes, people develop their sense of agency – the kinds of things it is possible for them to do that will make a difference in their lives – as a result of their lived experiences in the city (Kasper 2016). That is, agency can usefully be understood as an emergent component of the system based, again, on the relationships and spaces in which people live and the interaction dynamics that occur, facilitated and constrained by those structural factors. For example, I have recently explored the ways people living in informal settlements in India managed to strengthen their agency by reconfiguring their social networks (Kasper 2020).

Geoffrey West and Luis Bettencourt have documented the ways in which the products of human connection and interaction grow non-linearly with the populations of cities (see, for example, Bettencourt 2012; Bettencourt *et al*. 2007, 2010; West 2017). For example, as the city population doubles, a city will **more than** double aspects such as economic output, innovation (as measured by patent applications), and even crime; but it will require less than double the infrastructure (i.e. miles of road, number of buildings, length of broadband cables, etc.) and material inputs. The same systemic processes that drive these trends across cities also shape the lives of people living in cities – both enabling and constraining ways of living.

Under the concept of the urban land nexus, this report highlights ways of conceptualising the interplay between the spatial, material, and relational structures and dynamics that drive the emergence of WFCL in cities.

Section 3:

INSIGHTS FROM CONSIDERING CITIES THIS WAY

3 INSIGHTS FROM CONSIDERING CITIES THIS WAY

We conceive of WFCL as a 'wicked problem'.[4] It's something that emerges as part of the functioning of the urban social system. In other words, it cannot be explained as the aberrant behaviour of a few evil people. It emerges out of the everyday functioning of the economy, the city, or however we construct the system.

The task, then, is to explain how this happens. There is some limited literature on WFCL and other forms of child labour in urban environments, but there does not appear to be anything in the literature that empirically examines WFCL in a systemic way. To find a way forward, we can look to literature on how urban systems drive the emergence of other phenomena, such as crime, informality, and niche markets. In developing a conceptual approach to understanding the links between neighbourhood or urban dynamics and WFCL, I consider mechanisms for urban emergence generally, and look for analogues and linkages to WFCL.

3.1 How cities generate economic emergence

Cities generate a disproportionate amount of economic activity, compared to non-city spaces. This is true on a per capita basis and a spatial basis (McGranahan 2016; McGranahan *et al.* 2017; Turok and McGranahan 2013). This is part of the agglomeration effects of cities. Cities have a critical mass of capital, labour, and the kinds of infrastructure and services that facilitate greater economic output. As mentioned above, economic output and other aspects of urban life (including undesirable things such as crime) scale non-linearly with city size (West 2017). If a city doubles in population, it will, on average, more than double its economic output. It will more than double its crime rates. The fact that this holds true for cities across the world demonstrates that this kind of scaling arises from something fundamental about cities. Using the model of the urban land nexus, we can see that the combination of agglomeration and exclusion sort activities and people across the space of the city. In a path-dependent way, certain kinds of economic activity, including informal markets and informal sectors, end up clustering in certain parts of the city. This leads to economies of scope, where the existence of certain kinds of activity feeds the growth of related kinds of activity.

For example, once Silicon Valley became the location of tech industry hubs, additional tech industry firms sprouted up alongside them (see, for example, Sturgeon 2003). Chip manufacturing evolved alongside PC manufacturing and software development. Even though much of the hardware manufacturing has moved out of the US, Silicon Valley remains a centre of tech industry capital and innovation. Firms associated with the geographical location have amassed tremendous economic and political power. Workers in the industry move between firms, with experience in one being valued for employability in others.

Similarly, Bangalore became a tech hub of India after initial post-independence investments by government in key heavy industries (Saraogi 2019). Firms developed within the burgeoning ecosystem of communications and space technologies, with workers developing skills that were interchangeable and which further led to innovations. Now, Bangalore is home to some very specialised industries, including the world's foremost abilities to 3D print livers and other organs (Raghunathan 2016; Srinivasa 2020).

In this way, we can see the ready-made garment industry in Bangladesh as spawning related industries requiring similar types of capital and labour. While the formal sector garment industry may have evolved to a level where there is little child labour and labour standards are relatively good, those related industries – especially those in the informal sector – have not. While the leather supply chains we are studying are somewhat disconnected from the international ready-made garment export sector, they are likely to exist in some form of relationship to them. They will likely either be in spatial proximity or exist with some relational ties. Factory owners or managers who left the formal sectors may have set up less formal factories, with marginally worse labour practices and marginally greater profits. Mapping out how those connections worked to nurture the development of the informal leather sector will be important to understand.

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4   For more on wicked problems and what it might look like to find wicked 'solutions', see Light, Kasper and Hielscher (2020).

3.2 How cities generate spatial and social informality

Using the urban land nexus framework, we know that the forces driving the city drive the emergence of informality. I have just mentioned some of the ways this happens in the informal economy. But the same basic forces drive the emergence of informal settlements. People migrate to the city and settle in areas a) where they can afford to settle, b) where they are close enough to livelihoods, and c) based on their connection to other people such as family or ethnic group. In the cities of the global South, informal settlements arise that have some combination of illegality, disconnection from formal services, lack of formal planning, lack of clear legal title, or occupancy rights. This arises when people are driven to migrate into the city, have no access to formal areas (either because there are simply not enough or because they are prohibitively expensive), but find a way to do it anyway.

In China, the strong state capacities and the Hukou system[5] have prevented informal rural–urban migration from leading to slum areas in the cities. However, the dynamics of urbanisation and economic growth (along with rural changes) led to the emergence of informal 'urban villages', essentially slum areas or informal settlements popping up on land that was formally designated as 'rural' (Wang, Wang and Wu 2009; Webster *et al.* 2016; Zhan 2018). People with rural Hukou status could migrate to these areas, and the individual or collective owners of those places found ways to meet the demand for housing by building new housing blocks, even in the absence of formal land or housing markets.

In most of the cities of the global South, no such state presence prevents people from moving into central city areas, and slums have emerged as a result. It is also important to note that these processes that generate informality are not limited to slums or people in poverty. Formally planned housing developments are out of the reach of many people who have middle-class jobs and lifestyles as well. Roy (2005) notes that such instances of informality are often thought of and treated very differently, but they are the result of the same basic processes.

In recent research on the emergence of informality in Nairobi (Kenya) and Accra (Ghana), we documented the ways multiple parallel systems of governance – usually one that is rooted in the formal government planning

apparatus and others that are rooted in 'traditional' forms of authority such as village chiefs or informal claims to land use – lead to gridlock and stalemates in complex contestations over who has the right to own and use areas of land across the city. In Accra, 'traditional chiefs' (not actually a form of historical leadership, but introduced during colonial rule), have formal authority to sell building permits to individuals or companies. We documented how often these arrangements lead to legal permits being granted to housing developments for middle- and upper-class dwellings that are still disconnected from formal planning processes, meaning that the new builds have no access to water or sewerage and the urban planners must work backwards to supply services after the fact.

In Nairobi, settlement in various slums and even middle-class areas of the city is associated with tribal membership. For example, in the past, many different tribal groups lived in Kibera, the biggest slum in Africa, but for historical reasons, the biggest group in the slum was the Luo tribe. After the elections of 2007, during which a major reconfiguration of political power happened in Kenya, resulting in a new constitution and an ongoing renegotiation of the major political alliances governing the country (Tadros and Allouche 2017), a violent reconfiguration of settlement patterns has ensued. Luo groups became more strongly connected via patronage ties to the leader of a political party who happened to fall out of favour with former allies. They also began forcibly removing their neighbours from other tribes, especially the Kikuyu tribe, which itself became more strongly connected via patronage ties to another political leader. In another major slum of Nairobi – Mathare – Kikuyus were the predominant demographic group, and they began violently removing their non-Kikuyu neighbours, especially the Luo (IDS Urbanisation in Africa and China Team 2021: 11).

In this way, we can see the interconnections between the spatial settlement patterns and social networks of tribe and political affiliation. This has had major political and social implications – namely high levels of political violence in the city, but also the leaving behind of Luo citizens, whose political patrons have lost the power to provide them with material resources in exchange for political allegiance. This has also had major spatial implications, as predominantly Luo areas of the city, such

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5   A registry system that determines where people are entitled to live, generally based on where they are born, and making a clear distinction between those with permission to live in cities and those who must live in areas designated as 'rural'.

as Kibera, have been left out of government regularisation and upgrading programmes.

This is happening in a way that is layered on top of the challenges of land use governance. For example, the Kenya Informal Settlement Improvement Project (KISIP) has worked with slum dwellers to improve services in many neighbourhoods (across tribal makeup), but they have steadfastly avoided working in any areas with ongoing land disputes. In practice, this means that they have only worked in areas where slums occupy public, government-owned land. Where slums occupy private land, there is always an ongoing land dispute, given the (dys)functioning of the land rights system.

3.3 The role of (informal) services in urban systems

Services are also driven to function informally because of the structures and dynamics of cities. Services such as water, sewerage, and electricity are necessary for people and businesses to survive and thrive in cities. When cities are formally planned, these services can be put in place before areas are built up or lived in. However, in practice, service provision often follows settlement patterns. This can lead to a complex co-evolution whereby urban residents make decisions about settlement or establishing a business based not only on what services exist, but on expectations about what urban authorities will end up doing, and urban authorities make decisions about providing or withholding services in response to political and social pressures that constitute de facto planning processes. Further, in places that already operate via informal governance arrangements – including, for example, reliance on political or economic patronage – access to services likely shapes and is shaped by the same informal structures.

In looking at the successes of China in leveraging urbanisation in the major coastal cities into rapid industrialisation and economic growth, McGranahan *et al.* (2014) noted that this was not the result of top-down authoritarian planning. Rather, as Ang (2016) explains using an argument grounded in a complex systems analysis, China found ways to work across formal and informal to bring capital and labour together on serviced land. During China's phase of 'opening up', they began to move away from efforts to abolish markets. Because of natural forces of supply and demand for urban land, nascent land markets emerged. Different cities experimented with different institutional arrangements, but the most successful versions – which involved local

authorities permitting some land sales, innovations in taking loans (financing) based on the future value of land, and working closely with firms to use that financing to construct new industrial capacities on land which could be provided with electricity, water, and other services – were then scaled up and implemented across cities. This was coupled with a controlled relaxing of the Hukou requirements keeping 'rural' people out of the city; 'rural' people were allowed to move into the city if they agreed to live in specific areas and work in the new industries, but they were not allowed all the rights (i.e. guaranteed social security benefits) that 'urban' people had (IDS Urbanisation in Africa and China Team 2021: 16–17).

While this is not necessarily the same underlying dynamic in our project cities, the point to note is the importance of urban services. Chinese cities experimented with institutional arrangements that worked across formal and informal to deliver the services necessary for the industry to take off. In a similar way, the case study locations for CLARISSA will have evolved some form of arrangements to deliver services, which are necessary for economic activity, whether formal or informal. Thus, we should expect to find sectors which make use of WFCL in areas where they are able to access services, but likely not in a fully formal way. This will likely be unique across the three chosen sectors. It may be, for example, if WFCL in the leather industry happens in slums or informal settlements, that these firms will have had to negotiate access to special industrial services informally, perhaps via patronage relationships.

The literature suggests that even slum areas tend to have much better access to services than villages where many of the residents will have migrated from. Sahasranaman and Bettencourt (2019) look at the patterns around service access and slums across cities of varying sizes, and they note that slums in bigger cities tend to offer better access to services for residents than slums in smaller cities, which in turn offer better access than most villages. This is in line with Bettencourt's earlier work on how most things scale with city size (see, for example, Bettencourt 2012; Bettencourt *et al.* 2010). It also explains why, in spite of the seeming deprivation in slums, people still opt to live there, as they are materially better places to live than the alternatives. Sahasranaman and Bettencourt (2019) also suggest that this can explain why people tend to move to the biggest cities, even though they are more 'overcrowded' than smaller cities. This pattern was also seen in a study of urbanising Turkey in the 1990s (Akşit, Karancı and Gündüz-Hoşgör 2001), where people in rural poverty were observed to move

from rural villages to regional hubs before moving on to informal settlements in Istanbul, the biggest city.

Takeda (2020: 26) argues that the lack of rural electrification in Myanmar is a major factor driving people to migrate into cities, where even in slums people can access electricity. Another study (Monge-Naranjo, Ferreira and Pereira 2018) models the links between access to schooling (a kind of service) in slum areas and the levels of child labour. Their finding is that improving the quality of life in slums by, for example, providing better schooling for children, 'would initially exacerbate the formation of slums, but would eventually lead to larger cities and smaller slums as a result of a higher skill formation in the lower-end of the urban distribution' (Monge-Naranjo *et al.* 2018: 4).

These studies suggest that, because of the ways services are linked to informal settlements and informal sectors, intervening in these service delivery arrangements can impact the dynamics that drive WFCL. Exactly how this happens will require in-depth exploration, since the highly non-linear nature of complex urban dynamics means it may be easy to exacerbate the problem by trying to solve it.

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Section 4:

LOOKING FOR URBAN DYNAMICS IN WFCL LITERATURE

4 LOOKING FOR URBAN DYNAMICS IN WFCL LITERATURE

4.1 Spatial dynamics and WFCL

A study on spatial patterns of child labour in Nepal using Nepal Labor Force Survey data from the late 1990s identified that the overall prevalence of child labour tends to decrease with proximity to urban areas (Fafchamps and Wahba 2006). This is because, overall, children who work tend to work in agriculture (mostly boys) and domestic work (mostly girls). With greater proximity to urban centres, there is less agricultural work and greater access to school, so fewer children tend to work. However, those children that do work are more likely to work for wages or in small businesses (*ibid.*: 375), making them more vulnerable to WFCL.

The study does not explicitly differentiate WFCL from other forms; however, it notes that poverty mitigates this effect of urban proximity, with urban poor households being more likely to send their children to work. For this reason, we should conceptually see WFCL as being driven by different dynamics from these less severe forms of child labour. It is likely that WFCL in paid work increases dramatically with proximity to urban areas, though the magnitude of this work may be much smaller than the overall amount of child labour that takes place in rural contexts.

Finally, this study identifies three main factors explaining the spatial pattern: opportunity costs for children's time, parents' attitudes regarding their children (i.e. level of altruism), and the potential for learning useful skills by working (*ibid.*: 377). Opportunity costs will be related to access to alternatives, such as schooling, as well as the extent to which the family needs additional income. Extreme poverty may tip the scales in favour of child work. Parents' attitudes can be seen (see Section 2.2) to be shaped by the social norms around them. Both parents and children can be socialised into finding WFCL acceptable, and this will be catalysed by living in areas where WFCL occurs and being socially connected with others involved in WFCL. In this way, spatial patterns link with social patterns.

Shahraki, Fouladiyan and Toosifar (2020) add the element of migration to the spatial dynamic, with a study of Mashhad, Iran, a city which has experienced a significant influx of refugees and migrants from Afghanistan, the majority of whom are in extreme poverty and unskilled and have fled poor and conflict-affected areas of

Afghanistan. Many of these migrants have settled in slum areas on the outskirts of the city. The study constructs pathways through which children ended up in street work, depending on whether the family is economically poor, adheres to norms of child work, is dysfunctional or abusive, or engages in begging. The particular elements of the pathways contain slight variations in basic social dynamics, but I note that in each of the pathways, settling in the outskirts of the city is associated with conditions of relative deprivation and a social context where WFCL is common.

A final spatial consideration is that of commuting for work. Some studies indicate that children engaged in WFCL live in close proximity to their work, while others suggest that they must travel across the city. An assessment by the International Labour Organization (ILO) of urban child labour in Jordan noted that Syrian refugees in Jordan were more likely than Jordanians to be engaged in child labour, and that they tended to have to travel further from home to find work within the city (ILO 2014). The combination of social and spatial exclusions put pressure on Syrian children to take up worse forms of work.

Similarly, a study found that children who 'encounter work' by simply being with their families working in informal sector market jobs in Quito, Ecuador, also tended to live in informal settlements on the outskirts of town and have extended commutes to get to workplaces around the city (Hinrichsen 2017). This study did not specifically look at WFCL, but it noted that even the common experience of spending time in informal sector markets and working with family led to significant detrimental health effects and the perpetuation of poverty and marginalisation, locking children into informal work as adults. On the other hand, a study of children working in welding in Rajshahi, Bangladesh, portrays many of the children as living near or in their welding workshops (Shahen and Alam 2020).

It is clear that social and spatial disconnection and marginalisation are associated both with slums and WFCL. Further research is necessary to understand for particular sectors and locations what the links are between living spaces and working spaces. It may be that living in proximity to workplaces where WFCL is common may increase the likelihood that a child begins working in WFCL. On the other hand, it may also be that living far away from livelihood opportunities increases the vulnerability of children engaging in work, increasing the likelihood that the work they find is of the worst forms. Additionally, where children are working in invisible conditions, because of spatial isolation or living in

workplaces (either without family or away from family), it may be more difficult to monitor, or mobilise public opinion to generate government action to address the issues (Crippin 2020: 60).

4.2 Social/economic dynamics and WFCL

In examining the conditions of child labour in Mashhad, Iran, Shahraki *et al.* (2020) gathered data on the family and social conditions of street children. This study is not explicit about the differences between WFCL and other forms, but presumably much of the work described constitutes WFCL, including long hours selling on busy streets. They present evidence that family conditions or family breakdown – such as experience of violence and abuse in the home, substance abuse, or the lack of care from parents or other caregivers – leads children to work or live on the street. They develop models for how children end up working and/or living on the street, through which they note that conditions of extreme poverty can increase the likelihood of family breakdown. The experience of poverty, including unemployment, lack of basic services, depression, anxiety, and social marginalisation, can increase the likelihood of substance abuse and domestic abuse (*ibid.*: 3). Even when these conditions don't result in children running away from home to live on the street, it can lead to children choosing or being forced to work to provide for themselves.

Fafchamps and Wahba (2006: 378) suggest that 'neighborhood effects may also affect parental decisions', meaning that parents' and children's responses to their circumstances are informed by what is going on around them. Parents may engage in behaviours such as substance abuse and domestic violence in social settings where such things are common, and children may come to see opportunities to take care of themselves by starting to work when they see others doing so. Parents may also choose to force their children into work if others around them are doing so.

Shahraki *et al.* (2020) report that many of their child respondents mentioned methamphetamine and opium use by and with parents. Other literature suggests that drug use is common in physically demanding and socially stigmatised jobs as a coping mechanism (see, for example, Baumann *et al.* 2007; Kakchapati *et al.* 2018); however, it also feeds back into the dynamics of violence and coercion associated with WFCL. Many of the respondents also reported being forced to work by parents and other family members, and they reported

that in many cases, those same familial or familiar networks were used to secure the work. Ahad, Eleen and Chowdhury (2018) also note in the study of child labour in Sylhet City, Bangladesh, that many employers recruited child workers through their social networks, including extended family.

In a study of children working in informal leather work in Dhaka, Mollah and Shirin (2012) report that 90 per cent of the respondents had migrated from somewhere else in Bangladesh, consistent with the idea that migration leads to spatial and social connections associated with vulnerability to WFCL. Additionally, the children reported that they had help from parents (9 per cent), neighbours (12 per cent), brothers (13 per cent), and other relatives (43 per cent) in getting involved with the job. In other words, the majority of respondents were connected with the job via family networks or close connections. About 16 per cent of respondents claimed to have got their job by responding to an advert or by directly asking (*ibid.*: 9–10).

Building on the idea that children get socialised into WFCL, many of the children in the Sylhet study did not report a belief that they faced hazardous conditions even though most did report specific hazards when asked about them specifically. This suggests that the hazards faced in their work had become normalised (Ahad *et al.* 2018). In another study of children (boys) working in welding in Rajshahi, 44 per cent of the responding children reported being happy with the wages received, even as 86 per cent of the respondents earned less than 2,500Tk per month (Shahen and Alam 2020: 48). This is about US$30. The official poverty line in Bangladesh is US$1.9 per day (Asian Development Bank 2020), meaning these wages are at or below official poverty levels.

Only 30 per cent of the respondents reported the belief that welding work was bad for their health, and 60 per cent reported that they did not want to stop welding (Shahen and Alam 2020: 52). Meanwhile, 88 per cent of the respondents said they would 'never advise' a sibling or a friend to get into welding work (*ibid.*: 52). This would appear to be a paradox, and yet this is the prevailing psychological trend. Children working under these conditions have found ways of coping. They do not frame their circumstances as unacceptable, but they are aware of the realities (demonstrated by being able to name specific hazards faced and by noting that they would not hope for their friends and family to work under similar circumstances). These psychological strategies may be

helpful in coping; they may also have the potential to entrap people or misguide them into perpetuating WFCL.

Adonteng-Kissi (2018b), in a study of parental perceptions of child labour across rural and urban Ghana, found that most families ascribe some value to work done by their children, especially when school is not a useful or viable option. In rural areas, work has traditionally been seen as training for taking over the family livelihood in the future. However, when people migrate from rural to urban areas, these values and beliefs, without being updated to the new conditions, can lead to forms of child work that are more damaging than parents realise (Adonteng-Kissi 2018a).

4.3 Summary and reaction to the WFCL literature

Very little of the literature identified on urban child labour specifically differentiated WFCL from other forms. Still, these studies are helpful in identifying key spatial and social dynamics associated with WFCL. Reading this literature through the lens of complexity (i.e. through the framework of the urban land nexus), it is possible to identify structures and dynamics of urban systems which appear to be driving WFCL.

People in vulnerable social and economic positions often migrate to cities looking for better lives. Cities continue to offer opportunities, with some of the biggest and most exclusive cities continuing to offer some of the most promising opportunities, thanks to the benefits of agglomeration. However, because of the simultaneous forces of exclusion, these new arrivals end up sorted into slums or informal settlements and into livelihoods in the informal economy. Migration is associated with poverty and social dysfunctions which are themselves associated with poverty – including low levels of skills and education; depression and anxiety; likelihood for substance misuse; and domestic violence, abuse, or neglect.

Upon arrival in the city, people tend to settle in areas near existing social connections and find work using family and other networks. They bring with them their ideas about the nature of child work and a set of survival strategies. Living and working alongside others in similar circumstances, particular forms of social norms tend to emerge. Children and families get socialised into ways of thinking and acting which can accommodate child labour and WFCL. Once in WFCL, children may grow to accept the conditions and may be unable to aspire to alternative lifestyles or livelihoods.

Certain structures and dynamics would appear to be key in shaping urban WFCL. Structures include spaces (slums, neighbourhoods, industrial areas), physical and material connections (roads, measures of distance between home and work, between community and wider society, links to services), and social connections (social networks in communities, amongst children in WFCL, amongst employers, etc.). Key dynamics include social norms and values (how families and children think about child labour and WFCL, how businesses and employers operate, how laws are enforced in practice, how rights are understood), how people tend to look for opportunities, how people experience social life (i.e. stigma or marginalisation, gendered experiences, as a member of particular ethnic groups, etc.).

Section 5:

CONCLUSIONS: TOWARDS A RESEARCH AGENDA

5 CONCLUSIONS: TOWARDS A RESEARCH AGENDA

This report has elaborated a way of thinking about WFCL as being driven and conditioned by the everyday functioning of cities. At the most general level, the urban land nexus explains how the combination of agglomeration and exclusion forces leads to the sorting of people and activities across the space of a city. Zooming in, we can see how spatial and economic informality emerges, creating spaces such as neighbourhoods with specific dynamics that drive vulnerabilities to WFCL.

This framework suggests that key insights will come from mapping the specific structures and dynamics within the neighbourhoods of this project – from social networks and how people behave in them, to physical spaces and how physical connections condition human interactions. Neighbourhoods are dynamic spaces with everyday functions linked to the life of the entire city. They have been shaped by their particular histories to function in particular ways. Seeing WFCL as something that is continually generated by these functions, we can begin to look for the specific mechanisms that drive WFCL. We do not simply want to rescue individual children from WFCL, as the system would just draw in others to replace them. To eradicate WFCL, we would need to reconfigure urban systems so that they cease actively generating WFCL.

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CLARISSA works by co-developing with stakeholders practical options for children to avoid engagement in the worst forms of child labour in Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Nepal.

The participatory processes which underpin the programme are designed to generate innovation from the ground which can sustainably improve the lives of children and their families.

The programme's outputs are similarly co-designed and collaboratively produced to enhance local ownership of the knowledge, and to ensure that our research uptake and engagement strategy is rooted in the direct experience of the people most affected on the ground.