

THE PARADOXES OF DEMOCRATIZATION AND VIOLENCE IN BRAZIL

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Introduction

My studies of urban violence in Brazil showed two paradoxes and one enigma that have developed in this country during the last decades. The paradox of a process of democratisation that started in 1984 coming forward with increasing criminality rates, especially homicide, which increased three times in Rio de Janeiro during the 1980s, decreasing and stabilizing in the 1990s, and tripled in Sao Paulo from 1980 to 1995. The paradox of a nation constituted on the idea of cordiality and conciliation that changed recently its dominant ideas, criticized systematically as they were by Brazilian intellectuals. Finally, the enigma of a fierce violence among men, mainly young men (perpetrators and victims of murder at the same time), and has affected women comparatively much less. Young men commit homicides over other young men in 92% of the homicide cases for the past twenty years. This suggests a model of violence dissimilar to the model present in ethnic conflicts where women are object of rape.

To understand them, I have used three dimensions: the institutional inertia that explains persisting civil rights violations and the malfunctioning of the justice system; the importance and limits of macro social explanations for violent criminality, such as poverty and social exclusion; the necessary look at micro social processes concerning changes of power at neighbourhood level and the situation of young poor men in drug trafficking. This implies taking subjective formations as well as long institutional and social processes as a way of understanding institutional violence against the poor, as well as social violence between poor youths in a state and a society not entirely ruled by law. Since in countries like Brazil there have always been a gap between formal civil rights and real ones, one must focus not only the letter of law but mainly social processes not controlled by it, such as inexplicit informal rules or social practices ingrained in the actors' actions, including and mainly policemen daily practices.

International background

One of main global problems today is the inability to control the illegal use of narcotic drugs and the sinister criminal world that has developed to supply them everywhere, with logistics that astonish for its efficiency. It is said that the illegal drugs market is today one of the biggest economic sectors of the world economy, economically and socially ingrained in almost every country in the world. But this is only one part of the working system of organized crime that operates in manifold sectors, using similar networks and mechanisms for surfacing as clean operations. As many authors have stressed, since economic sectors, especially illegal ones, intermesh formal and informal markets, weave several economic sectors, as well as connect governmental agencies or institutions and drug businessmen, drug related businesses permeate many sectors of society, sectors that often function in the formal economy, but draw part of their profits from drug related activities. These activities are manifold in the sense that include other criminal activities such as robbery and theft of goods that will be used as currencies for buying drugs and precursors (Zaluar, 1994; Geffray,2001; UNDCP, 1997). They also follow networks already used for other illegal activities such as smuggling, governmental corruption, gun trafficking. This is particularly clear in the case of banks, real estate market and transport companies that provide services for illegal businesses and the main mechanisms for money laundering. But this is not an open market. Only those who have the trust and permission from the best located in the crime web are allowed to do business (Luppo, 2002; Zaluar, 2004). In a context of little economic growth, more people may be attracted to take the risks of crime-business, organizing their activities so as to curtail detection and prosecution.

Over the last decades world-wide production of illicit drugs has increased dramatically. Opium and marijuana production has roughly doubled, coca production tripled and new synthetic drugs were developed as consumer demand increased. Transnational organized crime or local ones that comprise *sui generis* economical, political and cultural characteristics, have increased violence in certain areas. For those who are in strategic positions in large networks of transnational connections may profit quickly and easily as a result of a combination of few institutional limits, violence and corruption. Globally, they foment practices and organizational forms that are both underground and violent

as means of conflict resolution, such as threats, intimidation, blackmail, extortion, aggressions, murders or, in certain cases, even terrorism.

The demand for drugs is created by changes in lifestyle associated with style consumption that is more costly than post-war family expenses linked to the secure domestic patterns of middle class families (Sassen, 1991). Dope trade may be considered as the illegal sector of the production and distribution of goods and services of what is called "mass consumption of style". That has favoured the impressive increase in certain crimes "against property" – thefts and mugging – as well as "against life" - aggressions and homicides (UNDCP, 1997). Social fragmentation and the increasing importance granted to leisure and consumption activities as means of ascertaining and defining new social identities have been considered the central features of global accelerated process of social, economic, political and cultural transformations. In terms of social control, such transformations indicate that conventional moral restraint, which exists without the law, has weakened, leaving more functions for policing and law enforcement.

The Executive Secretary of Interpol, Robert Kendall, said that it would be better for police forces not to be committed to hunt drug consumers or small dealers, and instead allot their resources to the repression of traffickers and launderers. Unfortunately, legislation and, furthermore, police practices in various countries entices them to the first choice. Hence the symbiotic relations between different actors with common and interrelated interests, which form a social, economic and institutional fabric, lead to what must be considered as systemic factors that exist both inside and outside nations, in trans-national webs (Van der Veen, 1998).

According to a most important newspaper in USA, the judicial and political effects of the war on drugs show a rather bleak picture: more than 19,000 drug offenders are jamming the prisons and draining the state's resources. Major drug dealers are seldom captured but tens of thousands of addicts and low-level vendors - the vast majority of them black or Hispanic - have been imprisoned. The last ones do not receive lighter sentences in cases that deserve them, or drug treatment programs as an alternative to incarceration when that is appropriate. Furthermore, although there is a widespread use of illegal drugs across ethnic spectrum, including among whites, 94 percent of the people doing time for drug offences in the state of New York are black or Hispanic (Herbert, 2002). In Brazil there are two penalties for drug related crimes: use of drugs, a minor crime, and

traffic of illegal drugs, a heinous crime that is punished with up to 12 years of imprisonment. But there are no limits for possession of drugs in either case. Not surprisingly, in Rio de Janeiro where 45% of the population are coloured and 55% considered as white, 65% of those prosecuted for use were classified as white, whereas 35% were black or dark; but 60% of those accused of trafficking were blacks and darks, for 40% white. There is also a higher percentage of those condemned in trafficking, a heinous crime, blacks and darks surpass whites in 26% (63% para 37%) (Zaluar, 1998).

The Brazilian Case

Institutional corruption, disrespect for law, inefficiency and discrimination in the Justice system, as well as urban violence increased at shocking paces in certain countries like Brazil, where little is known about the supply of illicit drugs or the organizational strength of the trafficker networks, primarily its connections with the legal economy and institutions. Despite the growing state powers and funds to control it, scarce attention has been given to the political and economic interests related to the drug economy, particularly the tightly knitted symbiotic and systemic interactions of the upper and the underworld, the legal and the illegal, the formal and informal sectors of the economy. In other words, although Federal Police has investigated organized crime during the past few years, state civil and military police still intervene mainly in violent repression inside shantytowns and poor districts in metropolitan regions. Not surprisingly, there was a growth of private security forces unable to diminish the risks and insecurity awareness among city dwellers.

A revolution in consumption patterns also happened in Brazil. More consumer goods, styles of consumption and shopping centres have been the main changes. Cultural values have also changed: individualistic and modern values became widespread in Brazilian society during the 1970s and 1980s, including "making easy money". As an underground and illegal entrepreneurial activity that allows for it, drug traffic is part of this new social, economic and political environment. But the consequences of this illegal business, as well as the style acquired in Brazil are not explained only by changes in consumption.

Since inequality remains at the social, economic and institutional level, these new globalizing forms of illegal and violent economic activities do not configure a life strategy for the deprived as youths die before 25 years old. One must discuss

how the effects of poverty and accelerated urbanization without economic development are linked with institutional mechanisms and fluxes of organized crime that crosses all social classes and are connected to legal businesses. Granting that many poor young men have been in a state of vulnerability as a consequence of crisis within families, estrangement between adults and youths, an inefficient school system and lack of professional training added to insufficient work posts, I have presented arguments that further the idea of “perverse integration” (Zaluar, 2000, 2002). Fierce competition for working in the drug gangs and early deaths are also a violation of their basic civil rights: to live to come and go and the right to live.

There were also deep changes in the political and ideological discourses that appeared in arts and the media. Conciliation, which was a mark in those discourses since the Empire, even before the end of slavery, as a way of compensating for the strong local and regional struggles for privileges and political power, is nowadays more and more condemned as a weakness in Brazilian character, as a sign of a lack of warrior spirit or strength in struggles till final victory. The myth of racial democracy, so ingrained in our social behaviour at public places, is now denounced as a lie that has hidden racial discrimination and hatred from everybody. Now there are attempts to substitute our not dichotomised racial system for one similar to the black – white opposition of the clear cut colour lines in the USA. Finally, during the plumb years, a name given commonly to the twenty years of military regime we had from 1964 to 84, torture and police violence became everyday practices almost everywhere, making fierce and cruel the police repression of people living in poor neighbourhoods.

A History of Social and Institutional Violence

As most countries, Brazil has a long history of social - institutional and private - violence but not political violence, as it happens in other Latin American countries. This is one of the main reasons why one cannot explain the present wave of violence as being simply an effect of the geological layers of customary violence in Brazil – which, in fact, has diminished after the Second World War and increased amazingly at the end of the seventies.

At the beginning of this century, a time of intense immigration from Europe, the first republican period, there had been a noticeable spur of criminality. The most common offences and crimes were disorders, vagrancy, thefts, robberies;

but "crimes of blood" – private vengeance committed between people known to each other – were much less frequent. Similar patterns existed in European countries (Fatela, 1989). After a period of relative tranquillity following the Second World War, there was an enormous increase in violent crimes, especially kidnapping, robbery and homicide. In many European countries, this started during the sixties (Gendrot, 1994; Lagrange, 1995), but in Brazil, such crimes increased quickly and greatly in capitals -- Cuiabá, Vitoria, Recife, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro -- and some medium sized towns in the hinterlands of a few Brazilian states, mainly Pernambuco, São Paulo and Paraná.

In the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro, the homicide rate tripled during the eighties, growing from 23 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants in 1982 to 63.03/100,000 in 1990, a period in which the population of the city had stabilised. However, this happened mainly in the peripheral and poor municipalities of the metropolitan region because police investigation is particularly difficult there. In 1994 it reached the rate of 74/100,000 and then started declining till 1999 when it was 41.2. A careful study of police inquiries and judicial cases during 1991 in Rio de Janeiro had showed that 57 % of the homicides that year were linked to drug traffic (Soares *et all.*, 1996). This is just one more indication suggesting that the growth in the homicide rate has been somewhat linked to the greater entry of guns and drugs in the country, since both began at the same time during the late 1970s.

Another indicator of the correlation between gang warfare and murders is the age of the victims. Although violent death rates have increased all over the country, the most common victims are not children but adolescent and young males from the metropolises and richest regions of the country. This rapid growth in homicides particularly affected young men 15-29 years old in crimes taking place in public places between people who were neither intimate, nor even known to each other. During 1991, official statistics indicated that 12.5 men had died per woman between 20 and 39 years in the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro. Most of the agents of this violence were young males; they were also the main victims (Campos, 1988).

In 1980, according to the data of the Ministry of Health, 59/100,000 men between 15 and 19 years old died of gun injuries in the state of Rio de Janeiro; in 1990, 190/100,000 died the same way; in 1995, 184. The rates for men between 20 and 24 are: 111/ 100,000 in 1980; 260 in 1990; and 276 youngsters in 1995. During this year, in the city of Rio de Janeiro, 6,399 people were victims of violent

deaths of which 45% were homicides. In the metropolitan region, 17,684 deaths by external causes were registered of which 55% were homicides. As a point of comparison, deaths from nutritional deficiencies affected 382 persons in the same year.

This is exactly the same pattern found in disputes over the division and defence of territories and the payoff of traffickers and robbers, as the one that developed during the violent competition between gangs in the ghettos of Los Angeles, Chicago and New York which started at the beginning of the 20th century. But impunity in Brazil certainly is also a factor for increasing the mortality rate amongst small traffickers because homicides are hardly investigated and crimes related to illegal drugs are fiercely repressed in poor areas.

Nevertheless, in 2003, Rio de Janeiro was far from being the most violent capital in the country. Data of the Ministry of Justice/ Secretaria Nacional de Segurança Pública, shows this city as the seventh in intentional homicides (41.1/100,000 inhabitants), the fourth in robberies, the 17th in rape, the 8th in robbery followed by death, the 8th in extortion from kidnapping, the 13th in deaths by traffic accidents. Vitória is the first in homicides, São Paulo the fourth. Regarding robberies, São Paulo is the first, is the second in extortion from kidnapping, the first in vehicle thefts and robberies, the fourth in robbery followed by death, of which Porto Alegre is the first. Furthermore, comparison between towns of more than 20,000 inhabitants shows that the ten most violent ones are found in the interland of the state of São Paulo and Pernambuco, where the most important area of marijuana production is. They displayed very impressive homicide rates: from 140.4/100,000 in Diadema, São Paulo, to 86.4 in Serra Talhada, Pernambuco. (Sistema Único de Saúde/ Folha de São Paulo, 1999).

The view that Rio de Janeiro is at the centre of organized crime is misleading and part of a fierce parochial competition that nowadays exists in Brazil. One of the main routes of cocaine inside this country passes through Rondônia, Mato Grosso, Paraná and São Paulo, states in which violent death rates and incidence of HIV virus, through intravenous use of drugs, reached the highest levels in the country, doubling during the decade (Bastos, 1995). Official data from the State Secretaries of Justice, based on police reports, indicates that, in the metropolitan region of São Paulo the proportion of intentional homicides grew tremendously during the eighties and nineties. In 1981, the homicide rate was 21/100,000 inhabitants (Caldeira, 1992), whereas, from 1990 to 1994, it was estimated at

42.91/100,000 inhabitants (*apud Adorno et alii*, 1995) and in 1997, 69,2/100,000. Of these deaths, 47.21% mainly concerned young males between fifteen and 24 years of age. In the municipality of São Paulo, the increase was 90.4%: from 3,516 in 1984 to 6,697 in 1994. These figures are even more impressive if one adds deaths caused by policemen. At the beginning of the 1980s, there were approximately 300 deaths per year in the city due to encounters with the military police. At the end of the decade, there were 585 deaths per year, and in 1991 there were 1,140 deaths. Those figures were not included in the homicide rates. The number of deaths among policemen also increased over the years. Even though they include death off duty, the figures are quite clear: 26 military policemen died in 1982 and 78 died in 1991 (Caldeira, 1992).

The political arena and private violence

Political violence – even though not altogether absent from Brazilian history -- cannot explain by itself this recent spur of interpersonal and collective violence linked to a new criminality. In spite of the oscillation between centralisation and decentralisation and several disruptions of the Rule of law, parliamentary power had been institutionalised in Brazil since the Empire. Even though there had been setbacks, Brazilian parliamentary liberal tradition, established through the strength that local oligarchies have always had in the country, revealed itself stronger than expected with help from supporters of authoritarianism and the military regime. But this goes as far as political rights and the electoral system are concerned.

Elections in Brazil have historically been propelled by clientele arrangements and multiple mediators: the Brazilian rural major patron, called “Colonel” had to please minor colonels, his followers and so to be electors as well as the Central Government. Votes were then bought with favours, but also with real local improvements as well as constraint upon the voters. The very swaying between Central government and provincial Oligarchies made negotiation and manipulation more important than open and violent conflicts. As a result, elections in Brazil have been less violent than in other Latin American countries, even though sometimes the results were not accepted. So it happened in 1930 when Vargas successfully executed a coup d’état that did not breed a civil war for he also soon compromised with local Oligarchies, especially in São Paulo where a revolt against the regime was quickly controlled.

Then, an authoritarian rule began as an ideology of the state (and not of the market) that did not allow for autonomous associations of the people. The state organized them in a corporatist fashion but the Fascist model was not associated with an ideology of white supremacy or purity of race. Work legislation recognized workers organizations organically linked to the state and established minimum wages (Lamounier, 1977).

With the deterioration of colonel's personal power, new clientele patterns arranged through political parties and benefices acquired via government prevailed. But this system have become more unstable and less legitimated for those politicians were considered faked patrons and friends (Zaluar, 1985). It remained as authoritarian manipulation to gain votes but hindered even more the real commitment to the voters' demands. Instead, it segmented popular interests in parochial and regional claims.

At the social level though, a lively debate concerning the ideas about the "Brazilian Cordial Man" have dealt with importance of violence in Brazil. There is no doubt that personal power and private violence were the privileges of plantation and hacienda proprietors. "Colonels" received this title because they had troops of "*jagunços*" or armed men at their service inside their properties. Personal vengeance and blood feuds were common. Family warfare in fact marked the history of Brazilian violence up to the 20th Century, especially in the Northeast and the hinterlands, during centuries the most violent areas of the country. Judges had hardly any autonomy in these localities and decisions usually benefited the powerful, whose crimes remained without punishment. One cannot say that institutions were above private power, except in Rio de Janeiro, the capital where higher level courts achieved some independence. Therefore, impunity has a long history in Brazil. Policemen were trained to comply with and submit to the powerful proprietors, repressing only the poor, the blacks and the natives.

Although it is true that slavery also led to centuries of deep interpersonal violence between masters and slaves, the explosive episodes of racial, religious and political hatred were either transitory or localised and never divided the country. Some slave revolts ended in compromises in which Africans negotiated their right to a weekly day of rest and to perform their religious rituals with dancing and music accompanied by percussion instruments.

Therefore, Brazil has no records of glorious revolutions nor of civil wars between political parties, ethnic and religious groups. By the 17th Century, Brazil

was a refuge for the Jews as important as the Netherlands (Mello e Souza, 1987). Nevertheless, it is also a fact that violence was given a real, though limited, place in the collective imagination of Brazilian society, as happened in Portugal (Fatela, 1989) mainly because of private violence and inequality of treatment in the Justice system. The Brazilian model of violence is then far away from the ethnic conflict model where violation of the bodies, mostly of women and also children, constitutes its main aspect, as continuously has happened in former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and South Africa.

Thus, there has never existed in Brazil anything similar to the phenomenon "la violencia", a war without rules which devastated the Colombian political parties and civil population during the 1950s. Nor there has been the enduring urban and rural guerrillas, or the paramilitaries that formed the peculiar pattern of violence in Colombia. Nevertheless, the very fact that the military dictatorship used and abused of torture, illegal arrests and censorship facilitated the emergence of organized crime. Some of the officers who had adhered to those unlawful practices became members of extermination and extortion groups or got involved with "bicheiros" (owners of areas for the animal gamble) and drug traffickers (Gaspari, 2002). Finally, since there have been no or few reforms within the justice system during the re-democratisation process, and especially no changes in police practices with regard to the poor, one might say that the effects of the military regime are still present in the functioning of these institutions that do not practice respect for the civil rights of the destitute.

Brazilian paradoxes: economic growth, democracy and violent crime

During the 1980s, the country had progressively recovered democratic practices in elections and freedom of press. This followed a period of economic development along the military regime (1964-1984), when increased wealth had never been distributed. Instead of economic growth, during the democratization process there was economic, moral and political crisis sustained by rapid inflation. Brazil has a varied and modern economy, but its political and juridical institutions have not evolved accordingly. Not only the country kept one of the worst income distributions in the world, but also there were great inequalities in terms of access to Justice or distributive justice. Even after the 1988 Constitution that has

guaranteed civil rights to the poor, they continue experiencing violations of their rights, though increasingly less.

Thus, the hard core of discrimination in Brazil is in the institutional sphere, i.e., in the violations of rights of the poor that dwell on the workings of the Justice system (Zaluar, 2001)¹. Corrupted policemen form what one could call “extortion groups”, a name more appropriate than “extermination groups”, for policemen who kill young traffickers are demanding their share of the traffic money. Still, the majority of the poor youngsters are really killed in gang warfare. This is one of the main reasons why one cannot explain the present wave of violence as being simply an effect of the genealogy of violence.

Inflation, which ravished the country until 1994, is not an exclusively economic phenomenon; psychological and moral factors are also involved. It has therefore had perverse effects on attitudes and values of the population, especially amongst people who earned wages and gained nothing from it. High inflation erodes mutual trust without which there is no stable social relationship between economic agents. Furthermore, inflation had been considered a form of “stealing” the salaried, and had depreciated governmental credibility, fostering governance crisis in the country. Psychologically, it had been used as a justification for crimes against property. Finally, high inflation had facilitated the functioning of circuits of organized crime inside the country in so far as it helped to create the mirages of “easy money”. Those who had started practising increasingly more daring economic crimes were helped by the growing difficulties in records and controls over public budgets and bills. This has therefore facilitated corruption and money laundering, activities that are very important for establishing criminal connections but have not been properly investigated up to now.

Even when in 1994 inflation was controlled by the Plano Real, which stabilised a new currency in the country, the magical and volatile financial international arrangements still existed, including the trans-national systems of money laundering for governmental corruption and organized crime². Since then, financial crimes have received more attention and some white collar and rich criminals have been arrested. But it is yet little known and uncontrolled, including those related to major trafficking and its means of money laundering³. Nevertheless, banks in Brazil still earn their huge profits not from lending money, but from financial ventures, especially with governmental titles and debts.

It is also a fact that, in order to compensate for the wage losses provoked by unemployment, low salaries, inflation and the new consumption demands, poor families have put children and adolescents at the work market in order to increase their income. Several studies point to the growth of this category of work and to a bigger rate of unemployment amongst youths. Nevertheless, the majority of these youngsters – many of whom work informally in the streets – never join criminal groups, despite their vulnerable position. According to several researches, only a small number of youths get involved with gangs of traffickers or robbers. Basic needs or the wish to help their families are not sufficient reasons to explain why certain ones join gangs and others do not, though the need to earn money remains behind their actions and personal decisions. In fact, few poor people opt for a criminal career. In one fieldwork research done in a poor neighbourhood of Rio de Janeiro, I estimated that around 1% of the total population (380 people out of a population of 39,000) belonged to the trafficker gangs, and about 1,200 people were involved in occasional thefts and mugging (Zaluar, 1994). A configuration of life situations, such as poor performance in school and lack of identification with their values; conflicted and distant family life; disorganized or fragmented neighbourhood and a strong presence of traffickers as the local power; weak relationships with responsible adults, increases their vulnerability and the seduction that throws them into the illusions of perverse integration.

The existence of a new form of informal market is another element in the Brazilian paradox. Informal markets have always existed in Brazil and have been an important source of income for those with little qualification for work or no jobs. These informal markets have developed personal networks and rules for the occupation of the main streets in the urban centres. Yet, for the past decades, they have been joined by street vendors who sell several counterfeit products, some of which smuggled from other countries⁴, and diverse types of goods which have been stolen from trucks, residences and pedestrians. Informal trade, which traditionally has been a way out of unemployment and an alternative for subaltern work, has hence become tied to organized crime. This becomes even clearer because of its connections with gold selling shops, car repair shops, wrecked cars lots, antique dealers, some of which have become collecting points for stolen goods. It has been discovered recently that even some legal truck transport businesses are part of the network for truck robbery. However, there has been little systematic investigation of these networks so far.

Impunity in the justice system

Equally important for understanding the growth of violent crimes in Brazil are the rooting of organized crime in some institutions achieved through strategies of corruption; the unequal functioning of the justice system due to the organizational practices created and maintained by those working in it; the obsolete Penal Code adopted by Republican governments. Together, they created "islands of impunity", an expression conceived by Dahrendorf (1987) to refer to other countries.

Once again, the interconnections between political power and institutions remain as the crux of the matter. Although the Judiciary is nowadays an independent power (too independent, some say), the Executive appoints members of the fiscal system, those who will monitor and audit their expenditures. The Executive also designates ministers of First Instance Courts as well as heads of civil police departments and military police commanders. Both are sources of easy corruption for neither has the necessary autonomy and will to combat violations of the law efficaciously. Reform of the State is slowly coming to the fore.

Brazil is now an electoral democracy. But elections are very costly in Brazil and candidates receive contributions, not always admitted publicly, from many sources, including that from illegal businesses. More accountability or more transparency is badly needed to change this picture.

The very inefficient and unjust functioning of the justice system in Brazil has played an important role in the crisis of morality, and allowed criminals to become entrenched in the country. An incredibly high percentage of homicides are not properly investigated and their authors never identified. A study of the Criminal Justice System in São Paulo (*apud* Adorno, 1990) has found greater percentages of conviction among those accused of robbery, theft and drug traffic than among those accused of homicide and assault. Another study revealed that only 1.38% of the homicides committed against children and adolescents up to seventeen years old were effectively investigated, with the victims and the suspects identified, and transformed into police inquiries and judicial cases which resulted in sentences (Mesquita, 1996). Yet another showed that of 4,277 homicide bulletins only 4.6% had the author and the motive for the crimes known and written down. In Rio de Janeiro, another study shows that 92% of the homicide judicial cases were returned to the Police because they were poorly investigated; in other words, only

8% of the murders registered by policemen under the form of an inquiry were in fact judged (Soares et al., 1996).

Workers and bandits alike have a moral view of crime that relates it to a necessary punishment. Nevertheless, the dynamics of interactions transformed this view in favour of a cynical, instrumental and manipulative version of the law on the part of those who have been indicted. Luck, manipulation of judicial actors and the due process of law, occasional pressures and bribes before, during and after the judicial process, regular corruption of policemen, intimidation of possible witnesses by the use of guns, terror exerted on neighbours, and a very lucrative business offer incentives and justifications for the crimes committed, including murder.

As an institution, Brazilian population, mostly the poor, negatively evaluates the Police. When someone assesses it positively most certainly is referring to a specific person, such as a policeman one used to know in the neighbourhood. Prison and police precincts are equated to “schools of criminality”. The Justice system as a whole is seen as “propelled by money”, as most of the country’s organisations nowadays. Policemen still have the power of beginning an inquiry by registering the “*auto da prisão em flagrante*” (flagrant *delicto* document) or any other proofs necessary to a judicial process. Sometimes they still maintain the secular practice, disconnected from the existing institutional norms and the constitutional rights of Brazilian citizens, of torturing prisoners, mainly poor and black people, in order to extract confessions from them about their supposed criminal acts.

Impunity is another effect of their frail professional ethos and precarious technical formation as investigators. Many bandits never get caught, what is mentioned by them as a stimulus to repeat delinquent acts. Since money may guarantee impunity, either because a policeman will not register the act, thus starting an inquiry, or because well-paid lawyers know how to avoid judicial processes or condemnations, joining drug traffic gangs becomes even more attractive (Zaluar, 1998). When inquired, the indicted may lie for there is no oath in Brazilian justice. Nevertheless, the whims and wishes of the traffickers may be decisive for the outcome of a youngster’s career (Zaluar, 1994; Lins, 1997).

Drug trafficking in Rio de Janeiro

Illegal drug traffic had never been a major social problem in Brazil until the late seventies. Then, cocaine started to be negotiated on a large scale, following the new routes chosen by the Colombian cartels and the Italian-American Mafia. Cocaine cargoes were sent to Europe and to the USA by these routes. Along the route, passing through several Brazilian states and cities, including Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, new consumer markets for drugs appeared. From the beginning of the 1980s, there was a clear market strategy oriented to change the habits of drug consumers in those cities. Formerly the illicit drug market concerned almost exclusively marijuana, which was an underground and dropout drug and never had great economic importance nor received rigid repressive policy. Then, cocaine started to be offered at good value.

The traffic itself changed. It was no longer done on a familiar basis and face-to-face relationship with the "man of the truck" who brought marijuana from Pernambuco, its main producer. A new complex, diversified and very well armed organization, in which any commercial and personal conflicts were settled with guns, arrived with a virile cult of guns and of violent exhibitions of power. This created the conditions that enticed many lower income youths to involve themselves in a localised but very deadly war (Zaluar, 1994, 2002). Today, drug trade has become synonymous of warfare in most Brazilian small towns and big cities.

There are several new and diverse networks that connect Brazilian states (São Paulo, Mato Grosso, Rondonia, Paraná, Minas Gerais, Espírito Santo, Rio de Janeiro) and others that connect Brazil with producing countries (Paraguay, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia) by which cocaine and guns reach their destiny inside towns and cities. In the opposite way, stolen goods - automobiles, trucks, jewellery, domestic appliances, cargoes -, robbed from their possessors in highways, roads, streets or residences inside those states and used in non monetary exchanges for illegal drugs, easily reach their final destination. This noiseless and disguised style of trafficking is in contrast with the noisy and murderous one at the selling points inside the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro, Vitoria, Belo Horizonte, Recife and São Paulo.

Even if not co-ordinated entirely like a Mafia hierarchy, the drug trade in Rio has an efficient horizontal arrangement by which a shantytown that runs out of

drugs or guns immediately gets them from the allied shantytowns: either in the CV (Red Command) networks, or in the TC (Third Command) network, the two best-known organizations for drug and gun traffic. These networks or Commandos conciliate the features of a geographically defined network, which includes central or diffusion points, from which other linkages are established on the basis of horizontal reciprocity. This has both positive and negative aspects. For, even though guns and drugs are quickly lent to allies, the violent reciprocity of private vengeance becomes imperative. Because of such exchanges, adolescents die not only in wars for the control of trading points, but also for any motives that menace the status or pride of youngsters trying to assert their virility – the so called "*Sujeito Homem*" (Alvito, 1996; Lins, 1997).

There is a hierarchy between shantytowns, some of them functioning as distribution centres for retail, while others as small dealers trading points. In the first ones, the exceedingly well-armed crews dominate the local population with extremely ruthless rules of security. In the second ones, the situation of insecurity varies, depending also on the relationship between drug crews and local military policemen, or the neighbourhood and the Police. Because of this, the *Favelado* Federation of the Dwellers' Association estimates that around 20% of «*favelados*» have left their respective shantytowns.

Drug traffic has developed divisions between shantytowns so closed to each other that their internal streets and constructions merge. Although neighbours still recognise the areas by their initial names, now they are officially considered as one complex. In one of these complexes, o "*Alemão*", after the death of the leader that unified several "*favelas*", there was not only a state of war between their respective gangs linked to different traffickers; neighbours were forbidden to trespass the artificial borders between them. Many adolescents have been killed just because they passed from one area to the other controlled by the belligerent networks of crime-business.

Anyway, amongst some of the youngsters, those who hang on the streets, traffickers and their organizations are well valued. Their symbols - TCK trademarks for the TC or Nike for CV - are used as ways of identifying themselves with one or the other. Adolescents say they belong to one of them as if they were soccer team supporters. They also absorb the warrior ethos with all its consequences by saying they have enemies everywhere and need guns. Finally, they show simultaneously a deep loath of policemen and a fear of being

considered squealers. This possibility is a great risk of being killed and an enormous shame of losing respect from the mates. At the same time they talk about the hatred they have of dealers who have killed friends, close relatives or innocent neighbours. Some of the heavy users, who have connections with dealers, also verbalize their loathing of the dependence acquired from sniffing cocaine, the most common heavy drug used. The present opposition to traffickers may be explained because recently there has been a change in the hierarchy of CV: younger traffickers who were more unruly and had fewer connections with the local dwellers ousted the elder leaders, largely in prison. Because they do not know or follow the rules of respect for the workers and their families who live in shantytowns, these young bandits inspired only fear or terror amongst neighbours.

Small dealers in Brazilian shanty towns, despite their military apparatus, in fact help those higher up in the hierarchy, that is, those who produce and trade tons of the illicit drugs, to accumulate capital elsewhere. Little is yet known about them in Brazil: who they are, how and where they live, how they make contacts in the underworld of crime.

Warrior ethos and gang warfare

There is a context of a masculine warrior ethos bred in traffic gangs that helps to understand the growing appeal to violence in such places. For youths have been partly socialized in this figuration (Elias & Dunning 1993: 10-11) sharing their codes through which they search respect and consideration from members of the traffic gang. Many think this social context is a natural component of social interaction for they have friends or relatives who have been part of the traffic networks. Since these youths try not to breach its main rules, they become conformists and lose autonomy, and are thus called *teleguiados*.

But poor youths receive, in their respective neighbourhoods, the instruments of their power and pleasure from others who come from elsewhere. This is possible because of suitable institutional workings and the influence of values that rush them to the pursuit of sensations and money. Nevertheless, beyond any nexus of objective causality, even those that take place at the symbolic plane, some of them, but not all submitted to the same conditions, «delegate to the world the powers that seduce them to criminality» (Katz, 1988). In this internal arrangement, they act as authors of their actions.

For youths or boys, the main source of pride lies in the fact that they are part of the gang, use guns, join in robbing and looting, become famous for this, and, if they have the proper "disposition to kill", may someday ascend in the hierarchy of crime (Zaluar, 1994; Lins, 1997). Thus, the strategies for recruiting youngsters -- calculated according to how many permanent dealers (from ten to 30) the trading point needs -- are based as much on the prospect of earning "easy money" as on the youth's fascination for power and fame gained out of cruelty and ruthlessness with competitors, debtors or squealers. They developed the warrior ethos that is based on the proud acquired from the destruction of the enemy.

Anyway, ambivalence has always been expressed on the words employed by them to denote criminal actions. "Vice", "delay", "stop", "devil condominium" express the opposite of morally valued work (Zaluar, 1994). They are applied to explain why someone is stuck or trapped in a vengeance circle, in blood feuds as well as in police persecution. "Revolt" is the positive term used to denote those who won't accept low wages and hard work, based on a simple conception of social justice and male pride that defies economic exploitation. But injustice can also be another cruel bandit or corrupt policemen.

However, disillusioned pushers generally cite dope hustling as a place of distrust and animosity, where there is no respect except for the other man's gun. It is also a sexually charged, virile world. All the men carry guns; to carry a gun is to "walk mated" or to "have your iron in your belt". To show off your weapon, or "to pull your stick out", is a common characteristic of such urban outlaws, and one which can often prove fatal. Instead of the verb to rob, they say "to mount" their victims, an expression used both for mugging people on the streets and for breaking and entering houses. To kill somebody is to "lay them down". The prime audiences for such displays are apparently the women they are trying to impress with their power and the money in their pockets. Women are their public for exhibitions of physical and gun strength, and not the main object of their violence as it happens in several African countries and whenever there are ethnic conflicts. The syndrome is different: not so much violating the women's bodies as a way of ascertaining power over another people or ethnic group.

The crux of the matter is another model of exacerbated destructive and exhibitionist male pride or hyper masculinity in which other men are the object of masculine violence. A thirst for unbridled power in a historical context of moral and institutional crisis, with inefficient restraints on the highly lucrative, expanding

market for illicit drugs that confront young men grouped as gangs or criminal organizations. Internally to the crew, there is a fierce hierarchy of power that develops a proud of being able to destroy rivals treated as mortal enemies. In order to keep control of a cocaine outlet, a "front man" or "chief" must be constantly vigilant and cruel. He cannot hesitate and must make sure his competitors are not taking too big a slice of the action by selling more or better goods or acquiring more arms. He has to deal with his national and international suppliers as well as local military policemen, who commonly receive part of the profits, or else he gets ripped off, his spot is taken, or he is simply wiped out by competitors from both inside and outside his gang, inside and outside prison (Coelho, 1989; Zaluar, 1988, 1994). Money in the drug business is highly concentrated at the top. Half of the profit goes to the "man in the front" or "trafficker", 30% to the "manager", who does the accounts, and various percentages to the "vapour", who remains at the trading point and distributes the small amounts of cocaine to the "aviões", the very young dealers who finally take the dope to the customers. The latter are those most commonly arrested and prosecuted. Most of the time they just receive "cargas" to sell, for which they become entirely responsible. They may sell them after increasing their weight with cheap substances in order to raise profits; they may consume most of them, which makes them prone to be killed by the trafficker. Death penalty is the sentence for those who repeatedly do not pay him or who excessively crumble the merchandise.

The political place occupied by traffickers is not, then, clear-cut. They were formerly praised for the respect they have for neighbours, what has become more and more rare, or for some social activities they patronize inside the shantytowns, now substitute for other informal business they run, such as selling methane gas container, van and bike transportation. Contrariwise, they may be loathed because of disrespect for the workers and their families: the way they seduce or order girls to have sexual relations with them, the continuous threat that their guns represent in any case of conflict or suspicion of betrayal involving traffickers, unarmed *favela* dwellers and policemen.

Still, youngsters mentioned that the criminal crews provided more security for their members, since they assure juridical assistance that increases the chance of not being sentenced, the higher the youngster is in the organised crime hierarchy and the more esteem ("*conceito*") they have won from their chiefs. Since

money can buy defence, and guns offer the protection that emerges from fear, they think that it is useful to make more crimes in order to have always money, guns and the respect and protection from the gang. Actually, their preference for armed robbery is explained by the fact that they can silence possible witnesses by terror, inflict fearful respect on accomplices and offer the gun as a “treat” to the policemen, multiple ways of escaping arrest and making condemnation more difficult.

In real life this calculation may prove ineffective in so far as it does not eliminate completely the likelihood that a poor or less important bandit may go through the experience of being beaten up, tortured or extorted for a sum of money they cannot provide. Or arise the suspicions of both the trafficker and the corrupt policemen if he is making a lot of money. The situation may become, as they say, “sinister”. They may be killed by either of them. Their guns and the riches they have just robbed may be removed from them and yet they may be taken into jail if policemen prefer to show service or to increase their bets in the corruption game. They may also be accused of crimes they did not commit as a way of showing work done at the police precinct. Besides, power relationships and the division of labour, sometimes very exploitative, also restrain criminal activities.

Local gangs waged violent fights over women during or after dances organized by youngsters during which they listened to new styles of music recommending violent confrontation with the “system”. The story of the war between Zé Pequeno and Manoel Galinha is well known. Manoel Galinha was a handsome workingman with a beautiful girlfriend, who was envied by Zé Pequeno⁵, a criminal gang leader who expanded his drug business violently. He wanted to “have it all”, to take over all the drug outlets in the neighbourhood and become the first “dono do morro” (owner of the whole vicinity). He also wanted Manoel’s woman. Manoel decided to join Ailton Batata’s trafficking gang or “dono da boca” (a modest owner of the selling point) and take revenge of the humiliations he passed through. A war started and lasted for several years, involving other gangs in Cidade de Deus even after the main protagonists were killed. Hundreds of young people died in the process because the chain of personal vengeance is especially bitter between drug dealer’s gangs (Zaluar, 1985 and 1994)⁶ and because drugs and arms enter the country easily. Even so, it should not be forgotten that trafficking in Rio is sometimes really disentangled for there are many crews and individuals striving for power and positions inside the

trade. The same kind of struggle is waged over women, weapons, dope, and stolen goods.

Then we come to another point that may explain one of the paradoxes. The destruction of neighbourhood organizations and the loss of power from their leaders such as religious priests of the Afro-Brazilian religions and important musicians of the samba schools, also a Afro-Brazilian invention. The following weakening of moral ties between adults and youths loosened the latter from social control that prevented explosions of violence amongst them. These youths became more prone to gang and violent peer group formations. From the end of the seventies onwards, gun possession has created, for those youngsters involved in the drug traffic war, a military power that has shaken the foundations of authority. Schoolteachers as well as local leaders have had their authority diminished vis-à-vis the youths with the power of money and guns (Guimarães, 1992; Zaluar, 1988, 1994). Today, children sometimes cannot go to school or to attend the several projects that train them in sports, arts, and professions because of warfare between the neighbouring shantytowns. Even the experienced and politically concerned adults who have worked in the countless neighbourhood organizations (Zaluar, 1985), have lost power and are now trying to recuperate it with the support of local government. The Legislative Assembly of Rio de Janeiro has just finished an inquiry by the Committee against Violence and Impunity that identified 800 poor communities⁷, leaders murdered, expelled or co-opted by traffickers in Great Rio, between 1992 e 2001. Half of them have associated to the bandits. Other 300 had to leave the shantytowns and one hundred were killed because they refuse to be intimidated⁸ (O Globo, 20/06/2002). An unidentified community leader asserted that traffickers had executed more than 200 directors of shantytown dwellers' associations during the 1990s. He also said that policemen have been negligent during investigations of these cases and suggested that the Public Ministry (Public Prosecutors) should make a thorough investigation in those associations. This has not been done yet.

A recent case reveals the dynamics of intimidation and murder. An examiner, very healthy and strong, president of the *Federação de Favelas do Estado do Rio Janeiro (FAFERJ)*, died of brain stroke in April the 15th 2002 when he was 60 years old. Four days before he had a hear attack, half an hour after a strong commotion while he was forced by traffickers to legitimize the investiture of

the dwellers' association president appointed by them in a shanty town. He had previously received death threats. (O Globo, 20/06/2002).

Traffickers have also succeeded in penetrating several voluntary and public organizations, intimidating drivers and personnel to take drugs or guns inside their vehicles from one place of the city to another without arousing suspicion. Those who have done military service in Brazilian Armed Forces and are not part of the gangs are compelled to give military training for young dealers or "soldiers". Furthermore, traffickers from the criminal organization that prevails in São Paulo -- *Primeiro Comando da Capital* -- started their dealings in *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro as partners of CV. At least 70 men escaped Justice by moving to another state and joining dominant dealers in six shantytowns in Rio in order to do the highly profitable business of dealing dope. With them they brought terrorist tactics that began to be used in September 11th 2002 and culminated in January 2003. Then the CV circulated a printed manifest in which they ordered that all the shops should remain closed on the 24/02/2003 till midnight Tuesday 25/02/2003, otherwise...

“...they will disobey an order and be radically punished...no way, we want our rights, we are not kidding, those who are kidding are the politicians with this total abuse of power and robbery, let the Judiciary open up the gates of the prisons and act according to the law before it is too late”.

The reason for this boasting and menacing text was the loss of privileges inside the prison, such as cell phones, restaurant food, daily visits by several lawyers, girl friends and relatives that entered the prisons without being searched. They did not succeed although there was a widespread wave of fear in the city. The revolt, during which buses were burned and several policemen killed from time to time, lasted three months, but did not stop the city. Mysteriously as it had begun, it finished. The main leaders are in high security prisons outside their state of origin. Other leaders were caught when the focus of investigation finally moved to the national and international sphere. Unfortunately, at state level, the focus is still the petty criminal and small dealers that do not say a word about their connections and suppliers so as not to be killed. The changes needed in intelligent and efficient investigation happen very slowly.

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¹ Leonardo Dias Mendonça, Brazilian main cocaine trafficker, was benefited with a scheme supposedly articulated by a federal deputy in Brasília to certify the concession of *habeas-corpus* for the trafficker. The deputy controlled the court schedule so as to know in advance which judges would be in the sessions. He would wait for the session in which judges who would not approve the action were absent to present it before the judges. Investigations of the Federal Police showed that many people participated in such operations.

² There was CPI (Parliamentary Commission of Investigations for *Precatórios*, a way of speculating with governmental titles by overpricing them that constituted a financial fraud. It proved that this formula was created in the municipal government of São Paulo from where it spread to other states -- Pernambuco, Rio Grande do Norte and Santa Catarina.

³ The Central Bank registered 11.023 "suspect operations" between 1999 e 2002. These operations were simultaneously communicated to the Federal Public Ministry and the *Conselho de Controle de Atividades Financeiras* (Coaf), a organ of Ministry of Economics. According to the Federal Judges Association, US\$ 500 bilhões are cleaned each year all over the world.

⁴ The petty smugglers that come from medium cities of the State of São Paulo and take goods worth around US\$ 150 by bus, were caught by the Federal Police and rioted burning their products (Estado de São Paulo, 22/12/2002).

⁵ . The first gang that entered into war with the Zé Pequeno, who led the most powerful gang in the neighbourhood, was the one called "caixa-baixa» (lower-case), a band of thieves that brought back to sell to him valuable stolen goods. Because of the high cuts taken, they killed Zé Pequeno and took over the hustle after a fierce struggle and were nearly all killed off in subsequent battle with the Red Commando. This ring had a policy of seeking support from the local population and therefore combats local thieves who mess up their business. It also follows the strict rule of capital punishment for betrayers or for those who kill because of personal revenge. Death is the punishment for men, women, "minors" who squeal or kill for personal motives, but not for rapists.

⁶. A total of 722 young people were killed in the course of 15 years of warfare in this neighbourhood.

⁷ There were 547 shanty towns in the city of Rio de Janeiro during the year 2000. In them, almost one million people lived, out of a population of 5897 000 inhabitants of the city.

⁸ Report by deputy Carlos Minc, president of the committee.