Crimes and Violence Trends in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Alba Zaluar

**Case study prepared for
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Introduction

The City of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil's former capital between 1688 and 1960, exhibited an amazing increase in crime rates from 1980 onwards, despite decreases in population growth of 2% in 1980 and 0.4% in 2000. While there were some improvements in urban infrastructure in some of the poorest regions of the city – the shantytowns – these continue to enlarge, at a rate of 2.4% in 2000. Then the city had 5.857.904 inhabitants, of which 1.094.922 lived in subnormal urban agglomerations, an official definition for the popular term "favelas", that is, shantytowns[1] where a heterogeneous, but mainly poor people live.

This scenario is common to the biggest Brazilian cities, as an effect of accelerated and disordered urbanization that started in the early years of the Twentieth Century, urbanization without industrialization or sufficient economic development to provide employment for the migrants. Vulnerability, especially for young men who have the highest unemployment rates, is unquestionable, even more so inside "favelas". Yet, the growth of the informal work sector and irregular dwellings, lasting phenomena in Brazil, cannot account for the amazing growth of homicides that occurred during the 1980's and 1990's.

Indeed, new forms of organized crime or criminal business affected informal markets, transforming them into gateways for selling stolen, smuggled or counterfeit goods, but also for trafficking illegal drugs, such as cocaine and marijuana. These new markets produced a strong effect on deaths by aggression[2] in so far as the illegality and the dangers involved in the businesses made the use of guns inevitable. During the1980's, trafficking gangs started to dominate some favelas of the city as armed traffickers became more than owners of the selling place, but were called "owners of the favela"[3]. As armed mobs appeared, death squads or militias were formed in some other poor areas of the Metropolitan Region in order to eliminate those identified as bandits. As a result, homicide rates grew astonishingly for young men between 14 and 29 years old. How do we explain why young men are being killed or killing each other in Brazil's second largest and richest city? Can poverty and inequality wholly explain this phenomenon?

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[1] Shantytown is not an appropriate term anymore for there are no mores shacks, but brick houses with water, electricity and sewage. The name favela is still used, mainly because the legal property issue is not completely solved and poverty continues.

[2] This term is the official definition of murder as it appears in the data collected from the National System of Deaths' Information (SIM) of the Ministry of Health, found at www.ms.gov.br/sim/datasus

[3] The expression is heard everywhere in the city. I started hearing it at the late 1980's during my fieldwork research in Cidade de Deus, published in several books, including Integração Perversa, of 2004.

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Patterns of violence in Brazil

In Brazil, while deaths by infectious diseases diminished continuously from the1980's onwards, violent deaths increased several times, especially among people 14-19 and 20-25 years old. In 1980, violent deaths accounted for 50% of the youth deaths, whereas in 2003 they reached 75%, of which 40% were homicides. In the states of Pernambuco, Espírito Santo, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, where drug trafficking grew greatly from the end of 1970's onwards; homicides represented 50% or more of youth's deaths.

The most amazing feature of the national pattern of the growth of murders is that it affects mainly young men as shown in the "Mapa da Violência IV"[4]. Whereas the homicide rate in the age bracket between 14 and 25 years old escalated from 30/100,000 in 1980 to 54.5/100,000 in 2002, the rate amongst older men remained stable, from 21.3/ 100,000 to 21.7 during the same period. Nationwide, 90% or more of the cases involved males while only 10% or less to women.

Figure 1: Youth and older people homicide rates
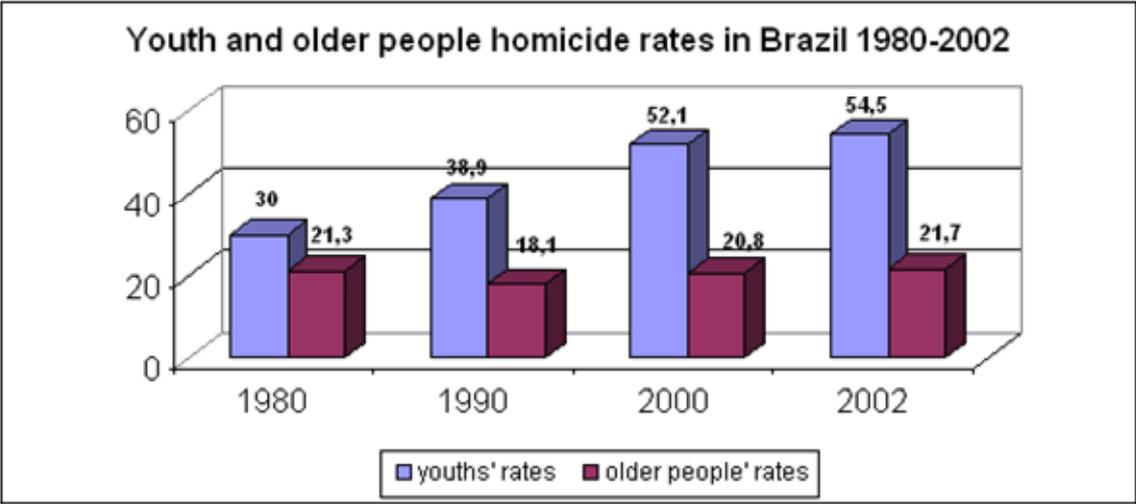
Source: SIM/DATASUS, apud J.J.Waiselfisz, Mapa da ViolênciaIV, UNESCO-Brasil.

This is the Brazilian violence charade, of which the city of Rio de Janeiro is just a part. Why has lethal violence affected men 10 times more than women, and young people five times more than older people? This criminal pattern is very different from ethnic or religious conflicts where women, children and old people are killed or sexually assaulted in similar proportions. Sexual crimes have not increased in Brazil or in Rio de Janeiro, where they had a rate of 1.5% in the Victimization Survey 2005-2006 carried out in Rio de Janeiro by my research team[5].

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[4]   Unesco-Brasil now has yearly publications called "Mapa da Violência" in which official data is presented in new tables and graphs. This one appeared in 2004 written by J.J.Waiselfisz.

[5]   The Vicitimization Survey, sponserd by Federal and Municipal agencies, is accessible at the NUPEVI site, where the executive report can be found: www.ims.uerj.br/nupevi. It was written by my research assistants and me in December 2006 and presents the main data from the survey.

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It is also an established fact that homicides are concentrated in the capital cities where youths' victimization indexes reached 189/100,000 in 2000, a rate three times larger than the youth victimization in the country as a whole. But although homicide is still concentrated in these cities, the same study by UNESCO noted that it is growing faster in other towns inside the federation unities. Homicide is therefore spreading to the hinterlands more rapidly, following a new wave of migration to the middle sized towns, which are also reached by the dissemination of organized crime networks. This is not restricted to drug and gun traffic but also includes privileged contracts between local authorities and transports or garbage companies, governmental corruption, commerce of counterfeit goods, smuggling and so on.

Official crime data for the metropolitan regions of Brazil show that in the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro homicide rate by handguns tripled from 20.5/100,000 in 1982 to 61.2/100,000 in 1989, when it reached its peak. From then on it has been around 50/100,000, with the lowest rate in 2001 (45.3/100,000), but up again in 2002. Of the 19 municipalities that formed the Metropolitan Region, there were 11 cities with average rates greater than the city of Rio de Janeiro between 1998 and 2002. Comparing the four capitals of Southeast Region, the most populated and richest capital region of Brazil, one can observe the different trends for the growth of homicide rates from mid 1990's onwards.

Figure 2: Youth (15-24 years old) homicide rates in four capitals of SE Brazil 1994-2004
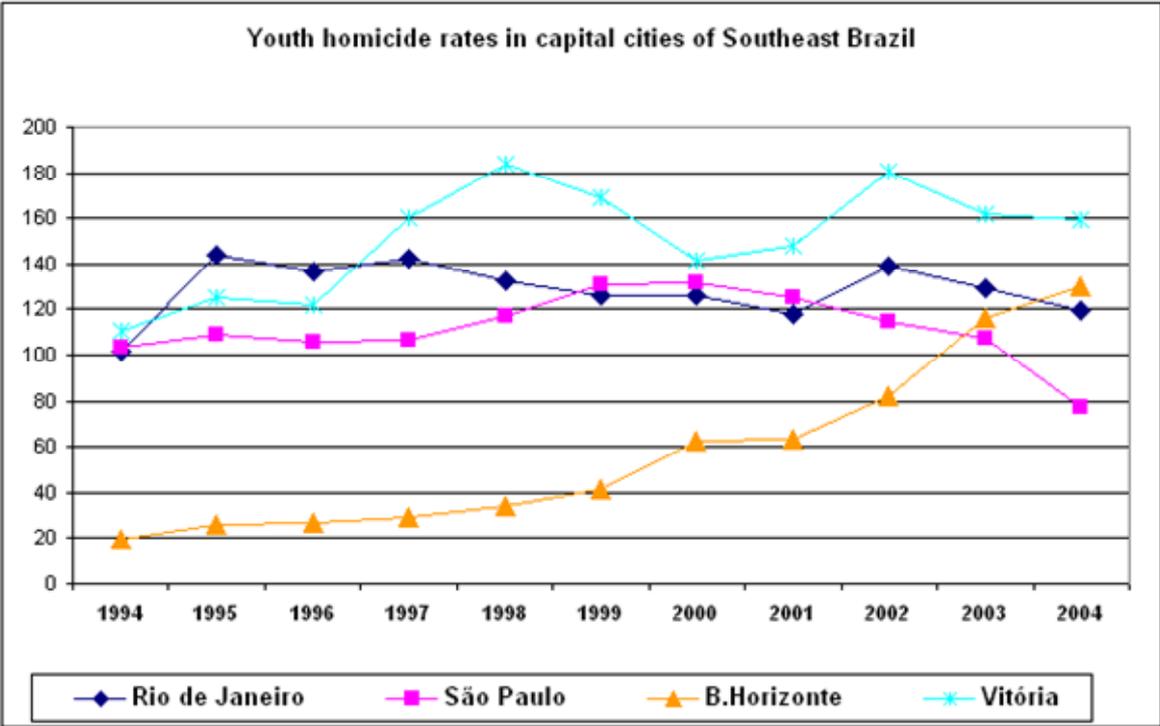
Source: SIM/DATASUS www.datasus.gov.br

While there was a diminishing trend after 1995, for the past ten years the rate has varied from about 140 to 120 in Rio de Janeiro. The decrease was even clearer in São Paulo, while the homicide rate advanced quickly in Belo Horizonte. If one considers only the capital cities and the rates among youths from 15 to 24 years old, in 1980 Rio de Janeiro had a worrying rate of

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58.7 per 100,000, almost double the rate of São Paulo (31.7/ 100,000); almost three times that of Recife (22.4/ 100,000); four times that of Vitória (15.7/100,000); 30 times that of Cuiabá (2.1/100,000). Twenty years later, Rio had 113.6/ 100,000 in the 15-24 age bracket, as opposed to São Paulo with 134; Recife, 142.2; Vitória, 187.1; and Cuiabá, 107.4/100,000.

The sudden growth in Rio during the 1980's followed the expansion of cocaine trafficking that came from Colombia, Peru and Bolivia through several Brazilian states. Rio de Janeiro, on the Atlantic coast of Brazil, with no boundaries with the producer countries, had a peak of cocaine use during the last half of the1980's and no epidemics of crack use. In 2003, Rio de Janeiro (38.5/100,000) was below eight Brazilian capitals in homicide rates calculated by the Civil Police of each state of the Federation[6].

Yet, in the same year, three medium sized towns in the metropolitan region of São Paulo had total homicide rates higher than the youth rates of the capital city, that is, São Paulo: the town of Diadema 149.76/100.000 (Total population: 333,207); Embu-Guaçu 136.57/100.000 (Total population: 46,130) and Itapecerica da Serra 105.5/100.000 (Total population: 124,879). In 2006, none of the Brazilian 27 capital cities, except Recife (92/100,000), were listed as the 60 most violent cities of the country. Diadema lowered its total murder rate to 74.6, Embu-Guaçu to 66.9 and Itapecerica da Serra to 72.8/100,000 but were still included with 60 other cities as the most violent cities. Although the City of Rio de Janeiro occupied the 107o position in this rank, it is still seen as the most violent city regarding youth violent deaths, a category that includes homicides, accidents and suicides.

Relative to robbery, there were seven capitals with higher rates than Rio (1,346/100,000), the highest in Belém (2,013/100,000). As regards theft, Brasília (11,231/100,000) was the leader; and before Rio (1,019/100,000) there were 23 capitals out of 27 Brazilian states. For sexual crimes, attempted murder and torture, there were 19 capitals with higher rates than Rio (33.2/100,000)[7]. Thus, Rio de Janeiro presents higher rates of homicide but not of sexual aggressions or kidnapping, of which São Paulo is the champion (84 cases in 2003 for 4 cases in Rio); and higher rates of robbery but not theft. Both these violent crimes - homicide and robbery - are heavily dependent on access to handguns.

Inequality and youth violence in Rio de Janeiro

Official data shows that, in Rio de Janeiro, the Brazilian pattern of higher male youth homicide rates is undoubtedly clearer in so far as for those from 14 to 30 years old, 94.5% of murder victims were men and only 5.5% women. According to "Mapa da Violência III"[8], in 1999, the intentional murder at this age bracket reached the rate of 105/100,000, whereas it was 76.2 in 1991, but the rate in all ages diminished considerably after 1995 in the state of Rio de Janeiro. This means that the homicide rate grew enormously amongst youths while diminishing in other ages.

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[6]   State Polices - Civil and Militar - have different criteria for registering crimes. Kilsztajn and others affirm, in the article "Vítimas Fatais da Violência e Mercado de Drogas na R.M. de São Paulo" of 2004, that in like São Paulo, the event and not the number of people killed are registered. In Rio de Janeiro each person killed counts even if in the same event.

[7]   Another source of official data is Ministério da Justiça, SENASP/ IBGE, found at the site www.mj.gov.br/senasp/estatisticas

[8]   See note 4. It appeared in 2003.

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Several studies have shown that violent crimes are more common in favelas and distant poor districts, corresponding to inequality differences in the city, and the lack of social and state control, especially policing in the more distant areas[9]. Unfortunately it is very difficult to compare official rates of homicides in different districts or favelas of Rio de Janeiro because the lack of property rights in favelas translates into the lack of addresses. Fearing being discriminated against as favelados, people give existing or non-existing addresses in adjacent districts. Moreover, since police repression is stronger against favelados, bodies are dumped in neighboring districts, thereby increasing their homicide rates tremendously.

The data gathered in the 2005-2006 Victimization Survey, showed that black, low income and less educated people have a greater proportion of relatives, friends and neighbors killed than brown and white people: 3,6% of white residents and 6.7% of browns and blacks had murdered relatives; 5.1% of whites, 5.7% of browns and 8.5% of blacks had friends killed, only 3% in the richest and most policed area of the town, more than 6% in the most distant and poorer areas; 3.8% of whites and 5.6% of browns and blacks had neighbors murdered. In the case of friends and neighbors killed there is not much difference between categories of family income. In the figure below, the percentage of residents with family income smaller than 2 times minimum wage (about 380 US$) is almost two times the percentage of people whose family income is larger than 11 minimum wages (about 2,095 US$).

Figure 3: Murdered Relatives in Rio de Janeiro, by family income
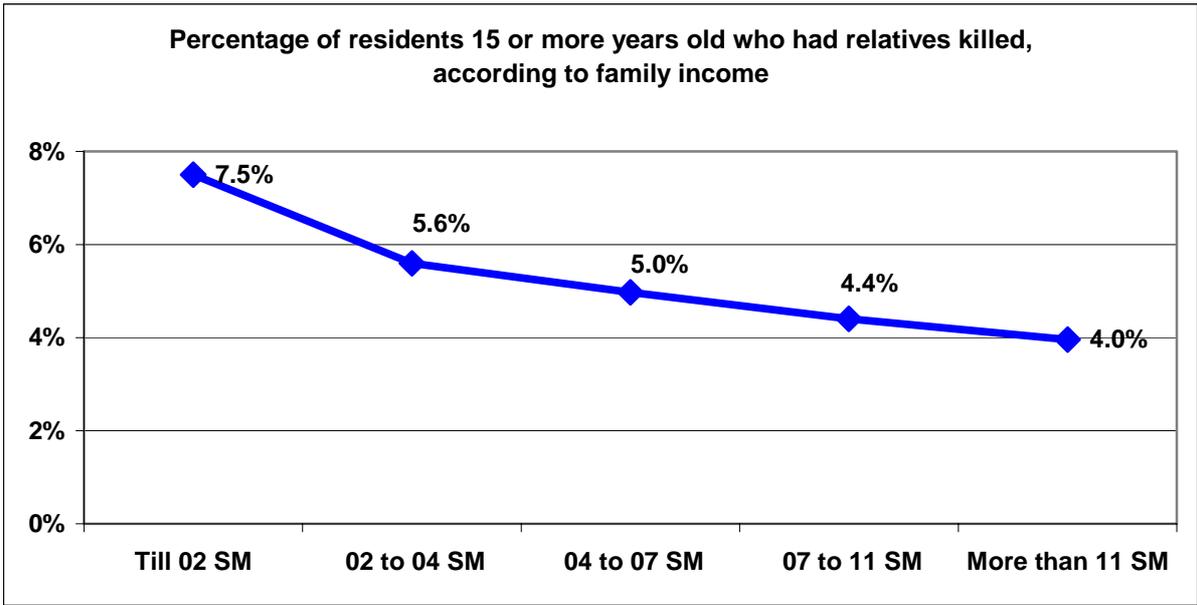
Source: NUPEVI/ UERJ/IPP/PCRJ Victimization Survey 2005-2006

When one looks at Figure 4, it is clear that killings vary considerably by age. Older people have much lower indexes of friends killed whereas younger ones have percentages ten to six times larger. Since these percentages point to losses along each respondent's entire life, one should expect similar rates in all age brackets, which is not the case.

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[9] A good description of this is in the articles I wrote in 2000 and 2001, but also in Alvito (1996) and Lins (1997) cited at the references.

Furthermore, lack of policing, police corruption and violence led to an "endless war", as neighbors calls it, that puts those who live in poor areas between two opposing armed conflicts: the war between bandits of different "commandos"; the war between policemen and bandits, not always to repress crime and to abide to the law. Even when firing is more heard than seen the noise (and the fear it produces) is not evenly distributed between neighborhoods, even the poor ones.

Figure 4: Friends Killed in Rio de Janeiro, by age

Percentages of residents 15 or more years old who had friends killed, according to categories of age

Age	Percentage
15-19	9.4%
20-29	9.1%
30-39	7.7%
40-49	6.2%
50-59	4.6%
60-69	2.1%
70+	0.8%
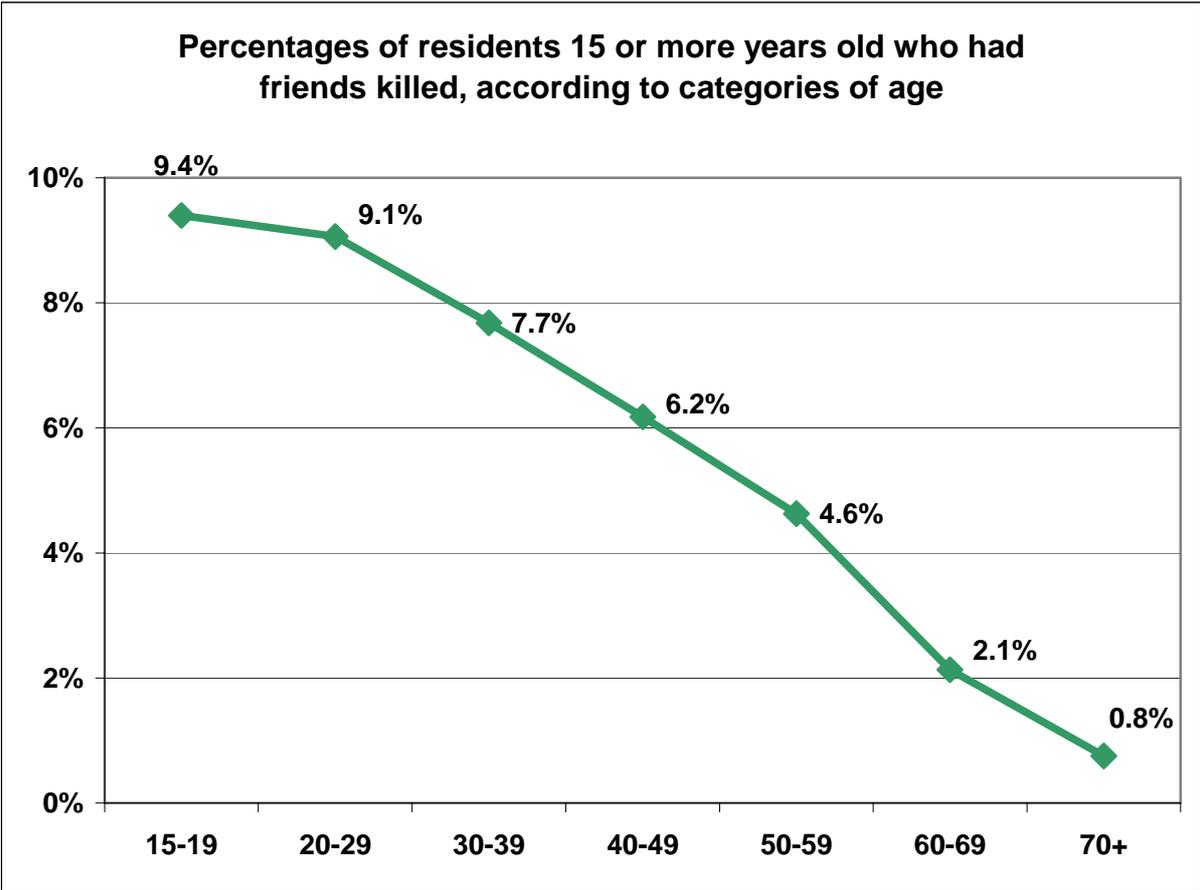
Source: NUPEVI/ UERJ/IPP/PCRJ Victimization Survey 2005-2006

The richest planning areas (Ap 2.1 and 4) are the ones where firing is much less heard. Some of the poorest (Ap 3 and 5.2), where trafficking gangs dominate most of the favelas, are the ones with most of the firing. Ap 5.1, where many military personnel live, and 5.3, where para-military groups controls the territory instead of trafficking gangs, present the lower proportions of firing as well.

If one considers the actual firing between people at vicinities, and other crimes observed or experienced by residents, the situation is much the same, except for robbery:

Figure 5: Hearing Gunfire in the neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro

Percentages of firing heard at neighborhoods, by Planing Areas of Rio de Janeiro
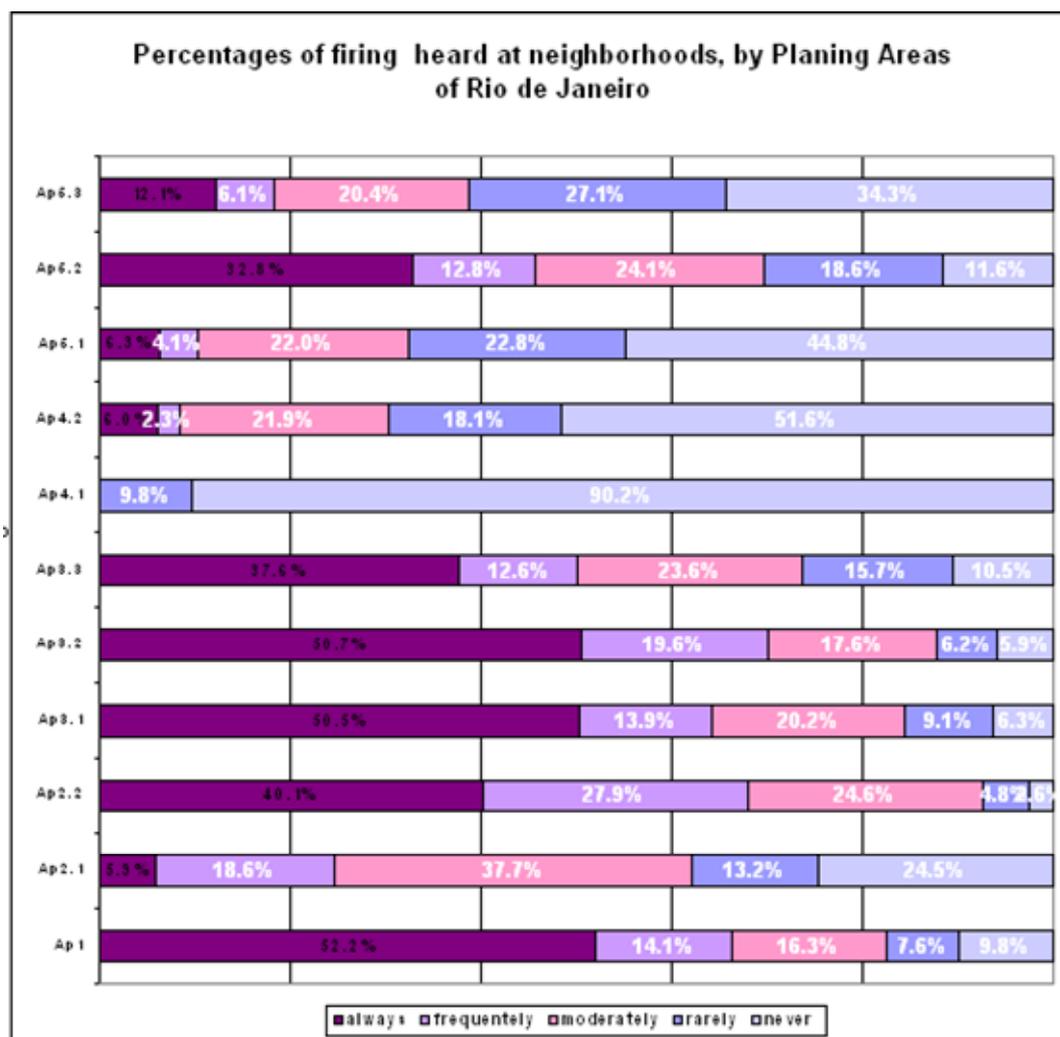
*Source: NUPEVI/ UERJ/IPP/PCRJ Victimization Survey 2005-2006*

Figure 6: Crime in favelas by planning areas of Rio de Janeiro

Planning area	Agression	Drug use	Drug trafficing	Gun fighting	Robbery	Deaths by gunfire	Police extortion	Police gunfire
Ap 2.2	2.10%	54.50%	52.70%	12.70%	0%	10.90%	1.80%	1.80%
Ap 3.1	28.10%	61.60%	61.10%	24.80%	6.50%	24.80%	25.70%	29.20%
Ap 3.2	29.30%	51.10%	41.90%	17.60%	3.30%	19.30%	15.10%	11.75%
Ap 3.3	21.60%	45.60%	36.40%	30.80%	6.80%	25.10%	22.80%	18.20%
Ap 4.2	41.30%	12.90%	3.90%	7.70%	0%	10.30%	0%	0.00%
Ap 5.1	42.40%	42.40%	51.40%	21.20%	6.80%	18.20%	9.10%	12.10%
Ap 5.2	25.50%	25.50%	20.40%	15.30%	0%	8.50%	8.50%	10.20%
Ap 5.3	71.40%	85.70%	47.60%	14.30%	0.00%	4.80%	9.50%	0.00%
Total in Favelas	**30.80%**	**44.90%**	**38.50%**	**18.90%**	**3.70%**	**17.20%**	**13.40%**	**12.50%**
% City Totals	**22.30%**	**31.10%**	**18.30%**	**13.30%**	**16.30%**	**11.60%**	**8.20%**	**4.00%**

Source: NUPEVI/ UERJ/IPP/PCRJ Victimization Survey 2005-2006

Finally, it is possible, from the Census data, to estimate indirectly the risk of dying young from the data gathered about children born alive and deceased for each mother. Since violent deaths account nowadays for 85% of premature deaths between 15 and 30 years old, one can say that the probability of dying young due to violence, especially homicides, in some favelas is several times bigger than in richer districts (Monteiro, 2004). The formula **15q15** per one thousand is the probability of dying before 30 years old for those youngsters who are 15 years old. Comparing several districts and favelas that are administrative districts of the city, one gets the following picture:

Figure 7: Risk of Dying Young
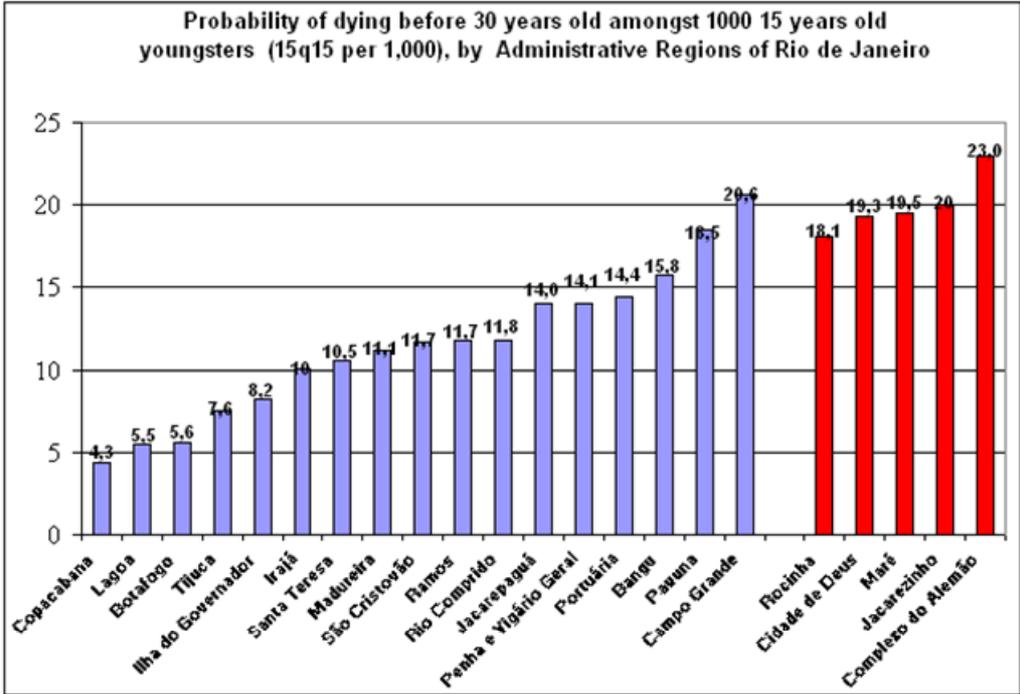
Source: Census of 2000. Software: Mortpak, developed by United Nations Population Division

In the richest districts (Copacabana, Lagoa and Botafogo- Ap2.1) where there are few favelas, for each cohort of 1,000 youngsters of 15 years of age, around five youths do not survive to be 30 years old. In the biggest favelas that have become administrative regions and are all dominated by traffickers' commands (Rocinha, Cidade de Deus, Maré, Jacarezinho and Complexo do Alemão, in red), the risk of dying before reaching 30 years old becomes four or five times larger. In some administrative regions that include poor districts and many favelas controlled by traffickers (Campo Grande and Pavuna), the risk of dying young is similar. But in other poor suburbs, such as Irajá, Madureira and Ramos, this risk is significantly smaller.

Socio-economic inequality in the city

The data presented above also demonstrate that there are not many socio-economic differences between favela and asphalt dwellers in the suburbs and other poor districts of the city. In fact, there was a remarkable impoverishment of the suburbs in Rio from the 1970's onwards. De-industrialization, economic losses in the service sectors and anti-poverty programs focused on the favelas, provoked a noticeable fall in family income and urban

degradation in these districts where lower middle-classes have always lived. Nowadays it is difficult to mark the boundaries between favelas and the adjacent regular districts, although there are islands of affluence in some of them. The opposite is true in the richest zones of the city. There, shantytowns are detached from their surroundings and constitute islands of poverty inside rich environments, presenting face to face the amazing contrasts of inequality in Brazil.

Rio is therefore a city with many fractures according to income, skin color, religion, gender, age and risks of victimization and dying young, but also of policing and military control by traffickers, militias and other forms of private security. As regards income, there is a concentration of poverty in certain districts and certain areas, most of them inside favelas, where there is low income, low educational levels, darker skin people, more children and adolescents, and more unemployment. This partly explains the risk of dying young by violent causes because of the vulnerability of youths to the attractions of criminal groups. The following map shows the poorest zones in red and the richest in sea blue, with middle ranges of income in pink and light blue.

Figure 8: Affluence/ Poverty Zones in Rio de Janeiro
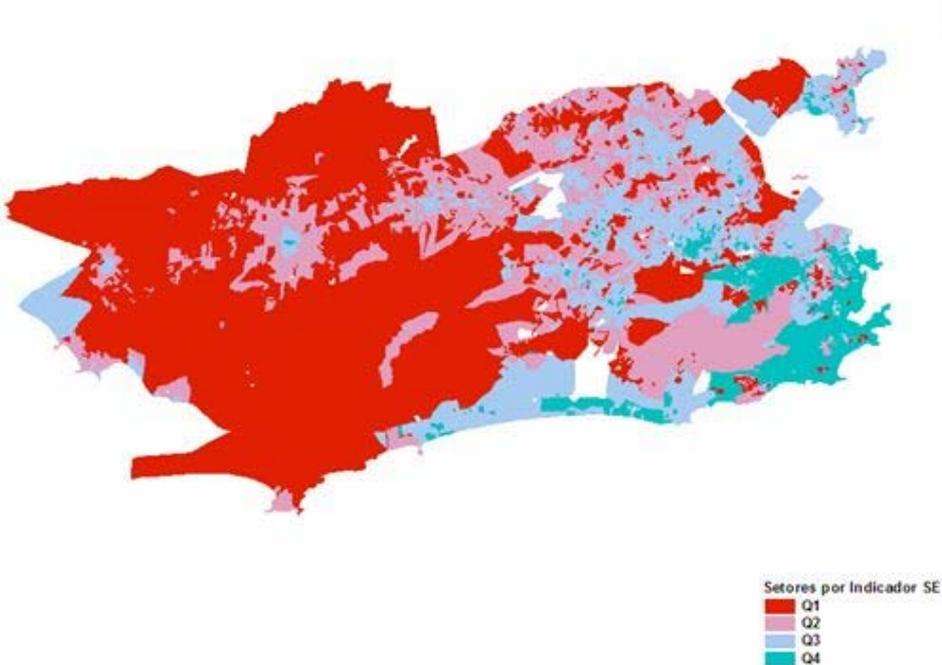
Source: 2000 Census, map made by Dr. Antonio Carlos Ponce de Leon for the Victimization Survey

As shantytowns continue to grow, and an informal real estate market functions inside them, regularization of the legal situation advances very slowly. Informality in building, irregular acquisition of electricity and water have created many areas of conflict due to the difficulties

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in limiting individual freedom in collective spaces. But there are advantages of living in such areas: no urban taxes are paid and informality makes possible the theft of energy, water and even cable TV signals, of which few pay the dues. The result is that population density is amazingly high in some of these favelas and regular city dwellers pay for the losses of the electricity and water services.

One the other hand, informality makes the military control of those areas easier by gangs or militias that, besides selling illegal drugs (the gangs) or security services (the militias), also trade irregular cable TV, informal transport, and domestic gas. Thus, one million people in the city live in areas that have no regular policing and police enforcement, as well as some essential urban services. This increases the chances for violent conflicts between neighbors and enhances the vulnerability of youths facing the attractions of armed drug gangs in the favelas controlled by them.

Racial segregation does not explain the greater vulnerability of youths living in favelas. Although the proportions of dark skinned and white people in favelas are exactly the opposite of the regular city (in favelas 58.6% are blacks and browns[10] and 41.4% white, whereas 36.5% and 63,5% respectively live outside favelas), one cannot define this situation as the segregation that exists in an Afro-American ghetto. Yet, socio-economic data are worse in favelas: 50% of those living in them are less than 25 years old as compared to 37,7% of those living in regular districts. In 2000, illiterates in favelas were 10%, outside them, 3%. Schooling levels in Rio are high compared to the national average of 6 years, but the proportion of people inside favelas with less than 8 years of schooling amounts to 82% of the total inhabitants compared to 46% in regular districts. Only 2% of the favelados and 25% of non-favelados reach the university. Nonetheless, 94% of children in favelas attend school where they still exhibit comparatively poorer performance: 20% of them are more than two years behind in school compared to only 10% of the students outside favelas. Most migrants from the poorest states of Brazil, especially the Northeast where illiteracy is very high, have flooded to the city since the forties and constitute the majority of favela dwellers.

But income distribution shows that there is a small difference between favelados of the South Zone, the richest of the city, and favelados of other zones, especially the West Zone, the poorest. There is also a greater contrast between the average income of favelados (208 US$) and non-favelados (1180 US$) in the South, where most of the rich people live, and those of the poorer zones where this difference is not so huge: US$ 175 for favelados and US$ 285 for non-favelados.[11]

Estrangement from family and school have an effect on the vulnerability of youths to the attractions of gangs and, therefore, to the risk of premature death. It is at the verge of adolescence that young men, when they are finishing the first grade at school or evading it because of repeated failures, become more vulnerable to the attractions of criminal gangs: easy money in cash, and power acquired from the barrel of the gun.

Data from the Victimization Survey 2005-2006 shows that only in poorer planning areas (Ap5.3 and Ap3), where there are many favelas dominated by traffickers, the proportions of victims or witnesses of some crimes are much higher, except robbery. Other poor areas

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[10] Racial classification in Brazil is different from the USA: it is hierarchical and not dichotomist, defined by different racial marks and not by origin. The shades of brown have a continuum that makes difficult to separate whites from "morenos" or "pardos". Racial classification is self ascribed in the Census and negotiated in birth certificate.

[11] Pero, Cardoso and Elias, 2005

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(including favelas of the AP 4 and 5) have much lower proportions of the same crimes. Therefore, poverty cannot explain entirely the greater risk either of dying young or of observing or experiencing other aggression. It is vital to take into account the effects of well-armed traffickers´ presence in those areas.

Violence linked to drug trafficking

Violence linked to drug trafficking is localized at vicinities, and does not divide the whole population in two opposing groups all over the country. In civil wars, soldiers are part of proper military or paramilitary armies and leave their neighbourhoods and do not generally particpate in everyday activities within their neighborhoods.[12]   Consequently, there is less militarisation of children and adolescents in the favelas of Rio where they are not taken away from their families, schools and neighborhoods in order to join military forces that go far away. In turf wars for traffic control, "soldiers" do not loose contact with their families, schools and vicinities.

Drug trafficking is equal to a localized war in many Brazilian cities, despite variations between cities and areas in the same city. In Rio de Janeiro, drug trafficking is not coordinated by a hierarchical mafia but has a horizontal arrangement by which allied favelas supply drugs and guns to each other as needed. Allied crews or commands join the devices of one geographically defined network, with central and distribution points, and one based on horizontal reciprocity. The militarization of drug traffic happened quickly because guns are more easily obtained in a city with ports and airports, as well as in the main arsenals of Brazilian Armed Forces. A continuous smuggling of guns from other countries and some thefts or robberies at these not so well controlled arsenals provided the endless flow of guns necessary to this localized war.

A state monopoly of violence never existed in Brazil. Though there had never been a civil war spread throughout the country, leaving guns in the hands of civilians and making them valuable goods, plantation and hacienda owners have had their own private armies up to the first half of 20th Century. Wars between their extended families and confronting local political parties lasted throughout this period. Nowadays, organized crime, death squads, militias or vigilantes, and private security companies[13] continue to challenge the state monopoly. The Brazilian state had not been strong enough to curb landowners' attempts to create private justice or collective violence and, recently, criminal business bosses' armed power. Thus, although the proportion of people that have handguns is small in cities considered violent, such as Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo[14], criminal armed groups defy the rule of law. And even if the resultant violence does not have a clear cut political character and

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[12]   This interpretation of ethnic conflicts is found in "Children, Armed Conflict, and Peace" by M.G.Wessell, 1998.

[13]   There are heterogenous ways of maintaining security for neighbors in the city. Usually traffickers and militias charge the neighbors for their services; armed vigilantes not always do. Employees of Security companies are not always regularly employed and controlled by the Federal Police. Data from the victimization survey 2005-2006 shows that, relative to crimes commited in the neighborhood, the worst situation is that of favelas controlled by traffickers, except for robberies that have a proportion smaller than the city's.

[14]   In 1997, Organizacion Pan-Americana de Saude coordinated a domicile survey that found 4.5% of the Rio's population declaring guns in their homes. The victimization Survey of 2005-2006, after the Law of Gun Control had been approved, found only 2.5%. In São Paulo, another domicile research in 2003, also calculated that 2.5% of the city population had guns.

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its main goal is business, it becomes political insofar as those powerful groups are able to control some territories in the country and maintain impunity for their criminal actions.

Drug Commands have transient skirmishes to dispute the territory of shantytowns where their markets are located. As a result of the ensuing military control, in most areas inside favelas or near them, the drug lords or "donos" restrict the movements of dwellers and governmental agents, therefore limiting the access to public services, such as schools, health agencies, and sports compounds. Residents of one favela cannot enter the territory of an "enemy" favela, even when delivering goods, visiting friends and relatives, or having dates. If they do, they are killed, especially when they are young men. Violent traffickers do not allow their turf to be "emasculated" and strictly control the sexuality of young women, killing the ones that do not abide to their rules.

This is what favelados of some districts call "the endless war", which consists of opposing members of enemy trafficking commands or policemen confronting traffickers. During these violent clashes, not only gang members, but also youths that live in the invaded or threatened favelas are told to help the local defenders against their "common enemies". Adolescents working for traffickers, who are called "soldiers" or "falcons", then form a "bond" that will confront the other "bond" thus constituted. Some of them have in fact been trained as recruits in Brazilian Armed Forces, a conscripted army. Even when they are not gang members, recruits are "invited" to mount automatic weapons either smuggled or stolen from the Army arsenals, and to train the younger traffic soldiers. Such invitations cannot be refused because youths feel compelled to cooperate with the crew that controls the community where they live and because they know that, if they rebuff the invitation, the price is very high: they will lose "consideration" of the "dono" and other peers; they may be expelled with their families from the favela and even be executed.

Hypermasculinity and turf war

Some adolescents identify themselves with the drug commands of the favelas where they live as if they were soccer team's supporters. This means acquiring the warrior ethos or hypermasculinity that exults with the physical destruction of rivals, calling them "alemães[15]". The end result may be participating in actions in which they need actual guns for survival, that is, practices and ideas developed in trafficking networks that become contagious in larger social contexts. Favela boys grow up seeing the exhibition of guns as symbols of power and the cruel use as lethal instruments for punishing foes. Favela boys learn to hate policemen and fear being pointed out as informers, which provokes loss of respect and death threats. They also learn the values that sustain the pride and virility of "Sujeito Homem"[16] , a man that does not accept an insult and one that reacts with a deadly disposition towards his opponents.

Yet, it is a known fact that not all adolescents follow a criminal career. In Cidade de Deus, the author has calculated that around 1% of the population end up somehow connected to the drug crews[17]. And the symbol of this involvement is carrying a gun. Possession of guns also

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[15]   "Alemães", Germans in Portuguese, is a reference to American films on the Second World War when Germans were the enemies.

[16]   Marcos Alvito (1996), Paulo Lins (1997) and myself (2004) describe the use of this term in the books cited.

[17]   This calculation was done in Cidade de Deus with the help of my research assistant Paulo Lins in 1991, published in most of my cited work. A study done at Fiocruz (www.fiocruz.gov.br), calculated that 15% of adolescents in another favela were so involved.

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follows the dynamics of small and local networks of peers. Youths who otherwise would not carry firearms have started displaying them in order to gain "consideration" from their peers and to avoid being victimized by those who possess guns. Using weapons is a learned behavior and not a natural inclination of poor youths for violence and murder. This learned behavior increases where there is a high concentration of handguns; within what criminologist Jeffrey Fagan has called"ecology of danger" for its contagious ideas and postures.

Dangerous favelas are the ones where firearms are easily acquired and exhibited[18]. In them, youths also believe that by joining a gang they will have military, juridical, political and personal protection from the powerful "donos" (bosses), thus preparing them for the local war. In these favelas, youths learn to be ruthless and to kill other youths from the favelas controlled by "enemy" commands without vacillation. For good reason, they also trust that their crimes will be exempt from penalty although they often end up as victims of homicide in the growing statistics of the country.

This social configuration has been called the warrior ethos[19] or hypermasculinity and points to the construction of an aggressive and destructive virility that permeates the locality where boys grow up. In the streets where they play they absorb the codes by which they become impervious to the suffering of others, that is, they master cruelty and the disposition to kill. Such configuration is not natural, nor eternal, nor consensual. Their main source of pride or illusion is being part of the armed crew that commits muggings and which battles others, thereby becoming famous for these deeds one day. But they are still part of their families, neighborhoods and schools, although they come and go continuously from them.

This trend is seen from the 1970's onwards and is replicated by youngsters whose parents are either too busy or too careless to pay attention to them, whose relatives and neighbors do not dare to confront the rules of the "context", and whose schoolteachers are unable to deal with their learning problems. These are the children who turn into conformists or are "teleguided", as local workers call them, to express the idea that they obey the rules of the criminal gangs without hesitation or thought.

Effects of violence

The boom of violence during the past 25 years has brought suffering for many dwellers of Rio and especially for the poor and the young. Within the justice system the lack of policing and failure to investigate violent acts, even homicides, gave these crimes very high rates of impunity[20]. For the most part, there is shortage of police investigation and people are reluctant to become witnesses at trials because of the fear of retribution from the offenders. The result is the absence of penalties for homicides, which disproportionably affect poor districts.

Because little has changed in prevention policies, guns killed 550,000 people between 1979 and 2003 in Brazil, according to OMS. In 2005, this amounted to 40,000 victims per year.

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[18]   Since 1980, when I started my first research in Cidade de Deus I heard how easy it was to get handguns and how corrupt policemen sold them to the traffickers, sometimes smuggled, sometimes stolen from Police and Army deposits. Most of them were exclusive to these institutions.

[19]   The concept is well defined in the work Quest for Excitement, Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process published by Elias and Dunning in 1993.

[20]   In 1995, a study done by Soares et all, 1995 about the judicial processes found out that only 8% of the police records of homicide were being judged in Rio de Janeiro.

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The slaughter became one major health problem in the country as physical, economic, moral and psychological effects on the victims, their relatives, neighbors and friends caused significant impacts on the scarce resources of the Public Health Sector. Hospitals had to serve the direct victims of violence but also other people with illnesses produced by the trauma of losing close friends or relatives and the risks and stress produced by noises of gunfire and scenes of violence. As a result of so many deaths, injuries losses and fears, the public hospital system collapsed in the 1980's and 1990's. The combined overload of mental health, social work, physical rehabilitation and surgical needs did not match the available funds.

At the community level, violence has worsened everyday life. Older people do not go out at night. Fences, bolts, padlocks and alarms, as well as ferocious dogs are now part of homes. The general feeling is that people are isolated and stranded in their own homes. In favelas, they resent the fact that they have also become the target for mistrust from regular city dwellers. Their neighborhood associations were once so important in the early cultural history of the city since Schools of Samba, Carnival Blocs and amateur Soccer Teams abound in favelas and poor districts, where Afro-Brazilians, and descendants of Ameridians and poor Portuguese created them. Now they are severed by many internal conflicts and by the powerful criminal bosses' attempts to interfere in their decisions. This also means less local informal controls for educating stray youths who make most of the trouble and gunfire in their neighborhoods. Their local leaders lost status and authority while rich and armed criminal bosses, mostly traffickers in the favelas they dominate, became the most valued men in the eyes of these youths.

Fragmented and weakened associations make way not only to traffickers but also to police practices based on the repressive measures of the "war against the internal enemy". This policy was established during the military regime that confronted internal political opposition as subversive organizations, and the small guerrilla movement soon destroyed. Now it is the "war" against another parallel power – organized crime – that has a huge capacity to corrupt policemen and is very well armed. Instead of investigating their networks spread throughout the country and crossing all social classes, the Military Police make incursions or "blitzen" in favelas, which makes adherence to the legal norms that should orient police action even more difficult. Many youths, some of them innocent, and many policemen have died as a consequence of this policy.

Knowledge of the social processes that induce youths to quit multi-generational reference groups, including family and school, point to inadequate parenting, and schools unprepared to give basic instruction and guidance for vulnerable youths. The failure of public policies regarding prevention of drug use and violence made things worse. All of them collude to make the transmission of violent practices easier amongst peers, more so in the institutions that unite heterogeneous delinquent boys under the control of equally unprepared state officials.

Besides, the combined effects of poverty and accelerated urbanization hamper the diffusion of a tolerant, civilized and considerate urban culture. The new urban context, more differentiated and unpredictable, makes dealing with unavoidable conflicts more difficult. Overcrowded cities are also associated with a lack of employment and more competition.

Reducing violence in the city

The only successful attempt to address the split between city dwellers and the Police is a project called DISQUE DENUNCIA that works 24 hours by phone and registers anonymous

complaints or accusations. This is a way of beating the power of organized crime in constraining possible witnesses. It has been very important in lowering crime rates, especially kidnapping and robberies in Rio de Janeiro. This project has now been established in other Brazilian cities, like São Paulo, where the numbers of these crimes are still very high.

Proper policing with a focus on the control of illegal gun use would significantly diminish the homicide rates, especially in the cases of banal conflicts between neighbors in bars, schools, and homes. This was partially accomplished by the recently approved "Estatuto do Desarmamento", a new law that restricts the commerce of guns. But the new law proved to be not enough, due to the presence of so many illegal guns traded in a black market not properly investigated.

As for the drug war, most of the deaths were predetermined since relatives of the victims knew beforehand about this outcome due to the victims' relations with traffickers related to heavy drug use or by other involvement with criminal activities. In both cases, the presence of policemen with training in problem resolution would lessen the lethal aftermath. Very little has been done in this direction with most of the effort devoted to the Municipal Guard, which does not have police power.

Since the 19th century it is possible for poor people to obtain legal assistance in Rio de Janeiro, independent of reliance on rich bosses. It has been the only city in Brazil where the poor can find public defenders, and those accused of murder who do not belong to the local crime organizations, can use them as defence counsels. However, the numbers of public defenders are low compared to the numbers of clients.

When based solely on the poverty and social exclusion diagnoses, most solutions point to improving schooling, stipends to augment family income, such as "bolsa familia"[21], and finally sport and cultural programs as means to increase inclusion. The idea behind the latter programs is that the symbolic dimensions of belonging and identity are more important to youths than income. There is no doubt that vulnerable youths, with shattered self-images, are the ones divorced from the institutions that should socialize them. But none of these projects focus on civility as part of citizenship, that is, the mutual obligations that citizens should have with each other. Youngsters who participate in these programmes are not necessarily learning how to act in a civilized way to respect each other and negotiate their conflicts.

A plethora of social programs, resulting from partnerships between state and NGOs, is trying to give cultural and economic alternatives to vulnerable youths who are out of school and out of work. Their main impacts on youths who become involved with them are to increase personal health and grooming, to increase paternal responsibility, to increase dialogue inside the family and to increase pride in those who are working hard to make progress. But undoubtedly they have no significant macro-social effects inasmuch as they reach small groups only and do not affect aggregate data on poverty and inequality. Only a few youths may become professionals in sports or the arts, which require talent. The majority depends on economic development policies that are designed to increase employment and technical training in other much needed areas.

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[21] This is the main Federal Government action to combat poverty and inequality. But it has been much criticized in the Press because its funds come from the equivalent to the Social Securituy system in Brazil, which is still based on quotas paid by workers. It has also been condemned for its assistentialist or paternalist character. Working people demand employment not charity.

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What can be learned?

The main lesson to be learned from the case of Rio de Janeiro is that it is crucial to have social projects and state policies that integrate all governmental levels (Municipality, State, and Federation) as well as several Secretaries and Ministries with a hold on the control of violence. Thus, Education, Health, Economic Development, and the Justice Systems should have coordinated projects in order to face all the challenges presented by new forms of criminality affecting mainly young men. This coordination is also very important to make the many social projects managed by NGOs -- some full of good ideas -- more efficacious at the macro level. For this it is imperative to reform the Education, Economic Development, and especially the nation's Justice Systems.

Data on the correlation between schooling and homicides indicate that teaching quality is vital to assure that poor youngsters will finish first grade and will be able to go on to the second grade. If Brazilian children are not taken away to become soldiers only a better school will make sure these youngsters will not be delayed in learning and leave school too soon. Thus, the objective in Brazilian cities is to diminish the contingent of stray youths that neither work nor study, and fall into gangs to feel protected and powerful because they carry guns and have money to spend lavishly in conspicuous consumption before their peers.

At the local level, cultural and sport neighborhood projects that connect adults and youths are important for families that can and should be engaged in them. Traditional forms of community association, such as Schools of Samba, Carnival Blocs and Soccer Teams have always fulfilled this function of integrating generations in order to socialize the young. They can and should be supported as much as the new projects that develop glob

alized identities and juvenile styles, such *as hip-hop* or *reggae*. Since trauma resulting from violence is collective[22], such actions will be more successful with groups of youngsters and adults than programs focusing on individuals[23].

Last but not the least, cultural and sport projects will only work if there are public policies for reducing access to guns which youngsters use to kill others and which facilitate their own deaths. It is paramount to impede the flow of weapons that come from army arsenals and across the frontiers of the country. This is a responsibility of the Federal Police and should be followed by changes in policing and law enforcement that respect the civil rights of any citizen, regardless their economic status, color of the skin, gender or religion.

Many actions may be envisaged to disarm these youths. For example, the employment of *gun-oriented* patrolling, aimed at seizing firearms is one policy. Providing youths with other symbols of status and respect is another, related alternative. For these to work, the existing police approaches and investigation modes have to change drastically. New problem solving and prevention strategies that involve the neighborhoods, including those inside favelas, may have more solid and long term effects than other strategies. They point to a better understanding between city dwellers and police and to the diffusion of new ideas that will change the image of policemen as the main enemy of black and poor inhabitants. This transformation will only be possible with a radical reform of Brazilian Police Forces.

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[22] A good explanation is found at Reichenberg & Friedman "Traumatized Children, Healing the Invisible Wounds of War: A Rights Approach".

[23] A thorough discussion of this issue is found at "Children, Armed Conflict, and Peace" by M.G. Wessell.

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