Revista Direito e Praxis

[Dossier: Ethnographies in Contexts of Violence, Criminalization, and Incarceration]

Violence under dispute: crime, discipline and revenge operations in São Paulo, Brazil

Violência sob disputa: crime, disciplina e operações vingança em São Paulo, Brasil

Janaina Maldonado [1]

[1] German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA), Hamburgo, Alemanha. E-mail: janaina.maldonado@giga-hamburg.de. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2300-1458.

Article received on 10/10/2025 and accepted on 12/20/2025.

https://doi.org/10.1590/2179-8966/2026/94623 | ISSN: 2179-8966 | e94623

Abstract

A substantial body of scholarship has examined how violence circulates across Latin American cities. However, much of this work is confined to normative distinctions between state and non-state armed actors. Consequently, the unequal distribution of violence across urban spaces and the relationships between these actors are overlooked. Drawing on ethnographic research in São Paulo (Brazil) conducted from 2018 to 2024, this paper analyses a case in which a mobile phone robbery resulted in the death of an off-duty police officer. The paper focuses on the two immediate responses to the robbery: the disciplinary action taken by the criminal organisation Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) and the retaliatory operation launched by the São Paulo Military Police within the favela. I argue that, although multiple actors — the young robbers, the police seeking retaliation and the PCC members seeking to restore order — mobilise violence as a resource, their actions have unequal implications in terms of power. Ultimately, the capacity to not only exercise violence, but also to regulate its use, emerges as a central element in the constitution of power regimes in urban poor territories.

Keywords: Violence; Urban Conflict; Ethnography.

Resumo

Um conjunto substancial de estudos examinou como a violência circula pelas cidades latino-americanas. No entanto, a maior parte desse trabalho limita-se a distinções normativas entre atores armados estatais e não estatais. Como resultado, a distribuição desigual da violência nos espaços urbanos e os imbricamentos entre esses atores são pouco exploradas. Com base numa investigação etnográfica realizada em São Paulo (Brasil) entre 2018 e 2024, o presente artigo analisa um caso em que o roubo de um celular resultou na morte de um policial fora de serviço. O artigo concentra-se nas duas respostas imediatas ao roubo: a *disciplina* da facção criminal Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) e a operação vingança deflagrada pela Polícia Militar de São Paulo no território. Aponto que, embora vários atores — ladrões, a polícia que procura vingança e os *irmãos* do PCC que procuram restaurar a ordem — mobilizem a violência como um recurso, as suas ações têm implicações desiguais em termos de poder. Em última análise, a capacidade de não só exercer a violência, mas também de regular a sua utilização, surge como um elemento central na constituição de regimes de poder em territórios urbanos pobres.

Palavras-chave: Violência; Conflito Urbano; Etnografia.

https://doi.org/10.1590/2179-8966/2026/94623 | ISSN: 2179-8966 | e94623

1. Introduction

"The situation is ugly, the police are in the neighbourhood"[1], Joana told me during a phone call in July 2023. She lives in the São Jorge favela, on the eastern outskirts of São Paulo. She is a black dark-skinned woman in her 50s and has been a research interlocutor since 2018. That day, Joana called me to say that the São Paulo State Military Police were carrying out a raid in the São Jorge's favela. The favela is home to nearly 9,000 people. It is located in one of the busiest districts of the largest city in the southern hemisphere. Joana lives on Liberdade Street, one of the least urbanised areas in São Jorge. She lives alone in a three-room exposed brick house, a typical self-construction of the outskirts of São Paulo (Kowarick, 1979). Joana moved to the neighbourhood in the late 1980s when an Italian missionary priest gave her a shack in the newly occupied territory. Before that, she spent her childhood in Sé Square, São Paulo's landmark, home for children like herself living on the streets. It was precisely because Joana knew from her street experience how to 'get by' (Gregori, 2000) and had faced the harsh consequences of police violence and juvenile incarceration that she called me that day in a voice full of despair: "a policeman has been killed on São Jorge's main avenue. I'm in my godmother's house and I'm afraid to go back home." While off duty, an officer was targeted in a robbery in the neighbourhood, reacted, and was killed. Joana knew that when a policeman is killed in the favela, everyone is in danger.

It wasn't the first time something like this had happened in São Jorge, and certainly not in the city of São Paulo. That same month, the São Paulo state government launched Operation Escudo following the murder of a military police officer in the south coast of São Paulo state. During the 40-days operation, 28 people were killed by police officers. Joana feared the same would happen in her neighbourhood. There, a group of young men have specialised in stealing and selling stolen mobile phones. Based on life trajectories and situations like the one narrated by Joana, this paper aims to reflect on the management of violence in poor territories by distinct armed actors. Drawing on the robbery that occurred in the São Jorge favela in 2023, I focus on the two immediate responses to the robbery which victimised an off-duty police officer: the reaction of the

[1] All character names and the name of the district in which this research was conducted are fictitious. Expressions in single quotation marks refer to concepts taken from specialised literature, while italicised expressions refer to empirical concepts. Double quotation marks are used throughout the text to indicate citations, whether from interlocutors or the literature. The source is indicated in each case.

https://doi.org/10.1590/2179-8966/2026/94623 | ISSN: 2179-8966 | e94623

São Paulo State Military Police, which gave rise to a revenge operation in the territory, and the reaction of the criminal brotherhood Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC), which through the factional position of the *disciplina* tried to reduce the harmful effects of the situation. Following it, we dive into the most violent part of the urban conflict (Motta, 2022; Maldonado, 2020) that cut across major Latin American cities like São Paulo.

The robbery that prompted this introduction was committed by a group of men, which Patrick, a 20-year-old light-skinned black man born and raised in the São Jorge favela was part of. Patrick occasionally engages in illegal activities to supplement his income. He represents a small fraction of favela youth who engage in criminal activities (Galdeano et al., 2018). He and his friends take the riskier positions in illegal markets – markets that are nothing more than global economies (Feltran et al., 2022). Between 2023 and 2024, he and a group of boys focused on stealing mobile phones as a means to 'survive in adversity' (Hirata, 2022).

Drawing on the two reactions to the robbery here briefly introduced, I intend to show that the regulation of the use of violence by Patrick and his friends is fiercely contested by different actors and the respective power regimes constructed through their practices. As Michel Misse (2006) points out, violence is a diverse set of practices whose legitimate use is contested. The most visible site of this struggle (but certainly not the only one) is the daily life of the poorest in São Paulo, which is directly and indirectly governed by a set of three armed actors: the 'operators of the illegal markets', the 'operators of the protection markets' and 'the forces of state law and order' (Rodrigues; Zambon; Feltran, 2023).

These practices are 'repertoires of violence' (Tilly, 2003). Operators of illegal markets (in our case the Primeiro Comando da Capital *brothers*), for example, organised *debates* and decided on punishments for the boys' *inappropriate* conduct. The state forces of law and order organised revenge raids to recover what they saw as an inversion in the balance of power caused by the murder of their fellow police officer. On the other hand, operators of the protection markets – often state forces of law and order acting outlaw – deployed techniques such as kidnappings and threats to secure their share of illegal proceedings. Such practices are always emergent and contested forms of "authority grounded in violence, performed and designed to generate loyalty, fear and legitimacy from the neighbourhood to the summit of the state" (Hansen and Stepputat, 2006, p. 297).

https://doi.org/10.1590/2179-8966/2026/94623 | ISSN: 2179-8966 | e94623

Based on this episode, I argue that although violence is a resource deployed by a variety number of actors - the boys who carried out the robbery, the police officers seeking revenge, and the *brothers* of the criminal group who were trying to reorganise the situation –, not all of them have the same power implications. In other words, the ability to not only exert violence, but more importantly to regulate its use, is one of the fundamental aspects of the constitution of power regimes in urban poor territories like São Jorge's favela.

This paper draws on ethnographic fieldwork conducted from 2018 to 2024 in a large favela in the eastern part of São Paulo. An area which concentrates inequalities, a varied and active social movement, and the hegemony of the PCC in its illegal markets (as it is in São Paulo as a whole). Following Machado da Silva (2010), I consider the São Jorge favela and the city of São Paulo to be a unique case that is nevertheless useful for understanding large Brazilian cities as a whole. My contacts in the area were facilitated by local institutions. Between 2019 and 2022, I've lived in the area for a total of 11 months. In 2023, I spent a further six months in São Paulo, carrying out weekly visits to my main interlocutors and monitoring conflict situations and family trajectories (Das and Poole, 2004; Blokland, 2017; Knowles, 2014). These periods were interspersed with sporadic visits, participation in social events, and digital contact. My methodological approach is based on participatory observation and a comprehensive description of conflict situations, as well as complementary biographical interviews with key interlocutors. My material consists of transcribed interviews, fieldwork diaries, and secondary data such newspaper reports, public datasets, photos and video recordings. The trajectories described here methodologically follow the proposition of typical trajectories,

> The methodological construction of our typical journeys follows the tradition of contemporary ethnographies of objects (Knowles 2014; Tsing 2015) but also that of narrative analysis (Alleyne 2014). In this method, the formal construction of the narratives is part of the methodological-analytical work. In this book, the journey of our five stolen cars is a composition, by aggregation, of situations and characters that we got to know in the field. The journeys must be typical, that is, we must reconstruct the chain of profile events of subject who were usually, frequently, found in the field. We did not, therefore, opt for exceptional scenes or liminal situations, even when we observed these in the field, but for repeated scenes and situations (Feltran et al., 2022, p. 23).

Researching violence was never my ambition. Rather, I have always been interested in looking beyond violence (Jaffe, 2019) to the processes of differentiation

https://doi.org/10.1590/2179-8966/2026/94623 | ISSN: 2179-8966 | e94623

and the differences that cut across urban conflict. In particular, I wanted to explore the interplay of racialisation, gender dynamics, criminalisation and territories as integral components of urban conflicts (Maldonado, 2020). As Jaffe (2019) points out, I wanted to see what would emerge if we looked beyond violence at territories mainly characterised by violence and the criminalisation processes that affect them. However, the violent encounters experienced by my interlocutors could not be ignored, precisely because violent encounters emerge from the very same processes of differentiation in motion in our urban world. Over the past few years, I have worked extensively with the region's Human Rights Centre, which has meant that my ethnographic work has focused much more on violence than I had initially anticipated. While observing the Centre's work and that of young people involved in illegal activities, as well as their families, I became familiar with the severe implications of assuming riskier positions in illegal markets. The challenge was how to describe these violent encounters without making them the focus of life trajectories that have much more to say. The field provided the answer. Violence was not exceptional; therefore, it did not have to be described as such (Das, 2020). It wasn't a defining feature, but was situational. It produced subjects, state processes and moral representations. Therefore, this is not a paper that attempts to measure violence, state its quality, or classify it. Rather, I intend to discuss the process through which it emerges, its deployment and management, and consequently its power implications.

For ease of understanding, this paper is divided into four parts. First, I will discuss my theoretical framework by introducing how violence will be treated throughout this paper. Then, we move to our core ethnographic situation, the robbery, its consequences and protagonists. This part is mainly descriptive and aims to reveal the complexity and heterogeneity of the lives of the urban poor in the city of São Paulo. Third, we will trace the responses of the two armed actors who claim to order the effects produced by the robbery and murder: first, the reaction of the criminal brotherhood PCC through the *disciplina*; second, the retaliation by state forces of law and order through the actions of the police corporations with their revenge raid. Finally, I return to the central concern of this chapter, arguing that although in São Paulo violence is a widely available resource for actors other than the state, its use is organised, controlled, territorialised and highly consequential. Resorting to violence without finding support in what is collectively legitimate can have dangerous and far-

https://doi.org/10.1590/2179-8966/2026/94623 | ISSN: 2179-8966 | e94623

reaching consequences. This legitimacy is achieved both through shared notions of respectability and through market and material accumulation (Maldonado and Beraldo, 2024). Therefore, the decision to deploy violence as a resource is not a simple one and is deeply related to practices of sovereignty (Stepputat and Hansen, 2016), governance (Lessing, 2021) and market pacification (Feltran et al., 2021; Lien and Feltran, 2025).

2. Theoretical framework

A substantial body of academic and intellectual work explores the various ways in which violence spreads across Latin American cities. The region is by far the most violent in the world, largely due to its high homicide rates[2]. Imbusch, Misse and Carrión (2011) argue that would be an easy task to rewrite the history of the region as a history of violence. Many authors have made this effort, reconstructing the history of armed conflict (Pearce and Perea, 2019), political violence (Kurtenbach, 2011) and most recently criminal violence (Durán Martinez, 2017; Zubillaga et al., 2019). Contemporary, we've seen contributions about violence and elites (Pearce, 2018), violence and poverty (Briceño Leon and Zubillaga, 2002; Ayuero, 2007; Machado da Silva, 2010), drug trafficking and violence (Feltran, 2011; Durán Martinez 2017; Hirata and Grillo 2019; Beraldo 2021), violence and criminal governance (Arias, 2006; Lessing, 2021), and violence and its entanglements with racialisation, gender and sexuality (Efrem Filho, 2017). After decades of political violence and authoritarian rule, 'urban violence' (Machado da Silva, 2010) has became the grammar which produces the practical-moral understanding of much of daily life in large Latin American cities (Machado da Silva, 2010, p. 286). However, violence is not distributed evenly throughout our cities, despite what the homicide rates might suggest. Rather it is localised at the borders between neighbourhoods of the lower and middle classes (Feltran et al., 2022), and concentrated in bodies territorialised, racialised and entangled in gender dynamics (Efrem Filho, 2017). However, while criminal violence dominates the public discourse through

[2] For a reflection on the use and misuse of homicide rates to understand violence in Brazil, see: Feltran, G., Lero, C., Cipriani, M., Maldonado, J., Rodrigues, F. D. J., Silva, L. E. L., & Farias, N. (2022). Variations in homicide rates in Brazil: an explanation centred on criminal group conflicts. *Dilemas: Revista de Estudos de Conflito e Controle Social*, *15*, 311-348.

https://doi.org/10.1590/2179-8966/2026/94623 | ISSN: 2179-8966 | e94623

definitions of crime - that are mostly processes of 'criminalisation' (Misse, 2018)[3] -, repression by the state and selective political violence are mostly neglected or justified (Kurtenbach, 2019, p. 284). Nevertheless, "the crisis of violence in Latin America is also a state security crises" (Pearce, 2018, p. 5), backed by a history of a perverse state formation (Pearce, 2010).

While, the state plays a primary role in the production and perpetuation of violence in the region, much of the explanation for the pervasive violence that cuts across Latin America continues to revolve around the idea of state weakness. This argument is based on the Weberian normative view that Latin American states should monopolise the legitimate use of force. In Latin America, however, the state has never effectively monopolised the legitimate exercise of violence (Cruz, 2016). The state's territorial and infrastructural presence has always been selective, sporadic, and contradictory (Cruz, 2016, p. 390). This argument has two consequences. First, as many authors have discussed (Vianna and Lowenkron, 2017; Das and Poole, 2004), the state is far from being a monolithic, unified and reified entity. The state is better described as a diffusion of processes and attempts at stabilisation that occur in the day-to-day workings of its bureaucracies (Das and Poole, 2004). When referring to state processes, I differentiate between the state as a normativity that gives meaning and justification to our experiences, and the processes that are deployed in practice by a myriad of actors who redefine and dispute the proper definition of a normative state in their daily lives. This is why, when discussing the state's forces of law and order, I am not referring to an autonomous regime, but to them as part of the state power regime and the disputes within its own formation. The second consequence is if a state monopoly of violence ever existed, Latin American cities are, on the contrary, formed by a plural order where violence is available to a set of actors. In other words, distinct power regimes conflict with, coexist with, and co-construct each other in our cities every day (Feltran, 2011; Maldonado and Beraldo, 2024). The most prominent are the criminal, religious and state power regimes. This plurality has been explored by various scholars (Feltran, 2012; Beraldo, 2021). The organisation of these regimes is closely linked to their use of

[3] Misse (2010, p.22) explains that the "social accusation that constructs the criminal (and which coincides with the beginning of the incrimination process) is always the result of a contextualised interpretation, among agents, of courses of action whose "normal" or "deviant" meaning is produced in that same process and not before it." Therefore, there is no criminal without criminal subjection.

https://doi.org/10.1590/2179-8966/2026/94623 | ISSN: 2179-8966 | e94623

violence as a key resource. Nevertheless, shared notions of respectability, infrastructure and material accumulation also form part of their foundation (Maldonado and Beraldo, 2024). This paper will, however, focus on the violence deployed by the three armed actors mentioned in the introduction. These actors are 'violent entrepreneurs' (Volkov, 2016) who have "the capacity to use and manage physical force" (Volkov, 2016, p.15) and to organise it as a resource for entrepreneurial activities (Volkov, 2016). Being that illegal markets, or its parasitary protection markets.

Over the years I conducted ethnographic research in São Paulo, I have been able to follow the various illegal activities that Patrick and his friends have been involved in. Situations like the robbery that ended in the murder of the police officer trigger violent and almost immediate reactions. Instantly after the shooting, police cars approached and isolated the crime scene. Using cars, helicopters, and ground incursions, several military police teams searched for the young men suspected of the murder, warning that anyone found on the streets would face the consequences. At the same time, rumours spread throughout the neighbourhood about what attitude the *brothers* would take in face of such a situation. *Brothers* are the members of the criminal brotherhood First Capital Command (PCC). Two hypotheses were considered, either the *brothers* would kill the responsible/s, or they would protect them and send them away safely. Beyond the rumours, its important to note that the murder triggered both the reaction of 'state forces of law and order' and of 'illegal operators' (Rodrigues; Zambon; Feltran, 2023), pointing to them as the plausible actors to respond to the matter.

To understand how these responses came to take shape, we need to consider the entangled development of public security, police lethality and the expansion of criminal collectives in São Paulo since the post-authoritarian era (after 1985) (Cruz Silva, 2023). Mass incarceration policies, for example, prompted the raise and expansion of criminal brotherhoods (Feltran, 2012). The massive economic, recognition and representational crises created fertile ground for illegal markets to boom in marginalised territories (Leeds, 1996; Feltran et al., 2022). Therefore, the development of government and criminal policies are parallel and often symbiotic (Auyero and Sobering, 2019). The *disciplina* of the First Capital Command and the revenge operations of the Military Police battalions became the centre of the dispute over the legitimate use of lethal violence in the favela and, above all, called into question the regulation of violence in the construction of power regimes. Violence has been used by both state

https://doi.org/10.1590/2179-8966/2026/94623 | ISSN: 2179-8966 | e94623

forces of law and order and operators of illegal markets as a means of war, as a means of pacifying conflict, or as a means of survival and resources accumulation. In all these ways, its legitimacy is contested, negotiated and reconfigured among its protagonists. Consequently, I am interested here in describing and inferring the assumptions, modes of action, ethical and political horizons that make up the repertoires of violence of each of these groups of actors.

3. The scam that went wrong

In July 2023, Patrick was involved in a scam with a group of boys from São Jorge. At 20, Patrick is the youngest child in a family of four. Patrick is black light-skinned, is slim and about 1.80 metres tall. Of his group of friends, he's the most discreet, always wearing his dark blue Nike cap, jeans and the favela team football shirt where we read: “the favela’s pride”. He lives with his mother and stepfather in a two-room self-constructed house on the same street as Joana. His father has been in prison for five years after being caught with a stolen car in the district's biggest avenue. His mother does odd jobs like cleaning middle- and upper-class family houses and selling self-made cakes. Aged 50, she cleans two apartments a week in the city centre, 1.5 hours by bus from her home. She earns per day worked and can make almost the minimum wage in a *good* month of work. Patrick’s stepfather is a retired bus driver and earns monthly 1 MW[4]. Patrick and his stepfather do not share a paternal relationship; for Patrick, the father figure has long since been filled by the educators at the local Human Rights Centre.

Patrick is the only man among the sisters. Two of his sisters have a degree in pedagogy and now work in day-care centres and socio-educational services in the region. The youngest sister, without having completed high school, works as a subcontracted worker for an industrial cleaning company in the São Paulo metropolitan area. As his sisters are already married and left the mother’s house, Patrick shares the contribution to the family budget with his mother and stepfather. Although only the three of them live in the house, his sisters’ children spend their days there since his mother helps in their care. Patrick feels the pressure to *become a man*. Especially now

[4] The Brazilian Minimum Wage (MW) in 2025 is equivalent to 284 US dollars.

https://doi.org/10.1590/2179-8966/2026/94623 | ISSN: 2179-8966 | e94623

that his daughter has turned one year old. She lives with the mother, who he doesn't have a relationship with anymore. He tries to help with money from time to time, but his former girlfriend has threatened to take him into court for pension. He fears he will need to call the *brothers* to solve the matter before she takes it into formal justice.

Patrick has completed secondary school and in recent years has found temporary work in the construction industry. He is known as dedicated, willing to do any kind of hard work. His most recent jobs have been on the embankments in the São Jorge favela. Since the 1980s, there have been many landslides in the area, particularly at his street – Liberdade Street. With no access to selective waste collection for decades, the rubbish accumulated at the top of the hill, causing it to slide down during rainy periods. At the same time, the many wooden shacks built on the slope contributed to its collapse. After decades of struggles over the construction of the wall, the work on the embankment was carried out in stages by the municipality, with the logistical involvement of a landowner on Liberdade Street, who was openly known for his ties to illegal enterprises. A couple of young male local residents were employed in the construction, Patrick included. At the time of the embankment project, in exchange for jobs arranged by the local landowner, Patrick diverted some of the construction materials to the man's enterprises – bringing both Patrick extra money, and the landowner free supplies to invest and maximise profits. However, both the embankment job and its extra-money are only temporary and after the birth of his daughter, Patrick needs to make a living during periods of unemployment, so he sporadically participates in his friends' illegal activities by lending them his motorbike, which he bought legally from earnings from previous licit work. In this way, not directly partaking in his friends illegal activities, Patrick manages to maintain his reputation as a hard worker, especially within his family. Even though most of the favela knows about his *partial* involvement in illegal activities, his nebulous position (between being part of the scheme or not, lending the motorbike but not executing the robbery) guarantees a certain flexibility when it comes to navigate formal, informal, legal, or illegal work perspectives. Patrick knows that its important to keep his options open.

The scheme that Patrick was involved in worked as follows: the boys searched for mobile phone adverts on OLX, a buying and selling platform based in Amsterdam and

https://doi.org/10.1590/2179-8966/2026/94623 | ISSN: 2179-8966 | e94623

by far the largest in Brazil. Instead of buying the phones, the boys stole them[5]. They created fake buyer profiles to search for specific iPhone models. After finding an offer, they would show interest in the product, negotiate with the seller, and then steal the device at the time of exchange. They used the internet at a barbershop on the busiest street in the favela for the negotiation part. Each participant in the scheme received a share. The phones could be unlocked at electronic repair shops in neighbouring districts of the São Paulo metropolitan area and sold at the same shops for one or two Brazilian minimum wages. Others could be sold privately or via the same OLX platform. Some robberies are commissioned by electronic shops, which act as both the point of arrival for clients and the destination for stolen goods. The barbershop owner provides the boys with internet access and the contact details of the people who can unlock the phones. He charges a percentage per device for both services.

This scheme is organised in a similar way to other illegal markets (Beckert and Dewey, 2017; Pires, 2020; Feltran et al. 2022). For example, if we consider the sale of stolen car parts, the clandestine and illegal dismantling business operates in a similar manner (Feltran et al., 2022). Boys like Patrick are hired on a contract basis by car and motorcycle choppers. The choppers order specific parts from the boys, such as an engine from a Hyundai HB20. The boys, who are not very professional — Patrick being a case in point — organise themselves into groups of three or four, rent guns from someone in their neighbourhood and search for cars on busy avenues or in nearby neighbourhoods. As they lack the skills to steal a vehicle without being noticed, they look for cars that are moving, entering garages, or stopped at traffic lights. Robberies may occur through the mere threat of violence, but if the victim resists, the situation can escalate. After the robbery, the boys leave the car in a safe place, such as an abandoned lot or shed, for a few days to cool off, before returning to take it to be dismantled. Alternatively, they may use the car to drive around the favela for a few days before taking it to the scrapyard. For this service, the boys usually receive an amount per stolen car. They deduct the cost of the borrowed weapon from this amount and divide the rest

[5]Although the market for stolen mobile phones has been in decline since 2024, it remains immense in Brazil as a whole, with 431.7 robberies per 100,000 inhabitants. The city of São Paulo has the third highest rate of stolen mobile phones in the country (Forum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública, 2025).

https://doi.org/10.1590/2179-8966/2026/94623 | ISSN: 2179-8966 | e94623

among the four participants (Feltran et al., 2022)[6]. The cellphone scheme follows the same logic.

In July, Patrick rented a gun to carry out a robbery. He split the gun rental fee, arranged by one of the neighbourhood *brothers* as part of the investment, with three other boys. Patrick, who owned a motorcycle bought legally from his previous job, did not take part in the robbery itself, but lent his friends his motorcycle in exchange for a share of the profits. They saw an online ad for an iPhone — the exact model that the unlocking shop had ordered. Using a fake profile, the boys negotiated with the advertiser. The delivery was scheduled for that same afternoon. They were calm, as the scheme had worked every time before. The boys split up: two got into a car and one got on a motorbike. They arranged to meet on a street parallel to the main road that ran through the neighbourhood. When they arrived and announced the robbery, the iPhone owner reacted by pulling a gun out from behind the car seat. Before he could fire, the boys were faster. One of them, scared, fired four times. The shots hit the man, killing him instantly. What no one knew at that moment was that the victim was an off-duty police officer from a special unit. The police officer, who was driving an Aldi vehicle and was alone, had gone to meet the boys to make the delivery. He and his wife were trying to make ends meet and were selling products online to supplement their income. The boys managed to run away.

4. The reaction: *disciplina* and revenge operations

The murder prompted a response from both the 'state forces of law and order' and the 'illegal operators'. Both have a repertoire of violence, including lethal violence, which they resort to or threaten to use. The former are the *disciplina* of the First Capital Command (PCC), while the latter are the revenge operations of the Military Police battalions. Their repertoire comprises practices that signal the regimes of crime and state power. Such regimes produce opposing interpretations of urban conflict through violence, fracturing metropolises such as São Paulo.

[6] The example of the stolen car market used here is part of the collective research that resulted in the book "Stolen cars: a journey through São Paulo's urban conflict" (Feltran et al. 2022), in which I participated as a researcher and author.

https://doi.org/10.1590/2179-8966/2026/94623 | ISSN: 2179-8966 | e94623

4.1. PCC's *disciplina*

Although the robbery attempt was unsuccessful and ended in a fatal mistake, Patrick and his friends had long been a nuisance to São Jorge's *disciplina*. The *disciplina* plays a crucial role in the criminal brotherhood First Capital Command (PCC) (Biondi, 2010; Mallart, 2014; Feltran, 2018) and its criminal governance (Lessing, 2021). Hegemonic in São Paulo's illegal markets since the beginning of the 2000s, the PCC has achieved internal pacification in the criminal underworld of São Paulo by controlling logistics, regulating the use of violence, particularly lethal violence, and strictly controlling gun circulation (Biondi, 2010; Feltran, 2018). This intra-crime pacification was mainly achieved by the *disciplina*, who, within the organisation, is responsible for mediating and solving conflicts within the criminal universe. A *disciplina* would be responsible for situations such as the death of the police officer in which Patrick was involved. He would decide how to deal with the boys and protect the brotherhood's business while the police were in the favela. Whether in prison or in the neighbourhood's criminal universe, a *disciplina* must manage conflict (Feltran, 2018). They must do so based on *procedures*. These *procedures* are a set of behaviours expected of those in the criminal world. As the lexicon and codes of the criminal world have expanded in the outskirts (Feltran, 2011), the term has become popular to describe behaviour that is considered appropriate and expected in everyday life beyond one's engagement with illegal economies. The *disciplinas* also serve as a point of contact between the residents and the brotherhood. The position of disciplina is rotated and filled by individuals who have demonstrated respectable behaviour within the criminal world.

However, the *disciplina* is not authorised to decide on punishment without first consulting their peers. To do so, they must convene a *debate* (an exchange of ideas), in which those involved in the conflict have the opportunity to present their side of the story. After the *debate*, the *brothers* present decide the punishments, either in person or via mobile phones that link the street and the prison (Godoi, 2010, 2017). When the PCC was established, the *disciplina* position and the *procedures* were a means of establishing a long-term morality within the criminal universe (Feltran, 2018).

https://doi.org/10.1590/2179-8966/2026/94623 | ISSN: 2179-8966 | e94623

Patrick and his friends actions have generated *debates*. Some were settled through violence, while others have not, or have as well escaped the control of the *disciplinas*. A few months before the robbery, the boys were involved in the theft of motorcycles. The stolen motorbikes were brought to the favela before being taken to scrap yards or sold on. While the motorbikes should be *cooling down,* the boys would ride them around the favela, attracting the attention of girls and the police. Attracting girls brings prestige in an extremely masculine world. Attracting policemen, however, is bad for business. With more police in the neighbourhood, or insurance companies deploying their *hunters* (teams hired to track down stolen vehicles[7]), illegal activities become more dangerous, and its profits are reduced. At the same time, police action in favela areas is long-standing characterised by the abuse of violent tactics, jeopardising the safety of people involved or not in criminal markets. After many complaints from community members, the *brothers* verbally warned the boys, which led some to find new places to hide the stolen motorcycles and others, less professionals, to find another target.

Why resorting to violence was avoid by the *brothers*? The *disciplina*' decision was aimed at respecting the boys' activities in the illegal market, after all there is no prohibition on the act of *seeking progress* by stealing motorcycles. Many of the *brothers* even profited from the activity by working in the dismantling business, for example. However, the boys had to be warned and instructed to reduce the visibility of their actions. After all, crime shouldn't be just for show. After the *salve* (warn), part of the boys changed their modus operandi, and others, Patrick included, began to steal goods and products delivered to the neighbourhood. Once again, residents began to complain that their deliveries weren't being made. Shops stopped making deliveries in the neighbourhood, and delivery men started or not coming or coming with armed guards. One more time, the *brothers* called the boys in for a *debate*. The boys' actions were damaging to the community. Ultimately, they were stealing products that were to supply the residents, so they shouldn't be doing it there. If they wanted to, they should steal in another area. The boys defied the decision. They argued that they were doing their own thing and not stealing from the neighbourhood because everyone could order their products again. Rumours began to spread around the favela that the boys lacked

[7] To an analysis of the Insurance Market in São Paulo see: Fromm, D. (2022). *A indústria da proteção: sobre as interfaces entre seguro, segurança e seguridade* (Doctoral dissertation, [sn]).

https://doi.org/10.1590/2179-8966/2026/94623 | ISSN: 2179-8966 | e94623

discipline. The authority of the local *disciplina* began to be challenged. Somebody has to do something, you could hear many people say. The *Command* (PCC) is too weak, others would go further. Regardless of their potential weakness, the relevance of those comments lies in the expectation of punishment or control for the boys' misbehaviour.

The group of boys who had started stealing deliveries, including Patrick, were warned and ultimately moved on to steal in other areas. However, during one of these activities, they robbed a residence in a neighbouring area which turned out to be the home of a *brother*. This was a line too far. Patrick and his partners had broken all the rules by being warned, adapting, and ending up robbing a *brother* from another community. Whether or not the boys knew it was a *brother's* house is irrelevant. Their actions had already shown countless examples of wrongdoing. Another *debate*, another discussion — this time, the boys were unable to argue. They all got beaten up. It was hoped that this would teach them a lesson. It did not. Rather, they left the debate even more determined to challenge any authority.

Patrick's involvement in the illegal markets takes place in this context of factional hegemony. Following the wars of the 1990s on the outskirts of São Paulo, the PCC established peace in the drug, weapon and stolen vehicle markets, as well as in the associated legal markets (fuel, transportation, hotels, etc.). This factional peace generated even more money for the criminal world and led to the growth of the protection markets, which became associated with illegal economies (Misse, 2010). The rate of homicide within the criminal world then remained consistently low for two decades (Feltran et al., 2021). In this way, the boys' behaviour, especially the alleged murder attributed to them, caused a disruption in what is fundamental to the normativity constructed by the criminal power regime: the restricted use of violence, especially lethal violence. What the PCC has realised over time is that the policy of regulating violence, which began as a way of organising against the violence of the *system*, has been extremely lucrative in business terms. Over the decades, as illegal markets (such cocaine trafficking) have become transnational and increasingly expanded (Sampó, 2019; Pinho; Rodrigues; Zambon, 2023), the PCC has mastered its logistics and became "a platform to professionalised logistical networks in which violence plays a secondary and instrumental role at the local level when really necessary" (Lien and Feltran, 2025, p.32).

https://doi.org/10.1590/2179-8966/2026/94623 | ISSN: 2179-8966 | e94623

4.2. Revenge Operations

As the PCC expanded into the world of crime, the 'state forces of law and order' expanded their security apparatus. Moreover, the corrupted part of the later, engaged in 'protection markets' (Misse, 2010) as 'violent entrepreneurs' (Volkov, 2002). The accumulation of material goods through protection markets has led to an increasing autonomised security forces. Through a process of double expropriation, which involves the extraction of money through bribes and protection services to guarantee the functioning of illegal markets, as well as the appropriation of the state's security infrastructure. In simple terms, corrupt police officers and their paramilitary counterparts take control of the state apparatus and parasite criminal markets for their own profit. In São Paulo, for most of the time, these arrangements between 'illegal operators' and 'state forces of law and order' work with relative harmony. However, this is not always the case. This harmony can be broken, as it often is when an officer is killed in a crime situation.

In our robbery scene, shortly after the shots were fired, the street was surrounded by police vehicles. The confrontation took place on a Friday afternoon. The same day, at night, the intervention began. Several Military Police units gathered in the favela. Cars, motorcycles and helicopters. The commander of the raid was not from the area. Neither were the officers on the ground. The presence of police operatives in favelas is not uncommon, nor is the abusive use of violence during such operations. However, my ethnographic experience shows that operations conducted by agents with no knowledge of or experience in the neighbourhoods they are targeting tend to be more violent. Anyone can become a suspect and any house can become a target for search. In operations motivated by revenge for the death of an agent, violence escalates and investigation and protocols are increasingly flouted (GENI, 2025). If the criminals use *salves* (warnings), the police do too, and the local boys were warned not to stay on the streets; anyone who did would suffer the consequences.

Saturday, the day after the robbery, I went to São Jorge's Human Rights Centre to follow the situation. I remember the feeling as I got off the monorail station that day and walked to the Human Rights Centre. Police officers were on duty outside the station. Police cars cruised fast from one side of the avenue to the other. A helicopter flew overhead. The feeling was one of anxiety. I would leave in a few hours and return

https://doi.org/10.1590/2179-8966/2026/94623 | ISSN: 2179-8966 | e94623

home safely, but what would happen to those young people? What would happen to all the others who had been a fundamental part of my career over the last few years? How far could Operation Revenge go this time? Upon arriving at the Human Rights Centre, everyone shared the same emotion. Fear ran through everyone present.

Over the following days, the military police visited the homes of those allegedly involved on a daily basis, demanding to know the whereabouts of the young suspect. One of these homes was Patrick's. The violent invasion of his family home led to a confrontation between his mother and the police officers, who demanded that he reveal the young man's whereabouts. One of the officers pointed his gun at Patrick and threatened him. In a desperate act, his mother pushed the officer and Patrick was shot in the buttocks. He and his mother were arrested that day. Patrick was released months later. His mother was released on the same day, thanks to the intervention of the Human Rights Centre.

The tense situation continued over the following months. Groups of police officers patrolled the alleys daily in search of suspects. I witnessed one of these patrols first-hand. It was a Sunday evening. The local community centre had organised a party in the community library on Liberdade Street. At around 7 pm, eight police officers came running down the street with their guns pointed at everyone at the event. They shouted accusations at us, claiming that we were protecting criminals, and demanded to know where the boys had gone. This was the same group that had been patrolling Liberdade Street for several days and had beaten Joana up in an alleyway. The officers wore cameras on their uniforms, but the most agitated officer, who was shouting, did not have a camera. An interlocutor explained that the most agitated group were inexperienced young police officers unfamiliar with the area. The calmer group were officers who knew the area well and were known by the locals by name. Nevertheless, the situation caused panic, so the children were taken inside the building. The officers continued to shout and threaten one of the event participants. After an intervention by a Human Rights Centre educator, the officers ran down the alley, allegedly in pursuit of the supposed perpetrators.

Despite the violent nature of the situation in the São Jorge favela, no local residents lost their lives. This non-lethal outcome can be attributed to the early intervention of the local Human Rights Centre, which took several protective measures to safeguard neighbourhood youth; the deployment of police forces to the coastal

https://doi.org/10.1590/2179-8966/2026/94623 | ISSN: 2179-8966 | e94623

region of the state in a revenge operation that had negative repercussions for the corporation and the state government; or to the young suspect being removed from the neighbourhood early on through his connections in the criminal world. Or perhaps it was just luck. Similar situations in the neighbourhood and in the state had ended in massacres. Between 1980 and 2020, 828 massacres were recorded in the state of São Paulo alone (Vedovello 2024). Within this universe, between 2015 and 2019, 43.5% of massacres in São Paulo involved police officers (Vedovello 2024). Recent data shows that, while homicide rates in the state are decreasing, the percentage of homicides involving 'state forces of law and order' is increasing (Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública 2025)[8]. It is no coincidence that social movements such as the Mothers of May describe Brazil political landscape as a a 'Democracy of Massacres' (Mães de Maio 2011).

Vedovello (2024) and the most recent reports by the Grupo de Estudos de Novos Ilegalismos (2025) suggests a potential reconfiguration of execution practices, shifting from clandestine to overt operations as part of the security policy, as we saw in the São Jorge favela, and in the Operations Escudo and Verão in 2023 and 2024[9]. In this sense, massacres cease to be seen as deviations and become a structuring element of Brazilian democracy, as GENI (2022) argues. This reveals lines of continuity between the military regime and the democratic period. Indeed, GENI's (2022) hypothesis is that the "democratic transition preserved more continuities than ruptures in the field of public security in relation to the military regime. Institutional democracy was established alongside a state killing machine which is currently operating at full capacity" (GENI, 2022, p.5). In this context, massacres fulfil a political function, responding to social demands for tough action against crime while maintaining the appearance of institutional legitimacy (GENI, 2022). As Auyero (2007) argues "the Police Corporations,

[8] Reports from the Brazilian Forum on Public Safety for 2024 and 2025 highlight an increase in the proportion of violent deaths caused by police lethality in several Brazilian states. The state of São Paulo is among the six states where police lethality accounts for more than 20% of all homicides. Between 2023 and 2024, São Paulo experienced a 61% surge in the number of individuals killed in police interventions (Brazilian Forum on Public Safety, 2025).

[9] Between July 2023 and April 2024, the Military Police of the State of São Paulo, under the leadership of State Secretary of Public Security Guilherme Derrite and with the approval of Governor Tarcísio de Freitas, launched Operation Escudo e Verão in response to the murder of a police officer on the southern coast of São Paulo. During the operation, 84 people were killed. Reports and footage recorded on police body cameras show that the deaths were not the result of conflict; that the victims were unarmed; and that post-mortem examinations were either not carried out or tampered with due to tampering with the crime scene. The images also show the summary execution of victims. These operations were the deadliest in the state's history (GENI 2025).

https://doi.org/10.1590/2179-8966/2026/94623 | ISSN: 2179-8966 | e94623

acting as the state representative, acts simultaneously as an enforcer of the rule of law and an accomplice to criminal acts" (Auyero, 2007, p. 13).

5. Conclusion

From inside a television studio, the presenter — a white man with black hair and a grey beard, wearing a suit and shirt — announces the following news: two robbers who came to grief during a mobile phone theft in eastern São Paulo. "Watch these images with me", he says. As images of the incident, recorded by a security camera, are shown, he narrates the events:

> The robbers had expressed interest in a mobile phone for sale online. When the victims went to deliver the phone, the robbers announced the robbery. As the victims surrender and hand over the mobile phone, look who arrives: a ROTA[10] police car. You can see it at the top of the video. Look! There was no conversation; there was a shoot-out. One assailant was wounded and another fled. The police are investigating the images to find out where he is. Thanks to God, the victims who were caught in the crossfire were not injured (Reporter narrative, quoted from a report broadcast in June 2025)[11].

Along with the narration, we see the scene on a big screen: two young men approach on a motorbike. One of them, holding a gun and wearing a helmet, gets off the motorbike and steals one of the boys' mobile phones. The other young man, who is still on the motorbike, demands that the other boy hand over his belongings. A few seconds later, a ROTA police car approaches the robber from behind at speed. The man is hit by a series of shots and falls onto the pavement, where he begins to crawl. The young man on the motorbike speeds off. That day, Patrick had decided to accompany a friend to collect a mobile phone that had been ordered by the technical assistance shop. While his friend drove Patrick's motorbike, Patrick dismounted to collect the phone. He was shot seven times that day. He survived and is currently in prison awaiting trial.

Patrick spend most of his days standing on a street corner in the São Jorge favela. In the past two years, he was involved in several violent situations. Through the robbery story, I tried to show that while violence is a complex mix of different practices

[10] São Paulo's Special Police Unit "Rondas Ostensivas Tobias de Aguiar".

[11] Although the report was broadcast on a mainstream Brazilian television channel and ended up as a "Shorts" video on YouTube, I have chosen not to share the link to the original video in order to protect the identities of those involved.

https://doi.org/10.1590/2179-8966/2026/94623 | ISSN: 2179-8966 | e94623

(Misse, 2018) and a broad resource for a range of actors, from petty criminals to high-ranking state officials, not all of them have the same implications. Violence is one means through which power regimes can be signalled. In other words, the ability to not only exert violence, but more importantly to regulate its use, is one of the fundamental aspects of the power regimes carried out by the armed actors here described.

For Patrick, violence is often one of the means by which he claim to "make money no matter what". He navigates formal employment, illegal markets and transit through churches, human rights centres, and drugs selling points. Patrick does not affiliate himself to any. He knows that keeping his options opened can help him tackling with life hardships. On the robbery day, was one more day Patrick was improvising to make a living, lending his motorbike but not taking part of the action, was precisely his way of keeping a normative distance between himself and crime as a normativity. In this sense Patrick was not very different from the officer that ended murdered in the situation, both were trying to improvise to make a living. We know very little about the police officer who was killed during the robbery. No news regarding his whereabouts was revealed, and throughout my research, I had little or no access to police officers or institutions (I was officially denied interviews and kept waiting for officers who did not show up). However, the socioeconomic profile of Brazilian officers can be very similar to Patrick's (Larkins and Durão, 2023).

In the second robbery, which prompted this conclusion, Patrick decided to join his friend to collect a stolen phone, he gave the key to his friend enjoy the ride. As the event unfold he ends up shot several times. The access to violence by Patrick is almost always situated in the context of a crime scene. And it is there, and only there, that he can use violence to redress the inequalities in which he is positioned. Whether or not its use is virtuous is irrelevant here. For Patrick and his group, violence serves as a situational resource. Yet they are its primary targets due to the intersection of markers of racialisation, gender, class, and territory that they embody (Efrem Filho, 2017). Moreover, Patrick is entangled in violent networks precisely because of the role he plays in illegal markets. He is a low-level operator within these markets, and is at the bottom of global supply chains involving drugs, stolen cars, weapons and contraband. He is unprotected and on the front line of the conflict between two different power regimes - the criminal and the state.

https://doi.org/10.1590/2179-8966/2026/94623 | ISSN: 2179-8966 | e94623

Overall, he is often subject to the governance of the set of armed actors described here as “illegal operators, protection market operators and state forces of law and order” (Rodrigues; Zambon; Feltran, 2023). For them, on the contrary, violence is a fundamental resource to ensure that their power regimes spread across territories. In their case, what these actors seem to be building are practices of sovereignty (Hansen and Stepputat, 2006), i.e. the right over life (either to protect it or to kill it). Diphoorn (2013, p. 15-16) argues that “this definition entails that claims to sovereignty are based on the ability to enforce punishment and to do so through violence”. Practising sovereignty, therefore, requires the ability to protect or kill, punish or discipline the body of others. Hansen and Stepputat (2006) argue that, due to the historically complex and frequently unstable configurations of sovereignty in postcolonial societies, a variety of informal sovereignties emerge. As we saw in this paper, the always tentative and partial rule of these forces — such as the emergence of *disciplina* and the deployment of revenge operations — often has a more profound and effective impact on the lives of ordinary people than an idealised, distant incomplete welfare state (Hansen and Stepputat, 2006).

The story of the robbery and its reactions, show how violence is a mechanism for the performance of sovereignty. For groups such as the PCC, violence is both a tool for exercising sovereignty and a solution for pacifying the criminal world by regulating its use. This was precisely the mechanism through which the Brotherhood established its hegemony in São Paulo’s carceral system and illegal markets. It was also the way the group managed to expand throughout the country and control the logistical networks that enabled their transnational expansion. Illegal economies without violence are much more profitable. Does this mean that the group does not use violence? On the contrary, episodes of brutal violence do occur. Violence is deployed, as we saw in our story, but through collective mechanisms at local and transnational levels to pacify conflicts and control logistical channels.

For the forces of the state law and order, the expressive use of lethal violence is, on the one hand, a performance that attempts to restore the balance of a performative monopoly of violence, and on the other, the public expression of a missionary world project based on the war between good and evil. So-called revenge operations, such as Operation Escudo and Operation Verão or São Jorge’s operation, are not isolated incidents or one-off deviations in São Paulo's public security. On the contrary, they are

https://doi.org/10.1590/2179-8966/2026/94623 | ISSN: 2179-8966 | e94623

updates of a long history of the differential management of impoverished areas, the social legitimisation of state violence against marginalised populations, and unstable pacts between the 'state forces of law and order' and 'illegal operators'. These operations do not emerge from nowhere; they are preceded by decades of the militarisation of public security policies, the expansion of illegal markets and their associated protection rackets, and the strengthening of criminal factions deeply rooted in popular territories.

These operations have one thing in common: they demand the restoration of a social order broken by the rupture of the pact between state law enforcement and illegal operators. In other words, it is not the existence of a criminal world or the widespread availability of violence as a resource to different armed groups that breaks social order, but rather the rupture of the pact between crime and the security forces. In 2010, the sociologist Machado da Silva argued that this was the key to understanding the coexistence of democratisation processes and the expansion of criminal and police violence.

Rather than protect life and stabilise lethal violence, death is taken as a political and procedural instrument. Meanwhile, illegal operators such as the First Capital Command coexist with state institutions, creating hybrid forms of sovereignty in the governance of urban territories. Designating these actions as "operations" legitimises them as state actions, demonstrating the autonomy of the corporations and the institutional alignment of their chains of command. The persistence of lethal police violence, combined with its growing political and social legitimisation, reveals a deep crisis in the democratic model of security management. Hirata and Grillo (2019) argue that, in contemporary Brazil, the 'metaphor of war' (Leite, 2012) serves as a cognitive framework for understanding the country's violent conflicts. In this framework, lethality is not an exception but rather a constitutive part of the equation. As Hirata and Grillo (2019) summarise, "the war on crime becomes the favoured means of interaction between the government and its citizens" (Hirata and Grillo, 2019, p. 556), sustained by a policy of extermination that employs militarisation, legality and death as key instruments of state power. However, the very notion of war is enunciated in very different ways depending on whose perspective it is, as we saw looking into both illegal operators, and state forces of law and order. It is therefore not a question of two sides of the same war, but of different worlds and, consequentially, different wars (Hirata and

https://doi.org/10.1590/2179-8966/2026/94623 | ISSN: 2179-8966 | e94623

Grillo, 2019). Different in their assumptions, modes of action, ethical and political horizons.

References

ALMEIDA, R. A expansão pentecostal: circulação e flexibilidade. In: As religiões no Brasil: continuidades e rupturas. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2006. p. 111–122.

ARIAS, E. D. The dynamics of criminal governance: networks and social order in Rio de Janeiro. Journal of Latin American Studies, v. 38, n. 2, p. 293–325, 2006.

AUYERO, J. Routine politics and violence in Argentina: the gray zone of state power. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

AUYERO, J.; SOBERING, K. The ambivalent state: police-criminal collusion at the urban margins. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

BECKERT, J.; DEWEY, M. The architecture of illegal markets: towards an economic sociology of illegality in the economy. Nova York: Oxford University Press, 2017.

BERALDO, A. Entre a vida e a morte: normatividades, negociações e violência em uma favela de Belo Horizonte. Dilemas: Revista de Estudos de Conflito e Controle Social, v. 14, p. 27–51, 2021.

BIONDI, K. Junto e misturado: uma etnografia do PCC. São Paulo: Terceiro Nome, 2010.

BLOKLAND, T. Community as urban practice. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017.

BRICEÑO-LEÓN, R.; ZUBILLAGA, V. Violence and globalization in Latin America. Current Sociology, v. 50, n. 1, p. 19–37, 2002.

CRUZ, J. M. State and criminal violence in Latin America. Crime, Law and Social Change, v. 66, n. 4, p. 375–396, 2016.

DA SILVA, L. A. M. "Violência urbana", segurança pública e favelas: o caso do Rio de Janeiro atual. Caderno CRH, v. 23, n. 59, p. 283–300, 2010.

DAS, V. Vida e palavras: a violência e sua descida ao ordinário. São Paulo: Editora da Unifesp, 2020.

DAS, V.; POOLE, D. Anthropology in the margins of the state. Santa Fé: School of American Research Press, 2004.

DIPHOORN, T. G. Twilight policing: private security in Durban, South Africa. Utrecht: Utrecht University, 2013.

https://doi.org/10.1590/2179-8966/2026/94623 | ISSN: 2179-8966 | e94623

DURÁN-MARTÍNEZ, A. The politics of drug violence: criminals, cops and politicians in Colombia and Mexico. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

EFREM FILHO, R. A reivindicação da violência: gênero, sexualidade e a constituição da vítima. Cadernos Pagu, n. 49, e175007, 2017.

EFREM FILHO, R. Mata-mata: reciprocidades constitutivas entre classe, gênero, sexualidade e território. Tese (Doutorado) – [s.l.], 2017.

FELTRAN, G. (Ed.). Stolen cars: a journey through São Paulo's urban conflict. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2022.

FELTRAN, G. et al. Variations in homicide rates in Brazil: an explanation centred on criminal group conflicts. Dilemas: Revista de Estudos de Conflito e Controle Social, v. 15, p. 311–348, 2022.

FELTRAN, G. Fronteiras de tensão: política e violência nas periferias de São Paulo. São Paulo: Editora Unesp/CEM/Cebrap, 2011.

FELTRAN, G. Governo que produz crime, crime que produz governo: o dispositivo de gestão do homicídio em São Paulo (1992–2011). Revista Brasileira de Segurança Pública, v. 2, n. 11, p. 232–255, 2012.

FELTRAN, G. Irmãos: uma história do PCC. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2018.

FROMM, D. A indústria da proteção: sobre as interfaces entre seguro, segurança e seguridade. Tese (Doutorado) – [s.l.], 2022.

GALDEANO, A. P. et al. Tráfico de drogas entre as piores formas de trabalho infantil: mercados, famílias e rede de proteção social. São Paulo: Cebrap, 2018.

GENI/UFF. Chacinas policiais: relatório de pesquisa. Rio de Janeiro: GENI/UFF, 2022. Disponível em: <https://geni.uff.br/wp-content/uploads/sites/357/2022/05/2022_Relatorio_Chacinas-Policiais_Geni_ALT2.pdf>. Acesso em: 10 out. 2025.

GENI/UFF. Vingança, uso da força e a utilização de provas nos casos de violência letal e lesões graves: dois anos da operação escudo/2023. Acesso em: 11 out. 2025.

GODOI, R. Ao redor e através da prisão: cartografias do dispositivo carcerário contemporâneo. 2010. Dissertação (Mestrado em Sociologia) – Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2010.

GODOI, R. Fluxos em cadeia: as prisões em São Paulo na virada dos tempos. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2017.

GREGORI, M. F. Viração: experiências de meninos nas ruas. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2000.

https://doi.org/10.1590/2179-8966/2026/94623 | ISSN: 2179-8966 | e94623

HANSEN, T. B.; STEPPUTAT, F. Sovereignty revisited. Annual Review of Anthropology, v. 35, n. 1, p. 295–315, 2006.

HIRATA, D. V. Sobreviver na adversidade: mercado e formas de vida. Vol. 3. São Carlos: EdUFSCar, 2022.

HIRATA, D.; GRILLO, C. C. Movement and death: illicit drug markets in the cities of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Journal of Illicit Economies and Development (JIED), v. 1, n. 2, p. 122–133, 2019.

IMBUSCH, P.; MISSE, M.; CARRIÓN, F. Violence research in Latin America and the Caribbean: a literature review. International Journal of Conflict and Violence (IJCV), v. 5, n. 1, p. 87–154, 2011.

JAFFE, R. Writing around violence: representing organized crime in Kingston, Jamaica. Ethnography, London, v. 20, n. 3, p. 379–396, 2019.

KNOWLES, C. Flip-flop: a journey through globalisation's backroads. London: Pluto Press, 2014.

KOWARICK, L. A espoliação urbana. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1979.

KURTENBACH, S. State-building, war and violence: evidence from Latin America. GIGA Working Papers, 2011.

KURTENBACH, S. The limits of peace in Latin America. Peacebuilding, v. 7, n. 3, p. 283–296, 2019.

LARKINS, E. R.; DURÃO, S. Os profissionais de segurança: creating moral security subjects in Bolsonaro's Brazil. Luso-Brazilian Review, v. 59, n. 2, p. 8–30, 2023.

LEEDS, E. Cocaine and parallel polities in the Brazilian urban periphery: constraints on local-level democratization. Latin American Research Review, v. 31, n. 3, p. 47–83, 1996.

LEITE, M. P. Da "metáfora da guerra" ao projeto de "pacificação": favelas e políticas de segurança pública no Rio de Janeiro. Revista Brasileira de Segurança Pública, v. 6, n. 2, p. 374–388, 2012.

LESSING, B. Conceptualizing criminal governance. Perspectives on Politics, v. 19, n. 3, p. 854–873, 2021.

LIEN, N.; FELTRAN, G. (I)llicit chains: some new hypotheses regarding a changing global cocaine market. Journal of Illicit Economies and Development, v. 7, n. 1, 2025.

MALDONADO, J. Jogando meu corpo no mundo: relações entre conflito urbano e diferença. 2020. Dissertação (Mestrado em Sociologia) – Universidade Federal de São Carlos, São Carlos, 2020. Disponível em: <https://repositorio.ufscar.br/handle/ufscar/13727>.

https://doi.org/10.1590/2179-8966/2026/94623 | ISSN: 2179-8966 | e94623

MALLART, F. Cadeias dominadas: a Fundação CASA, suas dinâmicas e as trajetórias de jovens internos. São Paulo: Terceiro Nome, 2014.

MISSE, M. Crime e violência no Brasil contemporâneo: estudos de sociologia do crime e da violência urbana. Rio de Janeiro: Lúmen Juris, 2006.

MISSE, M. Trocas ilícitas e mercadorias políticas: para uma interpretação de trocas ilícitas e moralmente reprováveis cuja persistência e abrangência no Brasil nos causam incômodos também teóricos. Anuário Antropológico, v. 35, n. 2, p. 89–107, 2010.

MISSE, M. Violence, criminal subjection and political merchandise in Brazil: an overview from Rio. International Journal of Criminology and Sociology, v. 7, p. 135–148, 2018.

MOTTA, L. Fazer Estado, produzir ordem: gestão do conflito urbano em projetos sociais para a juventude vulnerável. Vol. 6. São Carlos: EdUFSCar, 2022.

MÃES DE MAIO. Do luto à luta: Mães de Maio. São Paulo: [s.n.], 2011. Disponível em: <https://www.fundobrasil.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/livro-maes-de-maio.pdf>. Acesso em: 10 out. 2025.

PEARCE, J. Elites and violence in Latin America: logics of the fragmented security state. London: [s.n.], 2018.

PEARCE, J. Perverse state formation and securitized democracy in Latin America. Democratization, v. 17, n. 2, p. 286–306, 2010.

PEARCE, J.; PEREA, C. M. Post war and non war violences: learning about peace and peacebuilding from Latin America. Peacebuilding, v. 7, n. 3, p. 247–253, 2019.

PINHO, I. V.; RODRIGUES, F. D. J.; ZAMBON, G. Navegar é preciso: as jornadas da cocaína e a expansão das facções pelo Brasil. Novos Estudos Cebrap, v. 42, p. 41–58, 2023.

PIRES, L. Popular markets, illegalisms and its regulations through violence. [s.l.]: [s.n.], n. 50, p. 27, 2020.

RODRIGUES, F. D. J.; FELTRAN, G.; ZAMBON, G. Apresentação: expansão das facções, mutação dos mercados ilegais. Novos Estudos Cebrap, v. 42, n. 1, p. 11–18, 2023.

SAMPÓ, C. Cocaine trafficking between Latin America and West Africa. URVIO Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios de Seguridad, n. 24, p. 187–203, 2019.
SILVA, E. C. Até tirar-lhes a vida: uma genealogia do auto de resistência. Tese (Doutorado) – [s.l.], 2023.

TILLY, C. The politics of collective violence. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

VEDOVELLO, C. D. L. Urban slaughters in the city and Metropolitan Region of São Paulo (2009–2020). Cadernos Metrópole, v. 26, e6164747, 2024.

https://doi.org/10.1590/2179-8966/2026/94623 | ISSN: 2179-8966 | e94623

VIANNA, A.; LOWENKRON, L. O duplo fazer do gênero e do Estado: interconexões, materialidades e linguagens. Cadernos Pagu, n. 51, e175101, 2017.

VOLKOV, V. Violent entrepreneurs: the use of force in the making of Russian capitalism. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002.

ZUBILLAGA, V.; LLORENS, M.; SOUTO, J. Micropolitics in a Caracas barrio: the political survival strategies of mothers in a context of armed violence. Latin American Research.

About the author

Janaina Maldonado is a Researcher Fellow the German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA Hamburg) and a PhD Candidate at the University of Hamburg, Germany.

Authorship credits

The author is solely responsible for the article.

Conflict of interest statement

There are no possible conflicts of interest in carrying out and communicating the research.

Funding information

This research was conducted as part of the Graduate School 'Democratising Security in Turbulent Times', a PhD programme hosted by the University of Hamburg. It was supported and funded by the German Institute for Global and Area Studies. Additionally, the research was facilitated by the International Journal of Urban and Regional Research (IJURR Foundation) through its Writing Up Award.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, upon reasonable request.

Statement on the Use of Artificial Intelligence

The author used DeepL as a proofreading tool.

Editors Responsible for the Evaluation Process and Editing

Carolina Alves Vestena and Bruna Bataglia.

https://doi.org/10.1590/2179-8966/2026/94623 | ISSN: 2179-8966 | e94623