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Crime and the Governance of Large Metropolises in Latin America: Mexico City (Mexico) and São Paulo (Brazil)

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Criminalidade e a governança de grandes metrópoles na América Latina: Cidade do México (México) e São Paulo (Brasil) analisa as formas de governança criminal em duas metrópoles, Cidade do México e São Paulo. Procura responder às seguintes perguntas: como se governa o crime nas cidades? O que se governa? Por que em uma metrópole existe uma organização criminal quase monopólica da coerção, mas na outra não? As fontes de informação incluem documentos oficiais, notícias de imprensa, estatísticas e bibliografia especializada. Resultados indicam que a governança da cidade e a governança do crime estão interconectadas, constituindo microrregimes que controlam territórios, populações, bens, riquezas, usos da força e poder, articulando o local, o regional e o transnacional.

Palavras-chave: governança urbana, governança criminal, monopólio estatal da violência, Cidade do México, São Paulo

This paper analyzes different forms of criminal governance in two metropolises, Mexico City and São Paulo. It answers the questions: Who governs these two cities and how do they do it? What is governed? Why is it that in one metropolis there is an almost monopolistic criminal organization of coercion, but not in the other? Official sources include documents, press archives, statistics and a specialized bibliography. Results indicate that city governance and crime governance are interconnected, constituting micro-regimes that control territories, populations, goods, wealth, uses of force and power, thus bringing together the local, regional and transnational.

Keywords: urban governance, criminal governance, state monopoly on violence, Mexico City, São Paulo

Introduction¹: the problem of everyday life and crime in Latin American cities²

Most cities in Latin America have high rates of violence and in most of them there are multiple criminal organizations with distinct characteristics, of varied sizes, which employ diverse forms of territorial and population control. Numerous recent studies have proposed that criminal organizations have acquired sufficient power to confront governments and compete with them for control of territories and populations (LESSING, 2020; TREJO and LEY, 2020; MANSO and DIAS 2018; DURÁN-MARTÍNEZ, 2018; ARIAS, 2017; RODGERS, 2017; DIAS, 2013; WILLIS, 2013; VARESE, 2010). But this trend is neither temporally nor territorially universal. Although urban governments face increasing difficulties in the face of criminal organizations that supposedly compete with the State for the “monopoly of coercion,” the challenges to governance of Latin America’s metropolises are broad and cannot be not reduced to mere territorial, social or coercive control.

To analyze criminal governance, we have adapted a scheme proposed by Lessing (2020, p. 7). This can be understood as a situation in which large groups of the population live under forms of coercive control of some illicit, armed organization that claims the State's monopoly on the use of force in a certain territory and imposes itself as a relevant authority (*Ibid.*). This category may include influence and even economic, social and political criminal hegemony, affecting territorial sovereignty and the legitimacy of governments by being able to transform local residents into the subjects of at least two sovereigns. It is necessary to understand this phenomenon in a broad context of State and urban governance. To understand these processes, we will discuss two dimensions:

Table 1: Governance and crime

Functions	Dimensions and manifestations by city
Police and policing	Connection with military police (conflict-consensus-coalition-collusion). São Paulo.
	Imposition of rules by illicit organizations (robbery, other offences). São Paulo.
	Control over weapons. São Paulo.
	Military presence, militarization of public security. São Paulo.
Regulatory practices	Homicide (prohibition). São Paulo.
	Gang behavior. São Paulo.
	Control of territories (entry, movements). São Paulo (partial).
	Control of arms by illicit organizations. São Paulo.
	Control of other public behavior. São Paulo.
	Control of sexual behavior and other forms of violence.
	Law of silence imposed by criminal organization. São Paulo.
	Imposition of social rules (clothing, sexual relationships, etc.).
Justice	–
	Dispute resolution. São Paulo.
	“Informal justice” (executions, lynchings, persecution). Partly São Paulo.
	Debt collection. São Paulo.
	Judgments (and decisions, punishments, executions). São Paulo.
	Other judgment or dispute resolution functions.
	Tax collection.
	Other regulatory practices.
Public services (provision, capture, use)	Fulfillment of contracts-agreements. São Paulo.
	Other practices in Mexico City. São Paulo, in critical moments (2006, 2012).
Other regulatory economic practices	With national or international capital.
	Economic-commercial: regulation of trade on public roads (use of space, control of goods, employees, security guards).
	Intimidation of the formal-legal market through extortion in Mexico City.
	Loans (forced), to aid businesses, to improve housing, basic food baskets. Partly São Paulo.
	Corruption-extortion. São Paulo.

Social regulatory practices	Transgressive conduct, associations. São Paulo.
Attachment to the law	Legal cynicism (ambiguity) of politicians, citizens and criminal actors. São Paulo.
Type and size of illicit market (market power)	Large markets; monopoly of cocaine trafficking in SP; diversity in Mexico City and São Paulo.
Prisons	Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) has control over prisons, prisoners, guards, internal practices. In Mexico City there is nothing.
	Articulation with neighborhoods in São Paulo. Disarticulation and predatory practices in Mexico City
Policies	Community relations: clientelism and vote buying; electoral political clans in Mexico; voter control through informal trade organizations.
	Participation in security with collective action dilemmas; tolerance is the dominant strategy, along with criticism of police work.
	Other forms of citizen involvement: participatory budgeting in Mexico City.
	Commitment to elections (candidacies, sponsorship, voters, campaigns, pressure on the media and on electoral institutions) in Mexico.
	Other forms of political involvement.
	Capture of political positions, control of employees, control of budgets in territorial demarcations in Mexico City.
	Promotion or inhibition of political competition: in Mexico, candidacies are not controlled and participation in various organizations is promoted.
Territorial control practices Socio-spatial conditions	Urban socio-spatial and temporal regimes associated with <u>socio-spatial segregation</u> .
Behavior and presence-co-presence practices of other criminal organizations	Control in SP; conflicting and unstable co-presence in Mexico.
	Control-articulation (centralization, decentralization, franchising).
	Leadership. In every organization in Mexico City there is an ongoing struggle for command. In São Paulo, this problem and leadership succession are resolved by the "rules" and the so-called <i>sintonias</i> .
Relationship with the government elite	Interaction with heads of merchant associations, elected representatives, mayors and other members of the government of Mexico City. Weak evidence in São Paulo.
Connection with the local, national, transnational elite	In Mexico City, through party alliances and hidden sponsorship.
City government regime and citizen participation	Clientelism

Source: The authors, based on Lessing (2020, p. 7).

Urban governance is a process of coordination between actors and institutions in fragmented and uncertain environments (LE GALÈS, 2011; LE GALÈS and UGALDE, 2018). This is a matter of collective action between rulers, citizens and illicit actors, which includes institutions, guidelines, regulations; they are public and private practices that contribute to stability and

provide elements of legitimacy. Democratic governance is a way of regulating legitimate violence and limiting other forms of unlawful coercion.

Unlike the theoretical proposal in relation to the governments of nation-States, cities are not equivalent to them, nor do they have the same institutional, normative and power-related organizational instruments. We have to understand the reactions of urban governments and inhabitants to criminal threats, which move continuously from total submission to open collaboration to other negotiated forms, as well as refusal and the search for resistance. Urban governments also respond to urban residents, albeit unevenly. Relations with the urban population are mediated by many forms of exchange between these two actors, the police and illicit agents.

We propose to answer two questions that go beyond the criminal sphere: how are people governed? And what is governed in cities? Are we facing a scenario of criminal domination of cities, of their inhabitants and their governments, in a kind of double sovereignty that revokes democratic governance? Do urban governments today have the capacity to solve these challenges in the face of profound political changes that have altered the structures of governance and ways in which cities are governed? In daily activities, cities and large metropolises in particular face many problems of security and violence, due to the complex forms of intervention by licit and illicit actors. Government strategies range from open confrontation against illicit associations to evasion or collusion, but, above all, they tend to be conditioned responses that are less than ideal for resolving violence. The police and military strategies that are employed are the main responses of governments to organized crime. Their programs range from community policing to militarized strategies for confronting and occupying urban territories. In all metropolises, policies are mixed, resulting in some effective and legal practices and others that are less effective or even illegal.

We consider that in most metropolises there is no hegemony of a single group, just as not all metropolises can claim sole sovereignty, as it is often shared by several actors, which feeds an idea of disputed governance. As we observe and document the growing influence of criminal actors, we find spaces under the complete control of the government or the citizenry, where an acceptable legal regime operates (which is not a rule of law). In fact, in certain territories criminal actors exercise social, territorial and coercive control functions that rivals governments.

Methodological strategy

The article will compare two economically and socially relatively similar metropolises, whose political and policing arrangements as well as conflicts with criminal organizations are quite distinct. Their common challenge is active confrontation from large-scale criminal organizations. The cities

we compare are Mexico City, Mexico, and São Paulo, Brazil—the most extensive and dynamic urban territories in Latin America. They could be considered borderline cases in the sense of the presence or absence of disputes for territorial and political control of governance by illicit entities. While in São Paulo there is a debate about the influence of an organization over the government (sovereignty), by contrast, in Mexico City there is no criminal domain with this power, this sovereignty over the government, although the dispersion and multiplicity of organized forms of criminal violence also produce challenges to governance. There is not even a monopoly on State violence by governments.

One way to understand the varieties and differences of criminal governance will be to explore in depth the problems and criminal facts at different socio-spatial scales, comparing different neighborhoods and territories. We will show that its internal distribution is profoundly heterogeneous and not always articulated; sometimes it obeys local actors and causes, and often it goes beyond territorial boundaries to create its own arenas of action. Factors such as inequality, socio-spatial segregation and accumulation of disadvantages are present in these cities and associated with different forms of violence. Social spaces are classified according to a basic set of variables. Spatial distributions of criminal violence are also classified³.

Both cities have high levels of violence. To know the micro and macro balance, we will compare four themes: 1) the different forms and strategies by which criminal organizations acquire control of markets, territories and populations (and in some cases dominate governments); 2) relations with the city police; 3) the behavior of their governments and their relationship with inhabitants and illicit actors; and 4) the varied social responses of communities. The police in each city are the largest and most powerful security institutions in their respective regions, with distinct structures and practices for dealing with organized crime.

Criminal governance, urban governance and the State monopoly on violence

Among other aspects, the concept of criminal governance concerns a topic widely addressed by political sociology, i.e., the State monopoly on violence. Although in modern political thought there have already been reflections on this subject (Hobbes, Locke, Kant), the formula became well known thanks to Max Weber. In *Economy and Society* (1974), he delves further into the concept of the State: “By the State we must understand a political institute of continuous activity, when and to the extent that its administrative framework successfully maintains the claim to a legitimate monopoly of physical coercion to maintain the current order” (pp. 43-44).

These words were written in a very defined historical context—that of the modern civilizational process in the West—and in the period immediately after the end of the First World War and in the beginnings of the Weimar Republic. First, Weber was clear about the challenges facing the reconstruction of the German nation fractured by defeat in the war. Second, Weber's statements are limited to the State in the West and do not concern other forms of domination, be they legitimate or otherwise, or based or not based in a determined territory, with or without a singular administrative framework and constituted from coalitions of power resulting in equally singular forms of domination. Thirdly, Weber considers that the modern Western State expropriates from individuals (civilians) the right to use violence to solve their social and interpersonal conflicts. From this perspective, the modern Western State consists of a relationship of domination of some over others through the legitimate use of violence, precisely through authorization by law and enforced by laws. Finally, Weber suggests that the most important thing is the intention to achieve this relationship through a rational-legal bureaucratic framework. As a result, the modern Western State has the task of convincing the people it dominates of the legitimacy of the State monopoly on weapons (armed forces and police) as well as related monopolies: the application of laws and justice and the collection of taxes (fiscal), premises related to the modern idea of political sovereignty.

These ideas have been gradually adapted to explain aspects of the challenges represented by the growth of urban crime and the emergence of organized crime in contemporary societies. As such, they have been contested in different ways. Michel Wieviorka (1997) proposed to stop betting on the Weberian formula, given the profound societal transformations underlying the processes of globalization. Other analysts point to the transfer of surveillance functions, typical of police agents, to private agents, the internationalization of police forces blurring national borders and the expansion of private security as factors responsible for weakening both the legitimate State monopoly of coercion and political sovereignty.

An interesting hypothesis is developed by Norbert Elias. The second volume of *The Civilizing Process* (1993) is dedicated to the process that he calls the sociogenesis of the modern State, through which centralization of power, State control of governments and the formation of monopolies and quasi-monopolies converge. According to his detailed analyses of historical processes, over four centuries a handful of monarchs became monopolistic controllers of enormous financial and military resources. In the course of this transition, the mechanisms of formation of private monopolies are always the same, consisting of marriages and the purchase or conquest of land, which make one of the royal houses acquire more land and obtain predominance over neighboring houses.

The deepening of these processes led to the gradual transformation of private monopolies into public ones. A functional dependence is established between the monarch in relation to servants or subjects, culminating in the transfer of power over land and military power from a single family to a functional and administrative *corpus* that controls, regulates and establishes balance between conflicting parties on behalf of a central body, the State. With this transformation, monopolies are differentiated. The monopoly of force, application of laws and justice becomes a State prerogative; the monopoly of wealth remains in private hands. Thus, there is no homogeneity in the exercise of monopolies. Within the State itself, monopolies may experience different degrees of efficiency and effectiveness.

According to Elias' hypothesis, it is possible to think that in Latin American societies, whose unique historical and social configurations have known and are experiencing the emergence and expansion of different forms of criminal governance, the monopoly of violence and the application of justice have remained in private hands; or, at least, essential elements of private monopolies and the public monopoly of violence and the application of justice are mixed. Examples can be found in the way the police repress and investigate crimes, in the way in which criminal organizations govern portions of territory and exploit State functions for private purposes (such as collecting taxes, fees and tolls) and also in the way in which Police officers create autonomous spaces to protect themselves and carry out private actions, even when these are outside the law.

Based on these arguments and on studies on the emergence and expansion of different forms of criminal governance, it can be said that the assumption according to which Latin American states built their forms of domination based on the state monopoly of violence needs to be revised. The State continues to be strategic for all, as the institution with the most structure and which allows for profitable governance systems.

Urban governance

City governance is the product of dynamics of domination and resistance, an unstable balance constituted from the best responses of each actor. Urban policies do not produce coherent decisions and results due to contradictions and conflicts between different actors and institutions. It is a contradictory coordination process, with permanent challenges in respect of how to govern and what is at stake, what is governed at various scales, micro, macro, neighborhood or metropolis, between criminal organizations, citizens and the government. In this sense, criminal governance is a disruptive action that affects legitimacy, sovereignty and monopoly control of coercive resources. For citizens it also generates problems of agreement, submission or resistance.

It is important to take into account that many forms of social and economic organization produce governance mechanisms that are different from State ones, such as mafia organizations (VARESE, 2010), certain gang arrangements (RODGERS, 2017), *self-organized* citizen groups in communities (DÍAZ, 2019), prisoner organizations (PAES and DÍAZ, 2018), police organizations (ALVARADO, 2012) or local networks in neighborhoods (ARIAS, 2017). Most of these act in a parallel way to the State, even as they confront it. Therefore, several differences arise, but above all, there is a split between the city as representative political community and the city as a set of socio-spatial processes that force us to rethink who governs, who is the sovereign and what is the legitimate control of violence.

Cities operate differently from States and formal, national political regimes, not only because they have to maintain representative, accountable, sovereign and legitimate governments, but because they must satisfy not only their citizens, but also articulate other interests, which arise from agencies and corporations that intervene in micro, local or transnational issues. Therefore, the problems of sovereignty, territorial control and the claim to a monopoly of violence are added and articulated in urban processes, with complex results in terms of public domains.

Analysis of two cases, Mexico City and São Paulo

Mexico City, characterization and socio-territorial dynamics in the metropolis

Mexico City, the capital of Mexico, is one of the most populous and dynamic cities in the region, with nine million inhabitants in the city proper and some 22 million in its metropolitan area. It is Mexico's center of politics, economy, services and commerce, contributing 17% of the national economy; it is a polycentric urban space, very informal, unequal and fragmented, with about 46% of jobs in the informal sector. The configuration of the central metropolitan space is the result of struggles and competitions to stamp a mark on the collective built space, where rich landowners, international financial corporations, poor residents, informal traders, local governments and the police intervene. In this place, the formal intertwines and coexists with the informality that generates power and competes with and is integrated into governments. For example, the opulent Centro Histórico is divided into two sectors: one formal, rich and powerful, globally incorporated, hyper-regulated and secure; the other informal, with a strong component of illicit activities.

For 30 years the city was labeled one of the most violent in the region. In addition, crime expanded in the 1990s, when the country's various criminal corporations emerged. Only after several policies and law and police reforms was a left-wing government able to reduce and control violence, which lasted until the middle of the last decade, when violence started growing again

(ALVARADO, 2012; DÍAZ, 2018; FERNÁNDEZ, 2021). This urban violence does not give way; it is caused by the conflict between armed actors and against the police. Police reforms and several policies in the beginning of the century produced a reduction of crime and the illusion that the capital was a governable territory. Recent violence increase is associated with what we understand as the transformation of criminal groups into criminal industrial organizations. Thus, the city went from a few criminal groups to a situation characterized by the presence of two types of organizations: two *transnational* organizations—the *Cártel de Sinaloa* (CS) and the *Cártel de Jalisco Nueva Generación* (CJNG)—and the various *local* organizations responsible for most crimes that citizens are victims of, such as murder, extortion, kidnapping and drug distribution. This modified the connections between and the direct incursions of the organizations. The most spectacular moment was the attack, in June 2020, against Omar García, the city's Secretary of Public Security, allegedly organized by the CJNG, which demonstrated its power and attitude of open confrontation with the government.

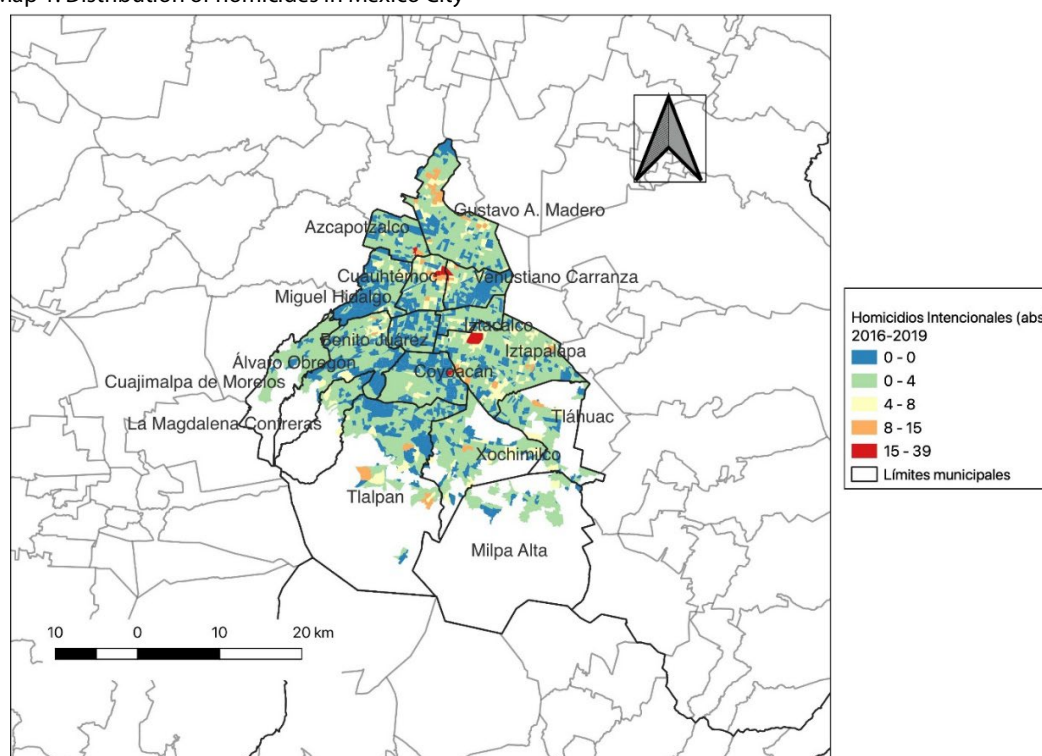
Description of the metropolis, macro and micro aspects

Following the analysis made for São Paulo by Nery, Souza and Adorno (2019, p. 8), Mexico City is not perfectly divided between rich and poor neighborhoods. It is true that deep economic and social inequality are reflected in many of its fundamental socio-spatial traits, and that there is a clear segregation between social groups, while in several places certain homogeneous groups are separated and concentrated. In some neighborhoods rich and poor coexist and in some areas of greater porosity there is communication between residents, services and uses of the territory. More than a coherent network, it is a set of neighborhoods and demarcations segmented by infrastructure, by public policies with territorial limits and by the actions of its inhabitants.

To build a classification, we use Schteingart and Rubalcava (2012, p. 80), who make a factor analysis in which they group the units in basic geostatistical areas (AGEB) of the city in six strata: 1) high, 2) medium high, 3) medium, 4) medium low, 5) low and 6) very low— the last two the strata accumulate the worst socio spatial conditions. The distribution resembles the inequality of the city.

The upper stratum today includes four of the 16 territorial demarcations of the capital and does not contain very low strata—66.8% of the AGEb belong to the high and very high strata (*Ibid.*, p. 81). High values tend to be situated and clustered together in the west zone of the borough of Miguel Hidalgo, partially in Benito Juárez and in Álvaro Obregón. Those in the very low stratum are located more in the eastern and northern areas of the urban area, even when they are adjacent to the middle strata, given that 83% of them are concentrated in the very low stratum:

Map 1: Distribution of homicides in Mexico City



Source: Fernández (2021).

In the middle of these poles, the population is distributed among the middle, lower middle and lower strata (see maps 3.2, 3.3. and 3.4 in SCHTEINGART and RUBALCABA, 2012, p. 81). The quality of housing, public services, employment, income and security are unevenly distributed among these groups. There are very segregated and isolated areas, others mixed. Thus, for example, we can describe the microterritorial conditions within the borough of Cuauhtémoc in the center of the city, where there are several high strata AGEs together with the medium ones, but where old working-class neighborhoods with high levels of marginality and deprivation are also located (those where most homicides occur); this zone includes high strata contiguous to very low strata, and some of them go beyond the limits of the borough to create common territories (for example, the *colonias* Morelos 1 and 2, in Cuauhtémoc, and Venustiano Carranza).

The conditions of urban life and crime

We will show the spatio-temporal patterns of the occurrence of intentional homicides. For Mexico City, several studies (ALVARADO, 2012; DÍAZ, 2018; FERNÁNDEZ, 2021) analyze the spatial distribution of homicides and propose five groups, according to rates per 100,000 inhabitants (see Map 1). The city's homicide crime trend over the last 20 years has fluctuated between 14 and 16 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, with a peak in 2019 of 19.1 homicides per

100,000 inhabitants. As for spatial distribution, there is huge dispersion and a small set that accounts for the majority (FERNÁNDEZ, 2021, pp. 8, 72-85).

Homicides tend to be concentrated in boroughs in the city center (Cuauhtémoc with some clusters in Venustiano Carranza, Iztapalapa Coyoacán and Tlalpan). These locations are home to the AGEBs classified as low and very low strata (SCHTEINGART and RUBALCAVA, 2012), with the exception of the Centro Histórico, which combines and merges high strata with others of great need. The boroughs of Cuauhtémoc, V. Carranza, Gustavo A. Madero and Azcapotzalco are similar in terms of their low socio-spatial stratification and have elevated homicide rates. There is a long strip around the neighborhoods between the boroughs of Cuauhtémoc and Venustiano Carranza, with rates of between 18 and 22 homicides per 100,000 (the neighborhoods of Tepito, Merced and Mixcalco in Morelos 1 and 2; in one AGEB there were 31 homicides). The second group includes five locations with rates of between 12 and 18.5 homicides per 100,000 (Gustavo Madero, Azcapotzalco, Iztapalapa, Tláhuac and Álvaro Obregón); the third group of four demarcations has rates of between 9 and 12.2 (Azcapotzalco, Miguel Hidalgo, La Magdalena, Xochimilco); the fourth group with two cases and rates of between 6.22 and 9.1 (Miguel Hidalgo, Milpa Alta) and the fifth with rates of between 5.3 and 6.2 (in Juárez and Cuajimalpa).

The AGEBs with high homicide rates correspond to sectors characterized by overlapping housing, educational and subsistence needs. Likewise, the low homicide rates from 2013 to 2019 correspond to the middle and upper strata sectors. When testing some hypotheses about theories of social disorganization, collective efficacy, or informal control, neither Díaz nor Fernández found a statistically significant relationship between the variables most frequently used in these experiments (FERNÁNDEZ, 2021). The same applies to urban marginalization and police control. On the other hand, there is a small relationship between citizen participation and a lower number of homicides (*Ibid.*, pp. 96, 98). This leads us to ask whether there are alternative hypotheses that explain the occurrence of homicides by criminals.

The different forms and strategies employed by criminal organizations to acquire control of markets, territories, populations and governments

Are some of these territories associated with the presence of criminal organizations? In 2015, 18.5% of homicides were attributed to activities associated with organized crime—107 of them occurred in the north of the borough of Cuauhtémoc and were 9.9% of the total (ALVARADO, 2016, p. 35). Most homicides were attributed to internecine and intranecine conflicts. Mexico City is the scene of the activities of practically all Mexico's transnational organizations and some external ones. In addition, there are various gangs and regional groups.

Table 2: Criminal organizations in Mexico City (2017–2021)

Borough	n° of organizations	Local/regional/transnational coverage	Criminal organizations with activities in the borough
Iztapalapa	15	Transnational and local	La Unión (Tepito); Cártel de Jalisco Nueva Generación (CJNG); Cártel de Sinaloa; Cártel del Golfo; Guerreros Unidos; Los Zetas; Juan Balta; Grupo Delictivo Iztapalapa; Cártel de Tláhuac; Molina; Los Tanzanios; El Richis; Sindicato Libertad; Güero Fresa; Los Oaxacos
Tlalpan	12	Transnational and local	La Unión (Tepito); CJNG; Cártel de Tláhuac; La Familia Michoacana; Guerreros; Maceros; Lenin; Robles; Los Papayos; Los Macedo; El H; Los Changos
Gustavo A. Madero	11	Transnational and local	La Unión (Tepito); CJNG; Cártel del Golfo; La Familia Michoacana; Guerreros Unidos; La Ronda 88; Los Rojos; Familia Cruz; Los Chilas; Los Negros; Los Rudos
Miguel Hidalgo	8	Transnational and local	Cártel de Sinaloa; Unión Tepito; Beltrán Leyva; Linares; Lenin; Banda el Balín; Banda el Robert; El Nopal
Venustiano Carranza	8	Transnational and local	La Unión (Tepito); Cártel de Sinaloa; Juan Balta; Los Tanzanios; Paco Pacas; El Pechugas; El Patinas; Los Estúpidos
Cuauhtémoc	6	Regional	La Unión (Tepito); CJNG; Cártel de Sinaloa; Los Zetas; La Ronda 88; Fabian R88; Fuerza Anti-Unión
Iztacalco	6	National and local	La Unión (Tepito); La Familia Michoacana; Juan Balta; Los Rodolfos; Los Tanzanios; Paco Pacas
Tláhuac	6	Transnational and local	CJNG; Cártel de Tláhuac; La Familia Michoacana; Molina; Los Rodolfos; Sindicato Libertad
Coyoacán	5	Transnational and local	La Unión (Tepito); CJNG; Los Guerreros; Molina; Los Rodolfos
Xochimilco	5	Transnational and local	Cártel de Tláhuac; CJNG; Los Rodolfos; Los Molina; Los Estúpidos
Álvaro Obregón	4	Transnational and local	La Unión (Tepito); CJNG; Lenin; El Esparragós
Benito Juárez	4	Transnational and local	La Unión (Tepito); CJNG; Fuerza Anti-Unión Tepito; Lenin
Magdalena Contreras	4	National and local	La Unión (Tepito); La Familia Michoacana; Lenin; Tercera Acción Destructiva (3AD)
Azcapotzalco	3	National and local	La Unión (Tepito); Fuerza Anti-Unión Tepito; Juan Balta
Cuajimalpa	3	Transnational and local	CJNG; Beltrán Leyva; Lenin
Milpa Alta	3	National and local	Cártel de Tláhuac; Molina; Los Rodolfos

Source: The authors with data extracted from México SOS (2017), Lantia (2020), El Financien (2021) and Sánchez (2021). The list lacks the names of some organizations engaged in other illicit activities.

The list of organizations is complex, with more than 30 gangs of varied sizes. Iztapalapa has 15 gangs, Tlalpan 12 and Cuauhtémoc six, presenting an image of a territory of domination and criminal competition between many competitors; however, the territorial dispersion reveals a certain insularity and limited power. Furthermore, confrontations between organizations are notably less violent than in other cities. Also, the location of territorial control is imprecise: it never comprises the entire territory of a borough and in several boroughs, its presence is only insular. The CJNG is the organization that has had the greatest presence (for more than six years), followed by the Sinaloa Cartel. Most are local and family groups such as mafias or neighborhood gangs. Only La Unión (Tepito) has a large presence in ten boroughs, however its coverage is limited to some neighborhoods where there are commercial activities, restaurants and bars.

Is Mexico City a city with business to offer for everyone? The informal and illegal market is huge and there is not just one supplier, but several. However, there is no organization that controls only one product or one market, such as arms (where many suppliers are police or military). The preponderant criminal activities are extortion (including extortion and loan sharking), kidnapping (including express kidnapping), murder, robbery, distribution and sale of drugs, sale of car parts, robbery of public transport, robbery of pedestrians, breaking into buildings and illegal sale of buildings, sale of weapons and bribery. Mexico City is the scene of many battles between transnational organizations to bring together organizations that control territories and vice versa, a struggle of small groups to connect with larger ones with a view to improving their position and increasing their market power. In its conflicts and “wars” there are no rules for the practice of homicides nor any regulation of it among illicit groups or among the police. They are informal contract controls. Some have links with organizations of street traders or with groups dedicated to smuggling, piracy or arms sales. Their current focus is the Centro Histórico.

The local organization La Unión and the transnational CJNG play the most prominent roles in this area. La Unión was responsible between 2014 and 2018 for more than 91 murders (ALVARADO, 2016). It has a high profile in the media and is frequently pursued by the police. La Unión focuses on four activities and regions: extortion, kidnapping, drug distribution, and homicide in the center of the city.

No group has been able to impose social rules of control over a territory for a continuous period, except, occasionally, control of certain piracy markets, which are well established in the center of the city. Some territories are heavily guarded and limit the entry of individuals who are not “from the gang” (such as in Tepito y Morelos, where there is a type of *de facto* curfew). There is no law of silence or any other forms of control among its members, nor among the communities where they are present. There are also no customary alternative routines or practices—arbitrariness prevails. With the exception of some (isolated) conflicts, the method of combat is summary

executions (there are police involved). There is another form of informal justice in communities for use against thieves: lynchings. With the exception of violent reactions to and “mutinies” against police operations, “narco-blockades,” such as occur in other cities, do not work in Mexico City. Most local gangs have a boss, many are family structures with narrow internal divisions, informal rules and conventions; several gang members and leaders are in prison, from where they organize extortion and other activities. They do not, however, maintain control from prison, nor do they have networks of protection, solidarity and work linked to their neighborhoods of residence.

Relations with the city police

Police security in Mexico City is provided by state forces, and in certain cases they have complementary support of federal forces, each belonging to unitary, centralized institutions. There are no municipal police. The first is the “civil preventive police,” which, in addition to being the state police force, is the largest force in the country (96,000 officers in 2018) with the largest budget, better armament, and detailed territorial. It has an infrastructure of 15,000 cameras linked to a radio and centralized monitoring system (called C5). C5 is divided into a grid of five zones, 16 regions, 73 sectors and 847 quadrants equivalent to about four blocks patrolled by at least two groups of police officers that resemble a citizen outreach program. The city is heavily guarded and has a high crime rate; in some territories there is hyper surveillance, while in others the police presence is selective and there are fewer operations. Those who patrol the areas with the greatest presence of criminal groups are designated for set periods of time, based on an agreement between the mayor, the head of the sector or region and the government. In addition, there is the complementary presence of federal police and military forces. The other police force is the ministerial and civil police (about three thousand officers), dedicated to the investigation of crimes, and have a territorial presence with local police stations.

Police work is the product of its organizational history and political insertion. The autonomy and impunity of the police come from facing the security challenges of a complex city, where the political elite and the Jefe de Gobierno (its political and legal boss) has a history of conflicts with law and order, where there is distrust and competition with other police forces, and where citizens do not trust it because historically it has never responded to their needs. The police are organized to provide security, but also to protect themselves from a hostile environment, both against criminal gangs and multiple bosses who use them for political ends and where there is a government in a continuous flow of negotiation and transgression. The police forces enjoy a wide margin of territorial control as well as discretion to carry out arrests of illicit actors; and, in some cases, they themselves participate in such activities on an individual and/or collective basis. The

preventive police behave like a cartel, while the ministerial police behave like a mafia, and is characterized by another strategy of persecution, control and abuse of criminal actors and, in some cases, schemes to protect against collusion—this is the case in the neighborhood of Tepito, where some deputy chiefs of the ministerial police run protection rackets. Their tactics are selective. The relations between the police and the different criminal gangs occur in a continuum between protection, stalking and collaboration-collusion-abuse. Organizational divisions lead to competition for control of criminal actors, for corruption, and for the control of criminal information and the violence market. The effectiveness of the police in combating crimes is considerable, but they do not have the capacity to reduce or eliminate organized crime.

Due to the fact that we do not have information on deaths caused by police operations, police detentions offer an alternative for understanding the way the police operate, the degree to which they follow the law and their relationships with illicit actors. In Mexico City, an average of 59% of arrests are carried out by the preventive police, 30% by the ministerial police, 9% by the federal police and 1% by the armed forces (PADILLA, 2021). Padilla (*Ibid.*) demonstrates that the police in Mexico City account for about 30% of arbitrary detentions, and use torture as a control mechanism, both to extract information and to extort detainees, particularly in detentions associated with the use of firearms, extortion or kidnapping, which are mainly the work of criminal organizations. This is predatory and selective behavior that can be complemented with the multiple forms of everyday policing, in which the police vary their strategies. For example, when patrolling neighborhoods like Tepito-Morelos, the police tend to flaunt their presence in an almost reckless way, while in middle-class neighborhoods that are more likely to act against abuses of police power, their practices are characterized by respect and *proximity*. In some cases, business-owners organize themselves into associations that provide security independently, without collaboration or conflict with the police (DÍAZ, 2019). The members of these groups also seek peaceful coexistence with other local gangs (as in Tepito with La Unión). This includes sharing spaces of socialization but maintaining clear boundaries in terms of professional activities.

The most general police illicit practice is corruption, which acts as a mechanism of negotiation with citizens and with criminals. Other type is collusion, in the form of police officers joining or forming gangs in common. The police are risk-averse and seek to evade conflicts involving powerful actors and organizations with firepower. They tolerate their presence as long as extreme violence is avoided. All this produces a peculiar result: violence levels never reach those of criminal uprisings but remain those of the type inherent to ongoing negotiations between criminal actors.

As regards homicides of police officers, public reports estimate that between 2013 and 2018, state police officers killed in confrontations with organized crime gangs accounted for 46% of such deaths (INEGI, 2021, pp. 26, 34). In Mexico City, it is estimated that there were between 41 and 70

homicides of police officers, of which 52% occurred because of “confrontations” (*Ibid.*, p. 39). We do not know the locations of these homicides, so we can only assume that they occurred because of confrontations with criminal organizations or because of patrolling in high-risk areas (*Ibid.*, p. 61).

The explanation for the micro-territorial dynamics of crime and its control-dominion in Mexico City lies, in our view, in the prevailing political and organizational conditions. Police behavior affects the ability of the police to control crime in the form of their self-protective and autonomous approach to policing and their penchant for micro-territorial negotiation with political and criminal actors. The dominant strategy is one of confrontation-dominion, then of control and collusion, an approach that mitigates against equilibrium.

Behavior of governments, their relations with residents and criminal actors

Since 1997, a coalition of left-wing parties has governed Mexico City (and now governs all of Mexico). This coalition has created its own “leftist” policing strategy consisting of zero-tolerance programs, adoption of the *Compstat* crime statistic compilation system and security provision by *quadrant*, a program that was regarded as innovative when it was introduced. Laws have been updated and the police re-organized with a view to obtaining political control over them through labor reforms, changes in the way they are grouped, their internal organization and the way they are deployed territorially, all with the goal of reducing the autonomy of police chiefs. Spending on security has also been increased (and now accounts for 25% of the state budget). By 2005, crime had visibly decreased, but as time went on it bounced back and increased, and Mexico’s security and policing situation deteriorated. Recently, the emphasis has shifted from “zero” tolerance to “conditional” tolerance and a “hugs and not bullets” strategy.

The other “pillar” of security is the political model. Mexico City is administratively centralized but beset by enormous political competition between the opposition and the ruling coalition. This gives rise to complex interactions vis-à-vis security between politicians, entrepreneurs, merchants, local formal and informal authorities, the police and criminals.

The illicit micro-territorial dynamic is continually negotiated between central authorities and mayors. Relationships between neighborhood associations, entrepreneurs, merchants, restaurant owners, street workers and real estate companies create pressures and opportunities to transgress laws. These interstices provide room for criminal activities and organizations that divide up local politics and informal markets.

A type of “symbiosis” exists between the local political elite and various informal groups that may include candidates for political office, elected officials or heads of party factions, all of whom negotiate with the leaders of criminal organizations on access to the administration of public

space. Several of the “bosses” of these groups become deputies, councilors or mayors. In each party network, working groups negotiate the circulation of public offices and the capture of public resources and public space. Electoral bases are organized by patronage networks that provide for the purchase of seats and votes.

Let us consider the example of the borough of Cuauhtémoc, which is home to a series of political-economic clans, such as the Bejarano Padierna clan, which is affiliated with the Morena party, and other such clans who control commerce on public roads, such as the Barrios family (affiliated to the PRI and other parties) or the Guillermina Rico clan that controls bars, restaurants and clubs. Many members of these clans have served as local or federal deputies or mayors and have thereby had access to the regulation of public spaces and the use of government resources, which they have leveraged to strengthen their networks. Candidacies and elections are organized by party elites, not by illicit groups (even if they seem to be); everyone supports vote-buying.

Social responses to criminal violence and criminal organizations in the heterogeneous urban space

A third element of security is citizen participation. This participation is ambivalent, there is little attachment to the law and formal justice, and some prefer informal arrangements. The classification of this participation can be undertaken in parallel to the spatial organization of the city, whereby one group inhabits the territories with the best urban conditions, numerous civil organizations and deep-pocketed entrepreneurs. There are also civil society groups from middle class neighborhoods, urban rights activists and a huge diversity of formal community organizations that bring in social actors in poorer area, where attachment to the rule of law is more varied than it is in the dominant groups. This occurs both in communities where the presence of illicit organizations is strong and in communities where there is plenty of money. There are also neighborhood scenarios where political and illicit actors coexist and interact with residents to establish relationships of clientelism and loyalty with some and of resistance in others. The government has developed a vertical relationship with neighborhood associations. The central question is whether there is communication, interaction and loyalties with criminal groups. In the case of Tepito and several adjacent neighborhoods, there is daily interaction and communication between neighbors, legal merchants and criminal groups. There are also mechanisms of peaceful community resistance that seek government intervention—but the police are not always accepted as a mechanism of order.

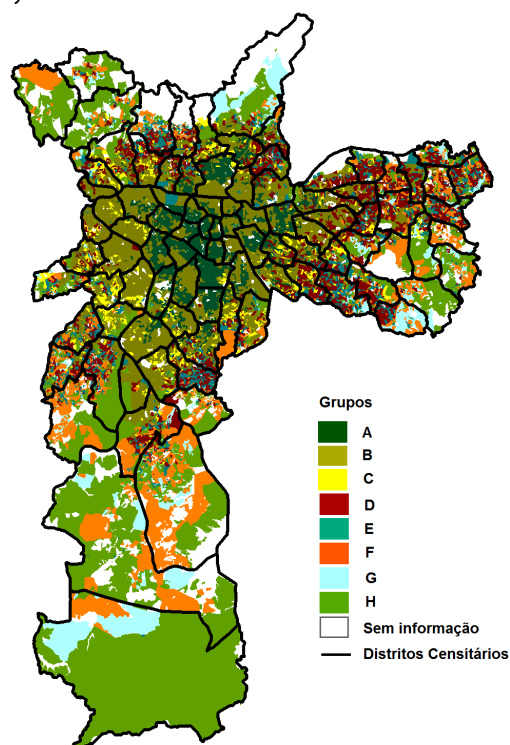
In the government’s system of rules, security is a participatory affair. The preference of citizen representatives is participatory government, with widespread demands more visible police patrols, alarms, the recovery of public spaces and more street lighting.

São Paulo, the metropolis and its heterogeneities

São Paulo is a land of contrasts, with a profile comparable to that of large metropolises with a high quality of life. With a population of 11,897,747 inhabitants, the fourth largest in the world, and a GDP that represents 10.8% of the national GDP (PRADO, 11/05/2020) and 36% of the production of the state of the same name, São Paulo is considered a global city, one of the richest in the world, with the biggest and best infrastructure [*of any Brazilian city*]. From a macro perspective, the representations of São Paulo's neighborhoods accentuate the contrasts between those that are "rich" and those that are "poor" neighborhoods, as well as between the center and the periphery. These are current common sense, public opinion and print media representations. Academic studies have, until recently, also relied on the center-periphery dichotomy. These representations have been in the process of deconstruction as official statistical data on neighborhoods has improved and (primarily ethnographic) field investigations have become more frequent and sought to cover more neighborhoods and more parts of the city (MAGNANI, 2003). It is increasingly understood that the 96 districts and 32 sub-prefectures that make up São Paulo cannot be grouped into two large homogeneous and opposite groups.

A recent study (NERY, SOUZA and ADORNO, 2019) sought to challenge the center-periphery dichotomy by means of a methodology that identified eight key areas in São Paulo:

Map 2: Urban clusters in the city of São Paulo



Source: NEV-Cepid/USP (NERY, SOUZA and ADORNO, 2019).

Some examples for illustrative purposes: Group A is concentrated in the central region of São Paulo. It combines commercial and service activities and is an old and consolidated urbanization area with high population density, a high proportion of owner-occupier households, a high proportion of verticalization, a low proportion of subnormal clusters, good levels of sanitary and hygienic conditions and a high proportion of literate, high-income heads of households. Most of its census sectors did not record any homicides in the period considered (2000-2008). Like some other groups, Group E experienced rapid growth between 1950 and 1962, led by industry and immigration. It is characterized by the spread of irregular housing arrangements in old neighborhoods, a phenomenon associated with the formation of slums and other forms of precarious housing. In this group, the proportion of heads of households with high income is lower than in Group A. Its homicide rates are average by general standards. Group H is the result of urban growth between 1975 and 1985. Six percent of its census sectors are defined as rural (these being extensive territories in the southern region). It is home to a large number of areas at geological risk, has poor reticulated water coverage, sewage infrastructure and garbage collection, a low proportion of high-income heads of families and low population density. This group is also characterized by housing in peri-urban areas, where urban and rural activities are mixed, especially in the extreme North, East and South of the city. The urban fabric in this area is discontinuous. Similarly to Group F, the area has high homicide rates, which may also be associated with the population dispersion in the territory.

One of the main findings of the study is that there is a blatant mismatch between the patterns of the urban clusters and the official political-administrative divisions. This mismatch has undeniable consequences. Firstly, the 32 sub-prefectures cover different territories, with different needs. Meeting social needs depends on city councilors and deputies with local electoral bases applying political pressure on sub-prefects and the City Hall. In this way, the relationships between governors and those of govern them remain subject to clientelism and personalism. In the daily lives of residents in neighborhoods that belong to urban clusters with relatively greater needs than others, many of problems are solved by networks of interpersonal relationships of cooperation. Everything requires local and personal knowledge, informal links with neighbors, religious entities, NGOs and the criminal organizations that control local drug trafficking and other illegal activities. Therefore, the city's heterogeneity is transversal with the world of crime.

The conditions of urban life and crime

In the course of more than three decades, profound social transformations have taken place both in the profile of São Paulo—accentuating the internal heterogeneity between census sectors

and urban agglomerations—and in the profile of crime and violence—also characterized by a diversity of forms of organization, manifestation and actors involved.

In the period from 1996 to 2019, some forms of crime decreased, while others grew. Although crime against property is an object of collective concern, homicide that arouses and feeds subjective fear and insecurity. Homicides also follow the “law” of the city’s heterogeneity. The trends observed for the period from 1981 to 2019 indicate curves of growth and decline. At the beginning of the historical series, the rate was 14.8 occurrences per 100,000 inhabitants; in 1990, this increased to 41.1; in 1996, to 46.5. The peak in 1999 was 52.4 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants. In subsequent years, the curve progressively descended, reaching the rate of 6.2 occurrences per 100,000 inhabitants at the end of the historical series.⁴ Based on an ecological-longitudinal study, Nery *et al.* (2012) examined the distribution of homicides in São Paulo from 2000 to 2008, which found seven spatial homicide regimes, which combine census sectors with different characteristics, such as neighborhoods with high and low homicide rates.

The reasons for these trends remain unclear, although some studies have attempted to offer explanatory clues. Peres *et al.* (2011), in an analysis of the evolution of homicides in São Paulo between 1996 and 2008, found a drop of 73% between 2001 and 2008. The main findings indicated that the decline had a greater impact among men aged 15 to 24 living in areas of extreme social exclusion. There was also a significant reduction in homicides. The risk of being a victim of intentional homicide has receded, especially in areas of extreme exclusion. Until 2008, everything indicated that economic growth and the relatively reduced social inequalities played the leading role in the decline in homicides. However, from 2008 onwards, the decline continued, becoming decoupled from changes in the economy and the distribution of wealth.

According to some scholars, the explanation lies in organized crime—specifically, the formation and consolidation of the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC), which achieved hegemony in São Paulo’s prisons and sealed its visible presence in the lives of residents of the city’s peripheries (BIDERMAN *et al.*, 2019; DIAS, 2013; FELTRAN, 2011). Although qualitative studies and ethnographies carried out by different researchers have found evidence that the PCC did in fact exert an influence on the drop in homicides by imposing its rules in prisons and neighborhoods where its presence and dominance are present, it cannot be asserted that this hypothesis has been indisputably demonstrated. Regardless, it is clear that the influence of the PCC and other factors converged to bring about a generalized reduction in homicide rates.

The stabilization of the homicide rate per 100,000 inhabitants between 2011 and 2019 in key areas of the municipality of São Paulo (contrasted with upward or downward trends in other municipalities) is illustrative of the process of “pacification” and territorial control.⁵ In urban cluster A, the location of the Pinheiros Police District (predominantly upper middle class), the

homicide rate of 2.1/100,000 (in 2011) grew to 3.4/100,000 (in 2019). In urban cluster E, location of the Vila Joaniza Police District (South Zone, low social indicators), the rate decreased from 10.2/100,000 (in 2011) to 2.9/100,000 (in 2019). Evidently, there was a significant drop. In cluster H, an area with a dispersed population and some rural zones, where the Jardim Mirna Police District is located, rates varied widely: 8.9/100,000 (in 2011), 23.0/100,000 (in 2012), 12.2/100,000 (in 2016) and 6.5/100,000 (in 2019). Regardless, the overall trend was a downward one.

Despite the general trend, low, medium and high rates were all present in the various key areas. It should be noted that not all homicides result from conflicts within the world of crime. Some homicides are the fatal outcomes of interpersonal/intersubjective conflicts, including neighborly disagreements, fights in bars or on the streets, disputes in marital relationships and between parents and children, arguments between friends and work colleagues, tensions in love relationships, as well as femicides whose motivations are diverse and do not necessarily involve the world of crime. There are also homicides that occur as a result of robberies or in cases of extortion through kidnapping of people or the sequestration of material goods, as well as conflicts over drug trafficking, in addition to deaths caused by police interventions. As is well known [*in Brazil*], the genesis and early expansion of the PCC coincided with an uptick in homicides, while the fall in rates coincides with the *pax monopolista* (BIDERMAN *et al.*, 2018) imposed by the gang. All this suggests that homicides are not the only indicator of the pacification process instituted by the PCC. In any case, what these analyses find is that organized crime has not taken the entire city by storm. Its presence is more evident in some neighborhoods and urban clusters than in others.

The various forms and strategies of criminal organizations that seek to acquire control of markets, territories and populations and dominate governments

There is no evidence that the PCC has replaced the municipal and state administrations in the running of the state's cities, let alone the whole state. Nevertheless, its presence is tangible and its dominance over substantial parts of the urban territory is a reality that cannot be denied.

Adorno, Dias and Nery (2016) investigated the relationships between patterns of intentional homicide and the evidence of organized criminal activity. Their study identified three scenarios present in the city of São Paulo between 2007 and 2008: sectors with high homicide rates, sectors with low homicide rates and sectors with no recorded homicides. The results suggest that in sectors where there were no recorded homicides, the presence of criminal organizations was weak or not very relevant. Criminal organizations were more active in the areas with high and low homicide rates. In the case of the areas with low homicide rates were under the influence of the PCC's pacification policies. From another perspective, the study undertaken by Biderman *et al.*

(2019) found that the advent and expansion of the PCC in São Paulo city was associated, from 2005 to 2010, with growth in violent crime, especially in favelas located on the periphery. However, the study also found that there were favelas that were not dominated by the gang.

The history of the creation of the PCC is well known [*in Brazil*]. It expanded in three stages (DIAS, 2013; FELTRAN, 2011) and reconfigured the governance of crime in São Paulo. Mass incarceration implemented by the state government, rapidly increased the prison overpopulation. This led to deadly conflicts between gangs for control of drug sales points, the monopoly of the use of physical coercion and the centralization of opportunities for power (DIAS, 2013). The PCC expanded outwards from the prison system and strengthened itself in the city's neighborhoods, creating an intense prison-city-prison exchange (GODOI, 2015). Now consolidated, there is evidence that the PCC is entering a fourth phase of expansion with the reorientation of its illegal activities towards the internationalization of the drug market *with the consequent transfer of decision-making power from the state capital [i.e., São Paulo city] to the port area*.

The PCC's core business remains the illegal drug trade, especially the cocaine trade. According to official data, the rates of occurrences of illegal drug consumption or trafficking increased substantially between 1996 and 2019. At the beginning of the period, 20 such incidents were recorded per 100,000 inhabitants of São Paulo. By 2007, that number had quadrupled; in 2013, the figure stood at 120 incidents per 100,000 inhabitants; at the end of the period, the volume of recorded incidents had attained 140 per 100,000. As a result, the number of police investigations and arrests increased. In 1996, arrests for drug trafficking were 10% of total arrests; in 2008, they accounted for 25%; by 2012, they were 30% of total arrests—the highest proportion in the period. In subsequent years, the curve wobbled up and down, reaching 23% of total arrests in 2019⁶.

Police and judicial sources have revealed that the PCC's business involves other activities, such as collective transport through vans and regular bus lines, cargo theft, hotels, gas stations, parking lots, the sale and dismantling of stolen vehicles, and protection rackets. More recently, the press reported invasions of watershed protection areas, possibly with the purpose of building housing and settling populations, as has happened in Rio de Janeiro (MANSO, 2020). Unlike Rio de Janeiro's *milícias*, the PCC does not charge protection fees or tolls for access to the streets of the neighborhood where they exercise their control.

The PCC employs a formal, hierarchical and functional structure of a business type, which is run by means of cell phones and applications, to manage its illegal business activities (DIAS, 2013, Ch. 10). In addition to the general rules established in the "Statute of the PCC" (the organization's constitution) and alongside its territorial controls, there are strict regulations regarding the recruitment of members. Each baptized and admitted member is "registered" and has a functional record which includes: name and reason for imprisonment; alias; registration

number (corresponding to the number assigned the member when he entered the prison system); neighborhood (place of residence or activity); date of baptism (date of entry into the organization); place of baptism (prison or in the neighborhoods); sponsors (the only way to become a member); last three faculties (prisons); last three “responsas” (leadership functions performed); punishments (penalties imposed for violating the PCC statute); exit date (exit date); *linha V* (contact phone number); registration (date and location of last update) (*O Globo*, Época Negócios 2015). The structure of this register is inspired by the files that make up police or prison records. This is undoubtedly an example of the appropriation of official investigation procedures that have been adapted to meet the needs of the PCC.

Control of accounts is fundamental to the success of the enterprise. This is done through electronic spreadsheets to monitor cash flow, drug purchase and sale operations and illegal activities, as well as assets and liabilities. What is known comes from police reports and information provided to the Public Prosecutor. The PCC structure reveals concern with results and return on investments both in core and support activities. The two examples of recruitment and accounting control indicate an outstanding rationalization of corporate internal governance. However, given the nature of illegal operations, corporate governance depends on institutional support beyond the world of the market. The governance of crime requires criminal governance of the city, which means thinking of the PCC as an organization of social life in its relations with governments, public order institutions and the political class.

Its presence in neighborhoods, especially in those that make up the outskirts of the city, is the result of people passing through the prison system. Some of the baptized members of the gang, once released from prison, become prison-neighborhood-prison communication vehicles, as do their families during visits. Little by little, this process continues and one neighborhood after another sees parts of its territory taken over by the organization. Although the use of violence or the threat thereof is not absent from the relations between “rulers” and “ruled,” circulation with weapons displayed publicly on the streets, in bars and in areas where people gather is rare, if not discreet, and the same applies to their use. This does not mean that the PCC does not buy weapons or use them in operations, but they are stored in an armory, out of public view.

The regulation of social behavior is extremely strict, as in prisons. The PCC’s regulations are set out in the *Dicionário disciplinar*⁷, “an extremely crucial tool for the training and preparation of new leaders”: “An item should be analyzed very carefully before being applied. The goal is to establish the conditions and applications of the items according to the analysis of the *intonia*.” The *Dicionário disciplinar* constitutes a checklist of good and bad conduct and the punishments applicable where called for. This makes it a kind of rudimentary code of civil procedure. Its simple and direct language, strongly influenced by words and terms current in the criminal world, make it

easy for anyone to understand. The “dictionary” allows us to identify some of the parameters of behavioral regulation around such axes as: abuse of trust; betrayal; use of reprehensible means such as psychological pressures to obtain personal advantages; committing acts that require prior authorization, such as the killing of disaffected members of the gang; failure to fulfill commitments; accusations made without evidence and/or slander; snitching; rape; abandonment of a mission without justification; use of drugs or similar acts that harm the organization; extortion and blackmail for personal gain; the commission of acts or expression of opinions that may harm people; lack of interest in organizing, participating in family work or projects; failure to fulfill missions or tasks within stipulated deadlines; having sexual relations or committing obscene acts with persons of the same sex; theft of the organization’s money, drugs and weapons; and over-invoicing for goods.

This repertoire includes not only reprehensible behaviors, but also the list of those that are to be inculcated in members. In this regard, it has a repressive dimension, like a penal code, and a positive one, promoted with the purpose of creating a community of collective understanding regarding values such as discipline, loyalty, cooperation, justice, honesty and virility. The world of crime—and the PCC is no exception—is a world conceived by men for men, hence why sexism is an integral part of it and why it seeks to rigidly regulate behavior between genders. Subaltern roles are reserved for women, both in women’s prisons and in neighborhoods. Until recently, women were in charge of controlling the flow of communications, being almost always in charge of telephone exchanges. With the spread of cell phones, frequently changed to avoid leaving traces, and the regular use of applications, that role has tended to lose relevance.

Some aspects of this catalog of appalling behaviors are not very explicit, not least because they are internalized without the threat of punishment being needed. Among them is the imperative of the law of silence that prevails in the neighborhoods. As is well known [in Brazil], many residents of neighborhoods and favelas where the presence of criminal organizations is recognized live between two sources of pressure: on the one hand, the PCC, on the other, the police. Surveillance by some over others and by PCC members over residents is a frequent reality. Knowing how to behave means knowing what you can hear, see and say. If, on the one hand, residents often recognize that the neighborhood is safer with the PCC present, on the other hand, going to the bar, playing amateur football on weekends and going to dance parties are all monitored discreetly from a distance.

Each behavior described in the *Dicionário disciplinar* as reprehensible is accompanied by a corresponding punishment. The penalties can be light, medium or hard, including warnings, suspensions, exclusion, exclusion without the option return, and annulment of baptism. The most serious penalty, death, is reserved exclusively for betrayal. When a PCC member informs to other gangs or the police or joins a rival gang. Among the listed reprehensible behaviors are those that

indirectly compromise the regularity of business and the everyday life of the gang, such as conflicts in marital relationships, neighborhood conflicts and fights at leisure and party venues.

Mechanisms were created to regulate conflicts both in prisons and in the hoods. These are known as “debates” and constitute tribunals concerned with ascertaining facts and distributing punishments. This phenomenon has been studied in the specialized literature (DIAS and GOMES, 2021). Dias and Gomes (*Ibid.*) analyzed a case brought to investigate torture in São Paulo. The case was based on a “debate” concerning whether an “offender” would live or die. Like the disciplinary code, the trial model is inspired by the procedures and rituals of the official justice system. This sort of appropriation is not strange, especially given that many PCC members went through such the experience of being accused and convicted and this have first-hand experience of the process. This is not, however, a case of the justice system of modern Western civilization being emulated. The PCC justice system comes with a sense of urgency; it seeks to implement quick and certain justice in record time—everything that the “civilized” justice system promises and fails to do.

Organized crime, politics and police

Alongside the PCC’s control and domination relationships in neighborhoods, the external relations of organized crime gangs with politics and the police are not new topics. Little is known about the PCC’s involvement in local, regional and national politics. Analyzing the trends that led to the constitution of electoral “machines” in modern democracies, Weber (1970) concludes that the central figure in this process is the figure of the boss, “an indispensable man who directly collects the funds that the great finance tycoons allocate to the [party] organization” (p. 97).

Bearing in mind the differences in the historical context, one cannot but recognize the powerful electoral machines at work in all Brazilian elections. Each party recruits its own fundraiser capable of leveraging elections for this or that candidate. There is no solid evidence that the PCC has allocated financial resources to parties or supported certain candidacies, nor that it has managed to elect any candidate identified with it and its purposes. From time to time, there are press reports of electoral financing or the ties of a candidate or parliamentarian to the PCC, but these tend to be suspicions and are not investigated.

Thus, in the case of São Paulo and the PCC, compelling evidence of a relationship between the gang and politics remains to be produced. Nonetheless, some symptoms can be identified indirectly. As revealed by the media and analysis of the events that resulted in the 2006 outbreak of violence in São Paulo, the trigger was the confidential information provided by Civil Police delegates to the Chamber of Deputies in a closed session, in which it was revealed that the state government was planning to transfer the PCC’s prison-based leadership, including its then most

prominent leader, a certain Marcola, to prisons in various locations around the state. An employee of the Chamber of Deputies who had been co-opted by the gang provided it with a copy of the recording of the session. It has been revealed, following events that took place in an election year, that the PCC finances the training of lawyers to support its defense and that it was considering financing the campaigns of two as-yet unnamed deputies—one state and one federal. It seems to be the case that the PCC's involvement in the political world is focused on obtaining privileged information, such as concerns police operations or bills under consideration that could harm its business. The defense and representation of its interests as a criminal organization or interests that could benefit the neighborhoods it controls seem to be of lesser relevance.

The relations between the PCC and the police, which differ by neighborhood and key area of São Paulo are of another nature. In the neighborhoods that make up urban cluster A, the police usually engage predictive policing with a view to preventing robberies or armed violence. In some other neighborhoods, its repressive functions seem to prevail (clusters E and H). In yet others, there are somewhat cordial relations, with police officers performing functions beyond the call of duty, such as driving women in labor to local public hospitals. In yet other clusters, the police presence is overt, threatening, violent and often accompanied by killings. Its main targets are drug users and traffickers, as well as robbers, professional killers and perpetrators of killings of police officers.

It is common among social scientists to say that it is not possible to write the history of Brazilian society without reference to the presence of the police in the daily lives of residents, especially in the urban peripheries. Much is known about how police organizations work. In the same way, the reactions not only of those directly affected by violent police attacks, but also of public opinion in general, are well known. It is worth remembering that urban policies implemented within the scope of municipal governments do not address public security problems related to crime control, which fall within the purview of state governments. In any case, police relations with residents are complex. Both the "Military Police," responsible for preventive and repressive policing, and the "Civil Police," responsible for crime investigation, maintain ambiguous relationships with residents and the PCC that involve co-optation, corruption, accommodation, clashes and deaths.

Although there is no consistent information regarding the involvement of police officers in the PCC's business—not least because only part of the arrangements come to the attention of the authorities—flagrant and notorious cases have been the subject of complaints to ombudsmen that have led to administrative procedures in internal affairs departments. The payment of bribes or blackmail as practiced by police officers, especially by the military police, are perennial practices because they maintain, through daytime and nighttime patrolling, daily and close contact with residents and members of the PCC. These practices constitute a bargaining chip; they are intended, through the circulation of privileged information, to prevent anyone being caught in the act of

committing a crime, protect members of the PCC against probable enemies, prevent police operations from sabotaging business or interrupting the flow of illegal activities. Relationships between the PCC and police are cyclical and subject to unexpected external circumstances, such as changes in police battalion formation, the appearance of previously unknown civil police officers in certain neighborhoods or pressure to alter the terms of verbal agreements. The relationships veer between accommodation and open conflict that can lead to the deaths of PCC members or residents of PPC-dominated neighborhoods who have nothing to do with either the PCC or the police.

The most serious forms of conflicts are those that result in police killings, resulting from broken agreements, revenge for the killing of a police officer, police officers moonlighting in other roles and operations that are part of security policies based around the war on drugs, the repression and elimination of traffickers and PCC leaders, which seems to be a frequent occurrence. The available data confirm this trend. In 1996, such deaths represented 2% of killings by police; in 2007, they accounted for 15%; in 2012, they were 19%; and they were 33% in 2016. These deaths are selective and not evenly distributed throughout the urban territory. Their highest incidence occurs in neighborhoods with low HDIs, with the preferred target being young black males with low education (PERES *et al.*, 2021).

This being so, one can understand why residents of poor neighborhoods and peripheries are in two minds about the presence of the PCC. Some are against. After all, why would they accept as normal the presence of something they see as morally unacceptable that could compromise the lives of non-criminal working families and represent a risk to their children. There are others who are also opposed in theory, but in practice regard the status quo as inevitable and feel that the best thing to do is to find a *modus vivendi* without making any trouble. Others are in favor of it on the grounds that security is improved, dance parties are under control and drug consumption is contained. In short, these relations are neither entirely welcoming nor entirely hostile (RUOTTI, 2016).

In this article, we have explored the nature of the PCC's criminal governance of parts of São Paulo. The assertive presence of the PCC affects the living conditions of residents in neighborhoods living in symbiosis with the gang. In some parts of the city this symbiosis is more flexible, in others, not so much. It has been suggested that this type of governance contemplates dimensions of collective existence that are intricately connected to the maintenance of regular business operations, for which a guarantee of peace is essential. That is why the *Dicionário disciplinar* focuses on the actions of members and their relationship with the PCC, whose authoritarianism is undeniable. In this way, it reaches residents who learn to practice the law of silence, avoid contact with strangers, move about freely (but with the necessary precautions), and share traditional moral values, including those which govern sexual, romantic and friendship relationships. In this respect, the PCC looks more like a moral-business enterprise. Its relations

with the world of official politics seem neither solid nor consolidated. Relations with the police mix arrangements, agreements and conflicts with fatal outcomes. But it cannot be concluded that the criminal governance of some neighborhoods or parts of territories translates into governance of the city. In the case of the PCC in the city of São Paulo, the configuration seems to be one of hybrid governance that mixes crime and city, infra-governance and official governance, forming a nexus of integration, accommodation and conflict between the world of crime and the city. Military and civil police officers also compete for these hybrid forms, as do neighborhood organizations capable of juxtaposing a local social order with its own broader order.

Conclusion: which governance for which city?

The first question in this article is: Are we facing a scenario of criminal domination of cities, their inhabitants and their governments, configured as a form of criminal sovereignty? At a macro level, we cannot conclude that there is criminal governance, nor can we confirm full territorial sovereignty. In neither Mexico City nor São Paulo can we confirm that there exists a monopoly on legitimate physical violence under the control of the city's authority. At local levels there are some micro-regimes of dual governance. There are cases where these focus on controlling crime; in others, they affect policing; and (less frequently) citizens' initiatives. It is like a war of positions. The idea of governance should not be understood in an instrumental way, with actions isolated from context. It cannot be concluded that the criminal governance of some neighborhoods, communities or parts of territories translates into city governance. In the case of the PCC in the city of São Paulo, the configuration seems to be one of hybrid governance that mixes crime and city, infra-governance and official governance, forming a nexus of integration, accommodation and conflict between the world of crime and the city.

Citizens navigate a complex world of limitations, where they appear to be subjects of a triple coercive order: that of autonomous police regimes, that of unpunished criminal actors, and that of a legal political elite, with legitimately elected representatives that are incapable of responding to the challenges posed either by criminal governance or the governance of cities.

Thus, we reveal the differences in the relationships between monopolistic criminal organizations, such as the PCC, and small ones, such as La Unión. In one city there is one large organization, while in the other, various mafias, "cartelitos" and fragmented groups coexist. Large organizations work like criminal versions of capitalist corporations and small ones like mafias.

Police strategies and behaviors differ correspondingly. The microterritorial dynamics of crime and its control-domain in the city reside in the political and organizational conditions of the police and in their autonomy, as well as in microcasuistic negotiation between criminal and

political actors. The dominant strategies are corruption and predation. In Mexico, the preventive police behave like a cartel, while the judicial police act like a mafia. The presence of the Armed Forces inhibits competition but works like a firefighting service. There is no control of firearms. In São Paulo, relations between the police are complex and ambiguous. Military and civil police officers also compete for these hybrid forms, as do neighborhood organizations capable of juxtaposing a local social order with its own broader order. Often, the police, representatives of goodness see themselves as being in a war against the PCC, representative of evil. They are enemies, and the annihilation of one will strengthen the other. But the police also engage in cooperative relationships, collusion, accommodation, corruption and even indirect participation in illegal business. The boundaries between public and private interests appear blurred.

On the concept of monopoly of coercion, in both cities private pseudo-monopolies coexist with public quasi-monopolies, both among criminal organizations and with some forms of police autonomy. There are territorial control practices, but none replaces government functions. In São Paulo, although the police are constitutionally authorized to use physical coercion to contain crimes and protect the rights of the greatest number of people, it is not uncommon for them to use this attribute as if it were a private prerogative.

As for other dimensions of criminal governance, with the exception of the PCC, no group has managed to impose social rules (such as the law of silence). Regarding normative practices, such as the control of homicides or other social behaviors, only the PCC has a statute and offers forms of criminal justice—it is a more bureaucratized organization. Relations with citizens depend on micro-territories and range from consensus to passive resistance. In Mexico, there is a peculiar form of clientelism and links with local politics. Several local political groups are involved with informal businesses and have interfaces with illicit actors, resulting in certain form of territorial political cartelization. In São Paulo, criminal actors may influence but do not directly participate in politics. Clientelism, traditional in relations between rulers and ruled, whether between elites or between the working classes, is also manifested in the triad police-PCC-residents. Without question, in the relations of resident citizens with criminals there may be “consensus,” understood as “consent,” however, there is no “legitimacy.”

Urban governments do not have the capacity to solve these challenges in the face of profound political and urban changes that have modified the structures of governance and the ways in which cities are governed.

Notes

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³ The data were compiled and processed by Marcelo Batista Nery, researcher and coordinator of Technology Transfer at NEV-Cepid/USP, and Jose A. Fernández (Colmex). The data come from public records of State statistical agencies: the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE) of Brazil and the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI) of Mexico for 2010 and 2019. The variables are: 1. Territory profile; 2. Population profile; 3. Housing conditions; 4. Sanitary and hygiene conditions; 5. Urban mobility, Public security, Law and Order, Social disorganization; 6. Collective efficacy and social cohesion (BATISTA, ALVES and ADORNO, 2020; NERY, SOUZA and ADORNO, 2019). The classification of the Mexican strata includes: 1. Economically Active Population Occupied; 2. Self-employed workers; 3. Housing ownership; 4. Housing units with piped water; 5. Number of people per room; 6. Population aged 15 and over with post-primary education; 7. Population with high income (more than five times the minimum monthly salary); 8. Urban population. The units of analysis are the basic geostatistical areas of the city (AGEB) (SCHTEINGART and RUBALCAVA, 2012, p. 76 et seq.)

⁴ Source: Secretaria de Segurança Pública do Estado de São Paulo (SSP), Departamento da Polícia Civil e da Polícia Militar. Available (on-line) at: <http://www.ssp.sp.gov.br/estatistica/pesquisa.aspx> (accessed on 08/20/2021).

⁵ Criminal data for the state of São Paulo is made available online (<http://www.ssp.sp.gov.br/Estatistica/Pesquisa.aspx>) one day prior to its official publication in the State Gazette (accessed on 08/26/2021).

⁶ Source: Secretaria de Segurança Pública do Estado de São Paulo – SSP Departamento da Polícia Civil e da Polícia Militar. Available (on-line) at: <http://www.ssp.sp.gov.br/estatistica/pesquisa.aspx> Accessed on 08/20/2021 (for various years).

⁷ Source: *Dicionário – Regimento Disciplinar PCC*. There is no way to attest to the veracity of this document, which circulates publicly. Disponível (on-line) em: <http://www.aconteceuemitu.org/2017/04/dicionario-regimento-disciplinar-pcc.html>

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