
DIVIDED CITIES: CRIME AND INEQUALITY IN URBAN BRAZIL

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ABSTRACT:

This paper examines the social and political problem of crime in urban Brazil through the lens of conventional economic models of crime, specifically the “rational criminal” model. Drawing on socio-economic information and attention to the social and political context of Brazil’s “mega-cities,” it challenges the presumed causal link between poverty and crime. Turning to the link between income inequality and crime, this paper further argues that non-material forms of relative deprivation are more significant than income inequality in Brazilian cities. It suggests that the Brazilian city is a distorted setting for a conventional economic analysis of crime, due to several factors: the extreme level of geographical segregation and proximity between social groups, the impact of perceptions and fears of crime and violence, and the interactions between legal and illegal security networks. Therefore, both deterrence efforts and crime prevention policies focused on poverty alleviation and income equity are insufficient for addressing the contemporary phenomenon of urban crime in Brazil.

INTRODUCTION

“Today, if you ask on the street, each one has a story to tell: if his house wasn’t burglarized, he has had a necklace taken, a ring, a wallet (...) many times people will take your shopping cart full of food.”

- *Resident of Sao Paulo* (Caldeira 2000, 24)

“Brazil’s public security strategy has abandoned the country’s poor and sentenced all Brazilians to crime and violence ... The public security budget allocation has been done on the basis of repression and discrimination effectively ‘criminalising’ poor communities as a whole.”

- *Tom Cahill, Amnesty International* (2005)

Though Brazil emerged from military rule more than twenty years ago, it is described as a country “under siege,” where the cities are ringed with “poor urban areas as dangerous and even barbarous places that outsiders, especially from the middle and upper classes, venture into only at their peril” (Arias 2006, 10). More than 300,000 people have been killed in Brazil in the past decade (Richardson and Kirsten 2005, 15), and its 2002 homicide rate was the fourth highest in the region (World Bank 2006), and higher than it used to be under military rule (1964-1985). The police force is notoriously repressive, and public support is growing for punitive sanctions, including the death penalty, against those labelled criminals (Caldeira 2002, 373; Caldeira 2006, 103). In the 2006 federal election, crime and insecurity were the top priorities of voters, along with unemployment (Kingstone 2006). Following an increase in deaths during confrontations with police in Rio de Janeiro, public security is a high-profile debate topic during the 2008 municipal elections (Osava 2008).

Across the political spectrum, the conventional assumption that crime is tied to poverty persists: those who do not have enough must steal. While proposed solutions to crime and

poverty differ, many Brazilians, as in other countries, tend to blame the poor, especially rural migrants to the city, for increases in crime and, by extension, for all related social problems, such as drug use, violence, and social distrust (Caldeira 2000, 22). This perceived link leads to a stigmatization of the poor. Research shows, however, that inequality, rather than poverty, has more influence on crime; in Brazil, various types of inequality, such as inequalities in land tenure, education, and employment, are relevant to the incidence of crime. However, most crime reduction policies target neither poverty nor inequality, focusing mainly on the deterrence and enforcement aspects – more and tougher police and prisons, targeting certain groups and areas.

The “basic equation” of crime posits that policymakers can attempt to adjust either the incentives or the deterrents for crime. The government of President Luis Inácio “Lula” da Silva and the Workers’ Party (PT), elected in 2002 and 2006 largely by the poor, has focused more than previous governments on reducing social inequity, both for general poverty alleviation and as a measure to combat crime. It has done so by devolving authority to the municipal level and instituting community policing, youth inclusion projects and supporting social integration initiatives run by NGOs. Meanwhile, hard-line policing approaches remain prevalent in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. While the political attention to crime in Brazil may stem in large part from personal fear among voters, an analysis of the economic factors that may cause, prevent, or result from crime remains important as a partial basis for policy decisions – and some insight into the limitations of both ‘tough policing’ and ‘social inclusion’ solutions.

This article argues that urban Brazil represents an extreme and distorted – but also increasingly widespread – environment in which this ‘basic equation’ is inadequate. Through examining the case of urban Brazil, this paper contends that policy solutions must be more complex, moving beyond the assumptions of the ‘rational criminal’ model in at least two aspects: the particular social, legal and geographical environments in a city, and the effect of illegal networks on individual choices. It is not within the scope of this paper to critique the econometric details and methods used to study crime and inequality. Rather, it will place the insights of economic models of crime in the overall context of human development in urban Brazil, primarily Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, demonstrating that the concentrated urban setting and the politics of fear alter the economic incentives and modes of criminality by stunting social mobility and blurring the boundary between the legal and the illegal.

The first section of this paper provides a summary of the facts and the gaps in information about crime and violence in Brazil and Latin America, as well as an outline of some theoretical and empirical links between poverty, inequality and crime. Then, it presents one of the original economic models of crime, the ‘rational criminal’ concept, and its relevance to the inequality hypothesis, including deterrence efforts. The next section discusses how two characteristics of Brazilian cities – physical and symbolic segregation of social sectors, and the role of legal and illegal networks – complicate this analysis. While others have assessed specific policy interventions in greater detail (Goetzl and Khan 2007; Ribeiro 2007; World Bank 2006; Cohen and Rubio 2007; Morrison 2007), this article makes two more general points: a) the ‘prevention vs. deterrence’ policy debate frame is too simplistic; and b) insofar as inequality influences crime, social and symbolic forms of inequality are equally or more significant than material inequality. It concludes by considering some of the newer, integrated policy approaches to crime in this light.

MEASURING CRIME AND VIOLENCE IN BRAZIL AND LATIN AMERICA

It is difficult to obtain an accurate or precise picture of crime and violence, and most econometric analyses of crime present their findings with strong caveats about the sources of quantitative data on crime rates (van Dijk 2006; Ribeiro 2007). Homicide rates are the most common measurement of violent crime, despite the serious limitations of such statistics. In addition to discrepancies in methods and numbers among police, hospital, and victimization-survey records, certain types of homicides, such as those of gang members and poor people, are less likely to be reported (Ribeiro 2007). Using homicide rates as a proxy also tends to over-emphasize the involvement of young males, not accounting for domestic violence, gender-based violence, organized crime, etc.¹ Nevertheless, the increase in homicide rates in Brazil – it doubled between 1980 and 2002, from 15 to 32 per 100,000 people, and became the cause of death for 51 percent of young males (World Bank 2006, v) – does reflect the general incidence of crime in Brazil and in the region.

It is important to note that in Brazil, along with the other violent countries (except El Salvador) homicide rates in cities are much higher than the national average, reaching 57 per 100,000 in Rio de Janeiro (Cohen and Rubio 2007; World Bank 2006; Londoño and Guerrero 1998, 19), and varying between 4 and 150 per 100,000 across different areas of Rio de Janeiro (UN Habitat 2004, 4). A recent reduction in the homicide rate in São Paulo (from 35 to 15 per 100,000 between 1999 and 2006, according to Van Dijk 2006), in contrast to other cities, is an anomaly, and will be discussed in the last section. Despite these variations, overall indicators of crime and violence are consistently much higher in Latin America than in most of North America and Europe (Soares and Naritomi 2008). Moreover, perceptions of violence and insecurity have doubled in Latin America in the last five years, with 73 percent of the population feeling “constant fear” (Latinobarómetro, cited in Cevallos 2008). Although crime and insecurity are increasingly named as ‘development issues,’ the assumption that the underlying problem is poverty is problematic: the evidence is mixed, and, moreover, the focus on poverty can detract attention from other factors. This article considers poverty and inequality as explanations for the violence afflicting the urban areas of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Brazil, but contends that other geographic and social factors must also be taken into account.

Linking Crime To Poverty And Inequality

Contrary to the presumed correlation between poverty and crime, on an international scale the poorest countries do not bear the heaviest burden of crime. Rather, it is the middle-income region of Latin America, as well as Southern Africa, where crime has overwhelmed societies. Furthermore, with the exception of Haiti, rising GDP levels have been accompanied by – and not mitigated – rising crime levels (World Bank 2006b: 294). The poverty explanation for crime proposes that crime is a ‘last resort’ means to material gain. Conventional models assume that economic growth should provide more legal livelihood options for individuals (Soares and Naritomi 2008). Evidence directly linking poverty to crime, however, is unclear and contradictory (Bourgignon 1999; Fajnzylber, Lederman and Loayza 2002; Neumayer 2005; Pinheiro and Scarlazzari 2005), pointing instead to the importance of the *proportion* of people who are poor. Some argue that relative poverty (Neumayer 2005), and even the prospect of relative poverty (Bourgignon 1999), as opposed to absolute poverty, is the primary determining factor. These accounts are challenging to test, as unequal distribution of income is obscured by national GDP figures.

The second angle to the poverty-crime link reverses the causation: crime negatively impacts collective economic growth and wealth, whether of a neighbourhood, a city, or a country. In Latin America, estimates of the loss of GDP due to violence have risen to 15 percent (Inter-American Development Bank, cited in Cevallos 2008) from 7.5 percent in the late 1990s (Bourgignon 1999: 28). These numbers generally do not include the social costs of crime: loss of human capital through death or injury, the opportunity cost of jailing potentially productive people, and the cost of deterrence measures (police, prisons, courts) (Bourgignon 1999, 26-28; Ministerio da Justicia 2008). The World Bank estimates that a 10 percent drop in Brazil's homicide rate could result in a 0.2 to 0.8 percent increase in per capita income (World Bank 2006, 9). This does not include economic activity deterred by high crime rates, to which foreign investment, real estate, and tourism are particularly susceptible; Richardson and Kirsten estimate this loss of economic activity at five to seven percent of GDP (2005, 39). In general, however, the economic and social consequences of crime disproportionately affect the more vulnerable sectors of the population (Sarmiento et al. 2004), thus exacerbating existing poverty and inequality.

The causal links between inequality and crime are more substantial. Since the end of the civil wars in Latin America (except Colombia), the gap in income distribution and economic growth have both been rising steadily (Szekely 2003; CEPAL 2005). Brazil is the third-most unequal country in the world – as measured by its Gini coefficient of 56.7 (CIA 2005) – and indeed numerous analyses have found a strong correlation between inequality and crime rates (Soares and Naritomi 2008). Fajnzylber, Lederman and Loayza, for example, find that income inequality, measured by the Gini coefficient across 39 countries, has a “significant and positive effect on the incidence of crime” (2002: 25). At first glance, Brazil seems exceptional in that inequality levels have remained stable or decreased slightly during the past fifteen years (0.57 in 2006), and the overall proportion of poor Brazilians has fallen. The notable difference, however, is in the urban areas, where inequality remains more extreme: Rio de Janeiro's Gini coefficient reached 0.67 in 1999 and had the most people living in absolute poverty (Richardson and Kirsten 2005); rapid urbanization is a main cause of this inequality (Szabo 2008).

This overview of economic indicators relating to crime rates in Latin America suggests that policy responses to violence and crime must tackle inequality as much or more than poverty. While this shift in focus is occurring, in order to consider the impact of policy solutions, it is important to clarify the underpinning assumptions of using an economic analysis of crime. The following section discusses the insights and gaps of rational cost-benefit analysis frames in this context.

AN ECONOMIC MODEL: THE RATIONAL CRIMINAL THEORY

Most economic explanations of crime assume that crime is a rational, individual decision; therefore, altering the incentive structures for potential criminals can cause them to respond accordingly. This can be traced to the “rational criminal theory,” first proposed by Gary Becker, who sought a model for the “optimal decision (...) that minimizes the social loss in income from offenses” (1968, 207). Isaac Ehrlich (1973) applied it to a spatial analysis of variation in crime rates across North American neighbourhoods. Becker's theory posits criminal behaviour as resulting from a cost-benefit calculation, in which the potential (material) gains of crime are weighed against the potential (material) costs. The cost of crime includes the nature of the sanction attached to that crime (e.g. fines, jail), the opportunity cost of that sanction (e.g. lost

work time), and the likelihood of facing a sanction (e.g. arrest, application of sentence). The society that seeks “optimal policies for addressing illegal behaviour,” argues Becker, must consider “optimal resource allocation” (1968, 209) in terms of loss and punishment incurred.

Crucially, both sides of this equation rely on the individual’s *perception* of the potential gain and loss from a crime, as well as their perception of this option as compared to a non-criminal option for material gain – some call this simply “maximising welfare” (Fajnzylber, Lederman and Loayza 2002, 224). Perception includes the “honesty factor” (Bourgignon 1999, 18), the idea that part of the cost of crime is the social disapproval of illegal behaviour. Two different individuals would behave similarly if they *perceive* a similar relative gain from crime, regardless of differences in their objective level of poverty (or that of society in general). The more drastic inequality in Brazilian cities, described above, could lead to greater perceived gains and higher crime levels, according to Becker and Ehrlich’s models; when measured by homicide and robbery rates, this holds true, with the important recent exception of São Paulo.

As discussed above, crime is both a cause and a consequence of inequality, but the rational criminal model only accounts for material inequality as viewed by an individual. A closer look at the social, economic, and political dynamics of urban life, however, suggests that many forms of social inequalities are more influential. Neumayer (2005), for example, finds that the link between disparities in income distribution (measured by the Gini coefficient) and crime becomes less significant when controlling for other social factors, in particular unemployment, women’s participation in the labour force, and the proportion of people living in extreme poverty (80 percent below the mean). National government statistics charting the number of homicide deaths by education level (not income) shows the highest rate in the second-lowest education category (68 per 100,000, compared to 35 for no education and less than 10 for high school or more), suggesting that rural areas with little education are less affected than sectors with some access to services, such as urban outskirts (Soares 2006, 841).

The study that finds the most robust correlation between the Gini coefficient and crime rates in Latin America is that an economic downturn does increase crime rates, but only after a “lag effect” (Fajnzylber, Lederman and Loayza 2002, 248) or “hysteresis” (Bourgignon 1999, 24). This implies that in the face of few livelihood options, social restraints may delay a decision to take up crime until the cost-benefit analysis of illegal activity tips, as the rational criminal theory would suggest. Once this “tipping point” into crime is crossed, however, it is less easy to move in reverse, away from crime. The fact that crime levels produced by an economic downturn remain high even after economic indicators readjust suggests that factors other than necessity borne of relative poverty keep people involved in crime, and the rational choice to abandon crime is not necessarily possible. In other words, exclusion from opportunities to invest may be more serious than not having resources to invest; crime as a solution to poverty thus becomes less than rational, even in the narrowest sense. The social implication is, as Bourgignon and Ferreira (2000) argue, that, though, crime may overcome unequal individual economic status, it actually contributes to unequal social mobility.

The correlations between high levels of poverty, inequality and crime in Brazil’s urban centres appear to provide fertile ground for applying the rational criminal theory. However, both the motivation and the deterrence sides of the equation are distorted in these cities of extremes. The following sections discuss the complexity through two sociological elements that characterize both São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro: geographical segregation and proximity, and social networks of (in)security.

CHARACTERISTICS OF BRAZILIAN CITIES

Segregated Cities: Inequality at Close Range

Although the most extreme disparities in Brazil exist between the wealthiest urban neighbourhoods and the poorest rural neighbourhoods, inequality also occurs *within* the city itself; it is where rich and poor live in close but segregated proximity that the mutual influence of inequality, crime and violence appear most significant. In Rio de Janeiro, less than 20 percent of residents live in the *favela* areas. Also, the literal and symbolic fragmentation of the city has a wider impact on crime levels. This occurs by capping social mobility through the use of stereotypes, and by distorting the effect of deterrence measures, leaving the poorest sectors more vulnerable to becoming both victims and perpetrators of crime.

Symbolic segregation: Discourses of fear and division

The segregation of the city results in concrete and perceived forms of inequality (Najar 2005), thus adding to the incentives for criminal behaviour, as discussed above. Not only do many people lack official housing tenure (and thus collateral) in *favela* areas, but in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, employers are known to reject job candidates on the basis of their address – “discrimination and stigmatisation of *favelas* are more marked than income differentials” (Richardson & Kirsten 2005, 11). The outsider identity of those who live in the ‘peripheries’ is actively replicated in urban youth culture, such as hip-hop music (Caldeira 2006). Afro-descended Brazilians suffer a double marginalization, for they are more likely to be born into poorer social sectors, and they face widespread racism (Bourgignon and Ferreira 2000; Caldeira 2006). Symbolic segregation is more than stereotypes, for in the dense geography of the city, the perception of criminality, magnified through social discourse and a pervasive sense of fear, becomes detached from individual people and their experiences. Teresa Caldeira (2000, 19) calls this a “talk of crime,” fuelling a sense of increasing intrusion into ‘safe’ spaces from the periphery toward the centre; the resulting divisions are socially corrosive and cement existing inequalities. In Caldeira’s words:

These narratives and practices impose partitions, build up walls, delineate and enclose spaces, establish distances, segregate, differentiate, impose prohibitions, multiply rules of avoidance and exclusion, and restrict movements. In short, they simplify and enclose the world. Narratives of crime elaborate prejudices and try to eliminate ambiguities (2002, 20).

Thus the scapegoats of the city are created, regardless of their individual guilt: the dark-skinned man, the migrant worker, the unemployed youth. This attitude also absolves those who may be equally or more criminal – police officers who use excessive violence or are involved in illegal activities, the commanders of drug gangs, government and white-collar officials who make a profit by fomenting crime and the drug trade.

Physical Segregation: Reducing public security and public space

The geographical segregation of the city, through barriers of wealthy, private security (walls, gates) or through barriers of fear and risk (not traversing controlled territories), drastically reduces the socio-economic mobility and entrepreneurship that should be the lifeblood of an urban centre. It also alters the incentive structure faced by potential criminals. Social capital is already in low supply in urban areas, where the natural ties of kinship among entire communities are few. This reduces the social constraints against illegal activity cited by the rational criminal

theory, while crime and fear dissolve the potential for social trust and cooperative responses. As Caldeira (2000) points out, the concept of public space is twisted – public places become dangerous places, and social activity happens behind closed walls rather than in civic spaces, further reducing interactions between different social sectors. All of these factors combine to frustrate people’s attempts to make their livelihood by legitimate means, making criminal behaviour a more compelling option. It also focuses the fear of crime on identifiable groups, detracting attention from the root causes and the equally serious crimes committed by wealthier people.

Additionally, the segregation of Brazilian cities distorts the deterrence side of the rational calculation of crime, through “the political economy of crime deterrence” (Bourgignon 1999, 32). Rich people build walls and hire private guards because they do not rely on the public security agents to prevent or deter crime. The police are among the most mistrusted institutions in the country (Gaviria & Pages 1999, 20), prisons are considered training sites for criminal behaviour, and private security has become the norm for those who can afford it in Brazil – from wire fences to security guards to, at the extreme end, private helicopters for commuting. In fact, Caldeira argues that poor people are also turning to (cheaper) forms of privatised security, so that “in both cases the rule of law is delegitimated” (2000, 199). A look beyond household security to policy decisions about deterrence spending shows that when the upper class purchases its own security, these private security systems are known to be much more effective than public policing, so, effectively, a segment of people removes itself (to varying degrees) from the list of potential victims of crime. The result is that crime is further concentrated among the lower classes; and yet, despite this unbalanced reality, the poor areas are not assigned additional public police (Bourgignon 1999; Gaviria and Pages 1999, 27). In fact, inadequate policing and lack of due process in marginalized areas often leads to inaccurate convictions and punishments, further diluting the deterrence effect of even minimal police presence. The uneven geography of security and protection options thus alters a criminal’s calculation of possible consequences. The “rational criminal” model cannot be applied uniformly in cities where fear and private security concentrate the burden of crime and of social exclusion on the peripheral sectors. This variation also undermines the government’s ability to make the most effective public policy choices regarding deterrence, and in the absence of reliable state presence, informal networks for protection and profit emerge. The next section discusses how this characteristic of Brazilian cities distorts the boundaries of legality/illegality and individual/group choice, adding complexity to the choice to engage in crime.

Illegal Networks: Altering the boundaries and the benefits of crime

Networks such as the drug trade, gangs, and corrupt police are only partially visible in measurements of economic activity, yet are central to any picture of crime. With established systems of profit and deterrence, the logic of these groups fits the welfare-maximising rational criminal model. But when the network is the dominant entity, not an individual criminal, the assumptions of the conventional rational criminal model become inadequate. For example, while drug addiction may be a benefit or constraint, the drug *trade* necessarily involves socio-economic interactions at multiple levels. In Brazil’s cities, drug traffickers rely on constantly crossing the division between licit and illicit activity and membership, using “loose institutional frameworks” (Arias 2006, 31) of official gangs, neighbourhood drug dealers, police and other officials, and young people.

Especially for youth, relative wealth is likely less of a motivation for joining such a group, while social pressures, such as a sense of identity and belonging and a culture of machismo, may be incentives for, and not restraints against, illegal actions (Bourgignon 1999, 29). As a collective, a drug-trafficking network in the Brazilian city behaves rationally and seeks profit, although networks in crime actually have a much broader range of self-interested options (Calvo-Armengol and Zenou 2004). Relative poverty and potential gain for the network may be internal – such as territorial or market control, status and reputation, or economic profit; deterrence comes primarily from other gang members and to some extent from government or private law enforcement. Opportunity costs for a group facing repressive tactics are less when members are expendable, as *favela* youngsters are.

The beneficial social and economic functions of illegal drug trade networks and, conversely, the uncertain benefits of remaining on the legal side, confound a simple ‘tipping point’ at which a person rationally chooses to resort to crime. A surprising number of prisoners on drug or gang charges have relatively high levels of education and had previously held jobs, but opted for the drug trade (Arias 2006, 134). The mixing of legal and illegal activities through several layers of networks, including police and government, also distorts expectations about deterrence – policing becomes unpredictable, possibly brutal, and not necessarily responding to actual crime incidents. In the late 1990s, 29 percent of Brazilians thought the police were “very bad,” and 65 percent said the same of the Attorney-General’s office (Londoño and Guerrero 1998, 36); these views persist, with the poor viewing the police as “part of the oppressive structure,” and Brazilians in general describing police as “corrupt” (Stone 2005, 3) . Arias suggests that both corruption and repression by police against criminals “gives legitimacy to traffickers by placing the state on equal footing with them in the eyes of many citizens” (2006, 4). In the city *favelas*, it may be ‘rational’ to survive by the rules of illegal networks; for example, the PCC gang provides protection to sections of Sao Paulo, in exchange for residents’ silence, obedience, or extortion payments, thus forming a “pseudo-state” (Willis 2007). A recent study showing murder rates rising most dramatically in smaller cities with nearly no presence of state security institutions (Nejamkis 2007) affirms evidence that urban networks, though distorted, provide a degree of stability. This has a perverse effect on policy responses: previously violent neighbourhoods may become less violent (‘stable’), thus attracting less attention from policymakers and law enforcement. But, at the same time, crime becomes the primary rational survival option, with no avenues for addressing the socio-economic contributors to crime, particularly among young people.

RETHINKING SECURITY: BEYOND THE ‘BASIC EQUATION’ OF CRIME PREVENTION VS. DETERRENCE

It is notable that in the first meeting of Public Security ministers of OAS countries in October 2008, the focus appeared to be on socio-economic conditions and prevention approaches, rather than debating the human rights controversies stemming from the “iron fist” repressive anti-crime and anti-gang tactics of recent years (Cevallos 2008). This attests to the influence of evolving international paradigms of security, specifically human security, in the issue of crime, as well as to the poor results of repressive tactics. While international attention, programs and research may provide vocabulary for this, much of this reconceptualisation stems from grassroots experiences, including community police projects, which gradually influence broader institutional changes, particularly in Brazil under the Workers’ Party (PT) (Barqueiro

2006). In Rio de Janeiro, there is increasing resistance to justifying military ‘sieges,’ curfews, and shutdowns of public services in certain neighbourhoods in the name of curbing crime and violence in the neighbourhood (Moreira 2007). The relative credibility of community groups enabled a successful neighbourhood-level gun buy-back program, even though the 2005 referendum on the Disarmament Statute did not pass (Szabo 2008; Souza and Sa 2005). A more complex example speaks to the international possibilities: the Rio de Janeiro NGO Viva Rio translates its understanding of exclusion and violence in *favelas* into disarmament and youth advocacy projects in the urban peripheries of Haiti, with promising results (AlertNet 2007; Richardsen and Kirsten 2005), in contrast to the more confrontational approach of the Brazilian-led UN peacekeeping mission. The oft-cited “success story” of São Paulo – where increased policing, gun control and incarceration levels achieved a drop in violent crime rates (Goertzel and Kahn 2007) – suggests that major socio-economic change is not essential. However, gangs and fear continue to rule much of the city, raising the question, echoed in the human security discussion, of whether reducing violence constitutes peace – “safety but not security” (Willis 2007). When considered from the distorted incentive structures of urban Brazil, as described in this article, the debates about whether prevention and control mechanisms should be balanced, integrated or complementary (World Bank 2006) seem less compelling than a perspective on urban violence that moves beyond this binary view.

RETHINKING ‘EFFECTIVE’ POLICY RESPONSES: INCORPORATING SUBJECTIVE DIMENSIONS

This discussion has argued that the characteristics of urban Brazil alter the circumstances and choices faced by a potential ‘rational criminal’ such that the assumptions about motivations and deterrence factors in conventional economic models of crime are inadequate. In developing more holistic and comprehensive policy models, it is also important to reconsider how the problem and the policy effectiveness of possible solutions are measured. Economic models are more likely to rely on quantitative information about crime and the costs of various interventions. While the cost-effectiveness of prevention approaches is a compelling argument against excessive ‘crackdown on crime’ policies (Cohen and Rubio 2007), quantifying a wide range of socio-economic conditions and using problematic crime statistics as indicators of urban violence in general leaves much out of the picture.

The two urban characteristics discussed in this article, segregation and illegal networks, point to some of these gaps. The symbolic segregation of classes and geographical areas of a city contributes to exclusion and a politics of fear, the effects of which can be multiple and widespread, beyond just incidences of crime. Similarly, the blurred distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate authorities and networks – exemplified by the ‘pseudo-state’ concept – creates experiences of violence, repression, and fear that are not captured quantifiably. Criminologist Rosa del Olmo has termed such elements the “subjective dimension of violence” (2000). Conversely, when assessing emerging policy initiatives, there may be unacknowledged positive impacts in the subjective dimension. One example is known as Crime Prevention through Environmental Design, responding to the problems engendered by geographical segregation and uneven urban infrastructure (Morrison 2007). In Brazil, where youth projects in public plazas and other dangerous places can transform youths’ perception of themselves and their neighbourhood (Instituto Sou da Paz 2007), including less antagonistic versions of *favela*

identity (Caldeira 2006), there is much potential for linking this with urban design efforts, thus capturing both the concrete and subjective dimensions.

PROSPECTS FOR ‘PUBLIC SECURITY’ IN BRAZIL

The PT government under Da Silva is demonstrating support for crime reduction policies that depart from the authoritarian tradition of repressive policing in Brazil, and it has developed several federal public security initiatives that attempt to address socio-economic conditions and the particular circumstances of Brazil. The Unitary Public Security System (SUSP), for example, aims to harmonize police hierarchies, records, procedures, and accountability, which is a promising step toward breaking the hold of illicit networks of drug trafficking and police officers. PRONASCI, the National Public Security and Citizenship Program (2007), is a \$3 billion set of actions that integrate prevention, control, and institutional change. The latter covers almost every aspect of social and economic inequality, as well as reforms to policing and prisons. While critics remain cautious regarding its feasibility and implementation (Soares 2007; Szabo 2008), particularly given the significant role of municipal institutions and leaders, these initiatives demonstrate a more integrated approach to crime and violence and provide an alternative structure to the conventional two-pronged approach of small-scale prevention efforts and heavy-handed deterrence and control. Notably, the proposed actions target social divisions, not simply material poverty or income inequality.

This article has presented a variation on the social calculations of crime prevention and deterrence, for the socio-economic stratification and segregation and the level of organisation among criminal networks create and cement altered ‘rational’ incentives for crime. In such a polarized environment, one common denominator of successful policy efforts is to approach areas afflicted by violence and crime as complex neighbourhoods, where residents’ insights and motivations form the basis of policy responses, rather than being reduced to ‘maximising wealth.’ As Caldeira (2006, 137) warns, groups long marginalized and maligned are not necessarily demanding a ‘chance’ in an unjust system. Greater attention to more subjective and collective definitions of inequality and (in)security is one avenue for overcoming the inadequacies of the economic lens on crime and violence.

¹ For example, the World Bank (2006c, v) cites a rape rate of 16 per 100,000 women in 2002, which is almost certainly an under-estimate. Morrison (2007) cites World Health Organization findings that 27 percent of women in Brazil suffer domestic violence.

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