Dirk Kruijt*

➲ Uncivil actors and violence systems in the Latin American urban domain

Introduction

The character and quality of Latin America's democracy is in dispute. Uncertainties about its nature and future prevail in the development debate. In the early 2000s the UNDP (2004) coined the terms "low-intensity citizenship" and "low-intensity democracy" to describe the post-dictatorship democracy in the region. When in the 1980s the military establishment withdrew from the political arena and democracy was restored, a severe economic crisis affected the region, producing long lasting effects in terms of mass poverty, informality and social exclusion. In the urban domain, and especially in territories where the representatives of law and order are relatively absent, "uncivil" non-state actors surfaced, including local drug lords and their small territorial armies; youth gangs; organised crime and the so-called "dark forces", joined by former belligerent actors of the Andean and Central American civil wars. In this article, I will analyse and typify this erosion of formal social order and the emergence of parallel and informal structures and hierarchies throughout Latin America. Subsequently, a variety of new, non-state armed actors and the violence systems in which they operate will be examined. The term "governance voids" (ungoverned areas where the representatives of law and order are absent or only symbolically present) will be used as an analytical tool for assessing these processes.[1]

A study focusing on actors in the urban domain is certainly justified. Latin America is an urban region: in 2007, nearly 80 per cent of its population lived in cities, five per cent more than, for example, in Europe. A significant percentage of Latin America's city dwellers are inhabitants of megacities and metropolitan conglomerates (UN-HABITAT 2007; World Bank 2009). A staggering pattern of urban explosion – of megacities, of secondary metropolitan areas, and even of medium-sized urban conglomerates – materialised in the region over more than 50 years. The consequence of this urbanisation process is that Latin America's poverty, informality and exclusion acquired an urban face. The concentration of large segments of urban poor and excluded people in capital

* *Professor of Development Studies (1993-2008) and currently honorary professor at Utrecht University. Research interests: social exclusion and poverty, ethnic and class conflicts, civil-military relations and urban violence. Recent publications are about Central American guerrilla* comandantes *and about violence in megacities of the Global South. Contact: d.kruijt@uu.nl.*

1 This term was coined by Kruijt/Koonings (1999). In Kruijt/Koonings (2009) there is some discussion of the ideas elaborated upon in this article.

cities, metropolitan areas and other urban territories has had fundamental socio-economic and political consequences.

The peak of massive urbanisation (between the 1970s and the 1990s) coincided with a major transformation in the political and economic order. After the replacement of military dictatorships by democratic governments in most Latin American countries, the economic crisis produced a mainstream model of economic adjustment reforms in the 1980s and 1990s. These reforms induced impoverishment in the economy and society. An evident failure of urban governments to expand urban labour markets and to provide basic public services (education, health and security), produced an ineffectual integration of the incessant migration stream from Latin America's rural hinterlands and the larger island states in the Caribbean. This precarious/restricted integration is related to a trans-generational process of urban informalisation and exclusion, reflected in high levels of persistent inequality regarding the distribution of urban income and wealth, the expansion of slums, and the deterioration of popular neighbourhoods over the past two or three decades (ECLAC 2007). No country in the region was capable of reincorporating the mass of population that previously passed away into informality, or of reinserting the vulnerable categories that for generations have suffered the stigmas of being second-class citizens.

Second-class citizenship in Latin America has traditionally been associated with the indigenous populations, the underdeveloped rural hinterland and fragmented patterns of land tenure in indigenous communities. Reflecting the permanent growth of Latin America's informal economy between 1950 and 1980 – a trend which accelerated in the 1980s and 1990s – this "rural" basis of second-class citizenship changed. It became urban. In another publication, on the dynamics of urban poverty, informality and social exclusion in Latin America (Kruijt/Sojo/Grynspan 2002), we introduced the notion of "informal citizenship" to underline the precarious implantation of second-class citizenship in the urban slums and shanty towns. Latin America has become the continent where in most of its countries a significant segment of the population is, at once, poor, informal and excluded (Márquez/Chong/Dureya/Ñopo 2008; Jordán/Martínez 2009). The question regarding the long-term consequences of urban poverty, the magnitude of slum households, and the phenomenon of second and third generations of slum dwellers in most of the region's urban conglomerates, indicates a permanent fault line in Latin America's democracy.

Urban poverty and the erosion of the formal social order

Urban poverty has become increasingly heterogeneous, reflecting marked changes in Latin American urban class structures (Portes/Hoffman 2003; Kruijt 2008a). The chronically poor were amalgamated with the "new poor", descended from the middle and industrial working classes who were severely affected by the adjustment policies of the 1980s and 1990s. Old and new poor converged in the swelling sector of informal micro-entrepreneurs and self-employed, searching for survival and livelihood strategies. The decomposition of the urban working class not only led to the formation of a new edifice of urban social stratification. It also changed the size and composition of family structures in poor households. The traditional role of men as heads of families is ebbing away with the enlarged number of female-headed households in the popular neighbourhoods.

Furthermore, the informal economy and society generate hidden migration cycles, demographic breakdowns and cleavages within family structures. Central America, with its poverty-stricken and war-torn societies, possibly provides the best example of disruption at the family level (Pérez Sáinz 2004; Mahler 2002).

These processes of growing poverty, exclusion and informality have been portrayed by Peruvian anthropologist Matos Mar (1984) as the *desborde popular*. In a prophetic essay, he depicted the decline of the institutional pillars of traditional Peruvian society, overwhelmed by the mushrooming of Lima's *pueblos jóvenes* (new villages) – the political euphemism for massive popular invasion of low-quality urban terrain – and its consequences in terms of the emergence of a qualitatively new urban society. He also predicted the birth of a diversity of organisations representing the informal entrepreneurs and self-employed, such as local and regional chambers of craftsmen and *comedores populares* (community-run canteens with cheap meals in the slums of Lima Metropolitana). All of these organisations share an ambivalent dependency on professional development organisations (religious and ecclesiastical foundations, NGOs, donor agencies, private banks "with a social face"), and municipal and central government organisations. In an updated version of his essay (Matos Mar 2004), he also pointed towards the collapse of traditional support institutions of the democratic order: the political parties; the status of the parliament as legislator; the stature of the magistrates as the legitimate authorities in the sphere of law and order; the collapse of the once powerful trade-union confederations; the weakening of other conventional entities of civil society, such as the chambers of industry and commerce, the professional organisations of doctors, lawyers and engineers, etc. Twenty-first century Peru is, he states, "a national society that is incomplete and unfinished, not authentic, a half-way formed Republic, to be reconstructed, revaluated and revitalised to create the possibility of […] full, participatory citizenship with (national) identity" (Matos Mar 2004: 116).

Another feature of Latin America's new class structure is the duality of the formal and informal economy and society. First interpreted as a short-term under- and unemployment phenomenon, at present employment in the informal economy appears highly consolidated. The informal economy shapes an informal society, partially inserted in the formal order and partially forming a parallel social structure with its own internal social hierarchies. This new class structure triggers the decline of the traditional institutional pillars of formal society, leading to the emergence of a qualitatively new urban order.[2] In fact, it seems that the parallel institutions, parallel hierarchies and parallel sectors that have emerged along the lines of poverty, informality and social exclusion, have formed a more durable, albeit heterogeneous economic, social, political and cultural (urban) order, with consequences for the larger political environment: Latin American presidents are elected by the massive votes of the informalised and excluded second-class citizens. They also force elected presidents out. It is interesting to note that during the last ten years all non-electoral government changes in Latin America were instigated not by a military coup[3], but by social movements of the urban poor – slum dwellers, urban *infor-*

---

2 For a good collection of articles on Latin America's informal economy and society, see Fernández-Kelly (2006).

3 The strange exception is the Honduran government change in 2009, introduced via a "legitimised" coup by the Supreme Court.

males, ethnic movements in the urban informal society – mostly by ad hoc popular protest movements, mass meetings, regional protest alliances, sit-downs and hunger marches. Several substitutions of presidential regimes in Argentina (four in 2001), Bolivia (two in two years), in Ecuador (eight in ten years), and in Peru at the fall of Fujimori (2000), were the result of this new *democracia de la calle*.

From *desborde popular* to *desborde de la violencia*

Urban second-class citizenship is also citizenship with a violent face. At the end of the 1970s, Walton (1976, 1977) introduced the concept of "divided cities". In the 1970s and 1980s, the "divided", "fragmented" or "fractured" cities were mostly typified in terms of urban misery, social exclusion and the dichotomy between the urban poor and the well-to-do middle and upper-classes with their gated communities (Caldeira 2000). As the intertwined dynamics of social exclusion and the proliferation of violence acquired spatial dimensions, urban segregation no longer referred to the geographical distribution of the traditional markers of poverty (human deprivation, dilapidated housing, absent public services), but also to the territorial and social division of cities in "go" and "no-go" areas – from the perspective of the middle-class citizen and local public administration, even the police.

Rio de Janeiro, whose poverty-stricken and crime-ridden *favelas* are synonymous with "no-go areas" within metropolitan boundaries, acquired a depressing reputation among researchers and authors dealing with urban violence. Ventura's (2002 [1994]) paradigmatic publication on the *cidade partida* was to be followed by other publications (Barcellos 2003; Chaves Pandolfi/Grynszpan 2003; Evangelista 2003; Soares 1996; Zaluar 1994, 2001). The relationship between the recent increase in poverty and violence in Buenos Aires was discussed, in comparative terms, by Sain (2002, 2007). Pécaut (2001, 2003) extensively examined the Colombian situation where urban social exclusion, crime and violence became part of the vortex of large-scale drug-based organised crime and political violence within the country's degenerated civil conflict.

These observations indicate that the connection between urban poverty, insecurity and violence has been rephrased in terms of the failure of citizenship. The social and cultural dimensions of contemporary urban violence in Latin America were comparatively analysed for the first time in a collection of articles and essays edited by De Olmo (2000), Briceño-León (2002) and Rotker (2002). Moser/Mcllwaine (2004) published the results of a systematic and comparative study on urban violence as perceived by the urban poor. They distinguish between social, economic, and political categories of violence. "Social" covers domestic violence, both inside and outside the home, including domestic violence and child abuse. "Economic" includes street crime (mugging, robbing, drug-related violence and kidnapping) and is motivated by material gain. "Political" encompasses guerrilla and paramilitary conflict, internal wars and political assassination. It is interesting to observe how consistently the urban poor in nation-wide surveys and group interviews report the complex interconnections between the different sources of violence.

Violence, however, is not only firmly rooted in the daily lives of the urban poor. It is also a characteristic of the long lasting civil wars in Central America and the Andean countries. In three publications, Koonings/Kruijt (1999, 2004, 2007) analysed the shift

between state-induced violence, the legacy of state terror of the Latin American military dictatorships in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, and the violence stemming from non-state actors operating in urban "violence enclaves", generally the habitat of the urban poor. Armed actors with a military background, youth gangs and "normal" criminal gangs have managed to mount parallel systems of violence of national significance in countries such as Colombia, Guatemala and Mexico, and, to a lesser degree, in Argentina, Brazil, and Peru. Colombia and Guatemala are, sadly, two good examples of causality chains between nation-wide violence and local violence enclaves and violence pockets.

Post-war Guatemala is infested with new forms of violence caused by street gangs, ex-paramilitary forces, and ex-military and police members tied to drug trafficking. In Colombia, the *desborde de la violencia* has been institutionalised during the last couple of decades and intensified by drug-linked violence and local criminality. Colombia's civil war is reproduced intensely by micro-wars in metropolitan areas and urban *comunas.*

To complicate our analysis even more: there is a gradual expansion of a "grey zone" between the order of inclusion, formality, legality, lawfulness and civility and the order of exclusion, illegality, criminality, and of the "uncivil" society and political arena. Within this grey zone, various forms of unclear and sometimes precarious articulations materialise: around the margins of decency and criminality, regarding the peaceful coexistence of actors on both sides of the law, about arrangements that involve "informal" and "irregular" solutions for everyday problems. These arrangements may vary from "innovative" economic exploitation such as subcontracting by government institutions to "cooperatives" of the self-employed headed by rough employers; to brutal and extremely violent solutions by mafia-style gangs, drug lords, vigilante bosses, and social cleansing of petty thieves, street gang members or nasty street children. Sometimes "twilight institutions", apparently "clean" organisations operating within the strict margins of the law but contaminated by its "informal culture" of extra-legal efficiency – the police whose members participate in death squads, slum leadership participating in "popular justice" meted out to petty local criminals – produce an "extra-legal" role expansion.

Present day non–state armed actors

Latin America is affected by globalisation processes. Economic and migratory relations with the United States and, to a lesser degree, with the European Union, have always been important and the relevance of these markets for legal and illegal export products is an important factor to be considered. Without the formal (legal) and informal labour markets in the United States and in the European Union (Spain, for instance), the economic situation of the poor in several Latin American and Caribbean countries would be much more burdensome. In 2008, Mexico received 27 billion remittance dollars from the country's legal and illegal migrants, each of the Central American republics received between three and four billion dollars in remittances, and Colombian and Ecuadorian migrants sent considerable remittances to their homelands.

The long decades of civil war in Central America and the Andean countries, as well as the military dictatorships in the Southern Cone (and elsewhere), left a legacy of vio-

lence as a medium for the solution of economic, social and political problems.[4] This is reflected in the post-conflict and post-dictatorship economies and societies in the region, marked by police violence and violence by a variety of non-state armed actors. The members of the latter are generally (male) adolescents and young adults, acting in youth gangs, local militias and/or private drug armies. It is not uncommon for former guerrilla fighters and paramilitary groups, and for former members of the armed forces and the police to join the ranks of these extra-legal violent actors.

The establishment of drug routes, as commercial trade routes and/or as distribution points for the urban consumer markets, aggravated these problems, as it formed the basis for the emergence of local "violence systems" in countries throughout the region. Below we present an overview of the presence of non-state armed actors in Latin America and the Caribbean, beginning with the three most notorious cases: Colombia, Central America and Brazil.

Colombia: Colombia was, and still is, a country where at the national, the regional and the municipal level, multi-actor internal wars are fought out (Leal Buitrago 2006a y 2006b). Three categories of non-state actors can be distinguished in this context: the members of drug gangs and their protection "armies", the guerrillas, and the paramilitary. Drug money fuels their logistics and armament. Until the late 1980s, several guerrilla forces existed. At present (2008) only two, the FARC (the majority force) and the ELN (the minority force) are active fighters.[5] In the past, most of the guerrilla battle groups or *frentes* imposed "war taxes" on coca producers and local drug lords and kidnapped local entrepreneurs. Afterwards they incorporated "regional protection" and coca cultivation in their operational strategies. Additionally, in the late 1980s the narco-entrepreneurs in Medellín and Cali created paramilitary units. Other rural entrepreneurs followed their example, producing a dispersed structure of regional and local vigilantes and *sicarios* – subcontracted professional murderers. These paramilitary groups, sometimes in close cooperation with the security forces, emerged as parallel counterinsurgency battle groups. They established "clean zones" where they represent/establish "law and order" through extortion and intimidation. In 1997, these regional forces were united in the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC). The higher paramilitary echelons used their power to enter "legitimate" business (rural property) and to establish patronage structures with local and regional "tame politicians" (the so-called *parapolítico*s), whose campaigns they financed (Duncan 2006). In 2009, the majority of the rank-and-file members were disarmed and demobilised, following an agreement with the government in 2003. Most of the demobilised (35,000 according to official data) are former members of paramilitary forces. Official sources also indicate that between 2003 and 2009 around 15,000 guerrilla members defected. The FARC and the ELN, however, are still recruiting members. Additionally, there has been a re-appearance of smaller mini-gangs of locally-based paramilitary forces, comparable with the emergence of a multiplicity of mini-cartels after the disarticulation of the two major cartels of Medellín and Cali. Mini-gangs of armed actors compete with other youth gangs and criminals who are engaged in mini-wars for the control of small (urban) territories. One of the first studies of juvenile gang-

4 Vellinga (2004) offers a general overview of the long-term effects of the drug economy.
5 Medina Gallego (2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c) gives a historical account of the FARC and the ELN.

sters, the *sicarios* (contract killers) in Medellín (Salazar 1993a, 1993b), illustrates that they converted violence into a strategy for acquiring income, status and prestige in their neighbourhoods. A recent study on Medellín points to the presence of ex-*guerrilleros* and ex-paramilitary members who followed their example, establishing day-to-day control in streets and city blocks to impose protection taxes on local taxi and bus drivers and small and micro-entrepreneurs (Rozema 2007). Even if Colombia resolved its internal disputes with the guerrilla and the paramilitary forces, the problem of the armed gangs operating within the narco-economy and the corrosive and corrupting power and the violence associated with the twilight drug economy would drag on.

Central America: In Guatemala, a country that for 36 years (1960-1996) was the scene of an atrocious internal war, three categories of armed actors operating in the post-war decade can be observed: First, the "dirty powers" (*los poderes oscuros*), a loose network of ex-combatants and ex-military intelligence functionaries who joined the ranks of the new booming narco-economy (Sieder/Thomas/Vickers/Spence 2002; Peacock/Beltrán 2004; Goldman 2007). Then there are the "regular" criminal gangs, specialised in car robbery, kidnapping and subcontracted murder. A third category includes youth gangs, called *maras*. In El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and to a lesser extent Nicaragua, *maras* are the national security threat number one (Savenije 2009; Gutierrez 2009; Savenije/Van der Borgh 2004; Rodgers 2007; Oettler 2007; Liebel 2008; Peetz 2008). They emerged during the 1980s and consolidated after the Central American Peace Agreements in the 1990s. The names of the oldest *maras* in San Salvador, Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula are a reminder of their US origin. The Honduran and Salvadoran *maras Salvatruchas* and *Barrio 18* assumed the names of two initially Central American street gangs in Los Angeles after the deportation of some gang leaders from the United States to El Salvador. The *mara* phenomenon proliferated in the poor *barrios* of Central America's most important cities, Several thousands of children and young adults between 12 and 30 years old, are *mareros,* recruited from the jobless, unemployed and unemployable – because of their tattoos – youth. The Central American *marero* economy depends on territorial control, extortion and drug trafficking. The *mareros* form a very loose collection of rival gangs, engaged in disputes over small territories. Their subsistence is guaranteed by extortion of local smallholders, taxi drivers and transporters, and petty drug trafficking. They share a comparable repertoire of rituals, tattoos, norms, internal loyalty codes and extreme violence. The scale of *maras* operations is so extensive that recently special anti-*mara* lawgiving was accepted by parliament and security commandos were formed by police forces and military personnel in Honduras and El Salvador. Special anti-*mara* laws were introduced somewhat later in Guatemala.

Brazil: Urban segregation and dualised urban societies have existed since the formation of *favelas* (slums) at the beginning of the twentieth century.[6] The phenomenon of local chiefdoms under the control of neighbourhood leaders (*donos*), acting as intermediaries between slum dwellers and the national and municipal authorities, were a characteristic of the Brazilian slums. However, during the military dictatorships between 1964 and 1985 three simultaneous changes took place in the *favelas*: (a) the establishment of

[6] On *favela* formation, see Valladares/Medeiros (2003), Campos (2004), Barrero/Libano/Santos (2005), De Sousa e Silva/Barbosa (2005) and Zaluar/Alvito (2006).

drug routes, first as commercials hubs between the Andean production countries and the European markets, then as a local consumption market; (b) a long period of negligence in matters of local security in the slums by the national (military) government; (c) a casual fusion between the pattern of organisation (and ideology) of the armed left and the armed criminal gangs.[7] The leadership of organised crime learned "politics" from the leaders of the urban guerrilla movements who after their arrest were imprisoned, as punishment, together with drug traffickers and dangerous criminals. Their co-inmates learned how to organise and how to find public favour.[8] Criminal organisations like the *Comando Vermelho* and rival gangs such as *Terceiro Comando* and the *Amigos dos Amigos* surfaced in the mid-1980s and 1990s as a "parallel power" in Rio's *favelas*. An additional problem is the recruitment of young members of street gangs as "soldiers" by the local drug lords who have appropriated, since the early 1970s, the status of *dono* in the urban slums (Dowdney 2003; Cruz/Rasga/Mazzei 2004; De Sousa e Silva/Barbosa 2005; Arias 2006; Koonings/Veenstra 2007). Organisations within the narco-economy, headed by traffickers and supported by small armies of child and adolescent soldiers, wield power as local authority and local justice in the *favelas*. The relationship between youth gangs and drug trafficking was characterised by Zaluar (2000, 2004) as the "perverse integration" of the clandestine economy and slum violence.

The police and the fire fighters are also part of the problem. In Rio, two parallel police systems in three overlapping hierarchies are in charge of public security. Both the police and the fire fighters are armed and their salaries are just above the poverty line. Complex relations of peaceful coexistence, conflict, financing, extortion and dominance exist between the neighbourhood associations, the criminal gangs and the municipal police. Between 10 and 15 per cent of the police and the fire fighters found a second source of employment as members of the local militias, controlled by the local *dono* of the *favela*. As in Colombia, the phenomenon of associated "tame" local politicians has surfaced during the last few years. Drugs are not the only source of illicit income in the *favelas*. Other sources are control of the distribution of gas, electricity, local transport, cloned cellular phones, and clandestine lotteries. Regular funding, by drug money, of local NGOs operating in the *favelas* of metropolitan areas is common practice. The *traficantes* wish to express their benevolence to local development. For instance, Deusimar da Costa, president of the Federaçao Municipal das Asociações de Favelas do Rio de Janeiro, quite openly acknowledged his organisation's peaceful coexistence with *traficantes:* "They are *moradores* [slum dwellers]," she said, "and their presence does not trouble us. They have the power of intervention and they are *moradores*, after all. We share, as you would call it, a symbiotic life. We are not inclined to call in the police."[9]

Argentina: A substantive portion of the population of Greater Buenos Aires is poor and lives in slum cities (Sain 2004, 2007). As in Brazil's metropolitan areas, the poor in Buenos Aires and other large Argentinean cities are confronted with violence and crime.

---

7 Author's interview with Luis Sérgio Wigderowitz, ombudsman of the police of the State of Rio de Janeiro, 26 July 2008.

8 This happened in Rio de Janeiro. In Sao Paolo, organised crime founded the *Primeiro Comando da Capital* (PCC), even with a leftist phraseology (Souza 2007).

9 Author's interview with Deusimar da Costa, Federaçao Municipal das Asociações de Favelas do Rio de Janeiro (FEMAFARJ/FAR-Rio), Rio de Janeiro, 28 August 2003.

Here again, the relative absence of the state in the marginal *villas* (slums) has been filled by interactions based on violence, and by extended criminal networks. In the context of permanent unemployment and lack of regular income, autonomous local power holders, criminal groups and gangs have replaced the formal and legal institutions of law and order. The trade in illegal drugs – cocaine and marijuana – is the most important and most profitable illicit activity. As is the case elsewhere, it is accompanied by a parallel market of small arms, theft and dismantling of automobiles, and the illegal sale of "cannibalised" car parts. Another source of income is the robbery of goods in transit, perpetrated by the so-called *piratas del asfalto*. Kidnapping, organised for extortion, occurs sometimes with police complicity. In general, police protection and even police sponsorship and participation in illegal gambling and prostitution has increased over the last fifteen years.

Peru and *Bolivia*: In the Andean countries the phenomenon of youth gangs is also surfacing. In Ayacucho, Peru, for instance, home base of the macabre guerrilla movement Shining Path (Degregori 2009), around 800 youth street gangs surfaced in the postwar decade. An in-depth study on the phenomenon of the *manchas* and the *mancheros* (gangs, gang members) in Ayacucho indicates that the emergence of these street gangs coincided with the disappearance of Shining Path in the mid-1990s (Strocka 2008). *Manchas* demarcate small territories that their members defend against rival *mancheros*. They break into houses, commit burglary and assault passers-by. The use of violence against non-members or "civilian" bystanders is minimal. In present day Bolivia, after the "water wars" and other popular protest movements that ended with the renunciation of two consecutive presidents in 2003 and 2005 (García Orellana/García Yapur/Quitón Harbas 2003; Crabtree 2005; Las piezas del conflicto 2005),[10] president Evo Morales was challenged by youth gangs, subcontracted by his political adversaries in the eastern departments, functioning as protesters while attacking indigenous members of parliament in 2007 and 2008.

Venezuela: Sharply increasing urban crime is also a problem in Venezuela, especially since the late 1990s (Briceño-León 2007a, 2007b). It is not the very existence of crime, but its increasingly more violent character that is disconcerting civil society. At the same time organised crime appears to be professionalizing. Previously, for instance, poor and part-time delinquents stole cars without violence. In the 2000s it became "normal" for owners to lose their cars at gun point. A rather new form of urban crime is the so-called "express kidnapping", where victims are only held for a couple of hours while they are forced to withdraw money from their accounts or while their family has to deliver a relatively modest amount of cash, always under the threat of killing. Another new crime variant is the mugging of public transport passengers by small gangs, also generally at gun point. The majority of victims and perpetrators are adolescent or young adult males, mostly members of local gangs involved in disputes over small local territories with rival youth gangs. These mini-wars generate endless chains of aggression and vengeance, known as *culebras* (snakes) in the local slang of Caracas. Political violence between supporters and opponents of the Chávez government has contributed to the increase in violence as well. This notable increase in urban violence also produces violent responses:

[10] For a discussion of the Bolivian conflict, see Lazar/McNeish (2006).

observable in the possession of firearms by "armed citizens" and by the "right to self-defence" in case of a violent confrontation.

Mexico: Since the mid-1990s, and especially after the severe economic recession in the post- Salinas years and the breakdown of PRI government structures and its attached regional system of pacts and alliances, with illicit economic actors, urban Mexico witnessed a "delinquency epidemic" (Pansters/Castillo Berthier 2007a, 2007b; Müller 2009). The first related phenomenon is the drug war over territorial control between various Mexican drug cartels in "their" regions and in the metropolitan areas. A fragmented and rival police structure with a strong reputation for internal corruption and involvement in protection rackets and illicit activities – contraband and robbery, even extortion, kidnapping and drug trafficking – does not improve the security situation. Juvenile delinquency and youth gangs are another problem. There are *cholos* and *mareros*. *Cholos* are young migrants who were "educated" in US street gangs and crime, and who after their return to Mexico became involved in drug trafficking and theft. They are involved in a bitter struggle for territorial control with the *mareros*, originally their Central American counterparts who migrated to the Mexican slum cities.

Jamaica: Violence and drugs determine the environment in which armed youth gangs operate in Kingston. The first territorial gangs operated in the city's ghettos and slums; residents received heavy-handed "advice" on who they should vote for during electoral campaigns. Clientelist political entrenchment in a system of bipartisan political representation was accompanied, from the 1970s on, by gunmen organized in gangs and affiliated to one of the two political parties. More than half of the constituencies of the poor Kingston districts are characterized by ingrained preferences for political candidates. Whereas politicians previously protected *ganja* trading and drug bosses, the affluence of the drug money started to reverse the relation between gangs, drugs and politics. In the 1980s, a crack and cocaine trafficking network was consolidated across Jamaica, with linkages to the Colombian producers' market and the North American and European consumer markets. At present, drug gangs finance politicians and even share part of the drugs surplus with the police to buy "protection". The "Jamaican posse", a loose collection of Jamaican gangs, established "posse colonies" on the US West Coast and in New York. The US "posses" and their British affiliates – called *yardies* – are notorious for their use of violence in drug-related activities (Clarke 2006).

Conclusion

The complex articulation between processes and actors belonging to the realms of formality and informality, of inclusion and exclusion, of law and order and criminality, and of the civil and the "uncivil" society, is the context of violence and fear experienced by the poor and marginalised population segments in urban Latin America.

It is interesting to note that, in the context of permeating violence and fluctuating mini-wars in small urban territories, the armed forces usually do not play an overwhelming role. During the long years of military dictatorships, civil-military governments and civil wars, the armed forces were the principal actors of state-related violence, directed against the states' internal enemies: revolutionary movements, guerrilla forces, peasant and union leaders, and presumed "communists". State terror and the complicated appara-

tus of repression formed by the system of interlinked intelligence services, state security forces, paramilitary units and police extensions created "societies of fear" at the national level, intensified in combat zones and theatres of counter-insurgency against guerrilla forces and other insurgents. In the 1980s and early 1990s, during the withdrawal of the military governments and the transition to civilian rule, military presence now demonstrated itself in the form of a shadow presence, through "compulsory military advisors" and "civil-military ties" between the public sector, the intelligence services and the leading generals. While even in the twenty-first century the (military) intelligence services and state security bureaucracies in many Andean and Central American countries are still oriented towards activities against the internal enemies of the state, the armed forces in the countries of the Southern Cone have publicly withdrawn from the political arena, reformulating their objectives clearly in the direction of "professional soldiers". The armed forces are leaving direct confrontation with non-state violent actors to the police and the special police forces, who are more adapted to urban aggression and explicitly trained in counter-aggression.

A second trait is the proliferation of "private vigilantism" which includes private police; privately paid street guardians in the middle-class and even popular metropolitan districts; private citizens' *serenazgos*; private protection squads; special forces in the financial sector recruited from ex-members of the police and the army; extra-legal task forces; paramilitary groups; death squads, etc. This trend, a legacy of the prolonged civil wars in countries such as Colombia and Guatemala, gradually extended to the urban spaces in the majority of the Latin American countries and even some Caribbean countries like Jamaica. Continuous fragmentation of the military and paramilitary organizations, and in some cases of guerrilla forces, is contributing to a more hidden, more ambiguous scenario of semi-organised crime and extortion of public functionaries and private persons.

Third, there are the new armed actors in the *favelas*, *villas*, *barriadas* or *comunas* where the local boss or trafficker is invested with factual authority with regard to law and order, at the same time being the benefactor of local development, the local churches and the local NGOs. Usually, the local population has to choose between the formal police (frequently absent) and the de facto guardians of the informal local order, represented by the bosses of armed actors who sometimes impose taxes, and in other cases act as financiers of local development, but perhaps alsonegotiate with the local social, political and religious leadership which has learned how to survive through peaceful coexistence. A considerable segment of the youth in marginalised neighbourhoods is unemployed and have no opportunities to become employable. They find a certain status, even identity and belonging, in gangs, a fact that explains the relative popularity of gang membership as a lifestyle.

The many mini-war scenarios in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the proliferation of the (urban) armed actors involved, are related to the phenomenon of local "governance voids". In this vacuum a kind of osmotic symbiosis emerges between the state (the police, the legal system),"common" criminals and ex-members of the armed forces, the police, paramilitary units and guerrilla combatants. "Law and order" is then the result of a fluctuating order of parallel forces of local power players and "moral" authorities (elected representatives of associations of *vecinos*, *pobladores* or *moradores*, priests and evangelical pastors, even successful entrepreneurs or owners of radio and TV stations) in shifting

alliances. In these voids, alternative, informal or "parallel" structures arise, seeking various forms of confrontation with or accommodation from the legitimate authorities and civil society. The new urban war lords of local violence: the bosses of the local drug traffickers, the leaders of the *maras* in the slums of Central America, the monopoly holders on local illegal, but nonethelessaccepted, violence are the new enforcers of customary justice, harsh but clear. They are the new local tax collectors who distribute the revenue.

The UNDP (2004) report on the state of Latin America's democracy mentions that the majority of the region's population would prefer an authoritarian government provided that it was able to resolve the mass poverty and to control the outbursts of violence. This "voting with the feet" on the part of Latin America's second-class citizens raises questions about the stability of the political order. Informal citizenship in a context of violence seems to be the standard integration mechanism of the poor and the underprivileged. Considerable segments of the Latin American population survive in the informal economy and society, where poverty goes hand-in-hand with everyday violence.

The paradox is that most Latin American governments, as was the case with many local popular leaders and church authorities, have accepted a de facto peaceful coexistence with the violent non-state actors, as long as they do not constitute a challenge to the national political order. The question is, of course, how long the economic, social and political order in Latin America can be maintained by this uneasy equilibrium between "acceptable" levels of exclusion and "acceptable" levels of violence.

Bibliography

Alba Vega, Carlos/Kruijt, Dirk (eds.) (2007): "Violencia urbana en América Latina". Special issue of *Foro Internacional* 189, XLVIII, 3, pp. 485-696.

Arias, Enrique Desmond (2006): *Drugs and Democracy in Rio de Janeiro. Trafficking, Social Networks, and Public Security*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

Barcellos, Caco (2003): *Abusado. O dono do morro Santa Marta*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Record.

Barrero Facias, Juliana/Libano Soares, Carlos Eugênio/Santos Gomes, Flavio dos (2005): *No labirinto das nações: Africanos e identidades no Rio de Janeiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Arquivo Nacional.

Briceño-León, Roberto (ed.) (2002): *Violencia, sociedad y justicia en América Latina*. Buenos Aires: CLACSO.

— "Caracas". In: Koonings, Kees/Kruijt, Dirk (eds.): *Fractured Cities. Social Exclusion, Urban Violence and Contested Spaces in Latin America.* London: Zed Books, pp. 83-100.

— (2007b): "Violencia, ciudadanía y miedo en Caracas". In: *Foro Internacional* 189, XLVIII, 3, pp. 551-576.

Caldeira, Teresa (2000): *Cities of Walls. Crime, Segregation and Citizenship in São Paulo*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Chaves Pandolfi, Dulce/Grynszpan, Mario (2003): *A favela fala. Depoimentos ao CPDOC*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Fundação Getulio Vargas.

Clarke, Colin (2006): "Politics, Violence and Drugs in Kingston, Jamaica". In: *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 25, 3, pp. 420-440.

Campos, Andrelino (2004): *Do quilombo à favela. A proção do "espaço criminalizado" no Rio de Janeiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Berrand Brasil.

Crabtree, John (2005): *Perfiles de la protesta. Política y movimientos sociales en Bolivia*. La Paz: Fundación PIEB.

Cruz Neto, Otávio/Rasga Moreira, Marcelo/Mazzei Sucena, Luiz Fernando (2004): *Nem soldados nem inocentes. Juventude e tráfico de drogas no Rio de Janeiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Fiocruz (2nd edition).

Degregori, Carlos Iván (2009): *Qué difícil es ser Dios. El partido comunista del Perú (Sendero Luminoso) y el conflicto armado interno en el Perú, 1980-1999*. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos.

Dreyfus, Pablo (2006): "Crime and Ammunition Procurement: The Case of Brazil". In: Pézard, Stéphanie/Anders, Holger (eds.): *Targeting Ammunition: A Primer*. Geneva: Small Arms Survey, pp. 173-227.

Dowdney, Luke: (2003): *Children of the Drug Trade. A Case Study of Children in Organised Armed Violence in Rio de Janeiro*. Rio de Janeiro: 7 Letras.

Duncan, Gustavo (2006): *De paramilitares, mafiosos y autodefensas en Colombia*. Bogotá: Editorial Planeta.

Durán Martínez, Angélica (2007): *Organized Crime, the State and Democracy. The Cases of Central America and the Caribbean.* Madrid: FRIDE/Social Science Research Council (Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum)/United Nations Department of Political Affairs.

ECLAC (2007): *Panorama social de América Latina*. Santiago de Chile: United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Evangelista, Helio de Araujo (2003): *Rio de Janeiro. Violência, jogo de bicho e narcotráfico segundo uma interpretação*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Revan.

Fernández-Kelly, Patricia (ed.) (2006): *Out of the Shadows. Political Action and the Informal Economy in Latin America.* University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

García Orellana, Alberto/García Yapur, Fernando/Quitón Herbas, Luz (2003): *La "Guerra del Agua". Abril 2000: La crisis de la política en Bolivia*. La Paz: Programa de Investigación Estratégica (PIEB).

Goldman, Francisco (2007): *The Art of Political Murder. Who Killed the Bishop?* New York: Grove Press.

González, Fernán E./Bolívar, Ingrid J./Vázquez, Teófilo (2006): *Violencia política en Colombia. De la nación fragmentada a la construcción del Estado.* Bogotá: CINEP (4th edition).

Gutiérrez Rivera, Lirio del Carmen (2009): *Enclaves y territorios: Estrategias territoriales del estado y de las pandillas en Honduras*. Berlin: Freie Universität, ZI–Lateinamerika Institut (PhD thesis).

Jordán, Ricardo/Martínez, Rodrigo (2009): *Pobreza y precariedad urbana en América Latina y el Caribe. Situación actual y financiamiento de políticas y programas*. Santiago de Chile: Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL)/Corporación Andina de Fomento (CAF).

Koonings, Kees/Kruijt, Dirk (eds.) (1999): *Societies of Fear. The Legacy of Civil War, Violence, and Terror in Latin America*. London: Zed Books.

— (2004): *Armed Actors: Organised Violence and State Failure in Latin America*. London: Zed Books.

— (2007): *Fractured Cities. Social Exclusion, Urban Violence and Contested Spaces in Latin America.* London: Zed Books.

Koonings, Kees/Veenstra, Sjoerd (2007): "Exclusión social, actores armados y violencia urbana en Río de Janeiro". In: *Foro Internacional*, XLVIII, 3, pp. 616-636.

Kruijt, Dirk (2008a): "Class Structure in Modern Latin America". In: Kinsbruner, Jay/Langer, Erick, D. (eds.): *Encyclopedia of Latin American History and Culture.* Detroit: Gale-MacMillan, Volume II, pp. 443-453 (2nd edition).

Kruijt, Dirk (2008b): "Gangs". In: Jay Kinsbruner/Langer, Erick D. (eds.): *Encyclopedia of Latin American History and Culture.* Detroit: Gale-MacMillan, Volume III, pp. 374–378 (2nd edition).

Kruijt, Dirk/Koonings, Kees (1999): "Violence and fear in Latin America". In: Koonings, Kees/Kruijt, Dirk (eds.): *Societies of Fear. The Legacy of Civil War, Violence, and Terror in Latin America*. London: Zed Books, pp. 1-30.

Kruijt, Dirk/Koonings, Kees (2009): "The Rise of Megacities and the Urbanisation of Informality, Exclusion and Violence". In: Koonings, Kees/Kruijt, Dirk (eds.): *Megacities. The Politics of Urban Exclusion and Violence in the Global South.* London: Zed Books, pp. 8-26.

Kruijt, Dirk/Sojo, Carlos/Grynspan, Rebeca (2002): *Informal Citizens. Poverty, Informality and Social Exclusion in Latin America*. Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers (Thela Latin America Series).

Kurtenbach, Sabine/Mackenbach, Werner/Maihold, Günther/Wünderlich, Volker (eds.) (2008): *Zentralamerika Heute. Politik – Wissenschaft – Kultur*. Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert.

Unir (2005): *Las piezas del conflicto.* La Paz: Fundación UNIR Bolivia.

Lazar, Sian/McNeish, John-Andrew (eds.) (2006): *The Millions Return? Democracy in Bolivia at the Start of the Twenty-first Century*. Special Issue of the *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 25, 2, pp. 157-263.

Leal Buitrago, Francisco (ed.) (2006a): *En la encrucijada. Colombia en el siglo XXI.* Bogotá: Grupo Norma Editorial.

— (ed.) (2006b): *La inseguridad de la seguridad. Colombia, 1958-2005*. Bogotá: Editorial Planeta Colombiana.

Liebel, Manfred (2008): "Jugendbanden und Strassencliquen in Zentralamerika – oder: Die schwierige Suche nach Gerechtigkeit in einer gewalttätigen Gesellschaft". In: Kurtenbach, Sabine/Mackenbach, Werner/Maihold, Günther/Wünderich, Volker (eds.) (2008): *Zentralamerika Heute. Politik, Wirtschaft, Kultur*. Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert, pp. 441-464.

Mahler, Sarah J. (2002): "Las migraciones y la problemática transnacional: tendencias recientes y perspectivas para 2020". In: Bodemer, Klaus/Gamarra, Eduardo (eds.): *Centroamérica 2020. Un nuevo modelo de desarrollo regional*. Caracas: Editorial Nueva Sociedad, pp. 160-196.

Márquez, Gustavo/Chong, Alberto/Dureya, Suzanna/Ñopo, Hogo (eds.) (2008): *Los de afuera. Patrones cambiantes de exclusión en América Latina y el Caribe. Informe 2008.* Washington: Inter-American Development Bank.

Matos Mar, José (2004): *Desborde popular y crisis del Estado. Veinte años después.* Lima: Fondo Editorial del Congreso del Perú.

Matos Mar, José (1984): *Desborde popular y crisis del Estado. El nuevo rostro del Perú en la década de 1980*. Lima: IEP.

Medina Gallego, Carlos (2008): *FARC – EP. Notas para una historia política, 1958-2008*. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

— *Conflicto armado y procesos de paz en Colombia. Memoria casos FARC – EP y ELN*. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

— *FARC – EP. Temas y problemas nacionales, 1958-2008*. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

— *FARC – EP y el ELN. Una historia política comparada, 1958-2006*. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

Moser, Caroline/Mcllwaine, Cathy (2004): *Encounters with Violence in Latin America. Urban Poor Conceptions from Colombia and Guatemala*. London: Routledge.

Müller, Markus-Michael (2009): *Policing the Fragments: Public Security and the State in Mexico City*. Berlin: Freie Universität, ZI–Lateinamerika Institut (PhD thesis).

Oettler, Anika (2007): *Discourses on Violence in Costa Rica, El Salvador and Nicaragua: National Patterns of Attention and Cross-border Discursive Nodes*. Hamburg: German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA WP 65/2007).

Olmo, Rosa de (ed.) (2000): *Inseguridad, violencia y miedo en América Latina*. Special issue of *Nueva Sociedad*, 167.

Pansters, Wil/Castillo Berthier, Héctor (2007a): "Mexico City". In: Koonings, Kees/Kruijt, Dirk (eds.): *Fractured Cities. Social Exclusion, Urban Violence and Contested Spaces in Latin America.* London: Zed Books, pp. 36-56.

— (2007b): "Violencia e inseguridad en la Ciudad de México. Entre la fragmentación y la politización". In: *Foro Internacional,* 189, XLVIII, 3, pp. 577-615.

Peacock, Susan C./Beltrán, Adriana (2004): *Poderes ocultos. Grupos ilegales armados en Guatemala pos conflicto y las fuerzas detrás de ellos*. Washington: Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA).

Pécaut, Daniel (2001): *Guerra contra la sociedad*. Bogotá: Editorial Planeta.

— (2003): *Violencia y política. Ensayos sobre el conflicto colombiano*. Medellín: Editora Hombre Nuevo.

Peetz, Peter (2008): *Discourses on Violence in Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Nicaragua: Youth, Crime, and the Responses of the State*. Hamburg: German Institute of Global and Area Studies, December (GIGA WP 80/2008).

Pérez Sáinz, Juan Pablo (2004): "La pobreza urbana en América Central: Evidencias e interrogantes de la década de los 90". In: Shelton, H. Davis/Gacitúa, Estanislao/Sojo, Carlos (eds.): *Desafíos del desarrollo social en Centroamérica*. San José/Washington: FLACSO/World Bank, pp. 63-103.

Portes, Alejandro/Hoffman, Kelly (2003): "Latin American Class Structures: Their Composition and Change during the Neoliberal Era". In: *Latin American Research Review,* 38, 1, pp. 41-82.

Rodgers, Dennis (2007): "Managua". In: Koonings, Kees/Kruijt, Dirk (eds.): *Fractured Cities. Social Exclusion, Urban Violence and Contested Spaces in Latin America.* London: Zed Books, pp. 71-85.

Rotker, Suzana (ed.) (2002): *Citizens of Fear. Urban Violence in Latin America*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Rozema, Ralph (2007): "Paramilitares y violencia en Medellín, Colombia". In: *Foro Internacional* 189, XLVIII, 3, pp. 535-550.

Sain, Marcelo Fabián (2002): *Seguridad, democracia y reforma del sistema policial en la Argentina*. Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

— (2004): "A failed state facing new criminal problems: The case of Argentina". In: Koonings, Kees/Kruijt, Dirk (eds.): *Armed Actors: Organised Violence and State Failure in Latin America.* London: Zed Books, pp. 127-138.

— (2007): "Seguridades e inseguridades en el Gran Buenos Aires". In: *Foro Internacional,* 189, XLVIII, 3, pp. 517-534.

Salazar, Alonso (1993a): *No nacimos pa' semilla. La cultura de las bandas juveniles de Medellín*. Bogotá: CINEP (7th edition).

— (1993b): *Mujeres de fuego*. Medellín: Corporación REGIÓN.

Savenije, Wim (2009): *Maras y Barras: Violencia y pandillas callejeras en los barrios marginales de Centroamérica.* San Salvador: FLACSO.

Savenije, Wim/Borgh, Chris van den (2004): "Youth Gangs, Social Exclusion and the Transformation of Violence in El Salvador". In: Koonings, Kees/Kruijt, Dirk (eds.): *Armed Actors: Organised Violence and State Failure in Latin America*. London: Zed Books, pp. 155-171.

Sieder, Raquel/Thomas, Megan/Vickers, George/Spence, Jack (2002): *Who Governs? Guatemala Five Years After the Peace Accords*. Cambridge: Hemispheric Initiatives and Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA).

Soares, Luiz Eduardo (1996): *Violência e política en Rio de Janeiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Relume Dumará/ISER.

Sousa e Silva, Jailson de/Barbosa, Jorje Luiz (2005): *Favela. Alegría e dor na cidade*. Rio de Janeiro: Observatório de Favelas.

Souza, Fatima (2007): *PCC. A facção*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Record.
Strocka, Cordula (2008): *"Unidos nos hacemos respetar". Jóvenes, identidades y violencia en Ayacucho*. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos.
UNDP (2004): *La democracia en América Latina. Hacia una democracia de ciudadanas y ciudadanos: Argentina, Bolivia, Brasil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, México, Nicaragua, Panamá, Paraguay, Perú, República Dominicana, Uruguay.* In: <http: www.democracia.UNDP.org> (accessed 27.08.2010).
UN-HABITAT (2007): *Enhancing Urban Safety and Security. Global Report on Human Settlements 2007*. London: Earthscan.
Valladares, Licia/Medeiros, Lidia (2003): *Pensando as favelas do Rio de Janeiro, 1906-2000*. Rio de Janeiro: FAPERJ-Relume-Dumará.
Vellinga, Menno (ed.) (2004): *The Political Economy of the Drug Industry. Latin America and the International System*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
Ventura, Zuemir (2002): *Cidade partida*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Companhía das Letras.
Walton, John (1976): "Guadalajara: Creating the Divided City". In: Cornelius, Wayne/Kemper, U.R. (eds.): *Metropolitan Problems and Governmental Responses in Latin America*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
— (1977): *Elites and Economic Development. Comparative Studies in the Political Economy of Latin American Cities*. Austin: The University of Texas Press.
World Bank (2009): *Growth and Crisis. Building Capacity to Reduce Poverty*. In: <http://blogs.worldbank.org/growth/archive/200903> (consulted 12 August 2009).
Zaluar, Alba (1994): *Condomínio do Diabo.* Rio de Janeiro: Editora da UFRJ.
— (2000): "Perverse Integration: Drug Trafficking and Youth in the Favelas of Rio de Janeiro". In: *Journal of International Affairs*, 53, 2, pp. 654-671.
— (2001): "Violence in Rio de Janeiro: Styles of Leisure, Drug Use, and Trafficking". In: *International Social Science Journal*, 3, pp. 369-379.
— (2004): "Urban Violence and Drug Warfare in Brazil". In: Koonings, Kees/Kruijt, Dirk (eds.): *Armed Actors: Organised Violence and State Failure in Latin America*. London: Zed Books, pp. 139-154.
Zaluar, Alba/Alvito, Marcos (eds.) (2006): *Um século de favela*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Fundação Getulio Vargas.