Working Paper No. 26, 2020

Marginal Conviviality
On Inequalities and Violence Reproduction

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Mecila:
Working
Paper
Series

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Abstract

In an insightful essay reviewing the state of art of "conviviality", Sergio Costa (2019: 1) follows the Mecila theoretical path (Mecila 2017) and asserts the "reciprocal constitution of conviviality and inequality". The author removes from conviviality its normative (and conflict-free) mood; the notion, Costa argues, must be understood as an analytical unit for theory-making. As such, Costa assumes that ordinary interactions construct and, at the same time, reproduce social life. Conviviality is about pragmatically living together, not about virtuous commonality. In sustainedly unequal societies such as the Latin American ones, conviviality is inescapably linked to the reproduction of inequalities. Are convivial situations also part of the reproduction of violence, in societies that are not only unequal but also violent? This paper explores marginal conviviality, adding empirical evidence to Costa's argument, as well as addressing his theoretical framework from an ethnographic point of view. A life story, followed empirically from 2005-2018 in a district of São Paulo, guides my argumentation.

Keywords: marginal conviviality | violence | urban ethnography | São Paulo

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1. Introduction

Maiana lost two teenage children, murdered at the turn of the 2000s. A third was imprisoned for many years. In 2017, police killed one of two nephews who lived with her, who had been accused of stealing a cell phone. I went to visit her; we have known each other since 2005. She was very sad and kept her composure as best as she could. We made lunch together; we ate, we talked. While we were eating, the brother of the murdered boy arrived from the street and entered the house. Locked in the bedroom, he wept uncontrollably, and sometimes cried out and bellowed in pain, revulsion, and despair. I had never seen such suffering. Maiana told me that's what it was like when something like that happens.

During my years of fieldwork in São Paulo's *favelas*, from 2005 to 2018, scenes of this intensity were repeated in many convivial situations. I lived those scenes in a very different position compared to my interlocutors in the field. While they were experiencing violence in their private lives, and having conversations with me, I was having conversations with them and speaking about violence in my texts. Coming back home very often, far from the *favelas*, in a middle-class neighbourhood in the countryside of the state of São Paulo, I kept reading and rewriting my research diary, filtering the physical and emotional impact of violence, crying and sad eyes into sociological interpretations (Das 2006). I wrote articles and essays on my interlocutor's life stories, and in my narratives they have fictional names, as Maiana has here.[1] Our unequal social positions are metaphorical of the argument I defend in this paper: in Latin America, the pragmatic of everyday life – or conviviality – structures the management of violence distribution through different, plural, and unequal social orders.

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1   In my ethnography, ordinary life and everyday routine, not spectacular events or hidden informations, are the sources of understanding and reasoning. I theoretically assume that ordinary – or convivial – situations would give me everything I need to understand how social life is framed, including the operation of illegal markets and violence itself. Despite the continuous developing of savoir-faire on doing ethnography in violent contexts, I never assume it is completely done. In methodological terms, the ethnographic fieldwork is not about "collecting data" or "gathering information"; the research groups I joined consider fieldwork as a process of "constructing long-term and transparent relations with all the interlocutors in the field". The logic is one of building trust by transparency and long term exchange, ethics and data protection. The routine of producing field diaries also prevents uncontrolled biases or possibly unreflected misunderstandings. At a procedural level, we never introduce ourselves using any misinformation, hidden identities, or use secret devices during research. We also assume we could never expose any of our interlocutors after fieldwork, so data protection is a key issue for us. My ethnography is never a lonely activity during fieldwork, for two different reasons. First, I always count on local intermediators who help us to navigate territories and situations; second, in our research group experienced researchers will always be supervising younger scholars during their field activities.

2.   Maiana and Her Family

The daughter of migrants from the states of Ceará and Minas Gerais, Maiana is the oldest of three siblings. She was born in 1964 in the neighbourhood of Vila Prudente, in the East Side of São Paulo. She grew up under the ideology of the "economic miracle" during the dictatorship (1964-1985), and saw her parents work in stable jobs in the industrial region known as the ABC[2] – her father a metal worker at the elevator manufacturer Otis, her mother a maid in the municipality Santo André.

> I spent my whole life in the ABC, my friendships were with my cousins, my mother didn't allow other friendships, only cousins; so I was raised like that, inside the family; with my brothers, it was the same. [Maiana]

Since she had other relatives in the ABC region, and her mother lived at the place she worked, she spent more time in Santo André. But her family bought a plot of land in Sapopemba, a neighbouring district, and built a house there. They moved in when her mother left her job to take care of her small children, much younger than Maiana, who continued her studies in the neighbourhood.

The beginnings of Maiana's family trajectory are very similar to numerous other I encountered in the field: The generation of the parents migrates from one state to another, or leaves the country for the city, attracted by industrial employment. The rural family, in a generation, becomes a working family and, through work, experience upward social and economical mobility. The division of labour is clearly demarcated according to age and gender. Finally, the family buys a plot at the city's expanding frontier to pursue the dream of home-ownership through self-construction. The plan is for the children to grow up safely and attend school so that the daughters may marry well, and the sons find good jobs. In this way, "God willing", life works itself out.

Maiana thoroughly followed the script of the previous generation: in 1982, at the age of 18, she married her school sweetheart, a hardworking boy who held a good job as a driver in a public transportation company. The two decided to live together, and the family tolerated the arrangement. They have lived in Sapopemba ever since. Within four years of marriage, they had three boys: Jonatas, Michel, and Robson. The family formed a close-knit unit, and everyone grew up together in the same neighbourhood. Maiana worked as a manicurist to supplement the household income, but, not having permanent employment, was also in charge of the domestic sphere.

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2   The ABC region is Greater São Paulo's, and Brazil's, main industrial zone. The acronym refers to the three cities that originally formed the region: Santo André (A), São Bernardo do Campo (B) and São Caetano do Sul (C). The region is known for its proletarian history, and for the enormous inequality typical of the Latin American industrial world. While São Caetano boasts the highest HDI in Brazil, the Santo André and Sapopemba *favelas* have pockets of extreme poverty.

The value of work continued to guide the organization of the group, but the husband's earnings were not enough to support so many people. The children learned the value of work from an early age and that, being men, especially in times of crisis, they should help the father as much as possible. In the mid-1990s, the boys first felt some pressure to contribute to the household budget. All help was welcome; the rampant inflation of the previous decade had reduced the real value of the principal earner's salary, and costs grew as boys became teenagers. But the incentive for Jonatas, Michel, and Robson to work was, above all, to learn to value of the money they spent, to value work. So they would understand life and become workers like their parents. It used to be a plan.

3.   The Third Element

In Feltran 2020, building upon direct dialogue with a long tradition of Brazilian authors working on urban conflict and violence, I present the argument that urban order in São Paulo is maintained by normative, plural, and coexisting regimes of action, (Machado da Silva 1967, 1999, 2004 and 2016; Misse 2006, 2018; Feltran 2012; Hirata 2018, 2010; Cabanes 2014; Machado 2017; Grillo 2013). For these authors, urban conflict occurs between subjects who do not share the same plausible parameters of action, even in convivial situations where they are pragmatically living together. By extension, these subjects are not occupying different positions in a shared urban order: even if they live in co-presence, they hold different positions in different urban orders.

Different analytical traditions discussed the same empirical issue in political terms. Concepts such as sovereignty, state authority and security, and hybrid orders or governscapes are mobilized to account for empirical challenges for modern states,[3] but also for our interpretations in fierce, violent contexts (Mbembe 2003; Arias and Barnes 2017; Stepputat 2013, 2015 and 2018; Willis 2015; Lessing 2017; Darke 2018; Das 2006).

Jacques Rancière, in his classic work *La Mésentente* (1995), pursues a related conceptual argument. The key conflict that helps us to understand contemporary

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3   "State" is written here in lowercase to reinforce the differentiation sought here in contrast to the more common use of "State" merely representing a set of public institutions or ideological apparatuses. The notion is Weberian as we refer to an objectified State: a human community that successfully imposes a legitimate monopoly of force on a particular territory (Weber 1967). State is, however, also an agent, and like all agents, it is produced during and as a result of its actions. The theory that substantiates this objective and ordered definition of State in Weber is a theory of action. Abrams (2006) warned us of the difficulty imposed by the study of the State, precisely because it implies studying under the perspective of the Simmelian theory of objectification (state as idea and system). Vianna (2014) and Souza Lima (2002) have demonstrated how it is more productive to understand what are known as state processes in motion, observing its will to be progressive and its instances of reification. Das and Poole (2004) have demonstrated that there is no state centre and that operations of legitimisation and constructing legibility are fundamental to its validation in legal terms.

politics, for the French philosopher, does not occur when one says white, and another says black. Following this tradition, we realize that the black vs. white dispute is only a secondary, sequential, and managerial dimension – what Rancière calls the "police" – of the original, essential conflict that occurs when one says white, and another also says white, but they do not understand one another. There is a radical mutual incomprehension about the criteria between these subjects (Rancière 1995), the many plausible meanings (Wittgenstein 2009 [1953]; Cavell 2006) and the pragmatic effects of whiteness, as they are understood by each agent (Thevenot 2006; Boltanski and Thevenot 1991; Werneck 2012).

Let's take an example. Three subjects in São Paulo, or in Paris, desire security and offer normative arguments about the form and content of the kind of security they seek. For the first one, security means living her/his life far from the threat of crime in São Paulo, or from the threat of terror in Paris. For the second, security means the ability to arm oneself against the threat of crime, or the existence of active state repression of terrorist threats. So far, the disagreement is at the level of content, and there are sequential, secondary themes that can be discussed on common grounds, such as access to arms, life in gated communities or repressive state action. How to achieve "security" would mean different, or even opposite, contents for both subjects' arguments, but they share the fundamental belief that crime and terror cause insecurity. Such differences between subjects divide, for instance, left and right along the democratic political spectrum. In São Paulo, the former might defend disarmament, the latter the right of upstanding citizens to own guns. In Paris, the former would advocate active anti-terrorism security measures, but without linking terrorism to any specific culture, while the latter advocates active state surveillance and anti-immigrant laws, as she/he connects immigration to terrorism. In this way, whether under democracy or authoritarianism, things may unfold on such a rational and administrative level. One says white, another says black, but both recognize the other as a plausible, even if a horrible, interlocutor, and acknowledge that white and black are categories of the same nature.

The fundamental problem arises when a third subject, radically different from the first two, emerges in the conversation. This one believes that in São Paulo it is the "world of crime" who offers security or that in Paris terrorism itself represents the very struggle for security, justice, and liberation. This third subject does not share the fundamental belief that crime and terror generate insecurity. This subject finds herself/himself embracing

the PCC – the Primeiro Comando da Capital (First Commando of the Capital),[4] nowadays the leading criminal gang in Brazil (Feltran 2018) – or the "terrorist". Her/his normative assumptions change the very nature of the conflict about the meaning of "security". Maiana's children were this type of subject, and they were not alone.

For residents of cities like São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro who have a direct experience of the relationship between the police and criminal factions, citizenship, democracy and the rule of law are not plausible frames of explanation. By contrast, anyone who studies social policies would have no problem seeing them as such. The conflict in these territories is situated and specific, rather than generic. The homogeneous profile of homicide victims in Brazil is indisputable in this regard: young unskilled operators of transnational illegal businesses, living in *favelas*. An absolute majority (94.6%) are men, 72% are black, 71% are killed by gunfire, 53% are between 15-29 years old (Cerqueira et al. 2018) – the exact profile of Maiana's sons. For a long time, generic or normative notions such as the republic, democracy, or citizenship have failed to offer an effective conceptual framework for Brazil's plural and disjunctive social conflict. They cannot encompass the mosaic of regimes of practice and plural urban orders, coexisting in time and space, that are needed to explain norms, deviations, and actions in each specific situation.

4. Working Children

Jonatas worked part-time at my aunt's recycling company from when he was twelve to fourteen years old. He started work at 7 am and had lunch at her house at noon. By 1 pm, I would go and pick him up. I would take him there and

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4   The origin of the PCC, also called *Comando* (Commando)*, Partido* (Party)*, Quinze* (Fifteen)*, Família* (Family) or simply *o crime* (the crime) is in 1993, a year after the Carandiru (a former huge prison in the state of São Paulo) Massacre, in which the state's military police shot dead 111 rioting inmates. As a result of this event, a collective of prisoners grew to fight "oppression" in the prison environment, whether perpetrated by prisoners among themselves or by what they called "The System" (Feltran 2018). To fight against the law of the strongest that reigned among fellow prisoners, the members of this group, self-entitled as "brothers", imposed themselves as mediators in daily conflicts and to impose a new way of delivering justice inside prisons. They declared war on all those who did not follow the principles of Peace, Justice and Freedom defended by the group. Conversely, they helped prisoners considered to be loyal, as well as their families, by providing them with various goods and services through a cooperative system funded by contributions paid by the "brothers". At the same time, negotiations were opened with the leading officials of the prisons: the PCC pledged not to organize any more riots conditions of detention deemed unworthy were improved. Having become hegemonic in the prisons, the PCC spread to the outskirts of the city from 2001 (Feltran 2020). Claiming a legitimate monopoly on violence in these territories, the criminal group regulated different illegal markets there, in particular by fixing the price of drugs – marijuana, cocaine, crack cocaine – to avoid competition between *favelas* and brawls between drug dealers. Now controlling large-scale trafficking in drugs, weapons, stolen cars, etc., the PCC is growing economically and expanding its influence over the 27 federated states in Brazil as well as its ports, airports, and borders. Police repression is also intensifying, and incarcerations are increasing, explaining new waves of violence attributed to the PCC as well as the ensuing police reprisals.

collect him. Then at 3 pm, he would go to school, and left at 7.20 pm. Once he told me, "Mother, if I work all day from 7 am to 5 pm, I'll earn twice as much". I said, "You can't… because of your age… [you'll have to] go to night school. And at school, they can't know that you're working, because they'll want to talk to us, because of the law". But he said, "No, I want to work all day".

So I talked to the people at school here in the neighbourhood, I talked to the principal and all that, right? I explained it to her, I said, "Look, he wants to work, he's working, but he wants to work all day. He has to study at night". She said, "But I can't enroll him at night at this age, he is twelve years old!" I said, "But I'll bring him in and fetch him, so I can assure you that I'm responsible for him. I'll come to get him every day". So she accepted it, I signed a paper saying that I would take him in and fetch him, and that's what I did. I would take him to work and fetch him, take him to school and fetch him.

Robson worked for a month in a launderette, when he was eleven. But he spent everything that he earned on sweets from the shop [laughs]. During the holidays, he was on holiday from school, he saw an advertisement for a launderette, so he asked the man, who said that he was too small, he couldn't [work there]. So he asked his dad to go there and talk to the guy. So his dad went there, talked, and the man hired him. But I also had to take him there and fetch him. So I would drop him off and pick him up, then on payday, he said: "I'm not going anymore, the man robbed me". I said, "He didn't steal anything. You spent it all in the canteen!". And Michel worked a little, too. [Maiana]

A mismatch emerges in the narrative. Maiana's family values, which sees work as a moral code and as the foundation of her children's education, were already in conflict with the law. The school is aware of the relevant legislation (the Child and Adolescent Statute, ECA, 1990): a twelve-year-old boy cannot work, let alone on a school day; the principal will not allow it. The owner of the launderette also thinks Robson is too young, it might get him into trouble. However, the mismatch between law and morality is negotiable. The boys want an opportunity to work; the parents are willing to take responsibility for their safety (the neighbourhood is increasingly violent). The context is of widespread unemployment (it's the mid-1990s), so why not?

Maiana negotiates with the school and the father with the launderette. The children begin to work and, even if their earnings are meager, they acquire greater autonomy. It is soon after this that Jonatas stops studying before he has completed the 7th grade of primary school. Robson also dropped out of school around the same time. Michel even earlier. They were all working. The parents had worked all their lives and studied little.

However, this is a turning point in the children's trajectories, since it produces a barrier in their access to the formal labour market – the context is one of intense productive restructuring and the opening up of the country to imports. The emphasis on work as a way of earning a living was not directly associated with a commitment to the children's schooling, which underpins the long-term project of social mobility. Maiana's children are destined to work low-skilled jobs, which are lower-paid and which confer lesser social status within their groups. And as the emerging markets' doors are closed to the unschooled, so is the prospect of long-term improvement for the boys (Tilly 1998). At the same time, as they get older, the pressure to have an adequate income and become a provider – a central dimension in the construction of masculinity – is higher. This is the case for most young people in the peripheries of big cities (Durham 1973).[5]

It is also true that the modernization of the city and the agenda of trade liberalisation brought about by President Fernando Collor in the early 1990s also significantly increased the pressure for consumption. Atari becomes Playstation; typewriters give way to computers and the virtual worlds in which people can reinvent themselves. Teenagers and young people are the most affected by this acceleration, a transformation that is as evident in the working-class peripheries as among the middle classes; the possession of specific goods (fashionable shoes, designer clothes, the latest cell phone, a motorbike, etc.) is directly linked to the construction of one's image relative to the group. The time bomb is set. But Maiana has no way of knowing: "until 1998 I had a quiet life, I was a housewife, I took care of my responsibilities, you know?".

5.   Crisis: A Child "Gets Into Drugs"

If, in theory, the father's income, supplemented by his wife's and children's meager earnings, should be enough to guarantee the family's livelihood, in practice the salary of a bus driver in the outskirts of São Paulo did not meet the expectation of consumption of three teenage boys at the turn of the 21st century. As they grew up, the boys quickly moved towards the local criminal scene. The life stories of Jonatas, Michel, and Robson, therefore, follow a pattern: crime offered them what all the teenagers in the neighbourhood most cherished: money, consumption, status, adrenaline, women.

> No matter how much you teach them, when you open the door, out there on the streets, there are a lot of risks. Because in the neighbourhood there are lots of drugs, lots of guns, right? Crime runs things in the neighbourhood. Crime

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5 In São Paulo, the expression periphery, or *periferia* in Portuguese, is used to refer to poor neighbourhoods, which have expanded concentrically due to the intense rural-urban migration between 1940 and 1980, the result of a very concentrated industrialization model. Self-constructed informal housing areas in those neighbourhoods, which concentrate the poorest among the poor, are known as *favelas*.

dominates here. Then, back in 1998, I discovered that my eldest son [Jonatas, then aged fourteen] was using drugs; he was into marijuana. […] Then he moved on to cocaine, began to hang out in the *favelas*, and I started to despair. I had a lot of love for him, you know? I overcame my fear and went into the *favelas* looking for him. My heart ached, but I went after him. [Maiana]

Favelas figure in the life of a worker in Sapopemba in a rather paradoxical manner. Presently there are almost forty *favelas* in the district, and it is difficult to ignore them. Maiana had never been to one when she moved to the neighbourhood. She was forced to discover them the hard way. It was from the *favelas* that the threat that came to interfere in her daily life emanated: that was where her son went to use drugs. But as her narrative proceeded, it became clear that crime was not contained within the limits of the *favelas*. It was not just from the poorest part of the neighbourhood that the threat came; the drug trade also encompassed the "nice households":

> The mistake of many mothers here is thinking, "Oh, that boy lives in a nice little house, [my son] can make friends with him". I fell into that trap, you know? So Jonatas made a friend who didn't live in the *favela*, he lived in a street that is the street of the boys here in the neighbourhood, you know? It has only nice houses, and they are all decent people, right? So he made friends there, and there he started getting into cocaine, with those boys.

> My son had not yet gone to Febem [the State Foundation for the Wellbeing of Minors, São Paulo's state youth detention system]. He was already committing offenses, but he hadn't been to Febem yet. He would steal, or sell his new clothes, for drug money.

> One time Jonatas ended up owing money… down there, at the *boca* [drug den] down there [in the favela do Madalena], and I went to talk to the drug dealer. I was really hard on him, I said: I don't care what you do, everyone has their way of getting by and making money. I work as a manicurist, my husband works as a driver. I said: "If I pay you all at once, we'll go broke". And I told him: "You'll have to let us pay in instalments". I asked to pay in instalments. So he said we could settle in three instalments, the same as you would in Casas Bahia [a popular retail store]. […] I even asked to sign a paper, and for a witness, so that afterward they couldn't say I hadn't paid and charge me again. I'll be giving this much, over so many days, and I want a witness. [I wanted to] know what I was paying." [Maiana]

Four analytical themes emerge from Maiana's account in this first moment. First is the opposition between people in the *favelas* and the "neighbourhood boys". The favelas are lower on the social scale, whereas the "boys" live in Jardim Planalto or Vila

Industrial, and have a superior status compared to Maiana's family. The opposition in Maiana's testimony between the *favela* residents and the "boys" suggests her family's intermediary social position – Maiana and her children occupy a social space between the established working-class families' households and the favelas. Thousands of other families in the neighbourhood see themselves in this position: not as stable as those employed in industrial jobs or public service, or successfully self-employed, but better off than the *favela* residents. They are working families, or "strivers" (*lutadores*), as they like to be called.

The second theme is Jonatas' situation. The eldest son is gradually entering the "world of crime". Still, he hasn't yet gone through his first experience of institutionalization, arguably the period of highest enjoyment of the relative advantages of entering this new universe. The third theme is drug use as leading to involvement with traffickers. Fourth, we see a direct relationship between drug trafficking and debt management strategies that are so typical of popular consumption practices. Casas Bahia, a popular Brazilian retail store, appears in the testimony as a token of a particular consumer habit (in this case, drug abuse). Drug traffickers are adopting commercial strategies already successful in the low-income consumer market, making their operations and accumulation more flexible.

While entering this universe and before being caught by the police, Jonatas broadened his social circuits. He was hanging out both in the favelas and with the boys from the "good" neighbourhoods; he learned the codes of the world of crime and the values of working-class people. No one in the family knew about his illicit activities, so it was easy to shuttle between worlds. The first crisis appears precisely when the family discovers his involvement – the young man who was supposed to be a worker was on drugs.

The mother is desperate, of course. She considers alternatives, speaks to friends, looks for solutions to an unexpected problem. The father punishes. The brothers understand Jonatas' decisions, but they don't reveal this to their parents. The family crisis worsens when Jonatas, already a user of drugs, starts to sell them as well and to owe money at the *bocas*. That's when the threats to his life and his family's begin. To settle the kid's debt and avoid the worse, the family borrows money. But to protect his family and their relatives from all the burden, Jonatas starts spending more time in the favelas and takes part in local criminal activities, becoming a hired hand for carjackings.

5.1   Marginal Conviviality

The literature on urban conflicts in São Paulo is mostly sound and relevant (Caldeira 2000; Holston 2007). But it implicitly or explicitly treats the normative framework of the state, one of the opposing actors in this conflict, through a naturalised set of

assumptions: democracy, citizenship, and the public sphere are taken as universal goals. This construction renders invisible the alternatives to this normative framework that, empirically, have emerged in the urban peripheries of São Paulo and other cities in recent decades. The charge is that this is an unplausible discourse or moral economy (Cabanes 2014) that "sabotages our reasoning", as Brazilian composer Mano Brown has sung, and Teresa Caldeira has explained (Caldeira 2006). As an ethnographer, and years after these seminal works were published, I can more easily identify the role of the aforementioned third element that, pragmatically, even if unintentionally, modifies in a disruptive way the plausible limits of the "world" and of those individuals who are allowed to take part in it. To understand those "violent subjects" who were not supposed to exist or be part of this world, and their implausible actions, we must look far beyond frameworks centred on categories such as state policies, democracy, and citizenship.

The third element discussed above – not the leftist of the right wing activist, but the criminal who understands the "world of crime" as a desirable political arena – introduces an epistemological fracture into the problematic of the urban order and the modern state. The first two do not consider the third's claim to be plausible, and therefore there can be no negotiation between them. Therefore, universalism faces its limits and is irrelevant to politically solve this aporetic situation. The practical consequences of this fracture are hugely significant. It invalidates the entire conversation in the so-called public sphere, because it destroys the common ground that the three subjects had occupied or should occupy (Arendt 1951; 1959; 1977). All could be fine if they were forever distant, but the empirical relations between the three elements continue to exist, despite the lack of mutual comprehension, in cosmopolitan cities or a global world. However high the walls of gated condominiums are, they still share the same city, state, country, or world.

The third element does not continue the ordered debate between constituted actors occupying the same normative space. It forces a rupture of the entire set of assumptions in the debate and, in this way, opens the possibility for two consequences. On the one hand, there are increasingly fierce clashes between actors who misunderstand one another. On the other hand, the first two subjects will discuss their differences between them, while the third subject will cease to engage with them and do so only with their peers. As time passes and conversation is restricted to those who share the same basis of understanding, the distinct and internally coherent regime of thought tends to become autonomous.

The rupture produced by such dissensus not only causes a radical departure of all the subjects from the public sphere but also their arrival at another place. They will probably not understand that a criminal gang like the PCC should not be seen as a

sign of the absence of the state, but instead as the positive representation of "crime" understood as a world in itself or at least as the authoritative body for regulating a community. This "exit-stage-left" of which Hirschman (Hirschman 1970) speaks, and which Arendt (Arendt 1959; 1977) recognizes as the destruction of the modern public sphere is not only a matter of counter-publics that move towards a synthesis of conflicting presuppositions (Fraser 1992; Habermas 1992), but pragmatically productive. This rupture produces alternative and coexistent regimes of publicness, with no possibility of integration, because there can be no plausible communication between them (Machado da Silva 1993).

With the common ground between the three subjects fractured, with two on one side and one on the other, we not only witness the withdrawal of one subject from the public sphere, which nonetheless continues without them. In cases of fierce conflict, we also see the emergence of other normative regimes, which coexist with the first as people still share common physical spaces in the city, without there being any rational, deliberative communication between them. Violence remains as the primary relation between them. When a possible negotiated exit from the urban conflict can no longer be resolved administratively, the city of São Paulo, like other Brazilian and Latin American cities (Arias and Goldstein, 2010; Arias and Barnes, 2017), enters into a spiral of accumulating urban conflict in the form of violence, understood as the use of force or threat that produces a similar effect (Misse 2006; 2018; Stepputat 2013; 2015; 2018).

The representatives of the city's middle and upper classes are left in a "democratic space", the actually existing government or public sphere, discussing amongst themselves what to do with, or instead to, the criminals. Whoever thinks criminals do not do the same is fooling themselves. The claim of the government – "we are working for everyone's security" – and that of the third element – "crime is a means to social mobility" – cannot be heard side by side. Crime threatens the country's security, period, says the government. "Crime" is the only route to safety in the favelas, period, the criminals from PCC say. It is precisely at this limit of the acceptable, the plausible, that Michael Taussig's terror – pure violence – becomes the fundamental relationship between the parts, who are separated by an unbridgeable divide.

5.2   Rupture: The Boys are Arrested, the Bandido has to Die

> It was 1998. That was the time when he [Jonatas] first went to Febem. He committed a misdemeanor, was caught, then he went to the Febem in Imigrantes [in São Paulo metropolitan region], where I was horrified by everything. He stayed

there for fifteen days, and from there I managed to get him into a rehabilitation centre [for drug dependents].

But when he left Febem they didn't explain about assisted freedom, they didn't explain anything [because it was his first detention, Jonatas was released on parole, to be accompanied by Cedeca, the Centre for the Defense of the Rights of Children and Adolescents, but the family did not know how this worked, and Jonatas failed to show up for required meetings]. So what did I do? I took him, took him for acupuncture sessions because that had worked for everyone who'd done it in the neighbourhood. But not for him. He had pins put in his ears and all, but it didn't do anything for him. Then I had him hospitalized for the first time [in a private clinic for drug addicts]. By then, he already had several absences in the parole programme.

He spent a few days [at the clinic], but could not stand to be away from the drugs, so he ran away… That meant breaking the terms of his parole. [Due to his failure to participate in the necessary open activities, Cedeca sent a discontinuation report to Febem]. I would tell him, "Look, you have to go back to a rehabilitation centre, you have to give it a try, if you don't you won't see results… You only stayed in there for twelve days, so you haven't seen any results yet, life is all about trying…"

Social workers were able to find another rehabilitation centre, where an NGO would pay. So they paid for it, there in São Lourenço da Serra, miles away. I took the boy there, he stayed for another twelve days and ran away. […] It turned into 'search and seizure' [by breaking open measures, Jonatas was given a measure of hospitalization]. He was caught, the search team came to our house and took him to Febem. Then I was very sad, because he went back to Imigrantes again, that horrible place, it was torture, you know?

And I stayed in that state, worried only about him. But the two other [kids] were getting involved, and I didn't realize it. The other two, his brothers. […] The other two began to get involved and I didn't realize because I was only looking at one. I only focused on one, I had even forgotten that I had other kids. Because I only saw the one in front of me, the one who was a drug user, the one who was involved, the one who needed me. So I forgot about the others. [Maiana]

At age fourteen, Jonatas was an inmate at Febem; the following year, he was joined by Robson, his younger brother; two years later Michel would also enter the penal system. At one point, Maiana's three sons were all deprived of their liberty simultaneously. Her life had turned upside down. For Maiana, it was a nightmare. Her three kids, aged sixteen, fourteen, and thirteen years old, were all involved in crime. Jonatas was still a

drug addict. Michel and Robson worked for drug dealers and also carried out robberies and carjackings. The working family could not adapt to the new situation. Apart from the personal impact, the household had to redesign all its routines, adding the budgeting and scheduling of visits, negotiations with various institutions, court hearings and trials. It also became necessary to coexist with local criminal actors, who were now in the boys' networks, as well as police stations, public attorneys and several judicial and penal institutions. They had to explain to the whole extended family and friends what was going on. Some came closer; others disappeared. It was necessary to redesign the entire network of family sociability.

The trajectories of the boys after that are so repetitive as to be already known (and, analytically, expected): they leave the institutions to work in drug dealing, they become more deeply embedded in the "world of crime" and its codes; as they get older, they move in and out of the penal system, of rehabilitation clinics for drug dependents, health services, and actual prison. Coexistence with institutional corruption and police violence becomes routine. Sometimes the outcomes of these circuits are fatal. Back when these stories took place, fatal consequences were far more common (Feltran 2020).

> When he was caught in the search and seizure operation, he stayed four months between Febem Imigrantes and Febem Tatuapé. In a '*mega* rebelião' (mass prison revolt) in 1999, which hit all Febem units with several days of riots, he managed to escape. So the next day I went up desperate to Cedeca, because I didn't know how to deal with it. I spoke with Valdênia Paulino, a close friend of her who lived most of his life in Sapopemba working as a lawyer: "Valdênia, my husband saved some money from his wages, I'll take Jonatas back. He's going to go back to Febem, but as long as he doesn't go to the UAI [Initial Treatment Unit] or Imigrantes."

> Let him return to the unit he escaped from, in [the neighbourhood of] Tatuapé. She said, "No, Jonatas' problem is not Febem, Jonatas' problem is rehabilitation. It's his drug addiction, and Febem doesn't provide this treatment, doesn't support with this, he will only get worse there. And every time he leaves, he's going back to Febem, because he's going to be worse than he was [when he came in]." So we took him, and she got him a place at Cláudio Amâncio [clinic], in São Caetano, where he stayed for five months. He entered in 1999, but in March 2000 he ran away, he felt the desire. After five months, he had already managed to free himself of cocaine addiction. So he ran away, I spoke to him and asked him to go back, but he said he didn't want to anymore; that he was tired of being away from home, that he wanted to stay home.

Within fifteen days he met a police officer on the street. [He was stopped by a policeman, who knew he was involved in crime]. The policeman demanded money from him [in order to not arrest him], but he didn't have any money. He went to steal for the police… And he went to rob him, to rob another police officer. [She gets emotional, puts her hands on her face. She continues seconds later, her voice choking]. The cop killed him. It was like that… [intense crying].

And with that, with the violence you have in the neighbourhood too, I already lost another in 2003 [long silence, crying].

I only have one child left today. [She recovers her voice] I got more influential in the mother's meetings, I also got involved in Amar [the association of mothers of Febem, the Association of Mothers and Friends of at-risk Adolescents], I stayed there in Amar from [19]99 to 2004 [cries again]. [Maiana]

Jonatas was murdered in 2001, at the age of seventeen. All the testimonies about from friends, relatives, and educators, confirmed that the police officer was accountable for his death, although they gave different versions for its causes. There was no formal investigation and, therefore, there is no official verdict on what happened, as in 85% of homicides in Brazil. Neither was there one for Robson, the youngest brother, who was killed in 2003. Robson was also seventeen when he died. Apparently, Maiana's youngest son was murdered in what is conventionally called "score-settling". In the last year that this kind of homicide occurred in Sapopemba – at the end of 2003 – the hegemony of the PCC ruling favelas order was already consolidated in the neighbourhood and such acts were no longer tolerated (Feltran 2011; 2020). In 2001, there were three times as many homicides in Sapopemba as in 2006, four times more than in 2009 (Feltran 2010).

[The case of] Robson was violence in the neighbourhood itself. […] All of that getting into fights, those kind of things. […] Robson, before he died, he got a tattoo, he put Jonatas', Michel's and my name on his arm. […] Then the next day it happened. [Maiana]

Another young man I met in the neighbourhood also knew the children of Maiana, and presented his view on their deaths:

I know, I know… one of them I didn't like very much, but I didn't have much contact with him, because he hung out with the crazy guys who got into trouble. I think she [Maiana] must have known, her son too. I don't like him that much, but these days I say hi to him, talk to him, fine. But her son was involved with some bad guys I didn't like either. He died because… her son died… I don't know what she knows about him, but one of them died because he deserved it, I think. I don't know. [Hesitation] I don't know, one of them was really bad

to people. He was bad to a guy who worked in his area, a quiet guy, so… [Question: he was bad in what way?] Beating people up, shooting them… There are these people who want to be thieves, but they're not cut out for it. And they end up beating up family men [*pai de família*], end up swearing at people, end up using drugs in front of a house where there's a sick child living. The only thing that the dealers [*o tráfico*] don't like, don't tolerate, is you being like that. Just because it's a shack, you're going to use drugs there? […] Also, those who died, they gave marijuana to kids, they smoked, they got the kids addicted, they set a bad example, they showed them guns and that, took them to their homes to guard and that, gave guns to the kids… marijuana, cocaine. [Pedro]

The contrast of tone and content between the mother's testimony and the testimony of someone who shared the codes of local crime but had a different group of friends than Jonatas and Robson is clear. The accusation is that the two died because they didn't behave properly. They do not share the same criteria to understand what happened. Maiana continually seeks to attribute the children's problems to external causes, Pedro focuses on their inappropriate behaviour, breaking with the ethics of the world of crime in which they had become entangled. There are also, of course, silences in both cases. Maiana doesn't want to talk about it anymore, it hurts too much. When prompted, Pedro decides to talk a bit about the case, still hesitating, at the end of a two-hour interview in which he had gained some trust in the interviewers. His reference to the crime world's intolerance of Robson's behaviour is direct evidence that his death was a decision, not a contingency. Deaths like these are preceded by warnings and threats whose effects are assessed before being carried out. Robson had already been warned, threatened, knew his situation, and that he could be killed at any moment. Most likely, that was when he had his brothers', father's and mother's names tattooed in his arm. He ritualized his own death at age seventeen. He was executed the next day.

He picked up a few letters, that you could glue, and put them on the shelf, like: "I love you mum", it seemed something … "I love you mum", "I love you dad", "I love you Jonatas"… much, "'I love you Michel", everyone, [put them on the shelf] by the television. I was going to take it down, but I though, I'll leave it there. Then the next day it happened. So it was like a goodbye. [Maiana]

6.   A Lost Family

The tension and suffering that preceded and followed the deaths of Maiana's children destroyed the family dynamic. If one of the foundations of the family is precisely the circumscription of a private, protected space in the social world, especially for children and young people, the corrosion of this space denotes the downfall of the group. In

Maiana's case, this meant not only the failure of the project of social mobility but of the very maintenance of the family. Conflict in the social sphere invaded and took over the domestic sphere. And not only symbolically: the police made sure to confirm this state of affairs. After Jonatas' first internment in Febem, and with Michel and Robson entering the world of crime, Maiana's house became the target of numerous police operations. The methods used by police officers when dealing with the families of *bandidos* [criminals] are well-known to all who go through similar situations in the peripheries. The sequence of examples is instructive.

> It happened a lot, it happened a lot. Even I had to get money to pay the police, already in 1998. R$1,500… At that time. […] It was like this, Jonatas was caught, he had been a week out of [the youth detention centre] Imigrantes, he and another little guy who had been caught with him. So they couldn't stay together anymore… if they were seen together the police would arrest them. They thought they were committing crimes, which they were at that time. Then [the police] took them both, took them to the police station, a week after they'd left Imigrantes. I said: "I won't go back to that place!". And it was the worst thing I ever did in my life. Then I gathered money from my brother, from my husband, from my grandmother, I was collecting, you know? So it took me forever to pay everyone. $1,500, in 1998, in October, I can't forget it. For the investigators at the 70th [Precint], to release my son. The [other] mother gave R$1,500 and I gave R$1,500, at the time. That goes on a lot here.

> The police came inside my house, I was at Amar [Mother's Association] working, at the time. He came into my house, my son called me from his own cell phone asking me for R$2,000. So I picked up and said to him: "But why are you asking me for R$2,000?" Then he whispered to me: "Mom, the police are here at home, and they said that if I don't give them R$2,000 by 7 pm, they'll charge me. They're going to ruin my life, I'm already an adult, mum." I said, "Okay, arrange with them for 7 pm, I'll bring R$2,000 to these shameless, disgraceful people". So he made the arrangement. Then I told the girl [the manager at Amar], and she said: "Let's call Globo [a tv network]? Globo will give us the money, if we ask, it's for Amar", like, to film, you know? Then they'll take it back, because they'll get caught, so they'll get the money back, they won't lose anything". Then she said: "Let's call Globo, we'll lay a trap and catch them all!" I said, "Sounds good". Then I called my father, listen to the mess I got into: I said, "Dad, keep Michel there, cause at 7 pm tonight the police are coming, and Globo too, with the money, they're going to give me the money, I'm going to give it to Michel, and they'll film it". My father said: "For God's sake, you can't do something like that, you'll have nowhere to go [after]. Where are you going to put the boy,

where are you going to hide the boy?" And we really didn't do it, you know? They didn't give me any guarantee. I didn't pay, I didn't give the money. He disappeared, went to a [friend's] house for a few days, disappeared from the neighbourhood. I didn't pay. The police vehicle on duty passed by my street every day, so much that the neighbours were sick of it… they said: "Maiana, if you don't do something we we're going to start a petition against these people". I only know that this conversation that happened in my house got back to the battalion, the 19th battalion, [and they heard about] what was happening. The battalion, it was a temporary one, up from my house, you know? He left, he went somewhere else, and those policemen were transferred to another location.

My son doesn't have a driving licence yet. At the beginning of the year he was driving his father's car. Then those same policemen who had asked him for the $2,000 stopped him. They took advantage of the fact that he had no licence, they took him in, they took him to the police station, and they wanted to arrest him. Because of a driver's licence. Boy, but I made such a big fuss inside the police station… I told them, "You guys want to work, you need to roll up your sleeves and arrest whoever killed my son, whoever killed my son last year. You did nothing, it was right under your noses. Now you want to arrest him because of a driver's licence? No sir, you're going to arrest…" Look, I almost swore. "You can arrest whoever you want, but not my son."

The Rota [special unit of the military police] once entered my house, my children were at Febem. They came inside my house, looking for my children. There had been a robbery in the street by some other boys, so they came inside my house [suspecting that it had been one of her children]. That was in 2001. My husband was lying on the sofa, he worked twelve hours a day, they almost killed my husband with a beating, because it was dark. They beat him badly, broke two of his teeth. [Question: Did they kick the door down?] No, I was sitting in the living room, I was back from visiting them [the children] in [Febem unit] Franco da Rocha, and I was sitting there, I told him [her husband]: "Christ, the street's full of police, there was a robbery". Then he said, "Ah, that's the problem of whoever did it, no?" So there we were. Then I saw the police passing by the living room window, I said, wow, did the thief escape through here? Let me run to the kitchen. By the time I got there, they were already in the kitchen. I said, what's going on? He said, "Where is your son?". I said, "which one?". He said, "Robson". I said "Robson's at Febem". "At Febem? Since when?" I said, "four months", but it was stupid to tell him which Febem, right? He asked which one, but I said another. He said, "What about Michel?". I said, "He's in Febem too". He said, "and the other?". [Forcefully] "In Camilópolis cemetery, go and

see!" I was nervous. They said, "Who's here at home?" I said, "My husband, sleeping. Today's his day off". Then he told my husband to get up. Except that at the moment they told him to get up, they pushed him off the sofa. And my husband, the poor thing, asleep, didn't even see who he was. And he swore. Then kicks were flying everywhere. If it hadn't been for the neighbours running down the street to my gate shouting that he was a working man [*trabalhador*], they would have killed my husband inside my house. And my husband, afraid to report it, went to [the state representative] Renato Simões, he wanted to report it. [Question: and why didn't you?] Out of fear. Because here there's nowhere to run from the police. [Maiana]

The presence of the police, police corruption, and "score-settling" between the world of crime and law enforcement are part of daily life not only for boys, but for the whole family. Families like Maiana's learn to cope with this routine. For each situation they experience, there is an agreement to be made, a negotiation to conduct, a price to be paid. Usually, there are ways to pay for alternatives to imprisonment, beatings, and retaliation. But there is always instability in these agreements, and any deviation can provoke violence. Families know the repertoire of police actions, and with the experience gained, they learn to deal with it. The first time she was extorted, Maiana paid the agreed amount. The second time she didn't, and only decided at the last minute not to call the press to report the case to the authorities. Curiously, in the absence of other options, the role of "policing the police" falls on the media. It was necessary to publicize the illegality of the action, in the public world it surely would be interpreted in other terms – there, people still have rights. But clearly the attempt doesn't work, not even in an isolated case. In the daily reality of this relationship, there are no clear routes for publicising these problems – in cases like these, there is not even any trust in the judiciary.

Even without the press, the retaliations appear. The same military police officers circulate around the house for weeks and finally arrest Michel. Maiana has to negotiate at the police station with the judiciary police. Her argument is a moral one, delivered in a passionate speech. It seems to resolve the situation. But only for a few days: a new episode appears when there is a robbery in the neighbourhood and her boys are naturally viewed as suspects; they've already committed several robberies, the police officers know them. They break into the family's home. The kids would have been arrested if they had not already been interned. The mother tries to argue with the officers, and gets irritated. The husband is beaten to the point of losing two teeth, and if the neighbours had not come to the gate, to shout that he is a *trabalhador*, it might have been worse. Police behaviour in the house of *bandidos* is like this. The family, with its history of identifying as workers, was humiliated in front of the neighbours.

In the life stories of Maiana's children, it is clear that the focus of police repression is not on the offending act, but on the individual who commits it (Cruz and Feltran, forthcoming). If the individual is a *bandido*, the subject comes to embody the illegal act in his very being: his body comes to exhibit illegality, and he becomes someone beyond the law. This designation does not allow for counter-arguments. And as illegality assumes an absolute state in the body of the individual, the eyes of law enforcement also become drawn towards similar bodies: brothers, friends, relatives, those who have the same colour, dress the same way (Misse 2018). In this case, police violence is systematically addressed to Maiana's entire family, because, from the first offense of one of the children, publicly acknowledged in the first internment, and aggravated by his and his brothers' recidivism, all lose access to the law: from now on they are *bandidos*. And *bandidos* must die.

7.   Final Notes

Maiana lived quietly as a housewife and a mother until she was 34 years old, and therefore did not have to worry about politics or the police. Immersed in her social position, she "fulfilled her obligations", as she says, and had a sense of place in the social structure. There is a place for the working poor in ordinary contexts of conviviality. But she suffered physical violence and had her home invaded (by both the world of crime and the police) when her children "opted for a criminal life", and her family lost that status. Social stigma, repression, and police corruption would become more intense as the children refused (or failed) to choose to live as working class people. If there aren't enough desirable jobs for the boys in the periphery, and if they are restless and uninterested in with what life has in store for them, they can't find their place in the ordinary social order. And the state can merely manage the (violent) conflict that emerges from the existence of this population, that is, closely monitor the quieter segment and repress or confine the more aggressive one; as a last resort, the latter might need to be eliminated. Maiana's three children all faced strict monitoring by the state, and after a series of internments, two of them were murdered, without any legal consequences.

At a first glance, in the flow of everyday life and pragmatic conviviality, the reproduction of difference – even between mother and son – may be not evident, except in terms of its sensory dimension: the politics of the composition of the social markers of difference is reflected through a set of signs and boundaries coherent to anyone who shares their meanings, effectively serving as an aesthetic of difference. The framework of conviviality can account for the reproduction of everyday differences. Maiana did not realize what was going on with her children because she did not share the meanings they expressed to their peers by their actions.

There is thus an "aesthetic" at the base of politics that has nothing to do with the "aestheticisation of politics" belonging to the "age of the masses" of which Benjamin speaks. This aesthetic should not be understood as a perverse capturing of politics by an artistic will, by the viewing of people as a work of art. Extending the analogy reveals it may be conceived of in a Kantian sense– eventually touched on by Foucault–as the system of a priori forms determining what one feels (Rancière 1995: 21).[6]

This sense of *a priori* forms, opening up to make way for the interpositioning of the most diverse of contents – sexuality and madness, for example – that Jacques Rancière identifies in Michel Foucault's *dispositif* [apparatus] (Foucault 1997 [1976]), in a close dialogue with the formal sociology as suggested by Georg Simmel (Georg Simmel 2010 [1918]):

Man's position in the world is defined by the fact he constantly finds himself between two boundaries in every dimension of his being and behaviour. This condition appears as the formal structure of our existence, filled as it always is with different contents in life's diverse provinces, activities, and destinies. We feel that the content and the value of every hour lies somewhere between a higher and a lower value; every thought between a wiser and a foolish value; every possession between a more extended and a more limited value; and every deed between a greater and a lesser measure of meaning, adequacy and morality. We are constantly orienting ourselves, even when we do not employ abstract concepts, to an "over us" and an "under us", to a right or a left, to a more or less, a tighter or looser, a better or a worse. The boundary, above and below, is our means of finding direction in the infinite space of our worlds. Along with the fact that boundaries are both constant and pervasive, we are boundaries ourselves. For insofar as every content in life – every feeling, experience, deed, or thought–possesses a specific intensity, a specific hue, a specific quantity and a specific position in some order of things, each content produces a continuum in two directions, toward its two poles; participating contentedly in each of these two continua, which both collide in it and are delimited by it. (Georg Simmel [1918] 2010: 1)

Categorical regimes are hard to study and particularly hard to compare, because the meanings expressed invariably refer to situated series of interaction that are therefore always distinct from one another. The categorical systems used by each group are also

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6   Aesthetic and politics are also considered here in terms of a concept proposed by Jacques Rancière: "Such forms are revealed to be tied to a certain political regime related to indeterminate identities, the delegitimation of words' positions, of the deregulating of the sharing of space and time. Such an aesthetic political regime befits democracy, the regime of assemblies of craftspeople, intangible written laws and the theatrical institution" (Rancière 1995: 18).

theirs for a variable period of time. Catholics ritualising their beliefs on a weekly basis tend to remain Catholic for longer than Catholics who never participate in such rituals. Categories can also serve as causal elements or consequences of a series of actions. In light of this reflection, I believe it is possible to affirm that categories used in convivial situations always simultaneously constitute:

> i) A situated position in an interval of values naturalized by convivial routine as a regime of plausibility for social life, therefore serving as a classified position in this regime, according to parameters of valuation supported by a situated ideal for a given group in a given time and space. Our lives see us evaluating and valuing all of the situations we find ourselves in, in actions as diverse as other drivers' manoeuvres and our children's drawings, with the way things are said and Instagram posts as a basis for the ideal parameters in each situation ("you can't expect any better from a 5-year-old…"), in each era ("you wouldn't have imagined it possible to rate a Skype call as "poor" 30 years ago), and in each aesthetic specific to our situated experiences (amateur photographs are evaluated differently to those taken by professionals). We both express and withhold these judgments based on categories or categorical silences. The problem with categories – and categorical silences – is in this sense that of value judgments (Georg Simmel 1990 [1908]).

> ii) An interval itself among many others that could potentially be applied, and an interval that is socially chosen by a given group as suitable for evaluating a given situation, in its historical construction and according to the agency of its subjects; one, which, between an infinite number of other passive intervals or scales, is potentially offering pragmatic parameters for the action or daily performance, from the most intimate to the most public. One can choose to place race in the centre of the evaluation of Maiana's identity. She doesn't do it very often. Subjects often use entirely distinct criteria (different categorical intervals, different series of meanings) to evaluate the same situation, identity, ethnicity, race, or person. In one example, LGBT love may be read as part of the categorical scale of carnal love or romantic love, or of Christian sin, or of citizens' rights, depending on the group and situation at hand. Categorisation therefore implies a choice on a scale of values, a choice which is made while simultaneously issuing its value judgment, choosing the scale itself to be used, which, however, constitutes a formal choice and not one of content. A choice of the interval of contents, therefore, belonging to the classification to be employed in each situation accordingly.

Michel survived. He didn't want to talk to me about his story until today. He was arrested days later. It was already his second time in the adult prison system, where he stayed

until 2008. From the age of thirteen, he alternated between short periods of freedom and more extended periods of internment in treatment units, in Febem and, more recently, in the prison system. In 2009, I met him one last time, at his house. When he was out of prison, he was still orbiting close to criminal networks. He seemed to have distanced himself at that time, but until today – 2020 – he is in and out of prison.

In any case, it is the overloading of the distinction between worker and *bandido*, categories that are represented as natural, that governs the social existence of Maiana's family. If the world is the space between people, at the moment two distinct worlds emerge, facing one another. The death of her children reveals the boundary, because it represents a loss for only one part of the residents of the neighbourhood and of the city. The greater the bonds that accompany the victim, the greater the loss to the world. For this reason, in the peripheries, when a "family man" dies, there are protests and outrage. When a *bandido* dies, and especially when the world of crime itself has decreed that he should no longer live, there is deep silence in the community. Privately many believe that he knew what he had coming, many had already warned him he could not escape the path he had chosen. And since he had already decided to live outside the legitimate world, there is no loss to "society". Two worlds coexisting in the same territory. Relegated to world of the *bandido*, Maiana's family came to face situations in which, at that time, there seemed to be no law.

7.1   Violence as Boundary

Almost 60 thousand people were killed in Brazil in 2019. The vast majority of them were young black men from favelas, low-wage workers in huge, transnational markets based in large cities, such as drug trafficking and car theft (Beckert and Dewey 2017; Paiva, Feltran, and Carlos 2019). Latin America is by far the most violent region in the world. Prisons keep filling up, armoured cars multiply, and armed robberies rates nonetheless continue to grow. Not only in São Paulo, but with different levels of intensity, such contemporary dynamics emerged in many Latin American countries or other situations of war and radical conflict. Assumptions are no longer negotiated, producing a fracture between distinct and self-contained sets of irreconcilable regimes of action and understanding about what constitutes the common good; about what the world is and how it should be.

These self-contained terrains, understood as formal structures of thought and action, filled situationally with different contents (George Simmel 2009 [1908]), are what I have called normative regimes (Feltran 2013; 2010). Empirical action and social forms are something else and come later. Normative regimes function as a plausible set of orientations for the empirical action of subjects. This makes such actions convenient,

which is to say formally expected by peers (Thevenot 1990). Action that is convenient for peers will be incomprehensible, because it is implausible, on the other side of the fracture. On that side, it is not even believed that such subjects exist, let alone that they might be able to speak meaningfully (Cavell 2006). This fundamental political fracture has been in place in Sao Paulo since the promise of the integration of the migrant worker into the modern city was, with rare exceptions, frustrated. The fracture became more profound, therefore, as urban wage labour declined and hopes of social integration, and the comprehensive provision of public services that would enable this, retreated ever further into the horizon (Machado da Silva 2016; Misse 2006). Over time, the limits of the plausible, on each side of the fracture, concretised. A thief is a thief. A worker is a worker. Crime is crime, the law is the law.

This fracture poses problems for analysts, though not as serious as for those who are positioned close to the edges of the divide. Describing the city precisely requires moving across different categorical boundaries, which is not an easy task. But thinking about the normative problem (of how the city should be) means addressing profound mutual incomprehensions and the risk of violence. In São Paulo, for journalists, lawyers, doctors, the middle classes, and even many working people from the peripheries, security means maintaining a safe distance from thieves, bandidos and the PCC in gated condominiums. The risks of violent forms of interaction are, these days, very plausible where the need for such a distance is not taken seriously. Meanwhile, in the favelas it is precisely thieves and bandidos who, for at least three decades, have seemed to offer security. "Thief" is, therefore, an offensive word within the state regime of action, but a celebration of intelligence and insight within the criminal regime; it has essential, closed, defined contents in each of these terrains. However, formally, or analytically, the word becomes a polysemic notion, endowed with various meanings, capable of being filled with different contents.

These theoretical and practical dilemmas are hardly new; Georg Simmel was already grappling with them in 1900. Neither are they problems unique to São Paulo. For decades the modern cities saw republicanism and multiculturalism as successful alternatives to these fierce conflicts. Today these are clearly understood as insufficient solutions, even though we may never find anything better. The countries of the "Global South" to whom modernity never delivered consolidated democracies or welfare, and the subjects that have never even been part of the community of rich, northern "nation-states" (indigenous, black and favela residents of São Paulo are just one example), face the same theoretical-political problem of understanding what order allows them to exist, in a scenario of profound misunderstanding about who they are on different sides of the structural fracture. The ethnographer has a role to play in this drama, as she

should be committed to avoiding ethnocentrism, that is, to avoid allowing the structural fracture to become an epistemological one.

After many years studying the development of life stories, my ethnography focused on the effects of coexisting social and political normative regimes, beyond the state order, in the Global South. Violence appears in marginal conviviality not as a representation but as the pragmatic violence Maiana's family experienced. Its reconversion to an abstract sociological notion places violence as a constitutive element of coexisting or hybrid political orders (Machado da Silva 1993; Arias and Goldstein 2010), a governscape (Stepputat 2013) or a set of normative regimes (Feltran 2020).

Because these regimes work with different sets of assumptions, and are not necessarily compatible, conflicts between them often results in violence. The absence of a common space – the republican public space or even the space of provisional counterpublics – means that in many situations there is no possible negotiation. The daily reproduction of social life – or pragmatic conviviality – presents itself as a source of violence (re) production. Previously unknown to me, those plural orders, and especially the "world of crime", operated in São Paulo – as in all Latin America – are reproducing marginality and violence not through spectacular or institutional events but on a convivial everyday basis.

It was not the bureaucracy or the laws that were at the core of this governscape regulation capability, but the everyday presence of a plausible, recognizable non-state violence. While jotting down and reading my fieldnotes, trying to reach further comprehension about the scenarios I experienced in the field, I made a theoretical return to the ordinary lived and especially conflictive situations, more than to speeches or representations. Marginal conviviality is often conflictive because incompatible, but coexistent, orders are framing everyday situations. Costa's pragmatic notion of conviviality (Costa 2019) directly matched the classic Weberian and Simmelian approaches on social action I was used to triggering. Violence and inequalities reproduction were already there, in convivial situations, bounding the everyday flux of marginal life far beyond state legitimacy (Feltran 2018; 2017; 2020).

Ordinary life and small interactions are the sources of reasoning for most ethnographers. Two social dynamics that I overlooked at the beginning of my fieldwork were performed simultaneously during my research: that of the pragmatic making of the plural urban order and also the making of our categories for understanding it. What looked like chaos at the beginning became more intelligible when reinterpreted through these two movements. Fieldwork is inescapably the reproduction of unequal – and sometimes violent – convivial realities. I was studying violence while Maiana's direct experience with it was touching her heart, flesh, and bones. But reasoning from lived fieldwork

is also inescapably emancipating ourselves from the boundaries of taken-for-granted ordinary conviviality, and understanding. My heart, flesh, and bones were not touched the same way, but Maiana's world has been part of mine for years, and vice-versa. The boundaries of normative regimes are also convivial spaces.

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