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# The violence behind the stigma

Lessons from a Mexican border city

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## Abstract

Ciudad Juárez, the birthplace of the maquiladora industry in the mid-1960s, won the international newspapers' headlines since the 1990s as a spot of endemic violence in the northern Mexican border region. The territorial stigmatization of Juárez became even stronger after the unprecedented upsurge of criminality from 2008 to 2010, when it was considered twice the world's most violent city. This violent context is often considered the result of cartels disputes and hence of the *narcos* (drug traffickers), responsible for degrading the city. The neoliberal politics of representation of the "undesirables", i.e. drug dealers, sex workers, and other vulnerable groups who could be easily identified as illegitimate dwellers of a "renewed" zone, is the symbolic mainstay both of the zero-tolerance policing (ZTP) and the attempts of gentrification that have taken place in Juárez since 2011. These two urban policies are claimed by the official discourse as the main reasons for the recovering from the seemingly unending cycle of violence that Juárez faced until 2010. Nevertheless, the narrative of "rescuing" the city image from the domain of narco-violence, vocalized by decision-makers and hegemonic journalism, contradictorily mobilizes different levels of violence (structural, political, symbolic, and everyday violence) in its formulation. This paper analyses how the interactions between four expressions of violence in the zero-tolerance policing and gentrification policies have violently produced a new space in Ciudad Juárez since 2011.

**Keywords:** Mexico, Ciudad Juárez, urban violence, gentrification, drug trafficking

## Introduction

The immediate association between Latin America and narco-trafficking is a simplistic but meaningful indicator of how the region has gained an international stigma of political corruption, legal impunity, and danger worldwide. Many “cultural products”, produced inside and outside Latin America, reinforce this regional “narco-stigma” (Cabañas 2014, p. 4). Its implications are particularly strong to the northern Mexican border, a privileged spot of drug routes towards the world’s largest drugs consumer market, where many cities have become internationally renowned “no-go zones”.

There are at least three reasons that make the Mexican border space an ideal laboratory for political experiments: exceptionality, porosity to transnational capital, and social inequalities. Ciudad Juárez, a border city located in the state of Chihuahua, México, fits perfectly into these three categories, and its recent urban history reinforces it. The discourse of exception has been used many times to justify not only the militarization of Juárez. The industrial plans, that since the end of the 19th century had to be accomplished under special conditions to bring economic success to the city and to the country, mobilized migrants from different parts of Mexico searching for job opportunities in the border region. It resulted in a population polarized between a transnational bourgeoisie and a huge mass of poor migrant workers.

Since the 1990s, Juárez has been known by its femicidios and juvenicidios – respectively the murder of women and young people with impunity; its high rates of generalized judicial impunity; the transformation of the urban landscape by an increasingly fortified architecture and the rising incidence of securitization policies (Gutiérrez 2014, p. 138). This violent context is often considered a result of cartels disputes and hence of the narcos (drug traffickers), responsible for degrading the city. The territorial stigmatization of Juárez became even stronger after the unprecedented upsurge of criminality from 2008 to 2010, when the city was considered twice the world’s most violent city (Ortega 2010).

Territorial stigmatization, i.e. the blemish of place, is the single most protrusive feature of the lived experience of advanced marginality (Wacquant 2007, p. 67). Although it is not a new phenomenon, a brief analysis of the recent history of Juárez shows that a new circuit of symbolic production has emerged in the policymaking process that has taken place in the city soon after the wave of homicides between 2008 and 2010. The current headlines of local and international newspapers about Juárez point to the

overcoming of the extraordinary cycle of violence faced by the city in these years. It is welcoming tourists to the renewed city center and proclaiming the end of cartels’ rule that the official discourse has performed (Denvir 2015; Dominguez 2016; Valencia 2015), visibly trying to break the stigma of violence that has marked the international image of Juárez in the last decades. Nevertheless, the auto-declared “rescuing” of the city image from the domain of narco-violence contradictorily mobilizes different levels of violence in its formulation. The official discourse claims two interrelated urban policies as the main reasons of the rescue of Juárez: the zero-tolerance policing conducted since 2011 and the “urban regeneration” plan, also released in 2011, responsible for the economic re-activation of the city center. The process of legitimation of such urban policies, deeply securitized, includes the construction of narratives about the sources of violence responsible for the insecurity in Juárez. The dominant discourse says the threats rest upon the criminals, and, in order to construct a new Juárez, public and private actors argue about progress and modernity to justify the violence entangled to the “cleaning” of the center through the elimination of the “undesirables”. The neoliberal politics of representation of these undesirables (Bourgeois 2001, p. 11), i.e. drug dealers, sex workers, and other vulnerable people who could be easily identified as illegitimate dwellers of a “renewed” zone, is the mainstay both of the zero-tolerance policing and the gentrification process that has taken place in Juárez since 2011.

Juárez’s transformation from a city of violence to a place pacified by a tough police approach and the businesspersons’ economic activity is outlined as a story of revenge. On one side, it poses the heroes, agents of rescue (“supercops”, entrepreneurs, decision-makers declaring war to narco-trafficking), and on the other the villains (big and small drug dealers), responsible for the degradation of the city and for the dynamic of violence which marked its recent past (Wright 2013, p. 842). However, the mythic coherence of such narrative rests exactly upon the aimless revenge between its good and bad characters. This paper argues that the dominant discourse mobilizes different forms and expressions of violence in its formulation. It does so by describing how four kinds of violence (structural, political, symbolic, and everyday violence) interact in the production of a new space in Ciudad Juárez. As a privileged target of the neoliberal exploitation since the mid-1960s, when the maquiladora

industry<sup>1</sup> (MI) had its birthplace in Juárez (Schmidt 1998, p. 11), the city has become a spot to observe how the economic globalization is accompanied by a “globalization of revanchism” (Smith 2009, p. 4). Through the equivalence between urban violence and criminality, the dominant discourse reduces the production of the urban space to a story about pointless revenge between “good” and “bad guys”. However, an analysis reveals that the urban space is produced in this city by melding a global and a local revanchism. The global revanchism makes the narco-trafficking threat a target of the War on Terror (Campbell and Hansen 2014, p. 161), through the spreading of an inconsistent moralist terror at the global scale, according to which narco-traffickers become equivalent to terrorists, and, thus an international hazard.<sup>2</sup> The local revanchism is expressed by the ongoing gentrification of the city center, supported by a typical revanchist discourse of reconquering the city, in this case (supposedly) from the hands of narcos (or terrorists, in times of globalization of revanchism).

Because of its geographical border situation and of its history of neoliberal exploitation, Ciudad Juárez constitutes an urban microcosm where the nexus between the mentioned four types of violence can be clearly observed. They are connected by a legitimization discourse of revenge that sustains the two policies here analyzed, both largely adopted by other Latin American countries. As a simultaneously material and symbolic process, the violent production of the space in Juárez mobilizes these different expressions of violence, that will be better described in the following sections, by entangling and mixing them in a single narrative of revanchism.

## Structural violence: the city in the frontier of neoliberalism

Liberalization, free trade and movement of goods, and export-oriented industrialization: these watchwords have dictated the economic development of the industrial hub Ciudad Juárez since the mid-1960s (Schmidt 1998, p. 11). In 1965, the maquiladora industry (MI) emerged in Juárez, replacing the cotton fields around the city. Not by chance, the birthplace of this new industry is the

northern border of Mexico, since the hybridity that the frontier situation attributes to the region allows the MI industrialists to take advantage on the rules (or on the lack of them) in both countries.

Since 1993, Juárez had been displayed by the major media not as a symbol of progress and successful industrial development, but as a site of endemic violence. During the 1990s, many social movements emerged, demanding security for the “obreras” (female workers of the MI), since many women were killed not while they were partying, drinking, or just walking alone through a dark street, but rather on their way between the industrial plants and their homes (Quiñones 1999).

However, the narco-violence is only the recrudescence of a deeper process, where the MI plays an important role. In the urbanization process of Third World cities under neoliberal globalization, the particular forms of peripheral violence (e.g. the “narcocriminality”) derive from structural violence, situated at the base of the production of the other forms of violence (Santos 2001, p. 27). Currently, this structural violence manifests itself in two major types of perversity: the tyranny of information and the tyranny of money.

An example of the tyranny of information is the binational imagination created along with the MI in Juárez (Berndt 2013, p. 2650), which in reality is translated as a deep social difference between the North and the South. The bad fame of Ciudad Juárez is historically grounded on the socio-economic differences between the communities located north and south of the border. The origin, as well as the repetition of the “black legend” of the Mexican border space, is fundamental to understand the production of a stigmatized city, as Juárez. It dates back the 1920s, with the prohibition of alcohol consumption in the United States, when the city became known as a space of excesses, addictions, and violence (Pereyra 2010, p. 11). This stigma was reinforced by violent processes which took place in Juárez during the following years, precisely with the femicides of the 1990s and the unprecedented wave of homicides from 2008 to 2010. While people used to cross north for working, studying and shopping, to cross south meant to be able to engage in activities that were not allowed in the north side (Fragoso et al. 2010, p. 68). The North-South differences, however, are not only part of the border imaginary, but it is reflected in the security conditions of

<sup>1</sup>Industry involved in the assembly of materials and parts shipped from the United States, which are returned as finished products to the original market. Apart from the macro-economic “bleeding” that this kind of industry promotes in the national economy of where it is installed, it is known by the abusive working conditions to which its workers are submitted.

<sup>2</sup>The discursive equivalence between the War on Drugs and the War on Terror is visible in the formulations of U.S. National Security Strategy of 2002. When the document refers to the Occidental Hemisphere as a possible source of terrorist threats, the War on Drugs and Insurgency in Latin America is losing autonomy to the global War on Terror (Villa 2014, p. 351).

one of the cities of the bi-national metropolitan area of Juárez-El Paso. It is interesting to note that at the same time that Ciudad Juárez was considered the world's most violent city, El Paso, the northern neighbor in Texas, was considered the safest city of the U.S. (González 2014).

The tyranny of money is only possible by the tyranny of information since the latter is responsible for making money violent and tyrannical, reducing everything to its exchange value. According to this mechanism, the equivalence between economic/industrial development and security, peace and stability, very often in the Juarenses context, is completely possible. These two kinds of tyranny have only one ideological purpose: hiding the connections between narco-related violence and MI production. Such interactions, between different kinds of violence, make possible the hegemonic production of a city that serves the demands of the global commodity production, which is not detached from a dynamic of violence but depends on it to reproduce.

## Symbolic violence: legitimizing gentrification

The ongoing policies of “urban regeneration” taking place in the city were justified by the stigmatization of Juárez as an extremely violent place. In order to become a legitimate target of the gentrifying policies, Juárez was submitted to the symbolic construction of a “not-reality”, through “emotional experiences stimulated by more or less uncontrolled words or images, such as those conveyed in tabloids and by political propaganda or rumor” (Bourdieu and Accardo 1999, p. 123).

In this process, the output of specialists in symbolic production (journalists, intellectuals, politicians, and others) was central, both stigmatizing the city and celebrating the outcomes of the mentioned urban policies. According to Wacquant (Wacquant 2007, p. 69), once “a place is publicly labeled as a ‘lawless zone’ or ‘outlaw estate’, outside the common norm, it is easy for the authorities to justify special measures, deviating from both law and custom, which can have the effect – if not the intention – of destabilizing and further marginalizing their occupants, subjecting them to the dictates of the deregulated labour market, and rendering them invisible or driving them out of a coveted space.”

The symbolic degradation of the city, by its successive stigmas, has a direct effect over the material degradation of its spaces and moral degradation of

its inhabitants, by denying their rights to accessing the city. Telling the story of the stigmas is another way of describing the process of changing the city into a “denationalized space” (Sassen 2002), i.e. the attribution of a wide range of right to transnational economic agents and the privation of rights which should be nationally assured to the local population. The latter, in turn, is considered “disposable” and “undesirable” (Sassen 2002, p. 111) and negatively associated with the territories at stake. As agents of the degradation, those local groups should make way to agents who could supposedly have the capacity to better use this territory.

At the national level, the Former President Peña Nieto presented the National Program for Crime Prevention (PRONAPRED, acronym in Spanish) in 2013, embodying the principles of the previous federal program *Todos Somos Juárez* (2010-2012) and adding the idea of “social-urban acupuncture” – small-scale interventions with the catalyst objective of relieve stress in all affected areas (International Crisis Group 2015).

At the local level, since the late 1980s, Ciudad Juárez has faced a number of attempts to recover its image, by erasing the different stigmas that have characterized the city over its history. According to the different master plans for the historical center, issued since 1988 by the municipal authorities, “rescuing” the urban image is a recurrent objective, presupposing that the territorial stigmatization of Juárez is responsible for its main problems, namely the recent drop of tourists.

In 2011, the New York former mayor Rudolph Giuliani visited Ciudad Juárez. In one of his discourses of disseminating the zero-tolerance policing his main advice to the city administrators was to tackle graffiti. Following the “broken windows theory”, the scholar discourse behind such policy, “untended behavior”, as provocative graffiti, should be considered a trigger for the “breakdown of community controls” (Wilson and Kelling 1982), not only caused by the narco-related violence entangled to the Mexican northern border.

The sequential projects of restructuring the historical center of Ciudad Juárez aim to gentrify the area, by rescuing the economic dynamic of the zone, what can only be reached after a previous process of stigmatization and destruction of the city's structures. Through the recognition of a speculative potential of these spaces, Smith describes how the return of the capital to the city center challenges the working class life, annihilating its spaces through the bourgeoisie investments (Smith 1996). It is important to highlight that this process has not been successful in the case of Juárez and many other Latin

American cities. Even though there have been many rehabilitation projects targeting the central zone, potential investors still face problems in attracting the middle class to this area. The remaining “undesirables” are still too many, reinforcing the stigma of the *centro* as highly dangerous and forbidden (Silva Santos 2017, p. 37).

The government of the United States formally supported the programs of crime prevention, sustained by the new principles of the Merida Initiative, a collection of security programs that since 2010 include the endorsement of human rights and rule of law, modernization of the border, and the construction of resilient communities (US Embassy 2015). Such great international enterprises are translated in the urban scale as an ambitious urbanistic plan that, in name of public security, aims to revitalize the center of Juárez through a binational investment project, funded by transnational capital (Wright 2013, p. 842). Counting on millions of public and private resources, investors actually search to rejuvenate the modest touristic area of the city

with a series of shops, convention centers, cinemas, and restaurants, making the center economically dynamic (Wright 2013, p. 831).

Figure 1 clearly illustrates the standardizing content of the interventions proposed by the most recent Master Plan of Urban Development for the Historical Center (PMDUCH, acronym in Spanish) of Ciudad Juárez, published in 2014. Although the plan suggests to maintain some old architectural structures of the city center, such as the Cathedral of Ciudad Juárez and the Mission of Guadalupe (located north to the designed commercial center), its core elements do not attribute a significant value to the historical content of the city center, and can be found in any shopping center of large metropolises around the world. A detail in the top of the right corner of the figure is a Starbucks logo – franchise internationally known by its products’ personality and for the high prices of its coffees – which reinforces the gentrifying character of this project.

Figure 1: Proposal of ‘rehabilitation’ of Manzana 14, one of the most dynamic zones of informal commerce at the city center



Source: Instituto Municipal de Investigación y Planeación (IMIP) 2014



What legitimizes this political project is a discourse that criminalizes narcos and delinquents targeted by the Mexican officials and its homologous from the U.S. These “undesirables” must be deterred by spatial forms that the urban regeneration policies produce, repopulating the center with a newer and fancier neighborhood. Dehumanizing the figure of the drug trafficker fuels a “neoliberal state of exception” (Eisenhammer 2014), where the eviction and even extermination of the undesirables are exceptionally admitted in the name of a new urban order.

## Political violence: who is zero-tolerance against?

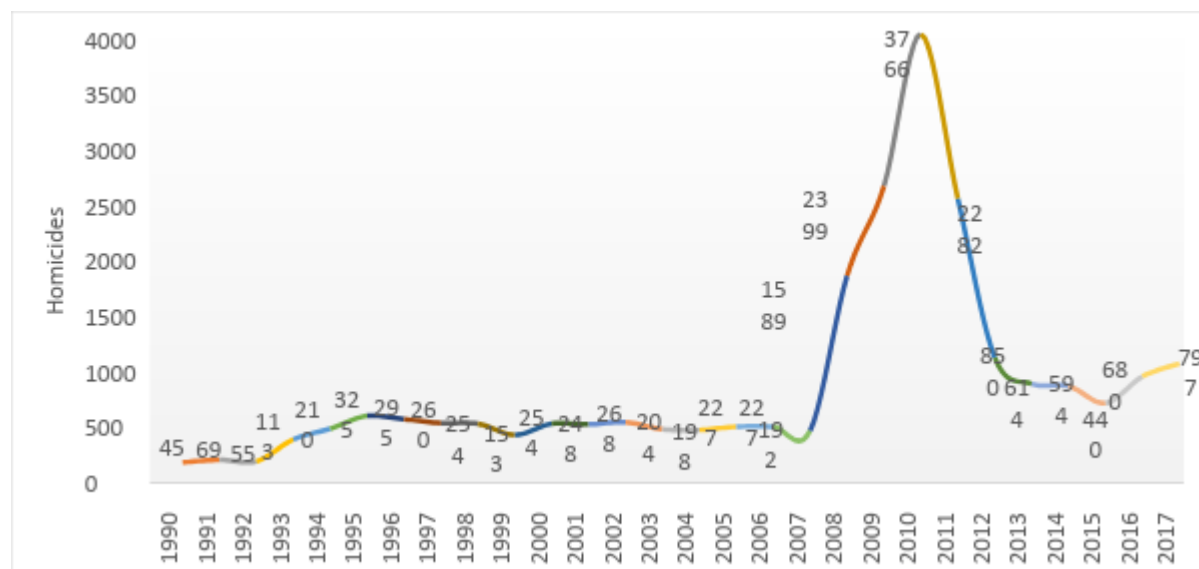
Bourgois (Bourgois 2001, p. 8) defines political violence as the “targeted physical violence and terror administered by official authorities and those opposing it, such as military repression, police torture and armed resistance”. In the specific case of Mexico, political violence is not clearly connected to a traditional political ideology. Nevertheless, the repression conducted by the police and the army in name of the War on Drugs (WoD) is a strong kind of violence that interacts with other forms to produce a violent space in the Mexican cities. The officially addressed targets are the criminals, according to the WoD’s ideology; however, the case of Juárez is a clear expression that, in practice, this ideology performs through a political strategy of criminalization of poverty. The official discourse attributes the positive shifts in the urban ordering of Juárez to the zero-tolerance or “New York-style” policing conducted by Colonel Julián Leyzaola. He applied the “iron fists” strategy, which became the main reason attributed by the dominant narrative to the overcoming of Juárez from an apparently unending cycle of violence. Leyzaola is accused of many human rights infractions, committed during his personal interventions on the patrols, characterized by a harsh approach against any potential “cholo” (Mexican designation to hoodlums). These indi-

viduals, mainly young men (particularly the poor), targets of police violence, are viewed as a public threat (Voeten 2012). The term *juenicidios* has been increasingly used to designate the majoritarian killing of poor young men in Mexico (Cruz Sierra 2014, p. 618), and protests against “la ley de Leyzaola” (the law of Leyzaola) denounced the arbitrariness and impunity of the Municipal Police under the motto *todos son delincuentes* (all are criminals) (Murillo 2012). Many pieces of evidence challenge the effectiveness of the zero-tolerance policing over the sharp falling homicides rates. The most important argument is related to how the current stabilization of Juárez was truly obtained.

Graph 1 shows the severe decline of homicides rates since 2010. Contradicting all the neoliberal principles that have guided the economy of the city since the mid-1960s, with the arriving of the maquiladora industry, the strategy of accentuation of police repression was supported by significant public resources, “including the recruitment and training of about 2,000 police officers since 2008” (Pachico 2011).

Known by his hard-line style of dealing with crime, chief Leyzaola assumed the leadership of the local police of Juárez after working at the same function in Tijuana, a border city that he is also recognized by pacifying it in times of intense corruption of police officers. His allegedly successful operational strategy in Juárez was dividing the city into individual sectors (“crime hotspots”), where patrols were systematically conducted. The patrols were all supported by COMPSTAT, a system of outcome-based personnel management used by the New York City Police Department, and others that imported the New York-style policing, to map designated areas of high criminal incidence. It attests the inapplicability of the “broken windows theory” by embodying the inverse rhetoric of a zero-tolerance discourse, which suggests treating with indiscriminate rigor every type of infraction, instead of concentrating efforts in defined areas (Wacquant 2009). At least three reasons challenge the agency of Leyzaola in homicides’ decreasing.

Graph 1: Annual homicides in Ciudad Juárez (1990-2017)



Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI) 2019

Firstly, a brief review of the city’s recent history proves that he was not the first one to apply a zero-tolerance policing approach in Juárez. In 1998, the Gov. Patricio Martínez implemented the “Zero Tolerance Program”, known by “putting the city to sleep early” (Gaspar de Alba and Guzmán 2010, p. 108). The policy was not considered as responsible for any significant change in the annual rates of homicides of even in other violence indicators.

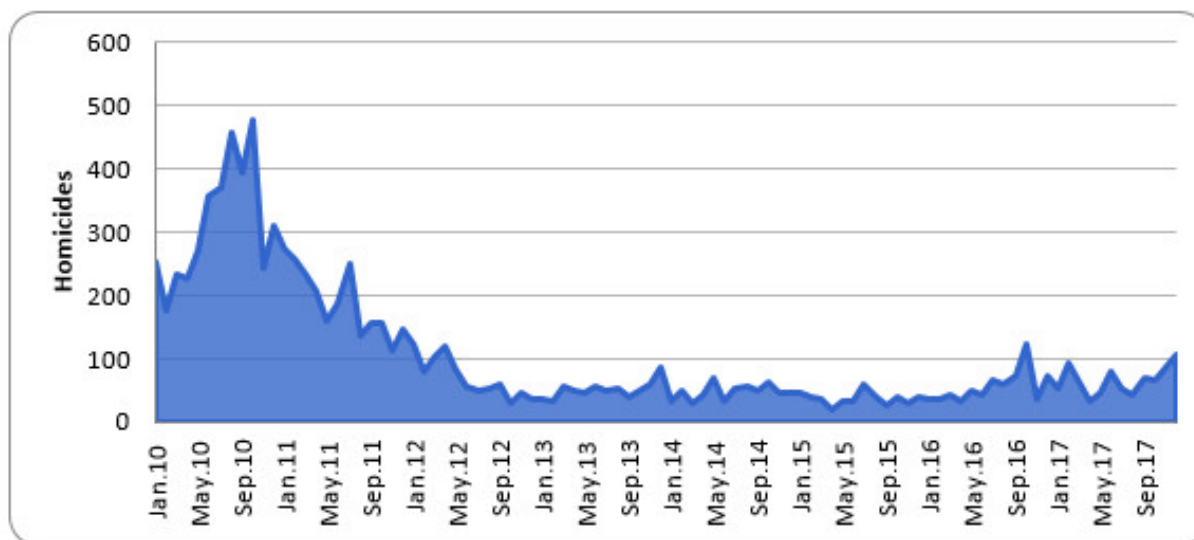
The second time zero-tolerance policing was applied in Juárez was after the remarkable “Drug War declaration” of the ex-President Felipe Calderón, in 2006, responsible for a sharp increase in criminal violence. The Operativo Conjunto Chihuahua consisted in an onslaught started on March 2008, with the deployment of 2,026 soldiers, supported by a tactical staff of fighting against the corruption of public security institutions, through the systematic application “confidence exams”. The result was an increment of the kidnappings, extortions, and executions responded by the government with an increasing number of militaries, which jumped to 7,000 in 2009 (Velázquez 2012, p. 15). Once more, the zero-tolerance approach proved itself inadequate to reduce the homicides rates.

During that military strategy, the increasing com-

plaints about human rights infractions of the officers led the government to adequate it. Firstly changing its name to Operación Coordinada Chihuahua; secondly focusing the effectiveness against the crimes of greater impact, once more attesting the inapplicability of the “broken windows theory” (Wacquant 2009, p. 262); and thirdly, announcing the withdrawal of the army, replaced by the Federal Police. Previous unsuccessful examples of a zero-tolerance approach in Juárez show why the policy just started to be celebrated by the official discourse after Leyzaola’s intervention.

A second reason that questions the effectiveness of this intervention is that it can just have happened in a statistically favorable moment. The monthly homicides data of Juárez show that the rates reached their last peak over 400 homicides per month in October 2010 (with 477 homicides registered). Since then, the numbers started to fall, and when Leyzaola assumed the coordination of local police, five months later, the monthly homicide rate fell by almost half, with 235 homicides registered. This general trend endured during the following months, as graph 2 illustrates.

Graph 2: Monthly homicides in Ciudad Juárez (Jan 2010 to Dec 2017)



Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI) 2019

Instead, “when violent crime reaches an unprecedented and extraordinary peak” (as it happened from 2008 to 2010), “chances are things will get better” (Bowling 1999). Besides that, the demographic shrink that has taken place in Juárez since the beginning of the criminality upsurge in 2007, was reinforced by the international economic crisis that directly affected the employability of the maquiladora industry, the main source of jobs in the city until recent years<sup>3</sup>. According to the Public Perception Survey on Insecurity in Ciudad Juárez of 2009, about 230,000 people migrated from the city between 2007 and 2009 (UACJ/CENAPRA 2009, p. 17). Although such forced displacement affects large segments of the population, its effects are obviously more severe on particularly vulnerable population groups (Velázquez 2012, p. 17).

The third challenging point to Leyzaola’s influence in the falling rates of homicides is the way in which the police forces allied to other important players during the “pacification” process. Juárez’s situation, especially during the harshest year of homicides (2008 to 2010), cannot be understood outside an interrelated set of forces and interests. It engages actors from cartels, official security forces, commercial businesses, and even the maquiladora industry, which is disposed to do concessions and alliances in name of the stability of an international market,

where drugs are just one of the commodities (Redmond 2013). Part of the literature on violence in Ciudad Juárez claims that there is an “unwritten pact” between local government, including the engagement of the police forces and drug cartels to promote a “narcopeace” (Felbab-Brown 2011, p. 4). The “war for Juárez” – a conflict between Sinaloa and Juárez Cartels for the drug routes of the border city – was won in 2010 by Sinaloa’s Cartel, formerly headed by Joaquim “El Chapo” Guzmán (Gagne 2015). The Sinaloa cartel not only used this victory to control drug trafficking routes but also to obtain control of law enforcement, incorporating the federal police and army into its criminal enactment (Dudley 2013). Such incorporations were possible thanks to an intense operation of Sinaloa’s Cartel against upper levels of law enforcement elites, which included lists of “executables”, extortions, and kidnappings (Rodríguez Nieto 2012).

The tactic alliances established between Sinaloa’s Cartel and the Mexican security forces express a gear shift in the “arrangements between those moving the drugs, those with guns and those in political authority” (Vulliamy 2015). This pact primarily aims to stable the drug market, locally corresponding to a reticular constellation of neighborhoods “tagged” under the rule of the “punteros” (operators of points of drug dealing, called “puntos”). In case

<sup>3</sup>The total of workers of the industrial sector in Juárez decreased significantly after the global economic crisis of 2008. In 2007, the number corresponded to 211,909, changing into 178,089 in June of 2010 (Velázquez 2012, p. 10).

of breaching pact between the criminal factions, the punteros can call the police to intervene and make the arrest, kidnap, or even murder, so that “the drugs flow and new business model remains intact” (Vulliamy 2015). The narco-trafficking performs by producing its own space, through the strict regulation of uses and accesses. The illegality of the narco-activities makes dominance over the places a vital condition to their execution. The territorial expression of the “unwritten pact” states that the zero-tolerance approach is not addressed to the proper narcos, but to the poor population directly affected by existential threats.

## Everyday violence: is the war truly over?

The repopulation of Juárez’s center denies the place to the former dwellers not only by expelling them from their houses, but also threatening their lives, with a set of “necropolitics”<sup>4</sup> that explicitly preach the end of the referred enemies as a condition for the success of the project. The intended gentrification process contradictorily challenges the civic and public spheres in name of security, and it is at the level of quotidian life that the different expressions of violence are made visible. Although the official discourse claims that nowadays the city is recovered from the brutality of narco-criminality, everyday reports of dwellers “after the war” do not affirm the same. People in restaurants still tell their war stories, about how they watched a man get murdered, how their neighbor was orphaned when his parents were murdered, how the uncle of a friend is a drug mule, about the safe house next to their home, etc. (Chaparro 2014).

Furthermore, the tragic psychological effects of daily exposure to different levels of violence are imminent. The presence of both legal and illegal armed actors and the extreme militarization of daily life as a whole describe a context of generalized fear, with particular sociabilities and territorialities (Rodríguez 2014, p. 34). Besides the marks left on the interpersonal relations, the psychological effects of this kind of violence are equally tragic. In 2014, Dr. Georgina Cárdenas, director of the Virtual Teaching and Cyberpsychology Laboratory UNAM (National

Autonomous University of Mexico), conducted therapy for people with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a typical disturb of survivors of war, in Juárez. According to her, “currently, 30 percent of the 1.4 million inhabitants of Ciudad Juárez suffer from PTSD as a direct consequence of the wave of violence” (Chaparro 2014). The normalized violence at the micro-interactional level (Bourgois 2001, p. 28) is still felt in the daily practices of the Juarenses and it is associated with structural and symbolic levels. Such normalization is operated by a general process of denying otherness, where the public space is constantly appropriated by the private, which creates a fragmented and hierarchic space, a place to exclude the “undesirables”. Analyzing the different expressions of violence produced by these policies allows the conclusion that the urban planning is not an activity that strictly produces materiality, but also a “quotidianity” marked by the violence, which is dissimulated by the official discourse.

However, reducing everyday violence to criminal and domestic delinquency constitutes an important limit to a critical reflection about the urban question. It hides the existing chains between the political, economic, and institutional forces that shape the micro-interpersonal and psychological interactions. That is why it is important to invert the object of the analysis in the studies of the so-called “violent cities”, by instead of focusing on the violence itself and its expressions, understanding it inside a violent production of space. The next and final section of this paper discusses how the different levels of violence identified in the previous sections are articulated to processes of production of urban space and reproduction of social relations, which are essentially violent.

## Conclusion

The Latin American socio-spatial formation<sup>5</sup> is historically based on unequal relations of appropriation of social wealth. The same is valid to other socio-spatial formations across the world under capitalism; however, the colonial onslaught and the continued forms of exploitation that have subjugated the region throughout the years attribute particular

<sup>4</sup>These politics can be understood as a technique of governance that claims the death of ones to justify the life of others. The involvement of the State in the reproduction of deaths is then justified with the argument of provision of security to the good citizens (Mbembe 2002, p. 12).

<sup>5</sup>The Brazilian Geographer Milton Santos (Santos 1977, p. 7) derives the idea of Socio-Spatial Formation from the Marxist concept of Socio-Economic Formation, to describe a spatial totality at a macro level (national). This concept allows a better understanding of the evolution and the current situation of a given historical and geographical reality.

contents to its urbanization process, which is influenced by two main characteristics that define the spaces of the Third World.

The first is that those are (re)organized according to distant interests. In Juárez's case, two facts reinforce the derived character of its spaces: firstly, the relevance of the transnational capital in the attempts of the gentrification of the city center; and secondly, the dependence of local markets on international consumers (mostly coming from the northern neighbor). It is interesting to notice that this local market has both a licit and illicit face, including not only the goods produced by the maquiladoras, but the significant amount of narcotics that pass through Ciudad Juárez before getting to its main international consumer, the United States. "Derived spaces" (Santos 1971, p. 246) such as Juárez are pressured by multiple influences and polarizations from different decision levels, what in the Mexican case becomes even more complex because of the contradictory connection between legal and illegal. The second one, derived from the first, is the selectiveness of the forms and effects of the modernization of such spaces. A selective spatial history makes them "selective spaces" – the punctual aspect of the modernizations produces segregation of the spaces that are not directly affected by the modernizing effects. This is particularly visible in the geographical patterns of expansion of the MI, for example – a strategy of "spatial distance" (Berndt 2013, p. 2648) that integrates places and people that have previously been linked only marginally to the industry, creating vacuums where the ordinary narco-related violence finds space to act.

Such selectiveness and inequalities pose a number of challenges to a state that "searches to assure the rules that formalize and concretize the specific class relations of a capitalist society" (Sampaio 2015, p. 64). Because of this difficulty, the role of the state in the reproduction of exchange relations is even more important in Latin American cities. In order to assure the hegemony of the valorization process and its own reproduction, the state becomes a motor of inequalities, favoring concentration and marginalization by selectively equipping and populating the territory within a new urban order.

Analyzing the contents of urban policies conducted in Juárez from 2011 highlights the important role of the state in the capitalist urbanization process, even greater in the margins of capitalism. Both the zero-tolerance policing and the gentrification policies highlight a significant agency of the state, which tries to "pacify" the essentially violent contents of the production of the space under capitalism. Although it aims to produce a new space in a city

dominated by the exacerbation of criminality, they have been doing so by generalizing violence and coercion as the basis of social relations.

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