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YOUTH, COLLECTIVE URBAN VIOLENCE AND SECURITY: KEY FINDINGS

Peace Studies Group (NEP/CES)

July 2011

NEP

Initiative For Peacebuilding
Early Warning

THIS INITIATIVE IS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

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The Peace Studies Group (NEP/CES) regards peace studies as one of the most important lines of research within the field of critical theories in International Relations. The research developed so far has included three main topics: a) a critical view on peacebuilding processes as elements of liberal global governance; b) newest wars, taking place in micro-territories (urban landscapes) and their key economic, cultural and social ingredients; c) small arms regulation, on both the demand and supply sides, and the connection between arms culture and gender violence. In 2008 NEP/CES created the Observatory on Gender and Armed Violence (OGAV) with the support of the Ford Foundation Brazil. OGAV develops studies, analyses and policy recommendations on femininities, masculinities and (in)security in armed violence contexts. For more information, see **http:\\www.ces.uc.pt/nucleos/nhumep/pages/en/presentation.php.**

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1 Masculinity refers to 'a cluster of norms, values and behavioral patterns expressing explicit and implicit expectations of how men should act and represent themselves to others'. S. Miescher and L. A. Lindsay (2003). 'Introduction: Men and masculinities in modern African history'. In S. Miescher and L. A. Lindsay (Eds.). *Men and masculinities in modern Africa*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, pp.1–29. The same applies to femininity regarding women.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of this paper is to discuss three main critical challenges which research and policymaking in the field of collective youth violence in urban contexts face today.

This paper argues that we need to shift the focus of research in this area from "problematic" youth to the study of the ways in which violence permeates daily lives and becomes normalised through specific local social and political conditions.

The paper then suggests that, in light of recent theory and empirical research, the relationship between violence and poverty should be re-evaluated. Additionally, and in order to properly address the causes of youth collective violence, this paper argues for a change of focus in the analysis of youth violent mobilisation. The suggested focus rests on the appeal of the symbolic revenues that mark the search for a valued social status and possibilities in contexts of adversity and violence. In fact, symbolic factors associated with the involvement in drugs trafficking and other violent activities and with youths' contact with firearms are key factors, namely the search for status, power and respect, and attracting recognition from their male and female peers. The adrenaline and danger which youth experience through these activities are highly connected with gender constructions.

Finally, this paper supports the progressively accepted evidence in favour of an urgent shift in how to address and prevent youth violence, claiming that repressive policies have hitherto failed to contain violence and to contribute to improving the formulation of preventive policies.

This paper is based on data collection and analysis as well as reports from several studies conducted since 2006 in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), San Salvador (El Salvador), Praia (Cape Verde) and Bissau (Guinea-Bissau).

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, the most visible and feared actors in the phenomenon of urban violence are youth gangs or youth involved in violent practices within wider and more organised illicit associations. These include drugs-trafficking factions and militia groups in Rio de Janeiro, *maras* in El Salvador, thugs in the city of Praia and the developing vigilante problem in Bissau.

However, despite being often depicted in this way, youth, especially the poor, living in contexts of marginalisation and inequality, are not only the aggressors, but also the main victims of several types of violence.[2] The countries with high rates of urban violence, frequently worsened by the persistence of violent illegal economies, also occupy the top spots in the world rankings on youth homicide. Besides this form of extreme violence, urban youth are also particularly affected by family violence, assault and sexual violence – especially young females – as well as institutional violence, namely at the hands of the police and resulting from unemployment, social exclusion and the frustration that arises from the lack of opportunities for social advancement.

World Youth Murder Rates per 100,000 (2008)

1. El Salvador: 92.3
2. Colombia: 73.4
3. Venezuela: 64.2
4. Guatemala: 55.4
5. Brazil: 51.6

Source: J. J. Waiselfisz (2008).
Mapa da Violência: os Jovens da América Latina [The map of violence: the youth in Latin America]. Ritla

Despite the bourgeoning academic and political literature on the topic of youth and violence, especially in the Latin American context, some stereotypes and myths remain, regarding both the analysis of the relations between youth and violence and the examination of the causes for youth involvement in the collective urban violence phenomenon, such as gangs. These stereotypes justify and reinforce policies oriented towards violence reduction, which are mainly repressive in nature and which have hitherto failed to contain violence and thus need to be re-evaluated.

Hence, and according to several studies conducted since 2006 in Latin America, namely in Rio de Janeiro and San Salvador, and on the African continent, especially in Praia and Bissau, this paper concentrates on three key topics for the analysis and formulation of policies in relation to collective youth violence in urban scenarios, drawing attention to the different intensities and expressions of this phenomenon.

2 A. Zaluar (2004). 'Urban violence and drug warfare in Brazil'. In K. Koonings and D. Kruijt (Eds.). *Armed actors. Organised violence and state failure in Latin America*. London/New York: Zed Books, pp.139–154.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY YOUTH, GANGS, VIGILANTES AND MILITIA GROUPS: KEY DEFINITIONS

Youth

"Youth" is a socially, politically and historically constructed concept and thus not homogeneous, "trans-historical" or "trans-cultural".[3] Within the scope of this paper, youth is considered not only as an age group, but also as a cultural and economic category, influenced by different local perceptions of youth and adulthood. This means that, in some cases, the word youth may be used for someone up to the age of 35 or 40 years old. In spite of the differences between the contexts analysed in this paper, which will not be developed here, as well as the differences between youths related to other identity categories (gender, class, race, and so forth) that will be explained throughout the text, we think it is possible to address the concept of youth in terms of the dominant statuses and expectations that are common to the young males in the case studies. In all cases, we refer to youths in underprivileged social positions, whose opportunities for changing the economic and social statuses are minimal. Although this position does not make them a homogenous group, it establishes the starting point for this analysis.

Gangs

Groups whose characteristics are fundamentally linked to territorial control (which is associated with some form of access to resources), the construction of a specific identity through symbols and mottos, enduring and perpetuating violence as a constitutive form of integration and recognition, the passage of initiation rites and the performance of constant proofs of courage, virility and loyalty.[4]

Vigilantes

Groups who organise themselves to guarantee the protection of their communities and to punish potential offenders. 'Various forms of violence associated with official and unofficial efforts to uphold the law, official brutality and torture, or violence associated with resistance to law enforcement – resisting arrest, police killings'.[5] In many countries, such as in South Africa, vigilantism is a growing phenomenon both in terms of expression and organisation, which often emerges as a result of generalised mistrust in the national police forces and judicial actors.[6] Some of these groups are "sub-contracted" by traders and interest groups, among others, and end up becoming part of the problem they wished to combat rather than the solution.

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3 D. Durham (2000). 'Youth and the social imagination in Africa: Introduction to Parts 1 and 2', *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 73, No. 3, pp.113–20.

4 A. Zaluar (1997). 'Gangues, Galeras e Quadrilhas: globalização, juventude e violência'[Gangs, Crews, and Criminal Groups: Globalisation, youth and violence]. In H. Vianna (Ed.). *Galeras Cariocas [Rio de Janeiro's crews]*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora UFRJ.
G. Kynoch (1999). 'From the Ninevites to the Hard Livings Gang: Township gangsters and urban violence in twentieth-century South Africa', *African Studies*, Vol. 58, No. 1, pp.55–85.
M. Santacruz Giralt (2005). 'La solidariedad violenta de las pandillas callejeras: el caso de El Salvador' [Violent solidarity within youth gangs. The case of El Salvador]. In N. Portillo, M. Gaborit and J. M. Cruz (Eds.). *Psicología social de la posguerra: teoría y aplicaciones desde El Salvador [Post-war social psychology: theory and practice in El Salvador]*. San Salvador: UCA.
E. Salo (2006). '*Man is ma soe*: Ganging practices in Manenberg, South Africa, and the ideologies of masculinity, gender and generational relations'. In E. G. Bay and D. Donham (Eds.). *States of violence: Politics, youth, and memory in contemporary Africa*. Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press.

5 L. Graham, D. Bruce and H. Perold (2010). *Ending the age of the marginal majority. An exploration of strategies to overcome youth exclusion, vulnerability and violence in southern Africa*. Midrand: Southern Africa Trust.

6 Ibid.; G, Kynoch (1999). Op. cit.

Militia groups

It is important to distinguish between vigilante groups and other criminal groups that are more structured and organised, such as militia groups in Rio de Janeiro. Since the early 2000s media reports and research have pointed to the emergence of organised criminal groups in Rio de Janeiro, usually constituted by or controlled by police officers, ex-police officers, firefighters and private security officers. The common features of these militia groups are the authoritarian *modus operandi*; the seeking of economic profit (namely through the control of transportation, and gas and television distribution); the circulation of a legitimising discourse for their existence (based on the expulsion of drugs trafficking) and territorial control of poor communities, especially in the west and north areas of the city of Rio de Janeiro.[7] With the emergence of the militia, some police forces cease to be simply crime mediators and establish their own militarised control over the poor areas of the city and the state, facilitating the progress of criminal activities and functioning in a complementary manner to the practice of summary executions that still characterises public security policies in Brazil and particularly in Rio de Janeiro.[8]

7 I. Cano (2008). 'Seis por meia dúzia: um estudo exploratório do fenômeno das chamadas "milícias" no Rio de Janeiro' [More of the same: an exploratory study on the phenomenon of the so-called "militia groups' in Rio de Janeiro]. In Justiça Global [Global Justice]. *Segurança, Tráfico e Milícias no Rio de Janeiro [Security, Drug Trafficking and Militia groups in Rio de Janeiro]*. Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Heinrich Böell, p.49.

8 J. C. A. Souza (2008). 'Milícias: Mudanças na Economia Política do crime no Rio de Janeiro' [Militia groups: changes in the political economy of crime in Rio de Janeiro]. In Justiça Global. Op. cit., pp.33–36.

PROBLEMATIC YOUTH OR THE NORMALISATION OF VIOLENCE?

The analysis of the topic of youth has often been associated with negative or problematic aspects as well as with their potential for violence and destabilisation in a myriad of contexts,[9] neglecting the examination of resistance to violence or the resilience[10] of youth and societies. Nevertheless, this problematic protagonism of youths does not necessarily have a concrete expression. In fact, most youths who are victims of the prolonged world economic and social crisis do not resort to violence as a means of overcoming this status, unless violence is organised towards some purpose,[11] namely in the cases of war or high-risk activities, such as drugs and arms trafficking. Even in countries or urban areas where criminality is rife, it is usually only a small fraction of society or of youth that gets involved in violent activities.[12]

Therefore, it is necessary to question two of the most frequent stereotypes about poor youths in peripheral countries, particularly those associated with male youths: the first one characterises them as a homogenous marginalised and irrational group, or, in the words of Kaplan, 'lost molecules',[13] who are easily manipulated by elites and armed groups in extreme poverty settings. According to this stereotype, a series of accumulated grievances are the basis for the manipulation of youth into joining violent groups.[14] The second stereotype portrays youth as merely passive victims of political and economic violence, unable to change their "condition".

IN NEED OF A PLURAL APPROACH TO VIOLENCE

Studying the topic of youth and violence, however, does not necessarily mean treating youth as a problematic group. The fear of stereotyping should not lead us to stop studying violence. Rather, we should contextualise the forms of social and political reproduction of violence, highlighting the "normalcy"[15] of both violent youths and non-violent youths and avoiding the logic of "positive cases" vs. "negative cases" and the individualisation of the causes of violence.

Particularly during the last decade, several studies in the area of youth anthropology have focused on the idea that youths are tactical actors and not necessarily strategic,[16] who find their ways to cope with or overcome the

9 J. Abbink (2005). 'Being young in Africa: the politics of despair and renewal'. In J. Abbink and I. van Kessesl (Eds.). *Vanguard or vandals. Youth, politics and conflict in Africa*. Leiden-Boston: Brill. p. 2; J. Seekings (2006). 'Beyond heroes and villains: The rediscovery of the ordinary in the study of childhood and adolescence in South Africa', *Social Dynamics*, Vol. 32, No. 1, pp.1–20.

10 By resilience we mean the ability of individuals, groups and societies to resist, overcome or adapt to adversities or external obstacles to their survival or modes of life.

11 P. Richards (2005). 'New war: An ethnographic approach'. In P. Richards (Ed.). *No peace, no war: Anthropology of contemporary armed conflicts*. Oxford: James Currey and Athens: Ohio University Press. pp.1–21.

12 A. Zaluar (1997). Op. cit.; G. T. Barker (2005). *Dying to be men: Youth, masculinity and social exclusion*. London: Routledge.

13 R. Kaplan (1994). 'The coming anarchy. How scarcity, crime, overpopulation, tribalism, and disease are rapidly destroying the social fabric of our planet', *The Atlantic Monthly*, February.

14 P. Collier, V. L. Elliott, H. Hegre, A. Hoeffler, M. Reynal-Querol and N. Sambanis (2003). *Breaking the conflict trap: Civil war and development policy*. Washington: Oxford University Press.

15 The tendency to analyse the problematic trajectory of youths is paralleled by the scarce academic and news production on the lives of "normal" youths. J. Seekings (2006). Op. cit.

16 Bayart and Honwana use the distinction between tactics and strategies advanced by de Certeau to characterise the actions and calculations of subordinate groups as a way to manage the circumstances that are imposed on them. The actions mobilised within the "enemy" space (tactics) stand in opposition to the strategies, which correspond to the calculations or manipulations that derive from powerful agents, capable of generating their own spaces and relations in the face of external targets and threats. See J.-F. Bayart (1981). 'Le politique par le bas en Afrique Noire: Questions de méthode' [Bottom-up politics in Subsaharan Africa. Methodological questions], *Politique Africaine*, Vol. 1, pp.53–82; A. Honwana (2000). 'Innocents et coupables. Les enfants-soldats comme acteurs tactiques' [Innocent or guilty? Child soldiers as tactical actors], *Politique Africaine*, Vol. 80, pp.58–78.

obstacles imposed by unemployment, poverty, discrimination, social fragmentation or political violence, either through the exercise of violence or not.

However, this approach, focused on the agency of youth or of other marginalised groups, has also been subject to criticism. For Chabal, the concept of agency 'is normally understood as directed action, intentional and self-reflective', and 'is the product of a long and ancient debate about the importance of the structure and of the individual'.[17] The concept has some advantages, but also risks, due to its ambiguity. The fact that it was co-opted by developmentalist and neo-liberal discourses, thereby attributing the responsibility of underdevelopment and insecurity to the individual sphere, constitutes one of these risks. Mackinnon[18] describes the dangers of the approaches that are focused on the agency and on the power of the powerless, underlining the neglect of the ways through which domination is operated and of the suffering caused by concrete violence.

VIOLENT YOUTH VS. VIOLENT SOCIETY

As well as focusing on the violence perpetrated by youth, we should also focus on the violence spread/propagated by societies and specific political and economic systems. Following the reflections put forward by the field of Peace Studies, we embrace the idea that violence, and not conflict or war, is the opposite of peace and that the latter can only be reached through the abolition of all types of violence that mutually support each other – direct, structural and cultural.[19] Along with Feminist Studies in International Relations, we believe it is fundamental to challenge the hierarchy of social groups and the naturalisation of power relations that produce and legitimate violence in several degrees and make the separation between war and peace artificial.[20]

The involvement and victimisation of youth in urban violence should not be synonyms of criminality. Indeed, urban violence concerns wider and more disseminated phenomena whose backdrops are structural violence contexts (economic and political) and the state's unwillingness to ensure the security of the more discriminated-against segments of the population. The direct expressions of this type of violence, whose main victims are the urban poor of the world, are usually identified with the violent economy of drugs trafficking and the existence of violent groups, such as gangs and vigilantes, as well as police and institutional violence, and gender violence.[21]

The normalisation of political violence and repression is extremely relevant to the examination of other violent patterns perceived as non-political.[22] Violence in formal peace periods, namely expressed by urban tensions and conflicts, is essentially perceived as criminal. In face of this phenomenon, violence is frequently labelled as social rather than political.[23] Nevertheless, the distinction between social and political violence is also artificial. Political violence is insidious and it becomes pervasive in time and in day-to-day life, thus contributing to the rooting and normalisation of what Scheper-Hughes defined as everyday violence*:* 'the implicit, legitimate, organised and routine violence of specific socio-political formations'.[24] In fact, the absence of declared armed conflict does not mean the absence of violence. Violence is a constant in war and peace, often revealing itself in continuum or spirals, in which only scale, organisation levels and actors change.[25]

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17 P. Chabal (2009). *Africa. The politics of suffering and smiling.* London and New York: Zed Books, p.7.

18 C. Mackinnon (2000). 'Points against postmodernism', *Chicago Kent Law Review*, Vol. 75, pp.701–02.

19 J. Galtung (1990). 'Cultural violence', *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 27, No. 3, Sage Publications, accessed on 17th June 2011. Available at http://www.jstor.org/stable/423472; J. M. Pureza and T. Moura (2004). 'O regresso da paz negativa?' [The return of negative peace?], *Revista de História das Idéias [The History of Ideas Journal]*, Vol. 25, pp.157–68.

20 B. Reardon (1985). *Sexism and the war system.* New York: Teachers College University Press; R. Santos, S. Roque and T. Moura (2010). 'UNSCR 1325: Is it only about war? Armed violence in non-war contexts', *Oficina do CES [CES Working Papers]*, 340. Coimbra: Centro de Estudos Sociais.

21 J. V. Tavares dos Santos (2002), 'The worldization of violence and injustice', *Current Sociology*, Vol. 50, No. 1, pp.123–34; T. Moura (2007). *Rostos invisíveis da violência armada. Um estudo de caso sobre o Rio de Janeiro [The invisible faces of armed violence. The case study of Rio de Janeiro].* Rio de Janeiro: 7 Letras.

22 W. Savenije and C. Van der Borgh (2004). 'Youth gangs, social exclusion and the transformation of violence in El Salvador'. In K. Koonings and D. Kruijt (Eds.). Op. cit., pp.155–71.

23 C. Moser and D. Rodgers (2005). 'Change, violence and insecurity in non-conflict situations', *Working Paper 245*. London: Overseas Development Institute.

24 N. Scheper-Hughes (1997). 'Specificities: Peace-time crimes', *Social Identities*, Vol. 3, No. 3, p.471.

25 N. Scheper-Hughes and P. Bourgois (2004). 'Introduction'. In N. Scheper-Hughes and P, Bourgois (Eds.). *Violence in war and peace: An anthology.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers; P. Richards (2005). Op. cit.

Everyday violence encompasses, for instance, the normalisation of torture and repression by state agents or the popular acceptance of violence in the combat against criminality, but also the violence of omission or neglect,[26] namely in terms of lack of access to health, education and food. In fact, it is not only the degree of physical brutality that people endure in African countries and elsewhere that is alarming, but also its frequent and arbitrary use. The consequence of this generalised violence is a process of dehumanisation, whose impacts are felt in the bodies, values and social order.[27]

The political formations and configurations are also important, namely state models and the ways states sustain or combat impunity and the triviality of violence. State failure or collapse in different parts of the world is concealed and produced through the induction of certain models of state and of development, and through the application of international prescriptions repeated *ad nauseam* with regard to "peacebuilding" or "state-building". The ingredients for this recipe are the economic opening of peripheral countries, the creed of private initiative, privatisation and austerity; the transfer of the functions of social protection to the formal and informal networks outside the state, the replication of the formal and apparently functional institutions of the state; a low-intensity democracy; most importantly, the creation of few and bad jobs at global level.[28] The emptying of the social functions of the state is somehow an international application of what Wacquant[29] describes in national terms as the paradox of the neoliberal's penal project. It advocates "more state" in law-enforcement areas, criminal courts and prisons in order to solve the generalised increase of objective and subjective insecurity which is, itself, caused by "less state" in the economic and social spheres in the advanced developed countries.

In Latin America, in several countries, a governmental vacuum created the possibility of the emergence of other dominant actors and resulted in the dispersion of violence, in spite of the progress of the processes of formal democratisation in recent decades.[30]

Despite its long record of social, institutional and private violence, Brazil has not endured periods of endemic political violence similar to other countries in the region. According to Zaluar,[31] private wars, between rival families, especially in the rural areas of the northeast of Brazil, cross-cut all types of violence experienced in the country up to the 20th century. This type of violence, which favoured the more powerful and wealthier people (*colonels*), was characterised by impunity and was condoned by the security forces, which only punished the poor, black and indigenous populations.

The military regime that ruled Brazil from 1964 to 1985 was responsible for collective and institutional acts of violence, although incomparable (in terms of numbers of deaths and disappearances) to other countries in Latin America, such as Argentina. However, torture, abuse, illegal imprisonment and censorship practised during the dictatorship period facilitated the emergence of organised crime. Many of those who participated in these practices became members of extortion and extermination groups, illegal gambling societies (*jogo do bicho*) and drugs-trafficking factions. Additionally, many military men, responsible for the violence of the dictatorship, were protected by the National Security Act (abolished in 1988) and by the 1979 Amnesty that hindered the holding of trials and determination of sanctions.[32] In this context, where justice reforms are practically nonexistent and police practices remain, to a large extent, unaltered, especially those aimed at the poor segments of the population, it can be claimed that the effects of the military regime are still felt in the functioning of Brazilian institutions now.[33]

Thus, the end of the dictatorship period did not translate into a more peaceful society. The worsening of direct urban violence results from the permanence of structural and cultural violence which are firmly rooted in the

26 P. Chabal (2009). Op. cit., p.153.
27 Ibid., pp.153–54.
28 D. Sogge (2010). *Global interventionism, security and development: A critical approach*, paper presented at the Summer School on Global Interventionism, Faculty of Economics, University of Coimbra, 9th July; J. M. Pureza, S. Roque, T. Cravo and M. Simões (2007). 'Do states fail or are they pushed? Lessons learned from three former Portuguese colonies', *Oficina do CES*, 273 [*CES Working Papers*]. Coimbra: Centro de Estudos Sociais.
29 L. Wacquant (2001). *As prisões da Miséria [Prisons of poverty].* Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Jorge Zarar.
30 D. Kruijtand K. Koonings (1999). 'Introduction: Violence and fear in Latin America'. In D. Kruijt and K. Koonings (Eds.), *Fractured cities. Social exclusion, urban violence and contested spaces in Latin America*. London: Zed Books, pp.138–41.
31 A. Zaluar (2004). Op. cit.
32 Ibid., p.141.
33 Ibid.

country. The slow transition to democracy resulted in the fragility of the state and its inability to control violence, even though security remains in the hands of the military police, inherited from the dictatorship period.

A combination of factors – such as rapid urban growth and the absence of sufficient housing structures (which has led to the increase of neighbourhoods and poor communities on the outskirts of big cities since the 1960s); high inequality in wealth distribution; slow economic growth; great dependency from international loans; low living standards; growing firearms availability (Brazil is the second-largest small-arms exporter in the American continent and the fifth in the world[34]); the emergence of drugs-trafficking factions and other armed groups, particularly in Rio de Janeiro; the inability or the omission of the state; the memory, culture and practice of violence maintained and perpetuated by the police and private security groups are at the root of the explosion of direct urban violence that erupted at the end of the 1980s and continues today in Rio de Janeiro.

In the post-war period in El Salvador, the main tenet of reconstruction policies neglected two central dimensions of transformation which were key to mitigate violence: the reduction of inequalities and justice. According to Pearce,[35] the *peace conditionality*, introduced in El Salvador by international institutions, had two main flaws. Firstly, the inflexibility of the institutions in terms of fiscal discipline hindered the kick-start of the process of reconstruction, delaying significantly the execution of programmes and thus affecting its success and hampering the redistribution of income. Secondly, there was no pressure to mobilise the government towards a fairer distribution of internal resources or policies to ensure the permanence of external investment in the country. The economic policies during the post-war period contributed to the continuity of positive growth, the decreasing of human development – despite the improvements noted at the end of the '90s – as well as the maintenance of some of the highest inequality rates in Latin America, namely between urban and rural populations.[36] Similar to other countries, the structural adjustment programmes, initiated in 1991, led the country to limit public services, impose conditions on employment sources,[37] and proceed to privatisation and market opening, including in the field of agriculture through the progressive handover of lands to known companies such as *maquillas* (duty-free and tariff-free zones). Despite their contribution to economic growth and inflation reduction, these programmes were not accompanied by inclusive economic development policies, which led, to a great extent, to the impoverishment and emigration of a large part of Salvadoran society. In addition, despite improvements in poverty reduction and access to health and education, employment opportunities remain scarce today. Accordingly, while the mobilisation conditions for the "traditional war" vanished – for example, land distribution and political conflicts – conditions for violence dispersion emerged, marked by progressive privatisation, de-legitimisation and criminalisation of gangs and organised crime.

The violence of war and the permanence of structural violence which often translated into direct violence had severe impacts on the organisation and cohesion of the social fabric. The postponement of the struggle against impunity has also impacted negatively on the social fabric. The psychosocial impact of war, its consequences on society's ability to organise and mobilise, the formulation of historic memory, social reconciliation and the long-term effects of conflict and violence were neglected altogether. The quick and painless silencing of the past overlooks the fact that 'a catastrophe implies a negative event […] originating a large number of victims and of social disorganisation. This destruction has other consequences that last in time'.[38] The blanket amnesty towards war crimes and the silencing of historical memory, as well as merely technical security reforms, perpetuated a culture of impunity, hindering the respect for human rights and the reparation of the victims.

In this context, the permanence of violence in society resulted in the decreasing of society's resilience to violence. Thus, violence penetrated the social relations already destabilised by the context of crisis and war. The disintegration of social networks has further reinforced the existing societal fragmentation and political and socio-economic polarisation. Communities' capacity to deal with conflict has thus been limited and violence has become part of everyday neighbourhood interaction.[39]

34 Small Arms Survey (2007). *Guns and the city*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

35 J. Pearce (1998). 'From civil war to civil society: Has the end of the Cold War brought peace to Central America?', *International Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 3, p.601.

36 R. Paris (2004). *At war's end, building peace after civil conflict*. New York: Cambridge University Press, p.125.

37 M. Hume (2004). *Armed violence and poverty in El Salvador*. CISS, University of Bradford, p.4.

38 C. Beristain (1999). *Reconstruir el tejido social. Un enfoque crítico de la ayuda humanitaria [Rebuilding the social fabric. A Critical approach to humanitarian aid]* Barcelona: Icaria, p. 21.

39 M. Hume (2004). Op. cit., p.5.

The normalisation of violence in unbalanced social networks resulted in its routine use in conflict, anxiety and despair management. With respect to the relation between society and violence, the role of the state was characterised by an unwillingness to address structural aspects of violence and by a repressive stance regarding direct violence. These repressive policies resulted in a high societal tolerance towards violence in El Salvador, similar to the existing tolerance regarding authoritarianism and repression.[40]

In post-Cold War Africa, neo-patrimonial extraverted states[41] faced growing marginalisation and decreasing external aid. A profound awareness of the shortcomings of development and the inability of a large number of post-colonial states to formulate successful development models have caused great dissatisfaction, especially for those excluded from neo-patrimonial networks that enable access to resources, as is the case for a vast majority of African youngsters. However, the impact of state collapse on youth is not only related to economic distribution and employment. It also has repercussions for access to education or health as well as for justice and security within the community. In fact, youngsters are often those who take charge of neighbourhood security, namely through the organisation of vigilante groups.

In Guinea-Bissau, the everyday existence of structural, political and institutional violence does not always lead to collective or youth violence with the same forms or intensities. The constant presence of war in the country since the beginning of the 20th century – the Portuguese conquest wars, the independence wars and the 1998–99 political conflict, all permeated by state coups and multiple political assassinations – and the systematic power and resources struggles over the occupation of the state have contributed to the crystallisation of a certain routine brutality[42] imposed by the security forces (the police and especially the military) on the Bissau population. These routine violent acts are only possible due to generalised impunity, which has its roots in the ramifications of political systems, and reveals itself in institutional acts of violence and in the paralysis of the judicial system. Impunity has led to one of the most worrying traits of the long post-war period in Guinea-Bissau: mistrust in the judicial system and in the state institutions, and the perception of corruption as endemic. In fact, the Guineans do not believe in formal justice and find it useful to pay "extras" to both the police and justice servants. There is a low level of trust in state institutions; for instance, in rural areas, trust is transferred to so-called traditional institutions, whereas in urban areas trust is allocated to NGOs.[43]

In spite of this, in Guinea-Bissau, the violent mobilisation of youth has been restricted to war periods in which they searched for possibilities for social existence[44] or to self-organisation for the protection of their neighbourhoods. Youth gangs are practically nonexistent. The proximity between rural and urban spaces and the permanence of broad family ties contribute to the effectiveness of social control over youth in terms of collective youth violence.

> Rivalries exist, but there is no grudge … because here we are mostly families […] I'm your friend, but for now I'm treating you as a brother. Your family is my family; my family is your family, so let's leave it like that. This way is difficult to hold that grudge.
>
> (INTERVIEW WITH A YOUNG MAN, BISSAU, 2009)

This does not mean that gangs or groups associated with crime, with characteristics very different to youth gangs, do not exist. This type of criminal activity – drugs, arms trafficking and armed robbery – is dominated by people of greater influence, in some cases with the participation of police officers and the military, who are extremely effective in eliminating competition.[45]

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40 J. M. Cruz (2005). 'El autoritarismo en la posguerra: un estudio de las actitudes de los salvadoreños' [Authoritarianism in the post-war period: a study of the atitudes of El Salvadoran people]. In N. Portillo, M. Gaborit and J. M. Cruz (Eds.). *Psicología social de la posguerra: Teoría y aplicaciones desde El Salvador* [*Post-war social psychology: Theory and practice in El Salvador*]. San Salvador: UCA Editores.

41 P. Richards (1996). *Fighting for the rain forest: War, youth and resources in Sierra Leone.* Portsmouth: Heinemann.

42 P. Chabal (2009). Op. cit.

43 World Bank (2006). *Guinea-Bissau: Integrated poverty and social assessment. Transition from post conflict to long-term development: Policy considerations for reducing poverty*, vol. I, Main Report, p.13.

44 H. Vigh (2006). *Navigating terrains of war: Youth and soldiering in Guinea-Bissau*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books.

45 One of the reasons mentioned in some interviews for the short duration of the groups known as gangs or bands is precisely the fact of being rapidly discovered and eliminated. This is due not necessarily to police effectiveness in fighting crime but to police effectiveness in eliminating competition.

Youth violence in Bissau is considerably diffuse and it does not encompass territorial control. But the prevalence of physical brutality with impunity has contributed to the reproduction of violent behaviours and to the legitimisation of their use in civilian contexts. The wide popular acceptance of extrajudicial actions is demonstrated by the popularity and admiration that the agents of the Rapid Intervention Police, known as the "Angolans"[46], enjoy in Bissau. Additionally, vigilante groups[47] in the neighbourhoods of Bissau, which occupy dozens of youths, are sustained by globalised versions of the anti-crime struggle in several parts of the world, often with the support of national and international organisations,[48] and do not always employ non-violent methods.

> Sometimes, some youngsters are there [a place called Caracol] waiting for someone to come and mug them and steal everything they have. We believe that this is not good. We feel we must address those responsible [the police], but if we go there they will not provide us with support for they don't perceive us a large organisation. But lately an association was created which caught, tied and hit them and it [criminality] diminished … But soon after it stopped working, because they caught some and left others, who they knew. Some thought it was not worthwhile doing, because they were doing it for the neighbourhood and others were carried away by acquaintance [of those caught] and ended up abandoning it […] If you assault someone or stab them, we are the ones who will catch you, we'll respond accordingly. If we can solve your problem here, we'll solve it instantly; if not, we'll lead you directly to the police. They'll assault you too and will leave you there.
>
> (INTERVIEW A MEMBER OF A VIGILANTE GROUP, BISSAU, 2009)

Violence is a constant in Cape Verdean society, both in structural and symbolic terms (ranging from the slavery-based system introduced by colonialism to more recent expressions of social discrimination and sexism) and direct terms (sexual and family violence). In other words, the country of *morabeza*[49] is also the country where direct and symbolic violence have historically been legitimised.

The dominant political, analytical and social approach to violence points out to some sort of ranking of violence according to its visibility and seriousness, in which acts of violence committed by youth groups labelled as thugs, for instance, are targets of greater concern than other violent manifestations, namely those which take place in the family sphere. It is important, however, to frame youths in their wider social context. Often, youths that join thug groups are direct victims of family violence and/or structural and widespread violence. Once acquainted with several types of violence in the course of their socialisation, violence then becomes a more or less obvious resource for youth.

A plural debate on youth violence needs to consider the prevalence and the normalisation of violence in Cape Verde in order to demystify its causes and responses. In investigating the causes for the emergence of thugs in Cape Verde, one often finds that young deportees, mainly from the USA, who in recent years have increasingly arrived in Cape Verde, have been the pioneers of urban violence. This identification, frequently exaggerated, stereotyped and criminalising, does not, however, question the global regulatory mechanism from which these fluxes originate.

46 PIR is the Rapid Intervention Police. They are often called Angolans because a great many of them were trained in Angola.
47 Youth groups that are dedicated to daily policing in neighbourhoods in informal and semi-informal ways whenever legitimated by the police.
48 See, for example, the national version of the United States Youth Crime Watch at http://www.ycwa.org/world/gbissau/index.html
49 It is a Creole expression for kindness, sympathy and loveliness, perceived as one of the main traits of the Cape Verdean identity.

INEQUALITIES, CONSUMPTION EXPECTATIONS AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

The causes that lead young people to mobilise/join violent groups are widely analysed in sociological and anthropological studies in both the field of urban violence and war. There is even a very significant resemblance between the causes for the violent mobilisation of youth in contexts of war and urban violence: unemployment, the search for security and/or power, the belief in the cause, vengeance and the sense of injustice are the most quoted causes in both scenarios.[50]

INEQUALITIES, (IM)POSSIBILITIES AND THE SEARCH FOR A VALUED SOCIAL STATUS

As far as structural causes are concerned, if the chronic and persistent lack of "development" does not necessarily lead to widespread urban violence, a step back in the progress achieved and the creation of new inequalities can do so. In this sense, contexts presenting a deterioration of living standards as well as greater social inequality and exclusion, even amid settings of apparent economic progress (Praia, Rio, San Salvador), are possibly more favourable to the proliferation of violent forms of behaviour than contexts of persistent widespread poverty (Bissau).

It is, then, important to underline that it is not (under)development or poverty that promotes youth collective violence. What can trigger violent reactions (or not) is the distribution of gains and losses of development and of economic crises as well as the notion of disempowerment. To a certain extent, the nonexistence of youth collective violence phenomena is related to the extreme degree of normalisation and acceptance of structural and daily violence, which often presents itself as a fatal acceptance of destiny.

> I'm resigned to my poverty … there are people who feel marginalised, but I don't.
>
> (INTERVIEW WITH A YOUNG MAN, BISSAU, 2009)

More than an approach that perceives poverty as the main cause of violence, one must consider that, since poverty has always been a pervasive characteristic of societies with low violence rates, such as in Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau, it is more useful to focus on the deepening of social inequalities to find the causes of violence growth. In Cape Verde, while the supply of material and symbolic products has progressively increased due to the economic development experienced in recent decades, these products are also limited to a small portion of the population. When questioned about the causes that fuelled the existence of youth violent groups, only 0.6 percent of young people in Praia cited poverty. They considered the use of illegal drugs (17.2 percent), bad company (14.1 percent), unemployment (12.3 percent) and alcoholism (12.3 percent) to be more direct causes of these violent groups. The existence of upper-class thugs, young students, whose profile does not coincide with the image of the "young excluded delinquent", who steals for survival, imposes a deconstruction of the relation between poverty and violence.

Regarding young people's motivations to integrate into violent groups and activities, several studies have shown that the 'financial question or the monetary appeal that offers the criminal option is not the most decisive cause'.[51]

50 World Bank (2011). *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, security, and development.* Washington DC: The World Bank, p. 9.

51 S. Ramos (2009). 'Meninos do Rio: jovens, violência armada e polícia nas favelas cariocas' ['Rio's boys: youth, armed violence and police in Rio de Janeiro's slums'], *Boletim Segurança e Cidadania 13 [Bulletin Security and Citizenship]*, December. Rio de Janeiro: CESeC.

This is particularly true in Brazil, and specifically in the case of Rio de Janeiro, where the revenues from drugs sales have been decreasing since the end of the 1990s.[52] In San Salvador, only a few gang members have joined gangs as a way of acquiring financial resources. The most frequently cited reasons are *el vacil*[53], family problems or lack of understanding.[54]

> I got involved with the gang [*pandilla*] because sometimes when you feel the thrill you end up doing wrong things. You want to know who is bigger than the other, who is the most important, who is the real "man". This takes us to extreme situations, like being here in jail.
>
> (INTERVIEW WITH YOUNG MAN, GANG MEMBER, EL SALVADOR, 2009)

> I started to hang out with them, and they always told us how good the hanging out and the fun in the gang was. So you think, 'OK, this is good,' and this is how I got more and more involved. Then they gave me the OK [acceptance in the group after initiation] and then, with time, I started to understand many things. I started to understand the situation I had put myself into. In the gang you have to do bad things, even things that you don't want to do. For instance, if someone is going to kill me, I have to defend myself and kill him. And this is something I didn't want to do.
>
> (INTERVIEW WITH YOUNG MAN, GANG MEMBER, EL SALVADOR, 2009)

Hence, more than the appeal of financial gain, one should look at the appeal of symbolic gains: the search for a valued social status and possibilities in contexts of adversity.[55] Some authors claim that violence erupts as a result of the mismatch between expectations and possibilities.[56] However, this mismatch does not necessarily push people to adopt violent behaviours. In the case of Bissau, several accounts confirm this fact. This is not only connected with individual agency and choices that mediate between structural and direct violence. It is also connected with society's ability to control violence and its cadets[57,58]

In spite of the fact that violence does not automatically result from this disconnection between expectations and possibilities, this idea remains of utmost importance when analysed along with other factors. One must pay attention to the ways youths react or position themselves when faced with the emergence of global youth cultures and the *mission civilizatrice* that, in the name of development, 'has been promising progress, consumption and a bright future to them, while simultaneously this bright future is severely compromised by the growing inequalities caused by neoliberal capitalism'.[59]

> Here a guy has no education, he's going to be a thief, or a drug dealer, or what else is he going to do? Work on a building site; carry crates … then what happens? The example that he sees is someone who earns 300/400 *reais*,[60] and it's a consumer culture. It demands other values. And only the drug trade can give it, right? There are kids here who can't write their name but they steal a mobile phone every day and sell it for 200/300 *reais*. How much is that at the end of the month? A lot of money! Money that I've no hope of getting with a secondary school education.
>
> (INTERVIEW WITH A YOUNG MAN, RIO DE JANEIRO, 2009)

> In the cities of any country, you don't see a young man doing that kind of hard work. They have fancy jobs, office jobs. That's what we want. We don't want to push a wheelbarrow, we don't want to work in the construction industry, no. We want good jobs. Office jobs, writing jobs. I'm poor but I don't want a job that

52 Ibid.

53 Hanging out, having fun.

54 M. Santacruz Giralt and A. Concha-Eastman (2001). *Barrio adentro: La solidaridad violenta de las pandillas [Inside the neighbourhood: violent solidarity withing gangs].* San Salvador: IUDOP and OPS, p.60.

55 R. Richards (1996). Op. cit.; H. Vigh (2006). Op. cit

56 R. Briceño-León and V. Zubillaga (2002). 'Violence and globalization in Latin America', *Current Sociology*, Vol. 50, No. 1, pp.19–37.

57 Term coined by Claude Meillassoux. For more information see Meillassoux, Claude (1960). 'Essai d'interprétation du phénomène économique dans les sociétés traditionnelles d'auto-subsistance [An attempt to interpret economic phenomena in traditional socities of self-sufficiency],' *Cahiers d'Etudes africaines [Journal of African Studies]*, I, 4, pp. 38-67.

58 U. Schiefer (2009). 'Como lidam as sociedades agrárias africanas com o potencial de violência dos seus jovens? Algumas considerações' [How do African agrarian societies deal with the violent potential of their youth?], *Boletim P@x* [P@x Online Newsletter] no. 13, Peace Studies Group, December.

59 J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff (2000). 'Rétléxions sur la jeunese. Du passé à la postcolonie' [Reflections on youth. From the past to the postcolony], *Politique Africaine [African Politics]*, Vol. 89, pp.94–97.

60 The Brazilian national currency. At the time of writing the report, 100 *reais* are around 64 US dollars.

> is going to make me ill. I can't work in a construction site because if get sick I won't have enough money to cure myself. Our salary only pays for our food, nothing more. So, if I get sick I might die. So, I prefer to do nothing. Yes, I'm always sitting here but I always have money. I do business. … But it's a secret. It's a man's job. It's a secret job.
>
> (INTERVIEW WITH A YOUNG MAN, BISSAU, 2009)

CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITIES AND FEMININITIES

In some contexts, mostly those marked by economic crisis, we witness the decreasing of possibilities for young men to assume socially-valued masculinity roles and models, such as being the provider of a family[61] or having access to a prestigious job.[62]

> They just want to imitate the Americans; everyone wants an easy life … In Cape Verde, there are no jobs, so everyone wants to get money fast. And so they end up by damaging the whole society.
>
> (INTERVIEW WITH A YOUNG MAN, PRAIA, 2009)

For instance, in Africa, the dominant and most persistent ideal of masculinity may continue to be the figure of the "big man", whose power derives essentially from age but also from the prestige and authority that are associated with age and are attributed to him by the extent of his family, and the number of dependants and subordinates.[63] But the multiplicity of models and aspirations associated with masculinity is a reality that has progressively been nourished by expectations connected with attributes such as education, the "modern" image of individuals and families, fast access to resources, individual accumulation or also more egalitarian versions of the relation between sexes.[64] These are the expectations towards which young men show disappointment, rather than their inability to achieve the status of "big men".

The ability demonstrated by young women to adapt themselves in contexts of pervasive and long-lasting crises by getting access to scarce resources, namely through transactional sex with older men, sometimes makes young men present themselves as victims of their female peers (even though some of them also profit from these resources).

> Most girls like men who have money. They are opportunistic. Ninety percent of women here just like the men with money. […] Some of them even tell their boyfriends, 'Look, you don't have anything to give to me and he wants to go out with me, and he has everything. He is a business man, so I'm going to go out with him, and you must accept it. When he gives money, I'll give you some.' Some people would just accept this, but I can't. I'm proud, I can't live like this.
>
> (INTERVIEW WITH A YOUNG MAN, BISSAU, 2009)

Simultaneously, faced with this demoralising process, boys can also assume violent attitudes towards the opposite sex, since violence is not so much a way of exercising power, but a way to regain power when one feels disempowered.[65]

The existence and functioning of youth gangs has been widely analysed as expressions and instigation factors for the adoption of violent masculinities in order to overcome or contradict collective experiences of subordination and discrimination (racial, ethnic, economic, etc.) in a wider social context.[66] Symbolic factors associated with the involvement in drugs trafficking and other violent activities and with contact to firearms are

61 S. Aboim (2008). 'Masculinidades na encruzilhada: hegemonia, dominação e hibridismo em Maputo' [Masculinities at a crossroads: hegemony, domination and hybridism in Maputo], *Análise Social [Social Analysis]*, Vol. 43, No. 2, p.283.

62 K. Ratele (2008). 'Analysing males in Africa: Certain useful elements in considering ruling masculinities', *African and Asian Studies*, Vol. 7, pp.515–36.

63 S. Miescher and L. A. Lindsay (2003). Op. cit., p.3; K. Ratele (2008). Op. cit., p.225.

64 S. Miescher and L. A. Lindsay (2003). Op. cit.; G. Barker and C. Ricardo (2005). 'Young men and the construction of masculinity in Sub-Saharan Africa: Implications for HIV/AIDS, conflict, and violence', *World Bank Social Development Papers* 25.

65 M. Kimmel (2005). *Masculinity and gun violence: The personal meets the political*, communication presented at the seminar 'Men, women and gun violence: Options for action', UN Second Biennial Meeting of States, New York, 14th July; G. T. Barker (2005). Op. cit.

66 G. Kynoch (1999). Op. cit.; C. Glaser (2000). *Bo-Tsotsi: The youth gangs of Soweto, 1935–1976.* Portsmouth NH: Heinemann; Oxford: James Currey and Cape Town: David.

thus decisive, namely the search for status, power and respect, and attracting recognition from their male and female peers. The adrenaline and danger which youth experience through these activities are highly connected with gender constructions and expectations.[67] Additionally, women and girls also intervene in support of armed and violent masculinity, either by acquiring a gun and/or participating directly in armed conflicts (albeit in far lesser numbers than men), encouraging men and boys to participate or by subtly endorsing the stereotypes that associate men and boys with violence and protection, namely through the glorification of firearms and seeking access to them as a way of obtaining goods and status.[68]

> Some boys become attractive to girls because they have money and the girls are influenced by money. In Guinea [Bissau], there are three factors in order to be admired: luxury [label clothes], money and the factor of having many girls. Money is respect and fame: who creates it is the government and the elders who chase girls, give them things … After, when they leave the government, that ends.
>
> (INTERVIEW WITH A GROUP OF YOUNGSTERS, BUBA, GUINEA BISSAU, 2010)

> There were many girls in our group. It is actually because of girls that we decided to go along with these things. They dig this stuff and lead us to play along.
>
> (INTERVIEW WITH A YOUNG MAN, PRAIA, 2009)

> I think that's what it is, you know, it's all ... it's being drunk on power, on success ... girls think that a guy who carries a gun he can give them... a good position in society ... so that's what they want ... they go after them in the slums ... even rich girls, middle class, upper middle class, they go after that in the slums, that position with the guy, who carries a gun, that power he's going to give her.
>
> (INTERVIEW WITH A YOUNG FEMALE PRISONER, RIO DE JANEIRO, 2009)

Men constitute the main victims of urban violence. In Brazil, for each 24 men killed with guns (between 15 and 29 years old), a women dies as a result of armed violence.[69] The face of this violence is not only male, but also predominantly young. When it comes to gun-related homicides, the probability of a male youth dying as a result of firearms is three times higher than all other weapons combined.[70] Men are 12 times more likely to become homicide victims than women. Also, the homicide risk for black young men is 2.6 times higher than for white young men.[71]

On the other hand, men and boys constitute the main agents of this type of violence. This is justified, to a large extent, by the ethos of masculinity[72] and the symbolism of guns associated with it, which is rooted in the culture of violence that permeates the Latin America region. Men's near monopoly of gun ownership and use is, in fact, an expression of socialisation into a certain type of masculinity, which is violent and characteristic of local and national cultures where male gun use constitutes the norm. In wartime as well as in peaceful scenarios, guns are often seen as a rite of passage from childhood to adult life for boys, who are frequently socialised into the familiarity and fascination with guns.[73]

However, while the hypervisibility (media-wise) of armed violence in the outskirts of the cities in Rio de Janeiro and the rest of Brazil seems to suggest that the majority of the youths of poor communities are violent, potentially violent or mostly involved in armed groups, only a small fraction of youth in these contexts (a little over 1 percent) take on activities associated with drugs trafficking or assume violent behaviours.[74]

For many young men from poor communities in Rio de Janeiro, who do not fulfil valued roles in the eyes of the society, violence constitutes a powerful means to achieve and maintain a status in the face of other male and

67 T. Moura (2007). Op. cit.
68 Ibid.
69 Amnesty International (2003). 'Women in Brazil take a stand against guns', accessed 20th June 2011. Available at http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/NWS21/001/2003/en]
70 J. J. Waiselfisz (2010). *Mapa da Violência: Anatomia dos Homicídios no Brasil [The Map of Violence: the Anatomy of Homicide in Brazil].* São Paulo: Instituto Sangari.
71 Ibid., p.117.
72 V. Fisas (1998). *Cultura de paz y gestión de conflictos [Peace Culture and conflict management].* Barcelona/Paris: Icaria Editorial, UNESCO.
73 R. W. Connell (1995). 'The social organization of masculinity'. In *Masculinities.* Berkeley: University of California Press.
74 G. T. Barker (2005). Op. cit.

female elements. This adherence to a violent version of masculinity presupposes the use of gun violence to achieve certain goals, the disposition to kill, the adoption of sexist attitudes towards women (including resorting to violence), and an exaggerated sense of male honour.[75] To be(come) a *bandido*[76] in Rio de Janeiro equals becoming the representative of the most visible and scariest version of what it means to be man. It means to become a representative, not the creator, of this violent version of masculinity. The armed drug factions as well as the militia groups in Rio de Janeiro re-create and exaggerate traditional male identities in a wider social context that promotes violent, sexist and misogynist models of masculinity. In fact, what changes are the means and methods used to attain and project a model of masculinity perceived as hegemonic.

Other youths have to project the identity of good students, be part of a religious group, maintain solid family ties and participate in artistic and cultural projects that allow them a social status and the ability for self-reflection. Globally, the exceptions are the ones which offer an entry point for the transformation of rigid and violent gender orders.[77] Whenever heard and included in social programmes and public policies, the voices of peace and resistance, often rendered invisible as a result of the hypervisibility of hegemonic masculinities, have the potential to overcome the rigid, homophobic and violent versions of masculinity. Nevertheless, these alternative masculinities are frequently interrupted prematurely by the spiral of armed violence that particularly affects young males in poor communities.

75 Ibid.
76 A thug, someone involved in drugs-trafficking factions, militia or other types of criminal organisation.
77 G. T. Barker (2005). Op. cit.

POLICIES TO COMBAT VIOLENCE SHOULD BE RE-EVALUATED FROM AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Youth violence is frequently considered an internal matter of the state, of a social and economic or criminal nature, but not an international or political issue. This perspective echoes the vision which dismisses processes of global marginalisation and securitisation as a form of violence in itself, and that can produce more violence either in spiral or in continuum.[78]

The analysis of youth violence centred on a problematic image of youth ended up reinforcing the securitisation[79] policies and practices towards poor youths both in periphery countries and central societies. Different problem-solving models aimed at addressing these violence issues in the peripheries have emerged. Usually these models are based on a certain indifference regarding the need to transform cultural, social and economic structures of inequality and marginalisation at the national or international levels. Instead, these models prioritise the securitarian dimension of the state and international institutions. Their goal is to perpetuate the control and dominance of marginalised populations by the wealthier classes.[80]

Therefore, international policies are relevant and they do affect local contexts. Just like the drug wars, these policies have been characterised by a huge repressive component towards youth as well as a lack of control concerning issues such as the arms trade. These types of policies tend to securitise poor youths from periphery countries or 'the young man from a marginal neighbourhood',[81] by depoliticising violence and aiming at controlling threats associated with youth. According to these policies, youths are only visible as specific target groups (and not as mirroring society itself and the discriminatory state policies aimed at them) or as threats (namely potential migrants, criminals, drugs consumers or sellers, prostitutes and HIV/AIDS "carriers"). The micro-social forms of violence that are perpetrated by and against youth are, therefore, neglected. The structural conditions that determine the marginalisation of youth in terms of access to jobs and ability to voice political demands are also dismissed.

In El Salvador, the logic of political polarisation inherited by the war, the inter-generational conflicts and the political and media manipulation of urban violence phenomena have led to a progressive dehumanisation of youth gangs[82] and to increasingly greater difficulties in solving the problem of violence. In 2003, similarly to other Central America countries, the Antimaras law was approved. This law was aimed at criminalising *maras* membership, namely, the simple fact of being a *pandillero* became a motive for imprisonment. This law has also aggravated the sanctions for individuals belonging to *maras* and decreased the criminal age – anyone over 12

78 N. Scheper-Hughes and P. Bourgois (2004). Op. cit.

79 We understand securitisation as a complex process through which a specific theme is defined as (becomes) a security matter. As a result, it requires emergency-type policies in order to address the issue. O. Wæver (1993). 'Securitization and desecuritization', *Arbejdspapir* 5 *[Working Paper 5]*. Copenhagen: Copenhagen Peace Research Institute; B. Buzan, O. Waever and J. de Wilde (1998). *Security: A new framework for analysis*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

80 M. Duffield (2001). *Global governance and the new wars: The merging of development and security*. London and New York: Zed Books; M. Duffield and N. Waddell (2006). 'Securing humans in a dangerous world', *International Politics*, Vol. 43, No. 1, pp.1–23; P. Rogers (2010). 'Beyond "liddism": Towards real global security', *Open Democracy*. Available at http://www.opendemocracy.net; R. Martel (2006). 'Las maras salvadoreñas: nuevas formas de espanto y control social' [El Salvadoran gangs: new forms of social control], *Estudios Centroamericanos [Central American Studies]*, Vol. 61, No. 696, pp.957–78.

81 R. Briceño-León and V. Zubillaga (2002). Op. cit., p.28.

82 Wolf analyses the narrative processes through which the mainstream press promoted the stigmatisation of these groups, whose alleged activities were associated with satanic cultures. S. Wolf (2008). *The politics of gang control. NGO advocacy in post-war El Salvador*, PhD thesis, University of Wales, Aberystwyth.

years old can now be held responsible for gang-related crimes.[83] This law was to be put forward by the *Plano Mano Dura* (2003) and *Super Mano Dura* (2004). The latter included the active participation of the military in public security.

In fact, since the passage of these plans, many poor youths from marginalised communities became targets of police assault and abuse. The simple fact of a youth having a tattoo would allow the police to imprison them for investigation. Simultaneously, these hard-line public policies were highly publicised in the sensationalist press which, in turn, increasingly portrayed the *pandilleros* as the scum of society, making them accountable for the majority of violent phenomena in the country, even before any kind of investigation.

This scapegoating of *maras* in a society where many other violent individual and collective actors exist ends up contributing to the concealment of other types of violence, since insecurity and criminality are actually a priority concern, much more than unemployment, for example.[84] As such, the populist measures of *Mano Dura* have received wide social approval, despite failing to contain violence. In reality, these plans were actually a form of controlling and manipulating society and potential political and collective struggles through fear and insecurity, opening up the space for the growth of associated businesses, such as private companies.

The ideology and the funding of these policies originate from the exact same country that had previously funded the war and the massacres in El Salvador: the USA. To North American administrations, transnational *maras* are on the same level as organised crime, and therefore the strategies to combat them are based on militarisation.[85]

The results could not have been worse. The imprisonment of the majority of the *pandilleros* has led to the reinforcement of the *maras*' structures and to the change of their *modi operandi*. If, before the enactment of the plans, violence occurred within *pandilleros* themselves and survival was guaranteed by thefts and robberies as well as drugs trafficking, after they were in place, new forms of survival emerged, based on robberies, abductions (which sometimes end up in homicide, whenever the victim refuses to pay) and *sicariato*.[86] These constitute new forms of violence, which are widespread geographically and socially, and that therefore increasingly affect more social groups.[87]

Simultaneously, some *clicas*[88] and individuals were co-opted by networks of organised crime (drugs and arms trafficking, among others), which directly and indirectly promote the use of violence as a way of controlling territories and acquiring resources, making them more secret. The transnational nature of the economy that supports these activities and the progressive association with drugs trafficking have led to the formation of a deep-rooted violent structure, which made these groups less opposed to the use of violence.

In this scenario the *pandilleros*, who are free, become increasingly hidden and socially isolated. The tattoos tend to disappear and women supposedly cease to officially join *maras*, in order to retain their ability to perform activities in secret. Additionally, police suspicion and mistrust has increased. Children and families who have seen their houses destroyed and/or their children beaten up or abused by the police or the army, end up admiring the *pandillas* even more. In part due to the way they are perceived and treated, the *pandilleros* also assume a war culture. In their conversations, they often differentiate between themselves and the "civilian people" and perceive the police as their enemy (not necessarily a target of offensive action but rather an actor to keep an eye on), which confirms that the idea of the gangs as highly armed actors and willing to control the country is not the most accurate image.

83 M. Carranza (2005). 'Detenção ou morte: aonde os garotos pandilleros de El Salvador estão indo' [Detention or death: where are the gang members in El Salvador going?], COAV, accessed on 20th June 2011. Available at http://www.coav.org.br/publique/media/elsalvadorport.pdf

84 PNUD (2003). *Armas de fuego y violencia*. [Firearms and violence], accessed 20th June 2011. Available at http://www.pnud.org.sv/2007/content/view/27/83?id_publ=69

85 The fact that the Bush Administration was mainly concerned with drugs trafficking and transnational gangs in Central America resulted in the signing of several cooperation agreements in the fields of security with partner countries of this region. In this domain, El Salvador emerged as the "best student" due to the implementation of the *Manu Dura* plans. In 2007 the US-sponsored initiative Mérida was set up, constituting a large-scale version of the *Manu Dura* plans. It was based on security forces training (police and armies) and arms transfers to Mexico and Central American countries, thereby stimulating repression and human rights abuse. See S. Fitzpatrick Behrens (2009). 'Le Plan Mexico et les migrations en Amérique centrale'[The Mexico Plan and migrations in Central America]. 23rd February, accessed on 17th June 2011. Available at http://risal.collectifs.net/spip.php?article2468

86 Often *pandilleros* are "sub-contracted" by "civilians" (including politicians and businessmen) to commit homicides and other crimes.

87 W. Savenije (2009). *Maras y Barras. Pandillas y violencia juvenil en los barrios marginales de Centroamérica [Gangs and youth violence in peripheral neighbourhoods in Central America].* San Salvador: Universitetit Utrecht/Facultada Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales.

88 *Pandillas*' divisions: each *pandilla* is divided into different *clicas*, according to neighbourhoods or community lines.

The *Mano Amigo* and *Mano Extendida* policies emerged in parallel to the *Mano Dura* plans. Their main goal is to soften the repressive image of the authorities. These programmes are based on two principles: the prevention of violence within affected communities and the rehabilitation of *pandilleros*. In order to work within these two areas and effectively address urban violence, the motivations behind youths joining *maras* should be taken into account. We know that the decision to join the *maras* is often fuelled by reactions towards violence,[89] such as social exclusion, family violence[90] and the violence experienced while in prison. The different motivations for joining can include access to resources; the search for status and identity; the need to guarantee respect and power, usually associated with access to guns and sex; the possibility of having a new family and new friendships; security, once the group offers protection from rival groups.

These programmes of prevention and rehabilitation have three main faults. The first one is the lack of political will. In fact, these programmes did not receive the same political attention and resources as the *Manu Dura* plans, which continued to overpopulate the prisons in El Salvador. As a result, the programmes ended up as a simulacrum of good will, despite the authentic good will of the staff. In some cases, *pandilleros* who participated in programmes were detained while in the programme, which increased suspicions surrounding the programmes themselves.

The second fault is related to the segmented analysis of the causes of violence, namely, the importance given to primary prevention to the detriment of rehabilitation and dialogue with less-criminalised leaders. In fact, we do not know if participation in the programme eliminates the attractiveness of the *pandillas*, once this can be simultaneous. Moreover, and since the *pandillas* remain the closest structure to youth and communities, it is normal for youth to continue to join such groups. If the *pandillas* remain excluded from these preventative programmes, the attraction of such programmes will not eliminate the attraction of the *pandillas*.

The third fault lies in the notion that the violence of the *pandillas* can be diminished without a holistic political programme aimed at combating youth problems but that also enables them to enjoy the freedom that is hard to achieve in a highly conservative and religious society, such as the one in El Salvador. Prevention programmes should not be based on the mere organisation of sports and cultural events. Furthermore, rehabilitation, as well as professional training and job creation, cannot be regarded as a panacea, given their actual range (around 20 youths out of thousands). Finally, the creation of micro-companies cannot be envisaged as the solution for a state which does not promote job creation.

The depoliticisation and the removal of the state from an approach that includes education, employment, and diversity favours a perspective where social control and authority are transformed into continuities of the relations of dominance and of the justification of violence between the state and its citizens, between women and men, youth and elders.[91] As long as the different power orders are not challenged, the polarisation between victims and perpetrators will prevail, along with the inability to go beyond the criminalisation of poverty and of youth. Youths will keep on searching for ways to escape this control, while, at the same time, they will also reproduce the authoritarian and violent structures in their society.

In Brazil, particularly in Rio de Janeiro, public security policies aimed at addressing urban violence and drugs trafficking have been characterised by the use of military confrontation and repression – which is notorious for the military-style incursions into poor communities, such as the ones that took place in the *Complexo do Alemão*, in 2007, as well as for the increasing number of people imprisoned for drugs trafficking. Black and poor youth constitute the dominant profile of those who are imprisoned or undergo socio-educative programmes as a result of involvement in drugs trafficking.[92] The selectivity of the judicial system (police and trials) allows the black, poor and young population to be the preferred target of the state's repressive control.

89 Many studies have analysed the motivations behind the violent mobilisation of youth in El Salvador. See, for example, M. Santacruz Giralt and A. Concha-Eastman (2001). Op. cit.; M. Carranza (2005). Op. cit.

90 80.5 percent of the *pandilleros* were abused during their childhood and nearly 50 percent have witnessed assault on women and children in the home. M. Liebel (2002). 'Pandillas y maras: señas de identidad' [Gangs: identity marks], *Revista Envío [The Sending Journal]*, accessed on 21st June 2011. Available at http://www.envio.org.ni/articulo/1161

91 M. Hume (2004). Op. cit.

92 V. M. Batista (2003). 'A construção do transgressor' [The construction of the aggressor]. In M. Batista, M. Cruz and R. Matias (Eds.). *Droga e pós-modernidade: faces de uma tema proscrito [Drugs and Post-modernity: aspects of an ongoing topic]*. Rio de Janeiro: Eduerj, vol. 2, pp.157–63.

This dominant conception of public security, profoundly militarised, was influenced by the Doctrine of National Security, which took root in society and politics during the military dictatorship and was aimed at eradicating the political opponents of the authoritarian regime.[93] With the transition to democracy, the category of "internal enemy", used during the dictatorship to refer to the regime's opponents, shifted meaning and began to target the most impoverished segments of the population: the young, poor and *favelado* (those who live in the *favelas*),[94] perceived as the main locus of drugs trafficking and violence. In this context, according to Wacquant, 'the criminal insecurity in Brazil is not reduced but rather aggravated by the intervention of the law and order forces. The routine use of deadly force by the police and the military [...] summary executions and forced disappearances generate a terror atmosphere among popular classes'.[95]

This militarised approach to public security, based on the "war against crime", armed confrontation and criminalisation has resulted in some difficulties in promoting security among the population and in addressing the issue of drugs trafficking besides the localised retail trade in slums. It has also contributed to the increase of human rights violations and summary executions perpetrated by the police, as stated by the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions.[96]

According to the *Instituto de Segurança Pública*,[97] from 1998 to 2009, 10,216 deaths were registered as a result of state violence (2.4 deaths per day). Data from the period 1993–96[98] demonstrate that the number of dead civilians as a result of police confrontations in comparison with the number of policemen killed on duty is 41 to 1; that is, for each policeman killed on duty, 41 civilians are murdered. This proportion is far higher than the international average and indicates the excessive use of force and practices of summary execution.[99] Between 2004 and 2008 the police forces of the states of Rio and São Paulo alone killed over 11,000 people.[100] There were more cases of execution by the Rio police (2,176) than there were deaths perpetrated during the same period by the police in South Africa (1,623), a country with higher homicide rates than those registered in the state of Rio de Janeiro.[101]

The permanence of the territorial control exercised by the drug factions, despite the crisis of this model,[102] the quick expansion of militia groups in poor areas of the city, alongside the maintenance of high levels of summary executions and forced disappearances perpetrated by state agents, constitute other examples of the limitations of this model of public security.

There are, nonetheless, some signs of change in the field of public security in Brazil, and especially in Rio de Janeiro, which has gradually begun to substitute the practice of military-style incursions into the poor communities with *de facto* state occupation of these territories. This occupation has taken place first through a military approach and subsequently through the institution of community police units in these communities, mainly in the state's capital. This pilot project, Unidades de Polícia Pacificadora (UPP, or Pacifying Police Units in English), is an initiative of the state's Secretary of Public Security that aims to disband criminal groups operating in territories as parallel states.

93 C. Coimbra (2001). *Operação Rio. O mito das classes perigosas: um estudo sobre a violência urbana, a mídia impressa e os discursos de segurança pública [Operation Rio. The myth of the dangerous classes: a study on urban violence, press and discourses on public security]*. Rio de Janeiro: Oficina do autor; Niterói: Intertexto.

94 The most obvious example of this policy was the institution in 1995, during the government of Marcelo Alencar, of the so-called "far-west", in place until 1997, an award granted to the Military policemen for acts of bravery in the command of the corporation. Often, the awarded policeman was distinguished by the participation in actions that resulted in the killing of alleged criminals. Justiça Global (2004). *Relatório Rio: Violência Policial e Insegurança Pública [Rio Report: Police Violence and Public Insecurity], accessed 20th June 2011*. Available at www.observatoriodeseguranca.org/files/rio_report1.pdf

95 L. Wacquant (2001). Op. cit., p. 9.

96 P. Alston (2008). *Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. Mission to Brazil*, United Nations Human Rights Council, accessed on 26th June 2011. Available at http://www.extrajudicialexecutions.org/application/media/A_HRC_8_3.pdf

97 Instituto de Segurança Pública (2010). 'Estatísticas sobre incidências Criminais no Estado do Rio de Janeiro 2003–2010' [Statistics on Criminal occurrences in the state of Rio de Janeiro 2003-2010], accessed 20th June 2011. Available at http://www.isp.rj.gov.br/Conteudo.asp?ident=150

98 I. Cano (1997). *Letalidade Policial no Rio de Janeiro: a atuação da Justiça Militar [Police lethality in Rio de Janeiro: the action of Military Justice]*. Rio de Janeiro: ISER.

99 Ibid.

100 Human Rights Watch (2009). 'Lethal force. Police violence and public security in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo', accessed 20th June 2011. Available at http://www.hrw.org/node/87020

101 Ibid.

102 S. Ramos (2009). Op. cit.

So far, 18 units have been implemented, mainly in the southern area of Rio, and in the areas which were controlled by drugs-trafficking factions (only one is in a territory once controlled by militia groups, the UPP from the Batan *favela*). This occupation in regions previously dominated by drugs-trafficking and militia groups must be accompanied by the ongoing qualification and external control of police forces as well as with the reduction of the presence of arms in these areas. As such, it is imperative to reflect upon the format and the timing of these community police forces (UPP) by challenging their military nature, apparent by the number and type of arms its police officers carry,[103] as well as supporting ongoing small-arms-control initiatives and civilian disarmament campaigns, nation- and state-wide. Finally, it is essential to ally this police project with social and cultural initiatives aimed at integrating, *de facto*, these spaces in the city, namely through the improvement of medical and school facilities, job creation, the amplification of professional alternatives, the setting up of grant programmes and the promotion of cultural initiatives.

In this context, it would also be important to reflect upon recent proposals chiefly directed towards youth, namely the supervised amnesty of young people involved in drugs trafficking, which appears to be a more efficient social integration measure than the existing imprisonment alternative in terms of social responsibility and future perspectives for these youngsters in conflict with the law.[104] Additionally, the idea of a process of disarmament and integration of demobilised members of drugs-trafficking factions or of the militia groups,[105] inspired by the DDR tool, should also be discussed.

Despite their different intensity and scale, the responses to youth violence in Cape Verde do not differ from their inspirational reference – El Salvador and Brazil (Rio de Janeiro). Punitive repression is the most frequent option, while prevention and rehabilitation are clearly dismissed. The predominance of a repressive approach is verifiable both at the legislative and police levels. As far as the former is concerned, the deficient practical use of the laws needs to be highlighted. For example, the Law 2/2006 on Juvenile Delinquency has not yet been implemented. Among other measures, the Law 2/2006 created an educational centre to host "youths in conflict with the law", aiming at integrating them back into society.

The Educational Centre Orlando Pantera is not yet functioning, as not all conditions to do so have been fulfilled. On 30th June 2010, the Law on Criminal Policies was unanimously approved. It identified its main goals to 'prevent, repress and reduce criminality' and defined its priorities as the conducting of criminal investigation, particularly those 'executed with violence, serious threat or with arms and/or perpetrated by organised groups' and intends to offer the 'deliquent a new opportunity for social integration'[106]. The way through which this "new opportunity" will be operationalised or not may be used either to corroborate or refute the opinion expressed in 2008 by an expert from the National Commission for Human Rights and Citizenship:

> I believe that the social reintegration policies in Cape Verde ... Well, claiming that there are none would be too radical, but when we consider the means we have and we apply and the results that they can accomplish – which are almost nothing – I can then go back and say that there are no social reintegration polices in Cape Verde. [...] I'm not dismissing the work and the performance of those who are working day to day in this field. The problem is the whole policy. [...] I think that to say that there are resources is a runaway strategy, since the central issue here is the policy. A social reintegration policy must have a mechanism, a capacity to look for resources and find them.
>
> (INTERVIEW WITH AN EXPERT FROM THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND CITIZENSHIP, 2008)

103 L. A. M. Silva (2010). 'Afinal qual é a das UPP?' [So, what is the objective of UPP?], March, accessed on 18th June 2011. Available at www.observatoriodasmetropoles.ufrj.br

104 L. E. Soares (1999). *Meu Casaco de General. Quintos Dias no Front da Segurança Pública do Rio de Janeiro [My uniform of Major. Five hundred days leading Public Security in Rio de Janeiro]*. Rio de Janeiro: Companhia das Letras.

105 R. Perez (2008). 'Movilización, Desarme e Inserción social (MDI)' [Mobilisation, Disarmament and Social Inclusion], accessed on 12th July 2011. Available at http://www.comunidadesegura.org/pt-br/node/40652/es_priv

106 Cape Verde Government (2009). 'Lei de Política Criminal define crimes de investigação prioritária. A Proposta de Lei que estabelece a Política Criminal foi aprovada, por unanimidade do Parlamento, na votação final global, esta quarta-feira, 30 de Junho' [Criminal Law Policy defines research-priority crimes. The draft law establishing the Criminal Policy was approved unanimously by Parliament in the overall vote, Wednesday June 30], accessed on 20th July 2010. Available at http://www.governo.cv/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2604

Regarding police responses to youth violence, we should mention an initial phase characterised by a lack of preparation to actually respond to this new typology of violence. This first phase was followed by short-term repressive measures (for instance, the increase of police officers in police stations). The option to employ the Military Police in patrolling tasks was widely reported in the media and heavily criticised, namely by the main opposition party. The official justification for this use was based on the crime-inhibition capacity of this force.

However, there were also a few records of inappropriate use of force by them during their patrolling duties.

Nonetheless, the most recent action (from 2008 onwards) has been characterised by some strategy changes and by a proximity logic regarding youth. The latter is aimed at "pacifying" rival thugs. In order to ensure the effective prevention of and combat against the urban violence phenomenon, and specifically thugs, one should understand the social exclusion landscape that frames the phenomenon and that does not necessarily fit into a mere police repression framework. As such, in February 2010, an Inter-ministry Commission to Combat Violence was created in Cape Verde. The Commission was aimed at 'establishing a pact with society for a consensual and national fight against violence' and 'improving the repressive mechanisms' as well as putting forward a holistic programme, entailing all the dimensions of the problem[107] This new action plan against violence has also included 'visits to problematic neighbourhoods in order to understand the perceptions and opinions about violence'.[108]

The meetings between members of government and thugs, included in the plan, were heavily criticised. Regardless of the criticisms and the political exploitation of the situation, these meetings have demonstrated the effort to get to know better and be closer to the periphery neighbourhoods of Praia and to the routine life of their youths.

Besides short-term responses, such as the building of sports arenas in some neighbourhoods, this new approach to violence entails a more structural vision of the problem since it proposes the creation of intra-municipality structures and centres for social development within each municipality. These aim at bringing social public polices and the people closer together, assuring wider access to them. The Mobile Youth Centre project, coordinated by the Youth Secretary and funded by the UN, should be highlighted. It aims to occupy the free time of poor and disenfranchised youth (e.g. through IT training courses and information campaigns, as well as prevention and counselling initiatives, regarding reproductive-health issues and HIV-AIDS).[109]

The involvement of civil society in this matter has been slow and has been generally characterised by the delegation of many functions to the government. Youth violence is not a central and mobilising theme in the agendas of organisations and institutions. However, in recent years experiences of civil society organisations, sometimes in partnership with public institutions, have been singled out as good examples and as having had some direct impact on the youth involved in violence at the Cidade da Praia. Different associations have their headquarters in these problematic neighbourhoods, for example, the organisation Espaço Aberto, which is based in the Safendi neighbourhood, and Black Panthers, which is based at the Várzea neighbourhood. These organisations have developed interesting programmes aimed at youth in general and thugs in particular. These include training in different areas and the promotion of cultural activities. Due to its innovative character and the results obtained, the project ACRIDES (Association for Poor Children), in Achada Grande Trás, a neighbourhood where three different rival thugs used to exist, should also be highlighted.

107 Government of Cape Verde (2011).'Governo cria Comissão Interministerial de combate à violência' [Government creates the Interministerial Committee to fight violence], accessed 20th July 2011. Available at http://www.governo.cv/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2251

108 Ibid.

109 For more information, please see www.juventude.cv

CONCLUSION

This paper has drawn attention to the need to address material as well as symbolic expectations and demands that are at the centre of the violent mobilisation of youth in the wider contexts of social exclusion and violence. The quest for status, power and respect, which often underlines youth experiences of violence is a profoundly gendered phenomenon, product and producer of gender constructions of what it means to be a real man and woman in these socially and economically adverse scenarios.

Similarly, this paper has highlighted the importance of rethinking the impact of international policies in local contexts and in the lives of youth, namely those targeting youth in peripheral countries of the international system. This paper advocates for an urgent shift in the combatting and prevention of youth violence, claiming that repressive policies have hitherto failed to contain violence and to contribute to effective preventive policies. Effective combat and prevention policies should take into account the intra-social forms of violence that are committed by and against youth, as well as the structural conditions that determine the marginalisation of youth, namely in terms of access to jobs and ability to voice political demands.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Mobilise public security agents, human rights organisations and social movements that have historically remained in separate fields of analysis and action (youth, political violence, urban violence, social exclusion) towards an approach that goes beyond the perspectives that consider youth as a problem or youth as victims when considering poor and marginalised youth.

2. Rethink and re-signify the target territories of violence-containing policies, with the purpose of better understanding the structuring dynamics of violence, and conceive more adjusted and adequate actions and interventions.

3. Support programmes and projects that aim at promoting and supporting non-violent models of masculinities/femininities and healthy relations between men and women.

4. Change the dominant paradigm of combatting urban violence which is characterised by confrontation, militarisation and securitisation. This repressive approach inspired by the international "war on drugs" is being progressively contested at several levels of thought and action. It is of utmost importance to give deep and wider-ranging consideration to the disadvantages of the current narcotics prohibition regime, as well as to measures for resolving the present situation. In order to tackle the enormous challenges that this trade poses in production and route countries, the prohibitionist paradigm should be debated and reconsidered. A public health approach centred on prevention policies and damage control should replace the criminal approach to drugs consumption.

5. Support national and international arms-control mechanisms – in order to avoid the diversions from legal to illegal markets operated by theft, mugging and deviation from legal civilian stocks as well as state-controlled stocks – as well as regular campaigns of gun registry and civilian disarmament. Investment in police intelligence and investigation is also key to stop gun trafficking and misuse.

6. Invest in national data collection and analysis mechanisms on homicide, suicide and other external causes, namely through health and criminal systems. Data should be disaggregated by sex and age and made available to the public on a regular and transparent basis.

7. Support national data collection and analysis systems of the involvement of the youth in armed violence (boys and girls), namely through police protocols, juvenile centres and prison censuses.

8. Develop programmes aimed at reducing lethal violence that take into account the articulation between public/state institutions, civil society and the population in the field of urban security. These programmes should also promote the creation of indicators that allow monitoring and evaluation processes.

9. Include a youth perspective in public policies in key areas such as employment, requalification of marginalised neighbourhoods and cultural initiatives. Additionally, contemplate supporting institutions and organisations working with youth financially and through capacity building.

10. Provide legal and psychological support to victims and survivors of urban violence, by creating spaces (public services, organisations and networks) to assist them.

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