A social determination approach to urban violence in Latin American cities: Accounts from Rio de Janeiro and Bogotá

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Introduction

The early 21st Century urban scenario in Latin America is characterized by deep territorial segregation.[1] The historical impact of social conflict in Latin American societies has proven crucial in defining urban power relations and spatial planning.

Despite their heterogeneity, large Latin American cities exhibit parallel processes of spatial re/de-configuration and consolidation of territorial orderings (or "disorderings" according to Haesbaert and Porto-Gonçalves.[2] guided by globalized economic interests, linked to both legal and illegal ventures. This urban spatial re/deconfiguration has been particularly influenced by the drug trade. But it has also been shaped by urban renewal megaprojects,[3] the emergence of large scale industry, and gentrification.[4] all factors that interact with transformations in rural areas. To a large extent, these transformations have unleashed what the Ecuadorian epidemiologist Jaime Breilh[5] calls "unhealthy processes." These processes, deeply marked by violence, systematically displace those urban spaces that promote life, health, and well-being.

Violence is one of the leading causes of death among people aged 15 to 44, and has deeply marked the closure of vital spaces[6] generating fear and mistrust in urban dwellers.[7] In this sense, Silvio Schachter points out that violence "has imposed the rupture of social and personal ties, restructuring family habits, stratifying forms and territories, crystallizing material and virtual frontiers, and giving new character to historical conflicts between class, identity, gender, and age.[8,76]" Violence can be understood as an engine of spatial re/deconfiguration, but also as a marker of urban re/deconfiguration strategies operating within a global framework[9]

Explanations that focus on a supposed lack of a "civic culture" among Latin American city dwellers[10], as well as those centered on the "State's failure" in the face of growing urban "disorder," have become central to diagnosis of urban violence offered to us by multilateral

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agencies and some academics.[11] Techno-material solutions, prevention policies, and advances in "good governance" have been presented as solutions to notorious urban problems, specifically violence.[12,13] These solutions seek to overcome an alleged absence or deficiency of planning, lack of political motivation, corruption, and the lack of technical competencies required for the implementation of international recipes that guarantee "urban development" through the control of urban violence and the competitive insertion of Global South cities in the globalized economy.[14]

This kind of "development" has materialized in urban renewal projects and in legislation that perpetuates a privatizing, territorial model, promoting the use of land as an asset. These "renewal projects" exist in the context of "powerful political interventions that modify legislation, to the point of forcing States to grant important fiscal benefits to companies", exempting them from tax payments and guaranteeing profit stability.[15] This, in turn, is achieved through the militarization of territories and the creation of security corridors for large investments. One example of such interventions is the installation of the Pacifying Police Units (UPP) in Rio de Janeiro, which fostered territorial dispossession by promoting gentrification.[16]

Various studies have questioned the role of violence as part of human nature[17,18] or as part of masculine nature.[19] Yet most approaches to violence focus on the role of aggressors and their violent nature. These theories are often accompanied by racist, culturalist, and classist narratives.

Although violence in Latin American cities is omnipresent, its analysis remains partial and clearly insufficient to capture the complexities of urban violence in Latin America. This essay stems from the need to find new ways of approaching and investigating urban violence in Latin America. Following Silvio Schachter,[8:78] we argue that "urban violence is not a 'natural' phenomenon, nor a moral or legal deviation. It is more than simply what the law defines as a crime, and it is not an aggregate of risk factors. It is, in essence, a social relationship: a particular collective form for the expression of political and social conflict arising in a specific time and space. Such a definition allows us to see the complex linkages between violence and the city."

We propose a re-reading of urban violence and outline an approach to the social determination of urban violence. To this end, we use the analytical keys from the fields of Social Medicine and Latin American Collective Health regarding the "social determination of health-disease processes, and of life and death." In this way, we hope to denaturalize and complexify the phenomenon of urban violence. Furthermore, we seek to understand violent death as one of the most intimate and perverse materializations of the "closure of vital spaces" in the face of the capitalist imperative of growth at all costs.[6] Rather than presenting research results, this paper lays out questions that may prove relevant to overcoming some of the limitations dicussed earlier. Bogotá, Colombia, and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, will be the referents of our (necessarily incomplete and introductory) reflection on the social determination of violence and, in particular, violent death in Latin American cities.

This essay is divided into two parts. The first deals with the violence of Latin American "urban development", discussing its historical-territorial configuration, along with the main characteristics of this kind of urban model. The sec-

ond proposes an approach to the social determination of violence and, particularly, violent death in Latin American cities. In this section, we depart from a critical discussion of the scope of existing urban violence research to explore the implications of examing violent death and urban violence from the perspective of social determination.

The violence of Latin American "urban development": Bogotá and Río de Janeiro

Since the 70s and 80s, a combination of various factors have accelerated urbanization in most of Latin America. Among these factors are rapid population growth due to high fertility rates, a decrease in urban mortality, and most importantly, the rural exodus generated by the penetration of capitalism in the countryside (New Rurality) (20; 21) and the violent repression of agrarian reform attempts.[21] In the case of Colombia, this trend was reinforced through the territorial dynamics and land struggle that marked the "*La Violencia*" (the Colombian civil war and the armed social conflict that developed in the 1960s. As the American researcher Angotti states, "*Latin American cities were not produced by free choice, but through the massive dispossession of rural lands.*" [1]

Latin American cities became the new poles of capitalist accumulation, mainly through exploitation of rural migrant labor force. In this way, the city became permeated by the logic of international competitiveness, mediated by "locational blackmail" dynamics[2,22] and investments in urban marketing. This led to the consolidation of a "developed" venture-city with a corporate urban management structure.[23] This framework facilitated the emergence of fortified territorial enclaves (such as closed residential complexes or "gated communities"), legal and

illegal business hubs[21;24-26]; spaces of tourist exploitation (through, for example, the revitalization of urban centers[27,28] and the growth of consumerism (shopping malls and free trade zones).

Sacrifice Zones

These projects, in turn, allowed for the consolidation of social and environmental "sacrifice zones". This term, adopted by Marcelo Firpo-Porto[29], refers to spaces that demonstrate the unsustainability of the hegemonic model of urban development; they are characterized by industrial pollution of the air, water and soil. The term also applies to what we call "social sacrifice zones," places where fundamental human rights are denied, and violence is used to tailor spaces to the needs of big business and historically privileged groups, thus facilitating the imposition of certain kinds of territorial models.

Not coincidentally, around this time - and particularly in the 80's and 90's - Latin American cities became landscapes of war. In these settings, violence and death reflected the contradictions of the hegemonic development model, as well as historical and territorial unrest.

An Epidemic of Homicides

Since the 80s and 90s, Latin America has experienced a homicide epidemic, which is not a chance - or isolated - occurrence.

According to the 2012 World Study on Homicide[31], almost half a million people (437,000) worldwide lost their lives to this "epidemic." More than a third (36%) of these deaths occured in the American Continent. According to the study, more than half of all homicide victims are under 30 years of age. Worldwide, the male homicide rate is almost four times higher than that for women (9.7 compared

with 2.7 per 100,000), and is at its highest in the Americas (29.3/100,000 men).[31] According to the study, Colombia has a homicide rate of 30.8 and Brazil of 25.2 per 100,000 people.[31] More current data from the "Atlas da Violência 2016" (2016 Atlas of Violence) reports a rate of 29.1 homicides per 100,000 people in Brazil in 2014 (IPEA, 2016). The Colombian Institute of Legal Medicine has reported a rate of 24.03 homicides per 100,000 people in that country.[32]

According to data compiled by the Institute of Public Security (ISP), (based on information from the Mortality Information System, SIM / MS / SVS, CGIAE),[33] the city of Rio de Janeiro, with a current population of 6,498,837, had a homicide rate (per 100,000 inhabitants) of 29.3 in 2016, with 1,903 homicides[3] registered in the city. This rate marks an increase with respect to previous years: 24.1 (2015), 24.0 (2014) and 25.1 (2013). However, it is still far from homicide rates seen between 2000 and 2009; these ranged from 46.3 (2009) to 58.3 (2002 and 2003), and correspond to a total of 3,495 homicides. The homicide peak was seen in the early 90's, when rates of up to 75.9 were recorded (1994). In 2017, Bogotá achieved the lowest homicide rate in the history of the city: 15.8 per 100,000. Even with a rate of 17.41 for 2015, as reported by the Institute of Legal Medicine,[32] the capital stood out in comparison to the Colombian average and to other large cities in the country - in particular, Medellín (20.17), Cali (60.09), Cartagena (28.95) and Buenaventura (21.01). However, it is important to note the enormous differences between neighborhoods in Bogotá, with Ciudad Bolívar heading the charts (272 cases in 2015).

In Brazil, almost 60,000 homicides were recorded in 2014. According to the IPEA, this constitutes the highest absolute number by country in the world and represents 10% of worldwide homicides (34). The tragedy of the Brazilian situation is reflected in the proportion of deaths caused by homicides in children/men aged 15 to 19 (53%) and 20 to 24 (49%). The "Mapa da Violência" (Map of Violence)[35,38] documents the magnitude of the problem and its evolution, showing a 124% surge in homicides during the last 30 years, and the assassination of more than one million people between 1980 and 2010.[36]

In 2014, the three states with the highest number of deaths due to legal interventions were Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Bahia.[34] While the SIM keeps a reliable record of victims, data on attackers has significant limitations. The generalized under-reporting of homicides in the country[38] is even more marked in the case of those committed by state employees. The 2016 "Mapa da Violência" (Map of Violence)[38] discovered differences between the SIM's records, and those of the Brazilian Public Security Yearbook, which uses data collected through the Freedom of Information Act. While the former reported a total of 681 murders resulting from police interventions in 2014, the latter documents a total of 3,009 homicides resulting from police interventions, both on duty and off duty. Between 2004 to 2014, SIM reported 6,665 homicides resulting from legal interventions, while the Yearbook counted 20,418. This worrisome state of the public records was further aggravated by recent strikes by civilian police in several Brazilian states[33] Furthermore, the numbers are alarming because they reflect an operational pattern of the police (mainly, Brazilian military police) that exposes the lack of democratization[4] in the country's public safety institutions.[38]

In Colombia, the definitive bilateral ceasefire agreement between the Government and the guerrilla of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) was signed in September 2016. This agreement proposed an end to a war which had lasted 50 years and caused much suffering and death in the country.

Out of the Rural

The armed social conflict affected mainly rural areas. Nevertheless, it generated a series of socio-territorial dynamics in urban areas due to massive displacements towards large cities. These migratory movements, generated by rural economic dynamics and other processes, have led some authors and actors to explain the phenomenon of urban violence in Colombia in terms of an "urbanization of the armed conflict."[39]

According to Colombian human rights specialist Pablo Emilio Angarita Cañas[39] governmental actors insisted that the violence was due to the decision of the FARC and the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) to 'take the war to the cities'". He concludes that "their assessment -regardless of their intentions - ultimately obstructed a calm and careful examination of what really happened"[39:102] Angarita distanced himself from this narrative, coinciding with other authors[40;41] that "the escalation of urban armed conflict was stimulated - though not determined - by the national armed conflict."[39-102] Blair, Grisales and Muñoz[41] of the Institute of Regional Studies (INER) of the University of Antioquia, argue that the idea of Medellin being immersed in an "urban war" stems from a state-centered, "rational/instrumental" conception of the political and of power. They prefer to use the term "urban conflicts"[41:30] which they feel reflects a more accurate picture of Medellin which became involed with a multiplicity of conflicts that were articulated in specific ways, and that involved the more subjective aspects of pre-"war" neighborhood dynamics. This essay's analytical proposal coincides with their view in its framing of violence within a more general understanding of the social conflict, the recognition of its embeddedness in a multiplicity of complex dynamics, and the refusal to understand it as intrinsic to the city.

Non-lethal violence

In addition to homicides, both Bogotá and Rio de Janiero have suffered the consequences of non-lethal violence, which has generated mistrust, fear and suffering in the population, impacting city dwellers in ways that have been described as "disastrous."[26;41-42] In an interview, David Harvey asks: "What kind of world is built in closed residential complexes, in which the urban experience of people is sequestered behind these walls and where residents have almost no contact with people from other social classes?¨[43]

We can ask the same question in relation to the worlds and ways of life in the "sacrifice zones" of large cities. What does it mean for the life and health of those residing in these "zones" to live surrounded by military police and militias that exercise power through violence? What ways of life are configured in these contexts? Furthermore, we ask: What kind of lives and what kind of urban life is built on "occupied" and segregated territories? How can non-violent masculinities be constructed when those who find respect and power in the "barrios" are armed men? Brazilian geographer Marcelo Lopes de Souza[26] refers to the consolidation of Latin American "phobopoles. In these

"fear cities", violence and crime come to determine a certain form of urbanization, which reinforces militarization and segregation thus impacting the most everyday decisions of residents.

Several researchers have stressed the role of violence in identity formation within violent contexts.[26;44] Based on a study of Rio De Janeiro, Machado da Silva[45] has adopted the controversial concept of "violent sociabilities." This concept describes the type of socialization and subjectivity reproduced within such contexts. Other research has shown that children and adolescents exposed to (urban and domestic) violence on a daily basis understand violence as an acceptable and appropriate means to solve problems.[46,47] A recent study explored possibilities for the construction of non-violent masculinities in contexts marked by urban violence (IMAGES-Urban Violence) in Rio de Janeiro. Its authors found that the widespread fear of intimidation and violence by public authorities and other armed actors fostered feelings of powerlessness and generated male identity crisies. These were often compensated for by constructing violent masculinities that reproduced street violence, particularly within domestic spaces.[19] This is consistent with Gill[48] and Enloe's[49] finding that trauma and humiliation are almost always present in processes that seek to construct men who kill - as, for example, in the training of special military forces and paramilitary groups.

The closure of common spaces

We observe a systematic closure of vital spaces through the (predominantly violent) imposition of spatial orders and territorialities that serve the legal (and illegal) accumulation of globalized capital in our cities. These dynamics, governed by the imperatives of profit and growth, inhibit the flourishing of social interaactions, materialities, and relationships that promote health and life. Instead, they promote the configuration of unhealthy processes that exacerbate and multiply violence, and often involve death.

Within this reordering of capitalist urban development, various processes of territorialization have been identified and analyzed, including territorial dispossession through gentrification and removal processes.[15;50] Several authors have pointed out the prominent role of violence in the Global South's urban territorial restructuring.[15;51] They have noted the ways in which it embodies a profoundly unjust social order, reflecting historically and territorially consolidated social conflicts on a national and global scale.

Phobopolis

The widespread city-fear ("phobopolis") of violence[26] has reinforced the consolidation and militarization of fortified territorial enclaves. These gated communities have played a role in urban territorial reordering, fostering territorial segregation in the cities of the Global South. Likewise, violence and, in particular, homicide have contributed to a reordering of urban territory. This has been achieved through the "liberation" of certain spaces and the imposition of new territorialities through the dispossession of certain groups by forced relocation, extermination, imprisonment, and intimidation, among others.

Mega events, such as the Olympic Games[52] and so-called social "emergencies" such as the "war on drugs have also played an important role in the reconfiguration of Global South cities. Such events legitimize the consolidation

of a "state of exception", in the sense given by Agamben.[53] This, in turn, allows for the establishment of a "legal civil war that allows the physical elimination not only of political adversaries, but of entire categories of citizens who, for whatever reason, cannot be integrated in the political system."[53] (53: 25). These disposable populations are sacrificed in the name of "urban development" and other mega-undertakings. Furthermore, this urban "territorial disordering" has been marked by other capitalist logics, including those of the drug trade. Drug trafficking has been violently territorialized in all the major Latin American cities, consolidating territories of accumulation aimed at national, and most prominently, international markets.

Social determination of violent death in Latin American cities

Studies on urban violence have managed to quantify this phenomenon, while anthropological approaches have tasked themselves with examining the meanings of death and violence.[54] At the same time, countless interpretive frameworks have been developed to understand this phenomenon and its specificities within the Latin American context. These have highlighted the role of drug trafficking, unemployment, inequality, and the absence of the State or, more specifically, of state institutions in the social production of violence and of segregated urban space.

With the exception of a few projects.[55-57] Public Health approaches to the subject of violence and violent death have been predominantly descriptive and marked by a sort of arithmetic of urban misery. There is a general tendency towards the individualization of violence and its victims, and towards racist and classist narratives that explain violent death in terms of the violent "nature" of (Latin American) men.

Instead, more critical approaches acknowledge inequality and urban segregation, problematize the norms of masculinity, draw attention to educational and occupational exclusion, and highlight the role of absent or weak States in the perpetuation of urban violence and violent death.[1; 19; 58-59] Critical analyses of homicide prevention policies in Latin America have also made progress. For instance, Cano y Rojido's[13] recent publication distinguishes between 14 types of programs and policies: firearms control, control of alcohol use, transformation of violent public spaces, advocacy of values against lethal violence, protection of threatened individuals and groups, police intervention in high-risk areas, police patrols, legal investigation of homicides, programs to reduce police lethality, reinsertion/rehabilitation of armed violence perpetrators, mediation and negotiation with armed groups, plans for violence prevention that incorporate homicide, and integrated strategies. Gomes and De Mauro[60] offer a vision centered on the role of the State as the author of violence. They argue that, in its inability to guarantee social, civil and political rights, the neoliberal State resorts to the use of violence in its quest for legitimacy.

Significant progress has been made in understanding the production and reproduction of urban violence. Some studies have analyzed the transference of violence between public and private spaces, as well as between generations. Others have problematized the crucial role of dominant masculinities in the reproduction of urban violence.[19] Some have criticized the role of the State in the perpetuation of urban "apartheid", pointing out the limitations in policies and programs for the prevention of homi-

cides. Other crucial projects have shown the impacts of the growing criminalization of urban poverty.

However, most analyses have fallen short in their focus on static factors and groups, failing to capture the historical-territorial dynamics of urban violence in Latin America.

This, to a large extent, reflects the current limitations of dominant urban research. Torres Ribeiro [61] relates this trend to the difficulty of detaching from readings closely linked to European modernity and North American urbanization, along with an invisibilization of the place of Latin American cities in the economic flows that organize the current phase of capitalism.[61,62.] Likewise, it reflects a tendency in the social sciences to invisibilize the "geograficity" of the social,[63] that is, to deny or ignore the spatial-territorial dimension of social dynamics, as well as the ways in which space is produced both materially and symbolically. These kinds of perspectives conceive of space and territory as fundamentally natural, neutral containers in which certain processes merely take place. This view effaces the ways in which processes and actors become embedded in space through different forms of territorialization that are, in turn, mediated by power relationships.

A social determination approach

Considering the explanatory inadequacy of dominant approaches, this essay proposes an introductory approach to urban violence and, particularly, to violent death, from the perspective of "social determination", a concept borrowed from the fields of Social Medicine and Latin American Collective Health (MS-SC).

The MS-SC was consolidated through constant confrontation with the models of interpretation and praxis dominant in public health, forming a separate identity based on materialist social theory. While remaining strongly rooted in Marxism, it evolved by adapting to the continent's realities, eventually acknowledging itself as a Southern Epistemology based on broader theoretical referents and a "creole" materialist social theory.[5] This trajectory of the MS-SC is reflected in the theoretical corpus of social determination, particularly in the work of Jaime Breilh (2003) and, more recently, of María Fernanda Solíz (64). Jaime Breilh (5) recognizes three domains of reality and complexity in health (general, particular and singular), as well as hierarchical structures, reproductive-generative movements, and relative subsumption-autonomy. Health-disease processes are understood as determined "by the dynamic opposition of healthy, protective processes (which should be promoted), versus unhealthy, destructive processes (which should be prevented and corrected)"[64:27] These interactions are understood as taking place "within the following social spheres: broad/macro (general reality), particular (social insertion and lifestyle typology), and individual (physiology-physiopathology and geno-phenotype)."[64:27] The social determination of health presupposes, therefore, that we do not exist in a social vacuum, recognizing instead different levels of articulation with "the social": the general socio-historical context, the sphere of family and community, and the individual, psycho-biological level. The concept of "lifestyle" acquires particular relevance in social determination. Solíz defines "lifestyles" as "the modes of life specific to particular groups or social classes, along with their concomitant gender and ethnocultural relations."[64:70] These "modes of life" take place within and in relation to "spaces of work, consumption, domestic life,

political organization, cultural construction, and relationship with nature"[64:70]

The historicity of processes and unfolding of phenomena are central to the proposal of social determination, which emphasizes the ways in which power relations are historically consolidated and expressed in social hierarchies. Breilh summarizes this idea in the concept of "triple inequity", which recognizes the intersection of social class, gender and ethnicity (race). The social determination thesis avoids the reduction of conflict to the individual realm (65), instead recognizing social conflict as configured within a capitalist regime of production and accumulation, which is in turn inscribed on individual bodies. Thus read, illness, injury and death do not become manifest in individual bodies, but, rather, in collectives and "sociohistorical subjects who become ill" [6] in specific times and spaces. Health-disease processes, as well as inequalities in health and death, are seen as expressions of social conflict marked by historicity and territoriality. The concept of social determination proposed in this article is historical, territorial and essentially social. With this understanding, we must go beyond a historical analysis of health-disease processes and situate our readings within the spatial-territorial dynamics of the reality we wish to study.

The territory-territoriality-territorialization triad (66) - an essential analytical tool of Southern historical-geographical materialism and, particularly, of Latin American Critical Geography - holds an important place within the historical-territorial view proposed in this article. Through it, we highlight the consolidation of territories through mechanisms of spatial adaptation, which are translated into re/deterritorialization processes. In such terms, there is no territory or geographical space "without a territori-ality (way of living, feeling, and thinking space) that has been produced in a process of territorialization embedded in power relations" (68: 9).

The social determination approach is radically critical of approaches that individualize, naturalize, decontextualize, or deny the configuration of urban violence and violent death within historical-territorial contexts, processes and relationships marked by power relations.

Social Determination / urban violence and death

We must recognize the processes of social determination that are expressed in urban violence and violent death. For example, although all city dwellers in one way or another suffer their consequences, their main victims have a particular color, class and zip code.[36] Violence, and, particularly, lethal violence, does not happen randomly, nor is it an isolated event: it reflects socially, historically and territorially configured conflicts that mark Latin American societies. Thus, by recognizing the social determination of urban violence, we are able to problematize it. This implies that inequalities in the the kinds and degrees of violence to which different social groups are made visible and that an assessment is made of the possibilities and conditions of existence and resistance.

Adopting a historical-territorial approach to understanding the social determination of urban violence allows us to understand the configuration of "lifestyles" in relation to both the sociohistorical - as proposed by Breilh[5] and Solíz[64] - and territorial contexts. In the case of urban violence, this allows us to mark the differences between areas classified as "zones of sacrifice," territorial enclaves, territories controlled by drug trafficking or militias, territories of accumulation through the exploitation of tourism,

and territories of accumulation through development of infrastructures supportive of globalized economies.

This does not only apply to destructive territorialities and forms of territorialization, that is, to the violent consolidation of unhealthy territories and the systematic closure of vital spaces (through drug trafficking, etc.) We can also apply this vision to processes of resistance that coexist within territories dominated by unhealthy processes. We can also recognize those spaces that promote the "4 S's of life" postulated by Breilh[5]: solidarity, (bio-)security, sustainability, and sovereignty.

Lastly, this approach requires an analysis of Latin American which integrates the larger picture as well as the particularities in the configuration of urban violence, and a problematization of "one size fits all" approaches. In this sense, we must recognize those situational particularities, such as the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, or the rural-urban dynamics of the armed conflict in Colombia. Mega sporting events happen to be a particularity of Brazil and, specifically, Rio de Janeiro. However, we must also keep in view the country's particular articulation of military and economic power, configured during more than 20 years of military-civil dictatorship (1964-1985). This particular configuration of military power marked the structures and mechanisms of policing,[69] and establishing the category of the "internal enemy", which is currently applied to young black people from urban peripheries.

Conclusions

The proposals developed in this essay move beyond the individualized approaches to urban violence that focus on the supposed intrinsic characteristics of individual aggressors. It also rejects the notion of Latin American cities as *intrinsically* problematic[21] proposing instead a "denaturalization" of urban territorial (dis)ordering and an analysis of its historical configuration. Thus, the city becomes more than simply a scenario of urban violence, thus transcending the understanding of space as a mere container. Rather, we look at the production and reproduction of urban violence in relation to the production of urban space. More specifically, we are concerned with the re/deconfiguration of urban social and territorial ordering within a national and international context. We view Latin American cities as constituted by transformations in modes of production and accumulation, but also by other processes more broadly constituent of Latin American societies, such as their place in the international division of labor, their history as colonies, and the ongoing processes of colonialism and neocolonization. Thus, we seek to recognize processes and actors imprinted onto urban space through various forms of - often violent - territorialization mediated by power relations. An example of this is the transnational drug trade, a phenomenon which is not intrinsic to the Latin American city.

This introductory approach to what we have called "social determination of urban violence" implies a situational, relational, and procedural understanding of violence. We must recognize violent death and urban violence as expressions of the social conflict characterizing the consolidation and reproduction of capitalist production and accumulation in the region. Victims of violence embody historically and territorially configured conflicts, scarred by the dynamics of power and exploitation that occur at the intersections of class, gender, and race. This understanding does not intend to be a mere academic exercise to work out ever higher levels of com-

plexity. Rather it is proposed as a tool for the identification, characterization, and denunciation of processes that impose death and ill-health in Latin American cities and, also, as a tool for the identification and articulation of processes that promote life, resistance, and (re)existence.

Acknowledgements

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