

# THE PRODUCTION OF SPACE AND VIOLENCE IN CITIES OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH: EVIDENCE FROM LATIN AMERICA

La producción del espacio y la violencia  
en las ciudades del Sur global:  
Evidencia de América Latina

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## Abstract

*Drawing on primary and secondary research, this article assesses the spatial dynamics that underpin high rates of urban violence in Latin America. It argues that both the origins and responses to urban violence in Latin America have involved some sort of state ordering of territory, ranging from modernist urban planning practices on the one hand to police control over urban spaces on the other. To the extent that efforts to impose social and spatial order in Latin American cities have both derived from and reinforced a history of squatter occupation, ambiguous property rights, and uneven distribution of services, thus producing a stark distinction between the so-called formal and the informal city, they have laid the foundations for urban violence. In what follows, we see how and why government efforts to create spatial and social order have produced this unfortunate state of affairs. The claim is that the assumptions and ideas underlying the imposition of modernist planning priorities and spatial practices in urban Latin America have inadvertently contributed to a set of inter-related spatial, social, economic, and political problems that have driven the cycle of urban violence.*

**Keywords:** *Cities, violence, spatial fragmentation, social exclusion, modernist planning.*

## Resumen

*Basado en investigación primaria y secundaria, este artículo evalúa la dinámica espacial que sustentan los altos índices de violencia urbana en América Latina. Argumenta que tanto los orígenes como las respuestas a la violencia urbana en América Latina han implicado algún tipo de ordenamiento del territorio por parte del estado, que por un lado va desde las prácticas de planificación urbana modernista, hasta el control de los espacios urbanos por parte de la policía, por el otro. Al punto que tanto los esfuerzos para imponer orden social y espacial en las ciudades de América Latina se han derivado y han reforzado una historia de ocupación ilegal, derechos de propiedad ambiguos, y la distribución desigual de los servicios, lo que produce una distinción rígida entre la llamada ciudad formal y la informal, sentando las bases para la violencia urbana. A continuación, vemos cómo y por qué los esfuerzos del gobierno para crear orden espacial y social han producido esta lamentable situación. La idea es que las suposiciones y las ideas que subyacen la imposición de las prioridades de la planificación modernistas y las prácticas espaciales en zonas urbanas de América Latina, han contribuido inadvertidamente a un conjunto de problemas espaciales, sociales, económicos y políticos interrelacionados que han impulsado el ciclo de la violencia urbana.*

**Palabras clave:** *Ciudades, violencia, fragmentación espacial, exclusión social, planificación modernista.*

## Introduction. The Challenge of Urban Violence

**W**e live in a world of where high levels of urban violence generate public anxiety and government concern, particularly in cities of the global south. This is true not only in highly politicized contexts like the Middle East, South Asia, or Africa, where sovereignty struggles play out in cities among opposition groups who are battling authoritarian, fragile or contested states. It also is true in many regions of newly democratic Latin America where economic liberalization and globalization have reduced employment opportunities, increased income inequalities, scaled back on social programs and curtailed government responsibility for public goods, including housing (Ungar, 2011; Bergman and Whitehead, 2009; Davis, 2010). In many of these settings, poverty becomes the context in which levels of everyday violence can match those seen in conditions of intense political conflict or war-time aggression (Davis 2009b). In Mexico, a country I have studied for years, the extent of violence in the last several years has matched that of Iraq and Afghanistan. Indeed, a recent UN report estimated that nearly 9,000 civilians had been killed and 17,386 wounded while fighting in Iraq in the year 2014; while in contrast, “figures from the Mexican government show that last year (i.e. 2014) cartels were responsible for murdering more than 16,000 people in Mexico alone, and an estimated 60,000 in the preceding six years.” (Porter, 2014).

In Latin America, violence tends to concentrate in cities where un- and underemployment combined with a history of informality have created socio-spatial and economic inequality. In these locales, squatter occupations, ambiguous property rights, and lack of services have set residents of the so-called “informal city” apart from the more “formal city” in ways that reinforce inequalities and thus drive the cycle of violence (Koonings and Kruijt, 2009). Such patterns are a particularly large problem in the major cities of Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela, and throughout Central America. And although violence is not specific to only the poor neighborhoods in these cities, it tends to flourish in its more marginalized areas, especially in informal settlements.

Why this is the case has a lot to do with the failures of the state to pursue socially, spatially, and economically inclusive policies for the urban citizenry. In many cities of the global south, poor residents have often been left to reproduce their own shelter and livelihoods, and in the face of state neglect they often turn to illicit actors and activities to guarantee the services, resources, and protection that local planning and policy authorities have failed to provide. Adding insult to injury, the state’s response to such conditions is often a criminalization of marginality, either through actions of the so-called “penal state” (Muller, 2011; Wacquant, 2009) or through clientelistic coercion (Koonings and Kruijt, 2009; Auyero, 2007). Complicating matters, many of the areas most affected by violence are precisely those where the state has tolerated informality, leaving citizens responsible for providing their own services and safety nets in ways that reinforce their social and economic vulnerability. While informality does provide socio-economic space for reproduction among the poorest of the poor, it also sustains deep spatial inequalities and produces a socio-political environment where residents are under constant surveillance and/or must informally negotiate with state authorities to maintain their livelihoods. Both practices have helped undermined the rule of law in ways that makes violence and criminality more common. This occurs mainly because police stand at the frontlines of surveillance, using their extraordinary powers of discretion to sustain multiple forms of

extortion in return for toleration of informality or illegality (Davis, 2008; Davis, 2009a; Uldriks, 2009). In a political system where informal or illicit actors and activities are exploited by state actors for personal gain, police have become part of the problem of violence and insecurity (Davis, 2008).

To be sure, the state's reliance on police has long been a critical armament in a larger arsenal of coercive tactics employed by the state to establish urban social and spatial order more generally (Davis and Pereira, 2000). For decades, urban authorities in Latin America have used police to help re-establish the state's provision and regulation of urban services, either directly in a bid to fulfill planning objectives or help generate citizen loyalty to the state, or indirectly in order to break the power of local mafias or gang leaders who have cemented their authority through clandestine control of urban services and other local urban governance functions. Yet police also have stood on the frontlines of state to bulldoze informal settlements or invade poor communities, playing a mediating role in "recapturing" land or public services (i.e. pirated water and electricity) from residents, for the purposes of returning them to the hands of the state or the private sector. Such practices have driven the cycle of citizen distrust of police, which in turn fuels state toleration of informality, thus establishing an urban spatial context for police complicity with criminals and thus creating an environment susceptible to violence.

All this suggests that, to a certain degree, both the origins and responses to urban violence in Latin American cities have involved some sort of state ordering of territory, ranging from urban planning practice on one hand to policed segregation of the city on the other. Indeed, the more the social and physical separation of the formal and the informal city, the more the violence, and the more the pressure to use police as a means to eliminate the moral "disorder" of informal areas and insure that the "pathologies" and activities of poor residents in informal areas do not spill over into the formal city. My aim here is to provide a closer examination of these dynamics, with a special focus on the ways that urban planning practices in Latin American cities have laid the social, spatial, and political foundations for violence. After laying out a set of general propositions about the history of urban planning practice in Latin America, followed by a discussion of the ways that the contemporary embrace of liberalization and globalization have reinforced the socio-spatial inequities initially established through state actions, I conclude with some suggestions about what planners can do to remedy or perhaps even reverse these developments. In particular, I argue that because urban violence involves planning failures in the form of social, political, and/or spatial exclusion, combined with state excess in the form of coercive policing and human rights abuses, the pathway out of the cycles of urban violence will inevitably require new planning institutions and priorities capable of generating social and spatial inclusion, greater state respect for community autonomy, and more legitimate methods of policing.

## Planning Practice and the Origins of Violence

A common feature shared by cities in Brazil, Colombia, Argentina, Venezuela, Mexico, and other Latin American locations now suffering from chronic urban violence is a shared tradition of urban planning practice rooted in modernist ideas about how to grow the national economy through strategic investments in industrial development. To prepare a city – and thus a nation -- for industrial take-off required the imposition of a new spatial order. Thus, starting in the 1930s and continuing through the 1960s, most urban planning authorities in Latin America prioritized land uses that privileged housing for workers

and sited factories near transportation infrastructure and other resources necessary for commercial economic growth. A closer examination of this history and logic, and how the urban investment decisions of national authorities impacted the socio-spatial segregation that now fuels contemporary patterns of urban violence, suggesting that the root foundations of urban violence in Latin American cities can be partly traced to the modernist distinction between the formal and informal city.

In Latin America and other parts of the global south, the actions of planners – both urban and national – were informed by the assumption that development occurred through the conquest and re-shaping of “untamed” space in the service of social and spatial integration. On the national scale, this entailed a “colonization” of national space through major infrastructural projects like roads and electricity, with the aim of integrating people, places, and natural resources into a larger project of employment and economic expansion. At the level of the city, architect-planners’ programmatic concerns with rationalizing social and spatial order were manifest in the development of urban plans with a strict spatial order. Different parts of the city were not only preserved for different social and economic functions, there was little room for any “pre-modern” mixing of land uses or informal activities in those areas designated as sites for a modern economic and political order. Such dictates re-directed citizens to liminal (and usually distant) areas of the city where informality was tolerated and where marginality flourished. Even as planners responded by extend the modernist project to ever more populations and neighborhoods – usually through state investments in workers’ housing, transport, and services -- fiscal constraints usually meant that such goods could not be provided for all urban residents.

One result was the development of a divided city in which large swathes of the urban population lived in so-called “no man’s lands” outside the social, spatial, and political bounds of the formal city. Whether seen as marginal or informal, planner’s preoccupation with the trappings of modernity meant that residents of these neighborhoods were practically “invisible” to city officials, whose studied failure to recognize them as part of the modern project further justified the explosion of neighborhoods without services, without formal property rights, lacking in political recognition, and with only minimal access to the goods and services of the modern or formal city (Goldstein, 2003b). These patterns not only set the basis for social and spatial separation rather than integration, they reinforced the view that those who lived in the informal city/marginal neighborhoods were second class citizens not morally worthy of inclusion or recognition, whose urban lifestyles and practices both stained and challenged the larger modernist project.

Planning officials’ failure to formally recognize the social and economic value of the ad hoc urban practices undertaken by residents in informal settlements, and their unwillingness to embrace these or other alternative forms of urbanism as either a legitimate or justifiable response to hardship, led to reprisals and, at times, the flat-out destruction of entire neighborhoods. Even without actual bulldozing, the threat of displacement fueled community instability and new forms of political clientelism that sustained citizen dependence on informal community leaders for protection vis-à-vis the oppressive and unpredictably coercive arm of the state (McIlwaine and Moser, 2001). In addition to calling into question the strong horizontal networks among community residents, the threat of coercion combined with political clientelism also reinforced vertical networks of authority, whether formal or informal, built around the power deriving from the capacity to protect and or accommodate residents in marginal areas. Such practices were particularly common in low-income neighborhoods where vulnerable citizens had little recourse but to

accommodate. The end result was the emergence of an array of informal and illicit community leaders who grounded their legitimacy and reinforced their authority by controlling urban neighborhoods -- and the activities within them -- for their own gain, in exchange for relative stability. Whether through direct domination over citizens and physical territory, or through cooptation and extortion in the provision of everyday services, these local leaders built their power by offering an alternative form of "sovereignty" that itself further limited the power and capacity of the formal state to integrate these spaces of informal urbanism into the developmental plans and infrastructural projects of the rest of the city.

This situation of territorially fragmented or "dual" sovereignty, in which informal political leaders leveraged control over services in the neighborhoods of low-income residents while formal state authorities remained attuned to the demands of middle and upper class urban residents in the formal city, affected the scope and nature of conventional planning practice -- most clearly reflected in the privileging of physical planning over social planning. The preoccupation with the physical built environment may have partly owed to planners' embrace of the modernization paradigm, in which building the urban economy through investments in industrial and transportation infrastructure was considered the first step towards advancing economic progress. With these priorities, planning action revolved around those interventions that directly strengthened the functioning of the urban industrial economy. But the preoccupation with physical over social planning was also made possible by the fact that with the emergence of informal settlements in the urban periphery, the state was less pressured to address the social concerns of the city's most vulnerable populations, who increasingly turned to informal leaders for quotidian claims. Accordingly, social concerns that were critical for the city's poorest populations, ranging from housing to health to education to income-generation, usually took a back burner to large-scale investments in transportation and the infrastructural servicing needs of upscale commerce and manufacturing.

This is not to say that planners completely ignored poor residents during the periods of greatest urban industrial growth between the 1940s and 1970s. But when they did implement targeted policies, a similar logic prevailed. Investment priority was given to housing and transport, so as to shelter and move the labor force necessary to a thriving industrial economy. Likewise, when built these projects tended to be located in the formal city where property rights regimes were clear and where developers were as likely to gain as residents. During this period, few efforts were made to invest in the housing, transport, or commercial infrastructure of the periphery, despite the fact that this was precisely where low-income residents displaced from the urban development of the formal city ended up. Even when informal areas were on the receiving end of state investment, the priority tended to be major transportation infrastructure that would make it possible for residents to travel to work in the formal city. Overall, informal settlements remained highly under-developed and under-invested, at least in terms of state programs and policies that might create alternative forms of local employment, thus reinforcing the conditions for continued poverty (Roy and Al-Sayyad, 2004). That planners' rarely sought to develop and foster forms of commercial development or other non-manufacturing sources of job creation in the informal areas of the city owed not just to social and political neglect, but also to the fact that economic principles associated with the modernist paradigm established a set of land use priorities associated with economies of scale and land valuation. With this logic, commercial activities were to be located in highly accessible downtown areas with well-established property rights regimes, while industrial manufacturing plants were relegated to peripheral locations where land was cheap; likewise, residents were expected to gravitate to work locations, and not vice-versa.

In such an environment, residents of informal settlements face a dual challenge: to find local sources of income generation and to provide their own infrastructure. For many the former was accomplished by either factory or domestic work in other locations, while the latter came through self-help housing and other forms of auto-construction. But for a small but significant number of residents in informal settlements, servicing the built environment of these precarious locations itself became a source of income generation and employment. This was perhaps best seen in the buying and selling of consumer access to physical services like, water, electricity, transport, and shelter, with the latter guaranteed through privileged territorial access to lots for self-construction (Gilbert and Ward, 1986). Yet it was precisely this state of affairs that further laid the foundation for violence by creating an environment where the employment and livelihood prospects of the city's poorest and most vulnerable populations depended on and thus were brokered by occupation of and control over the physical environment (Castells, 1983). Although such activities did produce income or livelihood options, these exchanges were often conducted outside the law and with the involvement of local informal leaders. To the extent that informal political leaders based much of their local power and legitimacy on their capacities to mount and protect these illegal exchanges, both residents and informal leaders needed each other for protection, further tying them to each other in alternative reciprocities that distanced them from the formal city and from the rule of law, thus creating unique social and territorial spaces for violence to emerge.

## Bringing the (Coercive) State into the Picture

The state was not completely clueless about these social and spatial developments, of course, and by the late 1960s and 1970s planners began to recognize that their failure to address conditions in informal settlements or other locations with economically vulnerable populations held the capacity to undermine larger urban developmental goals. This realization dawned on state actors most clearly when ongoing urban growth put pressure on urban land markets, leading to a territorial expansion of the city beyond the bounds of its existent infrastructure. With available land an increasing valuable commodity, informal settlements soon became a prime target for real estate developers, particularly those where squatting and illegal land tenure was the norm. Under pressure from investors to establish a regime of formal property rights, and with multi-lateral agencies like the World Bank willing to assist in mounting land regularization programs, local authorities sought new policies to incorporate or transform informal areas so as to better spatially integrate them into the expanding city by linking them to the basic infrastructure grids and/or to make them possible sites for future property development. However, because the areas spatially targeted for development were often those previously-marginalized communities now under the sway of informal leaders or other illicit actors, entering into such territories was easier said than done, particular when it came to shelter. At minimum, efforts to transform the spatial conditions of these settlements required careful political negotiation between planning authorities and local leaders over who should be the recipient of upgrading or regularization programs. And even under the best of circumstance, the amount of investment needed to transform a relatively impoverished neighborhood into a community where all residents had infrastructure services and property rights was beyond the scope of most government budgets.

Yet it was not merely the state's limited budgetary capacities that slowed efforts to better upgrade and incorporate informal settlements into the formal city. The longstanding separation of social from spatial

planning also fragmented political authority and planning capacity in and over the transformation of vulnerable communities in ways that kept low-income residents economically disadvantaged and vulnerable. Much of the problem owed to the institutional split between local and national authorities. To the extent that city authorities generally took care of physical planning issues like the provision of roads, electricity, and water, while national authorities established the institutional, social, legal, and economic contours of land regularization, as well as poverty and employment targets, coordination between the programs and priorities of the state was minimal. For example, when multi-lateral agencies like the World Bank entered into the field of housing and shelter, they worked through national authorities, often without interaction at the level of the city or the community. And even in those instances where local authorities developed housing programs for informal areas, using the land use tools and investment funds available to them, they still had very limited direct policy control over employment or mortgage finance programs, which tended to remain in the hands of national authorities. Thus, local officials were not in a position to insure that residents had the income potential to afford home ownership, nor were city finances sufficient to pick up the slack by offering mortgage or income subsidies to the un or under-employed who might be best served by housing programs in informal areas. This led to an array of projects and arrangements (including sites and services; squatter upgrading; land regularization) that served only a fraction of the population and that, when implemented, tended to fragment informal settlements into multiple “housing classes.”

In general, then, the imposition of property rights without a view to the larger bureaucratic divisions that limited overall effects, and without an understanding of the larger social or economic consequences of home ownership and its implications on land markets as well solidarity within the community, led to social divisions within community between those with and without title. It also pushed those without title to become more dependent on local power brokers, even as those with title became more linked to formal governing institutions. Both served as forms of patronage that continued to sustain informal and formal political authority. Such developments further undermined the horizontal relations among community residents even as they increased citizen dependence on political leaders who could broker service provision and divergent community claims, whether formal or informal. In fact, the existence of multiple housing classes, itself built on the uneven patterns of land tenure and property rights, further empowered those who wielded the capacity to mediate between the informal and formal systems of service provision, as well as between illicit and licit activities.

Yet it was not merely informal or illicit actors who became empowered by an environment riddled with social, spatial, and economic division, or who increased their authority by positioning themselves as mediators between citizens and planning officials in matters of the built environment. Police also played a similar role. Police’s involvement in informal neighborhoods may initially have owed to the state’s interests in controlling populations and space, as well as their desire to impose spatial order and monitor the social behavior of marginal populations (Hinton, 2006). But once inside the physical confines of these informal spaces, police tended to accommodate and reinforce the informal order even as they wielded their coercive authority in ways that made residents vulnerable to abuses of power (Rogers, 2006). Much like informal community leaders, police frequently worked with, negotiated, or extorted vulnerable residents for their own private gain – particularly those who needed protection in the face of urban regulations associated with formal dictates of urban governance (Dewey, 2012). In low income communities,



pressures for rent-seeking and the market for extortion were so widespread that both police and informal leaders often ended up competing over who would control local protection rackets (Koonings and Krujit, 2005). Over time, this led to longstanding networks of complicity between police and local community leaders, especially those involved in illicit activities, with these relationships growing stronger and more nefarious as the ranks of the informal economy expanded and the commodities traded became more illicit. This was especially the case when the markets for extortion and protection involved goods traded across metropolitan, national, and transnational supply chains, primarily because movement in space was more costly to insure and difficult to monitor, even by police.

In those informal communities where police protected criminals more than residents, and where the scale of illicit trade expanded beyond the territorial boundaries of the neighborhood, violence was much more likely. This occurred not just because police complicity in illegal activities meant that the rule of law was all but non-existent, or because such an environment produced high resident mistrust of police, thus leaving local informal authorities more scope to control social and spatial dynamics. The more the networks of protection, extortion, and trade spread beyond the community (itself a function of the local state's incapacity to keep the informal city isolated and controlled) the greater the sums of money exchanged and the more diffuse the networks of exchange. This in turn provided a range of new opportunities for rent-seeking in which violence was often a means for asserting authority.

## From Path-Dependency to Contingency: The Destructive Impacts of Globalization

The combined effect of these socio-spatial and political-economic developments – starting with a separation of the formal from the informal city, the reduction of employment prospects in concentrated physical spaces, the growth of a local illicit economy linked to the “alternative urbanism” of the local built environment, the emergence of local political leaders whose authority derived from their protection of these informal and illicit spaces, and the complicity of the police in such developments -- created new forms of loyalty and allegiance at the level of the neighborhood. These loyalties built on and derived from connections among those whose livelihoods were socially and spatially linked to informal and illicit activities at both subnational and transnational levels.

To the extent that alternative imagined communities of allegiance and reciprocity provide new forms of welfare and meaning, they often operated as the functional equivalents of states, thereby sustaining new forms of “non-state sovereignty” that contrast to the imagined national communities that sustained modern nation-state formation and traditional patterns of sovereignty, along the lines articulated by Benedict Anderson (Davis, 2009). When these new imagined communities exist apart from (if not in opposition to) traditional nation-states, they often choose (or are forced) to rely on their own armed actors to sustain, nurture, or protect their activities and dominion, especially when they conflict with national state requisites. In many cities of Latin America today, even the traditional policing/coercive function of the state is now undertaken by informal actors (like mafias) or private security forces whose allegiance rests only with their clients not the state (Muller, 2010). In this wild-west type of atmosphere, many low-income communities with a history of informality find themselves in a situation where violence is the

principal currency for greasing the wheels of the economic and for wielding political power.

That violence has become so widespread owes to much more than just a path-dependent set of built environmental decisions, grounded in the embrace of modernist planning principles. It also has intensified in the face of the newest form of modernization: economic globalization and its more recent manifestation, neo-liberalization, which also had negative social and spatial impacts (Davis and Alvarado, 1999). It was not merely that globalization produced new pressures for the implementation of urban redevelopment projects intended to help enhance the global city status of many Latin American metropolises, often in ways that displaced residents from informal or low-rent properties and thus increased their economic vulnerability while also driving greater social and spatial inequality (Davis, 2006 ; Becker and Muller 2013).

Globalization also made its mark by fundamentally altering the employment conditions of urban residents, particularly in comparison to the period of Fordist industrialization when large-scale industrial production factories co-existed easily with smaller ones, and when protection prevented undue competition from foreign firms. With reductions in tariff and trade barriers accompanying neoliberal globalization bringing more factory and firm closings, ever larger numbers of the urban labor force turned to the informal sector for employment (Baroni, 2007; Roberts and Porters, 2005). Likewise, the globalization of large-scale commercial activities (think Walmart) reduced the viability of petty commodity producers and small shops that had long provided the backbone of the local retail economy. As a result, the character and nature of informal commerce in cities of Latin America ballooned in size even as it began to undergo major transformation (De Alba and Lesseman 2012; Auyero 2000). Indeed, without heavy tariffs and other protectionist barriers, many of the consumer durables historically sold on city streets declined dramatically in cost, even as the supply of vendors accelerated, thereby reducing the income in informal sector work.

What was perhaps most significant about these trends was the fact that vulnerability now spread across the metropolitan area, moving from just the under-serviced periphery back to the formal city as well, and particularly to those downtown neighborhoods which had long hosted commercial retail activities. Street vendors and other petty commodity traders who served residents of the formal city, and who could have counted on networks of production and consumption of clandestine consumer goods in order to supply urban residents in pre-liberalization periods now had to find other “illicit” commodities to sell informally. This often meant the embrace of illegal commodities like pirated CD’s and DVD’s and other goods that still merited some form of global regulation. Sales of these goods not only linked informal vendors to a new set of international commodity chains in the global economy; they also brought local residents into ever more dangerous and violent international networks, as with drugs and guns. Not surprisingly, such activities began to change the already vulnerable urban neighborhoods by exposing them to more extensive internationally linked criminality and violence. And even those residents whose livelihood was not tied to such dangerous activities began to resent the transformation of their neighborhoods, because of their own feelings of insecurity, but also because the violence that accompanied illicit activities scared off potential customers for their retail and commercial activities.

That globalization helped expand commodity trade beyond national borders in ways that privileged transnational connections among licit and illicit activities and empowered the perpetrators of violence not only meant that ever larger numbers of urban citizens felt they no longer could count

on the police, or the state to protect them in the face of growing criminality. These new global networks of illicit exchange have produced new forms of social and political allegiance that challenge the state's legitimacy and capacity to monopolize or territorially control the means of violence. This is increasingly so among those urban residents who are spatially embedded in informal economies where local livelihoods are constructed through illicit activities built on transnational supply chains (Hasan, 2002). These are the urban residents who are more likely to turn local community leaders for protection in the face of national-state efforts to cleanse their neighborhoods or use military and police force restore urban order, thus reinforcing the cycle of violence. In the best of circumstances, these local leaders are well-enough connected to the residents, the political system, and the rule of law to both protect and engage the citizenry in the face of growing violence while also supplanting the legitimate power of the nation state (Arias, 2004). But owing to the path-dependent histories of state neglect, social and spatial exclusion, and police impunity discussed earlier, it is not surprising that few communities have been willing to buy into the formal system of governance that promises to serve as an antidote to violence. Many prefer to impose their own rule of law, often through acts of vigilantism (Goldstein, 2003a), or to forge new loyalties and allegiances to criminals who themselves take on state functions by providing protection and community services (Arias, 2006b). Once this happens, citizen's connection to the idea of the state (territory, allegiance, rule of law, and thus police) may be broken in fundamental ways, thus limiting both the local and the national state's capacity to use policy, planning, and policing tools to serve the population, further laying the foundation for more fragmentation, exclusion, neglect, and violence (Davis, 2011).

## Challenging Social and Spatial Exclusion through New Territorialities and Spatial Strategies for Planning Action: Concluding Remarks

So what is the future of cities facing chronic urban violence, in Latin America or elsewhere? There are probably no clear or simple answers to this question, not the least because the origins and nature of violence will be critical to understanding both the limits and the possibilities of planning in such settings. However, there seems to be preliminary evidence that much of the challenge lies in identifying the larger impacts of socio-spatial division in conflict cities, understanding whether these divisions are built on social, political, or economic exclusion, and then *recasting the scales and spatial strategies of planning action* to build synergies -- rather than greater division -- between these fragmented and competing territories of the city. To a certain degree, as they seek to make this strategic shift, planners will be hamstrung by the larger ideological projects that frame their authority and legitimacy -- whether understood in terms of allegiances to modernism or to other more political projects that seek to create hierarchies and order. But either way, if peace and co-existence that can chart an exit from vicious cycles of violence is the aim, then one has to imagine new forms of planning action that can link together the competing territorialities and sovereignties of the city. In pursuit of such aims, I would suggest innovative new planning practices that fall into the following three categories:

1. A purposeful socio-spatial rethinking of the formal-informal divide in planning practices, with an eye to understanding how alternative urbanisms that are practiced by spatially excluded populations can serve as the basis not just for strengthening their own neighborhoods, but for challenging their inferior status in ways that make informal activities desirable by all urban residents.
2. Development of new strategies for controlling local spaces that empower residents' capacities to both negotiate with and create autonomy from the agents of violence, whether they be local informal leaders or the police themselves. Coincident with this aim would be support for generating security strategies "from below," such that citizens are not forced to rely on state or market actors (whether private security or violence entrepreneurs) for local protection, but are empowered to make their own decisions about what must be secured in the spaces that comprise their neighborhood. Without enhancing the "agency" or relative autonomy of residents from the institutions and practices that drive violence, and without liberating them from their relegation to liminal social and political spaces between the formal and informal authority, violence will be very hard to reduce.
3. A territorial re-ordering of planning practices so as to focus less attention on a single locality and more attention on the creation of networks of activities and allegiances that link together neighborhoods of a city. Such an approach stands in contrast to much conventional planning practice in contemporary democratic societies, where activities within the local community serve as the starting and ending point for participation and planning action. Given the fact that in conflict settings division and fragmentation have helped drive the cycle of violence, efforts should be made to transcend such divisions without necessarily eliminating the social and spatial basis for connections and solidarity at the level of the community. One could conceptualize this as a form of "separation with connection," and work more to understand the array of infrastructural, social, and economic policies that support this end. The building of new participatory institutions that allow citizens to act independent from authorities, as noted above, could also be linked to the development of new urban policies to lay the material foundation for the enhancement and relative autonomy of the community – perhaps through new investments and economic projects that bring prosperity to informal areas in ways that strengthen their connectivity with the formal city as well.
4. A rethinking of overall metropolitan-scale planning goals in ways that can take into account the servicing, governance, and economic relationship of the territorial parts and whole of the city, paying strategic attention to spatial nodes in the city where violence and exclusion have prevented integration and thinking of new ways to achieve such synergies. Such initiatives will not only help establish the framework for new connections among activities and locations, as noted above, it will also serve as a basis for linking local communities into a larger urban gover-

nance project that will mitigate against further fragmentation of the metropolitan landscape. Such developments could set the basis for new forms of metropolitan allegiance in which urban priorities and activities become the basis for legitimate governance and political authority in ways that allow a reining in of competing subnational and transnational allegiances.

In a globalizing world where neoliberal political and economic policies are ascendant, it is easy for citizens to become less connected to the nation as the primordial site for political allegiance and social or economic claim-making, and more tied to alternative “imagined communities” of loyalties built either on essentialist identities like ethnicity, race or religion or on spatially-circumscribed allegiances and networks of social and economic production and reproduction, whether licit or illicit. When these are allowed to flower and fragment the urban domain, conflict is likely and the search for order becomes so urgent that it becomes tempting for the state to revert to modernist techniques of social and spatial control that may have helped fuel violence and conflict in the first place. In the face of such possibilities, an alternative scaling of allegiances, built around tangible planning action that connects the territorial parts and the whole while creating new social and spatial synergies between the franchised and the disenfranchised, may ultimately be the best course of action. At least if it helps renew a sense of loyalty to a larger guiding authority, even as it lays the material foundation for less socio-spatial exclusion and a positively shared urban experience.

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