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ADLAF Congreso 2016

Violencia y desigualdad

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(coords.)

FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG
ADLAF
NUEVA SOCIEDAD

Violencia y desigualdad : ADLAF Congreso 2016 / Jefferson Jaramillo Marín ...
[et al.] ; coordinación general de Svenja Blanke; Sabine Kurtenbach;
prólogo de José Mujica. – 1ª ed . - Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires:
Nueva Sociedad: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung: ADLAF, 2017.
256 p.; 23 x 15 cm.

ISBN 978-987-95677-9-1

1. Desigualdad. 2. Violencia. 3. América Latina. I. Jaramillo Marín, Jefferson II.
Blanke, Svenja, coord. III. Kurtenbach, Sabine, coord. IV. Mujica, José, prolog.
CDD 303

Primera edición: 2017
Corrección: Germán Conde, Vera Giaconi,
Kristie Robinson y Eduardo Szklarz
Diseño y diagramación: Fabiana Di Matteo
Fotografías de portada: Heinrich Sassenfeld, Shutterstock

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ADLAF, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
Defensa 1111, 1º A, C1065AAU
Buenos Aires, Argentina

ISBN 978-987-95677-9-1

Queda hecho el depósito que establece la Ley 11.723.

Libro de edición argentina.

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Inequality and drug violence: the crack market in Recife, Brazil

Jean Daudelin / José Luiz Ratton

Recife's crack market is violent, while its other drug markets remain quiet. This paper explores how the main mechanisms at work are tied to inequality. The article shows that those mechanisms—modalities of market operation, consumption patterns, and policing—are embedded in a context characterized by social and economic marginalization and that unequal treatment by law enforcement authorities contributes to the violence that prevails in that market. Poverty and compulsive consumption makes credit and consignment, along with their «management,» major drivers of violence. Lack of formal job opportunities creates a large pool of recruits for low level trafficking.

Introduction

Recife sits at the eastern tip of South America. It is the hub of the largest metropolitan area in Brazil's poor Northeast and, over the last two decades, its metropolitan region was the most violent of the whole country. Much of that violence has been traced to drug trafficking.

Building on separate studies where we identify the factors that make part of Recife's crack market tense and violent, while its other drug markets remain cool and quiet (Daudelin/Ratton 2016a y 2016b), this article explores the extent to which the key mechanisms at work are tied

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Note: Research for this paper was supported by a grant from the Insight Program of Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (435V2014V1275). The protocol for data collection was cleared by Carleton University's Research Ethics Board (project # 103339, September 9, 2015-September 9, 2016).

to inequality. We show that those mechanisms are embedded in a social context characterized by social and economic marginalization and that unequal treatment by law enforcement authorities contributes significantly to the violence that prevails in that market.

The article specifically traces violence to characteristics and modalities of market operation, consumption patterns, and policing that are structured by social exclusion and inequality, or that are discrete expressions of the latter. Addictive crack consumption is concentrated among the poorest sectors of Recife's population and they are offered insufficient support from health authorities, increasing the incidence of long-term dependent use. Poverty and compulsive or dependent consumption makes credit and consignment, along with their «management,» major drivers of violence. Lack of formal job opportunities creates a large pool of recruits for low level trafficking. Given cramped living spaces and a significant proportion of street dwellers among habitual users, the high-frequency transactions deriving from addictive consumption take place overtly, creating a locus of territorial competition for thieves or gangs, and making the market highly vulnerable to police disruption. Selective and discriminatory policing, finally, enhances the dysfunctionalities of the crack market and provides poor deterrence for violent behavior. These factors combine to create the conditions of extreme violence.

The article has three parts. It starts with a brief review of the literature on inequality and drug violence, in which we argue that structural explanations that focus on slow moving factors, on their own, simply cannot elucidate violent dynamics like Latin America's drug violence, given the high volatility of the latter. We then describe the mechanics of drug violence in Recife's crack market and, in a third section, explore the links that exist between those mechanisms, on one side, and socio-economic and legal marginalization and inequality on the other.

Inequality and drug violence

The link between inequality and violence in general, and particularly in Latin America, is a classic trope in the literature, both for traditional explanations of political violence and revolution (Paige; LaFeber), and more recently to explain criminal violence (Soares/Naritomi). If we accept the almost consensual view that a significant part of the violence that has plagued much of the region since the 1980s is tied to illegal drug production, trafficking, and consumption, it becomes almost natural to establish a direct connection between the extreme inequality and the high levels of violence that prevail in Latin America.

It has proven difficult to establish these connections with precision, however. Some statistical analyses of the relationship between inequality and violence, such as Fajnzylber et al. (1998) and Tatiane Menezes et al. (2015) have found a positive relationship, others have found none (Dills/Miron/Summers).

The economic theory that underlie much of the «empirical» research on inequality and homicides is also problematic. Gary Becker's famous model (1974) traces crime to an individual's cost-benefit calculation, where cost is understood as sanction times or its probability, and benefit as the net gain from a given criminal act. Inequality, in that model, implies that potential benefits increase, for poorer individuals, when wealth differentials are higher. While this model may plausibly apply to property crimes, its relevance for homicides is doubtful (Daudelin).

These studies, moreover, by assuming that a slow-moving structural variable like inequality could explain violence and homicide rates, have to assume as well that the latter are also slow moving, for you can't explain something that varies quickly by something that doesn't. Evidence, particularly from the most violent countries of the Americas, shows very clearly that volatility and spatial variation are the norm, not the exception. New York, Los Angeles, São Paulo, Recife, Bogota, Medellin, Tijuana and Ciudad Juarez have seen both huge increase of their homicide rates followed, in a period of a few years, by just as «violent» a drop (Zimring/Hawkings; Blumstein/Wallman). The variation within countries is also impressive, both in Brazil and Colombia or Mexico.

To tackle those problems, instead of working *down* from general levels of violence and homicide rates, we work *up* from the specific mechanisms that can generate violence in drug markets and, having established their efficacy and relevance, try to see how they are in turn affected by poverty and inequality.

The mechanics of violence in Recife's crack market

This section builds on an analysis of the micro-mechanics of Recife's drug markets. That analysis is based on 50 interviews of users, sellers, therapists, doctors, psychologists, social and health workers, academic experts, pharmacologists, police officers, and prosecutors. The detailed results are presented in two papers as yet unpublished but already available from the authors (Daudelin/Ratton 2016a y 2016b). For the sake of expediency, we will not constantly refer to them.

Violence on Recife's crack market can be traced to three inter-related groups of factors: the characteristics of the market and its participants, the consumption patterns of local users, and the way in which the police enforces the legal prohibition of crack use and trade.

Poor players in a competitive market

Crack consumption is concentrated among the most marginalized sectors of Recife's society. Retail distribution takes place in some of the city's poorest neighborhoods and involves individuals who grew up and still live in them.

For a poor individual, the raw economic appeal of crack trafficking is significant. Once adulterated, cooked, cut into crystals and wrapped, the kilogram of cocaine base bought at the Bolivian or Paraguayan border for US$ 1,000 is turned into US$ 20-30,000 worth of crack rocks when in the hands of the «owner» of a local distribution point. Even the street seller typically gets 20% of the retail price. At R$ 10 per .15-.25 gr rocks, this means that a youth with no formal qualification can net the equivalent of the official minimum salary (R$ 880 per month in 2016) by selling 400-500 rocks per month, or about 15 per day. With regular users typically smoking more than 10 rocks per use episode (Bastos/ Bertoni, pp. 60-61)—and often many more—such a sale volume is easily reached and it gives that seller a revenue that is superior to that of 60% of the city's *families* (IBGE).

Given such returns, the low opportunity costs of that population make involvement in the drug market extremely appealing. As a result, and in spite of the risks involved, a whole local economy develops around crack retailing: in addition to sales point (or *bocas*) managers, sellers, guards, hitmen, crack cooks, crystal cutters and wrappers, minors take on alert or courier duties, honest families house drug cache, black-market resellers pick up the goods bartered for drugs, neighbors provide space for the long smoking sessions, close-by motel owners do the same for richer users, addicts sell sex for drugs, and corner stores and street vendors provide food and drinks to all.

In practice, however, much of the profit at the lowest levels is purely notional. For many participants, payments are made in kind: a street seller gets 10 rocks at R$ 10 in consignment and needs to pay back R$ 80; lookouts receive one or two for signaling an approaching police car; a shack owner will get a few rocks from each user he lets in, as will young female users who offer sexual services in those same shacks. As a large

proportion of those involved in the crack economy are also users, those rocks are smoked, not sold, and profits literally go up in smoke.

In spite of this sizable problem, and given generalized poverty, involvement in crack trafficking remains alluring for many and this, as a result, implies relatively high levels of competition. A case in point is Recife's own bulk market for cocaine base and crack. According to converging accounts by our informants, it has been dominated by a group of 10 to 15 men for the last decade or so and the *modus vivendi* they have established has survived the regular arrest of some of them, as well as a degree of renewal among the various networks' leaders.

The calm that prevails in the higher reaches of the local crack market, however, does not filter down at the retail level. To understand why, we need to begin with the consequences of the peculiar way in which crack is consumed.

Compulsive and dependent consumption

Crack consumption has two dominant characteristics: compulsive use and, frequently, addiction. Unlike cannabis, cocaine, heroin, or LSD, crack is typically smoked over intensive «binging» sessions that can last hours and sometimes days. When smoked, crack produces a swift, powerful and short high followed by a quick and often brutal down that is difficult to manage on its own or with cannabis or alcohol. Users are thus compelled to repeat use, which they often do until complete exhaustion.

Compulsion has a number of implications. The first is to make crack use very expensive. Though the price of a single rock is very low (typically R$ 10, i.e. the price of three bus tickets or one cigarette pack), binge sessions quickly become expensive pursuits. According to a large-scale national study, regular Brazilian users typically smoke 14 rocks per such session (Bastos/Bertoni, pp. 60-61). Recife users, sellers, as well as frontline social and health workers, however, tell us that the consumption of 30 rocks or more is common, which implies smoking sessions that cost between R$ 100 and R$ 300. Using Jonathan Caulkins et al.'s «dollar per stoned hour» criteria (2012, p. 132)—a rough but useful metric—and considering that, at the writing of this paper (April 2016), a beer can sells in Recife for R$ 2, a bottle of *cachaça* for R$ 20, an LSD blot for R$ 50, 50 grams of good quality cannabis for R$ 80 and the gram of hashish oil for R$ 180-R$ 200 (direct observation and interviews), crack is clearly and by far the most expensive drug currently used in the city.

Worse still, compulsion turns the low price of individual rocks into a trap, as many users can't resist the urge to consume more than the few of them they may have bought at first.

Addiction is the second key characteristic of crack consumption in Recife. Though not inherent to crack use (interviews; Reinarman/Levine), it is widespread and, according to our informants, predominant among local users. Together with compulsive use, crack addiction is a major driver of further impoverishment among users. It also becomes a major incentive for them to join the traffic or the activities that revolve around it, as they represent one of the few practical ways available to sustain their expensive habit, whether in kind or financially.

«Economic compulsion,» in other words, is intrinsic to Recife's crack «game.» Its first consequence is to further impoverish already badly off users. It also plays an important role in spawning the violence that suffuses it. First, it creates an incentive to join the «industry,» increasing its competitive character. Crucially, however, it generates collateral crime as dependent users, sometimes in the middle of a binge, will engage in theft and robbery to get money or goods they can exchange for drugs, thus turning the areas surrounding *bocas*—though not their immediate vicinity, which is secured by the traffickers—into danger zones.

The mingling of compulsion and addiction creates another channel for violence by making consumption locales very tense. The small shacks or protected areas where poor users smoke are typically cramped and crowded. As crack use is often accompanied by various degrees of paranoia, the atmosphere that prevails among users is strained, and disputes over real or presumed drug theft are common. Homicidal violence, however, is unusual among users, as traffickers, who sell nearby, impose a degree of order in such locales. Informants, however, speak of executions of users by traffickers—for unpaid debt—in such venues.

The fact that many users join the traffic to finance their compulsive or dependent use represents perhaps the major core driver of violence. Such user-sellers are constantly tempted to shave or further adulterate their merchandise to keep a larger share of their consignment. This leads to complaints to the traffickers, who need to keep their customer base happy enough to avoid losing it to competitors, whose own *bocas* can be located a few blocks away. Most cases of extreme violence we encountered, however, had to do with sellers smoking more than their share of the consigned drug, thus building up debt with the higher reaches of the trafficking chain. Such debts, which make it more difficult

to get a sufficient part of the drug they sell for their own use, often prove impossible to pay back. Moreover, the chain of consignments—from the street seller to the manager of the *boca*, from the manager to the owner, and from the owner to the bulk traffickers—implies that the consequences of such lack of discipline, if tolerated at any stage, percolate up, cutting profits or driving oneself into debt. Rigid enforcement, as a result, quickly filters down.

One last consequence of the peculiar consumption patterns of crack is to make the location of the *boca* very easy to ascertain, as poor dependent users come frequently and often stay around for binge sessions. Such «overt» drug markets, everywhere, have been shown to be treacherous. Along with their surroundings, they quickly become magnets for thieves—whether they seek drugs or money—and easy targets for competitors keen on eliminating or hurting rivals. Recife's *bocas* are no exception. The visibility of the *boca* also makes the market extremely vulnerable to police intervention. In theory, this could feed violence directly if police interventions led to direct and deadly confrontations with traffickers. Such incidents, however, are unusual. It is indirectly, by facilitating drug seizures and the arrest of sellers by the police, that the overt character of the crack market generates violence. One cannot understand that effect, however, without considering the manner in which the crack market is policed in Recife.

Disruptive policing and limited homicide deterrence

According to data from Recife's Institute of Criminalistics, 24,000 crack seizures were made between 2001 and 2016,[1] 1,600 per year on average, or between 4 and 5 every day. The mean seizure was 24 grams, or between 100 and 160 rocks (.15-.25 grams each), and the median 19 grams, or 75 to 125 rocks.

Given an estimated total annual market value of between R$140-340 million (i.e. 14-34 million individual doses), between 40 and 90,000 crack rocks are sold every day in the Recife area. Seizure statistics, in other words, clearly show that the main focus of police action was the lower reaches of the retail market, below *boca*-level, as this number of rocks would represent a minute proportion of the daily turnover of all but the smallest distribution points.

1. This data was compiled by pharmacologist Antonio Gomes de Castro Neto, for his studies of crack and inhalant composition in the greater Recife area. He generously gave us access to his dataset for this part of the article. Cf. Gomes de Castro Neto (2014, 2015, 2016).

Police seizures at the retail level wreak havoc on the fragile system of consignment and debt on which the local crack distribution is based. Losing one's stock forces sellers to confront difficult options: assuming a degree of «forgiveness» from their supplier, they must increase their sales volume (possibly encroaching on other sellers' turf); cut their own consumption (a difficult option for dependent users); or shave off or further adulterate their product (risking customer complaints to *boca* managers). Alleging repeated seizures can make them suspect of scheming to divert the product for their own use or profit, and large or repeated seizures quickly make it impossible for them to ever pay back their debt.

This dynamic, which combines poverty, dependent consumption by small sellers, and policing geared to the disruption of retail distribution, appears to be a central driver of violence on the crack market. The implications of the police focus on crack retailing, moreover, are probably even worse than they appear here, because seizure statistics likely underestimate police pressure on the lowest and most vulnerable links in the distribution chain. Converging informant accounts testify to extortion and to police seizure from street sellers of extremely small quantities of crack that would not warrant a formal report. While a reliable identification in specific cases would be fiendishly difficult, perfectly reasonable incentives for such behaviors are many, especially in the context of a broad impunity for minor and major crimes and irregularities committed by the police: crack rocks can be smoked by police officials, sold, planted for extortion or vengeance purposes, or accrued to reach the threshold for the bonuses officers are given, by law,[2] for drug seizures.

Disruption of consignment-based retailing becomes particularly deadly in the context of deficient state deterrence of homicides among the poor. Many factors combine to weaken that deterrence and they have been well-documented by Brazilian scholars, from a lack of resources for law enforcement, and the overburdened police forces, judicial process, and prison system that result, to the institutional limitations of the country's criminal justice system and the long time public neglect for a violence that is heavily concentrated at the margins of society and has little bearing on the everyday life of those, arguably a majority, who enjoy effective citizenship. For the purpose of this article, we will simply note that, in Recife as in the rest of Brazil, the killing of poor drug users or sellers by traffickers or the police is extremely likely to remain impune (Ratton et al.). The State is simply not there to protect them or, for that matter, their neighbors—a vast majority—who have nothing whatsoever to do with

2. Law 14320, 27/5/2011.

the crack trade. Left to their own means, crack market participants are lured to the dangerous safety of the «code of the street,» turning to threats to defend themselves and, alone or with the gangs they join, waging vengeance not to be wiped out.

The absence of effective State deterrence creates a perverse environment in which joining a gang and adopting a threatening posture becomes a rational *defensive* strategy for young men, although by pushing others to do the exact same thing, overall insecurity increases for all. In such a context, retaliation similarly becomes an absolute necessity for those who want to avoid a perception of weakness that would make them vulnerable to further attacks. Such a logic is consistent with a second major source of crack-related violence in Recife, namely the deadly confrontations among those gangs that control the *bocas*. As noted above, the so-called «territorial wars» among them have not resulted in significant «conquests,» ebbing and flowing instead to the rhythm of isolated incidents and «honor» contests, in the street or in the big parties where youth from various neighborhoods sometimes converge (interviews).

Inequality and the mechanics of crack violence

Inequality lies in the differential enjoyment of material goods and citizenship. While material inequality is self-explanatory, unequal citizenship warrants a few words. Citizenship will be defined here as the right to have rights, that is as a general claim, validated socially and particularly by the State, to make specific claims against the State itself and other citizens, regarding a set of basic things, like justice, respect, political participation, and adequate levels and standards of food, shelter, education, and health care.

From all those standpoints, and although metrics are at best imperfect—especially but not only for citizenship—Recife does not fare very well, even by the standards of so unequal a country as Brazil. According to Brazil's latest Human Development Report, the average per capita income of the richest 10% of Recife's population was, in 2010, 36.74 times higher than that of the poorest 40%, a proportion that has barely declined since 1991, when it was 37.34. By comparison, the per capita income of the whole country's richest decile was 30.36 in 1991, and it had fallen, drastically, to 22.78 in 2010 (HDR - Brazil, 2013).

As discussed above, the standard connections established between inequality and criminal violence are either inconsistent with the class similarities of homicide perpetrators and victims—for Becker's hypotheses—

or with the distinct temporalities of inequality, marked long- or, exceptionally, only mid-term stability, and homicide dynamics in violent countries like Brazil, whose dominant characteristic is volatility—for structural, political economy, explanations (Daudelin). Having tentatively identified the mechanisms that best explain crack market violence, we now examine the extent to which inequality may impact them. Taking full account of our critique of structural explanations, we will focus here on (1) the extent to which economic inequality underlies the existence or enhances the efficacy of the mechanisms we have identified, and (2) on the ways in which specific and discrete policies that embody unequal citizenship are themselves components of those mechanisms.

Inequality and the dysfunctionalities of the crack market

The poverty of its participants was shown to play an important part in the violence that plagues Recife's crack market. Low opportunity costs make involvement in this relatively lucrative market more attractive, in spite of the risks, than almost any other realistic alternative open to the city's poor people. Participation, as a result, is significant and competition quite intense. As observed above, however, competition per se does not appear to be a major driver of violence. In addition, while poverty in this context can hardly be abstracted from the social exclusion that has prevailed in Brazil for a century, the low opportunity costs it implies would be no different if the whole population were equally poor and equally devoid of—or endowed with—rights. Similarly, the prominence of consignment as a business model can also be traced to the limited financial means of low-level traders, but it can hardly be traced to inequality itself.

Still, involvement in the trade and the prominence of consignment itself would make little sense for middle class individuals, who have easier access to well-paid formal employment and who, when they decide to join the trade, do it as a sideline to finance their personal use or have the financial wherewithal to pay as they go for the bulk drug they buy (Daudelin/Ratton 2016a). Inequality, in other words, is embodied in the very nature of drug markets themselves, which are different for the poor and for the wealthy.

Now, if the causal path from inequality to this first set of characteristics of the crack market, taken alone, is unclear, the relationship becomes more sharply defined when compulsion and addiction, two key features of crack consumption patterns, are brought into the picture.

Inequality and crack consumption patterns

As discussed above, poor crack users engage in expensive binge sessions that can quickly run down their limited disposable income. Many of them become addicted, which compels them to engage in petty crime to finance their habit. A natural option is to join the trade itself, which ensures, in theory at least, a steady supply of crack to even the lowest of its sellers. These, however, find it difficult to control their own use of consigned merchandise, especially once they start smoking sessions, as compulsion kicks in, or when they are addicted. They may shave off the doses they sell and adulterate them, alienating customers, or smoke their stock in whole or part and become indebted to their upstream provider on the retail chain. In addition, intense and repeated trade of small quantities by poor, compulsive, and often addicted users make distribution points highly visible and their customers and sellers vulnerable to theft and police arrest and seizures. Loss of consigned merchandise to theft or police seizure plunges sellers into debt holes from which it quickly becomes difficult to emerge. Default, in turn, is severely sanctioned by traffickers who perceive it as a major threat to their credibility and ultimately to the profitably and survival of their business.

Debt, in sum, driven by compulsive use and addiction, is a major driver of violence on Recife's crack market. All aspects of this picture, however, are embedded in a profoundly unequal social context that explains why such violence affects mostly poor people, even among users. Like middle-class traffickers, above, middle-class crack users provide us a counterfactual of sorts by showing us how consumption patterns are affected by the relative wealth of the user.

Compulsion only forces one to engage in petty crime, theft, or robberies if one can't pay for a whole smoking session. Addiction only drives to involvement in the trade itself if one can't finance it, and debt itself is only a problem for those deprived of personal resources or wealthy parents or friends. Middle-class users do not assault cars or bus stops in the vicinity of *bocas* to keep a binge going: they buy enough drug and smoke it at home or in a motel, or they sell and pawn their own belongings or ask and get credit from dealers who know they have the means to pay and can bet that they will come back (interviews). Addiction is a trap for them too, obviously, and it can wreak havoc on their lives, but unlike poor users, they can afford treatment and have a much easier access to health services. In addition, their relative wealth makes it possible for them to stop working altogether—or to travel abroad—for therapy (interviews), an option obviously denied to all but a minute

minority of the much larger number of poor dependent users. Like crack market features, in other words, compulsion and addiction end up having very different meanings for the poor and the wealthier.

Inequality and discriminatory policing

In both previous examples, inequality is less a driver of violence than inherent to the features that make crack markets and crack consumption patterns highly prone to violence. Differential policing, by contrast, directly feeds crack violence by focusing on a drug market that caters overwhelmingly to the poor, by interfering with the crack distribution chain at the points where violence is most likely to result and, with the caveats that we will introduce, by focusing resources and efforts less at deterring violence than at disrupting crack's retail distribution.

According to the most recent (2012) broad-based national survey of drug and alcohol use, crack is *not* particularly popular among Brazilian drug users. Among teenagers, it ranks eighth *ex aequo* for life use, and sixth among adults (see table 1), with prevalence, respectively, of 0.8% and 1.3%. These numbers must obviously be treated with care. First of all, they are not consistent with the largest survey of crack users, which found that 1.8% of Brazil's and 2.1% of Pernambuco's adults admitted to consuming crack in the six months preceding the survey (Bastos/Bertoni). Second, our informants revealed a high level of prejudice towards crack use, compared to cannabis, LSD, ecstasy, and inhalants, but also cocaine hydrochloride («powder»), which may be reflected in less candid answers to even an anonymous drug use survey and to an underestimation of use.

Even with those caveats, however, it is striking to find that of the more than 46,000 drug seizures made by the Recife police between 2010 and 2016, almost 40% involved crack, whereas cannabis, at least five times (500%) more commonly used, was seized only 40% more frequently, and that drugs more widely consumed than crack, like cocaine, LSD, ecstasy, and MDA—typical «middle-class drugs»—represented altogether barely 4% of total seizures, or ten times less.

Obviously, many explanations can partly help make sense of such a discrepancy, and several were offered by our informants. A crucial one, already mentioned, is the overt character of the crack market, which makes it much more vulnerable to police operations than the sales of cocaine, LSD, or ecstasy, which typically take place in well-hidden and often private spaces, such as bars and private apartments. A second one,

TABLE 1 **Life use of drugs among teenagers and adults, 2012 (in %)**

	Teenagers	Adults
Cocaine	2.3	3.8
Stimulants	1.3	2.7
Ritalin	0.6	0.4
Crack	**0.8**	**1.3**
Oxy	0.5	0.3
Tranquilizers	2.5	9.6
Inhalants	2.0	2.2
Ecstasy	0.5	0.7
Morphine	0.1	0.8
Heroin	0.2	0.2
Steroids	0.8	0.6
Hallucinogenics	1.4	0.9
Anesthetics	0.4	0.5
Crystal meth	0.3	0.3
Cannabis	4.3	6.8

Source: Table 31 in INPAD, p. 55.

also mentioned by various informants, is that a police focus on crack makes sense because of the severity of its public health and public safety consequences. This argument, however, simply offers a rationale for the discriminatory policing of drugs.

Moreover, when one considers the small size of individual seizures and their dreadful impact on the consignment and debt dynamics that we have examined, the focus on crack ends up increasing the level of violence, with significant public health implications, through the deaths and injuries inflicted to market participants and bystanders as a result.

Policing, however, does not have to be solely dysfunctional. From classic criminology to recent experiments with gun violence, scholarship has argued and shown that «swift and certain» sanctions could have a substantial effect on homicide rates (Beccaria; Kennedy). From that standpoint, however, policing in Recife and much of Brazil has proven to be mostly deficient, especially for poor-on-poor homicides.

The «violent» changes in homicide rates that took place in recent years in Brazil, both for the better (in São Paulo, Rio, and Recife) and for the worse (in Fortaleza, Salvador, Maceió, and Curitiba), show that while poor young men continue to provide most victims, mortality among them can decline or explode precipitously (table 2). All kinds of explanations have been proposed but the case of Recife suggests that police deterrence could indeed be a crucial part of the answer.

The evolution of the city's homicide rates over that last two decades, co-occurring with a very specific public security experiment, suggests that changes in police deterrence could indeed have a massive impact on drug violence.

TABLE 2 **HOMICIDE RATES IN BRAZILIAN CAPITALS, 2000-2014**

	2000	2014	% change
São Paulo	66.5	13.7	-79.4%
Rio de Janeiro	51.7	19.2	-62.9%
Recife	69.1	28.9	-58.2%
Fortaleza	24.3	82.7	+240%
Salvador	12.39	47.43	+282%
Maceió	37.8	73.6	+94.7%
Brazil	27.3	29.1	+6.5%

Source: SIM/DataSus/Ministério da Saúde

CONCLUSION

Brazilian drug markets are unequal affairs. Aside from cannabis and inhalants, which know little social boundaries, drug consumption is just as segregated as the rest of society. Cocaine, hashish, and synthetic drugs are middle- and upper-class pleasures, while crack is, for the most part, a poor person's drug. Even for crack users, moreover, the implications of consumption patterns and policing are much worse for the poor among them, a majority, than for richer users.

Inequality is not a cause of the violence that prevails on Recife's crack market. It explains, however, why that violence affects mostly the poor, as it structures the market and its functioning, affects the consequences of compulsion and addiction, and leads to a type of policing that disrupts the parts of the market in which only poor people operate.

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