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**The Impact of Militia Actions
on Public Security Policies in
Rio de Janeiro**

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Contents

• Introduction: Human Insecurity and Markets of Violence	3
• The impact of Militia actions on public security policies in Rio de Janeiro	6
■ Box: The Justice League	7
• Methodology	7
■ Map: Areas under control of militias	8
• Defining the issues	9
• Militias, market of violence and local power	11
• Changes in perspective: from denial to acceptance of the militias	13
• Visiting Gotham City	16
• Final Considerations	20
• Recommendations	22
■ Box: Main PCI recommendations	23
• Notes	24
• Bibliography	27
• Addendum: Impressions of a strange phenomenon	29



Introduction: Human Insecurity and Markets of Violence

By Tom Blickman

This briefing written by Paulo Jorge Ribeiro and Rosane Oliveira explores an apparently recent phenomenon in the recurrent episodes of extreme urban violence in Rio de Janeiro: the rise of militias – well-organised private vigilante groups made up of rogue, dismissed or retired police officers, firemen and prison guards. The briefing shows that while the role of private militias has only recently made headlines in the newspapers, it is part of a problem of urban insecurity that has much deeper and historical roots. Based on research taken in difficult and often dangerous conditions, the study describes a worrying scenario in informal urban settlements that may be particular to the city of Rio, but also represent developments in urban security that spread far beyond Brazil's self-proclaimed “wonderful city”.

Globally, many communities in insecure and informal urban settlements are confronted with serious challenges to human security due to the absence of the rule of law, state security protection and governance in such settings. This is particularly true of developing countries where little resources are available for a secure environment and where insecurity of tenure and precarious economic opportunities related to informal sector activities are widespread. In sharp contrast to mature democratic welfare states that provide security, regulation and litigation of conflicts on the basis of laws, probably half of the world population live in fragile informal spheres without access to legal protection.¹ The ensuing economical and material insecurity force many inhabitants of those areas to ‘migrate into illegality’ as a means of survival; into the unregulated informal economy and sometimes into the criminal one as well. Since 2008, for the first time in history, half of

the world's population, or 3.3 billion people, now live in urban areas. Within the next two decades that will increase to 60 percent. 2007 saw the number of slum dwellers in the world cross the one billion mark. One in every three city residents live in inadequate housing with no or few basic services. About 41 per cent of the combined urban populations of all developing regions live in slums, while 78 per cent of the urban population in least developed countries are slum dwellers; well over one fifth of humanity. The number of slum dwellers is projected to reach 1.4 billion by 2020 and if no firm and concrete action is taken, it may reach 2 billion by 2030, according to UN Habitat.² The international community recognised the urgent need to address the situation when – as one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – it agreed to “achieve significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.”³

Some slums are less visible or more integrated into the urban fabric as cities develop and as the incomes of slum dwellers improve. Others become permanent features of urban landscapes. Slums in many cities are no longer just marginalised neighbourhoods housing a relatively small proportion of the urban population; in many cities, they are the dominant type of human settlement. There also has been a trend toward “informalisation” of the urban economy, with an increasing share of incomes earned in unregulated employment. In Latin America and the Caribbean, seven out of ten new jobs in urban areas are created in the informal sector.

According to the UN Habitat report *The Challenge of Slums*, the urban poor are trapped in an informal and ‘illegal’ world – “in slums that are not reflected on maps, where waste is not



The Impact of Militia Actions on Public Security Policies in Rio de Janeiro

collected, where taxes are not paid and where public services are not provided. Slum dwellers mostly exist outside of the law. If they come into contact with government at all, they are more likely to be hindered in their attempts to provide the fundamentals of life – shelter and livelihood – rather than helped. They live in a state of permanent insecurity and illegality and business crooks and gangsters move into these ungoverned vacuums.⁴ Threats to the safety and security of urban residents pose a huge challenge to both city and national governments. The Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UN-ODC), Antonio Maria Costa, identified security and the rule of law as the missing targets for achieving the MDGs.⁵

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Security needs have shifted over the past decades. “During the 1960s and 1970s, the greatest fear among slum dwellers in some Latin American cities, especially those in squatter settlements or favelas, was of eviction either by government or private landowners,” according to the UN Habitat report. “Today, this has been replaced by fear of violence and crime, including shootings related to drug trafficking. While more globally representative empirical evidence on the linkages between crime and slums is needed, some recent analyses ... suggest that slum dwellers are not a threat to the larger city, but are themselves victims of urban crime and related violence. Slum dwellers are, in fact, more vulnerable to violence and crime by virtue of the exclusion of slums from preventive public programmes and processes, including policing.”⁶

Violence, crime and social exclusion, the latter increasingly taking forms of social apartheid, are the negative side-effects associated with rapid urbanisation. Security issues are often neglected in the urban environment where the rule of law is supposed to exist and left to the existing formal law enforcement and criminal

justice institutions. However, according to UN Habitat, corruption and ineffective practices, inflexibility of response to changing criminal circumstances along with limited resources and skills seriously undermine the performance of these institutions. “The problem of corruption in criminal justice systems and in the police is a particularly corrosive one in terms of public confidence, since the public at large relies on these agencies to do their traditional jobs of apprehending and sentencing criminals.”⁷

In many unruly megacities, the state often cannot provide law and order and satisfy basic security needs and is superseded by a wide range of alternative illegitimate security arrangements, creating a power and governance vacuum. The state monopoly on the legitimate use of force is eroded and “markets of violence” or “markets of force” – the most radical form of privatisation of security – emerge as a mode of security regulation.⁸ With the absence of the rule of law, security protection and governance, security ceases to be a public good and transforms into a private commodity. The social contract between state and citizen, expressed by the payment of taxes and the protection implied in an effective monopoly of the legitimate use of force, is seriously weakened.

In this vacuum, violent entrepreneurs controlling certain territories impose alternative security arrangements using arbitrary and random violence. Security turns into an expensive commodity for the already poor. The “market of violence” arises from the complex social, economic, political and institutional processes that make violence a prevalent means of resolving conflict and power in informal settlements. This leads to a “culture of violence” resulting in endemic fear and insecurity or “societies of fear”, which in turn often lead to forms of violence and popular justice that are rationalised as being defensive in nature. This

vicious circle of violence offers ample opportunities to entrepreneurs to enter the “market of force” and operate with impunity. These unconventional suppliers of security can be regular enterprises or informal, illegal or criminal actors, including criminal gangs and vigilante groups with sophisticated forms of mobilisation and organisation.

Local informal security arrangements function as “parallel power systems” or “feudal systems of government”. They can use their capacity for force for their own purposes to protect their criminal activities, extort security taxes and impose protection rackets on formal or informal economic activities, but also as a commodity for hire and sale. Every so often members of the state security apparatus are involved as well, offering or imposing their services while still wearing their uniform representing the state, which amounts to an informal self-privatisation.

In this scenario of corruption and privatisation of security, underprivileged communities, informal security providers, rogue and formal law enforcement agencies are caught in a complex and reciprocal system of protection and clientelism. In the “market of force”, supply creates its own demand. Suppliers threaten their clients into paying for their services – a mechanism that leads to mafia-type racketeering. The control of territories offers lucrative economic benefits through the levy of illicit taxes on goods and services or as a safe haven for criminal activities. Control of territory also turns these areas into electoral fiefdoms of illegitimate security entrepreneurs and/or allied politicians – further weakening practices of self-governance in the communities and undermining formal democratic institutions.

Once these networks of private security and control of territory and political protection

have been established, it will be very difficult to eliminate them, as the example of the Mafia, the ‘Ndrangheta and the Camorra in southern Italy shows. These criminal organisations developed a century and half ago under conditions of non-governance and the absence of the state monopoly of force, and through a process of dynamic adaptation to changing circumstances, have remained in place until today.⁹

Many of the elements described above are present in Rio. The larger metropolitan area is characterised by ungoverned territories occupied by competing organised drug gangs such as the *Comando Vermelho* (CV - Red Command), *Terceiro Comando* (Third Command) or the *Amigos dos Amigos* (ADA - Friends of Friends). This briefing describes the emergence of the militias, modernized versions of more traditional vigilante groups. The militias rationalise their violence by pretending to provide security to neighbourhoods based on their pledge to remove drug gangs and the need to respond to the violence caused by the competition between these gangs over drug trafficking free zones. Their “legitimation” comes from the absence of regular law enforcement that is supposed to restore public order.

However, Ribeiro and Oliveira show that the militias have another rationale as well, that distinguishes them from old-fashioned vigilantes. The ultimate goal of militias is profit, levying security taxes on inhabitants, business and services. This economic rationale has caused violent disputes between different militias. The perverse reality Rio is witnessing today is that – on top of the violence between drug gangs and between drugs gangs and police – the militias have added yet another wave of violence; of militias against drug gangs, militias against militias and militias against police.



The Impact of Militia Actions on Public Security Policies in Rio de Janeiro

Paulo Jorge Ribeiro and Rosane Oliveira¹⁰

Introduction

If we study the conditions of a society in which civilized forms of behaviour and conscience start to dissolve, we observe, once again, some of the steps in this process. It's a process of brutalization and dehumanization that, in relatively civilized societies, takes a significant amount of time. In these societies, terror and fear rarely manifest themselves without an extensive social process, in which conscience is dissolved. In an effort to understand the emergence of raw, brutal violence, either with or without state legitimization, people often resort to static diagnostics and short-term explanatory methods. This may be pertinent when we aren't interested in finding explanations, but blame. In this case, it is very easy to describe the process of barbarization, the de-civilization and each individual's civilized behaviour as an expression of free will. But such a diagnosis and voluntaristic explanation wouldn't get us very far.

(N. Elias – *Violência e civilização* (1997)¹¹)

The militias in the city of Rio de Janeiro, which are a controversial topic that divides public opinion and is the target of much speculation, represent a problem that affects urban security policies. The goal of this report is to provide a critical study of some patterns of the social behaviour of militias in Rio de Janeiro, particularly relating to those that operate in the West Zone (Zona Oeste) of the former Brazilian capital. This is an initial attempt that aims to undertake a more comprehensive study – including both the operational and political networks of these groups – of the economic activities and the dynamics of violent control exercised over a significant part of the population in the state of Rio de Janeiro.

The publication of the Final Report of the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry (PCI or in Portuguese: *Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito* or CPI) in November 2008, played a key role. The PCI was the first to dedicate enormous political effort to understanding and also dismantling the criminal networks that have been formed around these militias, that encompass a large number of civil and military police, firemen and prison staff, in other words, members of public security institutions. This resulted in the arrest of several local leaders – including politicians who were in charge of some militias and who also held office in the state legislature, like the well-known brothers Jerominho and Natalino (see box). Both were subsequently impeached from office and are now serving time in maximum security prisons.

Even though, since the publication of the parliamentary report there has been a concerted effort by the State Secretary of Public Security to dismantle these groups, they are not dismantled. A significant fact that illustrates the power and violence of these groups was the prison escape of one its key leaders, former military police officer Ricardo de Teixeira Cruz, also known as Batman. In October 2008, he was filmed by the prison's security cameras as he walked out the front door of maximum security prison Bangu 8, in Rio de Janeiro. This caused a huge crisis in the state's public security, even though he was recaptured by the Rio de Janeiro police in May 2009, and subsequently transferred to a maximum security prison in Mato Grosso do Sul. His escape demonstrates not only the power and audacity of these groups, but also the power over life and death that leaders such as Batman exercise in the regions under their control and even within the public security apparatus. He was



The Justice League

From 1992 until his arrest in 2007, Jerônimo Guimarães Filho (Jerominho), ran an NGO called “SOS Social”, in the West Zone of Rio de Janeiro. Jerominho and his brother, Natalino, had been active as local politicians since the early 1990s and have been sentenced to prison for belonging to the most notorious militia group of the West Zone, the *Liga da Justiça* (Justice League). In 2000, he was elected city councillor for the PMDB (Brazilian Democratic Movement Party) and reelected in 2004 with more than 33.000 votes.

In 2006, his brother, Natalino José Guimarães (Natalino), was elected as state representative for the PFL (Liberal Front Party). In late 2007, he was accused of belonging to the *Liga da Justiça* militia and obstructing the election campaign of his opponents in the West Zone, particularly in Campo Grande and surrounding areas. He was arrested in 2008, a month after the arrest of another militia leader, city councillor Nadinho from Rio das Pedras, an area in Jacarepaguá, also in Rio de Janeiro’s West Zone, near Barra da Tijuca, one of Rio de Janeiro’s prime real estate areas.

However, it’s clear that the arrest of these leaders didn’t result in the dismantling of these groups. After his arrest and impediment to run for office, Jerominho’s daughter, Carmen Glória Guinâncio Guimarães, also known as Carminha Jerominho, was able to run for city council member in the 2008 municipal elections. And even after she was arrested by the Federal Police during her election campaign and imprisoned in the Catanduvás maximum security prison in Paraná, she was still elected as city councillor. Later, in June 2009, she was impeached by the Supreme Electoral Court (*Tribunal Superior Eleitoral - TSE*).

openly seen by residents in different neighbourhoods around Campo Grande, the main power base of the militia group known as *Liga da Justiça*, without being bothered by residents or even the police. Several people who were interviewed for this study during the time that Batman was a fugitive mentioned the climate of fear imposed by Batman, known to have tortured and killed several of his opponents. Inevitably, this context is part of this study and has played a major role in the limitations and scope of the research (see also below under Methodology).

The challenge of this report is to compose a first assessment of the phenomenon of militias in Rio de Janeiro today, a business based on coercion and political control. As a result, the operations of the militias identify elements that emphasize the ineffectiveness – if not the perverse complementarity – between the State and these criminal groups, even though their structure is based on the consolidation of criminal networks for financial gain, sustained by territorial control and fear.

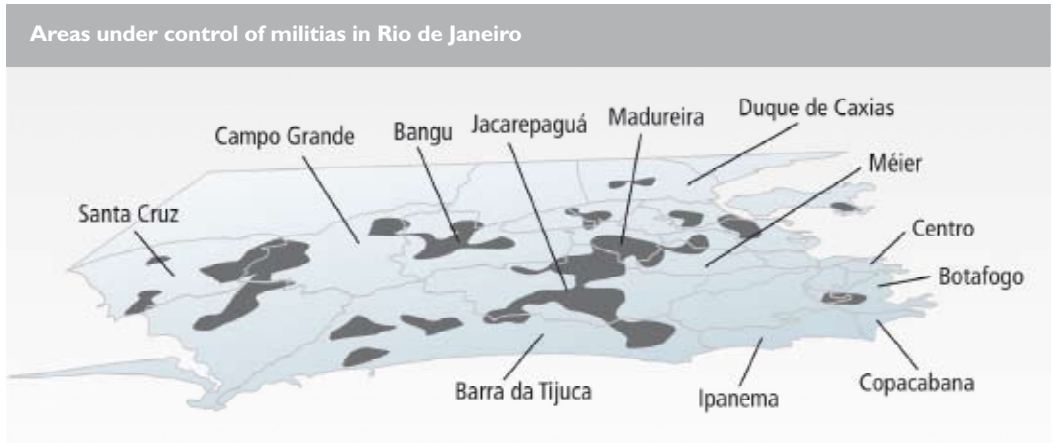
Methodology

This report doesn’t intend, in any way whatsoever, to be some sort of exposé of the militia violence in Rio de Janeiro today. The goal was to produce a political sociology of a crime that involves specific dynamics of violent urban criminality in a specific area of Rio de Janeiro, the West Zone. We want to avoid the “sensationalist” tone used by many media to describe these events, even though many emphasize it as a unique phenomenon of violent urban crime.

However, the challenges encountered in this study forced us on several occasions to redesign the possibilities and scope of this study. If this had been a study in the biomedical field,



The Impact of Militia Actions on Public Security Policies in Rio de Janeiro



the information that we did obtain here, our “field data”, probably wouldn’t have been considered conclusive. That’s because we currently don’t have access to any of the security tools that would be required to thoroughly investigate, and, subsequently, measure the problem.

We were able to conduct six recorded interviews and obtain one written statement. We also want to mention the short amount of time we had available to conduct this study and that during the course of our work, the “war” described above, exploded with Batman’s prison escape, Nadinho’s death – former city councillor and allegedly the main militia leader in Rio das Pedras – and other deaths in regions controlled by the *Liga da Justiça*, as a result of the campaign of terror imposed by this group to reassert its power in the West Zone.¹² Batman’s prison escape was certainly the biggest challenge and stumbling block in our research. During the entire time that this former military police member was on the run, the climate of fear unleashed in the West Zone of Rio de Janeiro was such that no resident would agree to be interviewed by researchers – even though we assured them of their safety and the confidential nature of the interviews, guaranteeing that these would take place far from their work and home, without identifying the interviewee in any way whatsoever. However, these events

will be described in greater detail later on (see Visiting Gotham City).

As the study took place in the course of the period of militia conflicts and the attempts by state public security forces to confront the power of these groups, a much lower number of interviews were conducted than for example by Cano (2008). We may conclude that these difficulties have arisen because the scenario in the West Zone today is not one of “appeasement through fear”, as implemented and maintained by the *Liga da Justiça*, the most powerful militia in Rio’s West Zone, but rather rules of social conduct imposed by “terror” as way to control these regions. A terror unleashed by the wars (between militias against police, militias against militias, and militias against drug gangs) that have been unfolding – with still an unknown outcome. It’s also key to underline that these conflicts are produced by very powerful forces – often supported by a significant “official” branch of state agents.

It was therefore impossible to increase the number of interviews, as both researchers and interviewees found themselves hostage to the perverse cycle of the capacity of violence that evolves around this Hobbesian scenario.¹³ There is a very popular saying in Brazil “a closed mouth catches no flies”. The residents of

the West Zone are firm believers in this; and we certainly have no reason to disagree.¹⁴

Our work was also significantly hampered by the fact that it was impossible to conduct more extensive field work in the West Zone. It's important to highlight this, as there already are several excellent studies that have used this kind of research methodology in favelas controlled by drug gangs. These ethnographies are usually conducted by one or more "mediators", individuals or organizations. Based on different methods, perspectives and goals, these mediators create a contextualization of the specific scenario to be studied, and also negotiate and even arrange for the protection of the researcher(s) and the communities and criminal groups to be studied. Some researchers call this "anthropology of risk".

As far as our research goes, it's currently impossible to conduct a comprehensive study on this topic in the West Zone. As a result of the imposed reign of terror, there currently are no mediators available to fulfil this role. Reporters from Rio de Janeiro's *O Dia* newspaper, who went undercover to write an article about the militias in 2007, were tortured – and probably weren't killed because of their high profile and therefore, political representation. This leads us to conclude that the militias are even more malicious and cruel than the drug gangs in Rio de Janeiro. To conduct field work in this context wouldn't be so much an "anthropology of risk", but rather "suicidal anthropology" or "heroic anthropology", which is not really our interest or desire.¹⁵

Anticipating our conclusions, the type of territorial control and reign of terror imposed by the militias of the West Zone surpasses – both in terms of territorial dimensions and their normative-restrictive presence – the level of control imposed by the drug gangs in most of Rio's favelas. This type of control is very

similar to the mafia-like model, as described in Gambetta's original work (1993). There is a good reason why, despite increased media focus, greater awareness among public representatives, repression by law enforcement and the creation of a Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry with national jurisdiction, that received worldwide attention, the power of these militias was only destabilized, but hardly destroyed. Even though some of the main leaders had been arrested or killed, their positions were filled by those "second in command", who continued to operate the protection business – continuing or increasing the terror campaign against their enemies. Quoting *The Leopard*, by Lampedusa, "things have to change to remain the same".

Defining the issues

In the ranking of high crime rates that affect Brazil's major cities today, Rio de Janeiro has always held a special position (Waiselfisz, 1998). The main homicide victims are young black men or male members of other underprivileged groups and residents of low income communities. Because of the probable connection between these high death rates and the activities of networks involved in the sale of drugs, the residents of these communities are easily stigmatized as (possible) participants of groups connected to the drug trade or other criminal elements associated with this *business* (Zaluar, 1994). This scenario is further compounded by the fact that the residents of these communities are undoubtedly more vulnerable to violent crime, in addition to being exposed to other risks caused by the lack of public services in these areas.

However, the fact is that from the very same population emerged the most heinous attempts to reoccupy these voids in society, through an endeavour that in Rio de Janeiro has been



The Impact of Militia Actions on Public Security Policies in Rio de Janeiro

called “militia”. The militias contradict any of the socially constructed processes regarding a democratic state and rights in terms of universal policies for public security. They are thus part of the perverse response to the vulnerability suffered by a large part of these populations.

This prerogative becomes clear in the final PCI report on militias, approved on November 13, 2008, that indicted and named several police officers and firemen who participated directly in these militias. The groups have a structured *modus operandi*, as defined by Souza and Silva (2008), of “armed criminal groups that have territorial control, (forming) local criminal networks that exercise several illegal and unregulated economic activities, such as the drug trade, security services and unregulated transportation services, within a specific territorial base, using physical force and coercion – particularly through the use of firearms – to sustain and propagate their practices.” It is important to emphasize that these specific groups are a form of organized crime, connected to the State through the involvement of public servants.

This model of criminal groups that control various areas in Rio de Janeiro requires a more comprehensive and detailed study, like the one conducted for example by Gambetta (1993), who analyzed mafia practices like the sale of protection services in the absence of strong public institutions, highlighting the fact that, far from being a single cell organism, these types of criminal organizations operate from numerous commercial networks and political practices.

Although they may not have the institutional power and infiltration level as described in Gambetta’s study, the militias primarily use illegal practices to make a profit, while claiming to uphold “moral values” in the community. They use brute, lethal and illegal force, but jus-

tify this practice in the name of law enforcement and to prevent crimes by drug gangs. They exploit the poverty and lack of public services to provide services at affordable prices (the so-called *gato net*¹⁶, cooking gas canisters, transportation, private security, etc), while acting politically to ensure that the State remains remiss. This combination of clientelism and exploitation is very successful in maintaining the “order of terror” and the level of barbarity that affects poor communities in Rio de Janeiro. Those communities are, on the one hand, hostages of the drug gangs, and on the other hand, an arbitrary pawn of the power of the criminal justice system. Therefore, the privatization of security services, as well as the lack of public policies that ensure and protect individual and social rights, play a decisive role in the development and propagation of this destructive scenario.

The goal of this study is to map out some configurations around the formation and operational methods of militias in certain favelas and suburbs, particularly those located in the West part of Rio de Janeiro. We will study how the forms of social conduct that have been implemented in these societal spaces are affected by the different dynamic of violence that has been established there. We will also point out their connection to protection networks and the market of violence in these areas, in order to understand that even in areas perceived as homogenous – like the case of Rio’s suburbs and favelas – we need to consider a diverse order of networks, circuits and social frameworks that intersect these areas.

There are two reasons for emphasizing the dimension of the market of violence in this analysis: the first reason relates to the fact that although the drug trade generates enormous profits, at first, the militia operations represented a watershed. For a brief moment, the emergence of these groups brought “peace”



to the community, often plagued by a lack of police presence. Then, the “maintenance” of this “peace” demanded that residents adhere to certain rules of behaviour, such as paying taxes for various services (for example *gato net*, informal transportation, the sale of cooking gas canisters) and respect the moral standards imposed by the militia leaders, such as abstaining from drug use or even certain sexual behaviour standards.

At that point, the dimension of the global market and its benefits were absorbed by these “new” social actors. Although the State doesn’t fulfil its obligations (to provide public funding, culture and public security to underserved communities), it relegates a “different civilization project” to those communities under militia rule. This project is based on the imposition of order by people who, although most no longer serve as representatives of legitimate power (police forces), “rule” this area and impose their own “order”.

Militias, market of violence and local power

As we examine the matter of militias in Rio de Janeiro, ever since this phenomenon, its networks and “social dramas”, hit the pages of the city’s main newspapers some four years ago, it is important for us to consider the origin of these events, taking into consideration the personalities and networks that form around these social actors.

Since the 1950s, in areas of the Baixada Fluminense and other surrounding metropolitan regions, these groups with their “*justiceiros*” (“justice-doers” or avengers¹⁷ already exercised a great deal of influence over the local population, whether by “taking justice into their own hands,”¹⁸ or by using force to stay in power

or influence politicians (mayors, city council members, state representatives, etc.).¹⁹ These questions were analyzed in great detail by Monteiro (2007), and what calls our attention in this study is the fact that some of the actions analyzed resemble the practices and paths of some militia leaders, who have for some time now exercised a strong control over some regions in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

The Baixada Fluminense is unique in the way that its land was appropriated, generally by people who worked in low-paying jobs downtown, such as maids, doormen, security guards, civil construction workers, and others. Here, the homes were built on subdivisions, illegally occupied land or in favelas. This reality resulted in unregulated growth, State absence and the emergence and strengthening of local leaders, networks of favours and territorial divisions according to the control exercised by these leaders.²⁰

In the city of Rio de Janeiro, especially in the locations that are geographically more distant from the centre, like some neighbourhoods in the West Zone, such as Campo Grande and Guaratiba and their sub-neighbourhoods, the styles of houses also resembles those of the Baixada Fluminense. However, the difference lies in the fact that, since they are part of the city of Rio de Janeiro, they receive some form of the benefits promoted by public policies and strategic planning; that is, health care systems, basic sanitation, urban transport and restructuring.²¹ As far as public security goes, the efforts leave a lot to be desired. This is especially due to the fact that in these locations the growth of favelas, drug trafficking and police inefficiency are clearly visible, which offers one of the most plausible explanations for why both drug gangs and militia action are more intense in this region.²²

The way that militia have entered communi-



The Impact of Militia Actions on Public Security Policies in Rio de Janeiro

ties during the past four years is generally fast and violent, triggering a twofold process: fear among the residents of these communities because of the constant threat of drug gangs returning to reclaim their drug sale locations, and on the other hand, fear created by the continuous presence of the militia who impose a series of rules on the local populations.²³

In spite of the considerable increase of militia action in recent years, the city of Rio de Janeiro has actually lived with this reality since the 1970s, with groups known as the “*policia mineira*” (vigilante-style security groups).²⁴ The first community in Rio de Janeiro known to have harboured such a group was Rio das Pedras. There, this phenomenon began in the early 1970s with the arrival of immigrants from the Brazilian Northeast, who came to work in civil construction. Since then, the rules of social conduct imposed on the community were enforced by groups that are “responsible for security” and “keeping the “peace” (Burgos, 2002).

In Rio de Janeiro, the neighbourhood of Jacarepaguá is the most heavily controlled by militia groups and Cidade de Deus is the only one that is not a part of this domain. In the neighbourhood of Campo Grande, there are also groups of militia called vigilantes (or, in some cases the *Liga da Justiça*), whose symbol is the cartoon figure Batman.²⁵ It is important to point out that the majority of those accused of being part of the militias in the neighbourhood of Campo Grande and adjacent areas are local politicians elected as state representatives with a significant number of votes.²⁶ Although the press widely publishes the participation in militia activities of certain well-known figures, they all deny any involvement in these practices.

Within this context, we can outline the style

of each group. The *justiceiros* are generally individuals motivated by more personal matters and achieve popularity and a certain admiration among the public. So-called *grupos de extermínio* (death squads) are composed of individuals who do not necessarily reside in the locations where they operate, and their actions may either be motivated by “discontent” or to carry out paid hit jobs, in which there is no connection to the person who is “marked to die”. The *policia mineira* or “neighbourhood killers” are, in most cases, connected to the communities where they operate, and are recognized and “respected” by the residents, and have a strong influence on “keeping order” and ensuring peace.

The difference between the actions of the *policia mineira* and the militias is tenuous. Generally, in newspapers and articles, they appear as synonyms. Nonetheless, the militias, especially those located in *favelas* in the city of Rio de Janeiro, act in accordance with the logic of “cleaning out the area” and “keeping the peace”, as do the *policia mineira*, but their main leaders are also active in public life, especially in the legislative area. In addition, they are present in a wide network of lesser criminal activity, control local commerce, exchange favours in a clientelistic manner, charge the population “security fees,” and other similar activities.

We therefore underline the economic aspect of militia action in the controlled areas. Generally, these groups move in to eliminate drug gangs and make profits in other ways: by selling cooking gas canisters, controlling alternative public transport, charging “security maintenance” fees, etc. At the start of 2008, an integrated police action in the West Zone of Rio, especially in the Campo Grande neighbourhood and surrounding areas, revealed that the militia had been active for more than nine years; not to “promote the peace,” but to control

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alternative public transport, LAN (Limited Access Network, or internet) houses, illegal bootleg CD copying locations, receivers of stolen motorcycles, and other forms of criminal activity. As a result of this “new” type of commerce, there are indications of conflict between different militia groups fighting to control certain territories.²⁷

If, on the one hand, militia activities divide public opinion,²⁸ clearly indicating that the population’s fear of drug gangs affords a certain legitimacy to militia action, it is nonetheless also true that as a result of the imposition of new rules and fees charged by these militias in the communities, people now see these organizations in a new light. First, the growing profits obtained by these militias have given rise to a new kind of fear: the dispute for territory, which leads to conflict among different militia groups and the unceasing terror among the population caused by threats from the drug gangs to resume trafficking.

In the PCI report on the militias published in November 2008, the chapter on finances confirms the “new” market strategies adopted by these groups: alternative public transport, cooking gas sales, cable TV and internet. On the issue of public transport, the PCI report states, “the good financial results, arising from the unmet demand in more distant and more poorly served areas, has drawn the attention of drug gangs and militias who saw an opportunity to increase their profits by monopolizing this service” (CPI, 2008: 112). The profits obtained from the alternative transport monopoly may be as high as R\$ 145 million (approximately 60 million Euro) per year. In Rio das Pedras, the militia takes in as much as R\$ 169,500,00 (70,000 Euro) a day from this activity, which corresponds to annual revenues in excess of R\$ 60 million (24 million Euro). The money brought in by the militia from clandestine cable TV and internet services exceeds the fig-

ure of R\$ 1 million (400,000 Euro) per year.²⁹

Changes in perspective: from denial to acceptance of the militias

It took a long time for the Government and the public security department to accept the existence of militia groups in Rio de Janeiro, even though these groups had been part of the reality in the outskirts of the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro, albeit in other forms, since the 1950s, as we noted previously. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the so-called “militias,” formed by ex-police officers and civilians, firemen and others who sympathized with the activities of these groups, began to make headway in many communities, especially in the northern and western zones of the city. Since 2000 (especially since 2005), newspapers began to report on militia activity in several locations in the city of Rio de Janeiro.³⁰ In December 2006, the newspaper *Folha de São Paulo* reported on the existence of these groups in the South Zone³¹ of the city, right after the take-over of three communities in the Maré Complex, in the North Zone.

Also in 2005, declarations by government officials pointed to the difficulty in defining the advance of these groups. Although he recognized the advances made by the militia in the region, Fernando Modolo, vice-mayor of Jacarepaguá, clearly stated that there “had been a noteworthy reduction in the number of favelas dominated by drug gangs in the region. These armed militia have their positive side, although they may cause harm over the long term, since there is an lack of government presence. These are ‘sheriffs’ who impose rules by force. If this is the only alternative to drug gangs, then let them keep control over the favelas, but ideally we shouldn’t need any of these ‘sheriffs.’”³²

Based on this kind of assessment of militia



The Impact of Militia Actions on Public Security Policies in Rio de Janeiro

activity, the people responsible for public security policies in the state government since 2007 probably felt a certain difficulty in publicly admitting the growing territorial control of these groups, as well as the criminal aspect of the form of control these groups have over communities.³³ In December 2007, two representatives were arrested, accused of heading the *Liga da Justiça* militia: Jerominho Guimarães, and a short time later, Natalino Guimarães. The investigations into their activities have forced the State to finally admit the existence and operations of these groups. Next, in May 2008, reporters from the *O Dia* newspaper were kidnapped and tortured by militia members in the Batan favela, in the western zone of Rio.³⁴ From this point on, the newspaper began to publish a daily section called *Militia Dossier*. Another factor was the creation of a PCI on the militias in June 2008. From this point on, the phenomenon of the militias became a political fact.

The Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry (PCI) indicted 226 active and retired civil and military police officers, firemen, prison guards, members of the armed forces and civilians (businesspeople, shopkeepers, journalists and self-employed professionals). According to the Final Report of the Commission, the creation of a Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry was requested by Representative Marcelo Freixo in February 2007, as a result of the extreme seriousness of the situation of the militias in communities in the State of Rio de Janeiro, but was approved only in June 2008 after the grave incidents mentioned above. According to the document, the term “militia” was incorporated into the vocabulary of the public security agencies of the State of Rio de Janeiro in 2004, when the press significantly started to increase its reports on their existence.

It is interesting to note the difficulty in reaching a consensus on the definition of the term militia. This stage of the Commission’s work

received inputs from both academics and police officers and *delegados*³⁵ (police chiefs). *Delegado* Marcus Neves (at the time of the PCI the police chief of the 35th DP of Campo Grande), concludes that “militia” had a direct association with financial aspects, since “profits are large and easy.” *Delegado* Pedro Paulo Pinho, Chief of the 32nd DP, considers the term to be inadequate, as it originally referred to the military police, and therefore, “what exists today in Rio de Janeiro is the *polícia mineira*, a term he uses to describe police officers that hunt thugs and extort the community” (CPI, 2008: 35).

According to *delegado* Cláudio Ferraz, of the Regional Criminal Activity Police Squad (Draco), “the militias fit the international definition of organized crime. First, they have a self-imposed organisational model, second, the business rationale of a criminal corporation that offers illicit goods and services, like drugs and prostitution, and which invests its profits in legal economic sectors; third, the use of violent means to occupy prominent positions or a monopoly on the market, and obtain maximum profits without the need for large investments, cost reductions and labour controls; fourth, they take advantage of the corruption in the police and legal system; fifth, establishment of relations with the government, sixth, use of intimidation and murder, to neutralize law enforcement, obtain favourable political decisions or achieve their goals” (CPI, 2008: 35-36). Public Prosecutor Antônio José Campos Moreira follows the same line of thought as Ferraz, when he argues that the term “militia configures the crime of conspiracy, with emphasis on the fact that today, across the world, organized crime is a business activity. There is no organized crime without a representation in the police, the government, even in the Judiciary and the Public Prosecutor’s Office” (CPI, 2008: 36).

For anthropologist Jaqueline Muniz the term

“militia” is inadequate, since the group is composed of gangs of ex-policemen who “sell security against themselves;” and for Professor Domicio Proença, the most appropriate concept for “militia” would be: “an arrangement of armed people who want to provide outlaw security; any and all groups that act in an illegal manner.”

In general, the definition of the term finds some common ground: the lack of effective State policies and actions to resolve the problem of public security. This State absence “informally legitimizes” the action of these groups. In this type of scenario, the militia groups find fertile ground for their activities: profits are high, quick and without any red tape.

In the chapter on the concept and past of these groups, it is interesting to note that although they have been active for at least three decades, emphasis is given from 2000 onwards. This emphasis emerged when these groups began to encroach on areas with a greater concentration of the City’s economic and intellectual elite: the South Zone of Rio (after the denunciation of the residents of Leme neighbourhood, in 2005). There is no consensus among intelligence agencies, the press and other institutions directly or indirectly linked to public security regarding the number of locations under militia control: “Recent studies by the Sub-secretary of Intelligence of hotlines, news stories, intelligence agencies and other agencies, point to the existence of 171 communities under militia command. In many of these, there is no information regarding the date of occupation, members and possible controlled electoral zones. The Sub-secretary of Intelligence admits that many cases actually relate to death squads and not genuine militias. SIPMERJ³⁶ indicates 81 areas dominated by militias and Cinpol³⁷ points to 144 areas” (CPI, 2008: 45). From a quantitative standpoint, the numbers published by the Sub-secretary of

Intelligence demonstrate that the involvement of civilians is alarming: 330 civilians appear on the SSI list.³⁸

Representatives accused of involvement denied direct or indirect participation in militia activities in the depositions included in the report. However, the electoral maps analyzed by the Commission confirm the suspicion that control over electoral zones is used to ensure the election of some of those accused. It is interesting to note that the analysis of these data only begins in 2004. Again, we can affirm the late recognition of the actual existence of these groups. In addition, based on information obtained from the Militia Hotline, the Report organized a list with the administrative regions of the city of Rio de Janeiro that are under militia command, the time of occupation (in some cases) and the main suspected leaders.

Of the regions listed, the one with the strongest militia concentration is the Administrative Region of Campo Grande, Guaratiba and Santa Cruz (under the control of the *Liga da Justiça*), which received 282 complaints. The Administrative region of Jacarepaguá received 175 complaints. In summary, these complaints were made by name (229), by partial name (277) and by alias (424). In total 930 persons were named as militia members on the Militia Hotline.

Although the document is long and full of detailed information, it undoubtedly transformed the phenomenon of militias and the “market of violence” formed by these new “actors” into a political fact. This market is far removed from the practices of drug gangs and more similar to that of the mafia-type characteristics typical of certain parts of South America, as in the Colombian model (Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris, 2007).



The Impact of Militia Actions on Public Security Policies in Rio de Janeiro

Even when militia activity is invoked as a way to dismantle the retail drug trade networks in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, it doesn't take into account that this activity, in the name of ideals such as "cleaning the area" or even "maintaining the peace," only confirms the victimization and vulnerability of the residents in those locations. This reaffirms yet another perverse aspect of the yoke to which these populations are submitted, reiterating the inefficiency of the fight against organized crime in these locations. Residents are constantly trapped between the drug gangs and the police, and now, also, the militias, which have economic and political control over a vast part of Rio de Janeiro.

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The main hypothesis of this study is that the ultimate goal of militias is profit. This can only be sustained through illegal practices articulated alongside the State and sustained by the lack of public and social policies. In this sense, the brute and lethal force of the militias is a means to accumulate profit and political control of the segregated spaces of the city of Rio de Janeiro. Even if profits ensure the maintenance and multiplication of the militias, it cannot be assumed that the activity is disassociated from the State. To the contrary, it is tied into a project of territorial control and serves as a basis to sustain a common political and economic project. In other words, it's a way to correlate the State and illegal and criminal activity focused on profits, through force and repression, using conditions of poverty and absence of public policies.

The charging of "fees" of residents and local business people; a monopoly over the sale of essential products in those communities, like cooking gas, as well as control over the distribution of illegal cable TV; the prohibition of competition of alternative transport inside the controlled communities;

as well as the protection and regulation of private and social behaviour of individuals that live in the locations where these militias are active; these are but some of the elements present in their activities. The question that must then be asked is the following: could these militias be an option against the drug gangs – as a certain interpretation of "good order" that certain sectors of Brazilian society, especially in Rio de Janeiro, would like us to believe – or are they simply a form of predatory control that competes with the drug gangs? Could it be a solution to the problem of the violence caused by drug gangs inside the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, or is it just one more chapter of the State's failure to bring democracy to all of its citizens?

Visiting Gotham City

Life before the militias

The perception and acceptance by the State and civil society of militia groups occurred just over five years ago. However, as we noted previously, these criminal practices are not recent. By gaining media space and dictating new rules for a fairly old game, the militia introduced or reconfigured their actions in countless locations. Life before this new configuration, whether in places terrified by the deep-rooted presence of drug gangs, or in locations that always co-existed with the reality of the "policia mineira," "vigilantes", and others, is often described as "peaceful," as people perhaps had gotten used to the routine of drug gangs and the fear of police action. According to Ludmila, a 27-year old resident of the Vila Kennedy neighbourhood, life "was calm... but recently things have changed... The police expelled the criminals from there, and now they are in charge..."³⁹

Entry of the militias

The militias were able to gain entry to large swaths of the West Zone of Rio de Janeiro by using a security-based rhetoric: they are supposedly the guarantors of peace and justice, and are above the legal procedures that guide the rule of law, as they are the solution to the needs of the population of those areas that suffer from the chronic lack of safety and drug gangs. For this service, they “asked for a contribution” from residents and local business people. In the words of Mariana (25 years old, resident of Campo Grande), the militia members:

“came in asking people for a fee, and if they wanted to pay, they came in and provided security for the street. There were many people who did not accept it, but even so, they continued. Later, many people said they really did not want it and they left ... But, during the time they were there, there was no more drug trafficking on the streets, security improved a lot, there were no more burglaries... you could be out on the streets until late, and nothing would happen.”

According to Ludmila (27 years old, resident of Vila Kennedy), the militia entered Vila Kennedy slowly: first, they expelled the majority of the drug gangs and weakened their base. Next, they gradually entered parts of the community. In other locations, within the same community, according to her, there are still some drug dealers, but they have lost power and are only allowed to remain if they pay a fee to the militia members.

What changes in some discourses is the way these groups enter locations. In some cases, the occupation is extremely violent and fast, and in others, it is more strategic.

Fear as terror

The issue of fear, mistrust and terror that involves the relation between residents and militia members is clear in these residents’ statements:

“there was a curfew...when they would come and make rounds. When it was nine-thirty, they didn’t want anyone to be out on the street anymore. A lot of people were afraid of them because they said that if we didn’t do what they said, they would make things happen...” (Mariana, 25 years old and a resident of Campo Grande neighbourhood).

“before, there was war between the drug gangs and the police. Today there is war between the drug gangs, militia and the police. Everyone has to be quiet, otherwise, it’s horrible...they control the cooking gas, cable TV, transportation, fees are levied of everyone who works...if a resident asks the militia for a favour, he is forever in debt... he will never stop paying...” (Gabriela, resident of Barbante favela, in Campo Grande)

Silence as a goal

The imposition of the militias on the communities is almost always based on the law of silence. In 2007, when Jerominho, one of the main militia leaders of the *Liga da Justiça*, was arrested, the newspaper *O Dia* published a story on the activities of Draco police squad, which emphasized the use of threats by militia members to intimidate witnesses: “during the investigations, what most caught the attention of the Draco agents was the fact that witnesses accused Jerominho’s group of being murderers, but then immediately recanted. Generally, at the beginning, they would identify at police stations, even Luciano, Jerominho’s son, and other members as perpetrators of crimes. However, a short time later, the group would be found



The Impact of Militia Actions on Public Security Policies in Rio de Janeiro

innocent. The agents believe that the witnesses recanted their stories because of death threats. According to the police, even the group's weapons were marked. In a recent operation by the Civil Police, a rifle was apprehended with a Batman symbol. Not even the police escaped the retaliation of the groups connected with militias in Campo Grande. With support from the Federal Police, a plan to kill a police chief was discovered, along with threats against another police chief and three detectives. This led to the first "Choque de Ordem" ("Order Shock") operation in Campo Grande.⁴⁰

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In some cases, the silence and the repressions against any type of reaction by the population against the militia can be seen. According to Gabriela, a resident of the Barbante favela, the militia doesn't allow any opposition whatsoever to their activities in the community. In general, opponents are punished with expulsion or death: "there can be no type of manifestation or protest in the community..." It is also common for orders to be issued, like control over the clothing people wear, especially with regards to prohibiting the girls from wearing certain brands of clothing. The reason for this was that the brand was used by young people who liked a certain kind of funk music that was prohibited in the community: "leisure activities are determined by them... you can only have street parties or any other type of activity with their authorization."

The militias as a business

It is difficult to state the exact amount of money involved with militia activities. We often see estimates in newspaper and magazine reports. However, it is a fact that there are considerable financial transactions. The consequence of this can be seen in both the conflicts among militia groups and between militia groups and drug gangs. The *Liga da Justiça*, for

example, is the largest group in the West Zone; it controls the majority of the neighbourhoods located in a vast area that begins around the Batan favela and almost reaches the neighbourhood of Paciência. According to some residents, there is no chance that two or more militias could be active in the same area, "this business is too profitable and nobody wants to share their pie" (Gabriela, resident of Barbante favela).

With the arrest of the main leaders of the *Liga da Justiça* (Jerominho, Natalino and Batman), there was a loss of power in some locations, although they continue their operations through other members who are still free. "Now, what happened? They were arrested, but some of their people are still around, but it's much less..." (Gabriela)

The militias and the drug trade

According to those interviewed, it's quite common in some communities to see the presence of some drug dealers in the militias, as is the case in Barbante and Vila Kennedy (in areas apparently determined by the militias themselves), which would indicate a certain complicity between drug gangs and the militias in those communities. This relation is not seen in other communities (like, for example, the Batan favela). According to Ludimila, a resident of Vila Kennedy, "the drug trade is visible... the militia members themselves protect the drug trade to a certain extent. Even in this, the community feels safer, because it doesn't run the risk of invasions by drug gangs from other areas." For Gabriela, a resident of Barbante, "the militia members accept the drug trade... here's the deal: they launder the money, they have these 'straw men'... the drug gangs are in the community and nearby... they have to behave the way that the militia tell them to, and if they don't, they die! The

militia makes its ‘rounds’ regularly throughout the night, they use whistles...when they kill someone, they don’t let the police come in to retrieve the bodies, the bodies stay there to serve as a warning to the population!”

In some cases, the criminals expelled by the militias cannot find a place to stay anywhere else, and they ask the militia to be allowed to return, to work as security guards, as explained by Carlos (resident of the community of Fumacê).

The idea of cleanliness as an orderly place

An important fact about the issue of cleanliness and order as a basic concept to justify the militia groups entering and staying in these locations is not only the idea of expelling drug gangs. We also note that the idea of cleanliness also refers to those who don’t adhere to the cultural values and lifestyle that are morally accepted by the militia members:

“the militia in Batan seem to act in a very conservative way... it’s the kind of macho guy who seems to want to return to the military dictatorship... you can’t say anything, you’re being watched all the time, everybody is quiet in their house, nobody goes out. The homosexuals were sent away from Batan. Those they consider citizens.. [except for those who are stigmatized, like transvestites, drug users], if they don’t follow orders, they die! That’s the idea of cleanliness. In their eyes the guy who smokes pot isn’t a citizen, he has to be exterminated. Those who snort coke are even worse. The transvestites were sent away. At first, when the militia entered, they didn’t have drugs. Since they didn’t have any, they closed down the drug dens and then began terrorize the residents: cooking gas, public transport, cable TV...” (Carlos, resident of Fumacê favela, which borders Batan)

Movement towards politics

Both the PCI and the major newspapers widely published the names of the militia members who were active in parliamentary positions, although the majority of militia leaders deny any involvement with these practices. When Jerominho was arrested in 2007, and accused of participating in militia activities, he told the newspapers that he was proud to be arrested for “fighting criminals.” At that time, we noted a certain resistance by the representatives (who avoided commenting on this matter) and by the Mayor (César Maia), who tried to minimize the participation of parliamentarians in militia practices, claiming that “at most, we are talking about 5% of the legislature.”

Currently, the accused are still in jail. However, in the areas where the *Liga da Justiça* is active, their positions are strong and they wield great political power. In the most recent elections, held in October 2008, Jerominho’s daughter, Carminha Jerominho, was elected with a majority of the votes from the Campo Grande region.

To keep their hold on political power, it is common for these groups to build and operate social assistance centres (most of which are located in communities ruled by militia), which ensures propaganda and interaction with the population. An example of this dynamic can be seen in the communities of Jardim Maravilha (which have been operating precariously since the arrest of Jerominho) and Barbante.

“Although the militia leaders do not live in the communities, they support social centres that offer medical services and distribute basic food baskets every week to the residents of the Barbante favela. This is a way to remain close and foster the acceptance of the population...” (Gabriela, resident of the Barbante favela).



Final Considerations

In this study, although it was necessarily brief, we sought to express some points that involve the activity of militias in the West Zone of Rio de Janeiro and their implications for the daily routine of the surrounding society. Both from the viewpoint of social relations and of economic activities, which involves the market of violence that surrounds this business. However, we should clarify that the problems involving these groups are more complex and require further investigation. We should emphasize the imperative need for qualitative studies that would make it possible to recognize the ethos that involves both the violent social structure of regions controlled by the militias, as well as the forms and mechanisms that legitimize the actions of these militia groups within the “biography” of the West Zone of Rio de Janeiro.

The main hypothesis of this study is that the ultimate goal of militias is profit. This can only be sustained through illegal practices articulated alongside the State and sustained by the lack of public and social policies. In this sense, the brute and lethal force of the militias is a means to achieve an end: to accumulate profit and political control of the segregated spaces of the city of Rio de Janeiro. Even if profits ensure the maintenance and multiplication of the militias, it cannot be assumed that the activity is disassociated from the State. To the contrary, it is tied into a project of territorial control and serves as a basis to sustain a common political and economic project. In other words, it is a way to correlate the State and illegal and criminal activity focused on profits, through force and repression using conditions of poverty and absence of public policies. Charging of “fees” of residents and local business people; a monopoly over the sale of essential products in those communities, like cooking gas, as well as control over the distribution of illegal cable TV and Internet; pressure and control over the real

estate market and public and leisure space; the prohibition of any competition of alternative transport inside the controlled communities; control of social projects, ranging from health-care to education, that are seen as “clientelistic” but are supported, albeit indirectly, by the control and financing of public administrators; as well as the subordination and regulation of private and social behaviour of the individuals that live in the locations where these militia are active. These are but some of the elements present in their activities.

The main point of the issue is how the militias structure themselves based on a market mechanism – even if the amount of money that the militias gross can only be speculated upon (today this business certainly involves tens of millions annually, due to the diversity of the activities involved). We can observe that the *market of violence* that involves militia – in its economic and political aspects – functions independently of the profits obtained from operations controlled by the militia. In a scenario like that of the West Zone, where the general lack of security and protection, which should be legitimately guaranteed by the state, is the rule rather than the exception, security itself becomes a commodity. The result is a context of absolute anarchy, alien even to radical liberal pundits, for whom security and justice are the only goods that cannot be relinquished by the State. Repeating the Italian situation, and more recently, the Colombian situation, this creates a lucrative market of violence; this does not only affect this market, but the very civic behaviour of the actors involved in those spaces.

We repeat here the maximum Hobbesian configuration of society: without a legitimate authority, in our case, the State itself, guaranteeing a monopoly of force, concurrent and disputing actors will fight to fill in this space, offering security to unprotected actors. Since

this open market does not have limits or regulations, and even when these are expanded based on projects designed by State agents themselves, the violent *modus operandi* focusing on expansion of the territory of these criminal actors tends to develop in unregulated disputes, with their own logic.

Thus, the actors in this market of violence will behave in such a way as to maximize their control over other territories and actors. In this search for expansion by controlling new profitable markets, fights will intensify in an entropic scenario, which may result in a new monopoly on this business, or, as seems to be the case in the West Zone, in incessant struggles between rival groups, as occurs with drug gangs, or, in the cruellest of these scenarios, in combining these two businesses. We would thus be right in the eye of the storm.

This hypothesis is relevant because it allows us to see that even if one of the factions in the dispute manages to control this market of violence in a reasonably stable manner, nothing guarantees that new actors, unsatisfied with the results of this game, join forces to break this monopoly. This would lead to a continuous circle of violence. And this is, inexorably, the vicious cycle that we are witnessing at this very moment.⁴¹

Complementing this matter, as we noted at the beginning of this study, is the discussion on the construction of the civilizing ideals. Elias (1997)⁴² affirms that in Western tradition, the civilizing process, in spite of its Sisyphian incompleteness, should have three core elements: individual self-discipline; peaceful and mediated resolution of intra-state conflicts to achieve social pacification; and finally, specific social structures that ensure a distribution of social goods that don't so much undermine the networks of interdependence as it serves as the basis for the State's role in balancing ex-

isting intra-state tensions. It should come as no surprise for this author that individuals in this scenario would feel aversion and repugnance over the use of physical violence. In the previous scenario, we believe we can see exactly the opposite to Elias' propositions in terms of controlling violence and establishing civilization standards. Thus, it would not be strange to believe, as was stated in the epigraph to this project, that the militias are a part of a process of decivilization that is taking place in certain areas of contemporary Rio de Janeiro.

The search for civilizing ideals⁴³ cannot be, from what has been shown to this point, a hostage to terror, and thus feed a policy of fear, in which instability continues to be the rule; not the exception. On the one hand, the tyranny of drug gangs, which imposes upon Rio de Janeiro, and even more so upon the favelas where it managed to establish itself, the total lack of pacification of these spaces. On the other hand there is the arbitrary nature of the militias, which occupy these spaces based on a predatory logic – economic, political and moral – alongside those government agents that should ensure the legitimate monopoly of the use of force instead of the indiscriminate use of violence. This process makes it impossible to administer universal public security for citizens. In this cruel conjugation of factors, we again see the iniquity of our current societal constitution: the lack of guarantees of rights, whether civil or social, of the *demos* that is at the margin of the *pólis*.

The population that is victimized on the outskirts of our major cities is far from visibility and the networks of protection and guarantees promulgated to those who do have these rights. Thus, here, the “policy of fear” reinforces the “socially implanted authoritarianism” (as has already been expressed by political scientist Guilherme O'Donnell) present in our society, which is often fed by a variety of political and media operators, who see the



The Impact of Militia Actions on Public Security Policies in Rio de Janeiro

outskirts and favelas as the sole focus of our public security calamity,

The actions of the militia thus clearly reinvigorate a *self-fulfilling* prophecy, putting into action the equation of its “effectiveness” – by not recognizing as legitimate the legal measures that should necessarily restrain their actions – against the outskirts and favelas. These are treated as “dens of delinquents,” thus reinforcing a stigmatizing and stigmatized vision of poverty. In this process, some of those who should be protecting the civilizing social order become yet another violent faction in the confrontation, adding yet another aspect to the “metaphors of war” underway in Rio de Janeiro (Ribeiro, 2007) as a circular argument that justifies the “politics of fear.” To the contrary of what is defended by one of the most important authors of the Colombian citizen safety plan,⁴⁴ sociologist Jairo Libreros (2007), who warns us that “public security is sustained by the democratic principle of the political and legal obligation that the State has to establish and preserve the conditions that ensure the full exercise of human rights and individual liberties. Consequently, there is no contradiction between security and human rights, as from a democratic perspective, there is a relation of dependence that is dedicated to the common goal of human protection.”

Recommendations⁴⁵

One of the main obstacles for proposing public policies, especially in terms of public security, is that generally these policies are based on models referring to countries in which the socio-economic reality presents different characteristics. Studies of public policies in developed countries with stable and consolidated democratic regimes are occasionally used to compare the analyses of the political-institutional context in developing countries,

which are characterized by delegative democracies like Brazil, as opposed to representative ones. In these countries, democratic institutions are generally fragile and the political-administrative behaviour oscillates between both modern and traditional, with liberal-individualist modernity co-existing with systems of stratification of pre-modern authoritarianism (DaMatta, 1979).

To this end, the following recommendations attempt to conjugate local reality and the perception of the best way to build effective instruments for the resolution of conflicts and the problems caused by the action of militia groups.

In the first place, it is necessary to take into account the most affected locations, where there is no Rule of Law to allow people to fully exercise their citizenship, especially their civil and social rights. In general, these places lack basic services (health, education, housing, basic sanitation and leisure) and are controlled by drug gangs or militias. Without ensuring the democratic distribution of social and constitutional protection to these populations, these territories will remain under the control of despotic forces, whether legitimate or not.

Second, there is the matter of corruption involving public agencies and the police force. The matter of corruption leads us to reflect on the type of training and working conditions of the police, whose salaries are not adequate for the exposure and stress to which they are subject. Therefore, we suggest the construction of a public policy for the area of security based on policing focused on intelligence, specialized training and the investigation into the root cause of the problem.

On the other hand, it would be interesting for the State to invest in teams specialized in analysis and prior diagnosis, before creating



any type of policy for these areas. The use of existing models may not be sufficient to address the unique characteristics of each of these locations. Since the basis for the militias is developed from within the security apparatus, what is needed is not just a reinforcement of police autonomy to control and monitor, but of

its technical capacity so that the police can “go after the money trail” of these groups, since, in this scenario, they build their organizational structure on “money laundering” and illegal networks.



Main PCI recommendations

The final report of the PCI on the militias contains 58 recommendations (CPI, 2008). There is concern however, that municipal, state and federal authorities have not fully implemented recommendations set out in the CPI report, especially those aimed at criminalising and prosecuting the activities that bring them funding. This has meant the militias continue to expand despite the arrest of a few of its key members.

The recommendations cover a wide range of measures which can be summarised as follows:

At the political level:

- The removal of parliamentary impunity of known representatives involved with the militias to enable prosecution and disciplinary measures such as impeachment, suspension of the electoral mandate;
- Strengthening of electoral laws and administrative measures to prevent misuse of power, vote rigging, establishing electoral fiefdoms and the use of social assistance centres for political objectives.

At the law enforcement level:

- Criminalizing the founding of militias;
- Creation of a commission against clandestine security activities including the Federal Police and the Public Security Department of Rio to monitor private security companies;
- A permanent special branch consisting of police and prosecution to investigate the militias;

- Improvement of training, working conditions and pay for police and others involved in public security, as well as measures to prevent political interference in the police departments;
- Institutional reinforcement of the internal control mechanisms and the creation of an outside control mechanism as well as enhancing the role of the Prosecution Office to monitor the police and public security agencies;
- Demilitarisation of the fire departments and disarming firemen.

At the social level:

- Prevention of illegal occupation of urban terrains and its division and resale as well as regulation of areas already inhabited;
- Legalisation, registration and regulation of the clandestine transportation sector and cooperatives;
- Regulation of cooking gas distribution, LAN houses and cable TV and broadband internet, including low-rate services and involvement of locals from the poor communities in commercialization of services;
- Public awareness campaigns against the militias band increase policing and collaboration; and community and business organisations to prevent clandestine security activities;
- Measures to increase alternative media outlets in poor communities;
- Involvement of civil society and creation of an ombudsman, for instance with the Brazilian Bar Association (Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil - OAB).

The Impact of Militia Actions on Public Security Policies in Rio de Janeiro

Notes

1. Peter Lock, *Crime and violence: Global economic parameters*, keynote speech at the roundtable on Crime and Violence at the Goethe Institute in Johannesburg, May 2006 (http://www.peter-lock.de/txjt_johannesburg.php)
2. United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), *Global Report on Human Settlements 2007: Enhancing Urban Safety and Security*; UN-Habitat's *State of the World's Cities Report 2006/7*; UN-Habitat's *State of the World's Cities 2008/2009*.
3. Millennium Development Goal 7, target 11. The UN Millennium Development Goals (<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/goals.html>)
4. UN-Habitat, *The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements 2003*, pp. 6-7.
5. *Rule of Law: A (missing) Millennium Development Goal that can help reach the other MDGs*, opening speech by Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Antonio Maria Costa at the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, 17th Session, Vienna, 14 April 2008 (<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/about-unodc/speeches/2008-04-14.html>)
6. UN-Habitat, *The Challenge of Slums*, op. cit. p. xxviii
7. UN-Habitat, *Global Report on Human Settlements 2007: Enhancing Urban Safety and Security*, p. 121
8. The concept of 'markets of violence' was first elaborated in the context of failed states. However, it applies as well to areas abandoned by functioning states. see Georg Elwert, *Intervention in Markets of Violence* (http://www.oei.fu-berlin.de/en/projekte/cscqa/downloads/ge_pub_marketsofviolence.pdf); and Peter Lock, *Economic Factors of Conflict and Violence*, November 2004 (<http://www.libertysecurity.org/article42.html#nh1>)
9. See: Gambetta, Diego (1993). *The Sicilian Mafia: The Business of Private Protection*. London: Harvard University Press. Gambetta constructs a framework clarifying the Mafia's actual economic role. Unlike previous observers, Gambetta describes the Mafia as a "commercial identity" that supplies "private protection."
10. This text is a preliminary version of a more extensive study, "The impact of militia actions on public security policies in Rio de Janeiro". We would like to thank Tom Blickman, from TNI, for his support to this endeavour. We would also like to thank TNI for financing this part of the study. In Brazil, this endeavour was supported by Rummos Assessoria, research and evaluation. The final research report presented to TNI in October 2009. Paulo Jorge Ribeiro has a doctorate in Social Sciences from the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ). He is a Professor of the Department of Sociology and Political Science at PUC-Rio and associate researcher at the Laboratory for the Analysis of Violence at UERJ. Rosane Oliveira is a Social Sciences Doctorate student at

the Post-Graduate Program of Social Sciences at UERJ.

11. English translation from the Portuguese language version.
12. There is evidence of numerous murders committed by militia in the region, according to the Report of the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry.
13. All of the interviews were conducted outside of the West Zone in Rio de Janeiro. Instead, they were held at a law firm in downtown Rio de Janeiro, quite far from the study area. We would like to thank these "anonymous lawyers" who assisted us with this study and, once again, TNI, for making these interviews possible. Without their financial assistance to fund the costs of transportation, food, transcription of recordings, etc. this wouldn't have been possible.
14. In a different context, it's necessary to observe this scenario of fear and abandonment of individuals vulnerable to the violence of criminal groups and the absence of the State in Heringer e Drska (1991).
15. However, we were able to obtain a long statement from a former resident of the West Zone, in particular of the Campo Grande area, which helped us enormously in our work. This statement is included as an appendix and serves as a powerful witness to the militia actions in those regions.
16. The term "gato net" refers to a common criminal practice in various parts of the city of Rio de Janeiro, especially in the suburbs and militia-controlled regions. These are illegal cable TV and broadband Internet connections provided to the population at much lower rates.
17. Among them, one of the most famous was Tenório Cavalcanti, about whom a movie was made. Another fairly well known "justiceiro", *Mão Branca*, (White hand), was also active in the Baixada Fluminense region, in the early 1980s. However, according to the study done by anthropologist Ana Lúcia Silva Enne, of the Universidade Federal Fluminense, *Mão Branca* was supposedly an "invention of the press" whose purpose was to increase sales of the newspaper *Última Hora*, as it was the first paper to publicize the existence of this supposed head of a death squad in the Baixada Fluminense.
18. A term that is often used by these groups, emphasizing that, in the event it is not possible to do justice, in its legal sense, then vengeance will be used to repair the "injustices" committed by third parties, thus disqualifying the legal and institutional mechanisms to remedy wrongs.
19. See the doctoral thesis by Monteiro (2007) for more on this topic. Monteiro's thesis (2007) is important precisely because it examines, as a backdrop, what makes (made) ordinary people into major local leaders with high levels of acceptance among the native population, independently of the "criminal" activities that these people are involved in.

20. The phenomenon introduced by Victor Nunes Leal, at the end of the 1930s, when old networks of local power common in smaller cities in the Brazilian interior, the so-called *coronelismo*, began to move to the urban centres that were beginning to flourish due to industrialization and growing migration to the cities. *Coronelismo* or “rule of the coronels” derives from the honorary title of colonel (coronel in Portuguese) in the National Guard that was customarily conferred on a locally dominant political boss, usually a substantial landowner or local justice of the peace. The term eventually would be used to refer local strongmen or political bosses, especially in rural areas and particularly in poorer Northeastern states. *Coronelismo* thus was a classic boss system under which control of patronage and minor funds was centralized in the coronel, who would dispense favours in return for political loyalty. (Note of the editor)

21. In the discussions regarding the preparation of the Strategic Plans for the city of Rio de Janeiro, I and II, throughout the 1990s, there are in fact several prerogatives for the West Zone of the City.

22. As occurs in Cidade de Deus, in Jacarepaguá, with strong drug gangs and in other favelas less profitable for drug gangs, which were appropriated by the militia.

23. According to a report by the *O Dia* newspaper, the activities of drug gangs and militia add a new dimension of fear: “According to residents, houses were invaded. To support the militia, the new group began to charge a monthly fee of R\$ 100 for moto-taxis, R\$ 30 from merchants and R\$ 10 from residents. The militia members also demand a percentage when houses are sold. Already alarmed with the new “owners”, residents have also been receiving messages from drug gangs promising to counter-attack.” (*O Dia Online, Hostages of drug traffickers and the militia in Água Santa*, January 23, 2008; http://odia.terra.com.br/rio/htm/refens_do_trafico_e_da_milicia_em_agua_santa_146802.asp)

24. The *policia mineira* was initially composed of local vigilantes or *seguranças* (security men) originating from small business people incensed by a scourge of theft and deadly attacks. They lowered crime rates and enforced a certain order, and by the 1990s, they were charging for their “service.” Rogue, fired or retired police officers, firemen and prison guards began to join their ranks, leading them to be referred to as *policia mineira*. The term *policia mineira* was apparently first used to refer to the police of the Federal District, when Rio was still the capital (up until 1960). Their extortions were referred to as *minando*, or “mining” the population of their wealth, hence the derivative *mineira* (McLeod-Roberts, 2007). (Note of the editor)

25. The complexities of the character Batman are an excellent source to understand the symbolic universe of these groups. This is because “Bruce Wayne,” before becoming Batman, studied law. When he saw that the “law” didn’t correspond to the idea of Justice, he abandoned his studies and transformed himself into the “masked avenger”.

26. One of those accused of heading militia groups

in the West Zone, City Council member Jerônimo Guimarães, a.k.a. Jerominho, who was in his second term at the City Council in the city of Rio de Janeiro, was arrested on December 27, 2007. His arrest led to a series of controversies and he denied all the accusations. However, upon walking through the neighbourhoods of Campo Grande and surrounding areas, we noted some banners with slogans of support for the City Council Member. One of these banners, right on the on ramp to Avenida Brasil, on Mendanha Road, reads: “being arrested on the suspicion of fighting criminals is an honour for me”, signed by Jerominho. (Extra, *Son-in-law of Jerominho escapes prison climbing wall*, January 23, 2008; http://oglobo.globo.com/rio/mat/2008/01/23/genro_de_jerominho_foge_da_prisao_escalando_muro-328172914.asp)

27. Recently, the team of Federal Representative Fernando Gabeira (Green Party – RJ), prepared a map showing the areas occupied by the militia in the city of Rio de Janeiro (<http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?hl=pt&gl=BR&ie=UTF8&oe=UTF8&msa=0&msid=100029860383604228831.000452cfd19b4a4580c3b>). The major newspapers note the conflicts over control of areas (which had previously been under the control of the *Liga da Justiça*), by other militia forces, among them, one led by Chico Bala, in the Barbante favela. If we compare it with the map of drug gangs, we can see that the number of communities dominated by militia groups is larger (<http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?msa=0&msid=115211214098399466668.000446fc11e5ea296a5e9>).

28. According to a survey by Instituto Imagem, conducted between March 31 and April 4, 2007, residents of Rio de Janeiro were divided on the issue of militia groups. While 48% felt that the State should repress them as it fights drug gangs, since they are unofficial groups that exploit the population, 46% considered that the government should not worry about the militia groups. Those with the most unfavourable opinion about the militias are young people (60%) and those with a college degree (64%). The residents of the neighbourhoods of Tijuca, Centro and the South Zone are also against the militia. The region of Leopoldina is the only area where a majority has a favourable opinion of the militia – 57% in favour and 29% against. This is where the most severe conflicts among different drug gangs occur. This survey, commissioned by city council member Andrea Gouvêa Vieira, interviewed 800 people. (*O Dia Online, Militias divide Rio*, June 5, 2007; http://odia.terra.com.br/rio/htm/geral_102652.asp)

29. The schemes created by the militia groups go beyond these services and in addition to the security maintenance fees, the sale of real estate in the controlled areas is manipulated by these agents, and the residents are obliged to pass on an average of 15% of the sales price of the real estate.

30. *O Globo, Militias composed of PMs expel drug traffickers*, March 20, 2005.

31. According to the newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*, during the months of November and December 2006, “Building managers from 45 buildings in the Leme



The Impact of Militia Actions on Public Security Policies in Rio de Janeiro

neighbourhood (extreme left end of Copacabana) received a written proposal to adopt a 24-hour protection scheme. The proposal was signed by a retired sergeant of the Military Police, and offered security services (six agents per six-hour shift) on four streets next to the Chapéu Manguieira favela. The reason for the offer, according to the document, was “the high crime rate” in the area. The police officer mentioned the crimes committed: “larceny, robbery, drug trafficking and drug use.” The sergeant stipulated the 28th of the prior month as the deadline for approval of the proposal; only then would he tell the “clients” the price of the security fee. Even so, he stipulated the payment date: between the 15th and 19th of each month. After consulting residents of their buildings, the building managers refused the proposal and denounced the police officer, who is being investigated for corruption. Although he is retired, he works at the internal service of the 9th Police Battalion, in Rocha Miranda (North Zone).” (Folha Online, *Police militia besiege noble neighbourhood*, December 12, 2006; <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/cotidiano/ult95u129287.shtml>)

32. O Globo newspaper, *Militias composed of PMs expelled drug traffickers*, March 20, 2005.

33. A more in-depth study on the government’s action and reaction to the problem and growth of militias in the city of Rio de Janeiro will be conducted during a later stage of this study.

34. The Final Report of the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry (Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito, *Relatório Final da Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito destinada a investigar a ação de milícias no âmbito do Estado do Rio de Janeiro*, Assembléia Legislativa do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, 14 de novembro de 2008). The work of the PCI on Militias was conducted between June and November 2008. From a methodology standpoint, 1,162 denunciations from the Militia Hotline (where people can anonymously call in to provide information), 44 anonymous denunciations, a 129-page report with an overall analysis of the denunciations about the militias and several confidential or secret documents were analyzed.

35. The powers of the *delegado* are wider than a ordinary police chief, but have a quasi-judicial function. Police investigations in Brazil mirror investigations conducted by the courts, thus making the *delegado* – who must have a law degree – a *de facto* investigating magistrate. Such ‘lawyerization’ of the police puts the police in competition with the judiciary and prosecution for control of the criminal investigation. (Note of the editor)

36. Subsystem of Police Intelligence of the State of Rio de Janeiro (Subsistema de Inteligência da Polícia Militar do Estado do Rio de Janeiro).

37. Coordination Centre for Police Information and Intelligence of the Polícia Civil (Centre Coordenadoria de Informações e Inteligência Policiais).

38. Sub-Secretary of Intelligence (Subsecretaria de Inteligência - SSI)

39. In 2007, the militia actually entered the community and took over control.

40. 400 police officers took part in the first “Order Shock” operation. Ten people were arrested, 80 vans were apprehended, nine clandestine cable TV centres were closed, 600 kilos of copper wire and 11 slot machines were confiscated, factories of bootleg DVDs and CDs and a gas station were closed. In addition, 150 roosters for cockfighting were seized, and seven people were arrested for illegal possession of firearms. (O Dia, Councillor is arrested accused of leading militia, December 27, 2007; http://odia.terra.com.br/rio/hm/vereador_e_preso_acusado_de_liderar_milicia_142443.asp)

41. We would like to thank Tom Blickman, at TNI, for the many discussions we had on the topics discussed above. We are responsible for any and all errors contained above, but we inexorably owe the theoretical and evaluation insights to him.

42. It is relevant to mention the frankly “ethnocentric” character of both the civilizing version exposed by Elias as, even more so, to redesign this version with a contemporary Rio de Janeiro with this focus as the goal. However, it is possible to understand Elias’ model as more than just a deterministic model, which involves that civilizing model as a final path. Instead, what we seek here is to understand it as a historical-comparative source, emphasizing the specifics of the scenario in which we find ourselves.

43. Certainly, many of the principles discussed here are again tributaries of the contributions fundamentally developed by Norbert Elias in *The civilizing process* (1994) and “Civilization and violence” (1997), even if, for the format of this article, the theoretical scope of this German sociologist had to be attenuated.

44. In fact, this plan seems to serve as an example for various Brazilian governors. However, so far it seems that these governors want to copy only the repressive aspect imposed by the Uribe government and to seek the financing that Bogotá and Medellín received from the International Development Bank, and not the policies implemented in those cities which became known based on their respective plans as “citizen safety.”

45. The Militia PCI Report made extensive recommendations to the government to appropriately address this matter, and deserves to be carefully read as it presents political instruments that are highly superior to those listed in this report. In any event, it is possible to emphasize, among the recommendations that, in spite of the fact that the Public Security Department has made progress in the investigations and fighting the expansion of these criminal groups, it still requires an effort at various government levels and institutions. This includes the need for municipal control and the regulation of illegal transportation companies, investigations by the Public Prosecutor’s Office of those indicated in the PCI of the Militias Report, as well as approval of federal laws recommended by the PCI.

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The Impact of Militia Actions on Public Security Policies in Rio de Janeiro

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Addendum: Impressions of a strange phenomenon

The following statement is, in part, an attempt to reconstruct a field record. Not a “diary” written by those on the outside, who come here out of curiosity, with a theoretical outline and a series of issues to observe. This is the statement of a former resident of a region that was “always” the target of certain groups, first to bring peace and maintain order, then to usurp people’s right to freely come and go and commit violent actions and exercise social control by demanding payment for maintaining an alleged peace.

The region in the western part of the city of Rio de Janeiro, more specifically one of the largest neighbourhoods in this region, Campo Grande and surrounding areas, as well as Guaratiba, Bangu, Padre Miguel and Realengo, compose the part of the city that has to endure the phenomenon of militias. Since 2006, the major newspapers have been covering the actions of these groups practically every day and generated a lot of discussion. However, it’s worth noting that there is still a real lack of “inside studies”, because of the imminent danger involved in any kind of contact with the members of these groups

Impressions of a strange phenomenon: militia action

The place....

Usually when we walk by the same place everyday, we tend to no longer notice the changes in the landscape... This would be the case if the problem had to do with the landscape. Haunted by two major issues, drug gangs and militia, the city of Rio de Janeiro cannot be observed like a simple landscape.

There are currently two lines of thought about

what is happening in Rio de Janeiro: the academic one and the one that has continuously featured in the media since 2006. But first we underline a third one: that of those who live, breath and walk in this city. I will start with my own theory that, at first, assumes the role of some kind of “outsider”.

I belong to a region of the city of Rio de Janeiro that is geographically far from what we would call “the centre of political decision-making” or “the centre of the city”: the West Zone (*Zona Oeste*). The western region, the area on the other side of Grota Funda (at this point I am not referring to Barra da Tijuca, Recreio dos Bandeirantes and Jacarepaguá), is an area that was settled very much the way the Baixada Fluminense was settled: through the illegal occupation of land, the absence of public security policies, the development of slums, drug trafficking, death squad operations and illegal gambling activities (*jogo do bicho*).

Over a 30-year period, the region has changed, not only in terms of its urban landscape, but also the social fabric: there is an enormous amount of real estate development and a huge increase in the purchasing power of the population. Despite the increased sprawl, most neighbourhoods between Realengo and Santa Cruz, with a few exceptions, preserve a certain small town atmosphere. Many families have lived here for many years and can therefore speak with authority on the transformations that have occurred and their personal impressions.

I was born in the neighbourhood of Campo Grande, more specifically on the border of Campo Grande and Guaratiba. I lived there until I was seven and moved to Tijuca, in the northern part of the city. However, the follow-



The Impact of Militia Actions on Public Security Policies in Rio de Janeiro

ing next ten years I visited the neighbourhood frequently. Only at the age of 21 did I move back to Campo Grande. But this time I felt like an “outsider”. I didn’t recognize the place, I didn’t identify myself with that place, I didn’t feel I was “from there” anymore. The social rules of conduct, the conservativeness and the way people talked, made it clear that anything in “the centre of the city” was too far.

In 1995 I moved back to the area. I was in the third term of my social science degree at the Universidade Federal Fluminense, in Niteroi. The first impact I felt was the distance: on average it would take me 2 or 3 hours to get to university. Some of my childhood friends thought it was strange to study so far away...

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Another thing I noticed was the fact that the “the city centre” seemed very distant in the daily routine of some residents, especially those who had all of their activities concentrated in the region. However, the impression was that “there” wasn’t part of the city of Rio de Janeiro. Perhaps this distance, either geographic or figurative, permits the different ways people talk about the city. For example: when I listen to comments of friends of mine who live in other parts of the city, especially those in the South Zone, there is very little or no mention of the West Zone.

Exploring some neighbourhoods...

When I was a kid I would often hear older people say things like “that husband beat his wife and the local boss straightened him out” or “that person mysteriously vanished because he broke a rule”. Later I would hear things like: “There are all afraid of the ‘*polícia mineira*’...”. Nowadays, people say things like, “well, things are difficult around here, the militia doesn’t allow anything...” It’s interesting to note that in

the territorial expansion that I described above, there are groups in charge who call themselves *Liga da Justiça*, often represented by a black knight, Batman. However, it would be more appropriate to change the name to Gotham City!

Here I should underline something; although Campo Grande and surrounding areas cover a vast territory, it still has a small town feel. In general, families have known each other for several generations. Lots often have two or three houses, as children tend to build a house on their parents’ lot when they get married. Until the end of the 1980s, the lack of post-secondary education in the area probably prevented most residents from attending university and therefore a great number of young people only completed high school and joined the labour market right away. Now that there are a growing number of universities in the region this situation has changed significantly. Perhaps that is why the growth of militia groups is now being criticized by the population. The compliance, in terms of the *polícia mineira*, seems to have become the target of criticism regarding the militias.

I can’t back up these issues with statistical data, but it’s the impression I get when I talk to the older generations. When I talk to younger people (under the age of 25), I detect deep discontent with the level of violence and the way militia operate. I don’t remember hearing these arguments 20 years ago or from people who are over 45. In a conversation I had with a 63-year old lady, she made it quite clear that the *polícia mineira* exercised more of a role that had to do with maintaining order than the militia... “they would do what the regular police didn’t do, they would get rid off the criminals and they lived in our communities...”

Another interesting aspect is the issue of peace

and quiet. There seems to be a certain consensus that everything used to be more peaceful, there weren't drug dealers and, in general, the only problems were fights, theft and sometimes illegal gun sales. With the emergence of the phenomenon of militias, the first motivation seems to be to expel the drug gangs. As a result, the invasions in most favelas have been "militarized," with the use of heavy weaponry. Of course this characteristic also stems from the fact that most militia members are either active or inactive civil police, military or firemen. As they take power a new order is implemented and those who don't agree are given the option to leave. Overall, however, the population approves and remains silent. That's why it's very difficult to validate field studies based on resident statements.

A neighbourhood.... (close to the West shopping)

In Campo Grande we are noticing a fast growing number of sub-neighbourhoods. Most of them have women's names, "Adriana, Cecília, Mariana...". I will comment briefly on these sub-neighbourhoods, located near the West Shopping (the largest mall in the region). In 2007, I went to a party in this neighbourhood and throughout the evening I noticed a "private security guard" patrolling the streets.

I was so intrigued that I asked the owner of the house how they had come to some sort of agreement on hiring one of these professionals. At the time I thought the reason was their fear of robberies or violence. But the answer was quite different! The home owner told me that the residents preferred to pay the guard instead of running the risk of being robbed by the people providing the security guard. In case that there would be a break-in, nobody could be "held responsible" and nothing could

be done about it. However, I noticed that the fear and coercion were so deeply instilled that they seemed part of people's behaviour.

The fact is that those "security guards" were members of the local militia. This is a middle class neighbourhood, far from the poor communities. This reality debunked the myth that these groups only operated in violent areas, in favelas that suffered under the drug gangs....

"Jardim Maravilha"

Going back over the last 30 years, there has been a huge growth in favelas and when I walk along the same main street that connects one neighbourhood to the other (Monteiro and Jardim Maravilha), I notice homes, shacks and brick structures as far as the eye can see, red dust, the main streets are paved, there are lots of children on the street, lots of shopkeepers and businesses and, apparently informally, some municipal schools, a health clinic, a social centre, lots of evangelical churches and one or two catholic churches. Also on this street, a huge flow of public transport, legal and illegal. But when I enter some streets that lead to the "heart" of this area, my impression changes. I see very few paved streets, schools or health clinics. I don't see any drug dealers, armed people or police. I am told that there are people responsible for maintaining order and keeping the area "clean", but they are not visible.

The operation is more low-key, day by day and it seems that it has already become a part of people's routine and doesn't really strike them. I reemphasize that over the years I spent a lot of time in this neighbourhood because I have relatives that live there. If I am not mistaken, in 2005 there was a "war" that expelled the "boss" of the *policia mineira* and allowed the group of one of the most famous militia leaders,



The Impact of Militia Actions on Public Security Policies in Rio de Janeiro

Jerominho, to take over. He set up a social assistance centre, which is now closed after he was arrested in 2008. That's why I didn't go in there for a while. There are other social assistance centres, administered by local politicians. The politicians are accused of belonging to militia groups... But nobody has evidence! Silence always seems more appropriate.

In the papers there are regular reports of extortion cases and other illegal actions committed by those who are now called militia. However, you shouldn't ask the residents about it or talk about it on the street... "you will burn yourself!". Of course I didn't ask any questions! I only walked around, observed, visited friends.

The image promoted by the media is so gloomy and full of indignation that, sometimes, we forget that nothing beats walking around, experiencing, listening, looking and feeling the places. Perhaps this is where the first criticism of academia emerges. Those who talk about certain phenomena that occur throughout the city in different ways, without even taking in the various smells of each place, may leave out certain details that could change the way people think. A simple example: as I walked around I didn't notice any signs of discontent or fear; I didn't hear any comments on the existence of militia, but I asked about a certain business that until recently had been open 24 hours, the answer was: "it's an order...it got too difficult to stay open all night!" Whose orders? Better not ask! So what actually happens is not always clear.

Another interesting factor: the fast growing number of rental studio apartments that are being built. It's amazing how, in a community like that, where most residents are poor and take years to finish building their own house that they acquired through occupation, in such a short amount of time there were so many studio apartments being built or just finished.

In the last six months I have lost track of how many of these have been built and rented out.

Just over five years ago (if I am not mistaken), there was a huge shoot-out in which several people were killed. The "local boss", leader of the local *pólicia mineira*, was brutally confronted by a group that was starting to gain power in the region. At the time I remember being quite afraid because I knew (and still know) several people who live there. The night when the fighting was very heavy I couldn't sleep. Military police cars were constantly driving by, making a lot of noise. But, according to statements of those who witnessed the conflict, the police wasn't involved.

We heard the following news. Several people involved with the *pólicia mineira* were killed, but the boss had escaped. Soon the Liga da Justiça controlled the neighbourhood, public transport and the sale of cooking gas. One of the militia leaders, Jerominho, founded the social assistance centre, which is currently closed because of his arrest in 2008. Until now, nothing is known about the whereabouts of the former boss. The other day I heard some comments that "Mazinho", the former leader, was about to come back now that his main enemy was in jail. But so far he hasn't returned.

In January of this year (2009), another militia leader "reappeared" with the intention of regaining the areas that the *Liga da Justiça* had taken from him. Some newspapers wrote that the *Liga da Justiça* was falling apart and that Chico Bala would be in charge from now on. In fact what happened was that there had been a mass murder in the favela Barbante in Inhoaíba, which belonged to the *Liga da Justiça*, and the main culprit was Chico Bala. Before that, I had been waiting for a van to go downtown and this guy showed up, he spoke briefly to the "coordinator" and then addressed some of the

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drivers saying: “starting today, we are in charge of the vans”.... I asked the van driver who this person was and he answered: “Those are Chico Bala’s people”

I started to check the news on the alleged return of Chico Bala and he did try to regain some of his former areas, now that the key leaders of the *Liga da Justiça* were in jail. But I don’t think he was very successful. The *Liga da Justiça* is still in charge. Although now they are more careful, more hidden....if you talk to any residents and say that the *Liga da Justiça* seems to have lost power, they will say: “lost power? Those guys control everything. They had some problems, but they are here, controlling the vans, the gas sales, taxes...” said one resident of Jardim Maravilha.

“Five Marias”

I will now talk about another neighbourhood, around Pedra de Guaratiba. That’s quite a different story. Over the course of 20 years, I didn’t notice any great changes in the “landscape”. The municipal government claims that the streets are paved, but I have never seen it. The number of houses hasn’t grown much. When the drug gangs were in charge you could often see fear and anxiety in people’s faces. But the drug traffickers were somewhat discrete... I think the neighbourhood was used more to transfer and distribute drugs than sell it. Just over two years ago, the militia took over and “cleaned the area”, and, as they say, reorganized some things that had gone off rail.

Unlike in Jardim Maravilha, the residents, in general, don’t seem to be pleased with the militia operation. The occupation strategy is still very similar to the one the drug gangs had imposed for a long time.

From the second semester in 2008...

In July

Continuing my story about the community mentioned above, the first thing I noticed was that there had been a sales outlet for cooking gas canisters, where the residents used to by their cooking gas. When the militia took over, the outlet was closed and “they” opened a new outlet. Some residents refuse to buy there and are therefore forced to walk much further to buy gas. The second thing: the few small shops that used to be around (the famous “*birosquinhas*” – little kiosks) have closed. During a casual conversation with a resident, I heard a very sad story: “you can’t run a business here....you have to pay for it and we already don’t make enough as it is...” Pay whom? Better not ask! Nobody answers anyway.

Again, you can walk “carefree” around the neighbourhood, see a lot of children on the street, red dirt, potholes or mud when it rains, thousands of sick street dogs, open sewage..... I didn’t see any police, militia or whoever it is who is supposed to “maintain order”. It seems as if they are invisible....but they are there! Some people know me and feel comfortable in telling me about the demands made and violations committed by the militia. I had an interesting conversation with a relative at a family lunch, who told me that the militia was treating the neighbourhood with contempt, because they only wanted to show ownership of the territory...this is a very small community and so poor that they couldn’t even tax all residents. That’s why the occupation is more strategic than just maintaining order or obtaining financial profit. Some residents have said that they don’t tax all residents there. They don’t insist if someone doesn’t want to pay. On the other hand, some services aren’t adequately provided, like the delivery of gas, for example.



The Impact of Militia Actions on Public Security Policies in Rio de Janeiro

Those who know the neighbourhood can't see any opportunity for short to long-term improvements. According to the municipality the streets are paved, but there is still mud everywhere; street lighting is poor and government doesn't seem to care about the community...or about so many other ones.

In August of 2008 I decided to stay spend a Saturday night with some relatives. After a certain time (around 10pm) you notice bikes, some motorcycles and men going around the neighbourhood. It was very hot and I spent some time on the veranda, observing the situation. The scenario was as follows: deserted streets, only a few people hurrying home from work or school, very dark (the street lighting is very poor). I asked my cousins about the guys that kept walking or riding by on their bicycle or motorbike. They replied: "those are the militia!"

That's when I understood why I hadn't seen them before. I had only been walking around in the daytime. In broad daylight the set-up was different. They would be out on the streets, but discretely. There was no display of weapons ore any kind of intimidation. It was all very subtle! They are in the little bars or shops, or just talking to "friends"...

In early 2009, there was a rumour that the fugitive *Batman* was "hiding out" there ... Whether it was true or not, I noticed that people were more afraid than normal and that there were a lot more people on the street in strategic locations, as if they were "guarding" the place.

"Downtown Campo Grande"

Changing settings, I decided to walk around the areas closer to the centre of Campo Grande, an area that is more organized, more urbanized, with nice houses and better access to stores and

transportation. I assumed that I wouldn't find a lot of evidence of militia control or people worried about it...that area is what I crudely call "the pavement", an area that should be relatively "safe" from such control.

However, during my first sociological observation my entire hypothesis came crashing down. Most of the stores that used to stay open 24 hours now closed at 10pm. After 10 or 11pm there weren't as many people on the street as there used to be. I wondered: is there maybe a curfew? There isn't! Or rather, not officially. But I decided not to stay any later...I saw some strange people, they told me they were "security guards"...never mind, I will come a bit earlier next time!

A few weeks later I returned and encountered an unusual situation. At the bus station, as I was talking to people waiting for the bus, a passenger told me that she was afraid to walk home after a certain time at night. I asked why (I remembered that there had been all those security guards..), he said: "my dear, the residents rebelled and didn't want to pay the militia anymore, so they told us that they would let anything happen to us...the other day they robbed my neighbour's house...". Even so, I walked around the neighbourhood a bit more (earlier, of course) and I didn't see the security guards. But you could notice the fear in people's faces as they were probably on their way home from work.

In 2009

Throughout 2009 (until September), I continued the same routine. Every week I would visit my relatives and friends, and sometimes I would walk or bike around the neighbourhood. My house is located close to a small and quiet community that is controlled by militia

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members (one of them is a relative of mine, but I don't have any direct contact with him). Real estate development is going full steam. Once or twice, when I was at my front door, some guy offered me cable TV service....illegal, of course! Once he said: "why don't you want it? It will be cheap... A lot people have it. We have friends here. I got the message.... some members of the militia live in the apartment and control the administration in a certain way...the message is always the same: "we will bring order here..." I had always known about that.

The problem is that even though there is no law of silence, I could never go around here saying that I "study" militia or talk to these people. Ever since I was a child I have known them (under the name of *policia mineira*), and have always been around them, some they even call my aunt by the same title....but they are not my relatives!

Some final thoughts...

It's impossible to affirm that the entire local population disapproves of the militia operations. But, "from the inside" I can try to argue that even though people say that they don't like them and don't support them, I don't believe that these groups will give up their power. What bothers the residents the most is the tax they charge and the terrible sanctions that a person and his family may suffer if they don't pay these taxes. If things were how they used to be, the *policia mineira*, might have been better for some residents. They didn't charge taxes, they usually lived in the area and had a perception of justice based on the idea of "neighbourhood vigilante" or saw themselves as those who did justice and protected their community against the abuse of drug gangs. The marketing aspect wasn't latent everywhere.

Academics are perhaps more familiar with the researcher who sits at his desk, in his office, surrounded by piles of field data collected by his researchers (or interns), creating huge reports. The problem is that, in most cases, they know very little or almost nothing about their subject. Far from taking a journalistic stand, by speaking "from the inside", you somehow justify the idea that *you can leave the place, but the place never leaves you*. From this perspective it seems both difficult and easy to talk about the militia. And even more so, to say more than "people around here are saying", how criminal these groups are, they are part of this place, rooted here, they are part of the folklore of the local community. It sometimes causes pain and anger. I once asked a resident who lives in a neighbourhood close to Campo Grande if he could picture his life without the presence of militia, and he told me: "I have never thought about it....when I was born, they already existed,...I don't know what this neighbourhood would be like without them." To be honest, I also don't know how to look at this region without the militia...they have always been here. The difference is that only in the last 4 or 5 years did they become part of the problem of public security, and that's why it has ended up in the newspapers.



Paulo Jorge Ribeiro and Rosane Oliveira look at a recent phenomenon in the recurrent episodes of extreme urban violence in Rio de Janeiro: the rise of militias – well-organised private vigilante groups made up of rogue, dismissed or retired police officers, firemen and prison guards. The study describes a worrying scenario in the informal urban settlements that may be particular to Rio, but also represent developments in urban security that spread far beyond Brazil.

In many unruly megacities around the world, the state often cannot provide law and order and satisfy basic security needs and is superseded by a wide range of alternative illegitimate security arrangements, creating a power and governance vacuum. The state monopoly on the legitimate use of force is eroded and “markets of violence” or a “markets of force” emerge as a mode of security regulation.

With the absence of rule of law, security protection and governance, security ceases to be a public good and transforms into a private commodity. The social contract between state and citizen, expressed by the payment of taxes and the protection implied in an effective monopoly of the legitimate use of force, is seriously weakened.

The militias rationalise their violence by pretending to provide security to neighbourhoods and remove the drug gangs and the violence caused by their competition over drug trafficking free zones. Their “legitimation” comes from the absence of regular law enforcement that is supposed to restore public order.

Ribeiro and Oliveira show that the militias have another rationale as well. The ultimate goal of militias is profit, levying security taxes on inhabitants, business and services. This economic rationale has caused violent disputes between different militias. The perverse reality Rio de Janeiro is witnessing today is that – on top of the violence between drug gangs and between drugs gangs and police – the militias have added yet another wave of violence; of militias against drug gangs, militias against militias and militias against police.

Founded in 1974, TNI is an international network of activists and researchers committed to critically analysing current and future global problems. Its goal is to provide intellectual support to grassroots movements concerned about creating a more democratic, equitable and sustainable world.

The Crime and Globalisation Project examines the synergy between neoliberal globalisation and crime. The project aims to stimulate critical thinking about mainstream discourses, which turn a blind eye to the criminogenic effects of globalisation. Crime is deteriorating human security situations and is a serious challenge to achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

The programme does field research, fosters political debate, provides information to officials and journalists, coordinates expert seminars, and produces analytical articles and documents.

On the one hand, the project is concerned with the number of people being forced to ‘migrate into illegality’ due to impoverishment and marginalisation. The development of ‘shadow’ or ‘underground’ economies is a major challenge to good governance. It is in the grey area of unregulated informal markets, that illegal and legal economic actors meet.

On the other hand, the project is concerned with the body of multilateral agreements put in place to counter the complex issues of security, transnational organized crime, money laundering, and political terrorism. Counter-measures are often based on limited national security concepts and are being adopted on the basis of vague definitions, scant information and tenuous links, and have serious consequences for civil liberties, human rights and national sovereignty.

Such an approach does not take into account the criminogenic aspects of the globalisation process, nor does it help meet the much broader human security needs of developing countries, particularly in relation to the increasing urban crime problems of the booming shanty towns of the South.