



# Violence, Crack and Crackdowns in Camaçari, Bahia: Connecting the Dots, Breaking the Cycles

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Oliver Bream McIntosh

## ABSTRACT

This book presents the data collected as part of research commissioned by Associação Viva A Vida in 2015 into the incidence of youth homicide, the dynamics of the Illegal Drugs Trade, and the public policies that respond to high levels of violence in Camaçari, Bahia, Brazil.

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**Introduction:**

Viva A Vida (VAV) is a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) that implements youth projects in the communities of Vila de Abrantes, the coastal district of Camaçari: a historic municipality in the state of Bahia, Northeastern Brazil. The area faces extraordinary levels of crime, especially drug trafficking and murder, and Viva a Vida work to engage and empower the population in response to these issues with political mobilisation groups; discursive workshops on citizenship and identity in the local school; and community educational programmes on drug abuse and violence.

This report represents the culmination of the organisation's efforts to produce thorough research, mapping out the details of the problems faced by the local population, both in order to ensure our work is responding closely to the reality, and to raise awareness of the complicated web of politics and history that shape the crisis, for the benefit of our partners and the wider public engaged in finding lasting solutions.

Oliver Bream McIntosh,  
Salvador da Bahia, December 2015

## **Chapter 1:**

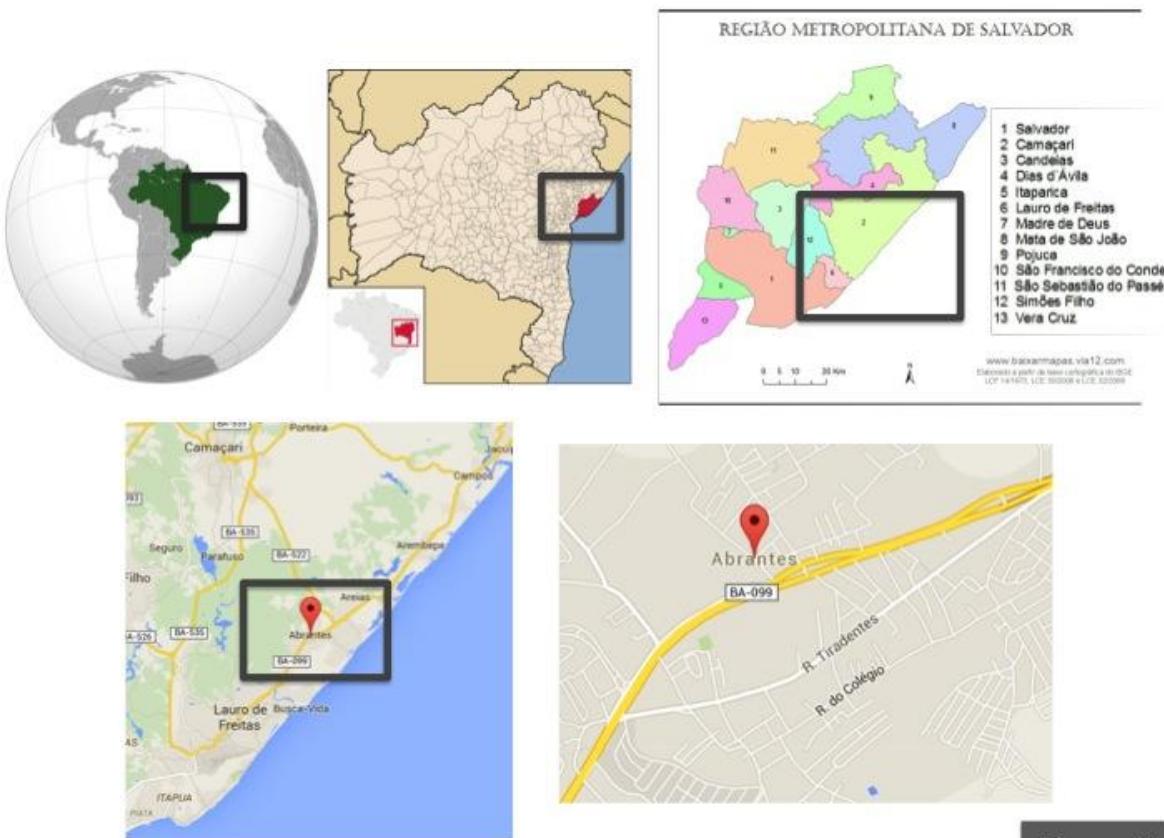
### **Counting the Dead**

This chapter will examine available data on violence in Camaçari to provide a global, national, and regional context (see Fig. 1), eventually narrowing our focus as locally as possible to provide a comprehensive outline of violence in the community today.

It should be noted at the offset however, that the research presented in this section frequently refers to data released by local and statutory government departments, secretaries and police units, on whose compliance and transparency our access has repeatedly depended. Issues have arisen on several occasions that have called these qualities into question. Reasons for this will be detailed further on, but given the scepticism that remains around the precision of some of these sources, the reader is encouraged to view figures presented here as lower boundaries for the values in question.

### **Continental Trends**

According to the 2014 edition of an annual report published by the Mexican Board for Security, Justice and Peace (SJP), which collects data on worldwide homicide rates to track patterns in global public security, the prevalence of lethal violence in Latin America considerably surpasses the rate of every other continent<sup>1</sup>. Forty-three of the cities in the SJP's Top Fifty Dangerous Cities list are located in Central and South America – Brazil's input dwarfing that of its neighbours at nineteen out of fifty. Data from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) corroborates this continental pattern – their 2013 'Global Study on Homicide' calculates homicide rates in the Americas at over two and a half times the global average, and the top ten cities for intentional homicide rates are all located within the region<sup>2</sup>.



**Figure 1**

This is generally accounted for with a few key characteristics in the continent's political past and present. The violent beginnings of colonialism, including the genocide of indigenous peoples, resource-depleting colonialism and an enduring, brutal slave trade. later gave way to bloody independence wars, fascist regimes and manipulative patron-client relationships with Western powers. Considered as a whole, it is perhaps unsurprising then, that the violence deeply embedded in this legacy is manifest at almost every level of society today. Fernando Conceição, a respected Brazilian sociologist, has gone so far as to identify the problem of violence in Brazil as a 'veritable epidemic', according to parameters provided by the World Health Organization (WHO)<sup>3</sup>.

### Regional Disparities

Brazil's military dictatorship came to a formal close in 1985 with the birth of a democratically elected federal government, its national constitution arriving

shortly thereafter in 1988. Despite progressive politics making headway across the continent since then, and burgeoning industries shifting national and regional economies onto a new world stage, violence remains an elusive problem to solve. In the state of Bahia, the focus area of this research, Conceição has noted that numerous changes in government and several exercises in democracy have not brought about any real improvements to the violence that continues to ravage civil society and persecute young people. In fact, on the nation-wide scale, the available data is unmistakable: things are getting worse.

In the twenty-six years from 1980 to 2006, the Brazilian Ministry of Health observed a 78% increase in violent deaths<sup>4</sup>. At once, this appears at odds with the image of Brazil typically projected in the West: reports of unprecedented growth, the recent alleviation of poverty and social ills, and a knack for cultural exuberance that continues to inspire the world. Although this is a face of Brazil many of its citizens guard with pride, it reflects a very distorted reality. Rio de Janeiro, the poster-child of the country's boom, and São Paulo, its commercial powerhouse, have seen the kinds of extensive civic improvements that spin doctors rely on, but a lack of media attention elsewhere in the country has left its other regions to stagnate in the background, or as is the case in Bahia, decline severely.

The improvements seen in Brazil's south-eastern megacities have equivalents elsewhere on the continent: Medellin, Colombia has seen a 67% drop in violence in four years, with a 49% drop in Torreon, Mexico, whilst Port Au Prince, Haiti and San Jose, Puerto Rico have left the SJP's Top Fifty for the first time since the list began. However, these tangible examples of progress all over Latin America and the Caribbean tend to form part of nation-wide processes of development where the country as a whole gains – it is this fact that sets Brazil apart. Rio and São Paulo aside, three of the country's cities were added to last year's Top Fifty Dangerous Cities – Teresina, Porto Alegre and Curitiba – the largest contribution of any one country. Further evidence for the singular

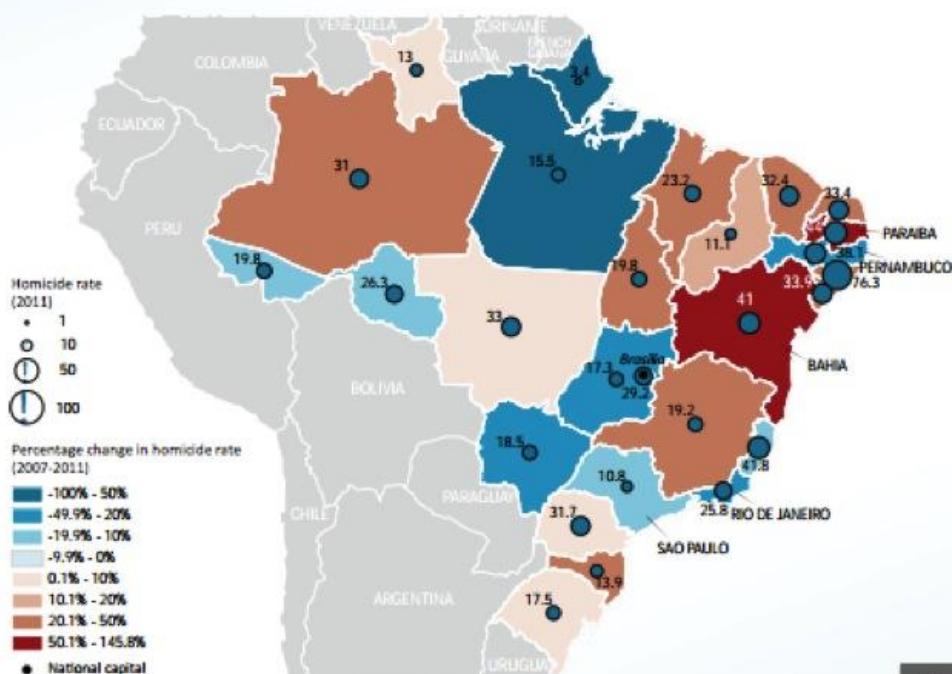
nature of Brazil's situation comes from a recent report published by São Paulo-based NGO The Brazilian Forum on Public Security (BFPS), showing that 2014 saw a 5% increase on the previous year's total homicide count for the country as a whole, setting the new record at 58,000 – that's an average of just over one homicide every ten minutes<sup>5</sup>.

In 2014, The Favela Observatory (TFO), a research entity initiated by the National Secretary for Human Rights, working in partnership with UNICEF's Lethal Violence Reduction Programme, published the results of their research into the distribution of homicides throughout Brazil. Their focus on young victims makes their data indispensable, in particular their Youth Homicide Index (YHI), an aggregate calculation based on various rates. It represents the number of annual homicides per thousand of the population aged between twelve and eighteen. The nationwide average is 3.32 – that is, for every thousand young people, an average of 3.32 will be murdered before they reach the age of nineteen<sup>6</sup>. As confirmed by the Parliamentary Investigative Committee for the Murder of Young Black Youths (PIC) in its final report published in 2015, murder is therefore the biggest cause of death among young people in Brazil<sup>7</sup>.

However, as previously discussed, and as affirmed by observations made in the UNODC's 2013 report, Brazil's violence distribution is an example of how national averages can conceal significantly more volatile trends at the regional level<sup>8</sup> (See Fig. 2). This was not the case prior to 2005, when relative uniformity in gradual rates of increase across all regions began to collapse, giving way to the sharply falling rates in the urban centres of the South East, coupled with a sharp increase in the Northeast. TFO's report corroborates this trend: when data from the Northeast's nine states are isolated, the YHI increases by 78% to 5.97, higher than all four other regions. It is by virtue of the extremity of this disparity that the Northeastern states cancel out those isolated improvements elsewhere in the country.

Data from the state of Bahia alone show yet further discrepancies, with the YHI leaping to 8.59 per thousand: the second highest of all twenty-seven states. Moreover, Figure 2 shows Bahia's homicide rate increased more than any other between 2007 and 2011.

**Map 1.3: Percentage change in sub-national homicide rates, Brazil (2007-2011)**



**Figure 2**

Source: UN: Office on Drugs and Crime (2014) *Global Study on Homicide: Trends, Contexts, Data: 2013*. United States: UN

One nationwide trend proffered by the report that does hold true for Bahia is a rural-urban distribution whereby homicides occur more in larger cities<sup>9</sup>. As such, the Metropolitan Region of Salvador (RMS) is an epicentre for the state's homicides, the municipalities it encompasses burdened with some of the highest YHI's in the country. The municipality of Camaçari in particular, some forty kilometres north of Salvador's centre but still within the remit of the RMS, has the fifth highest municipal YHI in the country, at an appalling 9.82 – three times the national average, ranking fifth in the entire country (see Fig. 3). This figure corresponds to an approximate homicide rate that sees one in every hundred young people killed before they reach nineteen years of age.

Level	Area	Youth Homicide Index (per 1000)	Increase from Base Figure (%)
country	<b>Brazil</b>	3.32	base figure
region	<b>North East</b>	5.97	<b>+ 79.819</b>
state	<b>Bahia</b>	8.59	<b>+ 158.735</b>
municipality	<b>Camaçari</b>	9.82	<b>+ 195.783</b>
district	<b>Vila de Abrantes</b>	unknown	unknown

**Figure 3**

### The Secretary for Public Security

Bahia's Secretary for Public Security (SSP) also publishes data on homicides, although their figures do not differentiate between youth and adult sectors, instead making reference only to the total population. This distinction warrants elaboration, as TFO's data indicate homicide among youths and adolescents is 7.6 times more common than in the adult population, with more than a third of all adolescent deaths being attributed to murder compared to one in twenty in the adult population. Whatever the reason for the SSP's lack of specificity here, it should be observed that its data will, at face value, differ considerably and be subject to different factors of influence and rates of change over time.

According to the Secretary's databases then, Camaçari's total homicide count ranks third among the 417 municipalities of Bahia, and has done each year since publicly available records began in 2009<sup>10</sup>. The municipalities of Salvador and Feira da Santana rank first and second respectively. However, when these figures are population-adjusted, this ranking inverts, Camaçari taking first place, Salvador in second and Feira da Santana, third. This adjustment is

calculated using the homicide counts from the first two quarters of 2015, doubled to stand in for yearly values, and then cross-referenced with the 2015 population estimates put forward by the Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics (IBGE)<sup>11</sup>, and returns the annual total homicide rates as listed in the table below (Fig. 4).

Municipality	Lethal Crime Count 2012	2012 Population	Lethal Crime Rate 2012 (per 1000)	Lethal Crime Count 2015	2015 Population	Lethal Crime Rate 2015 (per 1000)	Rate of Change 2012-2015 (%)
<b>Salvador</b>	2,771	2,679,656	<b>9.90</b>	1,970	2,921,087	<b>7.22</b>	-27.0
<b>Feira da Santana</b>	551	556,642	<b>10.34</b>	446	617,528	<b>6.74</b>	-34.8
<b>Camaçari</b>	281	242,970	<b>11.57</b>	324	286,219	<b>11.29</b>	-0.2

**Figure 4**

When the same adjustment is made using 2012 figures, an alarming growth differential emerges too. Over this three-year period, Salvador's rate appears to have fallen 27%, with Feira da Santana's falling by 34.8%. Camaçari, on the other hand, saw its rate dip just 0.2%.

It should be noted here however that when this research began, the SSP online databases displayed records from 2009 onwards. Half way through our research period, four years' worth of data was completely removed without warning or justification, so that only figures from 2014 and parts of 2015 remained. Fortunately, we retained data from initial investigations in some

notes, facilitating the calculations and comparisons above, but we fear that the removal of such important data will now categorically impede any further comparisons, both for our organisation, and others.

Questions still remain about the stark discrepancies among the rates of change over time presented above for Camaçari, Salvador and Feira da Santana. Two principal theories have been offered to explain this, although it should be noted that sources to verify these are unsurprisingly thin-on-the-ground, crucially because both suggest a gap between what is observed and lived by citizens on the ground, and what is recorded by government officials and newspapers.

First is the correlation between this timeframe and the arrival to the city of one of the world's largest international events: the Men's Football World Cup in 2014. Keen to capitalise on the incumbent tourism, a rapid operation is thought by some to have been choreographed by city authorities wanting to dispel any concerns of theft and violence that might deter a moneyed influx from abroad. Known drug traffickers were allegedly rounded up shortly before the opening of the competition and threateningly moved out of harm's way to the RMS's northernmost municipalities, namely Simões Filho and Camaçari, where they have supposedly remained, doing business and attracting violence as per usual.

Another, and perhaps more controversial, theory was presented to the researchers on this project by an academic health and social worker from the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), who will remain anonymous. All deaths in Brazil must be confirmed and registered by a doctor, typically in a hospital. Without a thorough system of registration where the fully detailed circumstances of each confirmed homicide can be recorded, the location data we have for incidences of homicide are derived from the location of the doctor that registered it. According to the UFBA academic's theory, the political expediency that has resulted in a drive to reduce homicide statistics in Salvador and gloss over its violence crisis for the reassurance of investors and tourists

alike, has in part sought to achieve this by an unofficial policy whereby the police forces called to homicide incidences often drive the corpses beyond Salvador's municipal borders, into Camaçari and Simões Filho, where a doctor can register their death there and thus save the incident from further tarnishing the city's reputation. This would not totally account for the increase in violence in these northern RMS municipalities, but it would explain, in conjunction with the theories offered above, the stark difference between the rates of change we have previously seen.

More specific information on the geographical distribution of homicides within municipalities is hard to find. The TFO report makes no reference to this distribution either, perhaps a direct result of the lack of clear data on the matter from the SSP, or at least its nonexistence in the public domain. We will examine the little data that does exist regarding sub-municipal levels of distribution in Camaçari later on. Firstly though, there is one other official source of data provided by the state that warrants brief discussion.

### **The Pact for Life Programme**

In September 2009, the SSP in Bahia brought into effect a programme known as Pacto Pela Vida (PPV) (Pact For Life). Its logo appears frequently in public spaces, on some police vehicles and outside police stations, suggesting the programme retains considerable support from today's authorities, whose cooperation for their forerunners' projects is sometimes sporadic.

As primarily a crime-mapping effort, it does make reference to some smaller, more specific geographical areas in the form of what it calls Integrated Public Security Zones (AISPs). There are 57 distributed around the state, with a large concentration in the RMS. According to the programme's official website, the zones are intended to "enable the efficient monitoring of indicators", as part of initiatives made by "the civil and military police, to prevent and combat

criminality”<sup>12</sup>. Some issues emerge however, when we examine the zoning process in detail.

For example, Barra (AISP 14), a higher-income neighbourhood just south of the city centre, has 44,000 inhabitants and incidentally the lowest criminality indicators in the whole RMS. One might therefore assume that the 48,000 inhabitants of Vila de Abrantes warrant their own AISP too. Instead, the town is incorporated into AISP 22, which covers the entire jurisdiction of Camaçari, with its 287,000 inhabitants and, as has already been discussed, the fifth highest YHI in Brazil. As such, “efficient monitoring” is perhaps an overly generous term.

The experience of Viva a Vida in Vila de Abrantes suggests that the escalating violence in these communities necessitates urgent action, but the data required to inform a strategic response is lacking, and the official information that does exist from the SSP and PPV comprises countless obstacles.

Chief among them is the question of specificity. Neither the SSP nor the PPV specify deaths by age group, despite studies showing that the risk is far higher among younger people. Moreover, neither programme specifies the location of homicides. Given that deaths must be confirmed and registered by a physician, it is logical to assume that published data has been compiled by government officials from various sub-divisions of the areas in question, each with their own group of physicians submitting data to an accumulative system. It follows therefore that the origins of the published data – how many homicides were registered in neighbourhood A compared to neighbourhood B – inevitably more precise and therefore more useful, does indeed exist, but is withheld and instead presented collectively.

Furthermore, the zoning process that produced PPV’s AISPs has, accidentally or otherwise, smoke-screened vital evidence of some of the RMS’s most at risk communities. Vila de Abrantes for instance has been subject to a form of

'gerrymandering', enveloped by a broader, totally disproportionate demographic group, whose most violent communities, such as Vila de Abrantes, are mitigated by the sum of less violent ones. As a result the areas that need the most attention receive the least.

'The mapping and re-designing of processes' is, according to Bahia's State Plan for Public Security 2012-2015 (PLANESP), priority 73 (out of 107), and is therefore deemed a 'long-term project', the same level of priority given to 'widening and updating the range of police vehicles', and 'acquiring new weaponry... of less dangerous potential.'<sup>13</sup> Although unclear elsewhere, here, the state's attitude to data collection and the procedures involved speaks vividly for itself.

### **The PRONASCI Programme**

Having exhausted the options at the state level of government, our research efforts turned to the higher, federal level, where one programme offered the potential for further analysis. PRONASCI (National Programme for Public Security and Citizenship) was designed and funded by Lula da Silva's Worker's Party (PT) government and implemented in the country's most violent municipalities in 2006 with a mandate for the creation of expertise on violence at the local level, ultimately intended to provide consultation services for municipal planners and policy makers in their public security strategy<sup>14</sup>. Traditionally, matters of public security are the remit of the state authorities alone, but federal powers took the decision that this approach was underperforming in areas of high violence, and that federally coordinated engagement at the municipal level of government was necessary.

In Camaçari, PRONASCI'S work on data collection is alleged to have culminated in several reports detailing location-specific, detailed descriptions of virtually every measurable incidence of violence in the municipality. Our association has requested copies of these reports on several occasions

throughout the programme's operation. We have long-established contact with the officers, but unfortunately, and without explanation, we are yet to receive a single report.

A visit to their headquarters in November 2015 did however provide some enlightening results. Most remarkable was that the vast majority of government officials had never heard of the programme, including the official ombudsman's office for the municipality. After spending some time trying various approaches with several members of staff, contact was established by telephone with Mayor Ademar Delgado's executive adviser, Adelson Carvalho, a respected local politician recently awarded for his commitment to racial justice who had, fortunately, heard of the programme and offered us his time to discuss the current situation.

He explained in cautious words that Delgado's appointment to office in 2013 was followed with department reshuffles that saw positions of authority across the board given to fellow members of his Evangelical Church, whose conservative Christian lobby has affirmatively determined an approach to public security that is 'slightly closed-minded', in which the only state mechanisms assigned a role in reducing criminality and improving public security are the Military and Civil Police forces. As such, funding for PRONASCI has been withdrawn, its offices closed, the professionals trained by the federal government dismissed, and the programme all but shut down. One part time professional, Durval Machado, splits his time working as a coordinator with several municipal projects, and is currently the only person involved in the programme, using Carvalho's office from time to time to formally maintain an otherwise totally adjourned entity.

Before Delgado's appointment though, the project was functioning, but Carvalho advised that the seven years' worth of data collected by PRONASCI up until that point has since been lost. He suggested one previous member of

the project who might have access to the information, but our efforts failed to locate this person.

Carvalho did subsequently introduce us to the chief of the Mayor's Press Office, who quickly responded to our interest in violence-mapping data with the claim that homicides in the municipality had reduced 48%. Eventually one of his assistants provided us with a copy of the original report from which this figure had been extracted. It cites a claim made by Thaís Siqueira, recently appointed chief of Camaçari's Civil Police jurisdiction, that in October 2014, there had been 25 homicides, compared to only 13 registered in October of this year. Thus a reduction of 48% had placed Camaçari in first place in the ranking of all AISPs<sup>15</sup>. Irrefutably misleading, a month-to-month comparison has no bearing on the actual trend, and that this should be used to rank Camaçari as first among all AISPs for successful violence reduction efforts, when data already examined here suggests that it is in fact the most violent and one of the fastest deteriorating, is testament to an arguably casual regard for transparency. What is more, the laboriousness of accessing even this offhand, questionable data corresponds to a serious lack of commitment to support local NGOs, which the Mayor has recently professed, without elaboration, to be a valued priority of his security strategy<sup>16</sup>.

However, according to the information contained in this and other official press releases we have accessed, the anti-criminality policies of the Mayor are said to be experiencing great success, and a recent security conference was attended by state officials who congratulated the commanders of the Military Police on their progress, announcing that some of the strategies employed in the municipality for controlling violence would soon be used as exemplar practice for the rest of the state. Figures such as the 48% cited above are referred to as good evidence that Mayor Delgado is 'on the right track' in his efforts to make the area 'more peaceful'. We await more detailed updates on Camaçari's alleged successes, along with the nine-year backlog of PRONASCI's reports.

## Non-Governmental Data

As for data that hasn't come from the government itself, detailed analyses and reports on violence in the local area are few, with seemingly no reports by NGOs and only one of note of an academic nature.

Márcio Silva Das Neves' post-graduate dissertation was published by the private Salvador-based university UNIFACS in 2008. Information gleaned from the records of the Camaçari's four police delegations, the archives of its local media outlets, and the registries of seven of its cemeteries is collated and presented in 13 territorial units, Vila de Abrantes among them. The table below (Fig. 5) is taken directly from this study. It informs us that in 2008, Vila de Abrantes was in joint first position with Nova Vitória, with 14.8% of all youth homicides<sup>17</sup>. Although dated, Das Neves' data confirm our suspicions that Vila de Abrantes is empirically one of the most dangerous communities in one of the most dangerous states in of the most dangerous countries in the world.

Tabela 1 – Jovens mortos em Camaçari por unidades territoriais<sup>(1)</sup> (2008)

N.	REGIÃO	TOTAL	%
1	Vila de Abrantes (litoral)	12	14,8%
2	Nova Vitória/Bairro Novo Horizonte	12	14,8%
3	Phoc I,II, III	9	11,1%
4	Parque Satélite/Gleba A/Mangueiral/Ficam I e II, Gravatá	9	11,1%
5	Jauá/Arembepe/Areias (litoral)	5	6,2%
6	Verde Horizonte/Parafuso	5	6,2%
7	Lama Preta/Gleba H/Triângulo	3	3,7%
8	Gleba E, Parque Verde I e II	3	3,7%
9	Camaçari de Dentro/Gleba C/ 46	3	3,7%
10	Inocoop/Piaçaveira/Ponto Certo/2 de Julho	3	3,7%
11	Pq. Das Mangabas/ Machadinho	3	3,7%
12	Monte Gordo/B.do Pojuca/B.Jacuípe/Setubal (litoral)	2	2,4%
13	Gleba B/Bomba/Natal	1	1,2%
14	Não Identificado	11	13,6%
<b>Total</b>		<b>81</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Fonte: Produzida pelo autor, utilizando dados coletados na mídia local, cemitérios e delegacias.

Nota: <sup>(1)</sup> Para definir unidade territorial, o autor considera a proximidade entre os bairros e o alcance dos atendimentos dos equipamentos públicos que as atende.

Source: Silva Das Neves, M. (2010) *Causas Dos Homicídios De Jovens E A Fragilidade Da Rede De Proteção Social Em Camaçari*. Salvador: UNIFACS Universidade Salvador.

**Figure 5**

Preliminary research conducted for this report repeatedly failed to find any other sub-municipal distribution data, meaning the contemporary state of violence in Vila de Abrantes remains somewhat unknown – despite all signs pointing towards continual deterioration.

We turn finally to a brief summary of the qualitative data revealed in interactions with community members themselves, whose anonymity has been guaranteed. Accounts seem to share the idea that violence has seen peaks and troughs throughout the years, which depend on the changing fortunes of the Illegal Drugs Trade (IDT) and the relationships between gangs and the police, but it is always present. Several accounts of life in the community depict a place where it is commonplace for school children to lose a classmate to crossfire in gang warfare, for drug dealers to execute their adolescent debtors as an example to other users, and for the bloodied bodies of untried criminals assassinated by police to be left in the streets long after they are shot dead as a display of power and impunity. Caught between fear and desensitisation, young people in particular convey a desperation for things to get better.

To reiterate then, in Vila de Abrantes and more widely in Camaçari, the data we have found speaks clearly of dire circumstances; although the data we are unable to find, perhaps more so.

## **Chapter 2:**

### **The Traffic and Its Traffickers**

This chapter will examine the role of the IDT in creating and sustaining high levels of violence in Brazil, considering in particular: the role of the criminal organisations that orchestrate trafficking operations; the relationship between economics and cocaine consumption patterns; and the political factors that have recently led to an upsurge in IDT-related killings in Camaçari and the Northeast as a whole.

#### **Brazilian Narcotics Culture**

Drugs like tobacco, alcohol, cannabis and DMT have long, pre-colonial histories in Brazil; intimate relationships between these substances and Brazil's myriad cultures and countercultures maintain their relevance to many aspects of the country's social life. LSD (Acid) arrived much later with the spread of Hippie Culture from the USA in the nineteen seventies, while the opiates with ancient Eurasian histories have remained relatively unpopular throughout.

Clarice Madruga, a psychiatrist, who in 2012 conducted research on the contemporary Brazilian drug economy, notes several new changes however. She observes that further globalisation of the country's Narcotics Culture has brought about a very recent boom in the popularity of synthetic recreational drugs common in Europe and North America, such as MDMA (Ecstasy) and amphetamines (Speed), to some extent replacing the hitherto popular powder-form cocaine – especially among middle-class young people in the more prosperous Southeast<sup>18</sup>. For Madruga however, the drug that stands out is crack, the base-form of cocaine that is usually pipe-smoked. A closer look at the industry for cocaine in Brazil is necessary to situate Madruga's concerns within their wider context.

## The Cocaine Continent

Essentially all of the world's cocaine comes from the same region: the tropical Andean highlands of Colombia, Peru and Bolivia. From its origins in the leaves of select varieties of *Erythroxylum Coca*, a plant used by indigenous and traditional populations across the continent for its stimulant properties, the drug is extracted by means of several chemical processes<sup>19</sup>. The first stage involves alkaline solution and the traditional foot-stamping process, producing the putty-like Cocaine Paste. Although recreational usage of the drug can be achieved in paste form (and is growing in the Amazon region), more common is its secondary conversion into base or powder, often carried out in more elaborate laboratories due to the complexity of the chemical processes involved. Producers in Bolivia and Peru typically convert paste into base, which can be smoked as crack (as popularised in the city ghettos of the USA), or subsequently converted into powder form, Cocaine Hydrochloride (HCl). Paste produced in Colombia, on the other hand, tends to be converted straight into HCl.

A national commercial monopoly in Peru (ENACO), the biggest producer of all three countries as of 2012<sup>20</sup>, and governmental regulation bodies in Bolivia maintain legal-but-limited traditional usage of the substances, whereas Colombia enacts full criminalisation. As such, when much of the region's produce is first trafficked to its logistical hub in Medellín, a notoriously violent city in Colombia, it is very much an underground and self-regulated network of gangs that oversees the drug's passage to its local distributors and consumers worldwide.

Consuming 18% of total global production, Brazil is cocaine's biggest consumer after the USA<sup>21</sup>, and in first place for base-form consumption with approximately one million users<sup>22</sup>. What's more, the country is the cheapest place to purchase cocaine outside of the producing/exporting troika<sup>23</sup>.

## **One Compound, Many Faces**

As already discussed, various forms of the drug can be fashioned for consumption, and although identical on a molecular level, there exists a very clear division in the consumption habits of its users. Powder-form (HCl) has long been used medicinally and recreationally by the middle classes, with a notable boom in its popularity in the urban party-scenes of the nineteen eighties, but with the arrival and spread of the more potent base-form (crack) in the following decade, an immediate class divide emerged. While HCl retains its reputation for usage in more gregarious, sophisticated contexts, in which long-term addictions are less common than periodic consumption (with usage decreasing yearly), crack is thought of more as a drug of the destitute, the ostracised and the vulnerable.

Carlos Salgado, president of the Brazilian Association for the Study of Alcohol and Other Drugs (ABEAD), seems to think this is not the case, having claimed that 'there is no such thing as a rich drug or a poor drug'<sup>24</sup>. His case refers to the nascent arrival of crack into the middle classes, but he seems to overlook where it spread from, and the story of how it got there. Political journalist Reinaldo Azevedo also laments the persistence of the idea that there is an underlying social inequality to crack consumption<sup>25</sup>. These two individuals represent a viewpoint which tends to defend the state when it is accused, as it often is, of having an instrumental role in the spread of devastating crack addictions. When we turn to sources with more data and less opinion however, a dazzling correlation emerges between poverty and crack from which a very clear cause-effect relationship can be deduced. In São Paulo for instance, studies show 77% of crack users are homeless<sup>26</sup>. Where the conservative hardliners would prefer to attribute this to some inherent moral defect, as suggested by Azevedo when claiming that the reason crack addicts are often jobless is because they don't have the 'personal morals and collective ethics' to look for one, VAV's experience suggests that the indices do indeed speak for

themselves: poor schooling and virtually absent social services play a vital role in creating the vacuum that addiction can so easily fill. And yet the cause-effect relationship here is still so frequently reduced to a casual coincidence.

The famous Rat Park experiment conducted in the nineteen seventies by Canadian psychologist Bruce Alexander first gave credence to the non-chemical causes of addiction, because its results indicated that addiction is a result of the addict's environment and not the cognitive properties of the drug they're using<sup>27</sup>. Carl Hart, a psychologist at Columbia University in New York City has since gone on to devote much work to the idea that crack addiction is not a personal weakness but, on the contrary, 'a rational choice'. He insists it is solely a lack of better options that renders submission to its physically addictive properties the preferable path to take, and not the intrinsic qualities of the substance itself.<sup>28</sup> A lack of better options simply cannot be the fault of any one individual user, nor a casual coincidence when it leads to drug-abuse on a mass scale within a given socioeconomic group.

We would argue the rich-poor divide between HCl and crack is certainly significant, and the absence of the socioeconomic privileges that often help prevent wealthier users of cocaine from devastating their future prospects with addictions (financial cushions, access to better healthcare and a more integrated education) mean that the social impacts of a drug so closely tied with poverty are not just a concern of the health system or conservative ideologues, but of the entire population and its entire government.

### **Trafficking Trends, Old and New**

Criminal organisations traffic cocaine and its derivatives usually across the Colombian border, through the Amazon, and along determined routes to intermediary distribution centres and eventually to market, in the cities and

towns of Brazil. The Brazilian end of this illegal operation is quite elaborate, and has been evolving since the earliest criminalisation laws appeared in 1921<sup>29</sup>. Crack entered the market in the nineteen nineties and, rife with the social phenomena we have already identified as key predicates to addiction, reliable demand from dependent users developed early in São Paulo and shortly thereafter in Rio de Janeiro<sup>30</sup>. Consequently, traffic routes to the Southeast, cutting across the North and Central-West regions, emerged with supporting infrastructures – all under the hand of powerful gangs

The gangs controlling these supply chains have a lot at stake, with the national cocaine economy valued in the billions of dollars (global market estimates put the value as high as \$130bn.<sup>31</sup>). Rival gangs, with sights set on shares of a lucrative market, represent threats to the stability of these main crack routes; warfare is therefore a constant factor in the trafficking process, with violence manifest in inter-gang assassinations, but also in debtor killings and collateral, ‘crossfire’ deaths.

In theory, a security-orientated paradigm of drug policy would treat violence as cause for a monumental intervention in the IDT. But for a long time, even the very visible violence of the IDT encountered by the average citizen was not enough to spur premeditated and extensive intervention on the part of state-controlled forces. It is only relatively recently, in parallel with Brazil’s increasing industrial pre-eminence, that both increased pressure from media and the work of some politicians have resulted in a drive to ease the plight of the communities worst affected by the trade. As highlighted by the executive advisor to Camaçari’s Mayor however, conservative Christian ideology endures as the principal reference point for matters of security in many areas, and where intervention is a proactive priority, intensely aggressive policing tends to take precedence over social welfare investments that might otherwise tackle the problems at their root.

The process in Rio began in 2008 with the installation of several Police Pacification Units (UPPs) throughout the favelas, which act as hubs for citywide distribution. This came in the form of gun control crackdowns (given that guns are involved in five times as many killings as another method<sup>32</sup>) and a large increase in police presence, achieved through the installation of 'community bases' – for the local police forces, not the communities themselves. Aside from the controversies<sup>33</sup> surrounding the UPPs that will be examined later, along with allegations regarding data manipulation on the part of authorities in the state Rio de Janeiro intended to exaggerate these improvements<sup>34</sup>, the method appears to have seen success in deterring traffickers and reducing homicide rates. According to the official statistics, the ten years between 2002 and 2012 saw an impressive 66% reduction in the city's homicide rate<sup>35</sup>. Similar efforts in São Paulo saw a 77% drop in rates over the same period. The rate in the southeastern region as a whole (which also includes more rural communities with lower and more stable homicide rates) fell a total of 47% from 1999 to 2009.

State governments seeking their own solutions to their own problems were effective then, but only insofar as decreasing homicide rates in those isolated environments. Perhaps unsurprisingly, gangs with multi-million dollar investments were not to be so easily deterred. With no sense of coordination on a national scale, nor a serious commitment to a more welfare-orientated policy paradigm, such as the promotion of universal access to good quality drugs and citizenship education or mental healthcare services, the government responses that were somewhat successful in ousting traffic from the Southeast didn't actually eradicate it, rather, simply moved it elsewhere.

Of note here are two other approaches to the IDT that have been immensely more successful, which, placed side-by-side with the case outlined above, clearly illuminate several flaws, central to the Brazilian method. Portugal, Brazil's former coloniser, enacted wholesale decriminalisation of all illicit

substances in 2001. Commissions hear serious possession cases, and if necessary, medical treatment plans are advised; the government spending removed from heavy policing has been diverted to long-term investments in education, healthcare and social work. The result is the lowest national addiction rates in Europe<sup>36</sup>.

Portugal's approach was in many ways a huge political experiment – but it worked. Admittedly though, the scale of IDT-related violence in Brazil may be too great a threat to public security to impose an ideologically sound but potentially catastrophic transition period on an already suffering population. Before the education and health policies could take effect, a likely spike in trade would occur, whose risk of increased deaths is almost certain, although avoidable. At a recent panel discussion on the many accusations of corruption and racism levelled against the designers of Brazilian drug policy, Mr. Pichite, a captain in the Military Police, voiced this concern when an audience member suggested that Brazil take humanitarian inspiration from Portugal. Pichite responded assuredly that too many people would die in the interim for this model to be worthy of consideration. His audience of academic specialists, activists and students immediately began to voice loud and impassioned rejections of this fatalism, although Pichite refused to back down. Debate rages on, but a move so radical for so traditional a country seems unlikely at best, at least for the time being.

Uruguay's model offers yet another perspective. In December 2013, the Uruguayan National Congress passed a law in an effort to combat the IDT there, whereby cannabis would be legalised, and licenses auctioned off to official growers, permitted to sell at regulated rates<sup>37</sup>. Subsidised by the government, prices per gram have since been able to undercut those offered by gangs selling on the illegal market, and the country's IDT has thus been all but financially dissolved. Again, some problems arise when we consider that the bodily and psychological damage caused by moderate use of cannabis is,

according to latest evidence, fairly minimal, whilst crack cocaine has proved to be significantly more harmful. Nevertheless, a financially literate approach could well be combined with other risk-controlling strategies to ensure efficacy, yet once again, the Brazilian political system and its resistance to change stand firmly in the way for the foreseeable future.

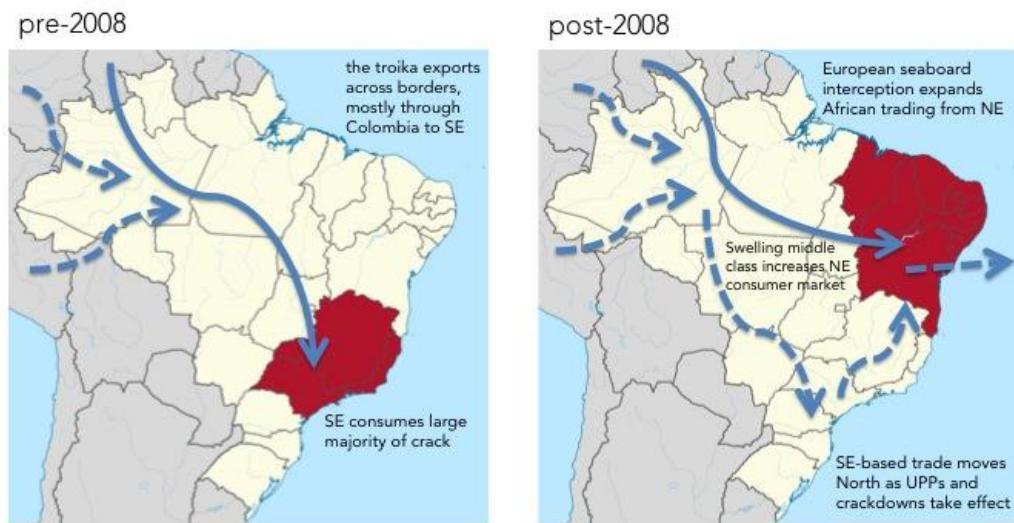
Returning to Brazil then: with the southeastern megacities largely displacing the IDT, only to bring about the partial discharge of the traditional crack routes, the conquest of new markets was both facilitated and encouraged. Traffickers, clearly unperturbed by their government's attempts to control the seemingly uncontrollable, began to move closer to the source, diverting the larger part of the drug flow to Brazil's third largest city and the surrounding region. Salvador and the Northeast thus became the new crack capital, and the industry rolled on.

Why the drugs moved to the Northeast specifically is a question posited by Madruga's report, and a combination of the two theories she presents is likely the most logical solution. First, is the phenomenon known as Lulism: the term given to the policies of socialist president Lula da Silva. Under his PT government, the first decade of the twenty-first century saw Brazil's Northeastern region begin to break away from centuries of economic stagnation, with new industries emerging and investment flooding in. This growth in the regional economy was soon reflected in a swelling middle class and a larger collective income, with GDP increasing 28.8% in the six years between 2004 and 2009, according to IGBE data<sup>38</sup>. This is not to say that poverty was eradicated, nor that every citizen now achieves full social mobility, but economic powers on the whole did increase considerably.

However, with the region's criminality indices indicating a concurrent increase, as we have already seen – the inequalities they signify remaining very much present – the actual causes of crack abuse persevered, while the financial ability of the average potential crack user to afford more crack, increased

sharply. As such, when the trafficking gangs migrated their business north, they found plenty of ready customers, Hart's so-called 'rational choice' remaining so. Potential addicts turned into addicts, and the IDT quickly responded, with more crack arriving just as fast as it was leaving the Southeast (see Fig. 6).

#### Factors Affecting Major Trafficking Routes of Crack Cocaine, Brazil



N.B.: arrows represent general trends according to data put forward by Madruga (2012) and are not intended to delineate routes with geographical accuracy.

**Figure 6**

Madruga's second theory illustrates the highly structured nature of the global cocaine market. When 99% of the world's cocaine is produced in the Andean troika, the drug's continued popularity in non-American markets relies heavily on the smooth running of a clandestine trans-Atlantic courier operation<sup>39</sup>. UNODC researchers observe that most cases of intercepted IDT shipments occur along routes from Venezuela's major ports to counterparts on the North Atlantic seaboard in Western Europe. However, recently heightened interception efforts in Spain (where an estimated 50% of all European cocaine seizures occur<sup>40</sup>); France; and the Netherlands have increased the attraction of overland imports from northern Africa, with cocaine-laden ships now tending

to arrive in the ports of Africa's West Coast instead, for overland trafficking through the Sahara to the Mediterranean, but also to the East towards Asian markets.

A new logistical hub for the continent has subsequently developed in Liberia and Sierra Leone, alongside an embryonic crack epidemic there and further inland, where routes to the booming market in India, and the new alternative routes into Europe have begun to take root and, in transit, flush the local urban centres with cheap access to the drug. However, the Venezuelan ports were chosen because of their proximity to Europe, not to Africa. For this new route, it is the 10<sup>th</sup> parallel south that minimises time at sea, being the shortest distance between the two southern continents. And the largest port most conveniently positioned for this crossing? Salvador, perfectly timed for the arrival of migrating Southeastern trade and the priming of the local economy.

These three factors in conjunction have since seen the Northeastern IDT skyrocket in value. Though the Northern and Southern regions command a modest 1% share each in the Brazilian crack economy, Madruga notes the Centre-West represents a 22% share, the Southeast still retaining 36%, and the Northeast having already climbed to first place with 40%. In tune with IDT activity, homicides in the Southeast are at an all time low, with 2015 data showing 21.5 homicides per 100,000 in Rio de Janeiro and just 15 in São Paulo. The rate in Salvador: four times higher – 60, and climbing<sup>41</sup>.

### **Gang Rivalries**

Before the resettlement of the IDT's national centre, Salvador actually had rates even lower than those São Paulo experiences today: the nine years between 1999 and 2008 having seen total homicides in the state of Bahia alone increase 430%. As already discussed, the link between the IDT and violence is clear, but in the case of Bahia, homicides seem to have increased beyond what we might have expected. This, as we will now consider, is attributable to the introduction

of new criminal organisations all seeking a slice of the mounting potential profits, and specifically the formation of their various new rivalries and allegiances with one another.

Brazil's biggest gang, responsible for most traffic in the Southeastern cities is the Primeiro Comando do Capital (PCC; First Capital Command). Based in São Paulo, it has long dominated key territories in the region. Upon arrival in Salvador however, it met with an already established order of criminal organisations local to the Northeast, among which was Salvador's most notorious gang: Comando de Paz (CP; Peace Command), the dominator of the city's expanding crack market since 2008. However, the market's expansion has resulted in more room for rival gangs to assume patrimony of new groups of potential consumers – CP's main rival in Salvador, Grupo de Perna (GP; The Leg Group), more commonly known as Caveira (Skull) or Caveirão (Big Skull), chief among them.

According to Latin American crime research group Insight Crime, PCC's strategy for its stealthy entrance into the Bahian market was by forming an allegiance powerful enough to compete with CP's dominance. The obvious choice here was Caveira. The allegiance has succeeded in its aim, and Caveira is now alternatively known as 1533 - numerical values for the corresponding letters in the Portuguese alphabet of its new ally's fearful acronym (P-15; C-3; C-3). Accordingly, CP now goes by the code 153. Their flagrant rivalry, according to Luiz Lourenço, a researcher at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), has forged a local scene resembling the São Paulo of the nineties<sup>42</sup>. Considering São Paulo at this time played host to the configuration of the newly arrived crack market, and that modern-day Salvador is in the throngs of reconfiguring the very same, this comparison is frighteningly accurate. As recalled by Insight Crime's researcher Sarah Kinosian though, things could still get much worse, considering that São Paulo's homicides peaked at over 110 per

100,000 of the population in the nineteen nineties, almost twice Salvador's current tragedy.

Something alarming distinguishes the nineteen nineties from the world of 2015 though: social media sites such as Facebook are now used by both parties in the rivalry to boast of new gains in territory and fire arm possession, but also – fascinatingly – to apologise for the upset caused by the business of selling crack<sup>43</sup>. A surprising PR success, gangs have begun to market themselves to young people, effectively circumventing the awareness of unprepared parents and suitably glamorising the traffic to recruit new members. VAV has witnessed the effects of this online presence first hand, with the insignia of the PCC-Caveira alliance (arms raised in a diagonal cross) repeated jokingly among some of our members, claiming to have learnt the gesture from images on Facebook. As such, while policing crackdowns and the changing tides of drug trends have historically been successful in removing, (or moving) the IDT, the inclusion of the internet in Brazil's gang warfare has ushered in a new era whose future is hard to predict.

In retrospect then, when Camaçari's municipal government's Press Chief spoke proudly of 48% reductions in monthly homicides, we can easily accredit these to the intermittent ebbs and flows of the power dynamic between rival gangs, with the municipality and its surrounds flung constantly between flare-ups and interspersed quiet periods. Peaks in clashes in 2012 and 2014 are reflected in the homicide rates in Camaçari we have already examined, and go far to show the extent to which Salvador's communities are at the mercy of forces beyond obvious control.

Lourenço's 2013 article in university sociology journal *Tempo Social* contains a map depicting a north/west band of Salvador's peninsula under CP's control, with a south/east band under that of Caveira. Lourenço observes a dangerous proximity between the two factions in some areas (Nordeste de Amaralina controlled by CP, and Vale das Pedrinhas controlled by Caveira, for instance)<sup>44</sup>.

A news report from February 2014 by Bocão News, which claims that 90% of the city's homicides are owed to one of the two rivals, includes a frightening first-hand account of life in a contested territory. Anonymous for obvious reasons, he explains that if he lives in a street controlled by CP, as demarcated by its acronym painted in graffiti, he is not permitted to enter a street marked as being controlled by Caveira<sup>45</sup>. It might seem obvious that repression of this intensity requires careful, community-involved, reactive government manoeuvres to combat, and yet, as is continually revealed, policy leans more towards heavier and heavier crackdowns. One is reminded of how Medusa's heads grow back in threes.

## **Chapter 3:**

### **Policing: Policy and Practice**

This chapter will aim to: shed light on the political paradigms that shape the policies put forward in response to intense violence and the operations of the IDT; scrutinise the impacts of the ‘medidas enérgicas’ (crackdowns) that exacerbate causes of criminality and persecute citizens; briefly discuss the role of the media as a monitor of civil society and an ombudsman for governance; and finally present comparisons to other paradigms beginning to take root elsewhere on the continent, that may represent potential political alternatives for the future of the state.

#### **Conceptualising Crime**

The Spanish term ‘Mano Dura’ (Hard Hand) refers to a set of policies that respond to violence principally as a matter of public security. It essentially assumes violent crime to be an inevitable element of society, but that the task of the government is to stop it by heavily punishing those responsible. In very general terms, the state government in Bahia has taken this approach. It views the citizens responsible for violence as criminals, and seeks out strategies to punish them and repress the criminality in which they participate. An example of this strategy at work is the controversial ‘pacification’ process, replicated in Bahia after allegedly laudable successes in the Southeast. ‘Medidas enérgicas’ like these, in which policing is heavily intensified, involve the police arresting – and killing – a lot of people.

Its counterpart term, ‘Mano Amiga’ (Friendly Hand), refers to the opposing view, where policy makers respond more holistically to the dynamic causes of crime, accepting that violence is often the result of more complicated historic factors. Accordingly, the person participating in violence is, although

committing a legal offense, likely reacting to their own life experience in which victimhood often plays a crucial part, and therefore the best approach is to respond to the reality of that life experience, identifying root causes and then supporting individuals and communities to overcome them. This is in no way the approach taken by Bahia's government.

In the first instance, the police are seen as the devices of the state for enacting security, and their violence is seen as a necessary cost, without which, worse violence would flourish. In the second, the main state device is the array of social services it can offer to citizens, without which, people facing the sorts of social factors that typically lead to violent crime would feel isolated, desperate, and even resentful, and may well go on to be violent citizens.

### **The Effects of Mano Dura**

Taking our previous example, Bahia's own UPP installation process, inspired by the quantitative successes of predecessor schemes in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, has been implemented in direct response to escalating violence in the state. In the first five years of ex-governor Jaques Wagner's time in office from 2007 to 2012, he created 10,500 new police officers. Rui Costa, his successor, elected in January 2015, added another 1,500 in October of the same year. The objective, in line with the state's Mano Dura approach, is to repress violent criminality with more arrests. Data from the eleven years between 2000 and 2011 show a 311% increase in Bahia's prison population, suggesting the state's police forces are very much fulfilling their function.

Many theorists on detention-based penal systems, perhaps most notably Angela Davis, have lamented the obsolescence of prisons in general as a method to stop crime and protect the population<sup>46</sup>. This is not to say there are no good arguments for detention, but it does seem that the method's implementation in this specific case overlooks several facts, principally: the fundamental workings of the criminal organisations that control the Brazilian

IDT. Insight Crime reports that PCC, CP and Caveira were all indeed formed in prisons, all continue to use prisons as recruitment and training grounds, and all have senior members currently serving sentences, during which time they direct surrogates on the outside and strategize for future operations<sup>47</sup>.

As it stands, minor expansions and investments have done little to relieve the stress on the facilities in place, all of which are alleged to be maintaining more-than-full capacity, with conditions so appalling that Gilmar Mendes, the president of Brazil's Supreme Federal Court, issued an official notice to the Bahian government in 2010 requesting them to prioritise improvements in this area<sup>48</sup>. The problems continue regardless, indicating that the system's capacity for effective detention is still not a priority of the state, and as such, the reprisal of imprisoned gang members and the long-term growth of their operations in general seems only a matter of time.

Another frequently cited issue in relation to the severity of the state's approach is that it leaves little room for flexible, holistic responses to criminality. This issue has been crystallised with first hand reports, as received by VAV, of instances in which police have aggressively threatened some of our youngest students – instances unheard of in more middle class communities. Not only does this erode the vital relationship of mutual trust between community members and police officers from the very outset of their adult lives, but it depicts a policy of criminalisation, whereby not only are young citizens automatically assumed to be criminals in the making; but also implicitly indicts them with being criminally responsible, years before they are legally recognised as such.

A duty of care on the part of the state and its various devices should oversee a protective, encouraging environment being fostered where the focus of youth policy is well-rounded education and healthy psycho-social development, and yet midway through their formative years of citizenship, many children in Bahia's most violent communities are treated as if they must already be held

accountable for their future life choices like mature adults. A focus group conducted in the state college of Vila de Abrantes showed that eighteen out of twenty students positively identified as personally knowing someone involved in the IDT. Why a child in such a high-risk environment should be expected to have acquired responsible citizenship before his or her wealthier, safer peers, remains to be clarified.

In July 2015, the question of criminal responsibility narrowly avoided a further setback into Mano Dura territory, when the elected members of parliament who sit in Brazil's Chamber of Deputies voted in favour of reducing the age of criminal responsibility from eighteen to sixteen years of age, but, in last minute about-turn by a handful of individual politicians, fortunately excluded IDT-related crimes from the proposed legislation<sup>49</sup>. The nearness of a legal move to further criminalise vulnerable children is a likely sign that shifts in the opposite direction are highly unlikely for the foreseeable future.

The final impact of the contemporary Bahian approach we will consider here is that of ethnic persecution. In a state where almost 80% of the population is Black or Mixed Race, accusations of ethnic persecution may appear puzzling, as we often think of persecution as a condition of minority groups alone<sup>50</sup>. And yet, innumerable voices repeatedly lament the entrenched racism in Bahian society. Sociologist Conceição accredits racism to the very tangible legacy of the region's slave trade, where black bodies were considered 'expendable goods'. Cofounder of policing commentary website Abordagem Policial and an officer in Bahia's Military Police, Danillo Ferreira suggests that racism in the police owes itself to this wider problem<sup>51</sup>. He quotes author Alex Castro, explaining that it is impossible to simply hunt down the racist police officers and oust them permanently when their racism is 'a reflection and a symptom of [the country's] general attitude'. Conceição goes so far as to call the situation 'a real genocide', comments echoed by Hamilton Borges Walê, leader of the grassroots racial justice movement Reaja Ou Seja Morto<sup>52</sup>.

BFPS and TPO have collected data on ethnicity among homicide victims. BFPS accounts for 272,422 Brazilians of African descent murdered in total in the eight years from 2002 to 2010 (approximately equivalent to the total population of Camaçari), corresponding to a national YHI almost three times higher than among their white counterparts. As for police brutality, despite the above evidence indicating that citizens of Afro-Brazilian ethnicities are the victims of homicide disproportionately far more than any other, they are also 132% more likely to face police violence. It is tragic that the enforcers of the law appear to break it so frequently by profiling and discriminating to this extent. But it soon becomes apparent that this is as much a problem with law and policy, as it is with its implementation and enforcement.

As Luiz Lourenço, a professor of sociology at UFBA, notes in his interview with Insight Crime that Bahia is afflicted by a deep-seated culture of impunity, which feeds a culture of violence, especially in the police. The racism Ferreira describes as an entrenched characteristic of the police can therefore manifest itself in unchecked, oppressive brutality, heedless of the well-developed legal framework and investigative councils that exist to forbid such things from happening. The impunity that allows racism to lead to ethnic persecution at the hands of police forces occurs in many forms, but we will now turn briefly to a closer look of a two of the most important, remembering we have already considered the data manipulation scandal regarding the Rio pacification units, and the aggressive intimidations committed against young children involved with VAV.

'Autos de Resistência' is the Brazilian term for a death induced by resistance. Legal loopholes mean that if a citizen being confronted by police should show any reasonable sign of resistance and then be subsequently killed by the police, criminal or not, they are not registered as the victim of a homicide, rather a case of 'auto de resistência', legally classifying the incident as a suicide, where the

victim is the culprit of their own death and the police cannot be charged. Bahia has the highest number of these deaths in the country.<sup>53</sup>

The second instance we will examine more closely here is arguably the most distressing phenomenon produced by the combination of impunity and racism. ‘Grupos de Extermínio’ (Extermination groups, frequently translated as ‘Death Squads’) are responsible for approximately 10% of all homicides in Salvador. They are composed of police officers and other members of society, and they carry out ‘chacinas’ (killings or massacres), which routinely involve the ‘squad’ arriving in cars with disguised plates, armed with high calibre pistols who shoot their victims, often homeless, always poor, almost always Black and male, often in the head, at point blank range. If police are indicted, there is conventionally a long conferral time, after which no charges are pressed.<sup>54</sup>

The most famous case in recent history was in the neighbourhood of Cabula in February 2015, where 12 young men, subsequently accused of having plotted to rob a bank (despite no evidence put forward for this) were rounded up and shot by on-duty Military Police officers. Found in an abandoned site near their community with signs of torture, several officers faced serious accusations, but all charges were dropped and governor Rui Costa, after the investigations – conducted by the state itself – had terminated, applauded the killings, calling on the Military Police to maintain the ruthlessness of their crackdowns against criminality of the kind invoked here, in the name of public security.<sup>55</sup>

### **The Media: An Ombudsman?**

As we have seen previously in the southeastern cities, pressure from critical media outlets can play an instrumental role in instigating political change. Police violence does receive attention in the Bahian press; more so on the Internet than in print, but the persisting ‘genocide’ Conceição refers to, suggests more is still needed to raise the profile of the crimes being committed until government officials have no choice but to take visible action.

In November 2015, entries into the USA version of the search engine Google for ‘police violence Brazil’ for example, returned 6 million results. No small sum, of course, but ‘police violence USA’ returned 20 million<sup>56</sup>. This much is to be expected from an American site, but when the Brazilian version of the site surprisingly showed more of the same, with ‘violência policial EUA’ returning 900,000 results, compared to just 800,000 for ‘violência policial brasil’, questions must be raised about the attention given to Brazilian policing concerns in the context of a global media.<sup>57</sup>

The last thirty years have seen 11,090 police killings recorded in the USA, a figure that pales in comparison to that of all its European counterparts. It is no surprise, then, that the subject is well attended to in mainstream European media, with new instances of brutality or homicide hitting headlines weekly. Compared to Brazil however, where European media outlets pay considerably less attention, this number of homicides was carried out by the police in the last five years alone (11,197). When population-adjusted, that equates to approximately ten times more police killings in Brazil: the rate per year, per hundred thousand of the population in the USA being calculated at 0.115, with the Brazilian rate at 1.109<sup>58</sup>. BFPS reports this rate corresponds to an average of six police killings every day. As the figures from Google show however, this is by no means reflected in the contemporary mediascape.

Biased coverage is only part of the problem, but a lack of fair and comprehensive reporting can seriously prolong suffering. It becomes clear that the efforts to engage and empower local populations, such as those carried out by VAV must be complemented by efforts to support a stronger local media that can give marginalised communities a voice.

## **Lessons From Honduras and Colombia**

The SJP's Top Fifty List has consistently ranked San Pedro Sula in Honduras as the world's most dangerous city<sup>59</sup>. Cure Violence (CV), an American social development firm, has been contracted by city authorities there since April 2013 to implement its particular health-based approach to urban violent crime reduction<sup>60</sup>. We will here outline the key tenants of the model they employ in order to highlight how different approaches to violence can produce vastly different results.

The CV model has three core components: 1) to detect and interrupt potentially violent conflicts; 2) to treat those at highest risk for involvement in violence; and 3) to encourage group and community norm change. These exhibit an inherently Mano Amiga approach, because they respond directly to the needs of victims without repressing and criminalising those responsible for violence, taking into account the complex situations that cause citizens to act violently. Prevention is still a focus, but through diplomatic resolution instead of warfare. The third core component is of particular interest. Changing normative attitudes and behaviours in a community is certainly a challenging process, but CV's approach is very thorough in this regard, making reference to school-based outreach work, community event programming and collective engagement. This corresponds fittingly to the objectives of VAV's project work, except that it comes with the funding and direct support of the state. In the future, perhaps Bahia's government may benefit from a concerted effort to support external actors like NGOs more than they currently do, as to enable norm changing to occur more organically, and without further violence.

The CV strategy has two implementing components, which support its core: 1) data and monitoring; and 2) training and technical assistance. As we have already observed, data and monitoring is not a current strength of the political system in Bahia, and as the PLANESP report uncovered, nor is it forecast to be anytime soon. However, as CV's strategy stresses, 'measuring changes in

'violence' and 'regular feedback' are essential parts of the solution to community violence. The Bahian government may therefore choose to also consider conceding higher priority to its monitoring efforts in the coming years. More generally, the clarity of the CV model's structure enables precise implementation and visible objectives; the issues that have arisen over transparency and efficiency in the SSP, PPV and PRONASCI could arguably benefit from a similar clarity.

Admittedly, Honduras and Brazil are different places with different histories and different governments, but statistically at least, San Pedro Sula is more violent than Salvador, and these strategies are beginning to take root there, begging the question: why not here in Salvador too? In San Pedro Sula at least, the CV model has already saved countless lives, with over 700 successful cases of coordinated violence interruptions and mediations since November 2014<sup>61</sup>.

Another instance of Mano Amiga strategies seeing relative success on the continent is in the city of Medellín, already mentioned here for its impressive homicide rate reductions in recent years. The SJP report which observes these reductions makes reference to two intervention programmes in particular: the first coordinated by international NGO The Red Cross; the second, by international development firm Chemonics. Their report highlights the work done by each organisation in Medellín's schools, where creative conflict resolution is prioritised to encourage alternatives to violence as more normative behaviour than violence itself. Public education in Bahia could benefit enormously from a similar scale project – VAV's current capacity is limited to one school in Vila de Abrantes, but tens of thousands of pupils across the state go without any citizenship- or community-education.

Furthermore, Singapore Institute of Technology's Timothy Pracher has summarised findings from intervention projects in Medellín with an academic paper published in 2014<sup>62</sup>. Of his five 'evidence-based programme recommendations', three stand out as clear insights that could be immediately

effective in the Bahian context. The first is that results improve when work is carried out collaboratively, rather than by individual actors working independently. This includes collaboration across agencies – between the SSP and the Human Rights Secretary for example; and across sectors – between the public sector and NGO's and/or development firms for example. The second is that projects supporting youth empowerment play an important role in reducing violent deaths, perhaps of particular concern to a municipality where approximately one in every hundred young people are murdered in their adolescence. The third is the potential for art and sport projects to help teach conflict resolution skills, which Pracher identifies as imperative to violence reduction.

On balance then, the arguments for the Mano Amiga paradigm of security policy have several cases of success to draw on across Latin America. As with all developments of this kind, it remains to be seen whether the state or municipal governments we work within will engage the possibility of a new, more holistic, responsive, community-driven strategy at some point in the future.

### **Conclusion:**

The research presented in these chapters is intended to bring together a variety of perspectives on the host of issues that have helped create and sustain high levels of violence, drug-related crime and gang warfare in Bahia, Camaçari and, where possible, Vila de Abrantes. We have also hoped to draw attention to some of the issues that arise in the government's response to this problem. Across the board, our investigations have returned worrying results: the power conferred by the country's political structures to its various institutions and departments is repeatedly abused, and those rendered reliant on its oversight by multitudes of social inequalities, resigned to silent decay in the periphery. Occasional developments seem lost to an overall trend of setbacks, increasingly concealed within available data that seem to show conciliatory levels of stability, while the international media pay more attention to new football stadiums and tax treaties than to the gang wars and death squads.

Surely, the most part of the findings presented here easily lead to a certain despair for the future, and yet, our years of experience engaging with the young members of these communities has so often revealed a sense of hope that prevails nonetheless. Needless to say, the task ahead is monumental, but the Mano Amiga approach inherent to all of our work strives to maximise this hope, helping to channel it into building effective and empowered communities that can continue contributing more and more to the fight against inefficiency, incompetency, prejudice and aggression. Although an end to the era of Mano Dura policy cannot come soon enough for the populations affected by violence and the IDT, the young people we work with maintain their commitment to mobilising themselves and their peers, spreading their knowledge and their tenacity for big ambitions, and bringing themselves and their communities ever closer to a more equitable, just world.

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