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Article

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Abstract
Cities across the global south are seeing unprecedented levels of violence that generate intense risks and vulnerability. Such problems are often experienced most viscerally among poorer residents, thus reinforcing longstanding socio-spatial conditions of exclusion, inequality, and reduced quality of life for those most exposed to urban violence. Frequently, these problems are understood through the lens of poverty, informality, and limited employment opportunities. Yet an under-theorized and equally significant factor in the rise of urban violence derives from the shifting territorialities of governance and power, which are both cause and consequence of ongoing struggles within and between citizens and state authorities over the planning and control of urban space. This article suggests that a relatively underexplored but revealing way to understand these dynamics, and how they drive violence, is through the lens of sovereignty. Drawing on examples primarily from Mexico, and other parts of urban Latin America, I suggest that problems of urban violence derive from fragmented sovereignty, a condition built upon the emergence of alternative, competing, and at times overlapping networks of territorial authority at the scale of the city, nation, and globe. In addition to theorizing the shifting spatial correlates of sovereignty among state and non-state armed actors, and showing how these dynamics interact with urbanization patterns to produce violence, I argue that the spatial form of the city both produces and is produced by changing political and economic relations embedded in urban planning principles. That is, urban planning practices must be seen as the cause, and not merely the solution, to problems of urban violence and its deleterious effects. Using these claims to dialogue with urban planners, this essay calls for new efforts to redesign cities and urban spaces with a focus on territorial connectivities and socio-spatial integration, so as to push back against the limits of fragmented sovereignty arrangements, minimize violence, and foster inclusion and justice.

1. Introduction

In many parts of Latin America, urban violence has been on the rise (Arias & Goldstein, 2010; Bergman & Whitehead, 2009; Fruhling, Tulchin, & Golding, 2003; Laguerre, 1994; Moser, 2004; Rotker, 2002; Smulovitz, 2003). Although violence can unfold at the individual scale, or within the household (as occurs with gender-based domestic violence), one of the main challenges for citizens in urban Latin America is the trauma of violence at the scales of both neighborhoods and cities as a whole (Arias, 2006a). Particularly when driven by illicit trade and organized crime, urban violence creates insecurities, vulnerabilities, segregations and exclusions in urban spaces (Koonigs & Krujit, 2007; Perlman, 2010). These conditions affect all citizens, but may be most damaging to low-income populations who lack the resources and power to push back against the root causes of insecurity.

Scholars who study urban violence often focus on the employment or policing dynamics that create an environment where violence flowers. They focus on endemic poverty and low levels of employment and education that incentivize crime (McIlwaine & Moser, 2001) or on the insufficient professionalization of law enforcement and the state's unwillingness or incapacity to prosecute criminals (Hinton & Newburn, 2008; Uldriks, 2009). Clearly, all these conditions matter. Yet they belie a scholarly preoccupation with individual behaviors more than with the social, spatial, and governance contexts—themselves reinforced through urban planning decisions—in which these behaviors flower. In this essay, I will argue that urban planning priorities in Latin America have a direct impact on urban violence, precisely because the social, spatial, and economic logics of planning actions serve to territorially exclude and spatially marginalize the poor and the vulnerable. Such patterns not only have an impact on the existence of power relationships and their territorial distribution in the city; they also lay the spatial groundwork for the emergence of certain forms of urban violence. That is, even well-intentioned urban planning priorities can inadvertently produce spaces of exclusion where justice and rule of law are absent, and where violence readily flourishes.

In what follows, I seek to reveal the interrelationships between urban planning and urban violence, on the one hand, and these practices and the notion of sovereignty, on the other. In empirical terms, I connect the historical, political, and governance dynamics of urbanization to fragmented or reformulated networks of allegiance distributed unevenly across urban space, and show how conflicts over who controls territory in the city have combined to produce an explosion of urban violence. It goes without saying that urban planning practices may create social exclusion and injustice everywhere, and as such planning's disastrous impacts are hardly unique to Latin American cities (Yiftachel, 1998). Nonetheless, there are significant differences in urban Latin America owing to the unique relationships linking urban planning, state formation, and economic modernization during the mid-twentieth century that, when combined with the extreme poverty and limited employment associated with late development, will produce both extreme spatial exclusion and alternative governance practices. Because of this, I use the concept of sovereignty to reveal the unique relationships between urban planning, spatial patterns, and urban violence in Latin America. I argue that this notion allows for a more nuanced and revealing accounting of these relationships than do conventional frameworks used to understand urban outcomes, particularly those framed through the logics of 'state' action.

Although commonly associated with the nation-state, the concept of sovereignty can also be used to reveal multiple governance logics, not just those applied to cities but also those that unfold within neighborhoods and other territories beyond. While acknowledging the many influential rigorous historical and critical genealogical studies of the concept of sovereignty, offered by scholars such as Malabou (2015), Jackson (2007), Foucault (2003), Hardt and Negri (2000), and Bartelson (1995), a widely used (if encyclopedic) definition of sovereignty is supreme authority within a territory (see also Philpott, 1995). Colloquially, the concept is often used to denote supreme power over a body politic. When applied to urban spaces, the concept of sovereignty invites a focus on territorial locations that may be controlled or dominated by forces other than nation-states, including cities or other spaces within them. Further, the concept of sovereignty tends to be less bureaucratically state-centric and thus better able to capture the range of cultural, economic, social, and political actors as well as spatial practices that comprise the 'governance regime(s)' that characterize cities in Latin America, with these governance regimes unfolding at scales both smaller and larger than the city or the nation. One cannot forget that in Latin America the rule of law is weakly institutionalized (Méndez, O'Donnell, & Pinheiro, 2000; Peruzzotti & Smulovitz, 2006). For this reason, quotidian struggles to establish authority over urban spaces are constant, often occurring at scales as small as the street or neighborhood (see, e.g., Arias, 2004, 2006b; Caldeira, 2001; Davis & Alvarado, 1999; Meade, 1997; Perlman, 1976). Sovereignty as a concept allows for an understanding of the ways that citizens may distribute their political allegiances to actors operating at territorial scales both smaller and larger than nation-states, including through relationships with non-state armed actors who may use violence to achieve their aims and seek to control territories of trade in ways that challenge the authority of states.

In making this argument, I do not necessarily seek to question or contradict other theoretical apparatuses used to explain spatial inequality, social injustice, or other related outcomes produced by hegemonic state planning practices in capitalist societies, such as those proposed by David Harvey (1985, 2001) among others, or their relevance for understanding power and inequality Latin American cities. Nor do I seek to engage in theoretical debate as to whether the territorialities of sovereignty in Latin America examined in this article are strictly speaking urban (Brenner & Schmid, 2015), as well as whether these conditions are 'universal' or generalizable across the global south, let alone considered to be exceptional versus ordinary (Robinson, 2006). My ambitions are analytical and empirical, and they consist of focusing greater scholarly attention on the ways that the conceptual notion of sovereignty will help us better understand the competing and overlapping scales of territorial governance that exist and now contribute to endemic violence in Latin America's largest cities. These aims not only build on recent writings from political geographers who seek to introduce the concept of sovereignty into the study of space (Mountz, 2013) as well as from those who raise questions about the importance of recovering 'the complex politics of the city' in order to exam-

ine the potential for equality or inequality (Davidson & Iveson, 2015). They also align with the work of critical geographers who examine the scaled territorial dynamics of urban governance (MacLeod & Goodwin, 1999) as well as those who seek to disaggregate the concept of urban autonomy to accommodate the empirical realities of 'fragmented' and 'networked' forms of association that operate in and through cities (Bulkeley, Luque-Ayala, McFarlane, & MacLeod, 2018, p. 705).

In order to synthesize these various theoretical, analytical, and conceptual threads into discussions of the territorial rescaling of sovereignty in Latin America, I examine the control of physical space and how efforts to monopolize coercive and political authority at the scale of the neighborhood have been set in motion by urban planning decisions embodied in the history of modernist planning paradigms as applied to the region. I draw on Mexico for much of my empirical evidence, where the level of violence has at times matched that of Iraq and Afghanistan. In certain locations in Mexico, of which the border city of Ciudad Juarez is perhaps the most notorious, violence levels were once so high that local officials called in UN peacekeeping forces, using both the nomenclature and the mechanisms historically created for dealing with wartime conflict. All this explains why in the current era, drug cartels control large swathes of Mexico's northern territories, leading to historic highs in rates of violence. Yet violence is not specifically a border problem; nor is it unique to Mexico. In Latin America, Brazil and Colombia have historically hosted high levels of violence, and in recent decades Argentina and Venezuela have joined the ranks. Currently, several countries in Central America such as Honduras and El Salvador have been ranked as among the most violent in the world. In all of these countries, violence at the scale the city has ratcheted out of control, and in the last 20 years has enveloped poor and marginal neighborhoods in ways that mark a dramatic break from the past.

While violence persists outside poor neighborhoods, historically it has tended to take hold in marginalized communities, often in informal settlements, where squatter occupations, ambiguous property rights, and lack of services accompany everyday life. Yet far from blaming the victim, I share this observation delete at the outset in order to focus our attention on urban and territorial planning roots to these problems, which, as shall be clear shortly, have reinforced ongoing struggles between state and non-state armed actors to control daily conditions and establish sovereignty at the scale of the city. Over time, these struggles have fueled transnational networks of coercive authority that are larger and smaller than the nation-state proper, thus recasting the territorial contours in which urban planning action might provide effective tools to reduce violence and the daily risks and vulnerabilities that accompany it. In the narrative that follows, I delineate these path-dependent processes, beginning with a focus on the historical impacts of mid-twentieth century planning priorities for Latin American cities. After arguing that modernist planning paradigms produced a schism between the formal and informal city, I use the case of Mexico to connect planning-induced patterns of socio-spatial exclusion to the emergence of informal power brokers who offer alternative governance regimes built on illicit activities in marginalized areas of the city. I then discuss the rise of alternative sovereignties emerging from these social, spatial, and governance practices, again using evidence from Mexico where such strongmen have permeated informal neighborhoods and networked their illegal activities to a globalizing economy. The essay ends with a reflection on some possible urban planning tools that might be devised to address both these alternative sovereignties and the networks and conditions of violence they have produced.

2. Modernist Urban Planning Paradigms and the Production of Spatial Inequality

It is not news to anyone who studies Latin American cities that the poor often need to secure their own forms of shelter and subsistence (Caldeira, 2001; Heinrichs & Bernet, 2014; McIlwaine & Moser, 2001; Perlman, 1976). Nor is it a surprise that they may turn to illegal and unrecognized actors (or actions) to receive the services which planning and policy officials fail to provide. Local authorities, for their part, openly tolerate these informal practices (at least until recently with the resurgence of support for neoliberal property rights regimes) because such a posture helped governments achieve legitimacy aims (Harvey, 2001; Roberts & Portes, 2005). The toleration of informality has not only helped undermine established law in ways that may advance criminality; it also has empowered the police. This is because police have considerable discretion, given their mediating role in political systems where state authorities take advantage of the poor for personal gain. With high levels of discretion, police often abuse their power in ways that drive the twin problems of violence and growing insecurity. In many Latin American cities, the police have long been involved in extortion activities, and these practices have laid the foundation for their more contemporary networking with criminal elements (Dewey, 2012; Leeds, 1996). Even as they protect or engage with criminal elements, police also continue to abuse their power with respect to common citizens, whether because of the rent-seeking potential inherent to policing or just pure influence-mongering.

All this suggests somewhat of a paradox: In situations of violence, one of the first lines of action undertaken by governing officials is to deploy the police in order to establish order, not just through law enforcement but also by better regulating urban infrastructure and services. Such actions help authorities fulfil planning objectives even as they establish greater legitimacy among residents. These priorities are a further strengthened when police arrest local gangs or mafias leaders who have es-

tablished their authority through unauthorized control of urban infrastructural services and other local governance mechanisms (an extreme version of which can be seen in the deployment of the 'pacification police' to fight drug-traffickers in poor neighborhoods across Rio de Janeiro). Either way, policing and security interventions are high on the agenda of local officials across cities facing chronic violence, despite the fact that it is precisely the police who are frequently the most hated and the least legitimate arm of the government (Davis, 2012). Police thus see themselves on the frontline of efforts to stamp out any perceived 'moral disorder' marking informal areas, so as to ensure that the 'pathologies' of impoverished residents residing in informal areas do not spread to the formal city (Holston, 1989; Meade, 1997).

Even so, police interventions in poor communities—even when conceived by local authorities as a frontline move to pave the way for better planning action later—are highly suspect, and thus drive a cycle of mistrust over the rule of law (Perlman, 2010). The implications of this are clear: Both the genesis of and reactions to accelerating urban violence in Latin American have involved some mode of state territorial control, whether by means of urban planning practices or by policed-enforced spatial segregation of cities. So what accounts for this? Several factors related to the hegemony of modernist urban planning paradigms give us a clue, precisely because they have produced inequalities that are firmly established in physical as well as political space, and not merely 'social' space.

One key determinant of these troubling outcomes has been the widely adopted distinction between the formal and informal city, which permeates 'modernist' planning practices and has contributed to spatial exclusion and the toleration of socio-spatial inequality (Collier, 1976; Gilbert & Ward, 2009; Pezzoli, 1987; Violich, 1987). In Latin America and elsewhere in the postcolonial world, the actions of planners—both urban and national—have been fueled by the presumption that developmental progress occurs through the transformation and reshaping of 'untamed' space so as to establish social, political, and economic order. At the scale of the nation, these views were embodied in the twentieth century tendency toward the 'colonization' of territory, often by means of large-scale infrastructural projects (e.g., roads, highways, and electricity), which subsumed heterogeneous peoples, places, and natural resources into a project of national economic expansion (Almandoz, 2002; Violich, 1987). At the city-level, the programmatic concerns of planners and architects justified the rationalization of social and spatial order, often in the form of large-scale plans (Almandoz, 2006; Fraser, 2001). Influenced by modernist sensibilities imported from Europe, different parts of the city were preserved for different social and economic functions. However, in those sites marked for integration into the modern economic and political order, short shrift was given to any 'pre-modern' blending of land uses and to the preservation of informal activities. One result was the relegation of poor citizens and informal activities to peripheral and/or marginalized areas of cities. Even when planners sought to expand the project of modernization to include evermore citizens and neighborhoods (mostly through investments in worker housing, transportation, and other services), financial limitations often prevented the provisioning of such goods and services to the poorest (Davis, 2014).

One consequence of this was the emergence of socio-spatially divided cities across Latin America, in which significant proportions of the urban population inhabited segregated and stigmatized outposts existing 'outside' the city's formal economic and political orders. The residents of these neighborhoods were often invisible to city officials, and their urban servicing needs were routinely ignored. The studied failure of planners and city officials to better conditions within informal settlements allowed for the further explosion of settled areas without services, formal property rights, or political recognition, let alone sufficient access to the goods and services that characterized the formal city. In addition to enabling the conditions for ongoing social and spatial separation, planners' failures to address informal settlements further reinforced the widespread belief that those living in such conditions were mere second-class citizens, not morally worthy of inclusion or recognition. If anything, these everyday forms of life were considered both a stain on, and challenge to, the larger project of modernization (Holston, 1989; Meade, 1997).

Planning officials' unwillingness to acknowledge the social and economic value of these ad hoc forms of urban life, let alone accept them as legitimate or justifiable responses to the hardships endogenous to modernist urbanity, usually gave rise to state actions which at times included the ruthless destruction of entire neighborhoods populated by informal occupiers. Even when bulldozing was avoided, the threat of displacement fueled community instability and incentivized new forms of urban clientelism. All this led to residents' growing dependence on informal community leaders to protect them from state aggression. In the process, these clientelistic practices both undermined the strong horizontal networks among community residents and reinforced vertical networks of authority (both formal and informal) predicated upon the power of those who could protect residents in these marginalized areas. The result was the emergence of an array of informal, illicit 'leaders' whose legitimacy and authority were buttressed by their ability to control the activities taking place within these informal territories/spaces, usually for their own gain. Whether by directly protecting citizens and property within these informal territories, or through co-optation and extortion, informal leaders both cultivated and maintained their power by supplying an 'alternative' regime of governance—or in my terms, a form of sovereignty. The existence of these informal governance regimes also served as a check on the capacity of the formal state to in-

tegrate spaces of informal urbanization into master plans and grand-scale projects unfolding across the so-called 'formal' city.

3. Limitations within the Planning Profession: The Minimal Concern with Economic Livelihoods

A second explanation for the emergence of these 'alternative' sovereignties is the failure of authorities and urban planners to address the main livelihood exigencies of poor residents, which included jobs and basic services. Indeed, as planners endeavored to construct the modern city, they turned most of their attention to roadway infrastructure, leaving to the market questions of employment and resources, like electricity and water. Inability to adequately address employment and basic livability concerns has been a general weakness in the planning discipline more broadly, particularly in the early years of rapid industrialization and urbanization. Yet this was particularly the case in the developing world where the adoption of Euro-centric modernist paradigms privileged physical over economic and social interventions (Gilbert, 1986). Even those projects intended to facilitate the entry of citizens into working life (such as modernist housing blocs intended to provide shelter for the laboring classes and/or massive road-building initiatives to facilitate urban labor mobility), they tended to neglect other daily necessities. And while planners continued to prioritize abstract, formalized idealizations of the city, a similarly 'formalistic' logic continued to dominate the development of infrastructure in informal areas, where priority was often given to official housing programs (in order to promote formal property rights) and transportation. Efforts to provide alternative employment opportunities in informal territories were effectively absent (including attempts to cultivate and promote a flourishing commercial sector in these informal spaces), primarily because the growth of commercial activities was taken to be one of the foundational functions of urban centers and other highly-differentiated zones within the formal city. As a result, even when informal areas received infrastructural investments that corresponded or connected them to the formal city, local services and economic activities within informal settlements remained severely underdeveloped, at least in terms of state investments and targeted programs, therefore laying the groundwork for increasing impoverishment.

The government's failure to prioritize employment goals of the urban poor—coupled with the fact that state provided social services were offered primarily to those in the formal sector (often mediated by the demands from organized labor)—meant that the physical infrastructure of poor, informal neighborhoods soon turned into the object of economic production, if not employment (Davis, 2014). This was perhaps best evidenced in the buying and selling of access to physical services (housing, water, electricity) as a means of reproduction (Meade, 1997; Perlman, 1976). Such responses also made a great deal of sense in a context where the division of labor between local and national planning authorities reinforced the neglect of local livelihoods. In the countries of the global south seeking to foster national industrialization while also facing rapid urbanization, city authorities took care of physical planning issues, while national authorities focused on economic planning priorities and large-scale policy initiatives like workforce development, health, and education. The policy distinction between the physical and economic domains, or between reproduction and production, mapped onto the bureaucratic structures of the state in ways that fragmented political authority and urban governance in and over informal areas.

Local authorities may have struggled for the development of housing, but without command over employment and macroeconomic policy, they were not in a position to guarantee residents' income capacities to acquire homes, nor were city finances adequate to pick up the slack by offering full subsidies to the un- or underemployed. Furthermore, local and national authorities rarely coordinated their scale-specific developmental priorities. This led to an array of federally funded projects and arrangements (such as land regularization; sites and services; and squatter upgrading, imposed with grants to federal states from the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund) that usually served only a small part of the urban population and that, when put into action, tended to spatially fragment cities even further. For example, such programs often divided informal settlements into multiple 'housing classes' (Gilbert, 1986). The imposing of property rights, without any consideration of the larger economic or social impacts of home ownership or its effects on solidarity within the community, led to social fragmentation between those with and without title. Such conditions pushed those without title to become more dependent on local power brokers, even as those with title became further tied to formal governance institutions. Both reinforced modes of patronage that sustained both informal and formal political authority in the same urban spaces. Such occurrences further weakened the horizontal relations of the community even as they increased citizen reliance on whichever leader could mediate service provision and heterogeneous community claims (Auyero, 2007; McIlwaine & Moser, 2001). In turn, those who possessed the power to mediate between the informal and informal systems of service provision, as well as between illicit and licit activities, gained both politically and economically

Yet precisely because such activities and exchanges were by their very nature conducted outside the law, they strengthened illegal markets for urban services and further laid the foundation for the rise of illicit brokers, further upping the stakes for those who had the political power to protect them (Leeds, 1996). To the extent that informal political leaders built local legitimacy on their capacities to protect illegal or illicit markets among the poor or informal areas, both residents and these in-

formal leaders needed each other (Arias, 2004, 2006b; Cross, 1998). These conditions further tied informal brokers and residents to each other in alternative reciprocities that distanced them from the formal city and from the rule of law. In the midst of these developments, violence soon became the currency of power.

4. Informality, Globalization, and Violence: Reinforcing Alternative Sovereignties

To the extent that informal brokers protected the livelihoods of informal residents, their activities challenged formal planning practices as well as the legitimate authority of local officials to regulate, monitor, and control the urban territory. Across Latin America, this usually meant that local police did not stand by quietly. As informality accelerated, police were expected to aggressively respond by displacing illegal occupiers and harassing or expelling street vendors (Collier, 1976). Police behavior may well have traced its origins to the state's desire to impose certain forms of spatial order and social values on marginalized groups. However, upon entering these informal spaces police usually accommodated and even perpetuated the informal order. Like informal leaders themselves, police were known to work with, negotiate, or extort vulnerable residents—especially those wanting to deviate from urban regulatory requirements (Davis, 2006b). In communities of lesser income, the opportunity for extortion was often so great that police and informal leaders alike wound up competing for control of local protection rackets, with citizens vulnerable to both the formal and informal actors who monitored or controlled everyday spaces (Hinton & Newburn, 2008; Koonigs & Krujit, 2005; Uldriks, 2009). Over time, however, this situation cemented durable networks of complicity between police and local leaders involved in illicit enterprises, with such relationships becoming stronger and more nefarious as informal economies expanded. This was best exemplified in instances where extortion markets dealt in traded goods that moved through urban, national, and transnational supply chains.

In those environments where police protected criminals at the expense of residents, and where the territoriality of unsanctioned and illegal trade transcended the local bounds of communities, violence was far more likely (Davis, 2013). This happened not merely because the participation of police in illegal enterprises undermined the rule of law, but also because police abuses of power led to widespread mistrust of state authorities by residents. In these conditions, informal political leaders at the community level gained greater powers of control over social and spatial dynamics. The further these informal systems of extortion and trade spread beyond community boundaries (a consequence of the inability of local states to isolate and control informal urban activity), the larger the sums of money exchanged and the more subtly dispersed such exchange networks became. In the face of territorially expanding illicit networks with higher

financial stakes, violence—actual and threatened—had the tendency to become the prominent technique for the assertion of authority (Davis, 2006a).

The combined effect of all these developments produced an alternative governance regime embedded in informal urbanism, built on new modalities of loyalty and allegiance emanating from neighborhoods, but slowly expanding beyond. This is precisely where the conceptual lens of sovereignty begins to make sense: It refers to the emergence of alternative loyalties based on informal connections between marginalized residents and local leaders who built their governing power and reciprocities through illicit activities. That the emergence of informal forms of governance and illicit enterprises began locally, but over time began to operate at both the sub- and transnational scales, further strengthened the durability of these arrangements. Precisely because these emergent communities of allegiance and mutual-exchange enabled unique opportunities for meaningful welfare, they began to function as veritable 'mini-states' capable of sustaining novel instantiations of non-state-based forms of sovereignty, in stark contrast to the previous 'imagined community' of national state sovereignty (Anderson, 2006). These local imagined communities of allegiance must rely on 'homegrown' armed constituencies to protect and maintain both their economic livelihoods and their relatively autonomous dominion, particularly in cases of conflict with formal authorities and nation-state policies (Davis, 2010). This means that in many Latin American cities, state-administered mechanisms of control (such as providing 'security' or infrastructure provision) have been taken over by unsanctioned actors (such as mafias or private security forces and militias) whose allegiance is solely to their client communities and/or networked territories, rather than formal state, as has traditionally been the case (Muller, 2010). In this unrestrained, wild-west atmosphere of alternative sovereignty, violence is a central form of currency, serving to sustain economic and political power. Yet it lies in the hands of illicit and informal actors organized at the local scale as much as in the hands of the national state.

As violence is used by both state and non-state actors in the struggle to buttress their preferred forms of sovereignty, urban residents are increasingly caught in the crossfire. In an ideal world, both democracy and rule of law would be activated to protect and engage the citizenry in the face of growing violence, with such responses strengthening the legitimacy of state authority. Yet owing to decades of neglect as well as social and spatial exclusion, many residents have been unwilling to buy into a formal system of governance that promises to provide an antidote to violence, but that allows police impunity to fuel that violence. In the face of these failures, some of the most marginalized urban residents prefer to forge new loyalties or cast their allegiance to non-state 'authorities,' including local mafia leaders (Arias, 2006b; Colette & Cullen, 2000; Goldstein, 2003). Once this hap-

pens, the sovereign power of the national state, and its legitimate claims to territory, allegiance, and rule of law, may be broken in fundamental ways. In such conditions, both local and national efforts to use policy, planning, and policing tools to serve the population are also delegitimized, further laying the foundation for more exclusion, neglect, and violence.

Despite the fact that these rather depressing outcomes find their origins in mid-century modernist planning decisions, the intensification of globalization and neo-liberalization over the past few decades has worsened the problem. Neoliberalism has limited the budgetary powers of domestic authorities to accommodate the urban poor, while globalization has strengthened the economic networks that propel alternative sovereignties. In the contemporary era, the opening of borders and expansion of international trade privileges transnational connections among licit and illicit activities alike. This too has undermined efforts to control of violence, which in turn eats into the national state's capacity to monopolize the means of coercion. Moreover, the acceptance of global markets and the reduced legitimacy of the nation-state in the face of economic liberalization, increasing urban inequality, and violence have further eaten into patterns of allegiances and reciprocity between citizens and the nation-state. This is particularly so among those urban residents who remain socially and spatially enmeshed in informal economic regimes built on forms of subsistence that are constructed through transnational supply chains (Hasan, 2002). With neo-liberalization further undermining traditional import-substitution industrialization and the supply of factory jobs, even as it intensifies the financialization of the economy, formal employment opportunities for the poor continue to disappear. With these negative effects often felt most dramatically in major cities across Latin America, urban residents are now even more likely to turn local strongmen—including criminal mafias empowered by trade of illicit goods—for guardianship over and against nation-state efforts to police neighborhoods in an effort to restore formal socio-spatial orders (Arias, 2006b).

The problem, however, is not merely that transnational networks of illicit trade can bring more violence into local neighborhoods—a primary site from which these activities emanate. Nor is it merely that these strong transnational networks of illicit trade reinforce the power and territorial control of these alternative 'sovereigns' (Davis, 2006a). Equally significant is the fact that economic neo-liberalization is usually accompanied by state downsizing, in which the fiscal capacities of authorities to push back against both poverty and violence is markedly reduced. This is not to say that state authorities have given up on addressing urban violence. Yet, as recent examples from Mexico and Brazil both show, the response is often more intense militarization of coercive force against illicit transnational smugglers. In Mexico under President Calderón, for example, military operations against drug-traffickers generated opposition from citi-

zens who become collateral damage, while in contemporary Brazil President Bolsonaro's adoption of extreme militarization has produced cries of opposition from human rights activists who see innocent favela residents caught up in armed police raids. Both responses reduce the state's legitimacy in ways that may allow alternative sovereign loyalties to persist.

5. Challenging Urban Violence and Alternative Sovereignties through Planning Action: Concluding Remarks

So, is there any exit from this troubling state of affairs? It goes without saying that planners across urban Latin America are bound to be hamstrung in their efforts to deal with the problems of ongoing urban violence, if only because their implementation capacities and authority frequently owe to the legitimacy of the local or national state 'sovereigns' on whose behalf they are planning and intervening. In that sense, planning theorists and urban practitioners will have to be cognizant of their own limitations, and will need to work with citizens and others whose efforts to wrench control of local conditions away from the perpetrators of violence must remain at the frontlines of action. Having said this, a focus only on a single community or bounded site where violence and illicit activities flower will not readily undermine or challenge the historically-produced networks of power and allegiance that keep illicit economies vibrant, territorially networked, and expansive. Moreover, dealing with networked urban violence in an environment where poverty persists and employment alternatives are limited will be difficult for the planning profession. This is particularly so because in recent years the discipline has moved away from comprehensive spatial planning even as it continues to undervalue the importance of job creation in planning praxis, instead focusing most of its attention on community level interventions and processes of citizen participation more than large-scale territorial reconfiguration. Yet pessimism and hopelessness are not going to solve the problem either. We have no choice but to think about productive pathways forward to reduce the risks and vulnerabilities associated with chronic urban violence, even if elimination of its root sources remains elusive.

In general, planners would do well to turn their attention toward recasting the spatial scales of intervention, and examining as well as questioning the scalar biases of planning action in an effort to cultivate synergies across the various competing territorial fragments that make up today's cities. The spatial fragmentation of Latin American cities was set in motion by the uneven application of infrastructure investments and resources in the first place, and a rethinking of ways to reduce or eliminate spatial inequities is a good place to start for future planning action. To a certain degree, planners may still be hamstrung by overarching ideological projects (whether in the form of allegiances to modernism, neo-oliberalism, or even the embrace of anarchism/critical

planning mantras) that accept a diminished state role. Yet in order to exit from the problems of violence generated by the shifting territorialities of sovereignty, planners must identify alternative planning and policy actions capable of networking spatially disjointed spaces and establishing shared social allegiances that link the city to the nation. These will require significant resources and possibly even concerted state action. Toward these ends, I suggest planners think along the following lines:

First, recognize that violence is a planning problem. For far too long, questions of urban violence have been relegated to the worlds of social policy and to specialists focused on police professionalization, the courts, or the justice system. Yet the spatial concentration and correlates of urban violence, which may be as obvious in cities like Newark as they are in Mexico City or São Paulo, cry out for spatially-sensitive approaches to mitigating or reducing violence. All future spatial interventions in a neighborhood or city should be reviewed for the impacts on socio-spatial exclusion and how they might inadvertently empower the perpetrators of violence. Certain investments or interventions may be more likely to strengthen as opposed to weaken illicit activities. Planners should think about actions or programs that undermine or transform the local economic activities that strengthen organized criminal leadership. They also should consider social, infrastructural, and economic interventions that reduce citizen dependence on illicit networks and the activities that fuel their vibrancy.

Second, strengthen novel forms of citizen mobilization or participation that empower residents to identify the root causes violence while also providing opportunities to construct alternative social and political spaces for action. Residents must be given the resources to cultivate relative autonomy from perpetrators of violence, whether they are informal leaders or the coercive forces of the state. Planners can support these efforts by helping citizens identify the activities and behaviors that prop up illicit networks, using this knowledge to construct security strategies that are appropriate to the room daily settings. This, in essence, is a call for constructing security practices from 'below' rather than from 'above,' so that residents are no longer forced to depend on state and/or market actors for protection. Instead, we must recognize that citizens caught in networks of violence have a better understanding of what is or is not possible then external experts looking for one-size-fits-all solutions. In light of this, residents of violence-prone neighborhoods must be empowered and resourced to make their own decisions about what to secure, how, and why. Failure to enhance the agency of residents with respect to the institutions and practices that propagate violence will slow down efforts to increase safety.

Third, radically transform urban planning epistemologies and practices to focus less on isolated communities, and instead recognize the overlapping networks of (inter)activities and mutual allegiances that work in, through, and beyond individual neighborhoods.

We must question standard planning practices built on the assumption that local communities are both the starting and ending point for action. We have seen that although chronic urban violence may start in a given community, it will network across the city as a whole, emanating across a nation and transnationally. Planning actions should be oriented towards transcending spatial isolation of communities while also reconfiguring the activities that embed them in networks of violence. This does not mean forgetting about the importance of fostering horizontal connections among community residents. However, community solidarity should be developed with an eye to programs that help residents break or disrupt the illicit activities that have pulled their communities into larger territorial networks of violence. Planners must pay attention to infrastructural, social, and economic programs and policies that foster such ends. New or increased investments as well as economic projects that redirect and inject wealth into informal and/or marginalized urban territories, but in ways that strengthen integral immersion within and spatial connection to the 'formal' city, are a first step towards reversing the territorial isolation that contributes to violence and precarity among the urban poor.

Fourth, question and re-conceptualize the current 'formal–informal' binary, which persists in urban planning practices. This will require greater appreciation for the array of 'alternative urbanisms' produced and practiced by marginalized and excluded populations, and a reassessment of the everyday practices undertaken by residents to create their own livelihoods in an environment of scarcity. Promoting or valuing the ingenuity of informality can provide a platform for challenging the inferior status ascribed to informal locations and activities, even as it can serve as a basis for learning from residents' own efforts to strengthen and protect their neighborhoods in the face of violence. One way to move forward ethically as well as constructively is to think about informality as a solution and not a problem. Planners should thus engage with informality, and possibly even augment it rather than try to banish it.

The bottom line is that the discipline of urban planning must re-conceptualize its long-standing assumptions as well as overarching spatial planning goals, with the aim of prioritizing connections among formal and informal activities and locations at the scale of the city. Breaking down the formal–informal divide in planning epistemology will help advance these aims, by ensuring that certain areas of the city do not become so severely stigmatized that authorities fail to integrate them into the urban economy and the larger polity. To accomplish such aims, informal settlements and other marginalized neighborhoods should be recognized as holding value while also being socially, spatially, and politically incorporated into all larger visions of city-building. This will also help urban planning practitioners to prioritize discussions of how distinctive communities can be linked to the city as a whole, and by so doing prioritize actions

that effectively connect citizens in one location to those in another, thus providing the basis for socio-spatial inclusion rather than exclusion or division. Such planning and policy developments can form the foundation for new networks of allegiance and new forms of political authority at scales larger than the community but smaller than the nation-state, thus allowing for pushback against transnationally networked activities that allow violence to flower.

In a globalizing world it may be easy for citizens to detach themselves from the idea of the nation-state as the primordial site for political allegiance and sovereignty, and instead become tied to alternative, 'imagined communities' grounded in local realities even if the latter are transnationally connected. In Latin America violence has flowered where these two scales of allegiance are in tension, leaving many residents with mixed loyalties. In situations of chronic violence, the desire for pacified order often becomes so urgent that there is a danger of succumbing to a nostalgia for the state-based modernist techniques of mass social and spatial control that helped fuel violence in the first place. Against such a regression, we must vigilantly pursue alternative scales of sovereign allegiance and new forms of imagined community formation, built around tangible planning actions that connect diverse territorial parts and wholes with the aim of creating new social and spatial synergies in cities that operate beyond simplistic, state-based understandings of the 'enfranchisement vs. disenfranchisement' binary. At the very least, such actions could cultivate a new sense of collective purpose linking human communities of citizens, committed and prepared to push back against the ravages of life-denying violence increasingly widespread in Latin American cities today.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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