Citizen Security and Organized Crime

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Chronic Violence and its Reproduction:

Perverse Trends in Social Relations, Citizenship, and Democracy in Latin America

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This report reviews a broad literature on the causes and social effects of chronic violence in Latin America – particularly in Mexico, Central America, Colombia, and the Caribbean – and details the consistent and diverse ways that chronic violence undermines social relations and support for democracy. The trends identified – also relevant for parts of Saharan Africa, Asia, and the Middle East – provoke ever increasing violence and social disintegration, and appear to constitute perverse norms among affected groups. Unabated, this problem –which remains largely overlooked by policy makers today – could constitute a growing threat to peace making and state building in affected regions throughout the world. The report proposes a collaborative initiative that will join international, national, and local actors to develop more effective approaches through research, policy reform, and local social action.

Executive Summary

In Mexico, Colombia, Central America, the Caribbean, and elsewhere in Latin America, people are riveted by spiraling social violence and the threats it poses to democracy. This report examines how chronic violence affects social relations and the practice of citizenship in the region. Based on an extensive review of the literature, it demonstrates that chronic violence is stimulated and perpetuated by a range of deep rooted forces, destroys the social fabric of vulnerable communities and countries, undermines support for democracy, and perverts the practice of citizenship. Given the nature of the forces that stimulate chronic violence and its tendency to reproduce itself, moreover, these destructive trends may constitute de-facto social norms in some parts of the region. If these dynamics continue to be neglected by policy makers, they will evolve into progressively more serious challenges to peacemaking and state building in the future.

Although Latin America leads in the global indices of violence, the phenomenon of chronic violence is also occurring in various lower and middle income countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. (Pearce and McGee, 2011) The 2011 World Development Report calculates that 25 percent of the world's population – both rich and poor – lives with high levels of long term violence and conflict that have trans-generational repercussions. (World Bank, 2011a) Some groups, however, are particularly vulnerable. These include young people (80 per-

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cent of whom live in developing countries), women, and certain ethnic groups. (PRB, 2010) The problem also affects chronically marginalized groups in wealthier countries– for example, undocumented migrants and certain minorities in the United States, Europe, and elsewhere.[1]

This paper provides a schematic picture of the causes and social effects of chronic violence in Latin America based on a review of relevant literature; proposes some ideas to build a fresh conceptual framework with which to approach this phenomenon; and outlines recommendations for policy reform, research, and social action. It is organized as follows:

Section I lays out the purpose of the working paper, the sources reviewed, and forwards definitions of five terms that are critical to understand this phenomenon: "violence," "chronic violence," "social fear," "grey zone," and "illicit trade."

Section II reviews the major factors that stimulate violence in the region. These include various unintended consequences of globalization including especially the "new poverty" and the explosion of illicit trade, disjunctive democratization, the mass media, and the effects of extreme political traumatization.

Section III first provides a catalog of major social effects of violence, starting with the consequences of the "new poverty" and the breakdown of families, intergenerational relations, and traditional community structures. Following, it provides summary descriptions of the major kinds of responses to chronic violence that emerge consistently in the literature reviewed.

Scapegoating and xenophobia produce dangerous "common sense" mechanisms that convert people into "victims" of dangerous "others," while social silence and other avoidance mechanisms distort their capacity to clearly understand their realities and to act accordingly. The state is progressively viewed as the enemy, and citizens construct diverse kinds of "parallel polities" that provide "state-like" protections, but further undermine state power and legitimacy. Increased legitimacy of violence and illegality fuels toxic mixtures of complicity and guilt, social silence and amnesia, social isolation, and aggression. The result is further distortions of reality, more social isolation, reduced use of public spaces, and the flourishing both of "pentecostalized" religions and reactive social action. In many countries, moreover, these trends are built on traumatic legacies of previous internal armed conflicts and state repression.

Finally, Section IV (a) forwards observations about the challenge posed by chronic violence to international and national policy makers and vulnerable populations and states, (b) presents four working propositions to contribute to a new framework for approaching this problem, and (c) outlines recommendations to enable policy makers, practitioners, scholars, and affected populations to address it in more integrated and strategic ways.

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The Latin American Program and its institutes on Mexico and Brazil serve as a bridge between the United States and Latin America, providing a nonpartisan forum for experts from throughout the region and the world to discuss the most critical issues facing the Hemisphere. The Program sponsors research, conferences, and publications aimed at deepening the understanding of Latin American and Caribbean politics, history, economics, culture, and U.S.-Latin American relations. By bringing pressing regional concerns to the attention of opinion leaders and policymakers, the Program contributes to more informed policy choices in Washington, D.C., and throughout the Hemisphere.

Citizen insecurity poses a rising challenge to democratic governance and the exercise of citizenship throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Homicide rates are among the highest in the world and citizens throughout the region cite crime, followed by unemployment, as the dominant concern of daily life. Transnational organized crime, including but not limited to narco-trafficking, exacerbates levels of violence, compromises state institutions, and undermines democratic quality and the rule of law.

The Latin American Program fosters comparative research and dialogue among scholars and policymakers from throughout the Americas regarding local, national, and international public policies to address citizen insecurity and related efforts to strengthen institutions, the observance of human rights, and the rule of law. The Program also focuses special attention on the changing sub-regional dynamics of organized crime and explores ways to diminish its pernicious effects on governance and insecurity. The Latin American Program sponsors a blog on citizen security, http://scela.wordpress.com, which has become a key resource for citizens and public officials throughout the region.

The International Institute of Learning on Social Reconciliation

IIARS - is a Guatemalan civil association founded in 2007 to foment dialogue, learning and reconciliation around issues of racism, social exclusion and other forms of social violence among key actors in Guatemala and internationally. A Spanish-language version of this paper will published on the IIARS website in April 2012. http://iiars.org/de-interes-general/documentos/violencia-cronica/

Acknowledgments

I. Introduction

A. Genesis and purpose of this paper

The question pursued by this report – how does violence affect social relations and the practice of citizenship? – was provoked for me by the experience of living in Guatemala during the decade following the euphoria of the Peace Accords, when a new kind of violence progressively overran daily life. Most analysts tended to place the blame for this new violence on drug traffickers, occult powers linked to the wartime military, and the corruption and impunity that prevailed because of the inability of the Guatemalan state to establish rule of law.

However, it seemed to me that the story might be more complex. Violence was clearly wreaking changes in the "victims" of criminality as well. Among neighbors, coworkers, people in the community, my own family, and friends, one could see contradictory impulses: adaptation and combat, fear, denial and indignation, heightened aggression, and avoidance. Research in several communities in Central Guatemala in 2007 and 2008 that explored how people were putting their lives back together after the war confirmed my hunch. Many of the survival strategies that people had learned during the war – silence, avoidance, self-victimization, and scapegoating – had clearly gained new life and functionality as ways to cope with violence in peacetime.

This report, then, has several purposes.

- It reports a wide range of social actions and responses that are consistently linked to the experience of living in chronic violence in an attempt to build a broader sensitivity to the kinds of human responses that these dynamics tend to provoke. While the original scope of the study was Central America, Mexico, Colombia, Jamaica, and the Dominican Republic, valuable accounts of similar experiences elsewhere in the region are also included.

- It identifies major dynamics that drive violence and its reproduction.

- Based on the dynamics identified by observers, it advances some propositions to contribute to a conceptual framework to approach the phenomenon we call "chronic violence."

- It identifies some initial steps that could be taken – by scholars, policy makers, practitioners, and affected populations – to reduce violence and its perverse effects.

The writings referred to directly in the paper are noted in the text itself, while footnotes are used to note additional texts that support or demonstrate the tendencies being described, as well as further literature about the topic under discussion.

B. Methodology, sources, and scope of this review

This report resorts to a linear list to begin to characterize the dizzying mix of interactive processes that produce and reproduce chronic violence. Most studies that explore the processes that constitute causes of violence tend to focus primarily on one or a few of these – globalization, the new poverty, drug trafficking, or democratization, for example. Studies that examine what is happening to people as result of those processes, on the other hand, tend to foreground social tendencies and behaviors – most often in specific places and moments in time – and analyze the causes (if they do analyze them) in a secondary way.

A major pending challenge is the development of a framework that would (1) enable us to see how macro and micro factors interplay, how transformations in the nature of the family, the use of space, livelihood strategies, and national and international economic and political forces interact to produce the social trends that are the focus of this report, and (2) aid us to create more sophisticated, integrated, and effective strategies to address them. A recent study of the social, economic, and cultural causes of social and gender violence in four Mexican cities produced by INCIDE Social represents a significant attempt to produce an integrative approach along these lines for specific populations. (2010a; 2010b)

The social responses described here provide a picture of a broad range of ways that chronic violence can make people behave and can serve as a catalogue for

those interested in this problem. The responses that transpire in specific populations can only be identified through empirical observation, which inevitably will help to further broaden the general menu contained here. Whether and to what degree specific factors may turn out to be "universal" trends or if most or all are determined by specific local realities – culture, history, ethnic makeup, social class, etc. – is an open question that would properly be explored through comparative analysis. What dynamics contribute to making some people and groups more vulnerable to the perverse effects described here? What conditions permit (some) people to transcend perverse tendencies more than others? Build or maintain more unity? Reduce the reproduction of violence?

It should also be noted that the literature tapped for this review represents just the tip of the iceberg, and one – contrary to most icebergs today – that is growing rather than shriveling. In the month since I finished this report, the United Nations has issued its new Global Report on Homicides and various papers, books and online journal articles have come to my attention that would surely further enrich what is written here. Moreover, many of the major dynamics that appear to be relevant to the generation of chronic violence are themselves the subject of extensive scholarly work and debate that would have constituted a task well beyond the scope of this paper. A large portion of the social effects of chronic violence described here have been identified through research focusing what is happening to specific populations in the world – in *favelas* in Brazil, for example, or among children of migrants in Jamaica. Some of the literature that sheds light on how violence affects people comes from other fields. The issue of "social silence," for example, has been most extensively described by observers concerned with the human damage caused by armed conflict.

Perhaps precisely because violence and chronic violence are subjects of such a rapidly growing literature, it is quite uneven. Groundbreaking observations have been produced in certain local contexts that have yet to be applied to others. Dynamics that could constitute general regional tendencies often appears as observations about particular localities or countries. This report seeks, whenever possible, to register ideas and approaches that could have broader relevance and

applicability — in order to provide a cauldron of ideas to nurture future work.

Finally, while effort was made to review materials about Latin America produced both inside and outside the region, our access to literature from the region itself (often unavailable through internet or U.S. academic libraries) was limited by restrictions of time and money. Help from various researchers in Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Jamaica, and Colombia secured access to some materials at an early stage of the research. However, this report relies more heavily than is ideal on literature accessible through the libraries and online systems available in U.S. academic circles. Important regional scholarship remains to be tapped, and the views emerging from these analyses will inevitably provide more nuance and complexity to the portrayal of the problem presented here. The burgeoning popular cultural production touching on these problems — novels, television programs, movies, video games, songs, etc. — is a potent source of insights (much of it "from the ground") that also remains to be tapped.

While we consulted writings from a broad range of disciplines for this piece, three kinds of literature were particularly helpful in providing fresh information about what happens to people living in chronic violence.

The first were the observations and analyses produced by people who had worked with target populations over relatively long periods of time – long enough to be able to observe the subtle changes wrought by increasing violence – and with methodologies and social capacities that enabled them to go into more depth than is possible with shorter term research. These longer and deeper views are critical for studying what it is like to live with chronic violence because it – like living with war – provokes feelings and actions that people don't feel too good about, and which they don't always easily share with outsiders. These include guilt and shame, impotence and denial, remorse and avoidance – not to speak of moral or legal vulnerability or more immanent dangers that face those immersed in contexts permeated by illicit and illegal activities.

Second were the analyses (often joining anthropologists and political scientists or coming from political scientists "who act like anthropologists") that explore how people experience states and how states func-

tion as social entities, which shed new light on how governance really works and how it is lived by citizens of the region – an approach much neglected in classic institutional analyses.

Third are those analyses that attempt to visualize in some way the integration of these micro and macro perspectives. Many of the anthropological analyses make reference to global drivers of the problems they are observing among specific groups or localities. The INCIDE Social study of four Mexican cities, however, is a more ambitious and systematic attempt that – because of its comparative nature – produces propositions that could be tested elsewhere. (ibid, April, 2010)

C. Defining key terms

This section defines five terms that are critical to understanding the patterns that emerge in diverse literature about violence in the region and enable us to begin to craft a new conceptual approach to the question of violence and its effects. First, we explore "violence" and "chronic violence," and then the concepts of "social fear," "grey zone," and "illicit trade" – which shine light on some consistent social effects of violence that are often overlooked.

1. Violence: As many scholars have noted, the term "violence" defies clear-cut definition. The Oxford Dictionary, for example, says that it is: *"behavior involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something"* (Oxford Dictionary, 2010) – ignoring both that it becomes meaningful only through the ways it is understood socially and culturally, and that it can be exercised simply through the threat to employ it. This report will use the synthetic definition of violence forwarded by the World Health Organization:

> *"the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal development or deprivation."* (WHO, 2002)

Violence can both be legitimate and illegitimate, visible and invisible, necessary and useless, productive and destructive, purposeful and unintended — depending on who is judging.   It tends to reproduce itself, and specific forms of violence integrate with,

feed on, and are nurtured by other forms. Political violence is usually discernible, but behavior learned in political realms also manifests in social relations and vice versa.[2] Structural violence – the oppression and social suffering caused by chronic poverty, hunger, social exclusion, and humiliation – classically translates into intimate and political violence. (Galtung, 1969; Farmer 1999, 2000). In the case of symbolic violence, victims absorb the blame themselves for the violence they have suffered. "My teacher beat me because I deserved it" is an example of how humiliation, discrimination, and other forms of abuse come to be perceived as if they were part of the natural order of things. (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Bourdieu, 2001) A final predictable quality of violence is that it tends to dominate when more complex social pacts (for example, state, community, or religion-based) are weakened.

The complexity of the term is also reflected in inadequate indicators. Homicide rates are the most common and visible indicators – perhaps due to relative consensus that homicide is bad. Although domestic violence is much more prevalent, it is unfortunately more socially acceptable in many places and thus more difficult to track. The map, provides a general picture of global homicide rates, demonstrating that the countries chosen for this study and the region in general are at the forefront of this phenomenon worldwide, with national levels as high as 61 and 59 per 100,000 population per year in Honduras and Jamaica respectively. (OCAVI, UNODC, 2010). Even as early as 2002, Latin America accounted for 27 percent of all homicides in the world though it only held 8.5 percent of the global population. (WHO, 2002 in UNDP/OAS *Nuestra democracia*, 2010) The map shows, however, that similarly high levels exist in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa and in pockets of the Middle East and Asia.

While most studies of violence focus on the high rates of homicides evident in recent decades, some scholars remind us that the problem often has much deeper historical roots. Azaola, for example, notes that national homicide rates in Mexico today are actually lower than they were for most of the 20th century. From a high of 77.4 homicides per 100,000 people in 1930, they dropped slowly until 1970 when they stayed at between 17 and 18 until 1990. The lowest

Homicide Rates by Country (2010 or latest available year)

HOMICIDE RATES
- 0,00-2,99
- 3,00-4,99
- 5,00-9,99
- 10,00-19,99
- 20,00-24,99
- 25,00-34,99
- >35
- No Data Available
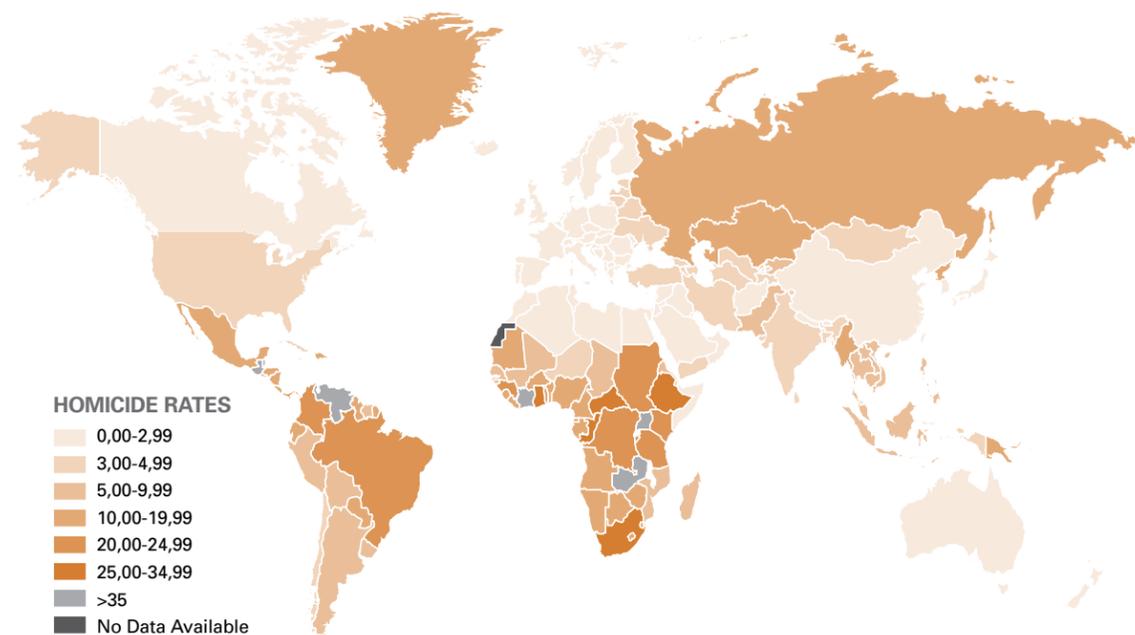
Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsements or acceptance by the United Nations
Source: UNODC Homicide Statistics (2011)

annual rates of around 11 were reached about 2007, just before the recent upsurge. (Azaola, n.d: 2)

Similarly, a recent World Bank report on Central America notes that

> "…fragmentary data for Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua from the late 1960s – well before armed conflict and political violence had reached intense levels – show that murder rates were already high then, exceeding 20 per 100,000. Cruz (2003) also shows that El Salvador experienced more than 900 killings in 1959, equal to a homicide rate of nearly 30 per 100,000. (World Bank, 2011b: 22)

National homicide rates also mask the fact that violence levels can vary significantly across social groups. In Rio de Janeiro, for example, Leeds notes that while homicide rates in the *favelas* were 84 per 100,000, they were as low as 4 per 100,000 in wealthier neighborhoods. (Leeds, 2006) In Guatemala today, homicide rates have always been much lower in the predominantly indigenous highlands than in Guatemala City or the eastern part of the country, dominated

by *mestizos* (termed *ladinos* there). However, collective killings – for example, lynchings – have exploded in indigenous areas in recent decades as well as among other groups. Some indigenous communities have also experienced a significant upsurge in homicides. (Metz et. al., 2010)

2. Chronic violence: The notion of "chronic violence" is relatively new.[3] Pearce has forwarded the following definition.

> [Chronic violence occurs in] "contexts in which levels of violence are measured across three dimensions of intensity, space and time. A working definition is where rates of violent death are at least twice the average for the country income category, where these levels are sustained for five years or more and where acts of violence not necessarily resulting in death are recorded at high levels across several socialization spaces, such as the household, the neighborhood, and the school, contributing to the further reproduction of violence over time." (Pearce, 2007: 7)

The material reviewed for this report, as we will see, suggests that chronic violence:

- is provoked and reproduced by a range of deeply rooted drivers ranging from gender socialization and family dynamics to certain patterns of state formation and globalization,

- destroys social relations in specific and consistent ways and provokes perverse social behavior in ways that become increasingly naturalized among vulnerable groups,

- perverts the practice of citizenship and undermines social support for democracy, thus provoking further violence, and

- becomes embedded in multiple social spaces and can be transmitted inter-generationally.

Although it doesn't employ the same term, the World Bank's 2011 *World Development Report* approaches the question of violence in similar fashion, recognizing its recurrent nature, its imbeddedness in diverse social spaces, its potential to have trans-generational effects, and that it is a problem for both rich and poor. (World Bank, 2011: 1-7)[4]

> "21st century violence does not fit with the 20th century mold. Interstate war and civil war… have declined in the last 25 years; deaths from civil war… are one-quarter of what they were in the 1980s [but] violence and conflict have not been banished: one in four people on the planet, more than 1.5 billion, live in fragile and conflict-affected states or in countries with very high levels of criminal violence [in situations that] do not fit neatly either into "war" or "peace" or into "criminal violence" or "political violence." (World Bank, 2011, 2)

Responses to violence and chronic violence, moreover, are reproduced and given form by certain social dynamics, such as "social fear" and the behavior described by the "grey zone" that are often left out of prevailing analytical accounts of this problem, and to which we turn now.

3. "Social fear": Reguillo proposes that fear – relatively ignored by scholars in longer standing democracies or relegated to the sphere of the individual and to the field of psychology – should be analyzed as a

social phenomenon. Fear, she argues, is both a primal response to risk and "an individually experienced, socially constructed, and culturally shared experience" accompanied, moreover, by the need to "find a way to explain, according to the rationality of the situation, the fears experienced…" (Reguillo in Rotker, 2002: 192ff) As will be seen in this report, the social construction of "the other" is an important individual and social mechanism for channeling fears, enabling people to transfer blame for risks, insecurity, violence, or other problems.

4. The "grey zone": The idea that systematic violence and associated fear makes many – if not most – people behave badly is well established. However, for many policy makers and private citizens – especially in longstanding democracies – this is not so evident. In his reflections on social relations in Auschwitz, Primo Levi detailed how life under a chronic regime of terror dehumanizes everyone. His term "grey zone" refers to how the lines between good and evil, right and wrong, become blurred and perpetrators and victims act increasingly like each other in conditions dominated by violence, fear, and social repression. (Levi, 1998: 36-69)

Levi sought to understand why so many readers – who repeatedly asked him why the prisoners didn't escape or rebel – found this difficult to imagine. In countries where elementary needs are satisfied, Levi suggested,

> "…people tend to experience freedom as a natural right… the idea of imprisonment is firmly linked to the idea of flight or revolt; … escape [is] a moral duty and the obligatory consequence of captivity. … Like the nexus imprisonment-flight, the nexus oppression-rebellion is also a stereotype… It is never the most oppressed individuals who stand at the head of movements…"

The most oppressed, he explained, lose so much of their fundamental humanity that strategically conceived and organized rebellion is impossible. (ibid: 158-160)

Latin American scholars came to similar conclusions regarding life under authoritarianism. They wondered why colleagues in Western democracies paid so little heed to the social effects of fear. Corradi (writing long before 9/11) conjectured that "in the United States and other advanced industrial democra-

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cies, there is a marked reluctance to consider fear as something other than a personal emotion, and, hence, a phenomenon within the exclusive purview of psychology." He came to a similar conclusion to Levi's: "free societies do suffer the occasional occurrence of collective frights or panics, but they do not know fear as the permanent and muffled undertone of life." (Corradi et. al., 1992: 1-2) These differences in worldview may further explain why the dynamics created by fear, repression and violence have received so little attention in the public policy world to date.

5. "Illicit trade": In a corollary to Levi's grey zone, Moisés Naím argued that prevailing notions of "organized crime," of which drug trafficking is one example, misleadingly establish a dualistic distinction between criminal actors and other members of society, and between illegal and legal acts. He forwarded the term "illicit trade" to refer more broadly to:

"…trade that breaks the rules – the laws, regulations, licenses, taxes, embargoes, and all the procedures that nations employ to organize commerce, protect their citizens, raise revenues, and enforce moral codes. It includes purchases and sales that are strictly illegal everywhere and others that may be illegal in some countries and accepted in others." (Naím, 2005: 2)

As he further notes:

"…to think of a clean line between good guys and bad guys [or the ability to separate illicit trade from licit trade] is to fail to capture the reality of trafficking today. Illicit trade permeates our daily lives in subtle ways." (ibid: 240-241)

II. The diverse causes of violence

Although a wide range of structural and other dynamics drive the current high levels of violence, policy makers often overlook these dynamics in favor of more proximate "single-issue" causes such as gang membership, unregulated gun control, impunity, or the narcotics trade. Chronic violence, however, is unlikely to change without addressing the multiplicity of factors that reproduce it.

A. Unintended effects of globalization
Most of the drivers of chronic violence explored in this section are linked in one way or another to the process of globalization, defined here as the intensification of trans-planetary phenomena and relationships at a global scale in economic, political, cultural, military, and non-human spheres. (Coleman in Heine et al, 2011: 19-20) As various writers have pointed out, globalization has been taking place for a long time – with special intensity in the decades during the wave of capitalist expansion in the decades around the turn of the 20th century. However, current globalization is unique "in the rapidity of its spread and in the intensity of the interactions in real time that result." (Heine et al: 2) These include the "expansion of economic activities across state borders, which has produced increasing interdependence through the growing volume and variety of cross-border flows of finance, investment, goods, and services; the rapid and widespread diffusion of technology; and the international movement of ideas, information, legal systems, organizations, and people as well as cultural exchanges." (ibid: 2)

One concrete result in Latin America is that the feeling and meaning of day-to-day life has fundamentally changed. The Central American peasants who understood their lives within the context of local and at most regional and national structures and processes in the 1970s have children for whom life is radically different. Whether they live in their parents' communities or have migrated elsewhere, their lives are oriented by new things – how they perceive life in the United States, the worlds they see on the internet and television, participation in a wide range of networks that didn't exist 30 years ago, and the new realities of livelihood in the 21st century.

As the International Labor Organization noted in its 2004 report, the problem is not with globalization *per se*, but "in the deficiencies in its governance" which have enabled a wide range of illicit transnational activities and organizations to flourish beyond the reach of national governments or international governance mechanisms. (World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, 2004: xi, Heine et al: 2-11) Among what has been termed the "dark side of globalization"[5] are transnational trafficking of drugs, human beings, arms, stolen property and wildlife, and the accumulation of capital among actors beyond the reach of national or international governance mechanisms.

Additionally, globalization has spurred asymmetrical processes of capital accumulation and dependence. As Heine and Thakur point out, industrialized countries are highly interdependent in economic relations with each other, [but] developing countries are largely independent in economic relations with each other and dependent on industrialized countries. (p. 3) At the same time there is increasing divergence – not convergence – in income levels between countries and people, with widening inequality among and within nations and between specific social groups. (Nayyar, 2006: 153-6, cited in Heine et al: 3) A rise in unemployment and increase in informal sector employment has generated an excess supply of labor and depressed real wages in many countries.

While there is debate about whether the 2008 economic crisis heralded in a new phase of "de-globalization," Heine *et al* argue that in any case, "the 'dark side of globalization'… will remain with us" and that it is imperative to better understand these forces in order to better manage their effects. (ibid: 14) Let us look now at how these processes manifest in Latin America and link to the problem of violence.

B. Social inequality, the "new poverty," and chronic social exclusion

1. Social inequality. Worldwide, there is a robust and well established correlation between social inequality and incidence of crime (both homicide and robbery), enabling us to transcend the misleading

notion that poverty itself provokes violence. (WHO, 2003, Wilkinson and Marmot, 2003: 22, Pearce, 2007: 294) Throughout Latin America, social inequality remains high, with the top 10 percent of the population earning three times as much as the poorest 40 percent. (UNDP/OAS, 2010: 90-98) Briceño León demonstrates, moreover, how specific countries with high levels of social inequality – Brazil, much of Central America, Mexico, and Colombia – have consistently higher levels of violence than countries with lower levels of social inequality such as Argentina, Uruguay, Costa Rica, and Chile. (Briceño León, 2008)[6]

2. The "new poverty." Demographic trends illuminate the existence of a new phenomenon on the socio-economic landscape that is not visible through macro-economic indicators. In recent decades, the predominantly rural poverty of agrarian societies led by autocratic regimes has given way to a "new poverty" lived by predominantly urban, more highly educated people in democracies. Paradoxically, however, many Latin Americans, a great proportion of whom are young, today are relegated to long-term job informality and severely reduced social mobility in spite of historically high educational levels. (Ward et al, 2004) Within these chronically excluded populations, indigenous and Afro-descendant groups, women, children, and youth are the most vulnerable. Although numbers vary from country to country, the following figures provide an idea of general trends in the continent.

- Between 1950 and 2009, Latin Americans went from being 41.4 percent urban to 79.3 percent, making it the second highest urbanized population in the world. (UNDESA, 2009: 9)

- 29 percent of the region's population is under 15 years of age – as opposed to 17 percent for more developed countries. (PRB, 2010)

- Between 1970 and 2010, estimated adult illiteracy rates dropped from 26.3 percent to 8.3 percent. (UNESCO)

- 46 percent of economically active Latin Americans work in the informal sector, where they constitute the "numerically most impor-

tant segment of the employed population, [but are] excluded from modern capitalist relations and must survive through unregulated work and direct subsistence activities." In poorer countries this percentage almost doubles. (PNUD-OAS 2010: 90-98)

One effect of these trends is increased perceptions of job insecurity. In 2010, Latinobarómetro reported that 38 percent of Latin American workers are worried about being unemployed in the coming year. In some countries, the numbers were much higher, for example, 62 percent in Guatemala and 56 percent in Ecuador. (Latinobarómetro, 2010: 11)

Another effect is increased migration, which is driven both by lack of job opportunities and in certain areas, by high levels of violence as well. (Wood et al, 2010; Jusidman, 2010)

- In Mexico, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic, 9 percent of the population migrates; in El Salvador, it is 15 percent and in Jamaica 25 percent.

- In El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Jamaica, 10-20 percent of the GDP is produced by remittances from citizens who have migrated to the United States, directly subsidizing 30 percent to 50 percent of these national populations. (UNDP, 2009)

- In 2009, however, due to the global economic recession, remittances to México dropped by 16 percent and in Central America by 9 percent. (Maldonado and Watson, 2009)

Various analysts report that migration and income derived from criminal networks also produces additional internal stratification within communities and social groups, between those with higher income sources and those without, further widening the gap between aspirations and possibilities and spurring increased conflict and violence.[7]

C. Increased power of "illicit trade"

"Illicit trade" has expanded notoriously in Latin America in recent decades. The region today constitutes the principal producer of marijuana and cocaine in the world and has a growing role in the production of opiates and synthetic drugs. (Latin American

Commission, 2009) Transnational drug trafficking organizations in Colombia and Mexico are said to "generate, remove, and launder" between $18-39 billion in drug profits a year. (UNODC: 4) By way of comparison, the Guatemalan government's annual budget is around $6 billion. The wholesale price of cocaine explodes as it is transported from production sites in Colombia through the region. As a recent World Bank report has noted:

> "A newly minted kilo of cocaine begins at approximately US$1000 on the Caribbean coast of Colombia, the cost rises sharply in value as it passes through Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Honduras, reaching $100,000….The 565 metric tons of cocaine shipped through the region is equivalent to 14 grams for each of the 40 million people in Central America – …at a street value in the US of about US$2,300 or more than half the US$4,200 per capita GDP of Honduras." (World Bank, 2011b: 12)

Global cocaine statistics show that between 2001 and 2008, seizure of cocaine in Latin America increased from 366 metric tons to 712. (UNODC World Drug Report 2010, 67) The distribution of cocaine seizures between Mexico, the Caribbean, Central America, and Colombia has shifted from being predominantly in Mexico and the Caribbean in the 1980's and 1990's, to being largely located in Central America starting in the early 2000's. (ibid: 74) Various 2008 estimates show that 90 percent of all cocaine entering the United States flowed from Mexico, 42 percent of which was transported via Central America. (Ribando-Seelke et. al., 2010: 2)

A major report on democracy in Latin America produced by the OAS and the UNDP in 2010 provides a good summary of the general effects of the drug trade on the region:

> "Be it as drug producers, sites of transport and storage, spaces for laundering illicit capital, points of access to the U.S. market, or as significant internal markets, the countries of Latin America participate in illicit commerce that moves dozens of billions of dollars each year. This immense flow of resources and the sophistication of the criminal networks that sustain them, as well as other kinds of

criminal activities, have drastically transformed the realities of politics and security in the region. In Colombia and Peru, for example, drug traffic has played a decisive role in financing and prolonging internal armed conflicts. In general, it has exposed police, military, judicial and political institutions to unprecedented risks of corruption, and has provoked a dramatic increase in criminal violence. The Caribbean basin, a critical transit area for drugs from Latin America to the United States, today manifests the highest homicide rates in the world. In Mexico, according to the Attorney General's Office, about half of all homicides in 2008 were directly related to drug trafficking." (author's translation, UNDP-OAS: 185)

The World Bank's 2011 report on violence in Central America also demonstrates a strong correlation between drug trafficking and homicide rates; trafficking is "quantitatively far more important than the other risk factors for violence" identified in their study. (World Bank, 2011b: 20-22)[8] Guerrero documents another aspect of the same problem, showing how the expansion of the Mexican government's anti-drug war is directly correlated to rising levels of violence in that country (Guerrero, 2011). Meléndez et. al., however, warn that there is not always a correlation between drug trafficking and increased violence, based on their study of frontier and coastal communities in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Panama, where traffickers enjoy strong support from the communities that depend on the income they provide. (Meléndez et al, 2010: 12. See also McDonald, 2005:120)

Part of what makes the actors involved in drug trafficking so difficult to control is their high levels of diversification. In addition to arms and human trafficking, kidnapping, (50 percent of all kidnapping worldwide occurs in Latin America), robbery, and extortion, they operate or infiltrate diverse legitimate businesses to facilitate money laundering or transport needs. These include construction, banking, remittance companies, shopping malls, entertainment and export-import businesses, agriculture, real estate, and numerous retail products marketed formally and informally.

As we will see in Section III, the resources, social values, and power of drug traffickers have catalyzed new models of extravagant consumerism and have

transformed social relations and cultural values – from religion to architecture, popular music to television, in gender and intergenerational relations, everyday dress, leisure activities, the organization of space, and in notions of state and local political organization.

Embedded in diverse social sectors, they often control territories and provide social services in a state-like manner, their transnational nature protecting them from governmental controls. Over time, these groups have accumulated power in arenas historically considered to be state domains in all of the countries covered in this report.[9] In Guatemala, however, drug traffickers effectively controlled at least 5 out of 22 departments in 2009, directly contesting the State and the national army for territorial control of these areas.[10] In Mexico, the state today is contesting drug traffickers for control over certain regions of the country, particularly in the West, North, and Northwest. In Colombia, drug traffickers, community self-defense groups, guerrilla organizations, and military forces have been battling over territorial and social control of the country for years, generating some of the highest levels of social violence in the continent. In Rio de Janeiro, federal and state forces launched the largest military operation in Brazilian history in 2010 and 2011 to recuperate control over major *favelas.* In Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Panama, drug traffickers have come to dominate frontier and peripheral areas and coastlines, integrating many communities and populations into their networks. (Meléndez et. al., 2010: 13-22)

As the financial stakes have grown, and as cartels face increasing resistance from national governments, international agencies, and competitors, many (the Zetas are the best known example) have increasingly militarized their operations. Militarization and expanded use of violence have been central to expanding territorial control and market share and have also influenced how other social groups employ violence.

Most relevant governments and international agencies, however, continue to pursue these actors as somehow removed from their social context and significance. Prioritizing efforts to stem production, transport and supply (much less than demand) of drugs, they neglect the social embeddedness and, often, the legitimacy that these groups enjoy[11] in arenas where the state is relatively absent. In

Colombia and apparently in most other countries of the region today, significant aspects of the "informal sector" – sales of small appliances, CD's, and pirated merchandise – have now been co-opted as highly decentralized mechanisms for money laundering. (Farah, 2011)   A recent analysis explores how five years of governmental and international efforts to combat drug traffickers have also stimulated the decentralization and multiplication of major and minor drug trafficking organizations and increased criminal violence and citizen insecurity. (Guerrero, 2011)

D. "Disjunctive" democracies, violent and illegal pluralisms, and the perverse nexus between democratization, security, and violence

A growing consensus is developing that the new democracies of Latin America have some chronic failings, or as some would argue, inherent characteristics, that have been insufficiently contemplated by international democracy promoters and many national policy makers and political scientists. Many contemporary democratic states face significant problems of legitimacy – a problem that, 30 years ago, everyone assumed was specific to authoritarian regimes. Seventy-six percent of individuals polled by the Latin American Public Opinion Project expressed little to no confidence in political parties, 64 percent for the judicial system and national congress each, and 63 percent for the national police. (UNDP and OAS, 2010: 102) These macro-level findings correlate with the qualitative data from field studies reviewed for this report. State justice in these democracies is often perceived to be unjust, arbitrary, unacceptable, or simply non-existent, directly fueling support for alternative forms of justice and parallel state-like polities.

The critiques cited above have all blossomed in the context of neo-liberal approaches to democratization that have informed the political transformation of Latin America since the 1980s. The reliance on market-driven approaches, the reduced role of states, and – just as important – the shift of risks from governments and corporations to individuals have all fundamentally undermined state capacity to control illicit activities and provide basic citizen security and rights. In this context, various scholars posit a direct relationship between the particular forms that democracies

have taken in the region and the increasingly consistent patterns of violence. The work of these scholars challenges those in the democracy promotion community who assume that changes in political systems necessarily imply changes in political culture, and who have tended to downplay the significant problems of legitimacy faced by many democratizing states. We will review six analytical contributions – within a much vaster literature – that explore these questions.

1. Disjunctive democracies: In 1999, Caldeira and Holston noted that democratic theory "has rarely considered violence among citizens as a characteristic, rather than episodic condition of its development." Instead it has proceeded generally "as if the problem of internal violence has been solved" and as if "political democracy will produce a rule of law that is inherently democratic." In the "disjunctive democracies" under study, however, this has not occurred. Although political institution-building also remains relatively underdeveloped, it has generally been given priority over strengthening the civil sphere (social services, civil rights, and access to justice), leading to new forms of violence and injustice. Citizenship, these authors note, occurs through a process in which states mold people into subjects and citizens hold states accountable. When the civil component of democratization is undermined and discredited and the development of citizenship is derailed, "social groups … support privatization of justice and security, and illegal or extralegal measures of control…" (Caldeira and Holston, 1999: 693-726)

2. Violent pluralism: Along complementary lines, in 2010, Arias and Goldstein proposed that Latin American democratic societies could be conceptualized as "violently plural," "with states, social elites, and subalterns employing violence in the quest to establish or contest regimes of citizenship, justice, rights, and a democratic social order." The concept provides a way to think about violence in the region:

> …*as not merely concentrated in the state or in "deviant" groups and individuals who contravene otherwise accepted norms of comportment in a consensual democratic society. …[A]nd as much more than a social aberration… violence is a mechanism for keeping in place the very institutions and poli-*

> *cies that neoliberal democracies have fashioned over the past several decades, as well as an instrument for coping with the myriad problems that [they] have generated. …Rather than seeing violence as an indicator of the distance a state has fallen from the (implicitly Western) democratic ideal, violent pluralism allows us to analyze the role that violence plays in preserving or challenging a particular form of lived democracy, understanding that reality in its own terms rather than as a measure of movement away from a base line that even occidental democracies would have a hard time living up to.* (Arias and Goldstein, 2010: 4-5)

3. Perverse interfaces between violence, security and democracy: Pearce and McGee, in 2011, following extensive comparative field research in Latin America and Africa, forwarded two propositions to help to explain why democratization processes have not reduced violence in the global South:

> *First, state security-oriented responses to violence can undermine key democratic principles, vitiating political representation, and eroding the meanings and practices of democratic citizenship, so that classic understandings of state formation – with their stress on legitimate monopolization of violence – fall apart. Second, security provision can also be perversely related to violence itself. Rather than reducing violence, state security actors – sometimes in cooperation with non-state actors – can foster the reproduction of violence in the name of providing security. (Pearce and McGee, 2011: 7)*

Guerrero's recent analysis of the explosion of violence in Mexico since 2007, when the government initiated its war on drug traffickers, provides quantitative evidence of this claim for that country. (Guerrero, 2011)

As we will see in Section III, notions of human rights become progressively delegitimized when states cannot provide citizens with basic protections. However, "responsibility" – which is the other, more primal, component of citizenship – remains generally neglected. While international policy makers, social, and political leaders continue to focus on rights, many of the region's citizens identify themselves increasingly as "victims" – a construct that undermines any

notion of human responsibility or social solidarity, as discussed in III.6, below.

4. Illegal pluralism: Sieder points out that:

> *"…the state in Latin America has never, in practice, been able to create and secure unified legal orders. However, the privatization of the law that is occurring as a consequence of neoliberal reordering poses new and complex challenges to those seeking greater access to justice, respect for human rights, and more democratic forms of citizenship… [that lead to] a kind of illegal pluralism – the overlapping of different legal and regulatory orders – where the line dividing the legal from the illegal becomes increasingly difficult to discern…..*

Additionally, she argues that the decentralization of law promoted by national and international policy makers, and which represent such a significant aspect of most contemporary democratization efforts has

> *"advantages and disadvantages – it brings law closer to everyday lived experience, but in the context of weak states colonized by criminal groups, it can also open greater spaces for abuses by powerful actors and further marginalize the poor…. In contrast to the rational spread of law so widely presupposed by classic paradigms of state modernization, what we may in fact be seeing in Guatemala and in many other parts of the world, is the consolidation of illegal pluralism as part and parcel of the neoliberal restructuring of the state. (Sieder in Pitarch et al, 2008: 85)*

5. The link between weak state legitimacy and high levels of violence: The World Bank's 2011 World Development Report posits that:

> *"…[the] risk of conflict and violence in any society (national or regional) is the combination of the exposure to internal and external stresses and the strength of the "immune system," or the social capability for coping with stress embodied in legitimate institutions….Where states, markets and social institutions fail to provide basic security, justice, and economic opportunities for citizens, conflict can escalate.*

> *In short, countries and subnational areas with the weakest institutional legitimacy and governance are the most vulnerable to violence and instability and the least able to respond to internal and external stresses.* (World Bank, 2011a: 7)

6. Exploring alternatives to the prevailing models: These perverse tendencies have provoked some analysts to explore some of the obvious questions that they provoke. One 10-year assessment of post-war reconstruction in Guatemala developed by a multi-sector group of national leaders asked what could be expected of the "anorexic" state that had been constructed within the neoliberal framework of the times. (Inter-American Dialogue and OAS, 2007) Another study during the same year pointed out that democratic states in fact cost more than their authoritarian predecessors, and noted the 22 new state institutions born in the post-war context of democratization. The authors trace the state's chronic incapacity to finance these new institutions and its work in general, its increasingly precarious financial prospects, high level of dependence on increasingly scarce international cooperation funds for social investment, weak national revenue base, and the reduced capacity for strategic leadership by the central state due to decentralization of essential state functions, and posed an additional question: Can Guatemala really afford democracy? (Calvaruso et. al., 2007; Adams, 2011)[12]

Other analysts are exploring related questions: what does governance look like in places where the state is not in control or operates alongside other entities that also exercise state-like governance functions. Who controls violence? Has state-like legitimacy? Who assesses taxes, provides social services and determines what is permissible vs. impermissible behavior? What are the consequences for vulnerable societies and for democracy in the longer term?[13]

Arias and colleagues, for example, are currently developing a comparative study of how people are governed in areas controlled by diverse armed groups.[14] Pásara, observing the consistent obstacles in establishing rule of law in many parts of the region, is exploring what this means for the long term prospects for the region. Few national and international policy makers, however, so far are asking such questions. Most continue to pursue democratization, security sector reform, and the establishment of rule

of law without recognizing the complex dynamics summarized above that could fundamentally limit the kinds of political systems that will emerge in the medium term. Meanwhile, citizens of the region are left to construct their own – sometimes perverse – answers. Hence, one of the proposals emerging from this report is the need to explore how to promote "citizen-like behavior" in scenarios where states- for whatever reason – prove incapable of providing basic security and citizen rights.[15]

E. Expanded power of mass media

In this context of increased social fragmentation and state dysfunction, the mass media play an increasingly central role in the production, reproduction, and amplification of violence in the region that needs to be explored in more detail for specific regions and target groups. As Putnam and others have pointed out with respect to the United States, television and other electronic entertainment media have direct and dramatic negative effects on social relations and social capital.[16] (Putnam, 2000: 216-246)   Martín Barbero reports that in Colombia:

> *"…the media has turned itself into a part of the basic fabric of urbanity, and [is central] to how fears have recently come to form an elemental part of the new processes of communication. … Television becomes a place of coming together, of vicarious encounters with the world, with people, and even with the city in which we live…"*

He argues that several factors – including the long political crisis in Colombia, a weak civil society, the reduction of public spaces, and the lack of institutional spaces of political expression and conflict resolution – have given television a disproportionate importance in the country's daily life. (Martín Barbero, 2002: 27-29)

Reguillo, from Mexico, notes how narratives of fear circulated by the media generate the "reality" in which people live. Focusing on how fear is constructed socially, she notes that "far from being weakened, fears are reinforced in the intimidating amplification of the media's narration." These constructions contribute directly to vilification and scapegoating of certain actors – for example, gang members, youth, and poor people in general – examined below.

(Reguillo, 2002: 198) The phenomenon of "crime talk," described in Section III, is also stimulated by the mass media. Moodie provides an exemplary case in point of how the media and political leaders interactively constructed a national furor around the person of one young gang member in El Salvador in 1999 that galvanized public support for hardline anti-crime policies. (2009)

The INCIDE Social study of several Mexican cities notes that the media has found that sensationalist reports on crime augment their audiences, and that this leads both to naturalizing the violence that is reported, trivializing other types of violence, and increasing fear and insecurity among the population. At the same time, it is important to note that reporters and communicators are among those who have been most affected by the growing prevalence of violence – through kidnapping, assassination, threats, torture – dynamics which have inevitably undermined the possibility of reporting on these issues. (INCIDE Social, 2010a: 9) The increasingly centralized – and in some cases trans-nationalized – control of local media in specific countries and the transnational reach of global media throughout the region are dynamics that need to be explored and integrated into the analysis of this question as well.

F. The relationship between "social capital" and chronic violence

The concept of social capital—understood as the social support systems and relations that permit the existence of trust, mutual obligations, and respect in communities and the wider society—can be very helpful to understanding the problem of chronic violence. Low levels of social capital have been demonstrated to be both cause and effect of chronic violence. In his study of U.S. society over the past 50 years, Putnam demonstrates that social capital and civic engagement have been undergoing a process of systematic destruction since the 1960s. He shows that downward trends in social capital are consistently correlated with higher crime rates, more neighborhood insecurity, and more interpersonal violence, as well as increased problems in the arenas of child welfare, economic prosperity, health, happiness, and democratic participation. (Putnam, 2000: 287-367) Higher levels of social capital are linked with more positive performance in all these arenas. Putnam attributes

declining levels of social capital in the United States to four major factors. These include increased use of television and other electronic media; increased hours, pressure, and uncertainty in the work arena; suburbanization and increased dependence on commuting; and an increasing tolerance for low levels of civic engagement in successive generations. (ibid: 183-286)[17]

It is beyond the scope of this paper to systematically apply this analytical framework to the issues at hand. However, it is clear both that low levels of social capital stimulate violence and that the perverse effects of violence (detailed in Section III) also further undermine the fundamental components of social capital—trust, mutual obligations, and social networks. The interactive relationship of social capital, chronic violence, and the civic aspect of democracy in Latin America is a complementary way of looking at the challenges faced with the construction of democracy in the region.

The concept of social capital also sheds light on a fundamental challenge facing Latin America's democracies in the effort to establish the rule of law: Putnam argues that social capital is a fundamental aspect of the social infrastructure of democracy and, reciprocally, that democracy (including the rule of law) depends on high levels of social capital in order to function. Contemporary efforts to establish democracy and rule of law in Latin America, however, are occurring in contexts of societies with low levels of social capital and civic engagement. (ibid: 336-414) At best, the task of strengthening the rule of law is made much more costly economically, politically, and socially when the social conditions that foment social obedience are absent.

G. Extreme political traumatization

In various countries of Latin America – for example, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Peru – contemporary violence is the foreground to relatively recent armed conflict, and in Colombia, it occurs in the context of ongoing armed conflict. Hamber forwards the concept of "extreme political traumatization" to characterize the long term disorienting effects that the experience of extreme political violence can have on people's lives. It helps to explain, for example, why contemporary manifestations of violence are lived more reactively, and interpreted with more fear and skepticism, than they may seem to warrant, and

why populations with previous experiences of violence may respond in particular ways. (Hamber, 2009, Keilson, 1992)

A good example comes from my own study of several communities in Guatemala that had been heavy targets during Guatemala's counter-insurgency war that ended in 1996. Although three of the communities in question had quite low levels of violence in the period of the study (2007-2008), local perceptions of violence were very high. Similar to their counterparts in areas with much higher levels of violence, local residents had constructed barriers to restrict entry into the community, had organized patrols to monitor the activities of suspicious people – often outsiders and youth – who might represent some danger, and in at least two of the communities, had threatened or carried out lynchings. These actions are undoubtedly fed by the continual reportage of criminality on television and radio, which provokes local "crime talk" described elsewhere, as well as by the discomfort older people feel about the difficulties in maintaining authority over the younger generation. However, people also continually associated the violence they were experiencing at the time with the past. The younger generation would make the association between contemporary and wartime violence, saying: "It's just like the war again… we're killing each other again, just like in the war…" Some older people were more emphatically fatalistic, equating contemporary violence and the past war to even earlier violence they had lived in 1954 when a *coup d'etat* put a violent end to a decade of social reform.[18] (Adams, 2010b)

The World Bank's recent study of violence in Central America, however, notes that while armed conflict in the region may have contributed to increased violence by damaging criminal justice institutions and generating a large stock of guns that remain in circulation, "broader evidence does not suggest that the region's high levels of violence are principally a legacy of armed conflict." Their study – defining violence relatively narrowly as indicated by homicide rates – suggests that that there is no significant correlation between specific localities within countries that suffered high levels of war-time violence and violence today. (World Bank, 2011b: 22)

H. Other drivers of violence

There are other significant forces that stimulate violence and are beyond control of nation-states, all of which require further investigation in order to compose a more complete picture of the problem of chronic violence. Among the most important are:

- climate change, which provokes natural disasters that represent increasing danger to vulnerable communities and food production through hurricanes, tsunamis, flooding, and other forms of extreme weather;

- environmental degradation; and

- the evolving effects of the global economic downturn, which has provoked significant economic crisis throughout the region, has reduced the availability of jobs, mobility and capital investment within the region and for migrants in the United States and elsewhere, and has created a long term sense of uncertainty for much of the population.

III. Consequences and effects of violence: a preliminary catalogue

This section examines some major consequences of the drivers of violence discussed in the previous section, and enumerates and describes the range of specific social effects and coping mechanisms that have been consistently identified among vulnerable populations in the studies reviewed. Some of the tendencies described below might appear initially to relate more to ways that violence affects democracy or attitudes toward the state, while others appear to more directly affect social relations. However, every one of the tendencies described in this section both affect the evolution of social relations as well as the quality of citizenship and political participation, demonstrating the fluid relations between, and often the inseparability of, these two arenas.

A. Breakdown of family and intergenerational relations, destruction of communal/traditional protections, and intensification of interpersonal and gender violence

The ways in which the breakdown of traditional social systems contributes to rising social violence has been recognized for decades, long before current levels of urbanization had been reached. In the 1960's, for example, Nash found that as communal structures of belief and local systems of social checks and balances were weakening in one indigenous community in Guatemala, people increasingly resorted to individualized means of social control, including homicide. (Nash, 1967) Today, however, with 80 percent of Latin Americans living in urban areas and as result of the impact of international migration, historic family and community relations based on agrarian peasant social structures have been definitively transformed.

A broad range of macro-level processes, many of them stimulated by economic liberalization, have interacted with evolving social dynamics to stimulate increasing violence at the community, family, and interpersonal levels. These macro-factors include the disorderly forces of urbanization, rising education levels combined with shrinking livelihood options, the lack of basic public services, migration, and illicit trade.

At the same time, increased access to mass media has increased public exposure – but not always access – to the privileges and consumption patterns of both legal and illegal elites region-wide and internationally. People with radically different levels of privilege and access live in contiguous urban spaces, but in great isolation from each other. The luxuries and benefits enjoyed by privileged groups are routinely in evidence through the media and by walking down the street. They contribute to extravagant new models of consumerism manifested in different ways among diverse social sectors – visible in styles of architecture, cars, dress, jewelry, and leisure activities, as will be detailed further on. [19]

Diverse analysts trace the various ways these factors undermine more intimate social relations. National and international migration can undermine parental legitimacy and authority as young people adapt to life in new contexts more rapidly and often develop identities radically different than those of their elders. (Pottinger 2005; Clark 2009) Parental authority is shaken when their offspring's livelihoods no longer depend on community and/or family-based pursuits, and because youth are quicker to adapt to new scenarios than their elders. (McIlwaine and Moser, 2004) Higher educational levels among younger people – even in countries where the reach of state-sponsored education remains relatively weak – also tend to further distance them from less educated parents and grandparents. (Green 2003) However, the reduction in viable livelihood options for young people who have gone through school is already reducing interest in education in some places. (Incide Social, 2010a, 2010b)

The crisis of traditional agriculture brought on by the deregulation of international food commodities forces youth to find other work, where they often earn more than their parents. (Dickens and Fischer, 2006; Offit and Clark, 2010; Green, 2003) Some observers note that young people often scorn their elders, and that some parents see their children as a "lost generation." Others note that through these processes parents and children cease to have life goals in common that

in previous times served to unite them in fundamental ways. (Foxen, 2010) New information technologies further exacerbate these tensions. Although young people's high skill levels with new technologies can be a critical asset, they can also contribute to undermining authority of their elders and increasing their vulnerability to illegal networks and the perverse social values that are associated with them. (Martín Barbero 2002)[20] As young people struggle to find their way in dangerous settings inside urban areas in their countries of origin, as international migrants, as well as in rural communities infiltrated by criminal groups, powerful illicit actors can inspire more respect than relatively less-experienced parents.[21]

Some research exploring the disintegration of family relations in marginal urban settlements concludes that as institutions, families are more effective in rural areas than in urban areas, despite their often rigid hierarchical nature. (Gayle et al, 2007) However, other materials indicate that the breakdown of traditional roles and relations is acutely felt in rural areas as well. An emblematic example is the horror experienced by a young university student when a man of an older generation that was traditionally revered approached him during a visit home to his rural community and, in a gesture of obeisance, reached for his hand to kiss it. (Adams, 2010b)[22]

The INCIDE study of violence in four Mexican cities shows how the macro-level drivers described above plus various national level dynamics have contributed to breaking down family structures and inciting increased domestic and gender-based violence inside and outside the home. Decrease in actual earnings over recent decades has forced – especially – more women into the workforce and has increased the number of jobs that all wage-earners need to survive. Chaotic urbanization patterns and lack of social services have reduced the informal and formal support for raising families. Children spend more time at home unattended and women have less time to care for their families and themselves. As result, there is more violence between men and women (contributing to femicides in Juárez, for example); a decrease in nuclear families; and an increase in divorce, women-heads-of-households, and recomposed families. The growing precariousness of child raising practices and lack of livelihood opportunities for young people has reduced interest in education and has increased their

vulnerability to illicit actors and options. (INCIDE Social, 2010a and 2010b)

The potential link between the breakdown of primary family and community structures and functions and increased capacity for violence was illuminated in a recent study of empathy and human cruelty by Baron-Cohen. Integrating social, psychological, neurological and genetic analysis, he proposes that human cruelty be conceived as "zero degrees of empathy." He argues that insecure or broken bonds between infant and parent and certain neurological factors can contribute to the development of people with little or no capacity for human empathy. Some of these can later manifest extreme and irreversible levels of cruelty, with effects on their own children or other younger people that can become trans-generational. (Baron-Cohen, 2011, 49ff)

B. "Social zeroes;" humiliation and the perverse search for respect; relative deprivation; and "social death"

In an early study of gangs, Levenson (1988) warned that the yawning gap that developed between the social and economic aspirations of working and middle class young people and dwindling opportunities contributed to the emergence of these groups in Latin America. Indeed, all the gang members she interviewed in 1988 were literate and 61 percent were still in school – but 83 percent were unable to find work. It is now clear that chronically high levels of job informality and sub-employment and a dramatic gap between rising aspirations and significantly limited livelihood options in an increasingly globalized environment, described above, produce a heightened experience of relative deprivation. In other words, "people are constantly reminded of what they lack."

This phenomenon – essentially the classic problem of "relative deprivation"—was reported by many writers whose works were reviewed for this essay.[23] Researchers use different terms to describe how people live the sensation of not-having in a world in which they can see so many who do have. However, all name essentially the same phenomenon: a "hopelessness" or "despondency," "fatalism," "resignation," being "a social zero," "invisible," a "second class" or "invalid" citizen. Koonings and Krujit characterize it as follows:

It is no longer a culture of poverty which prevails: it is the culture of violence, of hostility, of disintegration, of desolation, the life expectancy of being a second class citizen… It is living in governance voids…. (ibid: 138)

While this phenomenon is undoubtedly stronger in poorer countries of the region, it occurs among some populations virtually everywhere. As the resident of a *villa miseria* in Buenos Aires put it, "not even God remembers us." (Auyero, 2000) These attitudes differ significantly from those of the prevailing in the 1960s and 1970s, when developmentalist, utopian, progressive, and revolutionary ideologies prevailed.[24] This sense of abandonment and relative deprivation provoke a complex mix of shame, entrapment, and impotence. Gilligan argues that acts of violence

"…are attempts to ward off or eliminate the feeling of shame or humiliation – a feeling that is painful, and can even be intolerable and overwhelming – and replace it with its opposite, the feeling of pride." (Gilligan, in Wilkinson et al, 2009: 133)

The humiliation of being a "social zero" provokes a perverse counter response, which can manifest as a "search for respect,"[25] and/or in an aggressive "we'll do it ourselves" – both of which are often linked to a militarized sense of *machismo* among men. These public shows of extreme "manhood"[26] are demonstrated, for example, in the value that security guards or paramilitary soldiers attach to having a gun; the conspicuous display of expensive properties and vehicles; control over women; the power and capacity to provoke terror in others by joining a gang or becoming a *sicario*; or by public displays of control over public officials. For young returnees or deportees, such extreme displays also compensate for the vulnerability and illegality of the migrant experience. The notion of "we'll do it ourselves" among some citizens is driven by a similar sense of abandonment by the state/society, and appears as justification for lynchings and aggressive opposition to due process and human rights — both perceived as unjust means of "protecting criminals."[27]

Henrik Vigh's concept of "social death" is helpful to deepen our understanding of the situation faced by young people – particularly young men – in such circumstances. He coined the term to describe the situation faced by young men in Guinea Bissau, where, due to a long period of economic decline, a key feature of their lives is "the absence of the possibility of a worthy life." Death in these cases, he suggests, is not physical but social. (Vigh, 2006: 104) Vigh suggests that this term may be applicable to youth elsewhere – for example, in parts of Latin America – characterized by economic hardship and decline.

In such cases, young men face "social death" because the lack of economic alternatives makes it impossible for them to attain the social mobility necessary to become "complete men." Vigh suggests that for young men in such conditions, youth becomes a "social moratorium" where they may remain indefinitely because they are unable to complete the passage to adulthood. In such contexts, life becomes focused on a range of survival-oriented "tactics" instead of longer term "life-oriented" strategies. (ibid: 132) In Guinea Bissau, as in parts of Latin America, a prime mechanism to transcend this situation and to socially "become" is through migration or involvement in drug trafficking or other illicit activities. (ibid: 105) Both the static quality of "social death" and the perverse alternatives available to transcend it themselves can provoke increased intergenerational conflict and alienation.[28]

C. Growing perceptions of the state as "enemy" and increased opposition to democracy

The idea that violence undermines social support for democracy has been demonstrated both through quantitative and qualitative research, both theoretically and in Latin America.[29] Diverse observers recount the specific ways that democratic regimes in the region have come to be perceived as the "enemy" – for reasons very different than for their authoritarian predecessors. Rodgers uses the notion of "state as gang" in his effort to characterize the governmentality of violence in Nicaragua (2006). Reguillo reports that chronic violence today produces a:

sense of abandonment and defenselessness [that] … finds its greatest expression in the figure of the politician. [These actors,] … instead of protecting and providing, threaten and rob, [and]

are perceived as the main persons responsible for what the participants call 'social chaos.'" (Reguillo in Rotker, 2002: 189)[30]

Cruz used mass survey data from the Americas Barometer – LAPOP – to demonstrate that increased violence has a direct negative effect on the social support for democracy. Comparing the data for Latin America as a whole with those for the most violent new democracies in the region, he argued that this occurs not just because of perceptions of victimization and insecurity, but more importantly, because people do not believe the government can protect them from crime.

Support for the break with democracy due to criminal violence is the highest in precisely those countries where violence is a serious problem. In no other circumstance or country is there so much support for a break with democracy as in those countries where violence prevails. (Cruz, 2008: 240)

When citizens live in an environment of insecurity, and when they don't have a positive evaluation of the performance of the institutions in charge of security, an erosion in the attitudes that support a stable democracy becomes apparent… In countries where violence is one of the most serious social problems, over half [53.5 percent] of the people justify a coup d'état as a manner of dealing with the problem of criminal violence. [as opposed to 47.6 percent for the Latin American population at large].

[The impact of violence on the social support for democracy, therefore] "is not related only to the prevalence of crime and insecurity but above all to the conditions that erode the legitimacy of the institutions in charge of providing security… [As result, people] detach themselves from democratic values, ignore the rule of law and support authoritarian alternatives…Violence is pernicious to the frail path to democratization in the Central American countries because it can destroy the infrastructure of legitimacy that is necessary for new regimes. (Cruz, 2006: 241-42)

The most recent LAPOP surveys for Guatemala and El Salvador report that victimization by violent crime contributes to undermining support for political institutions, echoing similar findings since at least 2001. (LAPOP, 2010; Seligson et al, 2001) Similarly, in their study on violence in urban areas in Latin America, Koonings and Krujit report that while national civil society leaders, intellectuals and political elites continue promoting rule of law, many citizens are moving in a more pragmatic direction. Growing demand for anti-democratic action and perceptions of state illegitimacy is spurred by rising crime, the repressive and/or arbitrary logic of the legal system, and longstanding abuse attributed to government agencies – especially the police and judiciary. (Koonings et al: Introduction) In such contexts, support for basic democratic tenets such as due process and human rights is undermined, and support for alternative forms of justice as well as hardline policies that target gangs, migrants and other marginal groups.

Various studies recount the development of popular opposition to fundamental tenets of democracy such as due process and human rights. In a book on human rights in the Mayan region, Sieder notes that:

… international promotion of judicial reform and an increased awareness of human rights do not necessarily translate into effective respect for the human and constitutional rights of all citizens. In certain contexts [popular] claims for rule of law can mean advocating highly authoritarian measures… what is demanded instead is rapid and invariably highly punitive forms of justice. (Sieder, 2008: 85)

Moodie's account of El Salvador is a dramatic example of how violence provokes public clamor for hardline or illegal state action. She reports that 75 percent of Salvadorans approved of the hardline policies which illegally targeted gang members in 2005. As result, over 19,000 young people were arrested in one year, 91 percent of whom were released by judges for unconstitutional arrest or lack of evidence. (Cáceres, WOLA and El Faro in Moodie, 2009: 83-85, 99) The public opposition to human rights that accompanies such actions was well articulated by Salvadoran President Flores in 2005, who declared: "I don't care about the welfare of criminals! I care about the welfare of honorable Salvadorans!..It's the lawbreakers who get all the protection of these so-called 'rights' to let them keep on with their vices." (ibid: 83)[31]

Human rights in contexts of chronic violence and weak rule of law become perceived as conditional,

and subject to multiple interpretations and meanings. (Burrell, 2010: 96) People increasingly understand that their rights are ephemeral or nonexistent. Burrell and Ziberg, for example, detail how migrants "move in and out of rights" as they pass from being citizens of one state to right-less undocumented migrants subject to illegal and illegitimate state action in the United States, while citizens of many countries watch public officials who openly challenge human rights principles. (Burrell, 2010; Ziberg, 2004, Acosta, 2011) Similarly, young people who move from classrooms to gangs can see how from one moment to another, their basic civil rights can disappear as result of hardline policies that challenge classic notions of legality. Undocumented migrants crossing through Mexico and in the United States also learn quickly what it means to lack the basic rights of citizens in these countries. (Ziberg, ibid)

In these contexts, notions of divine justice often become central mechanisms to strengthen the legitimacy of informal administrators of justice – becoming a way of talking about a quality of justice that can't be expected on earth (from the state) as well as a moral justification invoked by diverse groups (for example, by gangs in Honduras, narco-traffickers in Mexico, community members in Bolivia, Brazil, and Guatemala) for taking justice into their own hands, as is detailed further on. [32]

D. High levels of acceptance and legitimacy of violence

Where the state is weak or absent, citizens *ipso facto* often operate outside the law. High levels of violence go hand in hand with its growing social legitimacy – evident in the following data on self-justice, lynching, use of private security forces; domestic violence, high levels of alcohol and drug use. Younger generations in general, however, exhibit higher levels of approval for violence than their elders. Although poorer and urban populations are the most vulnerable, support for social cleansing and summary executions cuts across all social classes. In Brazil, for example, Caldeira and Holston note that support for social cleansing and summary executions cuts across all social classes. However, rich people are rarely the object of police abuse, and for many purposes, being able to operate outside the law can constitute one more privilege. (ibid: 698) The possible links between these tendencies and the patterns of extreme cruelty studied by Baron-Cohen

at the individual level, as well as their trans-generational transmission, deserve concerted attention by policy makers.

1. General indicators: Opinion polls on Colombia, Guatemala, and other countries where violence levels are especially high, demonstrate the high levels of support for violence, particularly among younger people.

In Medellín:

- 70 percent approve of killing someone who raped their daughter;
- 71.9 percent approve of the use of violence to defend family members or for political or economic gain;
- 38.4 percent approve of eliminating someone who poses a threat to the community;
- 42.5 percent approve of using violence in defense of the community;
- 26.8 percent approve of social cleansing. (Duque et al, 2010: 71-73)

In Guatemala:

- 48.8 percent approve of taking justice into their own hands;
- 56 percent would approve of a *coup d'état* under conditions of high crime; and
- 39.2 percent approve of (authoritarian) *mano dura* government policies (social cleansing, gang roundups, etc.). (Azpuru, 2010)[33]

2. High levels of direct justice: Where the state proves incapable of stemming criminality and social violence, the individuals fill the vacuum, often in very public ways, through lynchings, for example. While perceived with horror by outside and many inside observers, they often miss the fact that such acts often constitute a perverse kind of moral complaint by populations who consider themselves as "defenseless victims." (Goldstein, 2003)[34]

- In Mexico, there were 198 completed or attempted lynchings between 1988 and 2005, (Guillen and Heredia) and 35 cases in 9 months of 2010.

- In Guatemala, there were 421 cases between 1996 and 2001, (Mendoza and Torres Rivas, 2003) and 110 in 9 months of 2009.

Individual revenge killings have also flared, and not only as part of the well documented logic of gang violence. In one rural indigenous community in Eastern Guatemala, local people committed "eye for eye" homicides at a rate of 100/100,000 in 2008. (Metz et al, 2010)

3. Privatized security: Middle and upper middle class people invest heavily in private security firms, which now outnumber police forces in virtually every country of the region – by a scale ranging from 1.2 to 1 in Chile to 4 to 1 in Guatemala and El Salvador:

- Argentina: 150,000 legal security agents and 50,000 unregistered agents vs. 120,000 police;
- Chile: 40,000 security agents vs. 35,000 police;
- El Salvador: 70,000 security agents in 2001 vs. 16,889 police;
- Colombia: 149,155 security agents vs. 119,146 police officers;
- Mexico: 450,000 legal and 600,000 unregistered security agents vs. 390,781 police agents in 2009;
- Guatemala: 28,000 legal and 50,000 unregistered security agents vs. a police force of 22,000 in 2010.[35]

Throughout the region, volunteer patrols are also mobilized to protect rural communities and urban neighborhoods. Operating with varying degrees of legality, they range from unarmed night watch groups to paramilitary forces. Early versions of such groups began in Colombia in the 1970s, were dismantled under the Uribe government and are now resurgent as new entities linked to criminal organizations. In Guatemala, both spontaneous and government-authorized citizen patrols have been linked to illegal detentions, lynchings and social cleansing.[36]

4. Domestic and intimate violence: Domestic and intimate violence is the most prevalent form of violence experienced in these contexts, although it is socially perceived as less threatening.

- In Antioquía, Colombia, a 2001 study reported that one-third of married women were victims of physical and verbal abuse. One in five had been battered. (Jimeno, 2001: 226)
- In Western rural Guatemala, a participatory survey calculated that a majority of women were abused sexually and physically. (Moser and McIlwaine, 2001)
- In two marginal communities of El Salvador, 1/3 to 1/2 of women are abused and 35.6 percent of parents admitted having hit their child with an object in the week prior to the interview. (Hume, 2007)

The links between violence in the home, on the street and in gangs are well documented. It "forces youth to the street, where they also find a hostile environment that far from offering them support, reinforces violent linkages." (Smutt and Miranda, 1998: 171) Domestic violence is also exacerbated by increased alcohol and drug use, which are both cause and effect of the processes of social breakdown this paper addresses, and are discussed further on.

E. Escalation of brutality

There appears to be an escalation in the brutality, arbitrariness and unpredictability of violence in the region. Regional press is full of accounts of atrocities that a few decades ago would have been reported as crimes against humanity in a few internecine conflicts – for example, in Serbia, Cambodia, Guatemala, or Rwanda. These today are often the work of drug traffickers, paramilitary groups, some gangs and some states. The dismemberment and public display of parts of bodies; messages on walls written with victims' blood; the burning of a busload of innocent intercity passengers; the torture and dumping of the bodies of young people suspected as delinquents; and lynching victims stoned, hacked, burned, or kicked to death in front of hundreds of people all appear to reinforce the power of the victimizers by seeding increasing levels of terror in vulnerable populations.

Several factors may help to account for the increasing use of such tactics. One is the increasingly high-stakes and militarized struggles of drug traffickers over markets and territories, especially in Mexico, Northern Central America, and Colombia, as their businesses are increasingly challenged both by competitors and

national and international entities battling the drug trade. Guerrero's report on Mexico shows how drug trafficking organizations have splintered, regrouped, and expanded and deepened their territorial reach as result of the national and international war on drugs taking place in Mexican territory. (Guerrero, 2011) All of these processes – as he demonstrates – imply increased violence. The expansion of local cartels in particular often requires pressing local gang members into supplementary tasks on behalf of the cartels; and brings with it expanded local sales and use of cocaine and crack and escalation of violent behavior.

Intensified brutality may also be a manifestation of the perverse search for respect and experience of "social death" lived by young people and others who feel that they have been thrown away, described earlier. The following quote from the *Virgin of the Sicarios* exemplifies the inverted morality and rage that can result:

> *How can anyone murder for a pair of tennis shoes? You, a foreigner, will ask. 'Mon cher ami,' it's not because of the shoes. It's about the principles of justice that we all believe in. The person who is going to get mugged thinks it's unfair that they robbed him because he paid for them; the one who robs him thinks it's unfair that he doesn't have a pair himself."* (Vallejo, 1994: 68)

Despite their obvious differences, these sensibilities, along with the perverse opportunities afforded by criminal organizations and the extreme amounts of money to be made in such enterprises, bring to mind the ideologies and circumstances that produce Jihadist suicide bombers.

Another element that may contribute to the escalation of brutality is that state and para-state actors involved in social cleansing and communities involved in lynching are seeking to send public messages to dissuade other potential wrongdoers. A final factor to consider relates to femicides — the brutal elimination of women especially in Mexico and Guatemala in recent years. The Inter American Commission for Human Rights interpreted these as one more effect of the breakdown of traditional gender relations – part of a larger trend of visceral reactions by men against working class and peasant women who have moved out of the domestic sphere into paid work in maquiladoras (sweat shops) or other entry-level urban employment. (Sanford, 2008: 104–109) INCIDE's

study of Juarez advances this notion further, providing a detailed contextualized and historicized account of the diverse social processes that feed social and gender violence, including femicides, in that city. (INCIDE, 2010b)

F. Expanding legitimacy of informal and illicit sources of income: the informal sector and migration

Informal and illicit income options constitute compelling opportunities in contexts of chronic job informality and social exclusion. Levenson presciently warned in 1988: "Where are these young people to go? There is no doubt that their lack of orientation leaves them exposed to manipulation by political groups, and that they will not escape from being incorporated or used by adult criminal networks … Absorbed by crime, they could well pass the point of no return, becoming more centralized [as groups], more antidemocratic, more authoritarian, more violent." (ibid, p. 88)

Observers of Colombia, El Salvador, Jamaica, Nicaragua, and Guatemala all note how reduced economic opportunities have increasingly spurred both working class and middle class people into illegal activities. Camus' study of Guatemala City documents how a shrinking state bureaucracy marginalized sectors of the traditional middle class.[37] In the vacuum left by diminishing state jobs, a new middle class emerged that was linked to commercial and financial speculation, privatizations, drug trafficking, foreign sweat shops, and migration. Farah has documented how criminal networks infiltrate petty retail activities in the informal sector as a mechanism for money laundering. (Farah, 2011)

The major alternatives – migration and the informal sector – both entail increased vulnerability to violence. Despite its dangers, a recent poll confirms that Latin Americans whose family members were victim of a crime in the last year were 30 percent more prone to migrate than others. (Wood et. al., 2010) For those who migrate, crossing illegally through Mexico into the United States or via other routes constitutes a powerful lesson in the ephemeral nature of law, citizenship, and human rights, detailed above. Migration separation is shown to be as traumatic for children left behind as divorce and death, further weakening the already endangered family networks described earlier. Remittance income also tends to spur community

level stratification and conflict, accentuating the difference between those whose families receive such funds from those who don't.[38]

G. Social silence ("crime talk"), indifference, substance abuse, and psychological and physical effects

The every-day tension, fear and uncertainty provoked by chronic violence has systematic effects on psychological and physical health. Social silence and amnesia, social forgetting and attitudes of indifference or avoidance are all common responses to fear that have been well documented throughout the world, especially in conflict and post-conflict situations.[39] These strategies enable people to eclipse memories or knowledge too painful or unmanageable to maintain active on the surface. In peace-time scenarios of fear and violence such as prevail in parts of Latin America today, they constitute critical survival strategies.

- In Medellín, where demobilized paramilitaries have returned to their communities, residents' efforts to distinguish friends and enemies provoke a sense of helplessness and paralysis with which they cope by "reinforcing the shell of supposed indifference which they have built around themselves." (Jimeno: 221-238)

- In Buenos Aires, street corner youth groups set the terms for who says what. "The guy next door sells drugs. You can't denounce him anywhere, because he might rob you, or even worse, hurt you. Every night they smoke pot or fire guns outside my window… we are cursed." (Auyero, 2000)

- In San Salvador, one woman explained it this way: "Learning how to live means only talking about good things, nothing dangerous. It is better not to talk about dangerous things because, in the first instance you don't know who you are talking to, and another thing is that you can't do anything. If you just speak for the sake of it, when they look for revenge, how do you defend yourself?" (Hume, 2008a: 71-2)

- In Northern Mexico, a heavy silence, indifference, resigned acceptance, and a constant low level anxiety – much more than overt violence

– came to prevail in one community as result of the growing power of local narco-migrants. (McDonald, 2005)

In spaces or in situations controlled by gangs, drug traffickers or renegade police, for example, silence is often imposed from above. The complicity thus forged between the silencers and the silenced becomes another mechanism through which vulnerable groups and communities become compromised by violence and illegality in their midst, while the act of silence itself pushes awareness of this complicity underground. (Hume 2008b) The net effect is heightened passivity and a decreased capacity to understand, analyze, exchange ideas with others openly, and act strategically. Given the highly complex and delicate circumstances that people live with, the reduction in analytical capacity has dramatic ramifications.

In the vacuum left by more nuanced and productive social exchange, more formalistic and scripted interactions prevail, such as scapegoating (analyzed elsewhere) and self-victimization. Caldeira noted the phenomenon of "crime talk" to refer to how everyday narratives, commentaries, and jokes with crime as their subject proliferate under these circumstances. The concept – which helps to explain the emergence of exaggerated perceptions of violence throughout the region – is constructed, stimulated and informed by the mass media and the state. Crime talk reproduces and circulates stereotypes, stimulates scapegoating usually of the weakest sectors with discourses that often assume the position of dominant groups, and spurs increased segregation and stigmatization, negation of citizenship rights, and further violence. (ibid, 695ff, see also Offit and Cook)

Drug and alcohol use are also ways to cope with – or escape from – these chronic tensions. While many continue to see alcohol use as "normal," both alcohol and drugs are widely recognized by vulnerable groups as one of the most direct causes of violence in daily life. Drug use, moreover, tends to grow in acceptability as the use increases. While drug use remains low region-wide (3-5 percent), national averages mask dramatic internal differences in various countries. For example, use in certain Colombian cities was documented at 40-60 percent and in Guatemala City from 10-20 percent of the population in 2004. The groups with relatively high levels of tolerance for drug use in

Colombia also tended to have positive perceptions of drug traffickers. (McIlwaine et. al., 2004) The use of crack, cocaine, and other drugs escalates because local actors paid in kind by outside cartels need to translate these in-kind payments into cash. Such processes consistently escalate community level violence.[40]

Wilkinson and Marmot's study of the social determinants of health (2003) reminds us that the destructive tendencies described in this report have dramatic and consistent effects on physical and psychological health. These include chronic distress, psychosomatic symptoms, substance abuse, despondency and depression, hypertension, diabetes, coronary problems, and depressed immune systems. While the studies reviewed for this report focus primarily on social dynamics, various analysts report these kinds of psychological and physical effects.[41] A targeted review of health effects of violence is required to fill out this picture.

H. Scapegoating, xenophobia, and self-victimization

The use of scapegoating by authoritarian governments in Latin America and elsewhere to produce objects of social fear – for example, by calling protesters "subversives" or "Communists" – is well known.[42] Today, political leaders and governments in many contemporary democracies use the same strategies to justify draconian hard-on-crime policies. Throughout the region, fearful constructions of youth and other marginal groups, as well as the social effects of inequality and violence sustain an authoritarian and exclusionary politics, and nurture a vicious circle of mistrust, polarization and repression[43] which undermines the nature of citizenship by fomenting a culture of victimhood, fuels draconian state policies, and intensifies social conflict and violence between the accused and their accusers.

Scapegoating enables people immersed in chronic violence to create dangerous new "common sense" justifications for social values and actions like those described in the previous sections. Intrinsic to the construction of the scapegoat or the xenophobic object is the conception of self as "victim" — even when the self is building a justification for violent action. Identification as "victim" reduces personal sense of responsibility, allays impotence and guilt, and masks the reality of the moral "gray zone" in which victim and perpetrator coincide and deeply influence

and condition each other. These mechanisms permit people to distance themselves from notions of wrong-doing by shifting the blame to individuals or groups perceived as (often racialized) "others."

- Blaming recent migrants permitted community members in El Salvador to maintain a myth that "our community has always been perfectly safe" – although many were being victimized by their own children who belonged to local gangs, and some had used local gang members as paid assassins to resolve interpersonal conflicts. (Hume, 2008a, 2008b)

- Moodie describes in detailed manner how media and governmental scapegoating of one young gang leader provoked nation-wide hysteria and support for hardline policies, and how the image of the "dangerous other" shifted from guerrillas and soldiers during the war to young people in peacetime. (Moodie, 2009: 81-85)

- Burrell notes how the scapegoating of young people in rural Guatemala denies youth labeled as *mareros* of their rights, justifies local violence, and undermines the ability of members of the community to imagine collective futures that include their young people. (2010)

Impartial studies throughout the region have debunked the notion that gang members and deportees are the major responsible parties for the upswing in violent crime. (Dominguez, 2010, Marroquín Parducci, 2007; Gayle et al, 2007)[44] Nonetheless, scapegoating and xenophobia are often generated, fed, and amplified by the mass media, which play a central role in formalizing the notion of these "others" as enemies, and in rooting these constructions as public "truths." Reguillo concludes that "the media has given the [gang] a huge symbolic power which opens the door to fear, but also heavy-handed responses by the government without actually looking at the socioeconomic and political model that cultivate these forms of extreme identity." (Valenzuela Arce et. al., 2007: 313)

I. "Pentecostalization" and other changes in religious beliefs

Exposure to chronic violence often provokes people to intensify their spiritual beliefs. Pentecostalized religions – of both the Catholic and Protestant strains – are the most prevalent spiritual tendencies reported on by the studies reviewed. Pentecostalization is the "acceptance of certain religious beliefs such as dramatic personal conversion, millennialism, and in some cases, biblical literalism, and the experience of particular religious practices such as speaking in tongues and divine healing." (Steigenga n.d.: 368) Such churches often provide an unambiguous "safe haven" for people numbed by the ambiguities, uncertainties and tension of chronic violence.

- In Honduras, evangelical churches provide a safe refuge – acknowledged and respected by all sides – for gang members seeking to leave their organizations. (Wolseth, 2008) Variants on this theme are seen throughout the region. (Steigenga, ibid; Perlman: 2010; USAID: 2006)

- In Mexico, these churches provide men with an alternative to the extreme forms of masculinity described earlier, establish rules that help people to deal with economic challenges and drug/alcohol problems, and help migrants to transit the uncertainties of life between two countries. (Garma and Leatham: 2004)

- In Guatemala, evangelical faith provides a "new beginning" for people in rural communities burdened with unspoken – and "unspeakable" – histories of conflict, and especially for those who seek to be released from the guilt of having participated in acts of extreme violence. (T. Adams, 2010b)

- In Peru, a kind of "fluid fundamentalism" among Evangelicals permits exoneration for inflicting certain types of violence and promotes a "change in life" and the possibility to live more peacefully with their neighbors after conflict. (Theidon, 2004)

Other spiritual beliefs have also emerged in studies. The heavy Catholic spiritualism of gangs and narco traffickers – focusing particularly on cults to the (all forgiving) Virgin Mary – are well documented in

both Mexico and Colombia. (Finnegan: 2010; Salazar) None of these belief structures, however, imply ideologies of non-violence. Drug traffickers, community defense groups, paramilitary groups, soldiers, and gang members all invoke God and the Gospel to justify and protect them in implementing violence. Pentecostal beliefs, however, are particularly effective in helping people to become "human" again – after the dehumanization of participating in violence.

Debate continues about how pentecostalization relates to political participation. On the one hand evangelical churches are particularly important spaces of social cohesion and organization in conflict-ridden communities. However, there is a correlation between pentecostalized beliefs and the tendency to unquestioningly accept political authority. Specifically, millennialism and the charismatic act of speaking in tongues appear to be consistent predictors of political quiescence across religious affiliations. (Steigenga, op. cit.)

J. Public displays of extravagant capitalist consumption

Many writers in the popular and academic spheres have documented the explosion of public displays of extravagant consumption in recent decades – from Miami Vice to the stories that circulate about the lifestyles of narco-lords like Pablo Escobar. The increased circulation of money because of illicit trade and remittance income has gone hand in hand with the development of a new aesthetic of consumption – a set of values that is conversant with the opulent displays of the wealth of speculator capital and celebrities in richer countries, whose lives are publicized in the mass media.

McDonald records how "narco-migrants" in a Northern Mexican community have bought up ranches to buy respectability, and have financed the construction of new malls where no one can afford to shop. The traditional cock fights involving farmers from the area were taken over by drug lords for whom expensive cocks and high stakes betting provided a public space to display their wealth and power. These new patterns were both a constant reminder of what local people did not have and, increasingly, a model of what people wanted. Everyone who could began to build houses of a whole new scale in line with the same opulent aesthetic modeled by the narco-migrants, creating a new way to construct community respectability. (McDonald, 2005)

In a working class neighborhood of Managua, Rodgers reports how – as local gangs were absorbed into drug trafficking networks – local consumption patterns and the social imaginary were transformed. The narco-leaders were distinguished by their multiplicity of homes with expensive vehicles conspicuously in evidence and multiple women on display. The pushers – in the next tier down – were recognizable by the construction of extravagant homes and European brand name consumer goods. Local mules had to content themselves with house improvements and national brand name products. All of these displays produced a "symbolic dispossession" of those outside these circles, who were constantly reminded of what they didn't have. (Rodgers, 2007)

Throughout the region, however, new aesthetics have emerged in the last decades – from the securitized homes of upper classes in closed condominiums to the dark glasses, short haircuts and designer sneakers sported by security guards working in Central American capitals. (Caldeira, 2000: 285, Dickens et al, 2010) Migrants in the northern triangle of Central America have transformed rural and urban landscapes with extravagant new models of homes that they often design and pay for from afar, and that radically break with local architectural traditions.[45]

A Colombian architect summed up how the "narco aesthetic" has been absorbed by popular culture, and has evolved in mimetic dialogue both with elite aesthetics prevailing in Western centers of power and the need of third generation cartels to operate in more subtle ways:

The aesthetic code of the drug trafficker in Colombia is part of its national identity … ostentatious, exaggerated, disproportionate and laden with symbols which seek to confer status and legitimize violence. … [however] the first thing it is important to note is that the narco aesthetic in Colombia does not any longer belong only to the drug trafficker, but forms part of popular taste, which sees it through positive eyes and copies it, ensuring its continuity through time and across cities. The diffusion of the narco aesthetic is evidence of the Colombian institutional vacuum. No stronger system for social cohesion exists to provide an alternative to the model of the power and social justice which drug trafficking represents…

It is [also] worth noting that the narco aesthetic has been changing. The third generation of the drug cartels has changed their strategy of ostentation for camouflage, as the illegal drug trade has demanded diversification, ramification and 'sophistication'. Ornament has given over to smooth surfaces and aluminum blinds which copy the 'modern' houses of young successful executives of the big businesses, which are themselves copies of the residences which we can find in architecture magazines from Europe and the United States. Now we don't know who is copying whom… (Cobo, 2009)

K. Expanded social sovereignty and parallel polities

The emergence of communities or groups that stake out alternative spheres of power and/or community within larger scenarios of chronic violence are a classic strategy used by groups like guerrillas, bandits and narco-traffickers, and are referred to as parallel sovereignties or parallel polities. (Rodgers 2006; Leeds 1996: 68)

While they range significantly in scope, orientation, and coercive capacity, they all seek to ensure protection for their own activities by offering goods and services to communities where they are operating. Such entities often gain significant legitimacy with local populations because they supply protection and services that states are not providing.

Parallel polities established by drug trafficking organizations such as *La Familia* in Michoacán or previously, Pablo Escobar in Colombia, are the most formal and extensive examples of this phenomenon. In the most extreme cases, they establish control over local populations and territories, and provide government-like social services in order to guarantee protection for their business pursuits. Given their illegal status and increasingly high level of conflict with state forces, this makes them both occupier and benefactor. Violence is the fundamental tool of social control, and the social rights and freedoms of people under their power exist in function of their interests. Nonetheless, as has been noted, such entities can enjoy significant social legitimacy and their acts bear an ideological significance in contexts of chronic state incapacity that is given too little attention by policy makers concerned with combatting the drug problem.[46]

Youth gangs are another variant on the model, and take a wide range of forms – from independent groups

that maintain strong ties and provide informal "protection" to neighborhoods with low levels of violence, to those that are absorbed into criminal networks and come to prey even on neighbors and families. While they are generally regarded as "perverse social institutions" (as they may benefit their members, but do harm to the larger community), gangs fulfill a critical social vacuum not filled either by the state nor their families: a sense of belonging, a clear social structure, protection, rules, status, meaning, and economic options.[47]

In a different variation, gated communities for wealthier people and guarded by security agents (described in more detail in a subsequent section) and street barriers blocking access to poorer communities and patrolled by community members, both constitute non-state efforts to safeguard insiders from "dangerous" outsiders. (Watson, 2007)

Finally, Pentecostal churches – examined in more detail in a subsequent section– have a somewhat similar function. They create an in-group governed by specific rules, beliefs and practices and – much more than Catholic churches – provide members with social support and protection often lacking in other spheres of life. In various countries, Pentecostal churches offer "safe refuge" – acknowledged by both gangs and the community – for young people who seek to leave youth gangs. (Wolseth, 2008)

In different ways and degrees, however, the very existence of these social groupings generates conflict with those "outside." The dynamics of gangs and narco-communities, for example, places communities under their influence in a dangerous position between them and the state, often catalyzing further popular opposition against the state. (Leeds 1996) In a lesser way, gates and barriers to neighborhoods and communities are formally guarded by people who work under the presumption that any "outsider" may be dangerous – thus establishing fear and diverse kinds of control (identification cards, rules, guns and physical barriers) as basic mechanisms that empower certain people to judge and determine who may enter into their space.

L. Re-organization of public spaces

Chronic violence has also led to the reconfiguration of how people use public spaces – both because upper and many middle class people have retreated into gated communities, and because those living in dangerous areas often cease to use public spaces because of the

risks involved. While the first trend isolates rich from poor, the second isolates neighbors from neighbors — undermining both social cohesion and conditions for social action. For example,

- Caldeira described how walled communities transform the lives of the elite in Brazil:

Closed condominiums, the new type of fortified elite housing, are not places people walk or even simply pass by. They are meant to be distant, to be approached only by car and then only by their residents… They are turned inward, away from the street, whose public life they explicitly reject. They are controlled by armed guards and security systems, which enforce rules of inclusion and exclusion… [and] are the residential version of a broader category of new urban developments that I call fortified enclaves….that include office complexes, shopping centers, etc. that are all private property for collective use…People who inhabit these spaces value living among selected people (considered to be of the same social group) and away from the undesired interactions, movement, heterogeneity, danger, and unpredictability of urban streets. (Caldeira, 2000, 258)[48]

- In Managua, high speed highways link "archipelagos" of gated neighborhoods of upper/middle class people with each other and with key commercial districts – all of which are overlaid on a sea of working class and unemployed people in marginal communities. (Rodgers, 2007)

- In Rio de Janeiro normalized fear and distrust tends to "not only prevent the use of public space, but also diminish socializing among friends and relatives, reduce membership in community organizations, weaken trust among neighbors, and erode community unity…," severely reducing traditional practices of mutual aid. (Perlman 2010: 298)

- A Medellín resident explained it this way: "You have to stay at home so as not to get involved with the groups of gangs on the street corners, you can't let your children out." (Moser and McIlwaine, 2004)

- In Buenos Aires, residents of a shantytown noted that the old rules which said that no one

would rob one another inside the community, no longer applied. Residents lived in increasing fear and isolation from each other, as well as more isolated from the outside, since virtually no outsiders – cab drivers, ambulances, milk trucks – would risk coming into the community. (Auyero, 2000)

The mass media – especially television – fills the vacuum created by the reduced public sphere and become disproportionately important as a means for people who are isolated from each other to make sense of their lives. "The absence of the spaces – streets and plazas – that facilitate communication makes television something more than an instrument of leisure. Television becomes a place of coming together, of vicarious encounters with the world, with people, and even with the city in which we live. … [and] … is devouring the space of communication that cannot be lived on the street." (Martín Barbero, 2002: 27-29)

M. Implications for social organizational trends

The drivers of violence and the social transformations described in this paper will continue to breed conflict and violence even as international and national governments and NGOs continue to struggle to stem their diverse manifestations. As we have seen in the preceding pages, exposure to chronic violence undermines social cohesion and breeds dehumanizing behavior and values. Scapegoating and xenophobic responses produce dangerous new "common sense" mechanisms that enable people to see themselves as "victims" in relation to some dangerous "other" while increased social silence and amnesia reduce their capacity to understand themselves and their complex realities and contexts. The state is often increasingly viewed as the enemy while citizens seek out, or are drawn into, parallel polities that further challenge state capacity and legitimacy. Increased acceptance and practice of violence and illegality contribute to toxic mixtures of complicity and guilt, impotence, fear, and aggression that are worsened by tragic distortions of reality, social fragmentation and isolation. In many countries, moreover, these processes are lived by people already burdened by traumatic legacies of internal armed conflicts or state repression.

What can be expected from organized civil society in this context?

International donors and national civil society actors often continue to assume that a vibrant civil society will contribute to strengthening democracy, inspire civic action and/or substitute for the state as both the guardian of civic and social values and provider of social services. Although such organizations have taken on a role that was virtually inconceivable a few decades ago, a substantive literature has developed over the past two decades – especially focused on Latin America and Africa – that demonstrate that these expectations are unreasonable.[49]

While civil society organizations up until about the 1970s were mainly grassroots groups with minimal resources and high levels of popular legitimacy (even in deeply polarized societies), the NGOs that have flourished during the democratic transitions of recent decades are quite different. Accountability structures and economic dependence tend to link them directly to the national and international organizations that sustain them, undermining their legitimacy and capacity as "representatives" of local interests. Divisions prevail between grassroots and professional NGOs, rural and urban imperatives, minority and majority groups, economic and cultural priorities, not to speak of the many "single issues" that currently constitute and drive most civil society organizations. (Binford, 2005) Organizations that provide services or resources, moreover, are often perceived as brokers, and hence themselves become objects of conflict and competition among potential clients. (NORAD, 2008)

Moreover, organized civil society leaders whose destinies are tied to international and national funders are often ideologically and experientially disconnected from the rest of the population. Although the former often claim to be, and are often seen by donors as "representatives" of the population, they have closer ideological, political and social ties with each other – conforming a species of "cosmopolitan network" – than with the priorities and realities of populations "on the ground." (Adams, 2010b)[50] The liberal democratic values espoused by actors in such networks are thus often quite different than the values corresponding to the survivalist dynamics described here. (Krujit and Koonings) The ideological (and sometimes the experiential) disjunction between the values espoused by organized civil society (themselves inserted in cosmopolitan networks) and those held by more vulnerable members of society, further weaken the capacity of the

former and their international donors to recognize dynamics such as those reported here and to integrate these complex realities into their programming.

What are the kinds of socially organized responses that prevail in the scenarios described in this paper?

One widely documented trend is for people – in individualized and self-protective fashion – to simply withdraw from community action and exchange. (Leeds, 1996)   In such contexts, organizations that provide direct relief tend to retain more legitimacy than others: women's organizations, child care centers, Alcoholics Anonymous, evangelical churches. (Moser and McIlwaine, 2006) Most NGOs, however, are prey to the same divisiveness that permeates a violent environment – and this can easily worsen when they manage (often disputed) resources and services from external sources.

In arenas controlled by criminal networks, often even the most basic kind of local level democracy can become virtually impossible because autonomous leaders and citizens are inevitably either coopted or eliminated.

Community leaders, for example, were priority targets for expanding drug trafficking organizations in Rio. While twenty five were killed between 1987 and 1995, over 800 were killed in the subsequent nine years as drug enterprises expanded their scope. While protest against the state may continue to be possible, it is often virtually unthinkable against traffickers. The infiltration of NGOs or community level grassroots organizations by illicit forces is a constant possibility that is likely to increase in countries from which international aid organizations are retreating. (Leeds 1996, 2006; Adams, 2011)

The expressions of social critique and protest by the leaders of criminal organizations and those who identify with them are not adequately recognized by policy makers and many scholars. As Salazar warned in 2001:

As the State stopped being an instrument of justice, the traditional political class showed signs of breakdown and the church did not respond to the demands of the new times, society was left with no paradigms and the traffickers had a clear ground to turn themselves into identity figures…" (Salazar, 2001, 65-66)

We need to listen more systematically to the populist messages expressed by narco-leaders like La Familia or Pablo Escobar in his time and by the popular support they command among some sectors. What social visions are being expressed by the violent – often criminal – actions pursued by young people locked into a dead end future? What is being communicated by the reactive outbursts of "democracy of the street?" What is it about the visceral justice of lynching that is so compelling and justifiable for many populations who engage in it?

Finally, while the trends reviewed here are consistently destructive, there is clearly variation in the ways that different populations cope with chronic violence. A major pending question is to explore the kinds of conditions or variables that enable some populations to transcend the reproductive dynamic of violence more than others?

IV. Conclusions

In 1988, Ulrich Beck noted how the normal course of industrial society itself leads to rupture and discontinuity. This, he argues, is because:

> *The concept of industrial society rests upon a contradiction between the universal principles of modernity – civil rights, equality…. – and the exclusive nature of its institutions, in which these principles can only be realized on a partial, sectorial and selective basis. The consequence is that industrial society destabilizes itself through its very establishment. Continuity becomes the 'cause' of discontinuity… The system of coordinates in which life and thinking are fastened in industrial modernity – the axes of gender, family and occupation, the belief in science and progress – begins to shake, and a new twilight of opportunities and hazards come into existence.* (Beck, 1992: 14-15)

Beck called this new paradigm "risk society." Although Beck is referring to classic industrial societies, his argument is relevant to the countries studied here. How certain structural conditions provoke social violence and how violence itself spurs social disintegration exemplify one way that continuity provokes discontinuity. What we often perceive as exceptions to the rule, (violence, weak rule of law, dehumanization), are from this perspective, the "normal" course of things. In fact, disjunctive democracies *are* more real than their ideal models. Economic, political, and cultural trans-nationalization – and other major factors not explored here, such as global climate change and the continuing economic recession – *will* continue to fundamentally transform contemporary societies. The damage caused by the social trends described here for Latin America are profound and far reaching – and, as noted, are not limited to this region.

However, policy makers largely continue to prioritize institutionalization of political democracy and rule of law, erroneously assuming that "every-day citizens" are the passive victims of the prevailing scenarios. They bypass the multi-faceted realities of violence for reductionist notions of criminality. States and international agencies keep prioritizing military strategies to shore up democratic systems threatened by violence and criminality, assuming that the state is the solution to the problems at hand. Meanwhile, the deep rooted forces driving violence and criminality, many of which lie outside of the capacity of states to control, continue to shake the foundations of the political system.

Meanwhile, NGOs are funded by state and international agencies to fix the symptoms – to train community security patrols not to lynch and police organizations to end internal corruption, to recuperate gang members, and urge youth to "say no" to violence, drugs, and unprotected sex. Causes and symptoms of the present reality continue to be confused, the interconnections between the spaces and manifestations of violence ignored – producing approaches that are either ineffective, misfire, and – sometimes – worsen the problems at hand. Meanwhile, the imperative to survive continues to impose itself, stimulating more violence and weakening the capacity of vulnerable groups to imagine and construct a way out.

If these trends continue to be neglected, they are likely to further intensify, and could become more uncontrollable and more obstructive to the possibility of peace making and state building in vulnerable regions in the future. If, however, we instead presume that the violence and social disintegration described here are the "natural" effects of the social processes described in this paper, more fertile questions come to light. What precisely do these "new normalities" look like in specific places around the globe? What local (probably more than national or global) opportunities exist to transcend their destructive effects?

Beck's "reflexive modernity" calls on us to acknowledge that the old rules of the game are up and to investigate the new order of things, to explore how to confront the challenges of the present. An intensive agenda of research and experimental action is in order, and needs to emerge from a dialogic process involving policy makers, scholars, practitioners, social leaders, and affected citizens – at the local, national and international levels.

A. Toward a new framework to approach "chronic violence"

To contribute to building a new framework to help local, national and international actors to more effectively address the problem of chronic violence, I forward the following propositions to help to more specifically characterize this phenomenon, building on Pearce's initial definition cited in Section I C of this report:

1. Chronic violence is provoked by multiple and interactive causes, which need to be contemplated in efforts to address the problem. Among the major factors reviewed in this paper are:

- **Diverse unintended consequences of globalization**. The explosion of illicit trade and organized crime, unregulated transnational migration and commerce, and the global economic crisis, challenge the sovereignty and capacity of all states – and weaker and more dependent states more than stronger ones.

- **Social inequality and the "new poverty"** resulting from simultaneous processes of urbanization, literacy, and high levels of dependence on informal labor.

- **The destructive disjunction between political and social democracy, the emergence of "violent democracies."**

2. Chronic violence is imbedded in multiple social spaces. As we have seen, these range from intimate and domestic relations to those between schoolmates, neighbors, and colleagues as well as relations between diverse social groups and the state.

3. Chronic violence provokes perverse responses that weaken social cohesion and the capacity to act strategically, undermine social support for democracy, endanger processes of state building, and further reproduce violence – in some cases inter-generationally. These include increased manifestations of:

- Scapegoating and xenophobic behavior (against youth, migrants, and "outsiders" – ethnic, religious, etc.)

- Social silence, forgetting, and amnesia, a weakened capacity to think strategically, and adverse physical and psychological effects

- Perceptions of the democratic state as "enemy" – as distinct from opposition to previous authoritarian regimes

- Support for non-state justice (private security, vigilante justice, lynching, etc)

- Opposition to due process, human rights, and other basic tenets of democracy

- Tolerance for, and use of, illegality, violence, and intensified brutality

- Gender and domestic violence

- Exclusionary and fundamentalist religious and ethnic beliefs

- Dependence on para-state polities (narco-communities, gangs, etc.) that provide services, structure, and stability that states do not

- Social isolation, reduced use of public space, and weakened local democracy, and

- Increased tendencies of citizens to self-identify as "victims" who seek "rights" and protections, but assume little social responsibility.

4. Chronic violence should be approached as a perverse norm because it is rooted in a complex web of persistent drivers that are unlikely to be reversed in the near term. Similarly, while efforts to strengthen democracies remain as important as ever the inability of certain states to control violence and ensure basic rights and the perverse effects this incapacity wreaks on vulnerable citizens should also be analyzed as a potentially long term reality – rather than as a passing moment in the transition to democracy. [31]

5. The multi-causal nature of chronic violence tends to overlooked by policy makers in vulnerable states, the international donor community, as well as by many actors in civil society. Many such actors continue to attribute it to single causes such as narcotrafficking, organized crime, or poverty, or in some cases, to a diffuse notion of "culturally" produced violence.

6. The local context emerges as a critical scenario for action. What enables some people and groups to be more capable of transcending some of its effects, to maintain more social cohesion, and to assume more social responsibility than others? How can these capacities be stimulated or enhanced among other groups?

These questions direct us to explore how local populations can enhance local level security and democracy or "proto-citizenship" – which refers to citizen-like behavior in conditions in which (for whatever reason) the state does not provide security nor ensure basic citizen rights, and when state legitimacy is collapsing or non-existent. Proto-citizenship focuses on the challenge of promoting social responsibility — a more primal aspect of citizenship that is relatively neglected in prevailing rights-based approaches to citizenship and democracy.

B. Proposal for an international initiative to address the problem through research, policy reform and social action

Given the deep rooted nature and locations of the drivers of violence and the complex and varied ways that it manifests from place to place, **an international multi-sectorial effort of policy makers, practitioners, scholars, and activists from donor countries and vulnerable regions** should be developed to chart out and launch a strategic long term course of social action, and national and international policy reform fed by targeted empirical research and conceptual analysis. This initiative could consider initial efforts such as the following:

1. Evaluate the possibly perverse effects of relevant foreign assistance and national governmental programs in relevant countries and regions – in fields such as security sector reform, the battle against drug traffickers, democratization and rule of law, human rights, transitional justice, and economic development.

2. Develop policy proposals that will permit international, national and local policy makers and political leaders to develop more effective and integrated approaches to this complex issue.[52]

3. Support research to explore – in specific locales and regions, among trans-nationalized social groups, and comparatively

- how violence affects social capital, social relations, and public attitudes toward democracy and the state

- how people are governed when states do not control these functions, i.e., who collects taxes, provides social services, exercises social control, has state-like legitimacy?

- what conditions enable people to defend themselves from – and conversely produce more vulnerability to – the perverse effects of chronic violence.

4. Facilitate development of, and support, locally-based efforts to reduce violence and strengthen the social infrastructure for democracy, through efforts to:

- Identify the factors and conditions that can help people to reduce violence, build social capital and local-level democratic capacity and

- facilitate local efforts to

  » Rebuild social relations beginning at the micro-level,

  » Stimulate "proto-citizenship" – the promotion of citizen-like behavior in contexts of chronic statelessness, relative absence, or state dysfunction, and

  » Promote citizen-based mechanisms to reduce violence, promote social cohesion, and the social infrastructure for democracy.

Endnotes

1. See Chabal, 2009; Heine and Thakur, 2011; Beebe and Kaldor, 2011, for example.

2. See, for example, Sheper Hughes and Bourgois, eds, 2008: 1-4; Bourgois in López, 2009.

3. See J.V. Pearce and R. McGee, 2011, for relevant citations.

4. Caldeira and Holston note that while violence affects both rich and poor, the dysfunction of the justice system can often constitute one more source of privilege for wealthier people, who have more resources to buy protection, are rarely the objects of police abuse, and often have more *de-facto* rights to disrespect or disobey the law. (ibid: 714)

5. Para trabajos clave sobre las dinámicas de la globalización, véase Castells, Manuel. (2004). *The Network Society.* Cheltenham: UK: Edward Elgar; Meyer, John, (2007). Globalization: Theory and Trends. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 15(2) (Junio): 233-48; Lechner, F.L. (2009). *Globalization: the Making of a World Society.* Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell; Stiglitz, Joseph (2002). *Globalization and its Discontents.* New York: Norton. También e Kaldor, 2007 and 2009; y Naím, 2005.

6. Nonetheless, the World Bank's 2011 World Development report notes that "people in fragile and conflict-affected states are twice as likely to be undernourished as those in other developing countries… On average, a country that experienced major violence over the period from 1981 to 2005 has poverty rates 21 percentage points high than a country that saw no violence. A similar picture emerged for subnational areas affected by violence in richer and more stable countries." (World Bank, 2011a: 5-6)

7. See, for example, Binford, 1999; McDonald, 2005; Dennis, 2003; and Rodgers, 2006b, 2009.

8. Other risk factors evaluated included "households headed by women" and "increase of 10 percent of populations of men aged 15-34." (World Bank, 2011b: 22)

9. While the paramilitary groups during the Central American revolutions, for example, were non-state actors exercising considerable violence, they were doing so in the context of a civil war, and in function of combatting a guerrilla army.

10. Interviews with high level government officials in Guatemala City, January 2009.

11. UNODC 2010; Ribando-Seekle, 2010; Brands, 2010; Briscoe 2010; Latin American Commission on Drugs and Democracy www.drogasedemocracia.org/Arquivos/declaracao_ingles_site.pdf (accessed 2/23/2011)

12. In Nicaragua, a recent study of organized crime calculates that the state is effectively absent from 70 percent of the national territory. (Meléndez et. al., 2010: 21)

13. This issue has been the subject of significant research and debate since the 1990s. See, for example, Agamben, G. (1998) *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Stanford: Stanford University Press; Clapham, C. (1998) 'Degrees of Statehood,' *Review of International Studies*, vol. 24: 143-157; Grovogui, S. (1996) Sovereigns, Quasi Sovereigns, and Africans: Race and Self-Determination in International Law, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; Hansen, T.B. and F. Stepputat (2001) *States of Imagination: Ethnographic Explorations of the Postcolonial State*, Durham: Duke University Press; Hansen, T.B. and F. Stepputat (2006) 'Sovereignty revisited,' *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 23, no. 1: 16.1-16.21; Jackson, R.H. (1999a) 'Introduction: Sovereignty at the Millenium,' *Political Studies*, vol. 47: 423-430; Jackson, R.H. (1999b) 'Sovereignty in World Politics: a Glance at the Conceptual and Historical Landscape,' *Political Studies*, vol. 47: 431-456; Lund, C. (2006) 'Twilight institutions: public authority and local politics in Africa,' *Development and Change,* vol. 37, no. 4: 685-705.

14. Personal communication, August 4, 2011.

15. Pearce and colleagues have been pursuing participatory research with vulnerable communities to explore how they themselves can reduce violence and strengthen security and local level democracy. See Pearce, 2007 and 2009; Baird, 2009; Abello, Colak and Pearce, 2009; and Cortéz Ruíz, 2009.

16. In his study of the destruction of social capital in the United States, Putnam attributes about one quarter of the dramatic decrease in civic engagement and social capital that has occurred since the 1960s to the watching of television and demonstrates that this effect intensifies with each generation. (ibid: 283)

17. See also Wilkinson et. al., 2003: 22; Wilkinson et. al., 2009.

18. Also see Offit and Cook, 2010; Hume, 2008a and 2008b; Bourgois, 2001; Binford, 2002; and Foxen, 2010.

19. McDonald, 2005: 117; Rodgers 2007; Dennis, 2003; Burrell, 2009; Foxen, 2008, 2010; Leeds, 2006.

20. See also Gayle, 2007; Green, 2003; Martín Barbero 2002. See also, Smutt and Miranda, 1998, 171; Moser and McIlwaine, 2001, 63; Hume, 2008, 64; Savenije and Andrade-Eekhoff, 2005: 229.

21. See Foxen, 2008; Gunst, 1999; Moodie, 2009; Burrell, 2009; Ziberg, 2007; Dennis, 2003.

22. See Metz et. al., 2010; Foxen, 2008 and 2010; Green, 2003; Camus, 2005.

23. In addition to those in footnote 10, also Goldstein, 2003, 35; Green, 2003; Gunst , 1999; Camus, 2005; Jimeno 2001, Riaño 2006; Duque et. al. 2010.

24. Such notions are reported by – in order -- Krujit and Koonings – Epilogue, 2007; Foxen, 2010; Green, 2003; Metz et. al., 2010; Rodgers, 2006, Heine and Thakur, 2010; and Rotker, 2002.

25. For example, see Metz, Dickens and Fischer, 2006; McDonald, Foxen, Levy, 2009; Burrell, Theidon 2007; Goldstein.

26. Salazar in Krujit and Koonings, 16; Burrell, 2010; Theidon 2007, 76.

27. McDonald, 2005; Metz et al 2010; Nash, 1967; Binford, 2003; Foxen, 2010; Green, 2003; Goldstein, 2003; Leeds, 2006; Dennis, 2003; Rodgers, 2006a, 2006b, 2007; Salazar, Dickens and Fischer, 2006; Theidon, 2007; Offit and Cook, 2010; Moodie, 2009.

28. Wilkinson and Marmot, in their study of the social determinants of health, provide a complementary perspective, noting that the social meaning of being poor and unemployed – the sense of having no value, of relative deprivation, of having little or no control over work conditions—has significant destructive effects on health. (Wilkinson et. al., 2003: 9-18)

29. See Cruz (2008: 222) for a bibliographic review of the theoretical literature that touches on how violence erodes citizen support for democracy, erodes social capital that is necessary to construct and maintain democracy, promotes support for authoritarianism, produces anxious citizens who become "bad democrats," and stimulates citizen support for repressive measures that violate rule of law.

30. See also Rodgers, 2006b.

31. For other reflections about due process and human rights, see Pitarch et. al., 2008; Burrell, 2009; Caldeira and Holston, 1999; Binford, 1999; Goldstein, 2003; and Foxen, 2010. For a review of diverse views about the impact of international human rights ideologies in the region, see Wilson in Pitarch et. al., 2008.

32. Leeds, 1996; Steigenga, 2010; Adams, 2010b; Finnegan, 2010.

33. Also see Concha-Eastman et. al., 2001; Savenije et. al., 2005, for El Salvador.

34. See also Snodgrass Godoy, 2006; Binford 1999; Castellanos, 2003; Guillén et. al., 2005; Mendoza and Torres Rivas, 2003

35. All from Basombrío, Carlos, forthcoming; except for Mexico (Guillén et. al., 2005) and Guatemala (Mendoza and Torres Rivas, 2003).

36. Arias 2009, except for Hume (El Salvador) 2008, Ortiz in La Hora, Brands, Fischer and Dickens. Zepeda 2010,

37. See Jimeno, 243; Riaño, 57 ; Gunst, 74; Duque et. al., 77-78; Rodgers, 2006; Levenson, 36-39; Camus, 2005: 203.

38. Pottinger, 2005; Clark, 2009; Foxen, 2008, 2010, Headley,2005; Ziberg, 2007; Moodie, Burrell 2010; Camus, 2005.

39. See also Levi; Suzanne Buckley-Zistel, 2006, for Rwanda; Rosalind Shaw, 2007, for Sierra Leone; Kimberly Theidon, 2004, for Peru; Linda Green, 1995, and Adams, 2010b, Zur, Foxen for Guatemala; Brandon Hamber, 2009, for South Africa.

40. Also see Moser and Holland, 1997; Tobar Estrada, 2007; Savenije et al, 2005; Dennis, Rodgers 2006.

41. Foxen, 2008: 67; Green, 2003; McDonald, 2005; Metz et. al. 2010; Hume.

42. Corradi 1992; Lechner, 1993; O'Donnell, 1983; Hinkelammert, 1977; and for a more general treatment in relationship to human behavior and repressive regimes throughout history, see, for example: Hamerton-Kelly, 1987.

43. Corradi et al.; Lechner, 1993; Reguillo, 2002 in Rotker; Hume, 2007; Snodgrass-Godoy, 2006; Caldeira,et al, 1998; Levenson, 1988; Marroquín Parducci; Carroll, 2007; Headley,2005; Domínguez, 2010;Valenzuela Arce et. al., 2007; Martín Barbero, 2002; Hume, 2008a; Rotker, 2002; and Martín Barbero, 2002 and 2009.

44. Also see Demoscopia, Riaño, Smutt and Miranda, Hume, Pérez Guzmán, Perea Restrepo. Youth reflections on this problem: Salazar, Tobar Estrada, Gayle

45. See http://arquitecturadelasremesas.blogspot.com/) for a photographic essay on the architecture of remittances in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras.

46. Finnegan, 2010; Salazar, 2001.

47. See Moser and McIlwaine 2004, 117-118, 163; more generally about gangs in Latin America, see Salazar 1990; Valenzuela Arce et. al., 2007; Rodgers, 2006, 2006b, 2007; Wolseth, 2008; Moodie, 2008; Ziberg, 2007; Concha-Eastman et. al., 2001; Demoscopia; García 2006; Burrell, 2010; Headley, 2005; Levenson, 1988; Levy, 2009; Perea Restrepo, 2000, 2001; Rapley, 2010; Riaño, 2006; Savenije et. al., 2005; Smutt and Miranda, 1998; Tobar Estrada, 2007; Vallejo, 1994; USAID, 2006.

48. See a similar account by Rodgers on Managua, 2007.

49. Kalb 2006 references a broad selection of relevant literature. See also McIlwaine, 1998; Foley, 1996; Adams, 2011.

50. The problem of legitimacy that NGOs face is not unique to this region. Putnam, for example, describes the transformation of citizen action and the decoupling of social organizations from their grassroots bases of legitimacy and citizen involvement in the US (Putnam, 2000)

51. Along similar lines, the 2011 World Development Report suggests that "the repeated cycles of conflict and violence exact other human, social, and economic costs that last for generations. … A major episode of violence, unlike natural disasters or economic cycles, can wipe out an entire generation of economic progress." (World Bank, 2011a: 5-6) The Bank's report on violence in Central America states: "Clearly there is no quick and easy fix to Central America's crime and violence problem. Rather the Bank's analysis indicates that… the fight against crime is likely to be long lasting. (World Bank, 2011b: iii)

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