Difficulties Measuring and Controlling Homicide in Rio de Janeiro

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Official crime data is generally limited by restrictions of quality and access. Rio de Janeiro in Brazil provides an example of the problems involved in measuring the homicide rate in a developing country, including the lack of proper crime reporting and the use of separate categories to reduce the number of homicides in official crime reports. Using longitudinal data, we can explain differences between the official homicide rate and alternative calculations that consider otherwise neglected categories. The interests of politicians, police, business, and citizens contribute to the difficulties in measuring and controlling homicides in the city.

Like other developing countries, Brazil not only suffers high crime rates, but also great difficulties in measuring them. The primary crime data is inadequate for various reasons. On the one hand, there are problems in registering crime properly; on the other, state officials are in the difficult situation of having to show improvements in public security while also demonstrating increasing state repression against perpetrators (which in Brazil usually means more lethal). Little information is made publicly available, aggregated data is often inaccessible even for scientific purposes, and many homicides are omitted from the official homicide rate through registration in separate categories. Finally, many homicides are never registered at all due to structural deficits in the police system and the ease with which criminal gangs can permanently hide bodies from the authorities. All of this contributes to a rather unclear picture of the situation and crime trends in the city (Ramos 2006).

These problems exist even though homicide is the offense for which most data is accessible in Brazil, and the crime that is most widely discussed in public. Data on other crimes are even less satisfactory, while the media rarely cover incidents of rape, aggravated assault, or robbery unless they occur under spectacular circumstances (Cano and Iotty 2008). Only kidnappings of middle- and upper-class individuals and foreigners are reported as intensively as homicides, but they are much rarer – about 400 reported cases of kidnapping in Brazil each year, compared to 46,660 recorded homicides in 2006. Public demands for significant reductions in crime focus on homicide, in particular calling for tough police action against the drug gangs.

Regional policies and intervention programs must also be considered in relation to the difficulties controling and measuring the homicide rate in Brazil, which differs significantly between cities. In recent years there have been efforts to reduce homicide in the big cities throughout Brazil and indeed throughout the whole of Latin America. While Sao Paulo in Brazil and Bogota and Medellin in Colombia have recently been quite successful, Rio de Janeiro has lost ground to its traditional rival, the Brazilian industrial and business powerhouse of Sao Paulo. The official crime data for Rio de Janeiro indicate only a slight reduction in the homicide rate from 45.7 (per 100,000 inhabitants) in 2002 to 40.2 in 2006, whereas it fell from 55.7 to 23.7 in Sao Paulo during the same period. Nevertheless, Rio de Janeiro can be considered an example illustrating the difficulties of measuring and controlling homicide in a developing country.

1. Data and Methods

Brazil has no publicly accessible central reporting of primary crime data. Data is collected by the Secretary for Security of each federal state, who is responsible for making it available to the public. The information originates from the police, which for historical reasons are divided into military and civil forces. The military police are responsible for patrols and public order, and also operate task forces in the favelas. The civil police primarily investigate crime. The two forces work independently and individual units collect crime data on their own. This in itself causes several problems, which are discussed further below.

Another problem is inconsistency of reporting. The Secretary for Security decides which data to publish, and how to categorize and format it, which makes it difficult to compare specific offenses between states. For instance, Rio de Janeiro's Secretary for Security decided to stop recording suspected deaths *(morte suspeita)* in 2001. Such cases, where the police believe that a person is dead but lack sufficient evidence, are frequent in Brazil.[1]

To fill some of the gaps in the reports of Rio de Janeiro's Secretary for Security, other reports and studies were analyzed: data from the national Ministry of Justice, the annual UNESCO crime report *Mapa da Violencia* by Julio

Waiselfisz (2008), *Neither War nor Peace* by Luke Dowdney (2005), and reports by the Nucleo de Estudos da Cidadania, Conflito e Violencia Urbana in Rio de Janeiro. These provide, for example, comparative data from other federal states and certain information that is neglected in official crime reports, such as the number of firearms-related deaths. My analysis is restricted to the period from 1991 to 2007 because the reliability of the country's earlier crime data is questionable. Brazil had a military dictatorship from 1964 to 1985 and it took the government some years to establish the current crime reporting system.

2. Results

With its very high homicide rate caused particularly by gang warfare and shootouts with the police, Rio de Janeiro can be said to be in a state of *undeclared war* (Caravana Comunidade Segua 2007; Dowdney 2003, 2005). About 90 percent of the registered homicides in the city have been firearms-related since the early 1990s, and no other city in Brazil has a higher rate of firearms-related mortality in the 15–24 age group (Waiselfisz 2008). Although the total number of firearms-related deaths has decreased, most homicides are still caused by guns. Table 1 shows that Rio de Janeiro currently has the highest number of homicides by firearms in the country, after a significant reduction in Sao Paulo in recent years.

Table 1: Firearms-related deaths 2002–2006

	City	Population	Number of firearms-related deaths					Rate 2006
		2006	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	
1	Rio de Janeiro	6,024,061	3,126	3,002	2,848	2,412	2,235	37.1
2	Sao Paulo	10,761,191	3,824	4,009	2,947	2,345	2,151	20.0
3	Recife	1,512,810	1,181	1,177	1,167	1,154	1,198	79.2
4	Belo Horizonte	2,375,969	866	1,170	1,377	1,142	1,038	43.7
5	Salvador	2,812,480	947	974	876	884	960	34.1
6	Maceio	864,322	396	411	445	514	776	89.8
7	Curitiba	1,771,818	418	520	562	645	724	40.9
8	Fortaleza	2,389,695	399	430	427	572	622	26.0
9	Brasilia	2,393,131	569	655	599	536	518	21.6
10	Duque de Caxias(*)	830,408	494	512	512	621	460	55.4

* = This city is located at the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro and is closer to the city center than many western and northern suburbs. city is located at the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro and is closer to the city center than many western and northern suburbs. *Source:* Waiselfisz (2008)

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1 Another example for the inconsistency of the Brazilian data are the slight differences between police figures and Ministry of Health data 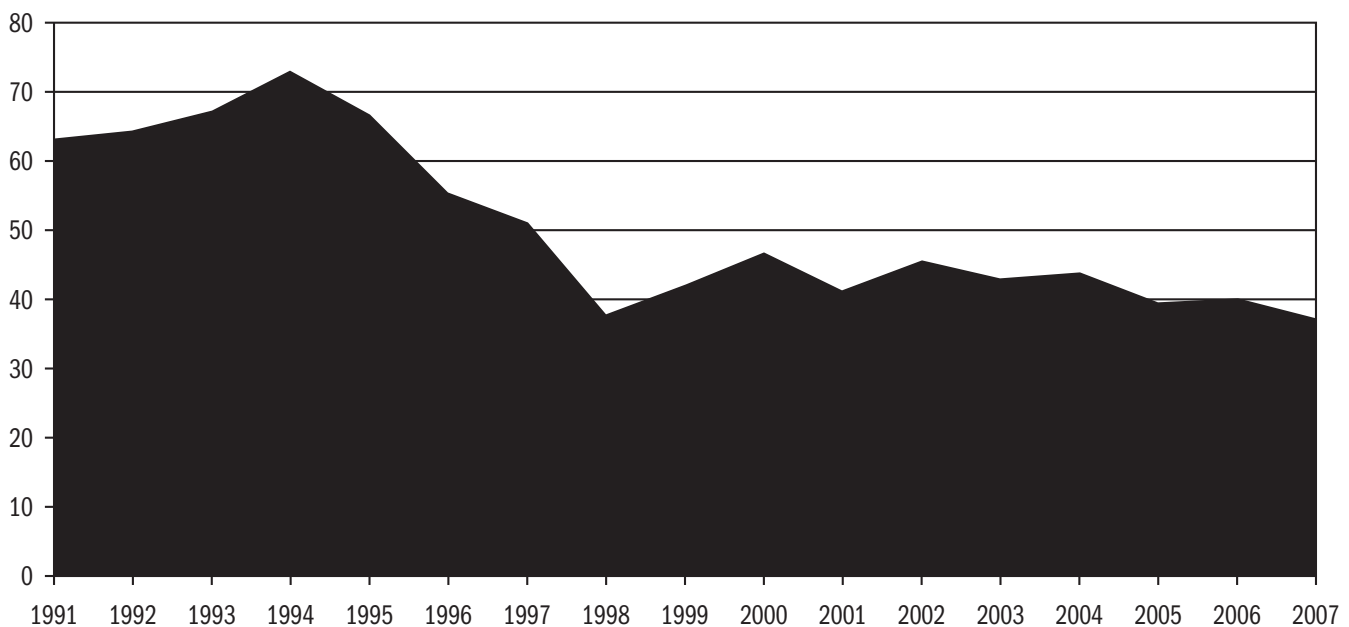(DATASUS), for instance regarding "death by aggression." The reasons for these discrepancies are not discussed here, but should be investigated in further research.

2.1. General Problems of Measuring Homicides in Rio de Janeiro

For various reasons the number of homicides in Rio de Janeiro is significantly higher than official data suggest. Here it is useful first of all to take a look at the longitudinal data published by the Secretary for Security, which show the homicide rate decreasing by 41 percent from 1991 to 2007, although with a spike from 1991 to 1994 to reach the highest rate in the city's history. The biggest drop occurred from 1994 to 1998, since when the rate has remained relatively stable at about 40 per 100,000 inhabitants.

Figure 1: Official homicide rate in Rio de Janeiro 1991–2007

Source: Annual Crime Reports.

One problem in measuring the homicide rate is that certain cases are registered in separate categories, for example when it is not immediately certain whether a person was actually killed or died in some other way. Where no body is found it may not even be certain that someone has died. The procedure for separating out provisional cases is not incorrect, but it fails to account for the results of subsequent investigations. The problem is that the data are not updated in the crime statistics after the case has been clarified. Moreover, no data is published on how many provisional cases are solved and what the results of the investigations are. Although these separate categories are publicly accessible in the crime reports, they are neglected by the media and the public. This causes the homicide rate in Rio de Janeiro to be heavily underestimated.

Provisional cases include discovered corpses, bones, missing persons, and suspected deaths. Cases where a *corpse* or *bones* are found are counted in wo separate categories, although autopsies and subsequent investigations usually prove that they belong to homicide victims (Cano 1997a). In other words, the data stays permanently in two different categories but they appear in the official crime reports so officials cannot be criticized for hiding them. They just label them in a way that reduces the official homicide rate. Every year up to 1,000 cases are omitted from homicide calculations due to this procedure.

The third provisional category is *missing persons*. Unlike the other separate categories, this one is updated regularly to remove those who turn up alive before publication in

the annual crime reports. However, those who are found to have been killed are not added to the homicide category. The main reasons why people disappear in big Brazilian cities are a) kidnappings for human trafficking, forced prostitution, or organ harvesting; b) gang killings where the body is not found; and c) police killings where the body is disposed of by the police themselves (Machado da Silva and Pereira Leite 2007). Runaways who become street children are often omitted because they are not report missing in the first place.[2] Altogether, there is little reliable data on how many of the people who disappear every year (up to 2,000) are actually killed, and no information on this matter is supplied in official reports.

Another largely neglected category where many cases might be homicides is the *morte suspeita*. Unlike the category of missing persons, a suspected death is recorded only where a person is missing and the police have reason to assume that they are actually dead, for instance if someone involved in illegal business dealings suddenly disappears completely without taking any personal belongings (Dowdney 2003). Here it is almost certain at the moment of registration that the person has been killed, but there is no body. Nonetheless, these cases are registered separately and do appear in the homicide statistics even when they have been solved. Nor is information available on how many cases are solved. None of the state secretaries for security in Brazil provide any data on this subject. This adds another thousand killings per year to the total omitted from the official homicide statistics in Rio de Janeiro.

One explanation for the lack of transparency on this category is the difficulty of investigating in dangerous favelas (Dowdney 2003; Fiocruz 2005). Ordinary police units avoid going there because of the risk of getting attacked, kidnapped, or killed. Usually only special task forces enter these areas to conduct combat actions, so corpses and bones are only found incidentally. This makes it rather easy for the drug gangs to get rid of members of rival gangs and

people who do not pay their debts. It is possible that the outcome of cases of suspected death is obscured in order to conceal the enormous deficits of police investigations.

All cases where individuals are shot by the police are also registered separately, as "resisting arrest" *(auto de resistencia)* rather than homicide. Although this interpretation suggests that the person was shot by a police officer acting in self-defense, an unknown number of cases actually appear to be homicides, especially when paramilitary task forces invade favelas (Lemgruber 2004; Ramos 2006; Soares, Batista, and Pimentel 2007). Shootouts with gangs regularly cause casualties, in particular among members of the drug factions. Some researchers go so far as to claim that many interventions in the favelas are explicitly designed to kill gang members without any intention of arresting them (Ramos 2006). The idea that these killings are intentional would be supported by the military demeanor of the special units: they enter an area with combat groups (e.g. BOPE, CORE), fight their way through to the target, shoot the person, and carry the dead body out in a plastic bag visible for all to see (Bottari 2008; Soares, Batista, and Pimentel 2007). In a study using data from 1993 to 1995 when the number of "resisting arrest" cases was still fairly low, Ignacio Cano shows that out of 1,340 cases only 247 targets were arrested uninjured, 360 were arrested injured, while 733 were killed during combat operations (Cano 1997b). An analysis of autopsy data for these cases shows that 65 percent of the victims were shot in the back, suggesting that they were running away or were executed.

This category appears also to serve as a means of guaranteeing impunity to the police, and to be an ideological issue relating to policy governing police operations in Rio de Janeiro. The relatively high level of acceptance of deliberate killings by the police among the middle and upper classes is discussed below, but we can already note that the city would be unlikely to have experienced such a significant

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2 Many street children leave home because of parental neglect or domestic violence, or are thrown out by their parents due to lack of money and space. In general, reporting a child to be missing causes trouble with the authorities and is therefore avoided (Rizzini and Lusk 1995). Reporting a relative missing can, however, also be beneficial in cases where their presence could endanger the whole family, for instance, if he or she is on the run from a drug gang (De Oliveira 2010).

increase in these incidents without public acceptance. Moreover, structural deficits in the training and equipment of ordinary police units have to be considered. In contrast to the task forces they are rarely provided with adequate psychological training, even where their lives are in danger on the streets every day (Cano 1997b; Fiocruz 2005). These structural shortcomings primarily explain accidental killings.

Data on "resisting arrest" cases has been available only since 1993, when 138 cases were recorded in Rio de Janeiro. Since then they have increased steadily to reach 902 in 2007. National comparison shows that this development is specific to Rio. Sao Paulo has double the number of inhabitants and many more favelados but annually only about three hundred deaths "resisting arrest". According to Silvia Ramos (2006), this difference is due to the efforts of the government of Sao Paulo, which actively pursued policies to reduce lethal police violence. She criticizes the "license to kill" given to police operating in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. Longitudinal crime mapping studies (Cano 1997b; Waiselfisz 2008) and the official statistics of the Secretary for Security indicate that most killings classified as "resisting arrest" occur in disadvantaged neighborhoods or involve muggers and robbers shot dead by the police when caught in flagrante delicto in privileged neighborhoods. Lemgruber (2004) points out that the only difference between
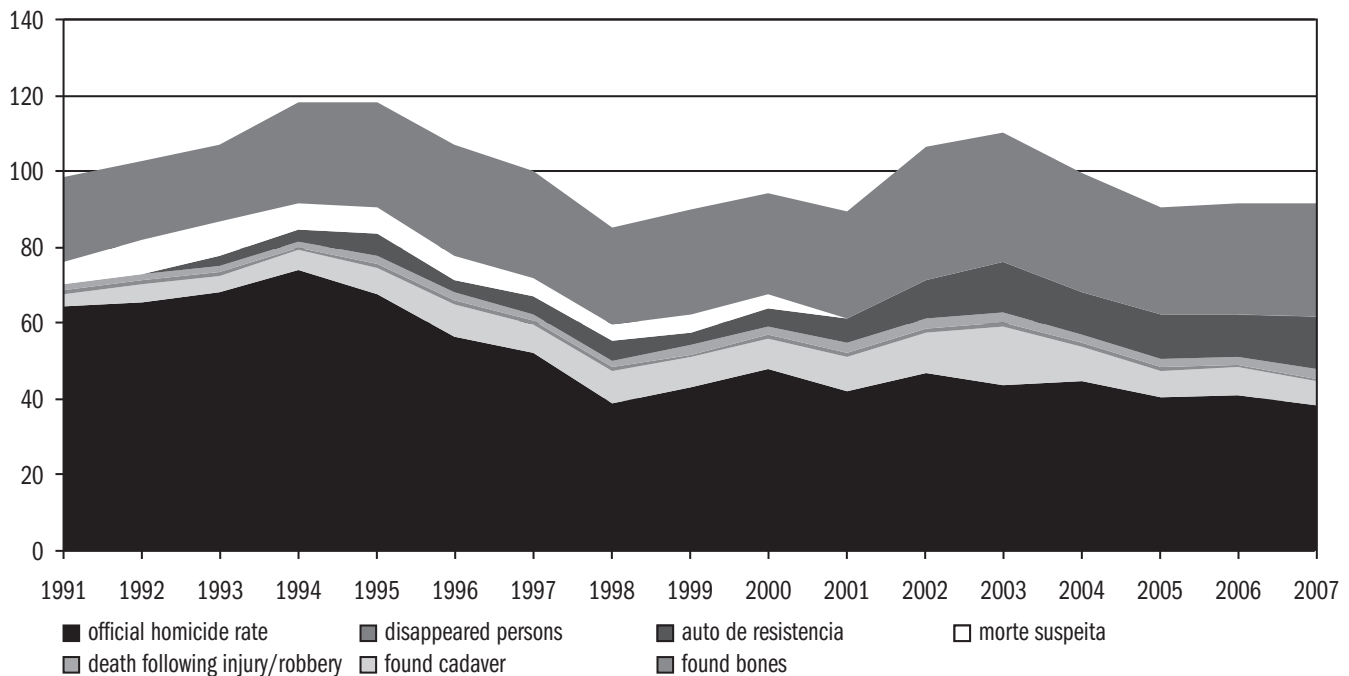
many police killings and gang shootouts and executions is that the former are institutionally and publicly accepted.

The number of policemen killed is relatively small in comparison to the number of "resisting arrest" cases. Between twenty and forty police officers were killed on duty each year since 2000. This number is much lower than the number of people shot by the police, and has not increased in recent years; in fact, it has decreased since 2004. In 2007 the ratio of killed police to citizens killed by the police was 1:28. So while the number of "resisting arrest" cases has grown steadily, the number of police killed has not increased. This suggests firstly that the combat police units operate without many casualties on their side. Secondly, the increasing number of "resisting arrest" cases cannot be interpreted or "justified" as retaliation by the police, even though official statements on the prevalence of "resisting arrest" cases usually refer to danger and losses on the police side.

Finally, deaths resulting from assault or robbery are reported in two separate categories. About one hundred cases that obviously should be considered homicides are excluded from the official homicide rate every year this way.

Given the omission of the aforementioned categories from the official homicide statistics, it is worth calculating alternative homicide rates. These are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Alternative homicide rates for Rio de Janeiro 1991–2007

- official homicide rate
- disappeared persons
- auto de resistencia
- morte suspeita
- death following injury/robbery
- found cadaver
- found bones

Source: Secretary for Security of Rio de Janeiro, Annual Crime Reports.

When we consider all cases, the alternative homicide rate was 98.7 in 1991, peaked at 118.3 in 1994, and decreased to 91.6 in 2007. the reduction in the homicide rate over the past seventeen years was not 41 percent, as the official homicide rate suggests, but only 7 percent. This alternative homicide rate is likely to be an overestimate because it includes the category of missing persons, where it is especially unclear how many victims are actually dead. If we recalculate the alternative homicide rate excluding this category, the rate is still 76.2 in 1991, reached a peak of 91.6 in 1994, and decreasing to 62.0 in 2007, producing an overall reduction of only 20 percent. Note that the numbers would be higher if the category of suspected death was still included in the crime reports.

Although the soaring number of "resisting arrest" cases is occasionally mentioned by the media, the public is largely unaware of the additional categoriesand therefore has the incorrect impression that the homicide rate has remained rather stable since 1998, nor noticed the peak in 2003. The

alternative homicide rate was 76.0 in 2003 (excluding missing persons; including this category it was 110.1). Either way, this was the highest rate since 1995.

Rio de Janeiro also has an undefined number of homicides that are not registered at all because they are not reported to the police, for instance, when drug gangs execute rivals (Dowdney 2003). Even relatives and friends might be afraid to do so, especially if they know the perpetrators, while fellow gang members are more interested in revenge than in going to the police. If the body is well hidden, it may never be found and friends and relatives get no chance to bury it. Sometimes no-one even notices the absence of a victim, or it is noticed but no-one feels responsible.

Other homicides are missed by official reports due to structural deficits in the police system. Both military and civil police are divided into different units with specific responsibilities and districts (Fiocruz 2005). Lack of cooperation and communication is a major problem for Rio de

Janeiro's police. In many respects individual units act as rivals. Each unit is particularly concerned about crime rates in its own district because these have to be justified to the Secretary for Security. This causes paradoxical behavior that reduces the quality of the crime data (Lemgruber 2004). One of the most extreme examples is where officers transfer corpses they find in their district or victims they have shot themselves to other neighborhoods in order to reduce the number of homicides and "resisting arrest" cases in their own area. Officers have repeatedly admitted this practice in anonymous interviews with researchers and journalists and in autobiographies (e.g., Ludemir 2007; Soares, Batista, and Pimentel 2007). This enormously reduces the quality of crime data because homicides are attributed to areas of the city in which the offense did not happen. It also reduces the chances of successful police investigations and increases the likelihood of homicides being registered in one of the separate categories.

Tensions between police units are also responsible for some cases not being registered at all. As Ignacio Cano (1997b) documented in the 1990s, where two different units get involved in a case it is not unusual for neither of them to write an incident report, because each considers this the responsibility of the other. Simple miscommunication is one reason for this problem, but the everyday reality of relatively low salaries, inadequate training and equipment, and lack of support from higher-ranking officers also contribute to a general lack of motivation (Fiocruz 2005; Lemgruber 2004; Ramos 2006).

Finally, another development has to be considered in this context. Since the early 1990s, the number of attempted homicides has increased in Rio de Janeiro – from 652 cases in 1992 to 1,693 cases in 2007. Like in other countries (Nieuwbeerta and Leistra 2007), this trend has much to do with major improvements in health care infrastructure. Many deaths are prevented thanks to better ambulance services, better medical equipment, and growing access to hospitals. This is a positive trend in the sense that many victims are saved, but it also suggests that a large part of the decline in the official homicide rate may have been caused by improvements in health care for victims rather than better crime prevention.

2.2. Public Demands for Repression and Economic Interests in Decreasing Crime Rates

Permanent exposure to violence in Rio de Janeiro has manifold effects on everyday life and the attitudes and behavior patterns of the citizens. Although most inhabitants reject violence and live in fear, there is a *normalization of violence* (Grossi Porto 2004; Ramos 2006). Nancy Cardia writes: "Peace does not prevail and people do not have the opportunity to recover from the conflict" (2002, 163). Although middle- and upper-class people do not live in the crime hot-spots where most homicides and other offenses occur, they are often more afraid of crime than the favelados.[3] Typical reactions are isolating themselves from collective life, mistrusting other people, moving to gated communities, and rejecting social support for the poor. This state of permanent fear fuels support for punitive attitudes among many privileged people, who come to accept and at times even welcome violence against the young male favelados with whom they associate the rise in crime (Cardia 2002; Dowdney 2003; Machado da Silva and Pereira Leite 2007; Paes Machado and Vilar Noronha 2002).

Most privileged citizens demand repression and discriminates the poor rather than acknowledging the societal root causes of crime and their own responsibility (for instance, by participating in the exploitation of the marginalized population and as customers for drugs and other illegal goods) (Zaluar 2004). Prevention measures that might address the societal causes of crime are largely rejected as a waste of money. Such developments have been comprehensively studied in many countries (Baumer, Messner, and Rosenfeld 2003; Brown 2007; Garland 2000; King 2008; Shaftoe 2000; Zdun 2008). However, the level of *punitiveness* seems to be significantly higher in Brazil with its high homicide rate and great social inequality than in

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3 No group is more severely affected by firearm-related mortality than 15- to 24-year-old male favelados (Caravana Comunidade Segua 2007).

developed countries (Cardia 2002; Cano and Iotty 2008; Soares, Batista, and Pimentel 2007; Zaluar and Ribeiro 1995). Research also suggests a relationship between proximity and punitiveness. The closer frightened privileged citizens live to their discriminated counterparts, the more they demand repression and invest in private security (e.g., security guards, electric fences, gated communities) (Dowdney 2005; Zaluar 2004). This might even explain why punitiveness is stronger in Rio de Janeiro (where more than seven hundred favelas are spread throughout the city and not restricted to remote areas) than in Sao Paulo (where the favelas are mainly located in the suburbs and the wealthy inner-city neighborhoods are relatively secure). The privileged of Rio de Janeiro hence seem to live in a constant state of tension and fear because they have less possibility to escape violence and crime (Cardia 2002; Zdun 2008).

Silvia Ramos (2006) shows that *lack of democratization* contributes to this situation, and also hinders the institutional development of the police (see also Grossi Porto 2004). According to Ramos (2006), mainstream society does not question the way the police still operate under directives dating from the military dictatorship. Politicians and senior police officers therefore see no need for a transition from protecting the state to protecting the citizen (see also Goncalves Guimaraes, Torres, and de Faria 2005). At the national level there is no single document that could be called a national public safety policy. NGOs try to improve local conditions in individual favelas but their efforts have no significant impact on the punitive attitudes of mainstream society and the behavior patterns of the police.

Overall, the middle and upper classes tend to demand security by any means (Goncalves Guimaraes, Torres, and de Faria 2005; Machado da Silva and Pereira Leite 2007). Even abuses up to and including torture are largely tolerated if they are intended to force a police suspect to provide information. Citizens also have an ambivalent attitude toward "resisting arrest" cases. While there is disapproval of bystanders getting wounded or killed by the police, a "one less to worry about" attitude seems to prevail when it is announced that the police have killed a gang member. It even seems to become common to prefer killings over arrests in order to avoid the possibility that a perpetrator may be re-

leased and commit further crimes or break out of prison (Goncalves Guimaraes, Torres, and de Faria 2005; Paes Machado and Vilar Noronha 2002). People even react increasingly indifferently to news that unarmed favelados have been shot (Machado da Silva and Pereira Leite 2007). Research suggests that this mainly reflectsa habit of not differentiating between delinquent and non-delinquent favelados (Cano 1997b; Dowdney 2003). Alba Zaluar (2004) argues that this is due to growing individualism among citizens and the prioritization of personal needs in the post-dictatorship era. Middle-class citizens especially seem to be preoccupied with meeting a backlog of needs and react with disinterest, anger, and fear to those who disturb this routine. This may even explain why "resisting arrest" cases often go uncriticized.

Like in many other countries, the opinion of the middle and upper class counts most in Brazilian society. The favelados that are mainly affected by police killings have no lobby and their rejection of police violence is ignored (Ramos 2006). The police can therefore openly demonstrate power (Goncalves Guimaraes, Torres, and de Faria 2005). This is only occasionally challenged by the media, leading to symbolic sanctions against individual police, while the media in general rarely report critically on police methods (Machado da Silva and Pereira Leite 2007). So it fits with the general situation in the city that the biggest scandals are when the police accidentally shoot a privileged citizen. These cases usually have more severe consequences for the police than the unintended killing of a favelado. Consequently, firearms seem to be used more carefully by police patrolling in the city center and in privileged neighborhoods (Paes Machado and Vilar Noronha 2002).

Despite the rivalry between different police units, internal investigations are the exception. This is largely because of the code of silence that serves to protect the state and the image of the institution (another relict of the military dictatorship). Before they have even finished their training police recruits internalize that colleagues must be protected by all means. The lack of support from superiors fosters a sense of community among ordinary officers that includes avoidance of investigations and refusal to report misbehavior by colleagues (Fiocruz 2005; Soares, Batista, and Pimentel 2007).

This mutual support is also based on an interpretation of police work in black-and-white terms. The favelados are seen collectively as a permanent threat, due to routine life-threatening experiences with drug gangs and a perceived relationship between non-delinquent favelados and the gangs. Unlawful police practices seem to be more common when it is ignored that the same law counts in the favelas, even though the gangs establish their own laws (Dowdney 2003). Thus norm violations by colleagues are justified as an acceptable reaction and the best way to control violence. This leads to a situation where officers distinguish between official police work (that conforms to the public image and serves to make privileged people feel more secure) and the unofficial "real" police work in the favelas that the majority cannot understand because "they do not see what the police see" (see also Soares, Batista, and Pimentel 2007).[4]

The public's demand for security and acceptance of killings of favelados appears to be crucial for this development and its persistence. People want decreasing crime rates but demand repressive actions that maintain the status quo. Preventive measures that might address the root causes of crime are largely rejected.

The issue of public security affects the economy of Rio de Janeiro too. A recent study by the Instituto de Pesquisa Economica Aplicada (IPEA) estimates the annual cost of violence in Brazil (support for victims and spending on public and private security) to be R$ 92 billion, of which R$ 5 billion are spent in Rio de Janeiro (Carvalho 2007). The study also estimates that losses in the commercial and industrial sector caused by violence and insecurity cost the city an additional R$ 800 million. Losses in the property sector (residential, commercial, and industrial rentals) cost a further R$ 9 billion. Losses in tourism are estimated at R$ 2 billion. Violence-related insurance contracts for citizens, businesses, and the state cost R$ 1.5 billion. Human losses (death and injury) amount to R$ 700 million. Finally, additional expenses for security measures are estimated to cost R$ 2 billion. These add up to a total of R$ 21 billion (about 21 billion) in direct and indirect costs in Rio de Janeiro every year.

Various political initiatives seek to reduce crime or at least improve the city's image among residents, international investors, and tourists. In terms of public approval and economic goals it is important to be competitive in comparison to other cities in the country. Rio de Janeiro has to respond to the reduction in the homicide rate that Sao Paulo has achieved while its own stagnated at a high level since 1998. The separate categories may be useful for concealing the real number of homicides and reducing the reported rate, but even this can only create the impression of a slightly decreasing homicide rate. The challenge will be to conduct changes at the institutional and social level in order to better measure and control crime, in particular homicide.

3. Discussion

Statistical and structural shortcomings contribute to a situation where the quality of homicide data in Rio de Janeiro is relatively poor and there are real difficulties in controlling lethal violence. Some problems are of a methodological nature; others relate to structural deficits in the police system. Even killings of gang members during police raids are ordered from above and tolerated, due to tense class relations, by a mainstream majority in society that fears being robbed, wounded, or killed in the streets. As long as they mainly affect favelados, arbitrary and brutal behavior patterns are not questioned. Politicians and police leaders even seem to feel that economic interests encourage them to maintain authoritarian policies and policing methods. Repression is still the main strategy for addressing violence and crime in Rio de Janeiro.

The complex dynamics of organized crime, punitive public attitudes, and the political and policing difficulties of controlling violence are exacerbated by the huge number of unreported homicides (and other crimes). On the one hand, up to four thousand killings per year are registered in separate categories (i.e. other than homicide). The problem is that even though they are defined as provisional cases, the homicide data are not updated to reflect the results of police investigations. Moreover, several hundred cases of "resisting arrest" every year are not considered homicides, even if they

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4 Police research in developed countries shows similar patterns that protect colleagues from institutional sanctions, which are interpreted as attacks on their everyday work (Schweer and Zdun 2005).

partly appear to be intended killings of gang members by the police. There is also an unknown number of homicides that are not registered at all by the police, largely as a result of the low level of institutional organization in the favelas. The crime hot-spots in Rio de Janeiro are mainly controlled by the drug factions, so bodies can easily be hidden. False recording and non-registration of homicides due to structural and motivational deficits and rivalry between police units further reduces the quality of the crime data.

Despite the local peculiarities of Rio de Janeiro and its high homicide rate, several general patterns and problems of crime – and its registration and reporting – appear to be shared by many big cities in developing countries and reduce the respective quality of life (UNODC 2007). Even if the complexity of the overall situation makes it difficult to elucidate the specific problems and shortcomings, other South American cities such as Sao Paulo have been quite successful in reducing their homicide rates in recent years. In other words, the situation and measurement of homicides can be improved. What this seems to require is an integrated sustainable approach involving all the different parties. Comparative studies are required in order to obtain a broader picture of the similarities and differences in approaches and outcomes.

Rio de Janeiro appears to need a police reform to improve working conditions, salaries, training, and equipment, and correct inappropriate methods. This should improve motivation, reduce misbehavior (including corruption), and cut the number of "resisting arrest" cases. However, these changes would also require broad action to improve the social climate: integrated approaches addressing the punitive attitudes of mainstream society and tackling the root causes of crime among the favelados. This would include strengthening the social engagement of the middle and upper class and investing in the education, prospects, and living conditions of the marginalized population. Such developments can be moderated and supported by state institutions, but what they require most is motivation and mutual trust among citizens. Indeed, lack of social control and awareness of the problems and needs of fellow citizens seems to exacerbate the difficulties in controlling homicides and other crimes in Rio de Janeiro.

Finally, the measurement and control of homicide belong together. In this pursuit non-repressive crime reduction is one of the most ambitious but also promising goals in efforts to fight crime in Rio de Janeiro and comparable cities. But control and measurement also require structural developments and improvements in relations between all involved parties. With respect to the measurement of homicides, more transparency and a more appropriate use of the separate categories in the crime reports are recommended, even if this would temporarily lead to higher total numbers of recorded homicide.

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