

# The pacification of Brazil's urban margins: peripheral urbanisation and dynamic order- making

Matthew Aaron Richmond

To cite this article: Matthew Aaron Richmond (2021): The pacification of Brazil's urban margins: peripheral urbanisation and dynamic order-making, Contemporary Social Science, DOI: [10.1080/21582041.2021.1906937](https://doi.org/10.1080/21582041.2021.1906937)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/21582041.2021.1906937>



© 2021 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 15 Apr 2021.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 78



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

# The pacification of Brazil's urban margins: peripheral urbanisation and dynamic order-making

Matthew Aaron Richmond 

London School of Economics, Latin America and Caribbean Centre (LSE LACC), London, UK

## ABSTRACT

This article explores the relationship between informal processes of urbanisation and order-making at Brazil's urban margins. It draws on research conducted in contrasting neighbourhoods in the peripheries of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, analysing the influence of different kinds of criminal organisation on these areas. It is argued that the unpredictable processes surrounding peripheral urbanisation – the irregular occupation or subdivision of land, the growth of diverse markets, physical consolidation and, in some cases, eventual formalisation – provide a dynamic backdrop against which local order and disorder are produced. To theorise these interrelated processes, I mobilise the concept of 'pacification'. This is usually used to refer to violent state interventions against socially and racially marginalised populations that are followed by measures designed to create more lasting stability. However, I argue that, while it may ultimately have such effects, pacification should be understood as a provisional outcome of ongoing negotiations between state and criminal actors rather than as a coherent, top-down project.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 31 October 2020  
Accepted 16 March 2021

## KEYWORDS

Informality; urbanisation; peripheries; criminal governance; pacification; Brazil

As has been established by a large body of literature (e.g. Caldeira, 2017; Holston, 2008; Telles, 2010), Brazil's urban peripheries have historically expanded through an interplay between informal and formal logics. Urban expansion often occurs via the incorporation of new neighbourhoods by landowners who violate urban planning codes or even falsify ownership claims, while, in other cases, land is directly occupied by squatters. Once established, the subsequent fate of such settlements also rests heavily on informal processes. Residents may depend on political patronage to avoid eviction, while the arrival of key infrastructure and services tends to occur initially via the mediation of clientelistic politicians harvesting votes. Some of these spaces may eventually be 'regularised', thus gaining legitimacy in the eyes of the state and access to at least some urban services as a right rather than favour. Others – favelas – may achieve relative permanence via physical consolidation and the partial protection provided by squatters' rights legislation, without ever being officially regularised, thus leaving them vulnerable to exceptional forms of governance and possible future removal.

**CONTACT** Matthew Aaron Richmond  m.a.richmond@lse.ac.uk  @mattyrichy

This article has been republished with minor changes. These changes do not impact the academic content of the article.

© 2021 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

An equally substantial body of literature has looked at the ways in which criminal actors participate in the governance of such peripheral spaces (e.g. Arias & Barnes, 2017; Feltran, 2020; Richmond, 2019; Telles, 2010). These analyses have challenged the notion that these areas lie beyond the reach of the state and under the sovereignty of separate 'parallel powers' (Leeds, 1996). Instead, they emphasise how both state and criminal actors are present in these spaces and interact with one another to co-produce local (dis)order, regulate illegal markets, and generally establish the social and security conditions under which local life is lived.

Rather than addressing them separately, as the literature has tended to, this article explores the relationship between these two phenomena: the process of peripheral urbanisation on the one hand, and order-making in peripheries on the other. Specifically, I argue that the dynamic processes associated with peripheral urbanisation – the occupation or irregular subdivision of land, physical consolidation, growth of housing and other markets, and processes of formalisation and regularisation – interact with and impact upon the ways in which order-making in peripheries occurs. This is because changing urban conditions can both generate disorder, for example by producing weakly governed spaces or destabilising local social norms, and also create opportunities for local actors to enhance their influence (and, often, also profit financially) by (re)establishing order. Of course, criminal organisations and state structures operate far beyond the local scale and these larger structures significantly constrain the freedom of local actors. Nonetheless, the challenges and opportunities generated by urbanisation processes often give rise to specific, highly situated arrangements, relationships and innovations. As such, the local scale offers a privileged vantage point for observing the dynamic ways in which peripheral urbanisation and order-making interact.

To theorise this relationship, I mobilise the concept of 'pacification'. This name was, infamously, given to Rio de Janeiro's *Unidades de Polícia Pacificadora* (Police Pacification Units, *UPPs*), a programme that was rolled out across many of the city's favelas after 2008 (Richmond, 2019). However, the term has also been used more broadly to conceptualise historical and contemporary efforts by (neo)colonial and capitalist states to suppress conflict and subdue unruly, marginalised populations (Neocleous, 2011, 2013; Pacheco de Oliveira, 2014). While drawing on the insights of such approaches, I argue they overstate the extent to which pacification can be achieved unilaterally by the state. Instead, following Telles (2010), I understand actors beyond or at the margins of the state as playing a decisive role in the pacification of peripheral spaces, both by imposing their own authority on local populations and markets, and through the practices and routines of coexistence that they establish with local state actors. 'Pacification', then, can be understood as the establishment of provisional arrangements among local state and non-state actors that produce local order and suppress conflict; i.e. an *outcome* of these arrangements, rather than a coherent, top-down state *project*.

I will develop this argument first through a discussion of the relevant literature and then by presenting case studies of two distinct urban contexts in Brazil: the first a small favela in the West Zone of Rio de Janeiro; the second a large peripheral neighbourhood in the East Zone of São Paulo. These case studies are based on extensive fieldwork, conducted over several months or more, which in each case involved dozens of interviews with local residents, community leaders and local state agents, as well as ethnographic observation conducted in local civil society organisations, such as residents' associations

and NGOs. To preserve the anonymity of the research participants, the names of the first case site and of all individuals mentioned in both case studies have been changed. However, so as to be able to draw on the secondary literature, and on the grounds that there is no risk of individuals being identifiable, the second case site has been named.

As will be described, the two case sites are very different in terms of their size, historic urbanisation patterns, present-day conditions, and the actors involved in local pacification processes. While the first is a favela whose residents have never been granted property titles, the second is a highly heterogeneous neighbourhood containing a range of distinct types of housing, most of which have today been regularised. Whereas the first site is located in a region dominated by Rio de Janeiro's so-called 'militias', the latter lies under the influence of São Paulo's hegemonic criminal organisation, the *Primeiro Comando da Capital* (First Command of the Capital, PCC). Although differences between the cases correspond to some key variables relevant to my argument, the sites were not selected in advance on the basis of being 'representative' of particular types of peripheral settlement and/or criminal organisation. Fieldwork in the two sites was conducted as part of two separate research projects and analysis was only conducted retrospectively, upon reflection that some common dynamics could be observed. The aim here, then, is to analyse both cases, recognising their peculiarities, similarities and differences, so as to isolate some key features that shed light more generally on the relationship between peripheral urbanisation and local order-making at Brazil's urban margins.

### **Pacification and order-making at the margins**

The term 'pacification' has long been used to refer to the violent conquest of territory by colonising forces, followed by broader interventions designed to create lasting stability. Neocleous (2013, 2011) notes that the concept was first developed in the sixteenth century in the military protocols of Spanish colonisers in the New World, but was also widely used in twentieth century (neo)colonial wars in places like Algeria and Vietnam. In the latter case, a 'New Model Pacification Programme', outlined the need for US forces not only to defeat insurgents militarily, but also 'create a socio-political environment in which future insurgency would not flourish again' (quoted in Neocleous, 2011, p. 194). In the Brazilian case, Pacheco de Oliveira (2014) identifies pacification as a continual process of colonisation of Brazil's national territory over several centuries. This was grounded in the model of 'tutelage' of the indigenous inhabitants, described as a form of domination 'driven by contradictory principles, always involving protection and repression, applied either alternately or together' (Pacheco de Oliveira, 2014, p. 130). With efforts to 'civilise' the colonised peoples through religious conversion widely regarded failure, in practice, 'pacification' tended to simply represent militarily conquest and (temporary) resignation to Portuguese rule (*ibid.*). However, new forms of resistance would frequently arise, prompting new rounds of pacification.

Some authors have drawn parallels or connections between these historical precedents to conceptualise contemporary policing practices as similarly underpinned by logics of pacification. Neocleous (2013), for example, argues that pacification is inextricably linked to capitalism, in that it serves to maintain access to both a cheap and pliable labour force and valuable raw materials. Pacification practices must therefore be continually revolutionised in relation to changing strategies of accumulation. Saborio

(2013), among others, has pointed to the relationship between Rio's UPP programme and new dynamics of capital accumulation associated with mega-events and tourism. Pacheco de Oliveira (2014) has drawn similarities between the Brazilian state's historical treatment of indigenous peoples and of Rio's favela residents under the pacification programme, highlighting how both are based on 'tutelage' – the need for violence and protection – grounded in inferiorising, racist narratives.

Such approaches offer important insights into the relationship between economic development, social and racial exclusion, and order-making in Brazilian cities today. However, they risk taking the state's own claims about its ability to achieve 'pacification' at face value. In recent years, research in marginalised urban spaces across Latin America has emphasised how order is often co-produced by state and nonstate actors through 'hybrid' (Jaffe, 2013) or 'plural' (Arias & Barnes, 2017) orders. Indeed, even Rio's UPPs may have, to a significant degree, rested on informal modes of coexistence and even co-operation between police and drug traffickers (Richmond, 2019). Rather than seeing order-making by criminal and state actors as a zero-sum game, they should be understood as co-constituted via continually shifting relationships.

This raises the question of how such relationships are established, maintained and/or break down over time. At the higher, executive levels of both the state and large and complex criminal organisations, policies may be adopted that either increase or minimise the likelihood of conflict (Feltran, 2020; Lessing, 2018). However, in practice both police forces and criminal organisations in Brazil tend to be highly decentralised, allowing local actors in urban peripheries significant margins for making autonomous decisions and pursuing their own interests (Feltran, 2020; Pope, 2019). Empirically, substantial diversity has been observed between forms of criminal organisation and local arrangements within and between Brazilian cities. For example, Hirata and Grillo (2017) identify important differences between the organisation of drug trafficking in Rio and São Paulo. In São Paulo, a single hegemonic criminal organisation, the *Primeiro Comando da Capital* (First Command of the Capital, PCC), regulates the retail drug market across the city with relatively low levels of violence, dispensing with the need for open use of weaponry at drug sale points. In Rio, by contrast, three major drug trafficking factions compete violently for territory, meaning that frontline dealers are always armed and that there is far higher risk of violence breaking out in certain parts of the city.

There are also important territorial differences across Rio de Janeiro's fragmented criminal landscape (Arias & Barnes, 2017). In the South and North Zones of the city, favelas are mainly dominated by different drug trafficking factions, in some cases in coexistence with the formal presence of UPPs. While these groups may be targeted by violent police operations, everyday 'peace' tends to be maintained through practices of mutual avoidance (Richmond, 2019) and corrupt payments to local officers (Misse, 2018). Much of the West Zone of the city, meanwhile, is dominated by so-called 'militias' – groups of off-duty or retired police and other armed agents of (or with connections to) the state, who operate illegally in diverse markets and use violence and intimidation to repress other criminal actors (Paes Manso, 2020; Pope, 2019). Militias tend to profit primarily from extortion and the monopolisation of local utilities, rather than drug trafficking. Because they are deeply entwined with the police and formal political actors, there are rarely sustained attempts by the state to disrupt their activities, meaning that militias are able to exercise coercive control over their territories with little resistance from the state. As such, rather than being

straightforwardly ‘non-state’ actors, militias should be understood as existing at the *margins* of the state, partially benefitting from the resources and authority bestowed by the state, while directly undermining the rule of law by using violence in the pursuit of private gain and influence.

If there are important differences in forms of criminal organisation across different urban contexts, as shown clearly by the case of Rio de Janeiro, there have also been important changes over time. Telles (2010) offers an illuminating account of how criminal and order-making dynamics in the peripheries of São Paulo have evolved since the 1980s. During the first period, covering the 1980s, ‘*justiceiros*’ (local vigilante strongmen) acted as informal police in many peripheral neighbourhoods, repressing small-scale criminality. In a second period, during the 1990s and early 2000s, small gangs participating in drug trafficking and other criminal markets proliferated across the peripheries, leading to a huge increase in violence and endless cycles of revenge killings. During a third period, from the mid-2000s onwards the *PCC* established hegemony over the criminal world, forcing those operating in illegal markets to accept their authority and regulatory structures. These structures rest on a hierarchy of a mainly prison-based leadership, a highly decentralised official membership of ‘*irmãos*’ (brothers), and a much larger population of criminal actors subject to its authority (Feltran, 2020). Transgressions of *PCC* rules, whether by members or non-members, trigger so-called ‘debates’, where ‘brothers’ are called to hear testimonies and eventually pass verdicts that may result in punishment, including execution for the most serious offences. This parallel justice system has been credited with putting an end to the cycles of violence that characterised Telles’ second period and dramatically reducing São Paulo’s homicide rate (Feltran, 2020; Telles, 2010).

Telles cautiously describes the *PCC*’s expansion as a process of ‘pacification’. This is because it has, by imposing relatively stable authority and regulatory structures, reduced the need for violent conflict between actors operating in criminal markets. This in turn has reduced the frequency of violent police interventions. However, she also emphasises the limits of pacification, namely the persistence, even if at lower levels, of both criminal and police violence, and the lack of any kind of democratic accountability:

If there is a relative “pacification” of these territories, it also needs to be placed in the perspective and in relation to the modes of operation of the forces of order that remain present, marking and unmarking these territories as spaces of exception. The extra-legal procedures of the police continue to operate, with their protection markets and practices of extortion. Extra-legal violence persists. (Telles, 2010, p. 46)

As will be discussed, then, this approach keeps in view the structural factors associated with more state-centric understandings of pacification, such as the centrality of capitalist markets and dynamics of social and racial exclusion. However, they emphasise that the dynamics through which provisional reductions in violence are achieved rest more on the internal dynamics of criminal organisations and their relationships to local state actors than any unilateral capacity of the state to suppress conflict.

### **Eldorado: in search of tranquility**

Eldorado is a small favela with a population of a few thousand residents, located in the Jacarepaguá region of Rio de Janeiro’s West Zone. Most of Eldorado has a grid-like layout and sewerage built into its original design thanks to a relatively organised

settlement process, typical of favelas in this part of this city. However, its peripheral location and historical development have left it largely excluded from public policies, including tenure regularisation, that have been directed at favelas elsewhere in the city. Since its establishment, Eldorado has relied heavily on political patronage to access state resources. Even when the favela was finally physically upgraded, this was achieved through familiar clientelist channels after the residents' association had supported the election campaign of Mayor Eduardo Paes (2008–2016). As a result, the favela was admitted into a newly-created upgrading programme narrowly focused on paving and the installation of drains and lighting, rather than gaining access to more holistic or participatory interventions.

The land that the favela occupies today was previously farmland, used by several families who lived on and used different parts of the territory. As urbanisation accelerated in this part of the city during the 1970s, especially in the wealthy beachside area of Barra da Tijuca, there was increasing demand for low-cost housing in Jacarepaguá (Araújo & Cortado, 2020). This created incentives for rural landowners to subdivide and sell off their land as small lots, precipitating a rapid process of urbanisation. Part of Eldorado's territory was first subdivided in this way in the late-1970s by the purported owner of this parcel. However, although the buyers paid for their lots, there were legal irregularities and to this day they have not received formal land titles. Two sisters who today live in Asa Branca, Gisleine and Joana, described the legal irregularities of this initial stage:

- Gisleine: It was like this, it was my grandfather and a Portuguese guy. The Portuguese guy subdivided everything and sold it. He took a bit part of my granddad's [land].  
Joana: My granddad was so disgusted, he died because of it.

From this beginning, Eldorado subsequently grew horizontally through a series of land occupations during the 1980s and 1990s. According to several accounts, these were coordinated by the existing residents who wished to claim lots either to house their growing families or to sell on. This was the case of Gisleine: 'My mother was in charge of this invasion here, my mother. So my mother came to grab a plot for me, for my sister, and we came here'.

However, these occupations encountered challenges. Another purported landowner disputed the occupation of part of the land in the early 1990s, hoping to clear the occupiers so he could sell it. However, he was unable to prove ownership and the occupiers remained. Meanwhile, the process of occupation itself appears to have been a contested process. Although 'organised' by existing residents, it appears outsiders also wished to take advantage of the opportunity to claim plots. Henrique, another current resident, claimed his family legally owned land that was threatened by occupiers in the late-1980s. He described the conflicts that ensued:

You know what an invasion is like? It's like this "Ah there's going to be a spare plot", and everyone comes, because everyone wants a place. [...] It was organised, but lots of people died. Lots of people died because of the invasion. They came from outside to take a plot of land, you understand. At the time when we bought here, these walls weren't here, it was only our path. So lots of people invaded, they wanted to invade our space here and we were always with the police saying that they couldn't, you understand, and we had all the documentation in order, so they didn't invade. [...] An invasion, "I want a plot, a piece of land", and they settle and stay, you understand? But once it consolidated, it stopped. It finished, understand?



The scenario Henrique paints is one of intensifying competition for an increasingly valuable commodity: *land*. The value of the land lay in the fact that there was increased demand from a growing low-income population and those with ownership claims sought to capture the maximum potential value. This created a crisis of order, as competing claims to the land needed to be mediated and the accompanying threat of conflict suppressed. While in some instances this occurred through formal legal processes, it also seems to have, at times, involved violence. Henrique's account suggests the police played a key role in protecting the claims of some occupiers against others by deploying their access to the means of violence to re-establish a sense of local order.

Intriguingly, according to Henrique's account, the period of greatest violence – when 'lots of people died' – seems to have come to an end as the neighbourhood became physically and demographically consolidated. Eldorado ceased to expand horizontally, as available space became saturated. With no unoccupied or undeveloped land left to be contested, competition for land was channelled into a growing informal property market that appears to have operated largely according to a non-violent logic. Meanwhile, the population stabilised at a relatively small size and with low resident turnover. As residents all knew one another, it became easier to uphold informal social norms without recourse to violence. Nonetheless, it appears that violent actors remained in the background, available to resolve conflicts and repel external threats when necessary. Many residents spoke enigmatically of attempts by traffickers to establish drug sale points, but being prevented from this by the 'community'. Indeed, residents enthusiastically celebrate the absence of drug trafficking and the violence they associate with it, frequently using terms like 'peace' and 'tranquility' to distinguish their community from the popular image of favelas (Araújo & Cortado, 2020). Joana, one of the sisters mentioned earlier, at one point exclaimed: 'This place is a blessing. It's a place blessed by God, you know. It's a quiet, tranquil place. It doesn't have that favela thing, you understand ... of criminality ["*bandidagem*"], thank God!'

However, since around the mid-2000s, Eldorado has undergone dramatic changes linked to transformations in the wider region. As mentioned previously, the favela was upgraded via the paving of streets and the installation of street lamps and drains, all serving to increase its attractiveness to incomers. Meanwhile, between 2009 and 2016, Jacarepaguá underwent a construction boom, largely linked to the Rio Olympic Games (Araújo & Cortado, 2020). Aside from the need for new sporting and tourism infrastructure, property speculation led to the construction to large numbers of elite condominiums in the area. The boom, in turn, attracted new workers and also fuelled renewed competition for housing within Eldorado. Since the late 2000s, Eldorado's population has grown dramatically, as did the proportion of renters relative to homeowners. Whereas population growth had previously been absorbed through *horizontal* expansion, now growth was *vertical*. Existing residents built second and third floors to their homes and turned these into small studio flats to rent out. While this appeared to be a widespread practice, there were rumours of individuals buying up large numbers of homes to let out in this way.

The 2000s were also the period in which militias expanded rapidly across Jacarepaguá and the wider West Zone (Paes Manso, 2020). These groups, represented an evolution of older models of order-making centred on local strongmen, with the institutionalisation of extortion rackets and expansion into new economic activities, including the monopoly



provision of utilities, informal transport services, and property speculation. They were subject to a public commission in 2008, leading to numerous arrests, but have nonetheless continued to expand and deepen their influence over Rio politics (*ibid.*). While the expansion of militias is a phenomenon that affects Rio's entire West Zone and beyond, the experience of Eldorado suggests that rapid urban growth can contribute in specific ways. It creates new market opportunities that can be exploited by licit actors and existing residents as well as by criminal organisations, but also destabilises local population dynamics and social norms, thus potentially generating new challenges to order.

Anxiety about these changes is clear in the discourses of Eldorado's long-term residents. While they still celebrate the community's relative 'tranquility', rapid population growth and increased resident turnover fuel speculation that danger may lurk amongst the growing number of unfamiliar faces circulating through the area. The following quotes from Hamilton, a long-standing resident, and Gisleine, introduced above, express these concerns:

I think there are lots of people in hiding in our community. You don't know the past of your neighbour. [...] It could be someone who already killed someone, who is a fugitive that's gone to a community. It could be someone who's a drug addict, who was in prison. We don't know, and we can't find out from anyone else.

*Hamilton*

Look, it doesn't bother me especially, but I'm not going to lie to you, it's not good. Because today you don't know who is who, where people are coming from, you understand. Lots of people are coming from the North to work here, understand. They don't bother us, that's the important thing, right? But it's really a lot of people. Lots of people. People pass and it's like "I've never seen those people", "God, he's strange, that guy, strange". [...] For me this thing of renting isn't for communities. That's something for the street [i.e. formal areas], not for favelas.

*Gisleine*

While the authoritarian nature of militia rule makes it nigh impossible to judge how much support they actually enjoy among residents of these territories, it is highly plausible that the anxiety provoked by urban growth may reinforce the perception among existing residents that some group or arrangement of actors must play a 'pacifying' function, and suppress potential conflict before it arises.

### **Fazenda da Juta: from occupation to pacification**

Fazenda da Juta is a large, heterogeneous neighbourhood of around 38,000 residents (IBGE, 2010), lying in the district of Sapopemba in São Paulo's East Zone. The initial phase of settlement of the area bears some resemblance to that which occurred in Eldorado, though on a far larger scale.<sup>1</sup> The property, which mainly consisted of farmland and some forest, was owned by a single individual. By the late 1970s it had been fully encircled by the expanding city, which dramatically increased its value. Via a land development company, the landlord began to subdivide parcels of the land and rent them out to low-income tenants who proceeded to construct their own homes. In the mid-1980s, however, the landowner raised the rents to unaffordable levels and then sought to evict the tenants. This was met with collective resistance. In the context of Brazil's

redemocratisation process, housing movements were growing in confidence and supported the claims of tenants by publicising the case, organising street protests, and providing legal defence. During the second half of the decade, this was followed by a series of land occupations, which, despite numerous eviction attempts, the landowner was ultimately unable to resist. By the end of the 1980s, thousands of families had occupied and built on the western part of Fazenda da Juta. Legal disputes continued for many years, but urban upgrading was carried out by the state during the 1990s and most residents' legal status was finally regularised in 2016 (Ferreira, 2018).

During the 1990s, a quite distinct process of settlement began on the eastern portion of the territory. This parcel of the land was appropriated by *Companhia de Desenvolvimento Habitacional e Urbano* (Company for Housing and Urban Development, CDHU) of the State of São Paulo, which began to build social housing that would eventually be allocated via formal waiting lists. However, in 1997, before construction was complete, the numerous apartment blocks were spontaneously occupied by hundreds of families. After failed removal attempts by police, one of which led to the deaths of three young men (Ferreira, 2018), the state government opted to negotiate a process of regularisation with the occupiers, offering means-tested repayment plans. Once agreed, this set in train a series of other processes, including the upgrading of the buildings and surrounding urban infrastructure and the formalisation of water and electricity provision. Eventually, key public services, including several schools, two health centres and two police stations, were installed in the neighbourhood.

These successive waves of land and building occupations, negotiations between occupiers and the state, and eventual formalisation and regularisation bear an interesting relationship to order-making dynamics in Fazenda da Juta. These broadly follow the three historical periods identified by Telles. Based on first-hand accounts, Ferreira (2018) recounts how, during the initial land conflicts of the early 1980s, a local *justiceiro* was hired by the landowner to collect rents and, when necessary, evict tenants, often using intimidation and violence. However, the scale and speed of the subsequent occupations and accompanying population growth overwhelmed his ability to maintain order. Instead, the resulting vacuum of authority was filled by individual strongmen who began to exercise violent control over the different micro-neighbourhoods that emerged across the area. Ágata, who participated in an occupation during in the early 1990s, described a figure who briefly thrived under such conditions:

Renan was like this, if a friend of his wanted a house, Renan would enter your house, he would kick out the family and put his own friend in. Renan was like that. [...] He was one of the bosses [*"cabeças"*] here in Juta, one of the top-cats [*"manda-chuvas"*], you know? [...] And with Renan you left on your own two feet or you left dead. So Renan killed a lot of people here, a lot of people.

Renan was eventually murdered by a rival, but numerous characters like him appear across residents' accounts of this period. The occupations of the apartment blocks that followed produced a similar scenario. Those who participated describe chaotic scenes: of occupiers locking themselves into apartments for fear of being forcefully removed; of the spontaneous formation of groups in different blocks for self-protection. During this process, along with ordinary poor families, criminal gangs also took the opportunity to requisition apartments for their own purposes, establishing them as stores for drugs,

arms and stolen goods. Several residents described the impact of these groups during the 1990s and early 2000s. One mentioned individuals who would periodically go door-to-door to charge a 'protection fee', others spoke of a group who stood on a footbridge into the neighbourhood, charging a toll for people to cross. Meanwhile, there was almost perpetual conflict and cycles of revenge killings between different criminal groups. Suzane, who bought an apartment informally in 2000, described the context:

Lots of people died here in Juta. We say that there was a lot of bloodshed, in each of these blocks that you pass, at least three people died under the block in broad daylight. When I moved here in 2000, I witnessed two murders on my block, you understand, aside from those nearby. So the bad people, lots of them died, lots of people died.

However, this would change dramatically over the next five years as a result of two distinct, but – in the case of Fazenda da Juta – historically coinciding processes. The first was the aforementioned regularisation of the apartments. Occupiers who were unable or unwilling to have their resident status regularised – which meant entering bureaucratic state systems and becoming liable to pay mortgages and utility bills – sold their apartments informally. This included many of the poorest residents, but also most of those involved in criminal activities. Bete, who had participated in the original occupation and still lived in the same apartment told me:

There were lots and lots and lots and lots and lots of criminals ["*bandidos*"] here. You know, in an invasion they're the first to arrive. But after the legalisation they all left. No-one knows where they went ... just that they didn't stay in here in Juta.

The second major change was that around 2004–2005, the PCC became hegemonic in Sapopemba and imposed its system of parallel justice on criminal actors operating in the area (Feltran, 2020). While this process of centralisation initially caused an increase in violence, it has subsequently been remarkably effective at preventing the cycles of revenge and trivial violence that terrorised São Paulo's peripheries during the 1990s. The local effects of this shift have not gone unnoticed among Fazenda da Juta's residents. One of them, Analise, described the difference between the 1990s and today to me in the following terms:

At that time you didn't have the PCC, so when they entered, those who didn't accept them died. So lots of people died, lots. You have no idea. We lived tripping over the bodies. You would visit someone, when you came back there was one lying there. You would go down the road, there was a shootout down there. [...] You can imagine how it was at the time. Today it's marvellous. Juta is a paradise!

Criminal activity, including drug trafficking, continues in Fazenda da Juta today, but is accompanied by far less violence than previously. Since most of the neighbourhood was physically consolidated in the early 2000s, subsequent urban growth has occurred primarily through the construction of a number of small occupations mainly located in precarious areas like river banks and hillsides. Rumours circulate widely among residents that the PCC leads these occupations in order to profit from the sale of lots. It is also widely alleged that many of the homes are used to store drugs and stolen goods, just as had occurred previously in the occupied apartment buildings. If true, however, today this occurs under very different conditions.

Aside from the PCC's own regulation of the criminal world, relations with police, who are now permanently present in the neighbourhood, appear to operate according to a logic of mutual avoidance and coexistence. One of the two police stations in Fazenda da Juta sits about 100 metres from an irregular occupation, where residents claim that drug dealing occurs openly without police intervention. Paulo, who previously lived in one of these occupations, but had been rehoused in an apartment in the area, suspected that there was collusion between traffickers and police:

What we think is that there's involvement, because of their behaviour. Because it shouldn't happen. Because there are police right there on the doorstep, and the drug trafficking is out in the open. So no one is interested in reporting it, because who are you going to report it to? Who *doesn't* know?

This appears to reflect a wider arrangement whereby residents largely avoid calling the police to resolve problems, and instead seek to resolve conflicts themselves informally or, in serious cases, by activating the PCC's networks. These arrangements have been successful in 'pacifying' the neighbourhood, leading to a remarkable reduction in violence even as criminal markets remain as active as ever. However, they have left residents largely without recourse to accountable forms of security, and with daily reminders of the state's failure to unilaterally produce 'order'.

### Conclusion: varieties of pacification

As the cases of Eldorado and Fazenda da Juta demonstrate, dynamics of order-making in Brazil's urban peripheries have undergone diverse and dramatic transformations over the last four decades. As I have argued, it can be analytically useful to conceptualise these as constituting ongoing processes of 'pacification'. As Telles (2010) has argued, however, this term needs to be used with great caution. As more state-centred understandings (e.g. Neocleous, 2011, 2013; Pacheco de Oliveira, 2014) of pacification clearly show, the term itself can be misleading. Pacification does not mean the production of peaceful or harmonious relationships, but rather the suppression of conflict by actors with the capacity and desire to do so. In the historical treatment of colonised populations, this has meant the asymmetric imposition of terms by (neo)colonial states pursuing their own interests, even if these may include some concessions designed to ensure lasting stability. The need to then maintain order under changing social and economic conditions means that pacification becomes a dynamic, ongoing process that is never definitively concluded. In this respect, these analyses offer important insights into the continuing use of state violence in the favelas and peripheries of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and other Brazilian cities today.

However, as I have argued, state-centred approaches overstate the degree to which formal state actors unilaterally make order in these spaces. Instead, pacification depends heavily on the actions of those beyond or at the margins of the state, and on the arrangements of coexistence that these actors establish with local agents of the state. The case sites are located in wider urban settings that have seen dramatic transformations to criminal organisation since the 1980s. In Rio's West Zone, there has been a transition from highly localised arrangements, in which order was maintained by police and other armed individuals acting informally and in *ad hoc* ways, to complex

militia organisations monopolising diverse urban markets and often exercising quasi-authoritarian forms of local control. In the peripheries of São Paulo, there have been transitions from the era of *justiceiros* to the fragmentation and extreme violence of the 1990s, and then to the hegemony of the *PCC* since the mid-2000s, with its parallel systems of regulation and justice.

Within these broader contexts, however, the case studies indicate that order-making arrangements and practices are established at a much more local scale in response to constantly changing urban conditions. As described, these effects may be observed at different moments of peripheral urbanisation processes: from initial occupation, to consolidation and regularisation, to changes in housing market dynamics. In both cases, informal land occupations generated conflicting land claims, creating a perceived need – and opportunities – for authoritative actors who could use their access to the means of violence to uphold the claims of some over others. These occupations also quickly produced weakly regulated spaces where criminal markets could potentially flourish. While the authoritative actors who emerged in Eldorado prevented drug-trafficking from taking root, in Fazenda da Juta this and other criminal activities became established, accompanied by high levels of everyday violence. Over time, however, processes of regularisation and formalisation and the increased presence of state agents (something which never occurred to the same degree in Eldorado) served to displace these activities into other informal spaces in the area or to push them into being conducted in more covert ways. This does not mean that the state successfully *repressed* criminal activity in Fazenda da Juta, but rather that local criminal and state actors established new routines and spatial arrangements to make their coexistence viable (see also Richmond, 2019). Finally, as indicated by recent developments in Eldorado, rapid population growth and increased resident turnover, channelled through informal housing markets, can create new market opportunities but also pose challenges to established order and social norms, generating new anxieties that may also reinforce demands for order-making among some residents.

Clearly, Rio's militias and the *PCC* are radically different types of criminal organisation and the effects of these differences can be seen in the way pacification occurs. Whereas the militias grew from within the state, in the form of state security agents who began to act systematically outside of the law, the *PCC* emerged in opposition to it, as a form of collective self-defence among prisoners that later spread across São Paulo's criminal world. Local actors are embedded in, and constrained by, these larger hierarchies and regulatory structures, which help to determine, for example, which criminal activities are permitted, how the use of force is regulated, and the nature of relationships between local state and criminal actors. These differences are also visible in dominant representations of the two types – drug traffickers are normatively viewed as '*bandidos*' (criminals), whereas militias are often seen as providing protection from them. These ideological differences find their way into the discourses of local residents, for example in the framing of militia dominated areas as being 'free from criminality'.

Despite these differences, however, it is striking that residents in both cases tended to mobilise remarkably similar narratives when discussing changes to local security conditions over time. During fieldwork in both sites, I frequently heard variations on the following construction that I believe distils the pacification process in its essence: *before* 'lots of people died', *but now* 'it's tranquil'. This apparent isomorphy between such different

contexts suggests that we must look to social and institutional conditions in Brazil's favelas and peripheries more broadly, and the perceived 'threats to order' that continually arise within them, to understand what drives the never-ending process of pacification. Because if local arrangements established in Eldorado and Fazenda da Juta have, at least for now, largely succeeded in suppressing such conflicts, elsewhere they continue unabated.

## Note

1. See Ferreira (2018) for a detailed account of this process.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Andreza de Souza Santos for the invitation to contribute to this special issue. Thank you also to Gabriel Feltran, Deocleciana Ferreira, Nick Pope and the anonymous journal reviewers for helping to shape the ideas presented in this article. Finally, I would like to thank Gareth Jones and the other organisers and participants of the British Council/Newton Fund Researcher Links workshop 'Governance, Crime and International Security', in São Paulo, 2019, where I had the opportunity to present and discuss this paper in draft form.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Funding

This research was funded by an Economic and Social Research Council PhD 1+3 studentship and a FAPESP Postdoctoral Grant (no. 2015/14480-0); Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo. The British Council/Newton Fund Researcher Links workshop, 'Governance, Crime and International Security: testing innovations in policy, practice and research', São Paulo, 2019. Grant ID – 2018-RLWK10-10060.

## Notes on contributor

*Matthew A. Richmond* is Leverhulme Trust Early Career Fellow at LSE LACC. He previously completed Postdoctoral Fellowships at the Centro de Estudos da Metrópole and the Universidade Estadual Paulista, both in São Paulo, Brazil. He has a PhD in Human Geography from King's College London, an MPhil in Social Sciences from the University of Cambridge, and a BA in History from LSE. Matthew's research looks at urban development, governance and subjectivity formation in Latin America, particularly in marginalised and peripheral urban spaces in Brazil. He has conducted ethnographic research in favelas and peripheries in the country's two largest metropolises, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, and on socio-spatial fragmentation and public space in several medium-sized Brazilian cities.

## ORCID

Matthew Aaron Richmond  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1563-3615>

## References

- Araújo, M., & Cortado, T. J. (2020). A Zona Oeste do Rio de Janeiro, fronteira dos estudos urbanos? *Dilemas*, 13(1), 7–30.

- Arias, E. D., & Barnes, N. (2017). Crime and plural orders in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. *Current Sociology*, 65(3), 448–465.
- Caldeira, T. (2017). Peripheral urbanization: Autoconstruction, transversal logics, and politics in cities of the global south. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 35(1), 3–20.
- Feltran, G. D. S. (2020). *The entangled city: Crime as urban fabric in São Paulo*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Ferreira, D. (2018). *Fazenda da Juta/SP: Uma trilha entre o rural e o urbano – Trajetória de luta e resistência no assentamento de um povo*. [PhD Thesis]. Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo (PUC-SP).
- Hirata, D., & Grillo, C. C. (2017). Sintonia e amizade entre patrões e donos de morro: Perspectivas comparativas entre o comércio varejista de drogas em São Paulo e no Rio de Janeiro. *Tempo Social*, 29(2), 75–97.
- Holston, J. (2008). *Insurgent citizenship: Disjunctions of democracy and modernity in Brazil*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE). 2010. *Censo Demográfico 2010*.
- Jaffe, R. (2013). The hybrid state: Crime and citizenship in urban Jamaica. *American Ethnologist*, 40(4), 734–748.
- Leeds, E. (1996). Cocaine and parallel polities on the Brazilian urban periphery: Constraints on local level democratization. *Latin American Research Review*, 31(3), 47–84.
- Lessing, B. (2018). *Making peace in drug wars: Crackdowns and cartels in Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Misse, M. (2018). Violence, criminal subjection and political merchandise in Brazil: An overview from Rio. *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology*, 7, 135–148.
- Neocleous, M. (2011). ‘A brighter and nicer new life’: Security as pacification. *Social & Legal Studies*, 20(2), 191–208.
- Neocleous, M. (2013). The dream of pacification: Accumulation, class war and the hunt. *Socialist Studies*, 9(2), 7–31.
- Pacheco de Oliveira, J. (2014). Pacificação e tutela militar na gestão de populações e territórios. *Mana*, 20(1), 125–161.
- Paes Manso, B. (2020). *A República das Milícias: Dos Esquadrões da Morte à Era Bolsonaro*. São Paulo: Todavia.
- Pope, N. (2019). *Brokering an urban frontier: Milícias, violence and Rio de Janeiro’s West Zone*. [PhD Thesis]. School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS).
- Richmond, M. A. (2019). “Hostages to both sides”: Favela pacification as dual security assemblage. *Geoforum*, 104, 71–80.
- Saborio, S. (2013). The pacification of the favelas: Mega events, global competitiveness, and the neutralization of marginality. *Socialist Studies*, 9(2), 130–145.
- Telles, V. S. (2010). *A Cidade nas Fronteiras do Legal e Illegal*. Belo Horizonte: Argumentum.