

Review of *Illegal Markets, Violence, and Inequality: Evidence from a Brazilian Metropolis* by Jean Daudelin and José Luiz Ratton. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018; Pp 90. ISBN: 978-3-319-76248-7. Hbk: £49.99

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The relationship between illicit drug markets and violence continues to be a substantial area of focus for criminology. Frequent incidences of often the most serious physical violence in these clandestine underworlds remain a cause of concern and scrutiny. Perceptions of drug markets being places of bloodshed and carnage are also often fundamental to how these environments and those that populate them are understood and represented. Over recent years in the UK, for example, their role in escalating street violence have been frequently debated by politicians, criminal justice officials and the media, with the apparent part played by middle class users regularly the subject of attention. This short book by Daudelin and Ratton, which scrutinises drug market violence explicitly in relation to inequality, is therefore a timely and welcome addition to the literature.

The setting is the city of Recife in North East Brazil, where the authors draw on over ten years' worth of (sometimes participant) observations and fifty three interviews with a range of drug market actors situated in opposing trenches of the drug war. Described as a metropolis scarred by high levels of violence and deprivation, the city's long history of inequality is immediately laid bare, with its neighbourhoods named after sugar mills run on slave labour, and the luxury apartments overlooking the Capibaribe river contrasted with the rickety shacks resting on its marshes a few kilometres downstream. However, those seeking a rich portrait of this locale or to hear from the respondents themselves will be disappointed. Despite the data collected, there is no deep immersion into these milieus via the sharing of field notes or interview quotes. In keeping with Palgrave's 'Pivot' book series, this is a concise text that sets out to make its points economically. A lean, punchy argument is constructed, free of any excess fat. How much of this is a strength or grounds for critique is likely to come down to the predilection of the reader.

The main argument of the book rests on a critique of Goldstein's (1985) 'systemic' explanation of drug market violence. This continues to be the dominant account of why violence manifests in these environments, but is judged by Daudelin and Rattin to be lacking. In line with others (e.g Coomber, 2015), they argue it is important to avoid the assumption that violence is inherent to how drug markets function. Implicitly contradicting the concept of 'virtual anarchy' (Jacques and Allen, 2015), where violence is considered an inevitable outcome of drug market actors not having recourse to formal law and conflict resolution, it is suggested that 'criminal governance' often works far better than is commonly expected. To properly appreciate why violence occurs, analysis must therefore foreground structural inequalities and understand how these mediate the informal regulation of these arenas. Reference to the work of Stevens (2011), which arguably remains the most thorough critique of Goldstein's conceptualisation, would have added further strength to this argument. Yet, with an emphasis placed on how inequality relates to deterrence, with some markets structured in ways that discourage violence far more than others, the opening chapter provides a suitable platform to be built upon.

The remainder of the book therefore serves to advance this position with a range of evidence. Presented in chapter two are the city's 'Islands of Peace', with artists, intellectuals and students among those consuming drugs such as cannabis, ecstasy and powder cocaine, creating highly active 'middle class' drug markets that do not conform to stereotypical depictions of places of darkness and danger. Some important context is provided regarding recent market trends and their role in minimising violence. Changes in the cannabis market, for example, have seen middle class users moving away from the traditional purchase venues of 'bocas' that pop up in deprived neighbourhoods in favour of frequenting middle class sellers who are often part of their own social circle, engaged in supply alongside regular employment and providing a higher quality product. Mirroring trends recently reported in European markets (see Bakken and Demant, 2019; Sogaard et al., 2019), the increased propensity for direct delivery and for orders to be made via avenues such as *WhatsApp* and *Facebook* are also alluded to.

With all of this combined, it is judged that the principal reason for the lack of violence in these markets is due to their 'closed' status, alongside associated conditions including high trust levels and the fact that they are cash based. An important distinction between conflict and violence is noted, with it recognised, as others have previously (Jacques and Wright, 2008), that the former does not necessarily lead to the latter. Even when conflicts do occur in middle class markets, violence will rarely be the way that they are resolved. Importantly, the policing (or lack thereof) of these markets is also addressed and connected to this. Being generally untouched by law enforcement leads to an entrenchment of trust and stability in these markets, constraining both conflict and violence. In cyclical fashion, this further limits the need or desire for the police to intervene or pursue those participating in them. Speaking to the type of governance required to minimise violence, under these conditions what market participants are aware of is that any use of violence is likely to lead to significant attention, which the authors identify as providing a deterrent effect.

The crack market presented in chapter three sits in direct contrast to this. These are scenes dominated by users living in deprivation, who congregate around places of purchase which overlap with the street sex market. Indoor smoking venues are popular destinations, but while a limited few may be able to hole up in the relative luxury of a motel room for binges that can last several days, these generally consist of dirty, cramped 'crack house' scenarios, filled with claustrophobic tension, anxiety and unpredictable intoxication. Unlike what could be identified in the middle class markets, there are no dealers similar to those described by the work of Salinas (2018) who combine supply alongside the patterns of legitimate work and leisure. Instead, 'gangs' with 'managers' and 'workforces' jostle for position in a competitive, commercial and hierarchical market place.

The open and overt nature of these markets is seen to lie at the heart of their violent tendencies. The use of credit and the related punishments for debt is identified as a particular contributor, with the typically small 'doses' on offer being very cheap but easily binged upon, often quickly leading to debt traps. Similar to the previous chapter, elements of under-enforcement are identified. However, rather than the police not pursuing drug related offences like they do in the middle class markets, in this case limited attention is placed on the violence that occurs. These markets and their actors are therefore simultaneously 'under' and 'over' policed, frequently being disrupted and destabilised, yet with the violence that this may exacerbate regularly going unchecked. Violence is rarely reported and, if it is, investigations are minimal with low clear up rates. The authors therefore consider any potential deterrence as being minimal.

Rounding the book's argument off, the final substantive chapter considers what might be put in place to influence this, specifically reflecting on the "Pact for Life" approach undertaken in the city between 2007-2013. By focusing police resources on the prevention and repression of violence, the authors suggest this helped reduce the unequal levels of deterrence identified across these different markets. The authors consider this as a key factor in the significant decrease in homicide rates around this time, though this is suitably caveated with a word of caution regarding causation. The approach consisted of a range of initiatives but focused most specifically on the intense targeting of those causing the most violence in the most violent areas. Backed financially by the government, the police were incentivised to pursue these crimes and investigate all homicides. What's notable about this approach is that it was directed towards treating the inequalities of deterrence, rather than structural inequalities. Its apparent success therefore conforms to the types of mechanisms associated with focussed deterrence approaches used elsewhere.

As with the aforementioned lack of data presented, the occasional omissions of what would have been beneficial references to other drug market literature can be forgiven due to the book's brevity and aim. Its main strength is the evidenced call that drug market violence is not inevitable and that there are things that can be done to reduce it. This is as applicable to Brazil as it is to other contexts. As indicated by the fate of the "Pact for Life" approach – which ultimately lost focus and momentum – initiatives to reduce violence clearly rely on political will. As will hopefully be borne out further in the wider research project of which this is just one part, it is important to recognise that even apparent success in the targeted arresting of those engaging in the most problematic behaviour in the most problematic markets ultimately leads to the criminal justice system reinforcing and reproducing social inequalities, with evermore poor young black men placed in torrid, overcrowded Brazilian prisons. Deterrence driven law enforcement campaigns can clearly provide welcome short term gains, but it is important to keep in mind what they don't attend to. If drug market violence is fundamentally a product of inequality, it is clear where sustained policy attention and responsibility must ultimately be focused if it is to be significantly reduced.

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