The social effects of crime
on the dynamics of Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil*

Os efeitos sociais do crime
na dinâmica de Fortaleza, Ceará, Brasil

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Abstract

The article addresses the impact of criminal factions on the city of Fortaleza, state of Ceará, and highlights their influence on the daily life, political dynamics, and housing situation of popular neighborhoods. The study used a qualitative approach involving the analysis of newspaper articles, interviews, and visits to the affected territories. The comprehensive perspective adopted in the article considers the point of view of multiple agents involved, emphasizing the consistent dominance of factions over certain territories and their substantive impact on the lives of local communities. This influence occurs within the scope of public housing policies and directly affects people's daily decisions in the face of the illegal control exercised by armed groups.

Keywords: faction; violence; city; territory; displacement.

Resumo

Este artigo aborda o choque das facções criminosas na cidade de Fortaleza, Ceará, destacando a influência no cotidiano, na dinâmica política e na situação de moradia em bairros populares. A pesquisa utilizou uma abordagem qualitativa, envolvendo análise de matérias de jornais, entrevistas e incursões aos territórios afetados. A perspectiva compreensiva adotada no artigo considera o ponto de vista de múltiplos agentes envolvidos, evidenciando o domínio consistente das facções em determinados territórios e seu influxo substantivo na vida das comunidades locais. Essa influência ocorre no âmbito das políticas públicas de habitação, afetando diretamente as decisões diárias das pessoas ante o controle ilegal exercido pelos grupos armados.

Palavras-chave: *facção; violência; cidade; território; deslocamentos.*

Introduction

This paper results from the confluence of research into the problem of urban violence and how the city is made up by ways of living, socializing, and getting around. It brings together a set of collaborations aimed at analyzing how violence in Fortaleza, the capital of the Brazilian State of Ceará, has affected the social dynamics relating to the occupation of urban territories and ensuring the right to be in the city. In particular, the article looks at how the emergence of criminal gangs has affected the urban peripheries of Fortaleza, where these groups impose armed domination on the territory and create rules by which residents must guide their presence, movement, and relationships. It is worth highlighting the fact that, as important studies on the relationship between cities and violence have shown, armed control of urban territories has become an experience that people in Brazil have had to learn to live with and strategize how to accommodate their lives to the arbitrary domination of certain groups (Machado da Silva, 2008; Barbosa, 2012; Muniz and Dias, 2022; Telles, 2015; Grillo, 2019; Paiva, 2022; Barreira, 2008; Nascimento and Siqueira, 2022). We discuss how it is possible for residents of urban areas, especially residential condominiums built with the support of public policies – such as the *Minha Casa Minha Vida Program* (MCMV) – to live under the influence of the actions and controls of groups that are socially recognized as criminal groups.

The guiding question of this reflection is the following: "How is it possible to live under the influence of the arbitrary control of criminal groups that significantly interfere with people's way of living and relating to one another in an urban territory?".

This important question drives this study in its ambition to explain how four criminal groups – the First Capital Command (*Primeiro Comando da Capital* – PCC), the Red Command (*Comando Vermelho* – CV), the State Guardians (*Guardiões do Estado* – GDE), and the Massa (TDN)[1] – established at different times, with varied structures and actions, have implemented territorial domains that have significant repercussions on the lives of people who live in those territories and are not involved in their criminal schemes. It is assumed, from the outset, that the residents obtain knowledge through the pain caused by the violence by the gangs, either through the imminent threat or through the implementation of expulsions, aggressions, and murders that mark the territories and create knowledge through the trauma caused by the practice of violence.[2]

It is worth noting that the phenomenon of criminal groups has been exhaustively mapped by the Brazilian Social Sciences, through studies on the history and characteristics of the various groups in action in the country's different regions. Among them, the investigations into the two oldest criminal groups in the country – the Red Command (CV), in Rio de Janeiro, and the First Capital Command (PCC), in the State of São Paulo, stand out. Research has shown how the experience of the CV has played a role in the articulation of illegal drug markets and "*jogo do bicho*", elevating communities and creating routines of violence in Rio's favelas (Misse, 2007; Machado da Silva, 2008). The VC mobilized

people involved in crimes in "war" relations, but seeking "peace" in disputes against the police and other criminal groups in urban territories that, among other things, housed poor workers and their families (Zaluar, 2012; Hirata and Grillo, 2019; Hirata, Grillo and Telles, 2023). In São Paulo, the PCC's experience also involved its structuring, which began in prisons, with moments of "war" and "peace" that are necessary due to how the criminal group itself manages violence as a resource and expands its domination over urban territories (Dias, 2009; Marques, 2010; Biondi, 2018; Feltran, 2018). These two experiences contributed to a phenomenon that, at various scales, travels through the urban territories of the capitals and smaller cities of Brazil, reaching their borders. It is now possible to observe it in practically all states (Candotti, Melo, and Siqueira, 2017; Manso and Dias, 2018; Siqueira and Paiva, 2019; Duarte, 2021; Dias and Paiva, 2022; Siqueira, Nascimento and Moraes, 2022; Diogo, 2022; Rodrigues, Feltran and Zambon, 2023).

In the Northeast, the criminal groups penetrated the prison systems and reached the daily life of different peripheries of capitals and smaller cities (Melo and Paiva, 2021; Rodrigues et al. 2022; Paiva, Dias, and Lourenço, 2022). In many states, CV and PCC operated through both alliances and conflicts between them, with articulations involving local groups whose organization replicates in multiple ways the method created by the two criminal groups in the Southeast region – although each local group has its specificities, as showed by important research developed in the Northeast states (Paiva, 2019; Rodrigues, 2020; Lourenço and Almeida, 2013; Matos Júnior, Santiago Neto and Pires, 2022; Paiva

and Pires, 2023; Briceño-Leon, Barreira and Aquino, 2022). The configuration of violence developed in the Northeast, therefore, is made up by conflicts between armed groups that, because of the pulverization of other criminal groups, generated an important augmentation in the number of homicides, among other serious problems in various territories (Paiva, Barros and Cavalcante, 2019; Feltran et al., 2022; Motta et al., 2022; Matos Júnior and Santiago Neto, 2022). This produced sufficient consequences in the way life was performed in urban territories, decisively affecting the social space housing practices, especially in the peripheries.

To help think about the phenomenon of gangs, we resort to the idea that these groups are not comprehensible only as an expression of their criminal actions. Criminal groups are treated as a social phenomenon, with repercussions on the economy, politics, and culture of the populations reached by their domination (Paiva, 2022). The *criminal groups are thought of here as moral and political communities*, exercising actions of domination and integration of people who relate to each other with the support of symbolic references making up the group, cultivating ideals and values that overflow the group itself and reach the surrounding society in the territories in which they operate and in extensive networks formed for the development of business and political objectives. The criminal groups operate on different scales and with multiple associations for diverse activities. Its integrity is maintained by the understandings and political positions of its members, but it also stems from conflicts and disputes over the worldviews and moral orientations structuring each group.[3]

As moral and political communities, criminal groups create social and affective bonds, and it is possible to observe ways of integration not associated with a criminal scheme, but with shared beliefs and expectations among its members (Paiva, 2019). They are around the youth criminal groups with the expectation of joining the group, family members, neighbors, spouses, and various people assigned to specific missions. They are the bonds with a criminal group constituted through relationships cultivated in multiple ways and in different social spaces. Such links are woven by works at various scales, as they involve everything from a mission within a territory to national and international circuits. Criminal groups are moral and political communities that move and transform themselves in space and time, adapting to the social conditions and political conjunctures imposed on their development. In their dynamics of integration, the criminal groups offer possibilities of protection and rewards, while demanding responsibilities and commitments, weaving a political economy of life and death that reaches its members and people affected by the social repercussions of their actions.

By considering precisely how the actions of the criminal groups have repercussions as a social phenomenon that affects the city, this paper denotes the situation of localities that make up the outskirts of the city of Fortaleza, the capital and the largest urban center of the state of Ceará, in the Northeast of Brazil. The research privileged the speech of people who live, work, and circulate in the outskirts of Fortaleza, especially in housing complexes arising from social programs, living with criminal groups that exercise, on various scales,

life domination in certain territories. We do not intend to define the work of the criminal groups or the extent of their domination but to know how the subjects of this investigation reported their experiences in the face of a phenomenon that gained importance, penetrated daily life, and ended up being a part of the local dynamics of the territories. The interviewees' narratives were not always based on a phenomenon in which they would accurately measure the degree of risk experienced, but all of them were exhaustive in evidencing the existence of an imminent danger of violence on the part of armed people who, explicitly or implicitly, impose their presence as something that must be considered by each person who inhabits the territory. Below, we present some considerations regarding the path taken to reach the results of this experiment.

The theoretical-methodological path of the research

This article is based on a comprehensive perspective of the phenomenon of violence (Weber, 2000; Barrier, 1998; Misse, 2010), in an attempt to understand how the action promoted by armed groups recognized as criminal groups affects the daily lives of residents of certain residential areas of the city of Fortaleza, especially in its periphery. As in other Brazilian cities, the outskirts of Fortaleza are a historical phenomenon resulting from the territorialization of cities structured by social inequality in an unjust system of accumulation and distribution of wealth.[4] They also form racially constituted places and are home to most of the black population in the state of

Ceará, according to data from the 2022 Census of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics. Class and race factors are crucial elements when trying to understand how crime affects the lives of the urban population of a Brazilian city, as it does not reach the middle strata, much less the elites, predominantly white, similarly (Cerqueira and Coelho, 2017; Silva and Freitas, 2018; Mattos, 2017).

When considering the factors of class and race, it is also necessary to emphasize that this study focuses on the speech and the acts of witnessing of people who experience situations of violence in their daily lives. They are witnesses of the actions of criminal groups, their orders, and their ability to act violently because of their interests. In this step, there is a dialogue with a very specific understanding of the speeches, exploring the meaning given by these witnesses, whose interpretations go through the way their world was structured by violence. As a disruptive event in everyday life, violence is an experience that disorganizes the world as it should be to reorganize it as a possibility of coexisting with support in ways of living with violence, overcoming it, or reducing its incidence in life (Das, 2020). Therefore, when considering gang violence, residents need to work with the probability of something happening, if they do not consider the effective risk posed by gang rule in their territories.

To understand how residents deal with the problem of gangs, we rely on Das' (2011) studies on the act of witnessing, to understand how people interpret the relationship between violence and their subjectivity, lending researchers their reflections on how their social world exists populated by criminal groups. It should be noted that, for this work, violence is treated as a cultural experience that involves the perception of moral and ethical limits that cause harm to life and the way the world is perceived and experienced (Das, 2020). Experience is a way of seeing the world and giving meaning to the actions and relationships that constitute it. By pursuing this sense of action, the article dialogues with the tradition of comprehensive sociology, with a vast literature that supports it, since the seminal works of Weber (2000) and Schutz (2012), as well as the important contribution made by Geertz (1989) in his ethnographic work. In this way, the treatment given to the interviews considered the demand for the meaning that could be understood, highlighting that, as Piedade Lalanda (1998) observes, the statements of the interviewees portray only "a version of a story" (p. 874). This is also followed by Bourdieu's (1996) indication when he considers that "to understand is not to recognize an invariant meaning, but to apprehend singularity in a way that only exists in a particular context" (p. 159). For this reason, the reader does not find here the truth about the criminal groups, but a version of the story told with the support of the testimony of state agents and residents of the urban peripheries of Fortaleza affected by the armed groups.

Other types of research investments are found in other versions, as the experience of different people demonstrated during the investigation. Young residents who participated in one of the focus groups showed that armed groups affect people living in the same territory differently. A young black woman and a young black man reported that they could not walk freely in the neighborhood, even though they were part of a collective engaged in social struggles in the region. During the conversation, a young white man with green

eyes, from the same group, reported: "This doesn't happen to me, I can walk everywhere without anyone touching me." Speech is always a social formulation that reveals evidence of the lived world, but in specific circumstances and demarcated by social differences of gender, race, and class.

To understand the territories, the research was developed with the support of a qualitative and multi-situated research strategy, with data collection from the press, visits to the territory, focus groups, conversations, and interviews. The material collected from the press includes 58 documents on situations in the city, since 2016 when the criminal groups became a widely disseminated public phenomenon due to the existence of groups such as the GDE and CV in the territories. Visits were also made to two housing complexes served by the MCMV, to talk to residents about the events, privileging the observation of the structure of the complexes and discretion to preserve the interlocutors willing to guide us in the field. In addition to this effort, a seminar, two focus groups, and six in-depth interviews conducted at the Federal University of Ceará (UFC) were added to this effort, to debate the problem of violence and social control of gangs in the territories, especially in housing projects. It should be noted that the seminar was an initiative of social movements linked to the struggle for housing to understand the phenomenon of violence promoted by gangs, and the structure of the event was designed based on the problems highlighted by the participants. In addition, interviews were

conducted at the Housing and Housing Center (Nuham) of the Public Defender's Office of Ceará, the Center for Assistance to Victims of Violence (Nuavv), and the Special Action Group to Combat Criminal Organizations (Gaeco) of the Public Prosecutor's Office of Ceará, the Police Station for Combating Organized Criminal Actions (Draco) of the Civil Police-CE, Habitafor of the City of Fortaleza and the Secretariat of Cities of the Government of the State of Ceará. For this publication, we have chosen to maintain anonymity, with indirect references to the speech and descriptions of general characteristics to preserve the identity of the interlocutors.

It should be noted that the expressed results are also based on data from multidisciplinary university extension activities developed by the Laboratory for the Study of Violence (LEV) and the Laboratory for Housing Studies (Lehab) of the UFC. Of particular note are the dialogues and exchanges through courses, meetings, and extension activities organized with social movements, focusing on the treatment of social problems related to public security, guarantee of rights, and popular housing. It is also evident that since 2013 Lehab has been developing efforts to understand state actions related to the Minha Casa Minha Vida Program (MCMV), whose developments are incorporated into the results of this research and reinforce the analysis of problems evidenced by researchers, since the conception of the project in all projects contracted in the Metropolitan Region of Fortaleza (RMF) (Pequeno e Rosa, 2015 and 2016; Pequeno, Rosa and Silva, 2015).

This article follows the presentation of results and analyses of the phenomenon in three complementary segments, revealing fundamental aspects of the problem: a) the effect of gangs on the lives of residents of urban peripheries; b) the context of the experience of living in areas affected by gang action; and c) the displacement of residents due to the presence of borders drawn by the intervention of criminal groups in the territory. In general terms, it has been demonstrated that the experience of housing in housing projects located on the outskirts of Fortaleza is affected by the actions of armed groups that, as the text demonstrates in continuity, exercise social control over the lives of their residents, significantly affecting the practice of housing in one of the main cities in Brazil. In transposition to the local dimensions, the study reveals aspects of a social problem that is distributed throughout the country, to the extent that the criminal groups advance as a mass phenomenon, affecting the economic, political, and cultural dynamics of the 5,568 Brazilian municipalities.

The criminal group effect on crime and life

Criminal groups have not only substantially altered criminal dynamics in Ceará since their rise in 2016 but have also changed the way local populations live with people involved in criminal activities. In 2005, for example, it was possible to find, in the same neighborhood of Fortaleza, armed groups made up of people involved in drug and arms trafficking, as well as robberies and other illegal activities.

These groups occupied, in general, specific territories recognized within the neighborhood as communities. The same neighborhood presented several communities and armed groups identified as belonging to that specific community. Between these groups, there were feuds with a long history of conflict and violent confrontation, causing communities to be "bordered" by these differences. Even if the people of the locality did not know how to report the reason that gave rise to the conflict between the groups of communities in the same neighborhood, they knew the weight of it in their existence and the effects of this on community life.[5]

In the 1980s and 1990s, it was common for the groups to be known as gangs, while in the 2000s, drug gangs became the dominant format, without losing the territorial dimensions constituted by the gangs in previous years. According to Diógenes (1998), the name gang was how young people elaborated their visibility for themselves and others, consolidating a modality of integration to "swarm", solve " and establish an identity. The gang was thus a social institution, with entrance rites and emblems markers of distinction. As a social phenomenon, the gangs in the microcosm of their territories established elements that, to some extent, had repercussions, both in the activities of drug gangs and in contemporary criminal groups in Fortaleza. Thus, when the illegal drug markets expanded and were organized in the outskirts of Fortaleza in the 1990s, the people involved in the practice of this criminal activity kept many elements of the gangs, their territorial divisions, and formats of social institution to establish the identities of gangs linked to urban territories. They guarded territorial

borders and inherited feuds, perpetuating systems of revenge between people involved in drug trafficking.

As explained by the community leaders interviewed, there was a certain balance between the people who committed the crime and others involved in grassroots social movements for struggles for social rights. Even in areas considered dangerous, there was some security, and people involved in criminal activities "did not mess with the people who worked and acted in the fight for the community," explained an interlocutor during a conversation. This made it possible to isolate, in the social imaginary, the local dynamics between those who worked in the world of crime and the workers, community leaders, state agents, and citizens who lived in the territories without participation in criminal activities. Some situations were likely to deviate from the planned script, but this balance seemed to organize social relations in popular neighborhoods. Despite the territorial borders, serious crimes generally occurred among those involved, and there was a feeling that people not linked to criminal activities lived in relative peace, even in territories marked by high indicators of violence (Barreira, 2008; Paiva, 2014).

And what has changed since the rise of the criminal groups as the main groups that organize and guide criminal activity in the state of Ceará? At first, the criminal groups changed the ways of doing crime in Fortaleza, forcing everyone to be under the protection of a criminal group and eliminating the resistance of those who did not intend to position themselves or join a certain group. Nowadays, it is possible to express, with some certainty, that someone involved in a life of crime can't survive without

the protection of a criminal group. It was also common for poor young people to engage in theft or robbery within their communities and, after the gangs, they were forbidden from such practice. Those who did not obey orders not to steal in the community were kidnapped, tortured, and, in some cases, killed. Thus, gradually, from 2016 to 2023, all criminal activities in Ceará began to take place under the guidance of a criminal group.

Another factor to be considered, before dealing with how the criminal groups affected the balance between those involved and those not involved, is the fact that in Ceará criminal groups are vying for control of territories and criminal activities. In 2016, the First Capital Command (PCC), the Red Command (CV), and the Northern Family (FDN) were active in our state, when the local criminal group Guardians of the State (GDE) emerged. Although, at first, these groups acted by appeasing wars between the gangs that are heirs of the territorial conflicts that have been ongoing since previous decades with the gangs, still in 2016, the criminal groups clashed with tenuous alliances between GDE and PCC, on the one hand, and CV and FDN, on the other. In the aforementioned period, there were demonstrations of people involved in crime who expressed themselves as "Neutrals" and constituted the "Prison Mass". It is worth assuring that, mainly, GDE and CV were the protagonists, from 2016 to 2020, in a war for the control of territories that extends throughout Ceará. Since 2020, at least, these groups have still faced internal schisms generating other groups, such as the Comando da Laje and, since 2021, the Massa – a criminal group that disputes territories with the GDE and the CV throughout the state of Ceará.

Regardless of the specifics of each criminal group, the existence of this configuration of groups created difficult problems that had a strong impact on the relationship of those involved with the communities controlled by each of these groups. In the period of gangs and drug gangs, territories were demarcated, and people from one territory at war with another were unlikely to take over the others because there was something in the place that created an identification. The armed group was from that territory, and the component of the armed group was from that group as a consequence. This generated a static effect, with the groups coexisting with territorial dominance and crimes caused by rivalry and interests arising from drug trafficking schemes. For example, weakening a territory was a way to have advantages when it came to selling or being the main point of sale within a certain neighborhood, gaining advantages through the flow of trade. The criminal groups, despite being in the territory, including the same as the gangs and gangs of drug traffickers, are not a group of the territory. Their identification and commitment are not established by their history with the territories. They exist beyond the territory, each with its status, symbols, moral values, and political orientations that, in general terms, establish the other groups as enemies to be confronted and defeated.

By breaking with the logic of the territory that marked the existence of gangs and gangs of drug traffickers, the criminal groups created something that has been repeated repeatedly in the last seven years in Ceará: the invasion of the territory by the enemy group. Since 2016, the criminal groups have waged a mobile conflict, with the seizure of territories and violent actions that have caused numerous deaths through massacres. An emblematic case was the Cajazeiras Massacre when 14 people were murdered after the GDE invaded a party in a CV territory. According to reports, people were killed just for being there, and the party was part of the neighborhood's routine, without any link to the CV. The action caused a great repercussion and was one of several invasions with violent deaths and reach of those involved and not involved.

Invasions are an important component of Ceará's criminal dynamics, with wide repercussions on how those involved in criminal practices began to act in the territories. In the period of gangs and gangs, invasions took place in a circumstantial manner for the death of one or more members of the group, without affecting the control of the territory. Massacres were exceptional situations that were not heard of as often as they have been reported since 2016. The increase in violence and the risk of completely losing control of the territory instituted the need to increase systems of social control to effectively prevent the entry of enemy groups. It is common to observe, right at the entrance of some communities on the urban outskirts of Fortaleza, the inscriptions "lower the windows of the cars". There are reports in the Ceará press that portray situations of violence against people who did not obey orders and for this reason, had their vehicles targeted by those involved, in some cases with a fatal outcome for the members of the vehicle. As several massacres involved the entry of vehicles with heavily armed people, it is possible to hear from residents reports of understanding of the order due to the imminent danger that the criminal groups of the territory began to face in their routines.

The invasions also led to widespread distrust, considering that targets in the territory were likely to be in danger from information their enemies would have of their routine and location. To avoid this situation, the criminal groups have created another problem for any residents who, by chance, have any kind of discovered relationship with people from a criminal group other than the one that dominates the territory. From this point of view, the research identified in the residents' speech a wide variety of things that are considered as mobilizing the distrust of the local criminal groups against a certain person, family, or group of residents. There were situations in which the resident had a relative recognized as an effective member of the other group. Others are accused of a friendly relationship or of coming from territories dominated by rival groups to the one that dominates the territory where he now lives. Women are also accused, because of some affective relationship with members of other groups, even when occasional and past. Although, in all these situations, it is possible to find some evidence, however more fragile than it seemed, the interlocutors also spoke of others in which, simply, the resident is accused, without there being any proof of the accusation. In all these situations, expulsion from the territory is an almost certain fate and, when not obeyed, a motive for other types of violence–such as kidnapping, torture, and murder.

And it was precisely in the lives of residents not involved in criminal practices that the criminal groups exercised a very effective power of domination, with the control of daily activities unheard of before the realization of their domains. According to the residents, although the former local drug traffickers had

a certain incidence in the community, the criminal groups expanded the experience of intervening directly in the lives of the residents. The following statement substantively illustrates that.

> *This introduction of gangs, of crime, took away a lot of the freedom of the residents. To give you an idea, my colleague there in the community, she planted a tree and for her to cut down the tree because it was getting in the way; she had to talk to the authorities [members of a criminal group] inside. She rebelled. So, "I planted it and do I have to ask someone's permission?" So, it took away a lot of our freedom, we who worked as leaders in the community, to solve something we would have to ask their permission.* (Excerpt from the focus group discussion held at UFC)

Other similar accounts helped to realize how the power of the criminal groups in Fortaleza extended and reached routine activities in minutely controlled territories. Maintaining control of the territory has become one of the structuring activities of the criminal groups' work, with a relative expenditure of their energy for this purpose. This has turned the criminal groups into an objective element worthy of the attention of any resident who happens to live in a place controlled by them. In the case of residential, the attendance of the criminal groups takes place, according to the residents' reports, from the moment the person receives the property and then there is a visit from members of the criminal groups questioning where the person comes from.[6] After the response, the person is likely to be informed that they should not stay in the place, and need to leave within an established period. "Is it not possible to call the police or other

agencies to guarantee the right to housing?" This was a question asked of the residents in practically all the interviews. The answers highlighted several problems, as residents report situations that involve everything from corruption schemes to an omission regarding recurrent facts that are known to the Government. Among other situations, the lack of guarantees of a permanent solution makes residents decide to solve the problem by resorting to fleeing, as opposed to seeking state institutions to ensure their permanence in the place.

According to the residents interviewed, the groups are made up of people with a commanding voice, evidencing the existence of members who lead, in the territories, the actions of the criminal groups. Also according to the reports, it is common to observe movements related to changes in the dynamics of local control, because, despite the difficulties of State intervention to ensure the safety of the population, police operations are carried out and arrests of these leaders are carried out in the territories. It should also be noted that, according to the assessment of public security and justice agents interviewed, "All the leaders from the beginning [of the criminal group action in Fortaleza] are dead or have been arrested." There is this reading that, for the most part, people involved in the practice of crimes by gangs have already been arrested, that is, to some extent, they have been reached by the State and its justice institutions. Even so, seven years since the emergence of the local GDE criminal group, the criminal groups continue to exist, working and controlling territories in Fortaleza and practically all municipalities in the state of Ceará. It is possible to find, in the speech of state agents, the ideation that the

GDE is weaker today, but, at the same time, a new force – such as the Massa – has emerged, claiming territories and having promoted more waves of armed conflicts in the year 2023. The criminal groups not only remain alive but also defy the social imagination when they impose themselves as a problem that is difficult for the government to solve.

According to interlocutors from the Ceará police forces, there is still no territory where a police force – such as the Military Police of Ceará (PMCE) – is unable to enter. At various moments of the research, however, we interacted with agents of the State, but not police officers, whose testimony emphasizes that the authorization of criminals is necessary to enter the community and perform some work.

> *Each one here has a story to tell, one, two, three, even four. That we had to leave the area because the drug traffickers asked us to leave because it was time for them to work or because there was some family and couple fight, and they are the ones who do the intervention, and we couldn't be in the area or because it was somehow disturbing some contact that they would have to have at that moment, Or because another criminal group arrived and started shooting, and we had to leave.* (Excerpt from a focus group with municipal housing policy operators in Fortaleza)

Generally, for this, they need to listen and follow a specific determination in what is pertinent to the location, time of the activity, and entry and exit from the community. People from certain territories do not work in a place controlled by a criminal group other than the one where they live. In addition, prohibitions are stipulated – and even communications to public institutions are made to avoid possible

retaliation by criminal groups. And you can't do anything about these people who threaten the state itself? In practice, as previously demonstrated, the actions of the State take place, and the arrest of those involved is common in the territories. The problem is that the detention, even of a significant number of gangs in a police operation, does not eliminate the activities of the gangs, nor does it guarantee the safety of the people who will have to continue living, working, and interacting in this territory. It is common that, after police operations, with several arrests, residents observe the arrival of new members or just the replacement of the leadership by others from the same group who will continue the practices of territorial control.

The resilience of a criminal group for action continuity, even after state interventions, is an important element and is considered by residents in their decisions. They know that the arrest of certain members does not mean the end of the group, and this is decisive for them to assume an attitude of care and discredit about the actions of the state forces. Next, the work highlights the impact of the phenomenon of criminal groups in the context of housing and how this influenced urban displacements in the city of Fortaleza. As shown below, the phenomenon of criminal groups forcefully affects life in the peripheries, as the groups express themselves as forces capable of acting and resisting state institutions, imposing on residents choices in which their well-being and survival are at stake.

The social context of housing affected by the gangs

Fortaleza is an unequal city, whose urban occupation and the exercise of criminal groups concentrated in the peripheries reveal a specific context of problems that, in general, affect in a particular way the populations of the poorest areas of the city. The capital has more than one million people living in precarious settlements and more than 230,000 families registered with the Housing Secretariat (Habitafor) as potential beneficiaries of housing programs. The demand for a place in the housing projects of the Minha Casa Minha Vida Program (MCMV) is considerable. This is because it is an opportunity – often, the only favorable occasion, when considering the waiting lists for the property – to access a home formally, realizing the "dream of owning a home". In the extensive research, we noticed that the realization of this "dream", nurtured for years by some interviewees, has become a "nightmare", that is, it represents an effective problem, due to the interference of an armed group that controls the set, which establishes rules and defines who will remain there or not.

According to explanations obtained from the Public Defender's Office of Ceará,

> Thus, until 2015 there were these forced displacements, as they are called, but they were usually due to the practice of trafficking, in those matters in which it was alleged that the family was a "snitch" of the police; there were even

reports in the newspapers that they expelled families, burned the houses... Until 2015, this was punctual in the city. Starting in 2016, especially with the delivery of the properties of the Minha Casa Minha Vida program, and when populations were displaced from other neighborhoods of the city to these large housing complexes, I began to notice a new phenomenon: people were expelled, but not because they had denounced the practice of crimes, but because they either came from another neighborhood where it was dominated by a criminal group and arrived in a neighborhood dominated by a different criminal group. Either because of the need of the criminal group that settled in that place to have total control over that set, or because of the need to make money, or because of the need to have a place for their godchildren to live. My perception is that this started around 2016. (Excerpt from an interview with Nuham's team from the Public Defender's Office of Ceará)

In the research, we verified how the phenomenon of violence and production of urban space through public policies, on the one hand, displaced populations to the outskirts of the city or between its circuits and, on the other hand, did not fulfill its role in the management of housing policy and guarantee of rights. The investigation also indicated that state power seems to lose centrality as a mediating structure of social relations, harming groups that escalate into violence and expropriation, subjugating the portion of society that has always been on the margins of the cities. Thus expressed, an explanation of the MCMV is appropriate.[7] This is a federal program for the construction of large-scale housing units, launched in 2009, as a strategy to face the global financial crisis at

the time. It is not up to us to discuss in detail the conception and implementation of the MCMV but to highlight relevant elements for the ongoing investigation, due to how criminal groups penetrated and began to act amid the implementation of this public policy.

It is opportune to consider the importance of the existence, since then, of a large-scale federal program that, among other things, has prioritized help to low-income families, where most of the Brazilian housing deficit is concentrated. The problem is that the structuring of the Program disregarded important aspects of the fact of inhabiting the city, given the occurrence of its problems. Thus, after they are implemented, the problems reach the lives of the population, as with their exposure to armed groups. It should be noted that many criticisms have been raised since before the launch of the program (Arantes and Fix, 2009; Ferreira, 2012; Rolnik and Nakano, 2009), through academic means or via civil society networks, with emphasis on components of the National Forum for Urban Reform.[8] Among these, the problem of the scale of the project was one of the important highlights.

By prioritizing scale over quality in housing production, tens of thousands of families were inserted, in a few years, in areas that, as showed by the law of the Master Plan of Fortaleza, should have a restricted occupation, or, before receiving the populations, undergo an urban requalification. Many of these areas lacked minimal infrastructure, with public facilities and services available. The locational decision of the projects is also "justified" by the change in phase 2 of the Program, which accepted projects of over five thousand units per contract, despite the criticism of specialists,

as well as the positions of entities in the right to the City. According to the groups that make up the FNRU, the limit of 500 housing units was important to ensure access to quality urban land. By prioritizing scale in production, it is known that only land in peripheral areas provides space for so numerous units. This has led to a huge profit margin for builders and developers, a profit to be paid mainly by residents in reducing their quality of life.

It is also noteworthy is the absence or poor quality of pre- and post-move social work which would prepare and organize families for the experience of living, living together, and managing a condominium. The apartments were standardized, not considering the diversity of families and their respective ways of inhabiting the social world. The projects prioritized the maximum number of units on the land, which also implies the minimum of leisure and living areas, making it difficult for families to be sociable during festive and restful moments. The high density compromises the privacy of residents and exposes them to risky situations.

The selection of displaced families was the responsibility of the municipalities, based on criteria that consider local specificities combined with national rules. The projects then received families from the demands of the movements/entities, affected by public works, coming from risk areas, among other criteria. In addition, many come from the raffles held among those registered in Habitafor. In a survey conducted by Lehab, it is known that 90% of the households in the groups surveyed were headed by women, half of whom were without a spouse. This worsens the situation of vulnerability, since the role of caregiver reserved for women is overloaded – not to

say unfeasible – in circumstances of state helplessness such as the ones experienced in these new urban ghettos created by a housing policy. This fact has contributed to the creation of excellent conditions for armed groups to occupy, reaching vulnerable people and sometimes showing themselves as protectors, sometimes as those who charge for protection, imposing a unit and eliminating possible undesirables.

The permanence of families in the MCMV complexes is hampered by numerous factors. In the interviews conducted by Lehab in 2013 and 2014, the existence of exchanged, rented, sold or simply empty/abandoned apartments was pointed out. The building administrators, at the time, highlighted cases of transfers of units to family members and abandonment of real estate due to the location and breaking of social ties in their original locations (Pequeno and Rosa, 2015). At the same time, there was the interest of buyers due to the walls and electric fences of some condominiums that appeared as more protected places than those around them, which, in the understanding of those who already lived in them, was not confirmed. This was a recurring complaint of the residents interviewed by Lehab, indicating that, even with concierges, electric fences, and high walls, the condominiums are vulnerable. Threatened landlords, properties handed over due to drug debts, abandonment of properties – and even homicides – were reported in the interviews (ibid., p. 13).

In time, the commercialization of MCMV properties is not allowed, but cases of sale and rental often occur from the first sets delivered. This theme of evictions was well-developed in the third part of this text, but we have already pointed out here the growing relevance of

the territory itself, as a frontier of market expansion, as criminal groups begin to obtain more income in that geographical delimitation because they have the power of force and, thus, can control the sources of consumption of goods or services by the residents of the place. As previously pointed out, there is no direct identification or commitment to the history of that place, but the territorial delimitation is structural in this phase of the criminal groups in Ceará.

From what has been learned by other studies, the Government has always underestimated this phenomenon of those displaced by criminal groups, as well as their ability to generate social controls in certain territories (Paiva and Pires, 2023). As we observed, according to a report by a resident when talking about the criminal groups, "*in the complexes, it is worse, I don't know why*". This statement was heard in one of the interviews and its meaning was reiterated at different times with other interlocutors. It is important to highlight that, in the case of the groups, the criminal groups act within a public policy, altering in their way the functioning of a state action to guarantee rights. The component of invasions and seizures of territories by rival groups, mentioned above, is made more difficult in housing projects, according to the state agents interviewed. Thus, those who control an MCMV have more security of staying with their business there for longer.

From what we have been able to observe, the structuring of the MCMV works to give more effectiveness to the control of criminal groups in the territories. It is known that there is a cycle of vulnerabilities historically attributed to residents of peripheries. Studies strongly suggest that the move to the complexes has deepened public safety problems. In addition to the factors involved in socio-territorial segregation, there is the abrupt insertion of people from different territories into the same group. Some of these relocated, when they arrive at the long-awaited "home of their own", are faced with the prohibition of remaining in the complex dominated by a criminal group other than their place of origin.

The information of which group will command that residence is even before its delivery. Some families don't even bother to move because they know they won't be able to stay. As one interlocutor pointed out, "We can't even unload the truck with our belongings." Some manage to arrive and stay, however, the threat of eviction is constant. It occurs for various reasons, including unstated ones. From what we have learned, there are cases of families expelled because one of the members disobeyed some command or displeased someone in the group; because the apartment has a strategic location for surveillance of the complex; because they need the property to store drugs, weapons, or proceeds of crime; because they want to use the space for meetings and other activities of the organization; to allocate protected or indicated families who were not beneficiaries of the program, who had to pay rent to the criminal group; or even cases in which an entire block of apartments was evicted and turned into a clothing criminal group, managed by drug traffickers. In addition to the apartments, the MCMV complexes also have their leisure spaces (party rooms) and trash cans transformed into commercial places, also under the control of the groups.

And what happens to those who leave? Even with seven years of records of occurrences of these cases, there is still no protocol from the State or Municipal Government of Fortaleza for the reception, protection, and resolution of the housing problem of these families. In the fieldwork carried out, it was found that, on a small scale, some entities of civil society and the justice system provide some support, focusing on psychological, and legal care and referral to care services. However, this is not a permanent solution, and even state operators try to advise against people repossessing the property.

> Look, I'll be quite honest, I don't recommend you come back. Here I already say it. Then am I going to demand that the person be subjected to violence? The house also implies a safe place, as long as it is not safe I recommend that you do not return. The work done within an enterprise is not an immediate response. Sometimes people in the criminal area ask me to get someone to witness the crimes. The measures that we act and work on are not short-term. (Excerpt from an interview with MPCE's Nuavv team)

In the case of MCMV beneficiaries removed, there was also the aggravating factor of continuing to owe the installments. Those responsible for the management of this debt reported that they work for the recognition of this problem by the financing entities and the creation of administrative/legal solutions so that, when considering the expulsion by armed groups, the debtor families get distracted, and return to the huge registry queue. Some actions initiated by the State Government and/or the Public Prosecutor's Office led to police operations in housing complexes.

There are many criticisms of them from social movements in these territories regarding their truculence and ineffectiveness. "*The police are always there. It's not a lack of police*", said one resident. In addition, in the interviews, there are records of fear due to the presence of the police in the complexes, as highlighted by another interlocutor, "*the police give us such a great feeling of insecurity*". According to reports from security professionals, even if the police manage to enter the units and retake the properties, the original beneficiary families do not want and are unable to return. Some interviewees even reported that the police themselves advise them not to return to their homes because the available security forces are not qualified to guarantee their safety.

In the context of urban planning, walkability (Ghidini, 2011) is used as an important criterion for assessing the quality of access to community services and facilities. The severity of the limits established by the criminal groups in Fortaleza makes this criterion unreasonable. By mapping that there are X schools, daycare centers, health centers, and bus stops, some of the MCMVs may be currently characterized as well-served. How, however, can we make visible the invisible and very concrete borders? In the conversations, the case of the young man killed with 14 shots on his way to school, 500 meters from the complex, was recalled. The reasonable distance of walkability in this situation is another.

There are several types of control over the families that start to occupy the properties and are permanently monitored. It is also worth noting that the local political dimension is also greatly affected. As already evidenced, people involved in criminal activities in popular territories have always existed, but the research

revealed a significant interference, to the point that there was an indication of leaders by criminal collectives in some spaces of representation. "*I don't know my community like I used to. The criminal group took away our conversation circles, the community experience*" – reported a resident with an important history of social struggle in the city of Fortaleza. The violence reached the organizations, preventing activities, embarrassing leaders, and even causing the death of community references. This phenomenon has been observed in the city, especially since 2016. This has changed the role of those who mediate conflicts in popular territories today, operating in an extra-legal logic.

In the housing complexes of the MCMV, political action has become even more difficult, probably because they are more recent and already constituted in the conjuncture of criminal group domination. The reports indicate that the groups do not have expressive leaders, even though, in several of them, members of popular movements live, who continue to be involved in various struggles, but mostly outside the territory. There is a certain mobilization in some groups, demanding infrastructure and denouncing the police operations that took place, including those with characteristics of persecution of militants.

Both the interlocutors of the Public Defender's Office and the Public Prosecutor's Office affirmed that MCMV complexes where there are members of social movements among the beneficiaries have fewer cases of eviction. At the same time, the reading of the interlocutors of the police forces indicates a suspicion of people linked to social movements, alleging that, nowadays, it is necessary to negotiate any type of action, favoring the

command of the criminal groups as the structuring element of social relations in the sets. Thus, the popular organization that arises in these conditions, with historically constituted networks of solidarity and sociability, is currently reconfigured. Without the day-to-day participation of the State other than through police violence, and the insufficiency of social protection circuits, people develop strategies for living with these controls and managing the various precarious situations.

The displacement caused by criminal group boundaries

As we have seen, the actions of criminal groups in the housing complexes have led to the expulsion of residents who, in popular parlance, are considered "sneezed". This produces an important discussion about the phenomenon of forced displacement in Fortaleza. Violence, whether resulting from armed conflicts, civil wars, territorial disputes, or criminal groups, has the power to displace entire populations in demand for safety and protection, qualifying as a migratory factor active in various contexts of "war" and also observed in the reality of territorial disputes in Fortaleza.[9] In these cases, fleeing becomes a matter of survival, and on numerous occasions, these displacements are made impromptu and without adequate resources, resulting in precarious conditions for the displaced and hindering access to essential services.

The violence observed in the complexes is related to larger disputes for control of drug trafficking in several regions. The violence engendered in this dispute directly affects

people's lives, producing fears, insecurities, and displacement. In the complexes, one hears stories and rumors about situations of entire families who had to flee, whether they had a justification for leaving the housing unit received through public policy. It is possible to affirm that the residents participating in the MCMV Program live under constant threat and violence because, even if they remain, there are fears about the continuity of the group that dominates and the moods of those who effectively exercise the power of command in the community. This situation portrays Viana's (2019) idea about the processes of "exclusionary inclusion" in housing policy as it is configured since it places the contemplated population in contexts of insecurity and intimidation.

It is important to highlight that the residents report a tenuous balance in the now dominant forces of the complex. With each new seizure of territory, every previous way of life is alterable, and someone who enjoys a quiet life under the control of a certain group is capable, in the previous circumstances, of being the object of serious changes in his condition as a resident. This means that sufficient cases of eviction of residents are a direct consequence of this context of armed violence. There are also conflicts within the groups themselves, the settling of scores and demands made by the local criminal group itself. There are cases of homicides within the housing unit itself, seriously affecting the well-being of the neighbors of the person targeted by the gang.

What is certain is the fact that each eviction of residents produces a significant social influx. Besides losing their homes, numerous families also lose support networks, such as neighbors and friends. The search for another place to live is likely to be difficult, particularly for those who have limited financial resources. In addition, the eviction of residents contributes to the increase in urban exodus, with people leaving the city searching for safer and quieter places to live. Cavalcante (2019) draws attention to the fact that a part of these expulsions falls on the streets of Fortaleza, mainly in Praça do Ferreira, in the center of the city, producing a shock in the number of homeless people and a later even greater difficulty in reintegration into housing policy. In her research, she deals with several cases of people who were left homeless by gangs and unable to go anywhere other than the street. Among the cases is that of Mr. Alex, who has been homeless for 15 years, was awarded a house by the MCMV program, and does not take possession because it is in a GDE territory. The fact also had a negative influence on his view of the city's streets, as he frequented Ferreira Square, considered a territory controlled by the CV. Thus, inhabiting one's street meant following the guidelines and boundaries of the criminal groups as a condition for being, at least, safe.

The practice of forced displacement, as seen in various contexts, is aimed at maintaining an order established by armed groups within the territories that intend to control, among other events, the entry and exit of people. These displacements occur for various reasons and are different from those that happened in the past. As pointed out by Cavalcante (ibid.), evictions are likely to happen for many reasons, from a debt to a distrust or the family refusing to participate in some scheme or even for some interest in the housing unit. They also affect different agents

and social movements. This fact corroborates the findings of the research now reported, considering that, in one of the visits to the community, we had the participation of a social activist who reported his experience of forced displacement. According to him, it was necessary to go to another residential as a result of threats received and that compromised his social action with the community.

If this is the case, we consider the existence of a strategy developed to accumulate spaces that will be redistributed based on the interests of the armed groups. Violently appropriating a person's property, even when he or she has no involvement, is a recurrent action, but it also has a symbolic cost because of the need to assert authority. Duriez (2014) teaches that this type of displacement, considered an intra-urban displacement, is only possible because an illegally armed agent tries to denote his authority and dominion, through economic and strategic pretexts over a given community, using force and coercion to achieve this goal. This implies that it is necessary to invest considerably in weapons, social relations, and bonds that allow the command to be exercised with the least possible resistance, being successful when the resident leaves the housing unit as soon as possible.

This displacement entails a series of characteristics that profoundly affect the lives of the people involved, as pointed out by Pacífico et al. (2020), placing them in a situation of "[...] high vulnerability, given the real and concrete conditions in which they live, and the psychological issues triggered by the threatening experience that led to the displacement" (p. 38). Psychological trauma and the psychosocial effects it causes are widely addressed themes, both from an anthropological and sociological perspective, when it comes to the phenomenon of displacement. Those who are forced to leave their homes face significant loss, including damage to security, stability, belonging, and identity. These traumatic experiences can result in symptoms of post-traumatic stress, anxiety, depression, and other aspects of mental health since they are episodes of expulsion permeated by fear and silence. During the interviews conducted by the research, one statement was very significant to represent this fear of the other engendered by the violent trauma of displacement: "*We under so much pressure, we're so afraid, that even a child [is] talking about fear*". A state of constant fear and insecurity is established, which begins to organize life in groups.

It is known that the city is a complex space, full of physical and symbolic borders, not always evident in our observations. In addition to geographical boundaries, there are also symbolic boundaries that permeate territorial disputes, leading to forced displacement. Criminal groups and criminal groups establish their borders within the city, delimiting territories where they exercise power and control. This "bordering" leads to a deterioration in the problem of violence and insecurity, generating territories of exception, where there are specific codes that overlap with the current norm and that must be followed since these armed groups are capable of exercising the power of life and death over the existence of the population. In addition, Silva Filho (2019) points out that these extreme situations give rise to the aggravation or "[...] impossibility of access to public service" (p. 105). He draws attention to the broadening, in this context, of the notion of "involved", which

is not necessarily related to the commission of any crime, but the simple fact that people have relations and circulate in the territory.

It is important to highlight that these boundaries established by the criminal groups are not static and are mutable. As territorial disputes evolve, new frontiers are likely to emerge and others are likely to disappear. This dynamic is likely to lead to a cycle of forced displacements, which also influences residents' travel routes through the city, with people constantly being affected by territorial disputes. During interviews conducted with young people in compliance with a measure of restriction of freedom in the socio-educational system of Ceará, one speech stands out, as it expresses this complexity of territorial displacement in the logic of the invisible borders established by the criminal groups, which create physical and symbolic barriers, hindering people's mobility. When asked where she used to go, a 16-year-old girl replied: "*I feel more comfortable in Barroso II than in José Walter, I feel more comfortable in Lagamar, in Alto da Balança than in José Walter, if [I] feel comfortable in Castelo Encantado, Vicente Pinzon than in José Walter, José Walter, Pirambu, Genibaú, I don't go to these neighborhoods*".[10] Given the intensity of the territorial disputes waged in Fortaleza, it is likely that this map will change occasionally, as the territories indicated, such as those where the interlocutor feels more or less comfortable, is still pressured by the disputes between criminal groups.

Restricting access to enemy territory of criminal groups is a practice commonly adopted in contexts of armed conflict or violent disputes between rival groups. This regulation of access or non-access to certain territories imposes on the general community very specific conditions of movement through the city, particularly in housing projects. There is a subliminally imposed narrative saying that those who are from a territory of the CV, or the GDE, or the TDN, or the PCC, are only allowed to circulate through these territories, so that cases like Mr. Alex's multiply, increasing the housing deficit in the city and making it difficult to reintegrate into housing policy. This territorialization marks in a very significant way the presence of criminal groups, not only in Fortaleza but also in other regions of the state of Ceará.

> *Territorialization regardless of whether it is in the outskirts, since there is also already a dominance of these criminals in the "countryside" (i.e., in small municipalities) will vary. Some are GDE, others are CV, Massa right. And territorial disputes are justified by this. You see a lot of conflict in Caucaia because there are all the criminal groups operating there. This is a big reason for the conflicts: one neighborhood here is GDE, one here is CV and one here is Massa, there is a zone of tension all the time. At one point, one goes out to make an attack here, another makes an attack there, and so the cycle of violence is perpetuated. Caucaia is the best example of this because it has the activities of three criminal groups, each with its territories and trying to invade the other's.* (Excerpt from an interview with the PCC's Draco cap)

The seizure of territory by a criminal group, when a group occupies the place that was once the place of the enemy criminal group, structures several movements of urban displacement since there are many reasons why a family is likely to be associated with the members of the defeated group in that territory. Considering the above, it is observed that forced displacement, as a result of the

occupation carried out by a criminal group, is a manifestation of the power and control capacity of a certain armed group. The displacement reveals the fragility of the exercise of the rule of law in a dominated territory whose population needs to take seriously the arbitrary orders of those who exercise their command through threats of violence and other violations. It constitutes a reality in which a criminal group regulates, through physical and psychological coercion, life and death in a community. The legitimacy of this criminal group-regulated social order rests on the residents' belief not only in authority but also in the ability of a group to assert its will through physical and psychological coercion. Power and domination, based on a Weberian perspective (2014), are the two faces that express this probability of both imposing one's will on the other and finding obedience in this relationship. These two faces are only possible in a context in which violence and fear legitimize these actions and where the various vulnerabilities imposed on residents place them in a state of acceptance, not by agreement, but by lack of choice.

Final thoughts

The criminal groups active in Fortaleza are a mass social phenomenon, with economic, political, and cultural repercussions that affect the city and its housing, circulation, and security formats. By constituting themselves as moral and political communities, the criminal groups impose territorial domination through effective guidance, commands, and controls of daily life. Its reach is not only explained by the capacity of a given group to carry out

criminal activities but also by its political capacity to produce adherence, manage territories, promote business, social relations, and resistance to traditional modalities of state control. The research demonstrated that the experience of housing in investigated housing complexes, located in peripheral territories and structured based on the MCMV Program, is deeply affected by the actions of criminal groups that control the territories, develop illegal markets, and impose their command through their orders and armed presence.

It is possible to find in the controlled territories the actions of government institutions in almost all areas, including the management of housing and public security programs. Nevertheless, the lack of efficiency and capacity of public institutions to generate security and guarantee the full exercise of the right to housing in appropriate conditions for the well-being of the population served was flagrant. The criminal groups have thrived in the housing estates and can impose their controls that extend from the residents to the state agents, whose action needs to consider the domains imposed on the community. This demonstrates the fragility of state power, with the naturalization of the command of the criminal groups as something that, in the conditions of the time that flows, needs to be considered. In this way, decisions such as fleeing the territory, abandoning the house, seeking to relieve the debt, and abandoning the dream of owning a home are the "right things to do", leaving resilience in the face of the unavoidable force of the arbitrary order of an armed group.

Not being expelled and being able to live in your home does not represent luck or freedom, as your life is subject to continuous

monitoring. Upon arriving in a territory, the resident has his life scrutinized by the criminal group that is in control, answering questions and, on certain occasions, already having to deal with information obtained about him. As explained in the interviews, the criminal group plays a decisive role in the permanence of people in the territory, legislating their lives and applying punishments in the light of its rules. Even more serious is to live with the expectations arising from the changes in the management of this arbitrary power. The control of one group is replaceable by the violent action of another. This alters the entire balance there, transforming the life of an accepted resident into a future expelled resident. Such movements between the criminal groups are structuring the urban displacements observed at various scales.

The results reveal, by way of conclusion, how the phenomenon of violence meets the social problem of housing in one of the main capitals of the country. The criminal groups structured relations between themselves and the communities, promoting domination through violent action that structured the ways of living and surviving in the urban peripheries of Fortaleza. Public housing policies, therefore, no longer find space to serve the population autonomously, requiring public agents to consider which group and what rules are imposed on the citizens of that territory. Negotiations to guarantee rights require, in general terms, an adjustment between the Public Power and the effective power exercised by armed people and integrated by the social bond constituting the criminal group. It has become commonplace to assess that one does not live only in a territory, but in a territory that effectively belongs to an armed group capable of imposing its own rules of conduct on the State itself. Feelings of fear and insecurity thrive, which may also be translated as a deep discouragement as a result of a social project incapable of generating peace, well-being, and security in the housing complexes studied.

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Notes

(1) The Mass is also recognized as Tudo Neutral and that is why the denomination TDN, referring to an idea that was very present in early 2016, when certain people involved in crimes, in Ceará, resisted the idea of composing with the GDE, CV or PCC, trying to maintain a relative autonomy in a scenario less and less prone to the style of committing crimes outside the scope of a faction.

(2) As Das (2020) explains, the experience of violence creates the trauma and memory of this experience, a knowledge that affects the present, a "poisoned knowledge" that guides the way people inhabit and relate to each other in the social world.

(3) As research in Social Sciences has shown, factions are a general and particular phenomenon, with distinct manifestations and characteristics in the Brazilian states and the Federal District, as well as due to their history and modalities of expansion of their actions (Dias and Paiva, 2022; Rodrigues et al., 2022; Feltran, 2018; Cricket, 2019).

(4) Studies by Adorno (2002), Caldeira (2000), Valladres (2005) and Diógenes (1998), among others, portray the dynamics of the Brazilian peripheries socially constructed in cities crossed by the expansion of capitalism and the processes of exclusion, inequalities, dissidence and inventions of centers and margins of bordered urban territories.

(5) Some of this history, in the Grande Bom Jardim region, was told in the research carried out by Paiva (2014), when studying the way residents of popular neighborhoods dealt with the problems of violence in their daily lives.

(6) In one report, the interviewee assured that there were people with the official lists of those contemplated for the complex and the data in hand of the residents who arrived at the housing complex. When questioning the responsible public agency, the information was not proven, but the entire team highlighted the difficulties encountered in the territory, confirming the interference of the factions.

(7) About the MCMV program, Rolnik et al. (2015, p. 131) explain that it was "a determining factor for the reproduction of the peripheral housing pattern of the low-income population in the country". Among other circumstances, the choice of land and the condominium model were factors that, as demonstrated by opportune, have a negative influence on the problems of violence experienced in the complexes today.

(8) "The National Forum for Urban Reform (FNRU) is a national articulation that brings together popular and social movements, NGOs, class associations and research institutions with the purpose of fighting for the right to the city, modifying the process of social and spatial segregation to build truly just, inclusive and democratic cities." Available at: https://forumreformaurbana.org.br/quem-somos/. Accessed on: Feb. 20, 2024.

(9) It is important to highlight that, as the study by Cantor (2014) demonstrates, forced displacement by criminal organizations occurs in several countries, with important inflows to society as observed in countries in the Americas, such as Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala. In Fortaleza, the work of Silva Filho and Mariano (2020) illustrates the phenomenon in the city.

(10) Research carried out as part of the consultancy on the difficulties in accessing schools in the outskirts of Fortaleza for the International Committee of the Red Cross.

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