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## Apology for crime: situational analysis of the communication within criminal commands in Brazil

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Submitted  
March 17, 2015  
Approved  
May 30, 2015

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© 2015  
Communication & Society  
ISSN 0214-0039  
E ISSN 2386-7876  
doi: 10.15581/003.28.3.83-96  
www.communication-society.com

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2015 – Vol. 28(3),  
pp. 83-96

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How to cite this article:  
Moretti Fernández, L (2015).  
Apology for crime: situational  
analysis of the communication  
within criminal commands in  
Brazil. *Communication & Society*  
28(3), 83-96.

### Abstract

**This article presents partial results of my research on strategic violence with political effects in the world of crime in Brazil. Using Situational Analysis as the methodological approach, thirty videos of exaltation of criminal groups and criminal events circulating on YouTube were analyzed. The situational map of the analytic situation empirically constructed allowed the identification of apology for crime as a discursive terrain and a phenomenon of communication with political tones. The description of oneself as member of the armed and political arm of criminal commands, dehumanization of the enemies and affective and cognitive shielding were identified as the axis of a process of preparing for a war around programmatic narratives of commands. The violence against previously named blanks following regimes of practices and conduct programs was identified as the central axis of a programmatic violence suggesting the existence of radicalization processes.**

### Keywords

**communicative interactions, apology for crime, political violence in Brazil, programmatic narratives, organized crime**

### 1. Introduction

In the last three decades, Brazil has experienced an intensification of organized crime, with criminal formations gaining political power and the constitution of parallel forms of power that stretch in various ways across the social fabric. Some of the most prominent criminal formations in the states of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo are recognized by social scientists as political forces, as they control large urban regions and their populations, in addition to moving large amounts of resources through illicit activities, including drug trafficking (Zaluar, 2004). Networks of corruption, drug trafficking and intervention over large urban regions

are among the manifestations of a plot that extends through formalized armed and political wings.

This article presents partial results of my research on programmatic violence in the world of crime, understood as a problem whose communicative dimension and political content are linked to contexts of prevailing social violence, endemic and structuring. This situation occurs in the peripheral regions of Brazil's big cities where drug trafficking is present. The approach from the perspective of communication including political dimensions considers the formulation of the problem in society, where communication is at the same time interface and a social practice (Braga, 2012), as well as debates on materiality and symbolic universes present in the "pursuit, standing or maintenance of power" (Matos, 2009: 114).

Thirty videos exalting groups and criminal acts that circulate on YouTube were analyzed, related to the two main criminal commands that operate in Brazil: *Primeiro Comando da Capital* (PCC) and *Comando Vermelho* (CV). The methodology used for data collection and analysis was the Situational Analysis, revision proposed by Clarke (2005) for Grounded Theory, suitable for working with discursive materials. With roots in Chicago Sociology, Symbolic Interactionism, and the Pragmatist philosophy, Situational Analysis enables an appropriate approach to the "communicative phenomenon as bond and basis for social construction" (Mattos, 2014). The analytic situation was constructed empirically from situational mapping, allowing the identification of apology for crime as a discursive field rooted in social interactions in the world of crime.

The apology for crime videos analyzed in my research serve as a support while also constituting the discursive arena in which the voices of criminal commands gain visibility from the underground, providing a locus for the discursive positioning of its members in relation to their peers, opponents, enemies and society. They constitute, therefore, an arena created by and for public spheres (Habermas, 1992) that operate as spaces of communicative interactions and expression of pulsating sociability in everyday life contexts of social exclusion. As an expression of symbolic interactions in the world of crime, the apology operates in the recruitment of members for the commands, which are not formal organizations, but fluid formations which are constituted in interactive narrative processes and practices whose driver is established in communication processes.

The results of the situational map analysis allowed us to identify the description of oneself as an integral member of the political wing of armed and criminal commands, the dehumanization of the opponent, and the affective and cognitive shielding as axes of a process of preparation for war articulated with the programmatic narratives of the commands. Violence against previously named recipients, linked to regimes of practices and conduct programs, has been identified as the core of a programmatic violence that suggests the existence of radicalization processes and political positioning. Located in the situational map, these results help us to understand that the construction of identity linked to programmatic narratives is central to the expansion of the commands and the world of crime in its symbolic aspect, and communication processes are at the heart of these interactions.

These processes of constructing meaning are embedded in communication processes in which the apology for crime presents itself as an arena of symbolic negotiations of an underground world, but with porous borders to other arenas and to broader public spheres (Habermas, 1992), reaching sometimes the public sphere of the media. The most striking example of such connections were PCC attacks in 2006 in the city of São Paulo, where attacks and the kidnapping of a journalist led to the group delivering its manifesto of demands to the authorities on television (Fernández, 2009).

The analysis conducted through the Situation Analysis allows us to place the apology for crime as a mezzo level phenomenon between local intersubjective exchanges and those that occur at the macro level, including mass media speeches, since in the empirically constructed

situation are registered micro and macro social elements that order that part of the problem of adherence to the world of crime as a way of life. As a situated phenomenon and practice, the apology for crime constitutes a locus of symbolic negotiations relevant to the reproduction of violence, so that what is sought here is to observe it from its communicative dimension.

The following section will briefly describe the problem of violence in Brazil, introducing conceptual clarifications necessary to understand the paths followed and analytical decisions taken. Next, the methodology and design adopted will be discussed in detail before a discussion of the findings and axes mentioned in this introduction, and finally move to the final considerations.

## 2. Considerations on violence in Brazil and conceptual aspects

In this article I use the expression "programmatic violence" to refer to violence aimed at previously named recipients, with prescriptive goals and with political connotation. This formulation is based on the apology for crime discourse conveyed in videos circulating on YouTube, in which violent acts and groups such as the *Comando Vermelho* (CV) and the *Primeiro Comando da Capital* (PCC) - the two criminal formations with the greatest presence in the Brazilian criminal scene - are exalted. Such formations act as social organizers in the peripheral regions of large urban centers taken over by crime, with emphasis on drug trafficking.

The term "programmatic" serves here as proposed by Foucault (1991) to denote regimes of practices and conduct programs with prescriptive effects on what to do and codification effects on what to know (Clarke, 2005; Foucault, 1991). Specifically, reference is made here to programmatic narratives associated with the *Comando Vermelho* (CV) and the *Primeiro Comando da Capital* (PCC), and violence in the world of crime aimed at rival groups, the authorities and society<sup>1</sup>.

The people who inhabit the peripheral regions of the major Brazilian cities live daily with social violence and crime and its effects. The tension is constant, as Feltran (2011: 114-115) describes, among the world of crime and those who, without being part of the universe of illegal business, are forced to deal with crime because they are busy defending themselves from its effects, negotiating ways of peaceful coexistence in the regions controlled by the drug traffickers, or accompanying stories of people affected by the direct involvement.

In these contexts, the word "crime" takes on a much broader connotation than the chargeable offenses in the Criminal Code (Biondi and Marques, 2010). It is commonly used to refer to the life that is built around the illicit business, including the subjective, economic, social and political dimensions. In an ethnographic study in Sapopemba, a suburb of São Paulo, Feltran (2008; 2011) proposed the expression "world of crime" to refer to "a set of codes and forms of sociability surrounding the illegal business of drug trafficking, thefts and robberies" (Feltran, 2002: 31). This formulation helps us here to refer to the world of crime as a symbolic world immersed in materiality and everyday stresses, emphasizing the aspect concerning the codes and possible forms of sociability that occur very early in Brazilian children and youths.

Homicide rates in Brazil are among the highest in the world, and it is young people that are driving those figures. According to the annual report published in 2014 by the *Forum for Public Security*, in 2013 the country recorded an average of one murder every ten minutes (Anuário Brasileiro de Segurança Pública, 2014). Homicides account for most of the deaths from external causes, making it possible to observe a cycle of life and violent death in which

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<sup>1</sup> The term "society" is used in the world of crime speech to designate those that "are not part of crime" or those that are not member of the commands (Biondi, 2010).

homicides soar from the age of 14, advancing 9.2 homicides per 100 000 inhabitants to 69.3 at 21 years of age, gradually falling back after that (Waiselfisz, 2014a: 25).

To Zaluar (2011: 36), the country is experiencing armed conflict that can not be justified by irreparable traumas in their past generated by ethnic, religious or ideological conflicts. Brazil's numbers are higher than the numbers of deaths in countries where armed conflict has been declared. The enormity of these numbers is such that, between 2008 and 2011, the total number of homicides in the country (206,005 victims) was much higher than the numbers registered in the 12 major armed conflicts in the world between 2004 and 2007 (Global Burden of Armed Violence, in Waiselfisz, 2014b). Brazil's numbers are almost identical to the total of direct deaths in the same period in the 62 armed conflicts studied, corresponding to 208,349 people (Waiselfisz, 2014b: 33).

Fluid formations like the PCC and the *Comando Vermelho* act as social organizers in contexts where social violence is prevalent, providing a transmuted outlet for crime of needs such as social affiliation, physical protection, economic alternatives, plus visibility and symbolic empowerment. In social violence contexts, the commands feed on interactions and processes in which a disposition to adhere to its programmatic narratives operates, contributing to its constitution and significance (see Biondi, 2010, on the PCC), as well as to its political record in its scope and in public life.

The term "command" should be clarified here. The commands are criminal formations operating in the slums and areas of social and economic exclusion as social organizers. There is controversy among social scientists about whether the commands in Brazil qualify as true organized crime groups, bands or parallel forms of power. The word command is used here to refer to the social organizer, assuming the wording proposed by Biondi (2010) to refer to the *Primeiro Comando da Capital* (PCC) as a "command without command", i.e., as a fluid formation that constitutes itself in daily practices - including narratives - by those that incorporate it and make it exist even where leaders are not present.

The borders between the world of crime and community life are porous. The project of social mobility and ascension of the whole family through work and seeking opportunities in big cities, responsible for immigration to the southeast region of Brazil and the formation of peripheral regions, did not materialize. To Feltran (2010), the generation born in the 1990s, which is no longer a migrant one, can only count on an individual ascension project. This shift is present in life narratives that recount the legal movement between life and crime. For younger people, the impossibilities of improving are part of their way of being in the world.

Albeit among a minority group, arguments have arisen legitimizing the world of crime as a context of sociability as legitimate as any other. This world plays very specific roles in the regions affected by exclusion: it is a rent-generating universe (which represents a symbolic dispute with the world of employment); it is a normative locus for the management of the social dynamic and obtaining justice (which is a symbolic dispute with the statutes of the law and obtaining justice) (Feltran, 2010: 62). The perception that the presence of the PCC on the outskirts of São Paulo, for example, is responsible for the marked reduction in the number of murders is told often between people of these regions (Biondi and Marques, 2010; Feltran, 2010: 69).

The interaction between the world of crime and the world of legality is not without tensions. Protection and resources that commands can provide local populations put them, at the same time, at risk. Established solidarity is a form of confined solidarity, which sits on networks of reciprocity with negative effects (Matos, 2009), and work against freedom and the construction of subjectivities in secure contexts. In this context, networks of social relations between what is legal and what is not passed "contest for legitimacy and therefore, to coexist with other codes already existing social order" (Feltran, 2011: 318).

The apology for crime can be understood here as a discursive field that is an arena for interaction in the world of crime. In the videos analyzed it is possible to observe the political

content flowing in exaltation among peers, threats between opponents, enemy provocations and depreciation, demands to authorities and statements aimed at the public at large, including the search for discursive legitimacy. This arena allows us to glimpse at processes based on a specific parcel of civil society, whose power to enforce their constitutional rights is diminished by every day, violent social processes that have political and exclusionary effects.

There are continuities between the lives of people who are victims of social exclusion in Brazil and, for example, the prison world. Both the *Comando Vermelho* and the *Primeiro Comando da Capital* emerged in prisons so that inmates could deal with the government, but also to protect themselves from violence by the authorities (Silveira, 2007). Beyond the prison walls, these formations communicate with local populations, where they recruit and prepare young people to act, but not limited to work in illegal businesses. In the apology for crime discourse, soldiers are prepared for a war that far exceeds the limits of drug trafficking, extending to the police, government and society, providing a place of discursive empowerment and identity.

Children and young people that are subjected to the forces of sociability in the world of crime in Brazil today are second and third generations of people within the urban phenomenon of social exclusion. The prevalence of involvement with crime in the families moves up the generational hierarchy, and it is common that relatives live together, working in both crime and legal activities (Feltran, 2011). The migration project to work in the big cities of the 1970s and 1980s in search of a better life for the family ended up in the intensification of slum and periphery formation. The elements of hatred and dehumanization of the opponent, the criminal command structure, and the cognitive and affective shielding present in the apology for crime indicate a possible phenomenon of radicalization of second and third generations in the world of crime that deserves to be investigated.

### 3. Design and methodology

The body of selected data in my research to address violence directed at specific targets in the *world of crime* consists of *proibidão*<sup>2</sup> videos circulating on YouTube in which incidents and criminal groups are exalted. These videos, a support and arena for the communication of crime, became publicly known in 1999 when the *Comando Vermelho Rap*, which describes the implementation of a whistleblower, hit the newspapers. The apology for crime *proibidão*, configured as an underground subgenre of *carioca funk*, a rap style born and popular in Rio de Janeiro, at a time when funk parties were banned in the state of Rio de Janeiro under the Funk Law (Law No 3410 of May 29, 2000, enacted by the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry of Funk<sup>3</sup>).

As a product of pop culture, funk culture is much broader than the plot of the underground funk and, therefore, cannot directly be associated with crime. In fact, *carioca funk* was declared a cultural heritage of Rio de Janeiro in 2008<sup>4</sup> in reaction to the law previously prohibiting raves and funk parties in the state and the association often made between funk and drug trafficking. The selection criteria established here is for the videos that are intended to exalt criminal incidents and criminal groups. For example, *proibidão*

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<sup>2</sup> The word "proibidão" is the augmentative form for "forbidden" and it is a colloquial way of referring to the "out of law" aspect of videos and music in carioca funk gender.

<sup>3</sup> Text of the Law recovered from <http://alerjln1.alerj.rj.gov.br/contlei.nsf/b24a2da5a077847c032564f4005d4bf2/756831a75d413aa4032568ef005562d8?OpenDocument>.

<sup>4</sup> Text of the Law recovered from [http://www.observatoriodefavelas.org.br/userfiles/file/funk\\_nr\\_\\_4124\\_-\\_Chico\\_Alencar1.pdf](http://www.observatoriodefavelas.org.br/userfiles/file/funk_nr__4124_-_Chico_Alencar1.pdf).

videos whose subject is sex appeal or videos of funk consciously aimed to publicize the difficulties of daily life in the *favelas* and peripheries, have not been analyzed here.

To address violence in the world of crime on their own terms, Situational Analysis methodology was used. Situational Analysis is a refunding of Grounded Theory proposed by Clarke (2003, 2005) as a methodological alternative to address human problems as situated problems. Having as an axis the complementing contributions of the Symbolic Interactionism and the Ecology of the Chicago School with Foucault's thought, Clarke's review represents both a methodological renovation and a discursive shift to Grounded Theory.

In a continuous process of data collection, analysis and theorizing, building situational maps allows one to build empirically the situation of inquiry so that an analytical ground for analysis and theorizing based on data can thus be obtained. The basic idea is that "everything in the situation *both constitutes and affects* most everything else in the situation in some way(s)" (Clarke, 2005: 72). Clarke does not understand the situation as molding, but rather as a whole gathering the perspective ideas on Mead and on Thomas and Thomas (the situation is real in its consequences), local action in Mills, and situated and embodied knowledge in Haraway (Clarke, 2005: 22). The unit of analysis is, therefore, the whole situation, where actions are analyzed as actions located in time and space.

Maps proposed by Clarke (situational map, discursive social worlds and arenas and positioning) provide useful analytical tools to the decentralization necessary to analyze problems saturated of previous meanings, such as the problem discussed here. The violence itself is a complex problem, and the system of significance in the world of crime includes a coded language for hiding and very particular ethical points of departure and explanations of world. Situational Analysis is useful as it provides graphical analytical tools by which the researchers can move quickly, sharpening their theoretical sensitivity, opening the situation for explanations and formulations beyond the limits of the meanings crystallized in social practices. It is, for Clarke, a democratic way of investigating human problems, supported by the perspectivism of Mead and the pluralism of Dewey.

As in Grounded Theory, the sampling used in Situational Analysis is theoretical sampling, not probabilistic sampling. The method of inference is abduction, where the underlying logical form is not the pursuit of ultimate truth or statistical probability, but the probability that the explanation provided is the best possible (Peirce, 1878; Charmaz, 2014; Fernández, 2014). Thus, starting from an initial exploratory approach to the videos, starting points have been established for theoretical sampling. The pieces analyzed responded to the needs arising during the process and from systematic comparisons, seeking conceptual development and grounded theorizing (Charmaz, 2014). For the partial results presented in this article, 30 videos (N = 30) have been analyzed that enabled the construction of maps and the identification of the analytical field and the axes discussed below.

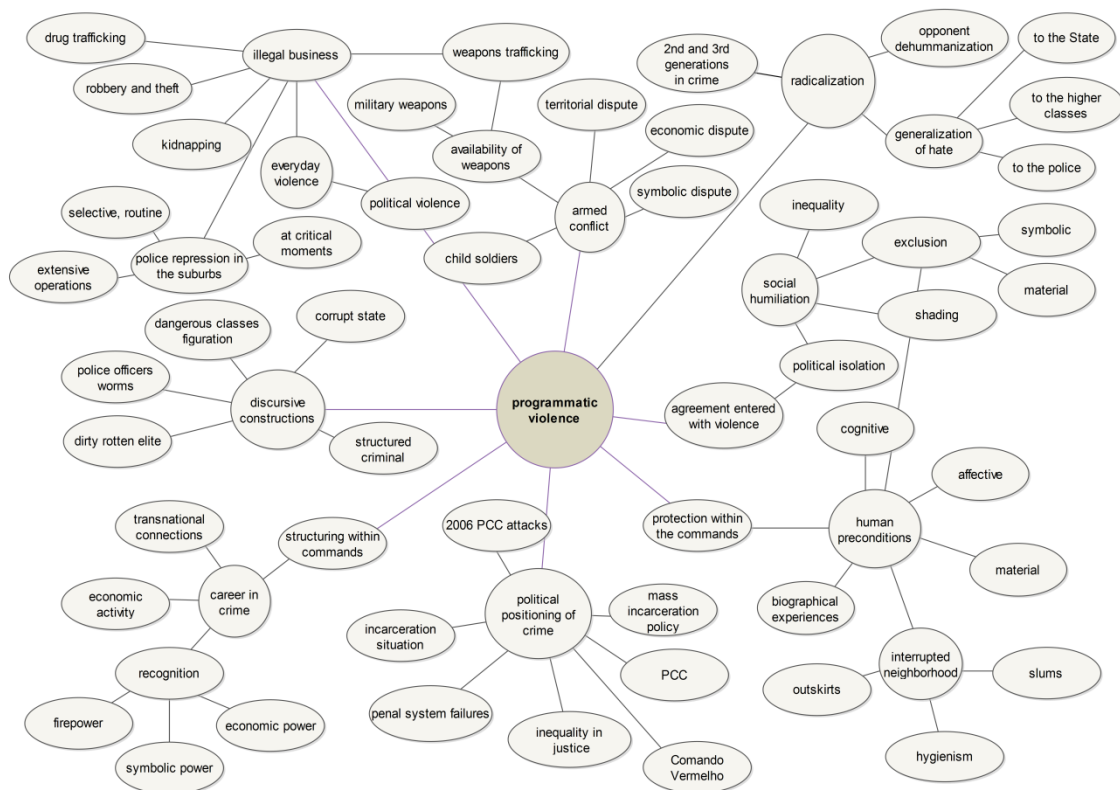
#### 4. Results and discussion

The situational map presented here was created from the 30 videos analyzed and constitutes the empirically constructed situation for grounded analysis and theorizing of programmatic violence as a communication phenomenon in the world of crime. The term programmatic violence, as has been said above, is formulated from observation and systematic comparison of the videos. As an analytical construct, programmatic violence is presented as an articulated game where violence is directed at previously named groups, serving prescriptions for what has to be done and what has to be known. It differs, therefore, from the particular violent action triggered by events or situations in which there is no associated program idea.

In the map below, human and non-human elements that are relevant to the situation are registered. Programmatic violence is at the center because of its connection with other

relevant processes that feed it. It is connected to the practice of illegal business as an economic alternative; the armed conflict experienced by the peripheral populations and reflecting social conflicts, in addition to the drug war and the war against the police; to the subjective construction that occurs in the integration in criminal commands, which act as organizers of social relations and development of the subject in the world of crime; the political positioning of the crime to authorities and society; processes of self protection through an alliance with the command; to discursive constructions and processes that give rise to radicalization, all in an agreement entered with the same violence as that of which one is also a victim.

**Figure 1.** Map of the situation empirically built for programmatic violence



Each of these nodes deserves a detailed discussion and can be an important analytical path. We focus here on the bigger picture that provides context for the analytical field of the apology for crime for its role in the reproduction of violence. The number of murders in Brazil exceeded the figures of countries with declared armed conflict, as noted in the introduction. However, this is a conflict that is often not named as such, although expressions such as pacification programs and pacified/unpacified areas are used when the issue is drug trafficking and the permanent state of exception in which hundreds of thousands Brazilians live in *favelas* and peripheral regions to the big cities.

In the world of crime weapons are used for confrontational situations, exceeding the available weapons police used. Doctors working in emergency services have to deal daily with wounds caused by firearms and high-caliber rifles at a frequency and demand that exceed what would be predictable situations in peaceful societies. Often these weapons are in the hands of teenagers, and sometimes children. It is they, the children, who do the work of surveillance and containment and, in situations of confrontation, can be sent as ordinary soldiers to the front line. They are the "minor Boladão" a term that refers to those under

eighteen able to act "big", whether as a result of drugs or for their willingness to be in and for the command.

The video *Se brotar no Manguinho, nós vai matar polícia* (If you come into the Manguinho neighborhood, we're going to kill police) it is an example of expression of a social and economic problem as armed conflict. Mixed images put together scenes of war in African countries with scenes of exaltation of firepower of drug traffickers at funk parties, plus images of depreciation and provocation directed at the police, who are referred to as "worms". The predominance of pictures of armed children indicates the importance of youth in the dynamics of armed conflict. The word *minor*, in addition to referring to those who are not yet adults, has a very specific connotation related to age for criminal responsibility. Training children and sending them to the front line is a strategy and used as such in the communication of the crime to the authorities.

**Figure 2.** YouTube. If you come into the Manguinho neighborhood, we're going to kill police (video)<sup>5</sup>.



The apology for crime is outlined as a discursive field through which narratives of programmatic violence circulate, and presents a simplified version of the social conflicts that cross the world of crime, based on inside-out, brother-enemy pairs, world of crime-society prestructured command. The meaningful games put forth in the apology for crime are as alternative livelihoods for those who adhere to the commands, obtaining physical protection and psychological empowerment, social affiliation, justifications that promise to legitimize involvement in illegal and violent activities, a culprit for the pain, an enemy against whom to fight: "We are not 'illegal' because we are the ones who make the Law. (YouTube, Faixa de Gaza, video)"<sup>6</sup>.

Simplification can be understood here as opposed to the idea of cognitive complexity, which refers to the degree with which the individual difference among competing alternatives, trying to integrate them. The binary scheme is simplistic because it does not provide intermediate points, only extremes. The idea of cognitive complexity can be used together with the idea of integrative complexity, which refers to the degree to which the verbalization reflects the recognition of more than one legitimate point of view on an issue related to another to some extent (Matsumoto Hwang, 2012: 3). These two ideas have been used by Matsumoto and his group in researching political violence and the relationship between linguistic markers and political speeches serving as possible predictors of violent and hetero-aggression actions.

<sup>5</sup> Recovered from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KNqiXiL8fMc>.

<sup>6</sup> Recovered from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zjm8oLhjupe>.



Scheduled for conditions and processes that cross the individual in various life dimensions, including the emotional dimension, the daily social exclusion creates the preconditions from which they can inhabit possible worlds and ways of life. It is in the context of inequality, including inequalities in the affective and cognitive preconditions, that vulnerability for entry into the world of crime occurs and to sign commitments with the same violence through which one is often the victim. With this, Souza (2009) questions the practically naturalized view that entry into crime in Brazil depends solely on individual decisions and movements, or economic reasons.

Although the heterogeneity of biographical stories of people making up the population in social exclusion in Brazil is as big as in any other social group, there are important regularities within it:

[...] Family disorganization, lack of affection, parental absence [...] the excluded seeks the integration and emulation of the inclusive community, the transmutation of the legitimate social objectives (access to wealth, prestige, women, etc.) in another social field, the field of crime. (Souza, 2009: 94)

We must recognize that the preconditions for the middle class individual are not the same as for those that are born in the context of exclusion. Above all, the emotional disposition and the ease with which they encounter schooling, for example, and cognitive matrices inherited by the social group and promises of possible paths are very different to each other. For example, seeing bodies of people killed on the way to school or work can be part of the daily lives of many young people, as is the killing of bystanders. Being unable to leave the house when there is conflict between traffickers or police operations is part of everyday life (see e.g. Souza, 1993; Feltran, 2011).

This is the context in which the simplified speech of radicalization finds its breeding ground. In the videos analyzed (where you can glimpse a claim of legitimacy for a life of crime), three axes have been identified in which the apology for crime proposes a possible way of life in the context of social violence: the promise of re-description of oneself as a member of the "nervous arm" (armed wing with political connotation) of the commands; cognitive and emotional armor necessary to inhabit the world of crime and establish itself as a fighter; and dehumanization of the enemy or opponent, thus establishing a narrative of legitimation for violence and cruelty.

The idea of re-description of oneself is based on the idea of linguistic subjectivity in Rorty (1989), registered in his pragmatic naturalism, which understands humans as a result of living cause and effect experiences. The description of oneself has as its starting point the conditions under which the individual is born, which are not the same for everyone. Thus the idea of preconditions in Souza (2009) serves to position the involvement in programmatic violence as a problem located from both the individual and social points of view.

Terror is one of the languages used in the positioning before rival groups, the police and the public, sometimes assuming its own forms of political terrorism. Emergency situations such as the *Primeiro Comando da Capital* (PCC) attacks in 2006 in the city of São Paulo, with simultaneous rebellions in 74 detention centers, attacks on police and civilians in public places, and the culmination of the violent campaign in the kidnapping of a reporter and the telecast of the group's manifesto are the most notorious examples (Fernández, 2009).

On the other hand, summary executions in criminal courts (Feltran, 2010; Amorim, 2011: 416, Nunes, 2011: 166), torture, beheadings and the exhibition of bodies inform local populations and rivals who dominates the territory, who is stronger. The enemies are dehumanized, named as worms and, therefore, the solidarity reserved for relatives, family, and the group that protects and provides structure, does not apply to them. Terror is the language, if necessary, to communicate with local people, opponents, and society, and in this

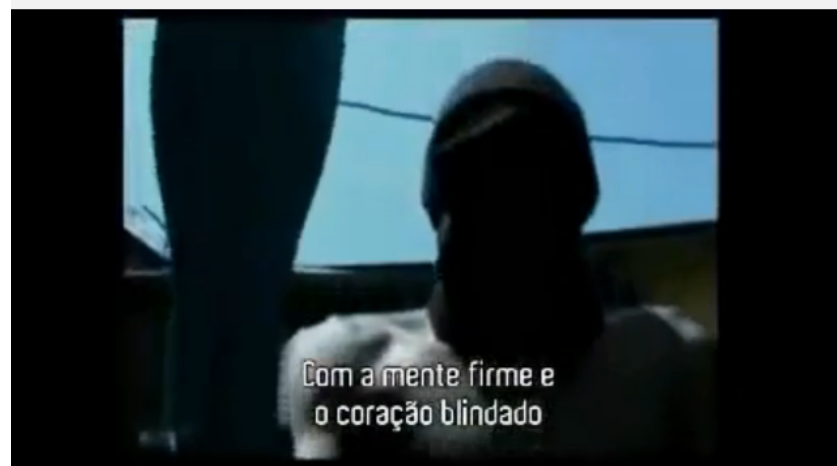
respect we approach what Jackson (2009: 12) identifies as a characteristic inherent to terrorism, which is the use of terror not only for publicity, but to actually communicate with their audiences, both local people as well as their enemies.

The members of the world of crime are not the only ones to be tried by the criminal courts. In 2002, journalist Tim Lopes was abducted, dismembered and placed in the "microwave" (cremated in barrels of gasoline) after being sentenced to death by a section of the *Comando Vermelho* for reporting the existence of free trade for selling drugs and conducting an investigation of parties that encouraged teenage prostitution and drug use (Amorim, 2011: 8). The execution of Tim Lopes had to communicate a message.

The video *Mente firme e coração blindado* (Firm mind and armored heart) reflects the three pillars of the apology identified here. Symbolic and military empowerment discourse contrast with images of young people carrying heavy weapons, their faces covered by a shirt, with bare chests, flip flops on their feet, walking in areas in a precarious state of urbanization. Thus, the warrior is presented, armored mind and heart, waiting and ready for confrontation, naked in his misery.

The images used in these homemade videos are recycled over and over again, circulating in various Internet videos, edited and posted by different people. They are, regardless of source, scenes of everyday life and correspond to the precarious reality of urbanization that fails to develop fully in the exclusion zones. They are interrupted territories, which never reached their fullness, something other than what results from the destruction, for example in war zones. They are a metaphor for life itself in those places where the innocence of childhood is interrupted and life may end soon.

**Figure 3.** YouTube. Firm mind and armored heart (video).<sup>7</sup>



The discourse based on the exaltation of the command, armor, and dehumanization, is the same in the other 30 pieces tested and observed. The three pillars on which the apology for crime sits are presented as the axes of preparation for war, a war that extends beyond drug trafficking. One does not grow armored overnight: it is necessary to gain peer recognition, prepare for a career that involves starting in lower positions, standing as moral interlocutor and being willing to adhere to the program. It is a war that goes beyond drug trafficking or confrontation with police. The apology for crime discourse provides visibility to the voices of the commanders.

<sup>7</sup> Recovered from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NIW\\_92js\\_wY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NIW_92js_wY).

No wonder that "being structured" is used as a way for redefining oneself with a vocabulary full of metaphors that refer to ideas of weight, density, strength, and impact. The command structures and strengthens, many times from the revolt, other times from desire, but always with the promise of protection (the command strengthens, and strengthening is protection with weapons); it offers membership (the command allows one to be "heavy" with the "brothers", providing density); orientation (it provides a straight path, the "procession"), attribution of meaning (something to fight for, highlighting the war against the "worms"), a career (in business - drug trafficking, kidnapping, robbery and theft) and, above all, a place of symbolic empowerment.

The elements discussed here suggest a process of radicalization to which children and adolescents are exposed from their affective, cognitive, economic, social position. The fact that crime also progresses in the symbolic aspect and that many of these young people live with the world of crime within their families and in very close environment, with stories that date back two generations, set a favorable situation for growing hatred. Hatred, different from rage, is not built on specific events. It is built in emptiness and therefore can be directed at someone identified not as an equal, but as a representative of a group which must be opposed.

## 5. Final considerations

The findings presented in the situational map, obtained from the videos analyzed and the apology for crime axes as a discursive field of communication in the world of crime, are supported by other studies. In an ethnography of PCC held in prison, Biondi (2010) highlights the existence of a willingness to adhere to the command programs, allowing its existence and reproduction, even in contexts in which their leaders are not present. Souza (2009) draws our attention to the affective and cognitive preconditions that precede accession to crime as a way of life, founded on social exclusion. The political positioning of the *commands* and the warrior ethos are highlighted by Zaluar (2004). Feltran (2009, 2011) in turn highlights the growth of the world of crime as a symbolic world in constant negotiations for legitimacy with the universe of legality.

The recipient of the apology for crime is precisely the contingent that on the Map of Violence (Waiselfisz, 2014 and earlier) and in the annuals of the Forum of Public Security mentioned in this article, among other documents and files, appears as victims of premature and violent death, especially by murder. They are young, mostly male, and by about 14 years old had already won the "moral breeding", i.e. moral posture to become commanders. They are often children of second and third generations exposed to the sociability of the crime, where violence and crime are installed in the neighborhood, in families, and among friends.

The apology for crime articulated in the construction axes of oneself as a member of the commands, and dehumanization of the other, as well as the affective and cognitive shielding, are facilitating axes of radicalization processes. This is a relevant and possible path for this analysis, perhaps in the light of theories on radicalization developed in other contexts, such as radical Islamism and how the second and third generations of immigrants are the target of these processes. This is in line with the idea of social preconditions developed by Souza (2009), which sees crime accession as a process of transmutation.

The situational map presented in this article provides an analytical ground empirically constructed from the contents of the apology for crime. In this map, the presence and communicative interaction between elements of different orders is explicit: material elements (crime as an economic alternative), historical and political (hygienist movements and the formation of slums and suburbs), biographical (the contingencies of each person), linguistic (creation of self and reality as an effect of language), discourse (speeches circulating locally and in the media), and even events relevant to the situation, such as the PCC attacks.

The apology videos analyzed are available in a medium - YouTube - as support and are, at the same time, an arena in which members of the commands display their worldviews, their explanatory theories, their reasons, their suffering. They also constitute an arena in which command members assume their position before their peers, their enemies, the communities in which they live, the government, police, society. They are also a place where legitimacy for the underground life is defended from very specific arguments that reverberate with local reality. One must remember that the world of crime as a way of life coexists with the world of legality not only in neighborhoods and cities, but also within the same family. Coexistence and tensions between these two worlds is very narrow, and the borders are very thin.

The organizing role of the commands and their programmatic narratives are critical in this context. Their consolidation as fluid social organizers, without structures that allow consideration of formal organizations, is only possible thanks to the fluidity of some interconnecting elements and processes of different orders. These elements and processes belong to ordinary life, to spheres of sociability based on everyday social interactions. The approach to this problem from the perspective of communication allows one to understand the commands and crime as a complex human phenomenon.

The expansion of the world of crime as a symbolic space and one of socialization is closely related to processes of significance and the presence of the command in regions of social exclusion. The fluid presence of the commands and the adherence to their programs and regimes of practices are based on social interactions, and the communication processes give life to their reproduction and transcendence. The approach to the apology for crime not as a chargeable product in the Penal Code but as a locus and arena located in a social context broadens the understanding of the problem of violence. Adhering to the commands and the expansion of crime as a way of life can be seen in their living processes of meaning, discursive positioning, and social place. It is an approach to the process in which products, threads of movement, and transformations capable of generating something new are formed (Braga, 2012).

It is unusual in Brazil to talk about political violence, armed conflict, or radicalism. However, the rates of violence, and also the form that violence has taken in recent years, signals processes that go beyond crime for economic reasons or personal weakness. Regularities indicate that these are not isolated situations or a phenomenon that arises by accident. There are factors that incite adherence to violence as a way of life that go beyond the material aspect. The apology for crime is presented as fertile ground for contact with the narratives, desires, constructions, and goals that permeate this world, as a contributing factor to maintaining and expanding the world of crime.

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