



Crime and Insecurity in Amazonas: Citizens and Officers' Views

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Abstract:

This article analyzes how crime and insecurity are perceived by local population and criminal justice officers in the Brazilian State of Amazonas. The research was based on focus group methodology with 41 interviewees. The data were gathered in Manaus (Amazonas' Capital) and in Tefé (countryside). The following issues have emerged from the data: 1 - the increase of drug related violence in the state, 2 - the lack of infrastructure to deal with crime, 3 - the tense relationship between police and society. The reasons for violence growth are shared by all interviewees. They stress problems arisen from urbanization and families' disaggregation. They do not see environmental problems or land conflicts as the main problems of violence in Amazonas. The research stresses the need to develop policies in accordance with the particularities of Amazonas that is a drug-corridor from Colombia and Peru. Existing research about crime and violence in Amazonas does not focus on the urban areas and the views of police and criminal justice officers. This article explores this gap.

Keywords:

Brazil, Amazon, Police reform, Crime, Public policy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since redemocratization⁵, public security problems have grown constantly in Brazil. It can be observed that homicides have passed from being the fourth cause of deaths in Brazil at

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⁵ Brazil lived under a military dictatorship from 1964-1985. After more than 20 years the power has returned to civilian hands. The immediate period after the end of military rule and the promulgation of the new constitution in Brazil in 1988 is considered the redemocratization period. During that time the strengthening of democratic institutions was the main concern in Brazilian political agenda. However, the rise of urban violence since then has put crime as one of the top problems in the country's agenda. The

the end of the 1980s, to the second cause of deaths in mid 1990's (Minayo and Souza 1994), placing Brazil among the nations with the greatest incidence of this crime in the world. The rise of the homicides was observed mainly on the larger urban centers in the Southeast region due to the growing presence of drug-trafficking in those areas (Fraga 2013). Nevertheless, the use of drugs has spread to different regions in the country and recently it has increased its presence in middle and small sized cities. For this reason, it has been registered that violence is now migrating to the countryside in a large scale⁶ (Waiselfisz 2013).

Currently the Amazonian region has been experiencing a significant increase in violence. Traditionally, violence in this region has been related to conflict over the possession of land, the illegal exploitation of natural resources, and the appropriation of the traditional communities' territory. Additionally, the Amazonian region is located on the frontier of drug producing regions (Fraga 2007).

This article deals with the results of the research regarding the perceptions of operators of the public security system and the general population about the problem of violence in the Amazonian state, the suitability of public institutions to guarantee public security, and possible solutions. These questions are interlinked, and point to the need of public policies to the region. The article is divided in four sections. The first section discusses the characteristics of public security in Brazil in a broad perspective, and the specificities of the Amazonian context. The relationship between state and society concerning security issues will also be stressed. It is relevant because legitimacy and efficacy concerns are key aspects on Brazilian public security agenda. The second section analyzes the characteristics of Amazonian reality and how the violence problems have been studied until now. Additionally, the gaps observed in the literature will be stressed. The third section presents results collected through qualitative research based on focus groups. In those sessions a sample of the general population of Manaus (the capital of Amazonas state) and Tefé (a regional pole in the Solimões river) composed the research, together with a sample of law enforcement officers and criminal justice professionals in both cities. Finally, the article ends with the conclusions that synthesize the analysis of the data gathered in the research.

2. SECURITY, STATE, AND SOCIETY IN BRAZIL

Violence⁷ is a serious problem on the Brazilian national agenda and its growth in the principal metropolitan regions of the country can be observed from the 1980s onwards.

inability of the state institutions to reduce levels of violence and to improve police legitimacy is considered a barrier to the full development of Brazilian democracy (Caldeira and Holston 1999; Ribeiro 2013).

⁶The Portuguese term "interior" refers to countryside. For this reason this process is also called "*interiorization of violence*" by researchers, law enforcement officers and legal professionals. The statistics of crime and victimization in Brazil are very criticized for being incomplete and not transparent. The main indicator used to measure violence in Brazil is the registered number of homicides by the Ministry of Health. The homicides statistics in Brazil starts its registry with data gathered from the 1980's. The data shows that violence in the countryside has risen from 7,6 homicides per 100.000 thousand inhabitants in 1980 to 19,4 homicides in 2011; if the main urban areas are considered homicides rise from 19.3 per 100.000 inhabitants in 1980 to 38 in 2011 (Waiselfisz 2013).

⁷The article adopts the definition of violence used by the World Health Organization: "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm,

This situation is related to various factors such as social conditions, lack of effectiveness of the criminal justice system, populations in situations of risk, and the increase in drug trafficking. In a more detailed manner, it is important to note that all rates of violence have grown in the different regions of Brazil, especially those with more accentuated levels of poverty. According to Waiselfisz (2013), in 2012 there were more than 56,000 murders in Brazil.

Violence in Brazil is eminently juvenile (Spagnol 2005). The largest number of deaths occurs in the 15-29 age groups. Something interesting in the Map of Violence is that the murder rate is 4.2 per 100,000 inhabitants until the 13 year old age group. From there it rises, reaching 75 per 100,000 inhabitants at 21 years of age. Young victims and perpetrators of violence are poor and live in situations of social risk (Fraga 2013). In general, programs and projects aimed at reducing violence are episodic and with a reduced continuity.

The problem has been worsened by the low crime prevention and repression capacity in Brazil. Police have a low level of legitimacy with society, as they are seen as violent, corrupt, and ineffective (Caldeira 2002; Costa 2004; Saporì 2007; French 2013). On the other hand, the police highlight authoritarian aspects present in their institutions, lack of professional valorization and lack of recognition of their work by society and the authorities (Riccio et. al. 2013).

Another difficulty is the non-existence of a structured and standardized system of indicators for the country, with the result that murder rates are represented by the mortality data obtained from the health system linked to the Ministry of Health (SUS). The use of SUS data also presents problems, since many violent deaths considered as due to 'undetermined causes' were actually lethal and intentional violent deaths. In 2010, for example, undetermined violent deaths corresponded to 10.3% of the total registered, something unthinkable in countries with better criminal statistics systems (Cerqueira 2013). This problem persists in the non-existence of temporal series about rates of imprisonment, firearms, drug consumption, and the number of police officers available, amongst others in the country (Cerqueira 2014).

Considering the facts exposed before, an important question arises: how do the general population and public security professionals perceive the incidence of violence in the context of Amazonas? This article intends to grasp how the changing context of violence in the Amazonian region is perceived by the people that suffer from its effects in daily basis and how police officers and members of the criminal justice system understand the reasons behind the rise of violence in the region, its characteristics and the capacity of state institutions to deal with those problems. To do so, a qualitative research was carried out in the state of Amazonas⁸ using focus groups, based in Manaus, the state capital, and Tefé, the center of the Middle Solimões region, with members of the Civil Police of Amazonas state⁹, members of the criminal justice system, and the general population of these cities. The conclusions of this study were based on the data gathered with the selected population, the law enforcement officers and legal professionals interviewed during

maldevelopment, or deprivation". <http://www.who.int/violenceprevention/approach/definition/en/> (Accessed on 19th May 2016).

⁸The State of Amazonas has an area of 1.559.161,68 square kilometres and 3.905.483 inhabitants (www.ibge.gov.br).

⁹In the case of Amazonas, its geographical particularity means that it possesses the largest hydrographic basin on the planet and has frontiers with the two principal producers of cocaine in the world: Colombia and Peru. Therefore, international traffic routes pass through the state.

the research process. Thus, this article is a first attempt to analyze how violence has been modified in urban and rural contexts in the Amazonas due to changes observed in the region such as the pressure for economic growth, urbanization and the expansion of drug-trafficking in larger and rural cities in Brazil.

3. THE AMAZONIAN SECURITY PROBLEM

The Amazon is an extensive region with diverse realities. These are manifested in economic and social aspects, as well as in relation to the nature of violent acts. The complexity of the region also includes the fact that it corresponds to 40% of the Brazilian territory and has the largest tropical forest and widest biodiversity on the planet. Frontier regions, or areas with intensive agriculture, or large urban centers all have particularities in relation to the incidence of violence.

Obviously, the environmental question is the main point of attention in the region. In 1960, 87% of land in the Amazon region was uncultivated forest. The rest of the land was occupied by 'extractivist' activities (11.2%). Of the total land existing in the Amazon region only 1.8% was used for agriculture and only half was held with proper land titles (Sant'anna and Young 2010). For this reason the few existing studies about violence and crime in the Amazon region focus on environmental related problems or land conflicts.

Nothing is more symptomatic of the fragility of the state than the phenomenon of *pistolagem*, characterized by the hiring of killers by the local elite to resolve disputes and impose their own power locally (Barreira 2004). *Pistolagem* arises out of this institutional fragility in which the power of the state is divided by the beneficiaries of the disorderly development process that emerged in the region, especially related with extensive livestock raising and the exploitation of timber (Loureiro and Pinto, 2005). Varga (2008) demonstrates that the advance of violence against the traditional populations on the frontiers of Maranhão State is related to growth of this type of agriculture.

Based on an economic perspective Sant'anna and Young (2010) analyze the relationship between rural conflicts and deforestation on the Amazonian frontier. According to these authors the non-existence of an effective system to guarantee property rights pushes populations towards predatory activities. There is a positive correlation between deforestation and murder. Deforestation is a way of obtaining property rights in a region covered by forest, which are duly regulated. This institutional fragility was observed by Fearside (2005) who pointed to the decline in the deforestation indices after police actions were undertaken against illegal logging in Brazil, such as Operation *Curupira*, or the creation of environmental protection areas in Pará after the murder of the Catholic missionary Dorothy Stang. However, the Brazilian state, whether at the federal or state level, is unable to carry out constant and sustainable action over time.

Aggravating this is the fact that the Amazonian region is now the stage for two global movements aimed at pressurizing the state over the use of territory. On the one hand, there is the movement of the economic, financial, and informational system aimed at integrating Brazil in globalization. On the other hand, there is the presence of social movements representing the demands of the various groups existing in the region, who in general have not benefited from the advantages obtained in these processes and suffer from the state fragilities. These coexist in the Amazon, though often in a conflictual manner

that reinforces its institutional fragilities (Becker 2005). Despite the importance of those problems, this article aims to understand the perceptions about the violence in the region considering this new context influenced by urbanization, industrialization and the impact of drug-trafficking. The objective is to understand it in a broad perspective.

4. METHODOLOGY

The research used the qualitative focus group technique with the purpose of analyzing the discourses of participants in relation to a determined issue (Morgan 1997; Kruger 1995), seeking to understand the meanings the interviewees conferred on social perceptions and actions. Seven (07) focus groups were held with representative samples of the following groups: two (02) with the general population of the metropolitan region of Manaus and one (01) with the general population of Tefé, a municipality from the interior chosen for the research, two (02) groups with members of the Civil Police and one (01) group with members of the criminal justice system in Manaus. The last group was held in Tefé and was compound with members of the Civil Police and the Military Police. All police officers belonged to the low ranks of their organizations in this group. The groups in Manaus consisted of two ages groups¹⁰, 18 - 29 and 30 - 55, and with members from both sexes. In Tefé, located in the center of Amazonas state, where access is only possible by boat or airplane, the group consisted of people of both sexes in the 30 - 55 age group.

In relation to security professionals, they were divided as follows: two (02) groups with members of the Civil Police based in Manaus, one with members from the operational level and another from the strategic level¹¹, and one (01) with a group of operational and strategic members from Tefé mixed with low-rank military police officers. The research also included one (01) group of members of the criminal justice system in Manaus. In this case, the group consisted of members of the *Polícia Militar*, agents from the penitentiary system, public defenders, and prosecutors. The intended group for members of the criminal justice system in Tefé did not occur, since the participants did not turn up. For this reason, interviews were held with three people related to criminal justice activities. In this case, they were a high-ranking officer from the Brazilian army and two members of the clergy who work in the area of human rights in Tefé.

The groups were held on November, 18, 19 and 20, 2013 in Manaus and on November 22 in Tefé. On November 18 the general population groups in Manaus were held, on November 19 those of the strategic and operational levels of the civil police and on November 20 the groups with the members of the criminal justice system were carried. In total, there were 41 participants in the research, including those interviewed individually.

¹⁰The group ages were based on the definitions from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) for youth population 18 to 29 years and adult population 30 to 55 years.

¹¹The Brazilian police system is based on a dual model of policing. The states in Brazil are responsible for organizing patrolling and investigation inside their boundaries. The patrolling is done by the military police and the investigation of crimes is done by the Civil Police. Each institution has different careers and hierarchical levels. Thus in the Military Police, the strategic level is composed by officers based on the Army model (ranks range from Lieutenant to Colonel) and the operational level is composed by soldiers, corporals and sergeants. At the Civil Police the strategic level is composed by the Police Inspector who is obliged by a constitutional command to hold a Law degree (Article 144 – Federal Constitution 1988) and forensic experts. The operational level is composed by detectives and clerks (Lino 2004).

It is important to note that due to difficulties with the environment, logistics, and access, carrying out research and holding events in the Amazonian region involves special difficulties. This specifically occurred in Tefé, where a strong equatorial rain hit the city on the day scheduled for the focus group with the general population and other members of the criminal justice system. This event resulted in the absence of some of those who had confirmed their presence, for which reason this group only had five participants.

Interviewees were recruited by a Manaus based research company with great experience in the definition of sampling, and data collection and analysis in the region. Participants were informed of the purpose of the work, the guarantee of the confidentiality of their identities, and asked if they consented to participate in the research. Focus group sessions were recorded on video. In Tefé the session with the general population was held in the parish hall of a local Catholic church. The session with the public security professionals was held in the local police station. Civil police and gendarmerie based there took part.

The material collected was transcribed and submitted to the analysis of researchers and three issues emerged: 1 - the context of the progressive increase of violence in Amazonas; 2 - a state structure unprepared to deal with violence; 3 - the relationship between police and society. The following section will look in greater detail at the results collected.

5. RESULTS

The first emerging issue from the data is the perception of the progressive increase in violence in Amazonas. The abrupt increase of violence in the principal metropolis in the Brazilian southeast, especially in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, observed at the end of the 1980s and in 1990, indicated the presence of violence in the most economically developed and settled areas. This phenomenon altered over time and in the second decade of the twenty-first century, a similar increase in violence in absolute and relative numbers has been verified in the north and northeast regions (Waiselfisz 2013).

This problem appears in the perception of the interviewees¹² who identify Amazonas as a state where violence has visibly increased. Manaus was no longer seen as a tranquil city, but as one regarded as ever more dangerous. Nonetheless, the level of violence does not correspond to that of metropolis such as Rio de Janeiro, where regions of the city are territorially dominated by armed gangs, and where armed conflict with the police is common. However, this perception is shared both by security professionals, inhabitants of the city, and other members of the criminal justice system:

Yesterday, for example, we arrived in region of the Rio Preto¹³, I think it was at 10 at night, it was a black car, a Golf, so I think without any reason at all, we passed the street, the corner, they saw us from a distance and began to fire. Without any reason. So much so, that those who were on the corner ran. Manaus is becoming a chaos and I think that with the increase in violence outside of Amazonas, I think that the increase in *mob activities* is coming here, to this state, which is where there is none (Claudio, general population group, Manaus)

¹²To keep the anonymity of the interviewees their names have been replaced with fake ones.

¹³Rio Preto da Eva is a city located in the metropolitan region of Manaus.

With firearms...So it is...we can see it is growing. In no year has it been less than in a previous one. It is possible that in one area of the city, of the state...with a harsher action it would have fallen, but in general, in total it is always increasing...in the interior of the state, the metropolitan zone and with great presence which have not occurred in the city there... men in hoods attacking boats, attacking traders, understand? (Tarcísio, Civil Police Detective, Manaus).

These perceptions of an increasing level of violence corroborate Adorno's analysis (2004) according to which nostalgia for cities without violence fades in the past. Reinforcing the scenario described above, seven of the eighteen participants in the general population groups indicated that they had already suffered violence (robberies, threats). There were also reports of relatives and acquaintances who had been victims (robberies and assaults) and participants who had witnessed acts of violence. For them, the growing levels of violence seem out of control and there is a perception that it will not change easily.

Once on a bus, I was carrying something, a black piece of luggage, and I was going to work, it was three years ago. Then the thief appeared with a gun. He said 'Do not look at my face. Hand over the money.' And I said 'leave my wallet, my documents and all that.' He said 'take it, take it.' So he robbed me like that, then he got off the bus peacefully, and did not even run away [Location of robbery: East Zone] (Carlos, general population group, Manaus)

Thank God I have never been mugged, nothing ever happened to me, but it did to my wife, here in Aleixo. She was leaving work. She was going to pay a bill. Then a thief with a knife came up to her and asked her if she had money and she had her phone in her hand, but she said 'no, I do not have any money.' She had already hidden the money. 'Give me your cell phone, give me your cell phone.' She said 'give me back the chip' and he broke her rib. She got hit by the thief. So he got it and walked away. Some people went past and ignored her (Joaquim, general population group, Manaus).

The perception of the increase of violence is unanimous in all groups and could be observed in relation to various types of crimes. Various reasons are offered for this increase by the general population group, the police and the other security professionals. These cover distinct themes such as structural factors related to the lack of basic sanitation, the exodus of the rural population to urban areas, the increase in the peripheries of the cities, and the lack of control of parents over youth, as well as the question of family de-structuring.

In the Tefé group the residents who participated were asked to compare violence in the city and around Manaus. Violence around the capital is higher. Nevertheless, in Tefé the occurrence of murders and attempted murders has been increasing.

It is calmer, yes. Here it is rare to hear criminals in shootouts with the police (Carla, Tefé).

What you have here are knives, not guns, understand? Here things are a little calmer in relation to this (Eder, Tefé).

Those from the interior region highlighted the degradation of their quality of life and the increase in violence, especially among the young:

Now there are muggings, something which did not happen before. We are used to a calm town, which did not have much violence, and it is even a surprise (Tobias, Tefé).

If we do not do something, the violence will tend to increase. I think everyone agrees, it goes from bad to worse (Gérson, Tefé).

Because the majority of users are young... the administration has, I am not sure, it has to find work for these young people, leisure areas, sports... parents have lots of children, understand, so they are obliged to work and leave their children alone, all left there...I think that this complicates things a lot, I think it is this (Adilson, Tefé).

The perceptions of police officers, members of the criminal justice system and the general population reinforce the sensation of insecurity and the increase in violence. This violence is eminently urban and repeats the pattern observed in the other regions of the country. In the discourse of those interviewed there is no reference to crimes related to the possession of land or illegal deforestation. According to the interviewees, this is not the principal cause of violence, but rather elements linked to urbanization, social inequalities, and the incapacity of the state to deal with the drug trade.

Additionally, the police reinforced the association between poverty and criminality. This explanation has always mobilized opinions in society and explanatory theoretical models have been built on this premise (Merton 1971). Nevertheless, critics of this explanation highlight the absence of explanations about the committing of crimes by members of the middle classes and even white collar crimes. The association of these variables is more efficient in the sense of helping to contribute to the stigmatization of determined ethnic and social groups than to properly explain criminality (Matza and Sykes 1961; Zaluar 2002; Adorno 2002).

The reports converge towards the construction of a discourse in which the changes caused by migration from the countryside to the city and the unplanned urbanization create the environment to spread violence. This process that occurred from the 1950's to the 1970's has been seen as the main disruptor of social bonds in the country. Distinct social classes and professional groups share this perception. There is a common opinion from the interviewees concerning the various undesirable effects of this process: the weakening of the family that does not exert the same influence as in the past to impose values on the young generation. In a more specific manner, the weakening of the family means its inability to inform young generations about the adequacy of behaving according to the law and other social norms. Those external factors are the main causes of violence in the contemporary Brazil. Furthermore, the perception of the interviewees also indicates an almost anomic vision of society.

There is... there is a mark which is the beginning; which is the arrival of the interior in the city. There is an increase in violence when this exodus to the city starts. The city cannot put up with this exodus, the favelas are formed everywhere all the time, invasions of everything nearby, lack of structure, lack of structure, basic sanitation, educational structure, health structure... For you to have an idea, in four or five years there was...in the capital, Manaus, it had fewer inhabitants than the interior, in four or five year, it came to have more residents than the interior (just the capital by itself)" (Nelson, strategic level Civil Police, Manaus).

And it is directly related to the... the *deflation* of the family. Families are completely collapsed, especially the most needy (homes). Coming from the interior *en masse* to the city under false promises of (social) improvements also brought this consequence. (Maura, Forensic Expert, Civil Police, Manaus).

[...] The real continued use of drugs, well this generates all types of violence, all types. I live in *Redenção* and there are areas of alleys and it is horrible. The father is already unemployed, and so comes all the confusion. (Samara, general population group, Manaus).

Next, the text will turn to the second topic that emerges from the data: the inadequate state structure to deal with violence. Its deficiencies are emphasized by all the groups interviewed. This aspect is highlighted especially by the operators of the public security system.

The state makes good laws. The problem is that the state does not have the structure to punish or rehabilitate this citizen. So I particularly see that there is no expectation of an improvement in society. I think that it gets worse every day. (Anacleto, Civil Police Investigator, Manaus).

I was talking about the increase in the forensics...I...I am new in the police, I entered at the last public contest, I will be here three years soon...when I started they gave me a clipboard and some pages, if I wanted to buy a pencil it was my problem...It has...now it got better. We have our field material. But we have great problems, large restrictions on maintenance and the replace of this material...but the state already is taking care of this (Ademar, Forensics Expert, Civil Police, Manaus).

The above citations highlight the absence of infrastructure to carry out police work and how it hinders good laws from being implemented. This need is also observed in forensics in which professionals do not have the necessary resources and need to buy pencils with their own money to do their jobs. Despite the improvements mentioned by this police officer, his discourse highlights the contradictions involved in carrying out proper scientific work. These problems are typical in Brazilian police forces and can also be seen in the low number of officers, the absence of mechanisms for the replacement and updating of equipment. The classic case is that of police vehicles, which are never provided in a sufficient number and quality.

The general population group also pointed to this fragility in infrastructure and once again the question of vehicles is presented. The reference to this instrument of work can be related to the perception of the effectiveness of the traditional model of policing. As is well known, the reactive model of policing is centered on the motorized response to the occurrence of crime. In this structure the vehicle is the principal instrument that makes the model feasible. What is interesting is the confluence of the perceptions of the police and the population about the centrality of the vehicle for good police practices. Both groups wanted its increase as a condition for better security. In other words, the common perception points to the reactive model of policing as a reference for public security (Moore 1992). In their discourse, there are no references of models of policing based on proactive work, decentralization and community-oriented practices (Skogan 2006). The adoption of more responsive practices such as the community-policing is not on their sight. Some citations from the general population group illustrate this point:

Here they do patrols around the neighborhood, various vehicles in the neighborhoods, but until then, I do not know, but it seems like they have not resolved anything (Claudio, general population group, Manaus).

The number of vehicles at the beginning was much higher. But nowadays it is because they have also surrendered to the bribes of the criminals (Beatriz, general population group, Manaus).

Nowadays you can see that it has disappeared. There are only two patrols where I live. What actually happens is that after two or three months they take away all the apparatus (Debora, general population group, Manaus).

In relation to the *Ronda no Bairro* program¹⁴ the interviewees noted that the instruments to control police actions, such as cameras in vehicles, were not working. They recognize the lack of interaction with police officers, or indeed the complete absence of this.

At the beginning the *ronda do bairro* had a torch and a camera. Now the camera is turned upwards or even left behind (Joaquim, general population group, Manaus).

They stay in the air conditioning of the car and do not even open the car door, not even at night when it is cooler. They do not open the window, so they stay inside and do not see anything from inside the car (Aparecida, general population group, Manaus).

In relation to Tefé, the police officers highlighted these structural difficulties even more. The logistical element has the greatest impact. It is a regional center for the small river-side settlement of the region, whose residents go to Tefé for commerce or a wide range of services. Only two means of transport are available: boat or airplane. The Civil Police and the Gendarmerie are responsible for Tefé and the other towns in the Middle Solimões, and the difficulties involved in being made aware of crimes and carrying out investigative activities are immense. One example can be observed in relation to sexual crimes against minors, which are very common in the region and often perpetrated by members of the same family group.

The father raped all his daughters and one of them had three children, all with the father. Accusations are generally anonymous and usually reach us by radio. To take measures we have to get the boat and go there. We have to wait for the victim to come and do a forensic medical examination. It takes six or seven hours to get there. And often there is no transport (Joana, Civil Police, Tefé).

We do not have a boat and often we have to borrow one to do our work. And this is in a town where everything comes by boat! (Jorge, Gendarmerie, Tefé).

The deficiency of the police is very great. There is only one police chief for the whole town and the number of officers is reduced. *Policia Militar* have just one company in the town and it is difficult for us to work (Pedro, Gendarmerie).

The public security body has little potential to combat traffic in the area due to lack of staff and material. In these isolated communities the number of soldiers is symbolic, there is no inspection work there, no support for the state government. The soldiers sent to these neighboring communities do not receive extra pay, and since there are only a small number of them, the crooks, the drug traffickers, end up corrupting them so they carry out their activities without any repression (Paulo, Officer, Brazilian Army).

¹⁴The Neighborhood Patrol (*Ronda no Bairro*) was created by the Amazonas' state government in 2012 with the aim of reducing violence levels in Manaus and other municipalities. The initiative was based on the allocation of special vehicles patrolling specific areas and operational integration between the military and civil police.

Lack of infrastructure reinforces a traditional discourse among the security operators in Brazil. Although investments have been made in recent years in the system, as the National Public Security Forum (2013) has pointed out, the perception is of a constant lack of resources. Certainly, this increase in investments is not sufficient given the existing demands, but it indicates an attempt to modernize and to avoid the discrepancy of infrastructure.

The third issue emerging in the research is the relationship between police and society. This relationship, as it is documented by the literature, is marked by tensions and variations in the levels of trust among the various groups (Tyler 2011; Klocars 1996). How the police and citizens meet is crucial in this process. This theme is relevant, since the quality of the service provided by the police is central to the assessment of their work by the general population (Rosenbaum 2005). Negative experiences have a much greater impact than positive ones in terms of the perception of the police (Skogan 2006b). Furthermore, the public considers legitimacy and fairness criteria when they evaluate police behavior (Meares *et. al.* 2014). The citations below are explicit about this:

[Talking about a friend stopped by police in the *Ronda no Bairro*] (...) it was that first impression, their way of dealing with you, (...) in something simple they treat you with a lack of respect, because taking everything into account they have a rigorous and preventive approach (...) but they should have training to deal with people respectfully (Joel, general population group, Manaus).

The most common error which the police commit daily is illegal restraint (Joaquim, general population group, Manaus).

I have an idea about the police. Like everything else in life, there are two groups, right? The good police and the psychopaths, right? I mean, if you are lucky you meet a police officer who is not corrupt, who is someone who deals with you in a certain manner. But if you are unlucky you meet a psychopath who sets you up, puts his gun against your head for no reason, then it is to pray (Othon, general population group, Manaus).

What they should give you is a feeling of security, but they give you a feeling of oppression (Plínio, general population group, Manaus).

So they stopped us, right, and I felt nervous. I had never been stopped. 'Why are you nervous?' No, there is nothing wrong. We were searched and there was nothing. 'So you had nothing, right?' So I began to talk with him, 'Ah, it cannot be like this, I know my rights etc.' So he said: 'Look what I have here.' And he wanted to put it in my pocket¹⁵. And I would have to prove this in the police station. (...) So, they often put it there themselves, they want to frame the guy (Joel, general population group, Manaus).

This discourse of the general population group describes classic problems in the relationship between the police and society. Something emphasized is the distancing established by the police. Especially highlighted are the verbal abuse and the lack of trust towards respectable people. The *Ronda no Bairro* program, specially designed to break away from this dichotomy, ended up reinforcing the distance between the two groups.

The members of the Civil Police have a different perspective. Prevention and integration to society are regarded with suspicion. In an explicit manner, one of the interviewees stat-

¹⁵This quote refers to a situation in which a police officer threatened to plant drugs to accuse the interviewee.

ed that it is better to repress and count on the support of the Judiciary. Another interviewee recognized that the use of force is more effective than lighter actions:

It is not better to prevent, it is better to repress. So, if there is better police repression with the support of the judiciary, then the actions will be a success. But nowadays in the actions that the police carry out all over Brazil there is only bullets; it is all pyrotechnics (Tarcísio, police investigator, Manaus).

Because at time we arrive, the police arrive rudely, kicking, screaming, and doing that because we know that in the reality of our daily experiences if we arrive politely, we are risking being met by bullets, being attacked. And often if two police arrive in a more violent manner, they reap better results than if 10/15 police officers were arriving more lightly, more politely. Unfortunately this is our reality (Silvio, police investigator, Manaus).

Despite the recognition of this form of action, Silvio believes that society trusts the police, especially those who respect the law. Nelson observes that the police are well received at the events to which they are invited. Maura, a forensics expert, also evaluates as positive the relationship with society. These citations clash with the perspective highlighted by the general population.

Generally, those who do not like the police are the outlaws. Upstanding citizens generally like the police and feel safe when the police are near (Silvio, Civil Police's operational level group).

The one there in Santa Senhora de Fátima improved a lot. The first time that we went there for a talk there was a very large party (Nelson, Civil Police's strategic level group)

I think that the entire civil police nowadays have managed to give greater visibility to our work...it is already very well accepted by society (Maura, forensics expert, Manaus).

The scenario observed in the Amazonian context is similar to the situation observed in the rest of the country (Souza 2015; Silva and Leite 2007). The hiatus between the police and society persists and there are no innovative solutions for this problem. Finally, the data collected in the capital and in an important regional center indicates a gap between police and society considering legitimacy aspects.

6. CONCLUSION

Immersion in the Amazonian context reveals problems common to the entire criminal justice system in Brazil. The perception of the various sectors interviewed for the research, the general population, civil police, and other members of the criminal justice system, points to the external elements which determine violence: social inequality, urbanization, and drug trafficking. In the judgment of all the groups interviewed these factors surpass questions that are intrinsic to the criminal justice system, such as effectiveness, professionalization, and infrastructure. Nevertheless, in relation to the last aspect, the absence of proper work conditions is reinforced by police officers and other criminal justice professionals.

There exists a shared understanding among the interviewees, whether they are from the general population or they are members of institutions concerned with public security. The diagnosis that there are social weaknesses has accompanied the ineffectiveness of laws and the lack of infrastructure of the institutions of the criminal justice system. In this way there is a convergence in relation to the perception of the 'quasi-anomia' experienced in Brazil, which is strengthened by the growth in drug traffic in all regions of the country. Furthermore, there is a common understanding about the traditional model of policing. The absence of vehicles is seen by the population as one of the hindrances to high quality public security. There is no comprehension about the most responsive policing strategies, such as the community model.

On the other hand, this adhesion to the traditional policing model disappears in the discussion of the relations between the police and the community. On this point the criticism falls on the police who do not manage to establish channels of dialogue with the population. Criticism of the verbal abuse received and the way people are treated reinforce this negative vision of the police. On the other hand, the analysis of the data demonstrates the presence of a paradox already highlighted by Caldeira (2002) about support for a traditional model of policing and criticism of its results when applied in practice. At the same time that it criticizes the reactive model of policing, the population supports it.

The scenario observed in Amazonas is surprising in relation to the reproduction of a perception of violence typical of other urban centers in the country. Actually, Amazonas, like the rest of the Amazonian region, suffers from the absence of actions aimed at security policies with a structuring quality. This problem is worsened by the absence of actions drafted for the region. The current scenario does not offer reasons to believe that the conditions will change for the better.

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