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The end of cohesion? Revisiting social fragmentation and neighborhood crime in Argentine shantytowns

Daniel Pedro Míguez*

Instituto de Geografía, Historia y Ciencias Sociales, Universidad Nacional del Centro de la Provincia de Buenos Aires/Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas, Argentina

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Rising crime rates have been a growing concern in Argentina since the 1990s. A significant body of research has associated this crime rise with the fragmentation of social bonds and forms of internal cohesion in urban areas affected by a high concentration of unemployment and poverty by income resulting from neoliberal structural reforms. Based on data from a survey conducted between 2004 and 2006, this paper's aim is to provide some new insights to this issue by measuring the presence and extension of networks based on mutual trust and reciprocity and estimating the incidence of conflict and crime in Argentine shantytowns. These estimations suggest that the social fragmentation thesis requires certain qualifications and enable some additional hypotheses about how neoliberal policies affected the internal forms of coexistence among shantytown dwellers.

La croissance de la criminalité a été une préoccupation en Argentine au cours des dernières décennies. Un nombre important d'études ont associé cette croissance à la fragmentation des liens sociaux dans les zones urbaines caractérisées par la concentration du chômage et la pauvreté résultat des réformes structurelles préconisées par le néolibéralisme. D'après les résultats d'une enquête menée entre 2004 et 2006, ce document vise à apporter des éléments nouveaux à la théorie de la fragmentation sociale basée sur des mesures de la présence et de l'étendue des réseaux internes de la réciprocité et l'incidence des conflits et la criminalité dans les bidonvilles. Ces estimations suggèrent la nécessité d'incorporer quelques nuances à la thèse de la fragmentation sociale a eu lieu jusqu'ici, et suggère également de nouvelles hypothèses sur les effets des politiques néolibérales dans les formes de relation sociale entre les gens des bidonvilles.

Keywords: crime; social fragmentation; Argentina; shantytowns

Introduction

Rising crime rates have been a growing concern in Latin America since the 1990s, and crime has continued to grow and be a topic of debate among scholars and policy makers during the initial decades of the twenty-first century (Briceño-León 2002; Koonings and Kruijt 2007; Arias and Dammert 2007). While rising crime rates affect most Latin American countries, comparative studies show that the processes underlying this growth in each country or region present significant contrasts (Imbusch, Misse, and Carrión 2011; Waldmann 2014). For example, while in Colombia criminal violence results from the way paramilitary organizations, former guerrilla movements and highly organized Drug Cartels dispute territories and resources (Giraldo-Ramirez and Duncan 2014), in El Salvador or

*Email: dpmiguez@gmail.com

Honduras criminal violence is associated with Maras (juvenile gangs) strongly related to the repatriation policies applied by the USA in the 1990s (Arana 2005). In other countries, such as Brazil, criminal violence is related to the way relatively decentralized forms of criminal organization such as "Comandos" control poverty-stricken areas in its mayor cities (Zaluar 2004).

In the case of Argentina, a significant body of research – presented in the next section – has associated rising crime rates to the "fragmentation" of social bonds and forms of internal cohesion in urban areas with high concentrations of unemployment and poverty by income such as shantytowns. Although they present some nuances, most of these studies depict the core of social fragmentation as the breakdown of social networks based on mutual trust and reciprocity, and the parallel emergence of neighborhood conflicts and crime. In this context, Argentina presents differences with other countries in the region in that fragmentation does not appear to be associated with organized crime or the intervention of highly structured juvenile gangs, as in Colombia or Central America (Imbusch, Misse, and Carrión 2011, 118). Even if, as discussed later, partial changes may be taking place, fragmentation appears as originally related to the way adolescent unsupervised and unstructured peer groups (Hagedorn 2008, 34) engage in vandalism and random criminal activity, altering internal convivial rules in low-income neighborhoods (see Isla and Míguez 2011 for further discussion of the particularities of the Argentine case).

In most studies, these core forms of fragmentation are associated with the presence of several associated conditions. Among the more relevant are: the decomposition, because of the effects of neoliberal structural reforms,[1] of the shared substrate of cultural orientations[2] that had traditionally enhanced peaceful coexistence and solidarity among shantytown dwellers; the discredit of local political leaders, who could no longer use their influence to mediate in internal conflicts and foster social cohesion; and the ineffectiveness of the security forces (particularly the police), which do not act as a deterrent to conflict and crime and sometimes are in connivance with those who promote them. Similar to what is found in social control theories,[3] studies of social fragmentation see shared cultural orientations and respect for local political leaders as the conditions that had traditionally favored trust and community organizations among shantytown dwellers. In this perspective, trust and community organizations moderate internal conflicts and exert informal social control of the public space, thus inhibiting criminal activity. As shown in the next section, social fragmentation studies tend to see the decomposition of this shared cultural substrate and the discredit of internal political leadership produced by neoliberal policies as the conditions that lead to more extreme conflicts and a decline in protective mechanisms of informal social control over the public space. In addition, the discredit of the security forces reduces even further the means of social control, leading to the perpetuation or recurrence of conflict and crime.

This perception of social fragmentation has resulted mainly from ethnographic case studies conducted in two distinct moments. A first series of studies took place, mainly, during or immediately after the economic and social crises that affected Argentina between 2000 and 2003.[4] These studies suggest that neoliberal policies precipitated the breakdown of networks of mutual trust and the parallel growth of conflicts and crime, making disputes because of internal delinquencies the single most important source of confrontation within shantytowns (Puex 2003, 35; Rebón 2004, 13). This, in turn, made shantytowns one of the major hubs of urban violence in Argentine cities. A second series of studies, developed when the more acute effects of the 2000–2003 crisis had waned, maintain the idea that the decomposition of internal cohesion extended, and conflict and

crime continued to grow in Argentine shantytowns even after neoliberal policies were replaced by others of a different orientation (Auyero, Berti, and Burbano de Lara 2014, 443).

Based on data from a survey conducted between 2004 and 2006, this paper's aim is to provide some new insights to the social fragmentation thesis. The particular contribution of the survey is that it provides a *measure* of the presence and extension of networks based on mutual trust and reciprocity and of the incidence of conflict and crime within shantytowns that was not available in previous ethnographic studies. This, in turn, allows for some clarifications regarding the *characteristics* of social fragmentation in the years immediately after the economic and social crises Argentina underwent between 2000 and 2003, enabling some additional hypotheses about how neoliberal policies affected the internal forms of coexistence among shantytown dwellers. This also leads to further hypotheses concerned with the evolution of social fragmentation and crime after the more prominent effects of neoliberal structural reforms declined.

A limitation in this approach stems from the fact that the survey was not preceded by similar studies and thus previous ethnographic research does not provide exact quantitative measures of the levels of fragmentation in shantytowns. Hence, although the survey's results suggest that ethnographies might, to some extent, overestimate the incidence of conflict and crime in shantytowns, it is not possible to establish the magnitude of this difference. However, the main goal of this paper is not so much to dispute the extension or incidence that fragmentation may have reached in Argentine shantytowns, but to provide a nuanced perspective regarding fragmentation's main characteristics or morphology and how it affects people's everyday lives.

In sum, although the survey does not enable an historical approach to the evolution of social fragmentation and the conditions associated with it, it does allow for a comparison with the initial ethnographic studies. Even if exact measures cannot be contrasted, the comparison suggests nuances in relation to what these latter studies show and provides for some complementary hypotheses concerning the findings in the research that took place in a "second phase", when the more acute effects of neoliberal structural reforms had waned. In order to develop this comparative perspective, in the next section we introduce the main contributions of ethnographic studies and in the following section we present the survey data and compare it with the main findings in qualitative research.

The consequences of structural change in everyday life

Studies on the consequences of neoliberal reforms on the internal social structure of shantytowns report as one of the main transformations the significant population growth that took place between 1981 and 2006, which strongly affected traditional convivial rules and internal cohesion (Cravino, Del Rio, and Duarte 2007,16; see also Caruso and Rebón 2001). Original shantytown settlers were rural migrants who arrived on the peripheries of big cities, mainly between the 1940s and 1960s, attracted by the opportunities offered by the development of the import substitution industry. Urban life and industrial employment offered rural migrants the opportunity to improve life chances through upward social mobility and greater access to the consumption market and basic public and cultural services, like education and healthcare (Roberts 1995, 149–50). These conditions favored the constitution of a shared cultural substrate, which had the nuclear family as a basic model of domestic order and was oriented by the possibility of individual progress

through the prolonged education of the progeny, disciplined labor, and thriftiness (Torre and Pastoriza 2002, 264; Gené 2005).[5]

In contrast with these conditions, those who arrived in the 1980s and 1990s did not find the same chances for personal progress. Instead, they faced job instability, low income, less social and labor benefits, and a greater population density and house overcrowding. These new conditions tended to erode the system of shared cultural orientations that had traditionally favored internal cohesion, leading to more neighborhood conflicts, recursively associated with internal crime (Puex 2003; Rebón 2004; Crovara 2004; Mancini 2009; Auyero and Burbano de Lara 2012, 535). One of the main disruptive elements was that groups of adolescents or juveniles with conflictive educational careers and difficulties in accessing the job market frequently became involved in what is locally known as *bardo* (Kessler 2002, 151–2).

Although *bardo* was in part the result of the naturalization of illegal activity as a legitimate source of income (Tonkonoff 2003; Kessler 2004), it involved more than just economically oriented crime. In contrast to "professional" crime, which usually followed the rule of not victimizing other neighbors (Isla 2002), *bardo* consisted of a miscellaneous set of activities that transgressed community convivial rules. Among other things, *bardo* included the public consumption of drugs or alcohol, acting aggressively against other neighbors, playing loud music in inappropriate hours, or vandalizing public lights and community organizations such as schools or local healthcare services.

Therefore, in contrast to crimes systematically oriented towards profit, *bardo* included different forms of vandalism and was spontaneous and opportunist, randomly affecting shantytown dwellers. However, whereas *bardo* was not necessarily economically oriented, it could eventually turn into certain forms of property crime, like armed robberies to occasional passers-by, the compulsory soliciting of money locally known as *peaje*,[6] or burglaries. An additional disruptive element was that local political leaders and security forces proved ineffective in dealing with *bardo*. Moreover, in some cases they were in connivance with those involved in *bardo* and internal crimes (Saín 2004; Isla and Míguez 2012). Hence, in addition to being subject to these forms of conflict and crime, neighbors could not trust public agencies to deal with these problems.

Rebón's (2004) case study of a shantytown in a southern district of the city of Buenos Aires provides a good illustration of the forms of social fragmentation that were, at the same time, the cause and consequence of *bardo*. In his initial interviews with local residents, he found evidence that trust among neighbors had declined and that internal relationships had turned more conflictive (Rebón 2004, 13). A central factor reported by neighbors as a source of internal conflicts was the transgressions to internal convivial rules committed by adolescents who were involved with drugs and were out of work and school. Focus groups conducted as part of the study showed that neighbors' main complaint was that they felt insecure because, in addition to being burglarized or even assaulted in their own homes, these groups of youngsters frequently robbed them or solicited *peaje* in the neighborhood's alleys, locally known as *pasillos*.[7] Everyday life became unpredictable as people were deprived of basic resources like the bus money they had to get to work, their daily pay, or even their sport shoes or jackets, mainly during the early morning when they were going to their jobs or in the evening when they came back from work. In a complementary survey, residents estimated the principal consequences of this type of crime. A majority (72%) pointed to them as the main cause of conflicts and daily confrontations between neighbors because of mutual accusations of who were responsible for those acts, and the efforts made by victims to recover the stolen goods

or to take revenge on those who had victimized them. Hence, *bardo* was portrayed as the consequence of the decomposition of internal convivial rules and networks of mutual trust in the neighborhood and, at the same time, it reproduced this decomposition, promoting distrust and conflict among neighbors.

Puex's (2003) study of a shantytown in a southern district of greater Buenos Aires provides further insights into the forms of social fragmentation that were reproduced through *bardo*. Puex (2003, 58) found that a common practice among adolescents involved in crime within the shantytown was to rob people or homes in "other" sections of the neighborhood, relatively distant from their area, and then sell the objects within their own section at a lower than market price. In many cases, the only way original owners could afford to recover their property was to buy it from their robbers. Hence, they had to locate them through the internal networks of the shantytown and then negotiate the price asked to recover the stolen goods. Even if in the process of recovering their goods victims could identify their robbers, they were reluctant to resort to the police or the judiciary, as this was considered "snitching" in traditional shantytown codes. In addition, it was frequently the police itself that ran illegal markets in shantytowns, therefore identifying robbers to the security forces could always backfire. Consequently, in contrast with traditional networks of mutual help based on trust, victims found themselves trapped in negative forms of reciprocity in which certain groups in the neighborhood (those involved in crime and in connivance with the police) imposed their interests on others.

Although these practices were conflictive, leading to internal quarrels, most of the time they did not result in extreme confrontations. However, Puex (2003, 50) showed that, in certain circumstances, the practices associated with *bardo* could become disruptive of the more basic forms of internal solidarity and in that case confrontations could escalate. A revealing episode occurred in relation to two youngsters who systematically asked for *peaje* in their own *pasillo* and then spent that money on the public consumption of alcohol and drugs. The youngsters had especially picked on a mason, taking his daily pay every afternoon when he came back from work with the threat of robbing his house and killling his family if he resisted. Neighbors were reluctant to involve the police, as security forces were usually indifferent to this type of situation and, even if they arrested the youngsters, they would be released in a few days and become even more violent towards their "snitching" neighbors. The mason and other neighbors had talked to the youngsters, appealing to the internal rule not to rob in their own *pasillo*, but conversations were to no avail. Neighbors also appealed to Tito, a local political leader, to talk to the two youngsters. However, his intervention only deterred them for a few days. After bearing with this situation for some time, one afternoon, when coming back from work, the mason shot the two youngsters. The fact that, after several warnings, the youngsters kept breaking some of the more basic solidarity rules in the neighborhood and that the mason's action seemed to represent the "only way out" of the problem raised the empathy of his neighbors. Far from condemning the mason, his neighbors from the same *pasillo* helped him evade the police and escape to his remaining family in the province from which he had originally migrated.

Although, as Puex (2003) herself points out, these extreme forms of confrontation were not the more frequent outcome of the conflicts generated by *bardo*, other researchers report similar episodes during their fieldwork (Rojas 2000; Alarcón 2003; Diez 2009; Bonaldi and del Cueto 2010). This recurrence, however, does not suggest that extreme confrontations were more than occasional episodes. What they reveal, instead, is that the internal conflicts that could eventually lead to them were present in other shantytowns. In sum, although *bardo* was not the only expression of fragmentation,[8] what is described in

these studies aptly synthesizes its main characteristics. Fragmentation results from the destitution of traditional cultural orientations that had traditionally fostered internal cohesion in shantytowns, and consists mainly in the decomposition of bonds of mutual trust and reciprocity networks among neighbors, recursively associated with the development of internal conflicts and crime.

A notable fact is that recent studies suggest that these forms of fragmentation and crime have increased even after the effects of the 2000–2003 economic and political crises were, at least, partially reversed. For example, a series of ethnographic studies of shantytowns, working-class neighborhoods, and squatter settlements on a southern district of Greater Buenos Aires between 2009 and 2012, based on the experiences of local schoolteachers, showed the high frequency with which students narrated episodes of physical violence in spontaneous conversations (Auyero and Berti 2013; Auyero, Burbano de Lara, and Beltomi, 2014). The students' stories revealed that, in their daily experiences, episodes of inter- and intra-familial violence, criminal violence, and violence coming from the state (mainly from the security forces) were profoundly intertwined, and became a defining feature of people's everyday lives (Auyero, Berti, and Burbano de Lara 2014, 443). In addition, journalists and further ethnographic research (although still in its initial stages) suggest that a possible factor associated with the increase of violent crime in shantytowns is the recent development of organized drug trade (Cozzi 2013; Mancini 2014). Although drug-related conflicts were mentioned as part of *bardo* in the early ethnographies, disputes for territory and cycles of retaliation between groups of drug dealers seem to have increased, to the point that, in certain shantytowns (especially in the city of Rosario, Santa Fe, and in southern districts of Buenos Aires), murders have reached unprecedented levels.[9]

Although these studies took place after several years of economic recovery (which yielded a substantial reduction in unemployment and poverty rates), they tend to see these later developments of internal conflicts and crime as the long-term effects of neoliberal structural reforms. However, one of the main findings in the survey data presented in the next section is that social networks remained strong and conflicts and crime did not have a high incidence in shantytowns, at least immediately after the height of the 2000–2003 economic and social crises. Initially, this opens the question as to why the case studies that took place between 2002 and 2006 may have found such strong influence of conflict and crime in everyday life, while quantitative measures do not show high frequencies of these types of episodes. In addition, this also leads to the question of why more recent studies found that the levels of conflict and crime increased several years after the more acute effects of neoliberal structural reforms receded, especially since, according to the survey's data, conflicts and crime were not so extended immediately after 2003.

A quantitative view

The survey used to measure the levels of fragmentation in Argentine shantytowns in 2004–2006 was part of a larger project carried out by five national universities and implemented in the area of influence of each of them[10]: the city of Buenos Aires (2,891,082 inhabitants) and its metropolitan area (9,910,282), the city of Córdoba (3,304,825), Mendoza (848,660), Tucumán (586,198), and Tandil (a smaller city, with a population of 117,408). The sample was representative of socioeconomic status, established through the housing-level index, which allows the differentiation of shantytowns from other types of neighborhoods. Given that ethnographies took place mainly in shantytowns, to enhance the comparability between quantitative and qualitative materials,

we centered our analysis exclusively in shantytown cases (n = 1558). Shantytowns in each city were identified through census tract data, and the shantytowns in which the survey was conducted were randomly selected, with approximately five shantytowns studied in each city. Within each shantytown a minimum of 50 households were selected at random and data were collected through face-to-face interviews with the head of each of these households.

Although survey variables do not capture all the subtle elements that articulate conflict and crime in shantytowns' everyday life, as shown in the next section they may still measure some of the core aspects of fragmentation. Namely, the extent of internal reciprocity networks, the incidence of conflicts among shantytown dwellers, and the victimization rates for the forms of crime more frequently associated with fragmentation. The survey also measured some of the conditions that have usually been portrayed as associated to the core forms of fragmentation, such as the levels of distrust in the police and internal political leaderships, and the decomposition of the conventional cultural orientations that had traditionally championed hard work, thriftiness, and education as means for personal progress.

Initially, these sets of variables enable us to estimate the incidence of the core elements of fragmentation among shantytown dwellers. In a second instance, they also allow calculations of the association between the core aspects of social fragmentation and some of the conditions that have usually been associated with it. A limitation in this approach is that being an essentially cross-sectional study, which measures respondents' characteristics and attitudes prior to their victimization, it does not allow for strict causal inferences. For this reason, we have chosen to treat the conditions that are usually associated with the core aspects of fragmentation as *concomitant* to them and not as factors holding true causal relationships. In addition, the core and concomitant forms of fragmentation do not appear to act as a fixed set of causes and consequences. Instead, as shown later, we found bidirectional relations between them that suggest that they act as a set of ongoing and mutually influencing conditions and not as a group of causal factors that produce a predetermined series of fixed effects.

Variables

In order to estimate the presence or absence of internal forms of reciprocity, we measured the extension of social networks characterized by the exchange of favors or the sharing of celebratory events, such as birthdays or national holidays. We thus asked shantytown residents to estimate with how many friends within five blocks from their homes they exchanged favors or participated in common celebrations. We also asked this question concerning family members. Answers were coded "zero" for those who had two or less friends or kin within five blocks of their homes and "one" for those who had three or more. We thus created the "kinship network" and "friendship network" binomial variables. Similarly, we measured the levels of neighborhood conflict, asking with how many neighbors living within five blocks of their residence respondents had problems. The more common conflicts mentioned by respondents were the public consumption of alcohol or drugs, neighbors that made loud noises, littered on improper places, or had an aggressive demeanor. Answers were coded "zero" for those having two neighbors or less with whom they had conflicts, and "one" for those who had three or more. Thus, we created the "neighborhood conflicts" binomial variable.

We measured victimization rates by asking respondents if they had been subject to *peaje* or violent robberies during the 12 months prior to the survey. This variable has the limitation

that it only considers victims and does not provide information about the perpetrators of crimes. It was not possible to ask about perpetrators as this raised suspicions among shantytown dwellers, producing a high level of non-response and even some personal risk for interviewers. However, we asked victims to calculate the age of the perpetrators. Although this is a partial measure and may include some biases,[11] it estimates one of the characteristics (age) portrayed in ethnographies as associated with fragmentation.

In addition to measuring its core aspects, we also inquired about the concomitant conditions of social fragmentation. One of the most elusive factors to capture in quantitative variables is the inter-subjective systems of meaning that compose the cultural orientations of a given social group. Quantitative variables tend to capture fixed opinions of a rather explicit nature, and not the dynamic and often implicit and inconsistent systems of meaning that form a culture (see Míguez 2014, 302–3 for further discussion). Therefore, while it is not possible to measure exactly how subjective conditions such as attachment to work, education, and family configure a common subjective substrate, we approached this factor through a variable that expresses skepticism towards their association with personal progress. In this vein, we asked respondents to express their agreement or disagreement with the following statements: "In this country [Argentina], it is not worthwhile to be honest and a hard laborer to prosper in life"; "Nowadays to be astute has greater advantages than to study hard and be perseverant"; and "Sometimes you need to put your family aside to make progress in life". We coded each answer "one" when respondents agreed with these statements and "zero" when they disagreed. We then integrated answers into one binomial variable called "skepticism towards conventional cultural orientations", using Cronbach's Alfa to estimate the internal consistency of the scale.[12]

We also developed measures that capture the perception of political leaders and the police, asking respondents how much trust or distrust they had in these public agencies. Answers were coded "zero" if they expressed trust and "one" if they expressed distrust. Thus, we created the "distrust in the police" and "distrust in local political leaders" variables. Finally, we also included personal-level variables like age (above and below 30) and gender.

In the next section, we present the survey's main results. Initially, we draw on descriptive statistics (see Appendix 1) to show the incidence of the core elements of social fragmentation among shantytown dwellers (i.e. the presence and extension of reciprocity networks based on kinship and friendship and the rate of neighborhood conflicts and victimization for *peaje* and violent robberies). In a second instance, we analyze the patterns of association between the core forms of social fragmentation and its concomitant conditions, while keeping constant individual characteristics such as gender and age.[13]

Main findings

The survey's most important result is that it reveals that the core forms of fragmentation did not have a high incidence among shantytown dwellers. Regarding friendship and kinship social networks, 39.7% of shantytown dwellers declared that they exchange favors or participate in common celebrations with three or more neighbors within five blocks of their homes, and 36.5% declared the same with proximate relatives. The two variables combined reveal that over 71% of respondents had three or more neighbors or relatives with whom they exchanged favors or participated in common celebrations proximate to their homes, showing a significant presence of reciprocity networks. In turn, only 5.8% of respondents reported conflicts with three or more neighbors proximate to their residence. In addition, crime rates for *peaje* and violent robberies were relatively low: 9.2% and 8.3%, respectively. In short, at least during the period in which the survey took place,

there was not a high incidence of what has been regularly portrayed as the core aspects of social fragmentation.

However, an important fact is that, although the core forms of fragmentation were not very regular, the conditions that have been considered in ethnographies as concomitant with them do show significant levels of association. Thus, although descriptive statistics indicate that the main forms of fragmentation do not affect a majority of shantytown dwellers, further analysis, shown in Figures 1 and 2, reveals that their patterns of association with the concomitant factors of fragmentation are significant and concurrent with what was found in ethnography.[14]

Initially, Figure 1 indicates that neighborhood conflicts are strongly associated with personal characteristics such as sex and age. As suggested by ethnographic studies, being male and young (under 30) is related to the probability of participating in neighborhood conflicts (public consumption of drugs and alcohol, making disturbing noises, or having an aggressive demeanor towards other neighbors). Figure 1 also indicates that, holding constant these individual characteristics, the variables expressing the concomitant conditions to the core aspects of social fragmentation are also associated with the likelihood of having conflicts with proximate neighbors. Among those who distrust the police and political leaders and have a skeptical attitude towards conventional cultural orientations, the chances of having conflicts with neighbors increase 25–40%.

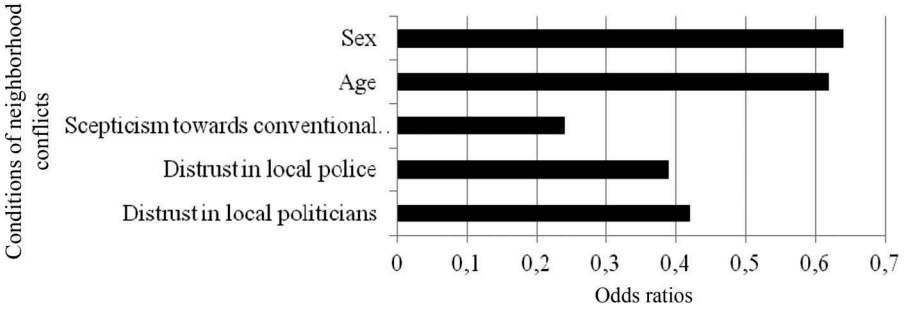

Figure 1. Conditions of neighborhood conflicts.
Note: $p < 0.050$ for all variables.

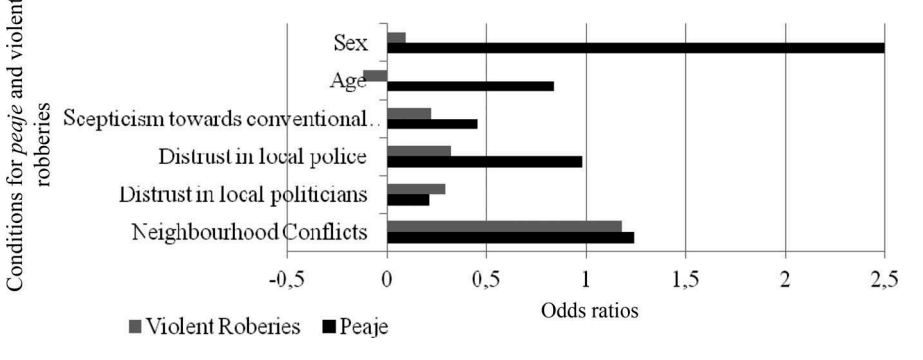

Figure 2. *Peaje* and violent robberies (odds ratio).
Note: $p < 0.050$ for all variables, except violent robberies vs. age (0.682) and sex (0.685).

Figure 2 indicates that, as is the case of neighborhood conflicts, personal characteristics such as age (being under 30) and especially gender (being a male) are associated with a greater risk of being a victim for *peaje*. However, victimization for violent robberies is not related to gender or age (although descriptive statistics indicate that, as is the case of *peaje*, most perpetrators are younger than 30). Thus, from a demographic point of view, *peaje* is a type of crime that occurs predominantly among young males, while violent robberies are perceived to be committed mainly by those below 30; victimizing shantytown dwellers occurs regardless of age or gender. Figure 2 also shows that, holding constant personal characteristics, the concomitant conditions to the core aspects of social fragmentation maintain their association with the probability of being victimized for *peaje* or violent robberies.

For both types of offenses, to be involved in conflicts with proximate neighbors relates significantly to the likelihood of being a victim of violent robberies or *peaje*. In addition, Figure 2 shows that distrust in the police, in local politicians, or in conventional cultural orientations also relate to the likelihood of being a victim. Thus, as stated, although descriptive statistics indicate that the main forms of fragmentation, neighborhood conflicts, victimization by violent robberies, or *peaje*, do not affect a majority of shantytown dwellers, further calculations reveal patterns of association with the concomitant factors of fragmentation, which matches what was found in ethnography.

Therefore, the survey indicates that the fragmentation that affected shantytowns between 2004 and 2006 was not characterized by a massive breakdown of internal reciprocity networks, or by a high incidence of neighborhood conflicts, victimization for *peaje*, or violent robberies. A more precise characterization of social fragmentation is that its core aspects only affected relatively small minorities, in which conflicts had a high incidence and were strongly associated with victimization for *peaje* and violent robberies. In addition, although distrust in the local police and neighborhood political leaders and skepticism towards conventional cultural orientations were quite extended among shantytown dwellers, they were more prevalent among the minorities affected by conflict and crime. In sum, fragmentation was characterized by the concentration of conflict and crime in relatively small minorities of shantytown dwellers (predominantly, although not exclusively, men under 30), among which the concomitant conditions to these core aspects, such as distrust in politicians and the police and skepticism towards conventional cultural orientations, had a higher incidence.

This hypothesis requires, however, a further qualification. While Figures 1 and 2 suggest that, along with the personal characteristics, the concomitant conditions to social fragmentation are associated with increases in the chances of being involved in neighborhood conflicts or becoming a victim of crime, these relationships are not unidirectional. Due to space limitations we have not included supplementary calculations in this case, but when we reversed the relationship between variables we also found significant associations. For example, while Figure 2 indicates that those who have conflicts with neighbors are more likely to become victims of *peaje* or violent robberies, the opposite is also true: among those who were victimized there is a greater incidence of neighborhood conflicts.[15] Similarly, we have also verified that the relationship is bidirectional between victimization for *peaje* or violent robberies and the degrees of distrust in local political leaders and the police. This suggests that, more than a fixed set of causes that promote the main forms of fragmentation, the core forms of social fragmentation and its concomitant aspects are a set of conditions that reciprocally influence each other over time.

Conclusions and final hypotheses

The most significant result provided by the survey is that, at least in 2004–2006, there was not an extended disruption of reciprocity networks, a high frequency of neighborhood conflicts or victimizations for *peaje*, or violent robberies among shantytown dwellers. Thus, while the lack of previous surveys does not allow estimations of how much change was introduced by neoliberal structural reforms, they do not seem to have resulted in an extended incidence of the core aspects of social fragmentation. Instead, what characterizes the social fabric of shantytowns immediately after the 2000–2003 crises was the coexistence of an extended number of reciprocity networks with a significantly smaller number of nuclei of social ties where neighborhood conflicts and crime had higher rates and were strongly associated. In addition, although distrust in local politicians and the police and a certain skepticism towards conventional cultural orientations were extended, these had a higher incidence among those affected by conflict and crime.

As noted, these results raise the question of why, while the survey shows a low frequency of conflicts and crime, ethnographic studies contemporary to the survey show an important impact of these kinds of events in the daily life of shantytown dwellers. Although it is not possible to give a definitive explanation, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches enables several hypotheses. A simple explanation is that, given their focus on fragmentation, ethnographies captured mainly the nuclei of social ties, in which conflict and crime prevail and underplayed their co-existence with internal forms of cooperation and peaceful cohabitation. However, it is possible to propose a complementary hypothesis. Because of their *modalities*, certain forms of conflict and crime may affect the temporal and spatial routines and types of social relations that constitute the everyday life of shantytown dwellers, thus having a strong impact on their lives in spite of their rather low frequency.

Peaje and violent robberies are illustrative of the modalities that may have influenced the routines and perceptions that constituted everyday life in the shantytown. *Peaje* not only involves an extortive relation among neighbors, but, being a type of crime used to mark a group's own turf, it also segments the internal space of the shantytown into familiar and alien territories. This affects daily routines inside the shantytown (e.g. trajectories to and from work or school), meaning that certain areas of the neighborhood are difficult to pass through for those who do not "belong" (do not live or have acquaintances) in these areas. In addition, the practice of robbing more distant neighbors and then reselling stolen objects in the same shantytown produces distrust and introduces deep tensions among shantytown residents. Therefore, even if they were not very frequent, these practices can have a strong impact on the daily lives of shantytown dwellers as they inhibit free circulation inside the neighborhood and foster mistrust among neighbors.[16]

Finally, the former analyses provide grounds for further hypotheses concerned with the possible increase of conflict and crime after the cycle of neoliberal structural reforms and its more prominent effects waned. Some studies attribute this development to the fact that the living conditions resulting from neoliberal structural reforms were not fully reversed despite the changes in social policies and the partial regression of unemployment and poverty rates that took place during the initial decades of the twenty-first century. From this perspective, the expansion of conflict and crime would result from a sort of vegetative growth due to the, at least partial, perpetuation of the conditions that generated them. Other studies associate the more recent expansion of conflict and crime to the internal disputes arising from the way that organized crime, especially drug trade, evolved in recent years. In turn, the results of our investigations suggest that fragmentation in shantytowns is not characterized by an extended disruption of reciprocity networks, but by the concentration of conflict and crime in reduced

nuclei of shantytown residents. Thus, a possible hypothesis, which partially brings together these diverse perspectives, is that the diffuse forms of conflict and crime that characterized fragmentation immediately after the 2000–2003 crises expanded and evolved into more extreme and systematic forms of confrontation. This did not necessarily result from the mere perpetuation of detrimental conditions in shantytowns; instead it may respond to the ways in which recent developments in the way drug trade operates in shantytowns affected the nuclei of social ties, characterized by a greater incidence of conflicts and crime.

Several studies show that in Latin America organized drug trade usually evolves from a "commercial" phase exclusively focused on the pursuit of profit to another phase in which profit is sought through the control of certain territories (especially those with a weak presence of the centralized state), establishing new forms of social domination (Waldmann 2014, 12). These alternative forms of domination usually combine cooptation, using informal mechanisms of social assistance for the most needy, with the extreme use of force. Thus, it may well be that these changes in the way that organized drug trade operates are producing a sort of mutation, in which the diffuse forms of conflict and crime that characterized fragmentation in its initial stages (e.g. *bardo*) are turning into more organized and lethal forms of confrontation. This would lead to an increase in the incidence of conflict and crime, with partial independence of how social conditions evolve in such areas. Although it is too early to reach a definitive conclusion, this suggests that, perhaps by a combination of imitation and external influences, the form that conflict and crime are developing in Argentine shantytowns begins to assimilate to what has happened in other countries in Latin America.

Notes

1. For a comprehensive description of these reforms and their effects, see, among others, Grimson and Kessler (2005) and Salvia (2012).
2. Following Geertz (1973, 89) we understand cultural orientations as a "a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their [...] attitudes towards life".
3. Social control theories also see the lack of common cultural understandings and frail community organizations in low income neighborhoods as factors contributing to weak social control of the public space, greater levels of internal conflicts, and a greater incidence of crime. See Downes and Rock (2003) for a comprehensive discussion of this approach and also see Míguez (2014) for a more systematic comparison between social control theories and studies of social fragmentation in Latin America.
4. As a result of neoliberal policies, between 2000 and 2003 Argentina faced an unprecedented social and political crisis, with unemployment rates reaching 20% and poverty rates more than 50% of the population.
5. Classical ethnographic studies report that, although domestic violence and certain forms of internal conflict were present among the original shantytown settlers, shared cultural orientations and common migratory origins favored the primacy of internal cohesion through strong community organizations and political leaderships, and the prevalence of bonds of mutual trust and reciprocity among neighbors (Ratier 1971, 1972, 67, 74; Margulis 1974; Ramos 1981; Guber 1991; Roberts 1995, 65–9; 80–2).
6. *Peaje* consisted of soliciting money from occasional passers-by in a threatening way. *Peaje* was usually demanded by groups of adolescents or juveniles in order to have some pocket money to buy drugs or alcohol and to mark their turf to "foreigners" (this category included members of the neighborhood who were not acquaintances). In contrast to common violent robberies, *peaje* did not necessarily mean taking all of the victim's money or using weapons to threaten them, although occasionally *peaje* could turn into a "regular" violent robbery and then include the use of weapons and taking all of the victim's money, especially if he or she resisted.
7. Instead of regular streets, shantytowns are usually divided by alleys, one or two meters wide, locally known as *pasillos*. Usually, people that live in the same or proximate blocks in the same *pasillo* develop a sense of identity or solidarity, which was broken in this case.

8. Another frequent manifestation of fragmentation was household break ups, due to male violence or intergenerational conflicts (Geldstein 1994).
9. See Clarín, "Crónica de una ciudad asediada por la droga", November 3, 2013; and "Cuatro de cada diez homicidios están vinculados al narcotráfico," May 8, 2014.
10. Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Universidad Nacional de Tucumán, Universidad Nacional del Centro de la Provincia de Buenos Aires, Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, and Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales.
11. Victims tend to attribute crimes to younger people. Even if the survey results suggest this type of bias, in general terms results match what we found in complementary sources and the data produced by the judiciary.
12. Alfa equaled 0.754, showing an acceptable level of internal consistency of the scale.
13. We express the levels of association between variables in odds ratios, applying logistic regression to calculate the incidence of the concomitant factors of social fragmentation while holding constant individual level factors.
14. Notably, descriptive statistics show that many of the concomitant conditions of fragmentation are more extended across the population. However, they also show a higher incidence among those who experience the core aspects of fragmentation, which explains the association between them. The reasons behind the greater incidence of the concomitant conditions to social fragmentation across the population are very complex and cannot be discussed here; see Isla and Mancini (2008, 152–60), among others, for further discussion.
15. Odds ratios estimations showed that associations between variables persist when locating neighborhood conflicts as a dependent variable of violent robberies (1.40) or *peaje* (2.25).
16. Given that survey results suggest that distrust did not affect kinship and friendship networks, we may propose as a complementary hypothesis that these practices had an impact in what network analysts call the second or third ring of social ties (Mitchel 1971); that is, the more extended system of social relationships beyond primary acquaintances.

Notes on contributor

Daniel Pedro Míguez is a researcher at the National Council for Scientific and Technical Research (CONICET) and Professor at the Faculty of Human Sciences at the National University of the State of Buenos Aires. He has successively researched on religious and political culture; social networks and interpersonal violence in low income neighborhoods and school conflicts and differential access to education in contexts of urban poverty. He has published more than 70 articles and 10 books on these subjects.

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Appendix 1

Descriptive Statistics (n = 1558)		Percentages
Sex	Male	49.7
	Female	50.3
Age	Below 30	30.7
	30 or more	69.3
Skepticism towards conventional cultural orientations	Trust	59.6
	Distrust	40.4
Distrust in the police	Trust	42
	Distrust	58
Distrust in politicians	Trust	23.9
	Distrust	76.1
Kinship networks	Less than three	63.5
	Three or more	36.5
Friendship networks	Less than three	60.3
	Three or more	39.7
Neighborhood conflicts	Less than three	94.2
	Three or more	5.8
Violent robberies	Non victim	91.7
	Victim	8.3
Age of perpetrators	Below 30	88.3
	30 or more	11.7
Peaje	Non victim	90.8
	Victim	9.2
Age of perpetrators	Below 30	90.6
	30 or more	9.4