



Broken windows in the Rio de la Plata: Constructing the disorderly other

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Keywords: police violence, broken windows, neoliberalism, Latin America

Abstract

Since 2010, Uruguay has moved towards a tough-on-crime approach by adopting Broken Windows and zero-tolerance policing. Interestingly this tough-on-crime approach was developed by a social democratic government that, during its first administration, rejected the approach and committed to fighting crime through social-democratic policies. The policies and rhetoric developed by the left-wing government led to the criminalization of low-income communities and the construction of an “undeserving other,” as they adhered to a neoliberal logic of competition and security. Consequently, the left-wing set the policy and institutional bases for an increase in mano dura and recent police violence with the electoral victory of the right-wing in 2019. The article examines this process and shows how the uncritical adoption of Broken Windows and other U.S. style policing initiatives can be extremely pernicious in Latin America.

“When the police act in neighbourhoods of these characteristics [low-income neighborhoods], there are people arguing that we are stigmatizing and criminalizing these areas, but it is the other way around. We are distinguishing between the majority that works and studies, and those who do not. These are the ones who are destroying the neighborhood.” *Eduardo Bonomi, Minister of Interior.*¹

“Society wants a firm hand. We don’t want to apply a *mano dura* that allows the police to do whatever they want, but we don’t want impunity. The image of impunity generates violence.” *Gustavo Leal, Director of Coexistence and Citizen Security, Ministry of Interior.*²

Broken Windows is based on the premise that signs of disorder generate greater disorder and crime. It argues that citizens are afraid of becoming victims of crime as well as being bothered by disorderly people. More importantly, when minor disorders go unpunished it shows that criminal activity is a fair game. Consequently, if we follow Broken Windows’ logic, the recipe to prevent crime, restore community order, and exercise social control is a zero-tolerance approach towards minor disorders (Kelling & Wilson, 1982). Both vignettes with which I began this article resonate with some of Broken Windows’ principles. The need to exercise a firm hand and show that disorder will not be tolerated, and the distinction between orderly and disorderly people have become central to the development of Uruguay’s security policies in the last decade.

The paradox of the Uruguayan case is that the political forces that brought Broken Windows and made it hegemonic were not right-wing conservative forces that campaigned under a banner of “tough-on-crime”, as much of the literature on *mano dura* in Latin America argues (Basombrío & Dammert, 2013; Bergman, 2006; Samet, 2019; Stippel & Serrano Moreno, 2018). Broken Windows was imported to Uruguay by a social democratic government committed to social justice. The opposition and major media outlets criticized the government for being soft on crime. Yet, this did not translate into an electoral challenge, as the left-wing coalition continued to enjoy widespread electoral support. Despite this, by the end of their first governmental period (2004–2010) and the inauguration of their second term (2010–2015) the Frente Amplio had shifted towards a *mano dura* approach.

Why did a social-democratic government, led by a broad coalition of left-wing parties, develop a security policy based on Broken Windows? In answering this question, this article argues that the Frente Amplio was incapable of breaking with the neoliberal security project, which adheres to economic growth as its main principle and requires the management and control of those who do not adapt or accept this order. This led to a punitive approach in the area of crime control. Secondly, authorities had to distinguish between the deserving and undeserving poor in order to overcome the paradox of being the party of the working-class while deploying state violence against working-class communities. In the process, Broken Windows and the tough-on-crime discourse became hegemonic in Uruguay, limiting the possibility of finding solutions to criminality that did not include harsh punishment. Worse, the left-wing coalition established the institutional and discursive bases for the strengthening of a punitive approach, which is now being led by the right-wing coalition that won the 2019 national elections, increasing police violence against low-income communities.

1 Eduardo Bonomi in an interview with *Diario El País*, Montevideo, Uruguay, June 6, 2016. In Uruguay the Ministry of the Interior is in charge, among other things, of internal security and the police forces inside the country.

2 Gustavo Leal in a radio interview with the programme *Doble Click*, February 7, 2019.

Authors have shown how punitive policies developed in the US have made their way into Latin America and have become hegemonic. These policies have been packaged in ready-made toolkits for Latin American governments to apply in a context of high violence and crime, and as a way of managing the fragmentation produced by neoliberalism (Blaustein, 2016; Iturralde, 2019; Wacquant, 2014). Many of these policies have been adopted by right-wing neoliberal governments, as well as many regimes who challenged neoliberal hegemony, such as Chavez's Venezuela, Correa's Ecuador, and Brazil under the rule of the Workers Party. These post-neoliberal regimes, as Máximo Sozzo (2016) calls them, have also adopted many tough-on-crime policies due to political pressure from the opposition or from social movements, which sought a response to social problems through punitive measures. Yet, as Manuel Iturralde suggests, the adoption of tough-on-crime measures is "riddled by contradictions, ambiguities and struggles" (Iturralde, 2019, p. 487), which require a closer examination. This article is an attempt to contribute to this critical dialogue by moving beyond the analysis that sees punitive populism as a right-wing and electoral populist response, and shows how the inability to break with neoliberal principles pushes social-democratic governments to deal with social fragmentation through criminal justice measures. Moreover, the article sheds new light on the adoption of tough on crime by a social-democratic government, by showing how Uruguay's Frente Amplio constructed the image of the "undeserving other" in order to justify the adoption of *mano dura*.

Before delving into Uruguay's story, I will review the main elements of Broken Windows theory, and how it fits into the neoliberal project of security. This project attempts to secure a social order based on capital accumulation and control of those expelled by the dynamics of the system. This will provide us with the conceptual tools to understand how the Frente Amplio's inability to break with neoliberal rationality led to the adoption of a tough-on-crime approach. Next, I will review the government's initial response to the crime problem and the transition towards a punitive approach. I will then analyse the process used by government authorities in constructing the disorderly other and failing to construct a left-wing security policy.

Broken Windows, Neoliberalism, and the Politics of Security

According to Broken Windows theory, when minor disorders, such as street beggars, a lack of respect for authority, and vagrancy, remain unpunished it will lead to major disorders and criminal activity (Herbert, 2001), and only a zero-tolerance approach towards these minor disorders can prevent further decay. The theory is rooted in a series of racist and classist preconceptions. James Q. Wilson, one of the main proponents of the theory, had argued in 1968 that teenagers hanging out in the streets, "a Negro wearing a 'conk rag'...girls in short skirts, [or] interracial couples", display unconventional behaviour that should be addressed by the police (Wilson, 1968 cited in Thompson, 2015, p. 45). As Phillip J. Thompson (2015) shows, some of what Broken Windows perceives as disorder is related to regular low-income behaviour, which is neither perceived as disorder nor represents a threat to the neighbourhood.

This focus on minor disorder, and the identification of disorder with the behaviour of low-income communities, works as a segregation mechanism, which separates "respectable" citizens from "others" (Herbert, 2001). Low-income communities are defined as dangerous areas in which punishment is not only preferred but necessary. It delegitimizes a social welfare approach (ibid.), because social welfare will not be effective unless order is restored, but, more importantly, because crime, according to Broken Windows, is not the result of socio-economic processes. As Uruguay's left-wing government adopted Broken Windows, it shifted from a welfare approach to crime to a punitive approach, and began to distinguish between respectable working-class citizens and "disorderly others" who needed *mano dura*. The fear of "others" is augmented by Broken Windows and reinforces middle-class fears

of both poverty and poor people, endorsing aggressive police tactics (ibid.), favouring a policy of segregation and exclusion. In the case of Uruguay, middle- and upper-class fears have been reflected in an increase in private security and the construction of gated communities. Crime is seen as the result of individual choices or a product of a culture of poverty (Sampson & Raudenbush, 2004).

Despite the enactment of important social programmes, Uruguay's left did not break with neoliberalism. Income concentration and accumulation of private capital grew during the left-wing government years (Burdín, de Rosa, & Vigorito, 2015; Oyhantçabal, 2019). This tension was strongly reflected in the area of crime control, where authorities, by the beginning of the second term, had shifted towards a rhetoric of individual responsibility and choice, abandoning the notion that crime was related to socio-economic policies. As Wendy Brown (2015) shows, those who do not adapt to the discipline of the market are further marginalized and criminalized, and require repressive state intervention. This intervention of expelling the "disorderly people" is translated into incapacitation through the prison system (Garland, 2001). In Uruguay we have observed a continuous increase in the prison population since the adoption of neoliberal policies in the late 1990s. From 1999 to 2020, the prison population in Uruguay increased from 4,000 to 11,700 inmates, having one of the largest incarceration rates in the region with 328 per 100,000 inhabitants. In 2010, with the inauguration of the second Frente Amplio administration and the consolidation of the tough-on-crime approach, there were 8,775 prisoners, and by the end of their third government in 2019, the inmate population had grown to more than 11,000 (Petit, 2019).

Neoliberalism is more than a set of economic policies, it is a "distinctive mode of reason, of the production of subjects" (Brown, 2015, loc. 169; see Harvey, 2005), it is a way of transforming and disciplining individuals to the logic of the market. The displacements, segregation, and expulsions produced by neoliberalism (see Davis, 2006; Sassen, 2001, 2014) require the expansion of the security apparatus, and an increase of police intrusion in those communities most affected by these changes. As the left wing consolidated their power in Uruguay and were able to move Uruguay away from the socio-economic crisis of the early 2000s, crime policy began to play a more prominent role in public opinion and government. Despite the advances made in social policy, and its commitment to addressing the crime problem as part of its social programme, the Frente Amplio abandoned its initial commitment and moved towards a punitive approach. While poverty and inequality were reduced, neither the socio-economic structures nor the concentration of wealth were deeply transformed (de Rosa, 2020; Oyhantçabal, 2019).

Faced with rising crime, but more importantly with an increase in the fear of crime, the left-wing government responded with a neoliberal discourse and policy rooted in Broken Windows' segregation principle of distinguishing between orderly people and disorderly others. The construction of the "undeserving other" became the governmental *dispositif* that allowed Uruguay's left to navigate the tension between their commitment to social change and their adoption of *mano dura*.³

In 2004, for the first time in Uruguay's history, the left wing won the national elections with 51.7 per cent of the votes.

The Frente Amplio, a coalition of left-wing, social-democratic, and social Christian parties, was formed in 1971 as a democratic response to the authoritarian repression and the urban guerrilla movement.

3 Guillermina Seri (2012), following Michel Foucault, explains governmental *dispositif* as a series of discursive practices and policies, which come together as a response to what is perceived as an urgent social need.

Most party leaders were imprisoned, tortured, or exiled, and many disappeared during Uruguay's military dictatorship (1972–1985). In 1989, they achieved a major electoral victory when they won the municipal elections in Montevideo – Uruguay's capital city, which holds close to half of Uruguay's population – and have governed the city uninterruptedly since then.

The 2004 massive electoral victory came after a deep economic crisis generated by the neoliberal policies of the 1990s and early 2000s in Uruguay and Latin America. The economic recession, which began in the late 1990s, continued into the early 2000s leading to an economic collapse following Argentina's 2001 economic debacle. The quick recovery in the second quarter of 2003 did not help the incumbent candidate (Panizza, 2008), and the left wing was able to win the elections. Poverty in Uruguay at the time of the 2004 election stood at 39.9 per cent, 4.7 per cent living under extreme poverty conditions, and unemployment levels were above 13 per cent.⁴ A decade later, poverty had been reduced to 10.1 per cent, with extreme poverty at less than 1 per cent. Unemployment had declined to 6.3 per cent, underemployment had fallen from 17 per cent to 7 per cent, and informal employment had decreased from 38 to 28 per cent. Real wages rose by 56.3 per cent from 2004 to 2016 (Oyhantçabal, 2019).

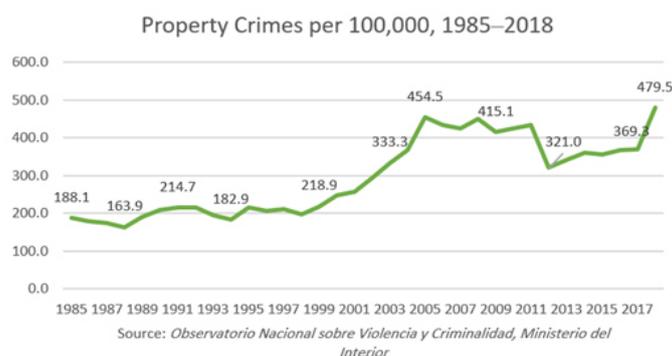
However, the massive improvement in economic and social conditions was not the product of a deep transformation of Uruguay's economic matrix and a complete rejection of neoliberalism. Rather, Uruguay took advantage of the rise in demand for primary commodities, in particular from China, and focused on economic growth and private capital accumulation, updating the legislative framework inherited from the neoliberal period (*ibid.*). At the same time, favoured by GDP growth, it developed a series of important social policies aimed at ameliorating the conditions of low-income sectors. Despite these positive changes, “neither the type of goods produced for the world market, nor the ownership of the majority of the means of production, nor the distribution of income among social classes saw significant modifications” (*ibid.*, p. 132). Income concentration in the top 1 per cent continued to rise, and the accumulation of private capital, both in land tenure and in the financial sector, continued to increase (Burdín et al., 2015; de Rosa, 2020; Oyhantçabal, 2019). In short, the important progressive changes did not amount to dismantling the neoliberal system developed in the previous decades.

As we observed in the previous section, neoliberalism is more than a set of economic policies. Neoliberalism implies a series of governmental practices, which include the transformation of the political subject into an economic one, who becomes the only one responsible for their fate, disconnected from larger societal processes (Brown, 2015). Capitalism produces insecurity and fear as the laws of capital accumulation and competition are constantly creating risks (Marx, [1867]1990). In the neoliberal phase, the levels of fear and insecurity increase as the processes of accumulation and expulsion become widespread and more complex (Sassen, 2014). In Uruguay, one of the expressions of insecurity was reflected in the rise of fear of crime, which rose at a much higher rate than the actual crime numbers. Faced with this dilemma, the government's choice was to follow neoliberal recipes in the area of crime control and adopt US-inspired policies. These aggressive tactics benefited from a series of institutional changes that reinforced the power of the police and the criminal justice system.

Crime and Crime Policy During the Frente Amplio Government

4 Data from Uruguay's Instituto Nacional de Estadística (Amarante & Vigorito, 2007).

Homicides and crime against property had been on the rise in Uruguay since the mid-1980s (see graphs below). In 2005, immediately after the Frente Amplio came to power, both homicides and property crime rose. Homicides increased from 6.3 per 100,000 to 9.1, and property crime went from 366.3 per 100,000 to 454.5. This increase in criminality can be explained as a consequence of the neoliberal crisis, which shook Uruguay's society. And this is how the Frente Amplio's leadership initially interpreted this increase.

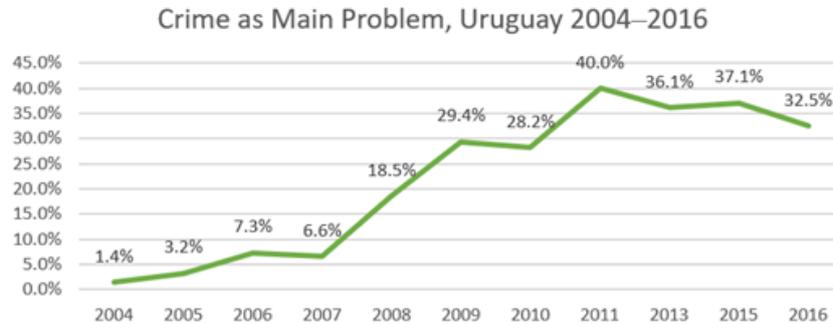


On March 1, 2005, in his inauguration speech, President Tabaré Vázquez spoke about the humanitarian crisis in the prison system and declared that the government would be “severe with criminality, but we will be relentless with the causes that lead to it”.

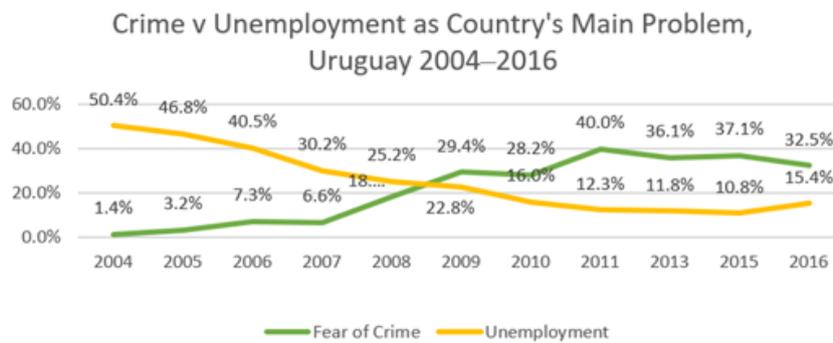
Criminality and security were not among the main axes of the Frente Amplio's programme, as the party focused on the economic and social policies that would ameliorate the economic crisis (Verzazza, 2015). Crime policy was included as part of the emergency plan designed to deal with the deep economic and social crisis affecting the country. The government emphasized the need to reform the police and the prison system, and reorganize the Ministry of the Interior, which was in charge of internal security, and which still functioned with many of the premises established during the military dictatorship. The government began a process of reform, which included the professionalization of the police, an improvement of the working conditions of police personnel, the restructuring and improvement of police intelligence, the formulation of an emergency plan to humanize prison conditions, and the creation of a new Penal Code, which included alternatives to incarceration.

The success enjoyed by the government in the socio-economic sphere did not provide immediate results in the area of crime control. Often, social security programmes are not enough to prevent or cure the social upheavals produced by capitalism (Neocleous, 2008), especially if basic structural conditions are not transformed. As the socio-economic conditions of the population improved, there was no immediate decrease in crime levels, and the sense of fear began to increase among the population.

According to Latinobarómetro, in 2004 only 1.4 per cent of those surveyed declared crime to be the country's main problem. But by 2011, 40 per cent had pinpointed crime as their main concern. As the socio-economic situation improved, popular concern shifted from socio-economic variables to crime.



Source: Latinobarómetro



Source: Latinobarómetro

Fear of crime had a much steeper increase than actual crime. While both homicides and property crime did increase, the growth was not as significant as the fear of it. Faced with the left-wing success in the economic area, the right-wing opposition shifted their criticism against what they perceived as the government's failure in crime control. The opposition argued that the left wing was incapable of addressing crime because they refused, in their view, to deploy and use the repressive power of the state. The mass media, in particular the private television networks and newspapers ideologically associated with the right, increased their coverage of criminal activity both in terms of the number of minutes dedicated to crime and the dramatism of its coverage (Silvera & Natalevich, 2012; Viscardi, Barbero, Chmiel, & Correa, 2010). Both the media and the political opposition contributed to transforming crime into the main public issue in Uruguay.⁵

Faced with public and political pressure, government authorities and party leaders began to change their discourse and approach. From a rhetoric and a policy that saw criminality as a social problem to be dealt with through socio-economic policies, the left wing began to shift towards a punitive approach that saw police and punishment as the main tools for addressing this issue.

Neoliberalism's intensified inequality, the increase in human exploitation and degradation, and the economic, ecological, and health havoc they produce (Brown, 2015) require a strong and expansive

5 For an explanation of the role of mass media in the rise of penal populism, see Bonner (2019).

security apparatus to maintain order (Neocleous, 2008). And this is the approach the Frente Amplio had taken by the end of their first administration and the beginning of their second one.

With the launch of the electoral campaign towards the 2010 national election, the Frente Amplio situated security as one of their five main priorities for the second term. While the Frente Amplio's first administration integrated its crime control policies under the axis of human rights and social integration, by the end of the first term the focus had shifted towards a punitive approach. Four crucial policies highlight this change.

First, we observe a continuous increase in the Ministry of the Interior's budget. In 2010, the budget jumped by more than one hundred million dollars, and went from 5.3 to 5.6 per cent of the national budget. Eight per cent of the increase in the government's public expenses went to the Ministry of the Interior, compared to 13 per cent destined for education, and a 3 per cent increase destined for the Ministry of Social Development.⁶

Secondly, the Guardia Nacional Republicana, a militarized unit formed by the unification of three police units (Grenadiers, Mounted Police, and Special Operations) was created in 2010. This unit was defined as a special force in charge of "re-establishing public order, collaborating and coordinating crime prevention and repression", providing support in the protection of prisons, participating in the war on drugs, intervening in high-risk operations such as kidnappings, and participating in raids and detention of suspects (Ley 18,719 Presupuesto Nacional, 2010). The first operations of this new unit were massive police raids in low-income neighbourhoods. These Brazilian-style operations, named *megaoperativos policiales* (police mega-operations) by the media, were framed by the Minister of the Interior, Eduardo Bonomi, as a way of fighting the process of "feudalization" of these areas and preventing the formation of "Brazilian-style favelas" (Redacción 180, 2011).

A third element was the enactment of new legislation and a reform of the Penal Code, moving from an inquisitorial to an adversarial process, but also establishing greater sanctions and harsher punishments for drug-related crimes, crimes committed by minors, and disorderly behaviour reflecting the government's adherence to Broken Windows and penal neoliberalism.⁷

Finally, we observe a significant change in the authorities' rhetoric. During the first period, the discursive framework saw crime as the failure of previous governments' social policy to integrate the marginalized sectors of society, and acknowledged that harsher punishment would not provide solutions. By the end of the first government and into the electoral campaign, we observe a shift towards a tough-on-crime rhetoric. The new Minister of the Interior, Eduardo Bonomi, declared in March 2010 that social policies are not enough to fight crime and a strong police response is necessary (Vernazza, 2015). Police actions focused on low-income neighbourhoods in Montevideo. More than half of the violent and property crimes are committed in Montevideo, and Montevideo's police command sets the tone for the rest of the country.⁸

6 Data obtained from Unidad de Presupuesto Nacional, Ministerio de Economía y Finanzas, 2017. <https://www.gub.uy/ministerio-economia-finanzas/sites/ministerio-economia-finanzas/files/2019-06/tomo%20 analisis%20presupuestal%20final.pdf>

7 See law 19,000 on *Pasta Base* and Cocaine. Also see changes to Articles 72 and 76 of the Children and Adolescent Code, which established a minimum sentence of one year for grave crimes. Law 19,120 established a series of sanctions for disorderly conduct, including the lack of respect for authority, vagrancy and panhandling, alcohol abuse, illegal gambling, and loitering.

8 In contrast to the US, Argentina and Brazil, Uruguay's security policies are designed by the central government through the Minister of the Interior, and not by local governments. This may produce tensions when local governments are ruled by a different political party to the one ruling the central administration.

By 2010, the left wing had shifted to a tough-on-crime approach. Massive police actions, the creation of a militarized police unit, and the harshening of penalties became the standard responses to the problem of crime. The proponents of US-style policing, in particular Broken Windows and zero-tolerance policing, made their way into Uruguay, and authorities began working and signing consultant agreements with Rudolph Giuliani, William Bratton, Lawrence Sherman, and others (Bonomi, 2019; Ministerio del Interior, 2014; Montevideo Portal, 2018; Subrayado, 2012).

Despite its commitment to social democracy and the enactment of important social policies, when it came to the area of crime control, Broken Windows and penal neoliberalism became hegemonic. The challenge was how to maintain a political commitment to redistribution and justice while adhering to a tough-on-crime approach. The response, following the logic of Broken Windows, was to divide low-income communities and their residents into deserving and undeserving poor.

The Construction of the Disorderly Other by Uruguay's Left-Wing Government

As we previously observed, one of the first signs of a tough-on-crime approach was the massive police operations in low-income communities. These *mega-operativos*, as the local press called them, were designed more as a show of force than a tool for fighting crime. Minister Eduardo Bonomi justified these operations as a way of stopping what he called a “process of feudalization and *favelization*” of Uruguay’s low-income neighbourhoods. “This is how favelas in Brazil began,” the Minister stated, adding “in Uruguay we can observe a process of feudalization through which organized delinquents, which have connections with drug traffic organizations, attempt to control areas of Montevideo” (Redacción 180, 2011). The comparison with Brazil’s *favelas* ignores the history of the *favelas* and its roots in policies of racial and urban segregation. Furthermore, the comparison is not a coincidence, as this style of police operation was similar to the police occupation of *favelas* in cities like Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. In São Paulo, for example, the official name given to these operations in 2009 was *Operação Saturação* (Operation Saturation). São Paulo police officers occupied the streets, searched houses, blocked the exits and entrances to the neighbourhood, and would ask all residents to provide identifying documentation (Alves, 2018, p. 144). These methods were exactly the same as those applied in Uruguay, and the official name given to these operations was *Operaciones de Saturación* (Operations of Saturation).

The use of terms such as *favelas*, *red zones*, and *feudalization* contributes to the criminalization of low-income communities and their residents, augmenting the existing social segregation in the city. This criminalization can be observed when we consider that the operations produced a high number of detained individuals but very few of those were formally arrested or charged with a crime. Asked about this, Bonomi argued that the procedures cannot be evaluated by the number of formally arrested individuals, but by the fact that the police would now have a permanent presence in these areas. The key element in this process is to highlight the “disorder” and threat that these low-income areas present to the rest of the city and the need to re-establish order. In other words, it appears that the main goal of these operations is to show the power of the state and its capacity for violence.

The security project, Seri (2012) contends, divides the community into antagonistic camps, the people who deserve security and the “others” from whom the community needs to be secured. The Frente Amplio began to adhere to this discourse by focusing on low-income communities and attempting to separate the “people” from the threatening “others” inside these communities. In the process, the stigmatization and criminalization of these areas increased. Those who were unable or unwilling to enter the consumption circuit, expanded by the government’s socio-economic policies, became the target of police control and surveillance.

The distinction between “orderly” and “disorderly” areas was highlighted by the next step taken by the government. Once the legality of mega-operations had been challenged, police leaders adopted what is known in the US as “Weed and Seed”. Developed during the George H.W. Bush administration, the programme involves the “weeding out” of individuals participating in criminal or disorderly activities, and preventing their return to the area. Only then does the “seeding” begin by investing in the neighbourhood (US Department of Justice, 1991), generally in a process of gentrification that produces more expulsions. Often, authorities continue to claim that the “weeding” has not been completed, justifying state use of force and further expulsions.

“Weed and Seed”, as in the case of other community policing initiatives, should be understood as part of a pacification logic embedded in the neoliberal security project. The goal of these programmes is to produce a docile population, who will accept and adhere to the existing social order and prevent political mobilization against this order (Williams, 2011). Through the recruitment of local community members, who already have a pro-police disposition, community “leaders” become the eyes, ears, and mouth of authorities in the production and reproduction of the existing social order (Gascón & Rousell, 2019; Neocleous, 2000). Understood in this way, the weeding never ends, as those who challenge the established order need to be convinced, disciplined, or expelled.

The saturation operations continued as part of the “weeding” process, but now a “seeding” element was incorporated through different ministries and the local government. Still, the discourse that constructed these spaces as dangerous threats, and their residents as dangerous others, continued with this new approach. It followed the Broken Windows segregation mechanism of distinguishing the “orderly” and “disorderly” people. Those expelled and incapacitated by the carceral system were the disorderly others who had to be weeded out. There is a disconnection between structural conditions that lead to crime, favouring an individualistic vision of criminality. The provision of social services has been extremely important and improved the life of many low-income residents in Uruguay. However, the “seeding” did not change the socio-economic matrix, did not reduce the concentration of wealth, and did not stop the process of urban segregation.

Community policing in Uruguay became attached to the principles of Broken Windows. The Frente Amplio programme indicated that the police, with the collaboration of the community, will promote the quality of life of its citizens by reducing minor crime and disorder, and improving the feeling of security. While the proposal mentions the fact that the rise in criminality is rooted in previous socio-economic processes, it also points out that socio-economic measures are not enough, and that certain criminal behaviours are a result of cultural changes and the loss of coexistence values (Frente Amplio, 2009). When the public discourse, the political rhetoric, and police operations focus on low-income neighbourhoods, the reference regarding a loss of coexistence values and the critique of cultural changes become associated with these spaces and their residents.

The portrayal of low-income neighbourhoods as a threat to the city, and the discourses of *favelization* and *feudalization*, contributed to the sense of fear, and a continuous segregation and seclusion of city residents. Two important data reflect this. One is the annual increase in the demand for, and offer of, private security, including new surveillance technology developed by private companies (Mujica, 2018). The other is the increase in residential segregation, territorial conflict, and gated communities (Aguiar, Borrás, Cruz, Fernández Gabard, & Pérez Sánchez 2019; Patiño et al., 2019).⁹ The development of gated communities has increased significantly since the first Frente Amplio administration

9 Gated communities are not allowed inside Montevideo, but they are allowed in its suburban area, which belongs to different municipal administrations.

(Aguiar et al., 2019), with 50 new gated communities, 25 per cent of them in Montevideo's suburban area (Pérez Sánchez & Ravela, 2019). Neither the social-democratic policies nor the "seeding" produced social and urban integration. On the contrary, the stigmatizing of low-income areas, the demand for private security, and residential segregation expanded.

The portrayal of low-income neighbourhoods as dangerous threats continued throughout the second and third Frente Amplio administrations. Gustavo Leal, Director of Coexistence and Citizen Security at the Ministry of the Interior, and the Frente Amplio's candidate to become Minister of the Interior, declared in February 2019, months before the national election, that the state needed to exercise its authority without fear and prevent the process of favelization and illegality in areas that resemble the criminal urban spaces of Brazil and Argentina (Leal, 2019). Once again, we observe an intentional ignorance regarding the historical, economic, and racist roots in the formation of *favelas*. These are portrayed as the product of criminal activity by wicked individuals, rather than a process of socio-economic oppression.

More importantly, in his declarations Leal highlighted the idea of the exercising of authority without fear, clearly signalling the need for a tough and repressive approach. Under accusations by the opposition that the left was afraid of using state violence, the response was the deployment of tough-on-crime and zero-tolerance policing. The distancing adopted by Eduardo Bonomi and Gustavo Leal from the approach that highlighted long-term social policies rather than policing as the main response to crime signals a deep ideological and political cleavage inside the left in Uruguay (Hernández & Paterlain, 2020), and in other parts of the world when it comes to the use and deployment of state violence. The application of social policies is dependent on the weeding of the "criminal" elements, and can only be destined for the deserving poor. For the undeserving poor, the answer is incapacitation. It is not a coincidence that the prison population increased significantly during this period.

Furthermore, when we look at the demographic profile of those in prison, we observe that they represent the lower sectors of society. Ninety per cent of prisoners are male, 70 per cent are between the ages of 18 and 35, and only 7 per cent have completed basic education. Twenty-seven per cent have received cash-transfer assistance compared to 5 per cent of the general population, and 20 per cent of inmates lived in an irregular settlement compared to 4 per cent of the general population (Departamento de Sociología, 2010; Garcé García y Santos, Casal, Díaz, & Donnangelo 2017). Similarly to other countries in the Americas, it is young, male residents of low-income communities who are most affected by punitive policies, materializing the process of criminalization they go through.

Constructing the Undeserving Other

The Frente Amplio continued to portray itself as the representative of the working class. The government worked hard to develop policies that improved the material conditions of low-income Uruguayans. They increased indirect cash transfers, improved healthcare coverage, and extended healthcare services to all Uruguayans. They re-established collective bargaining for all sectors of the economy, and enacted legislation in protection of rural and domestic workers, who had been historically excluded from legal protections. Furthermore, they enacted important progressive legislation, such as the guaranteed right to abortion, egalitarian marriage, and the legalization of marijuana, which mostly benefitted middle-class Uruguayans and gave Uruguay and President Mujica international recognition as a progressive country. However, while enacting this progressive programme, the government continued its commitment to tough-on-crime policies and continued to follow Giuliani and Bratton's style of policing. Minister Bonomi repeatedly stated how crime policy was following the recipe used by the former New York Mayor, transforming both Giuliani and Broken Windows into a hegemonic approach to addressing crime. The solution to this paradox, if it can ever be solved, became

possible by constructing an “undeserving other”, who, following Broken Windows and US community policing logic, had to be subdued so that the “deserving other” could enjoy the fruits of the government’s social policies.

“I believe the cause of crime today is not only poverty... there is a cultural and subcultural issue [that generates crime],” said Eduardo Bonomi. Bonomi further complained that it is difficult for the police to solve crimes when residents of low-income communities do not report or provide crucial information to the police. More importantly, when questioned about the protests that took place in some of these communities against police repression, he argued that it is the respectable members of these communities that ask the police to intervene (Bonomi, 2019), clearly differentiating between the “good” and “bad” members of the community.

Minister Bonomi continued to differentiate between the “good people” and the “dangerous others” when justifying police actions in low-income communities. “[M]ost of the people in these areas are people who work and study but coexist with groups that are connected with the drug traffic, burglaries, extorsions... that use children for their [criminal] operations, and this coexistence affects the people who work and study... we need to keep police presence in these areas to protect the people who work and study” (Bonomi, 2012). The police seem to exercise sanitary work by protecting the healthy community from polluting elements that need to be expelled. Any attempt to criticize police action by community residents and activists was dismissed by Minister Bonomi as the product of a minority of people who are trying to subvert the established order.

In 2016, the police killed a young resident of Marconi, a low-income neighbourhood popularly considered as a dangerous zone. The young resident was suspected to have stolen a motorcycle and was killed during the police action. When members of the community violently protested against the police, Minister Bonomi declared that the violent reaction against the police was perpetrated by a small organized group that does not represent the community (Bonomi, 2016). When criticized by activists and scholars, Bonomi’s response was to dismiss these criticisms as coming from people “living on the coastline”, in reference to the wealthier areas of Montevideo, who know little about low-income communities, despite the fact that many of the critics came from within these communities or from people working there. In short, those who do not adhere to the existing social order are portrayed as a menace to society’s well-being, and those who criticize *mano dura*’s policies are disconnected individuals or complicit with criminal elements.

Consider, for instance, the places where the police mega-operatives were carried out. The first two massive police actions took place in the Marconi neighbourhood, and later in the nearby neighbourhood of Casavalle, both in the Municipal Area D of Montevideo. This area is characterized by high levels of poverty and irregular settlements (Intendencia Municipal de Montevideo, 2019). Authorities argued that criminal activity and in particular drug-related activities were concentrated in these spaces. However, in the two operations in Marconi, only seven people were formally arrested from the many who were detained during the police actions, and from these seven, two were arrested for drug possession. Nonetheless, these massive police actions continued to focus on these areas.

The construction of dangerous others was also deployed against juveniles. During the 2009 electoral campaign, the opposition, which ran on a tough-on-crime campaign, included a proposal for a referendum to reduce the age of penal responsibility. A coalition of social movements and civil society actors, many of them associated with the Frente Amplio, opposed the referendum and successfully campaigned against it (Berri & Pandolfi, 2018). The Frente Amplio also opposed the right-wing proposal. However, by the inauguration of the second administration following the turn towards tough on crime, government authorities, in particular Minister Bonomi, had raised concerns about the participation of minors in criminal activity, suggesting the need to act in a stronger way against them. While the official report, supported by national and international NGOs, stated that the rate of participation

of minors in crime was close to 12 per cent, Minister Bonomi declared that he believed the percentage was closer to 40 per cent (Vernazza, 2015). Beyond the controversy about the data, the deeper issue here is the criminalization of poverty and youth.

Broken Windows follows and promotes a conservative moral perspective in which all those who challenge bourgeois lifestyles, and do not accept the neoliberal order, are criminalized. Any alternative culture, in particular coming from low-income communities, which can defy traditional ways is seen as dangerous. Government authorities in Uruguay began to systematically refer to juveniles as people who do not study and work, and who therefore are dangerous to society. While I am not arguing against studying or working, in a context of inequality, high income, and low levels of social mobility, studying and working do not provide for a better future and become less attractive to many young people who look for alternatives to survive. Criminal activity sometimes becomes part of the informal economy, which develops as a way to survive in complex socio-economic contexts that produce marginalization (Alves, 2018; Feltran, 2011; Sclofsky, 2021; Telles, 2010). The statement by government authorities echoing the right-wing conservative message of an unruly youth was reflected in police actions towards low-income minors, generating more fear towards this population and segregating them even more.

Rafael Paternain (2012) argues that when it came to crime policy, a conservative hegemonic discourse and approach developed in Uruguay. This hegemonic discourse is represented by a demand for punitive policies, the criminalization of poverty, and the search for moral and pathological causes of criminal activity. The Frente Amplio's second administration, inaugurated in 2010, consolidated this conservative hegemony with its turn towards a tough-on-crime approach. Alternative ideas were dismissed as unrealistic or the work of disconnected academics, many of whom were actually following cues from police leadership (Legrand, 2019, 2020). Broken Windows policing became hegemonic in Uruguay, not simply as a policing tactic but as a societal approach to the challenges of neoliberalism. The distinction between the undeserving and deserving "other" served as the justification for a tough-on-crime approach that contradicted some of the progressive principles and image the left wing in Uruguay stood for.

Conclusion

Former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani became the buzzword for security and policing in Uruguay. The mention of his name was enough for reporters, politicians, and some of the public to accept that the tough-on-crime approach taken by the social-democratic government in Uruguay was tough enough and was moving in the right direction (Subrayado, 2012). Asked about Giuliani's presence in Uruguay, Minister of the Interior Eduardo Bonomi declared in 2019 that "Giuliani went to talk to President Vázquez and told him that after what he saw, he had nothing to recommend as all that he had to say had been implemented" (Bonomi, 2019). Neither of the two reporters interviewing the Minister questioned this statement. The consequences of importing Giuliani's recipes have been suffered by the same victims that had suffered his approach across the US and Latin America. Neither crime nor fear of crime was reduced in Uruguay. However, the criminalization of poverty and the construction of the dangerous "other" continued, generating greater marginalization and segregation. Today, with a new neoliberal administration in Uruguay and a new Ministry of the Interior, who run a tough-on-crime campaign, we are able to witness the grave consequences of the import of Broken Windows. Instances of police violence against the young, poor, and Black population in Uruguay have begun to grow (La Diaria, 2020a, 2020b).

Montevideo continues to be governed by the Frente Amplio,¹⁰ and the new municipal administration has attempted to expand some of the social programmes developed by previous municipal governments, particularly during this pandemic crisis. However, the national government, and therefore the police and security policies, are now under a neoliberal administration, headed by Luis Lacalle Pou, that has solidified the vision that crime is the product of pathological individuals, and has increased its *mano dura* approach.

In this article, I have shown the ways in which the social-democratic government in Uruguay was unable to break with the neoliberal security project and by its second administration had adopted a tough-on-crime approach based on Broken Windows. While the government made very important inroads into reducing poverty and inequality, and providing a greater safety net for those most affected by the neoliberal policies of previous decades, they were unable or unwilling to transform the socio-economic matrix, favouring economic growth and competition as the key elements of governmental success. Urban segregation and concentration of wealth remained high in Uruguay, and the steps towards a social-democratic government favouring decommodification and universalism fell short. Faced with an increase in crime rates and fear of crime, fuelled by the uncertainty and insecurities that the capitalist and neoliberal system produces, the left-wing administration moved away from social-democratic principles and chose a conservative and neoliberal path, making Broken Windows hegemonic.

In the process, as part of the segregation mechanism Broken Windows promotes, authorities, in particular the Minister of the Interior, deployed a rhetoric and a policy of distinguishing among deserving and undeserving poor. The deserving poor were portrayed as demanding massive police operations, and accepting the demands of the neoliberal economy. Those who actively challenged these notions were seen as undeserving of state social policies and had to be disciplined or expelled into the prison realm. It is not a coincidence that the prison population grew significantly with the deployment of Broken Windows in Uruguay. The initiatives of community policing were carried out, as happened in the US, under the aegis of zero-tolerance policing, and as a way of imposing a social order based on exclusion and expulsion.

In this article we have been able to observe the power and centrality that crime policies and policing initiatives have and the dangers of uncritically importing policing strategies. Uruguay's left wing followed Brazil in its massive police operations in order to show they had no complexes in using state violence, even against those they argued were their most important constituency. Furthermore, they uncritically accepted the vision that Broken Windows was the solution to crime and social disorder, despite their commitment to social-democratic policies. Broken Windows is not simply a policing strategy, it is a conservative and segregationist view of society that categorizes those who are left behind by the capitalist system as disorderly others who need to be expelled. This approach is based on the reproduction of social hierarchies deeply entrenched in liberal discourse (Mills, 1997; Neocleous, 2008; Pateman, 1988). And it is this approach that the left-wing government in Uruguay favoured.

By contributing to this conservative hegemony (Paternain, 2012), the government insulated itself from alternatives that did not include *mano dura*, abandoning their initial commitment in 2005 to be relentless with the root causes of crime. By the end of their third administration, the left wing had provided the institutional and discursive bases for the new right-wing government to deploy an even tougher tough-on-crime approach, which has already produced an increase in police violence against

10 The Frente Amplio obtained 51.5% of the votes in Uruguay's 2020 municipal elections, making Carolina Cosse the city's new mayor.

residents of low-income communities.

Acknowledgements: This article is part of a wider research project on security policies in Uruguay and was possible thanks to generous grants from California State University, Stanislaus. I want to thank Rosangélica Martínez for her assistance in collecting and analysing data. I also want to acknowledge Denisse Legrand, Orlando Rivero, and Fernando Leguizamón for their help and contributions. Finally, I want to thank the anonymous reviewers who took time and effort to provide important suggestions to improve the manuscript.

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How to cite this article (APA– 7th ed.): Sclofsky, S. (2021). Broken windows in the Rio de la Plata: Constructing the disorderly other. *Criminological Encounters*, 4(1), 31-49. doi:10.26395/CE21040104



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