



**Viviana García Pinzón mit ihrer Dissertation: “Local order, violence, and trajectories of governance in peripheral cities in Colombia and El Salvador” an der Philipps-Universität Marburg**

The dissertation studies the complex dynamics of order-making, violence, and governance, taking peripheral cities in Colombia and El Salvador as a vantage point. Cities in Latin America and the Caribbean report the highest levels of lethal violence worldwide and have experienced increasing entrenchment of violent non-state actors into communities and politics over the last decades. While urban violence, crime, and politics have gained relevance in the study of politics and society in the region, most existing scholarship on urban violence draws on the analysis of capitals, large, and megacities. However, violence is also present in mid-size and small cities. Like larger urban centres, peripheral cities confront serious challenges amid economic globalisation, political change, shifting demographic patterns, and the increasing proliferation of violent non-state actors. Some of these cities have become the space of violent orders, in which the interaction between the state and violent non-state actors and different forms of violence underpins political rule and governance, shaping the social, political, and economic dimensions of city dwellers’ life. Yet, we know little about the drivers, contexts, and uneven levels of violence in these settings and across cases. Theories and analyses advanced from larger cities do not necessarily apply to peripheral ones as their characteristics, strengths, and vulnerabilities differ. Based on a novel and multidisciplinary analytical framework, my analysis moves away from predominant empirical and case study foci in the literature to explain why and how some peripheral cities have become the locus of violent orders, whereas others have managed to control violence, and to examine the role of violence in the workings of local governance.

To this end, the dissertation offers a novel approach to the relationship between local order and violence through comparative, processual, and multi-scalar lenses. It brings literature on politics, governance, and violence, with an emphasis on Latin America, into conversation with literature on processual sociology and historical institutionalism to develop an encompassing analytical framework, with the concept of ‘trajectories of governance’ at their core. The notion of trajectories of governance is rooted in the concepts of political trajectory as formulated by Bayart and figurational flows. Trajectory refers to the idea that political configurations result from the interlace between large-scale or global events and the characteristics of each society. While different processes of change are comparable across cases, the way they play out in each society and their significance is shaped by the local forces and their distinct histories. As a concept, local trajectory of governance draws attention toward the understanding of order production and its linkages to violence as historically and spatially embedded. The analytical framework enables us to explain

varying levels of violence and different types of local order in four cities: Chalatenango and Sonsonate in El Salvador and Pereira and Tunja in Colombia.

By integrating a broad array of qualitative and quantitative data from different sources, including more than a hundred in-depth interviews, focus groups, and direct observation, the study traces the trajectories of governance in the selected socio-spatial contexts showing how the relationship between local order and violence is shaped by historical multi-scalar processes, changing constellations of actors partaking in governance, citizenship agendas, and the cumulated effect of different forms of violence in the mechanisms whereby local orders are enacted, maintained and challenged. Based on the cross-case comparison, I introduce a typology encompassing three forms of local order: violent (Pereira and Sonsonate), state-led (Tunja), and society-led (Chalatenango). In contrast to violent orders, the latter two are characterised by low incidence of violence. Challenging conventional assumptions portraying violence as a problem of state absence or weakness, the comparative analysis of violent orders shows that the state is a co-producer of violence. Similarly, the cases of state-led and society-led orders demonstrate that containment of violence via the state's monopolisation of coercion is just one alternative, as societal actors might also have the capacity to regulate it. State absence or neglect does not necessarily translate into violence nor constitute a 'governance void.' Taken together, the study of the trajectories of governance shows the diverging influence of accumulated effects of violence (layering) in the configuration of orders, governance, and the historical, albeit non-linear, connections between different waves of violence. Layers of violence and distinct patterns of state formation at the subnational level are likewise associated with processes enabling the emergence of violent orders.

I leverage the rich variety and complexity of orders across peripheral cities to make the argument that the type of local order is contingent on the interplay between multi-scalar processes and place-specific conditions. The study unveils the crucial role of historical and spatial connections in shaping the conditions that either enable or prevent the rise of violence and the processes accounting for the emergence and strengthening of violent non-state actors. Rather than reflecting global trends or being the product of endogenous/local characteristics, diverging trajectories of governance and diverse types of order result from global/local encounters and ensuing adjustments, ruptures, and continuities.

The findings of this research add to the literature exploring subnational politics, violence, and local orders, with a focus on cities. Additionally, it contributes to historical and comparative accounts of violence in Latin America by providing empirical evidence on the complex and manifold connections between the so-called 'old', mostly rural, and the 'new', mostly urban, violence of the region, a salient line of research in the scholarship on the matter. In other words, the study brings into question the conventional periodisation of violence in the region and the idea that urban violence in Latin America largely emerged in the aftermath of the Third Wave of Democratization and was driven mainly by the impacts of neoliberal reforms, thus showing that violence is rooted into processes of urbanisation, politics, and space-production. Hence, rather than being a novel phenomenon, contemporary urban violence is embedded within a long-term and non-linear trajectory of protean, multi-actor, and multifarious violence in the region.

## **Biography**

Viviana García Pinzón is a senior researcher at the Institute Arnold Bergstraesser (ABI) in Freiburg. She obtained her PhD in Political Science at the University in Marburg in 2022. Her research interests are conflict, violence, local governance, peace and conflict transformation, security, and comparative research with emphasis on cities and borderlands and a regional focus on Latin America. She has extensive experience in research and teaching in her native Colombia as well as in Chile and Germany.

