Political Geography 105 (2023) 102930

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Political Geography

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/polgeo

Full Length Article

Clandestinity and insurgent consolidation: The M-19's rebel governance in urban Colombia

Francis O'Connor

Rural Sociology, Wageningen University and Research, Department of Social Sciences, Hollandseweg 1, 6706KN, Wageningen, Netherlands

A B S T R A C T

Insurgent movements have commonly re-located to isolated rural areas with weak state presence where their security was guaranteed by a hostile environment to launch insurgencies. Yet, some groups have chosen to predominantly base their armed mobilisations in cities with much higher security risks where they are obliged to mobilise clandestinely. Clandestinity is often seen as an impediment to insurgent consolidation. This article explores the forms of rebel governance adopted by the M-19 in Colombia to construct networks of social ties needed to embed itself in urban environments. It highlights a case of urban rebel governance without territorial control, thus extending the scope of the rebel governance literature. It addresses the spatial variation of the M-19's insurgency by analysing its diverging experiences of its clandestine mobilisation in Bogotá and Cali, as well as a brief window where it conducted more public urban mobilisation. It is based on qualitative interviews conducted with former militants in Bogota in 2018 and an extensive qualitative, coding of M-19 primary archival sources.

1. Introduction

It is widely accepted that "the pursuit of irregular war relies on the ongoing support of at least some civilians" (Wood, 2008, 543). It is also established that for such patterns of support to be consolidated, insurgents must be acknowledged as legitimate actors and that there needs to be some degree of reciprocal trust between militants and their supportive constituencies[1]. Crucially, legitimacy is an interactive relational process and not an innate quality (Demetriou, 2007), requiring the pursuit and maintenance of networks of social relations between insurgents and their constituency. Yet, fearful of surveillance and infiltration, armed groups oftentimes operate with extreme caution when interacting with existing and potential supporters, a caution which can inadvertently result in the development of a social distance vis-à-vis their constituency, potentially causing insurgent detachment and isolation. These conflicting imperatives between security and broader support, can lead to what has been called the "vanguards' dilemma" (Moriarty, 2010, 477). A tension between the need to operate in the shadows to maintain operational capacity (McCormick & Owen, 2000) and the need to mobilise publicly so that insurgent actions are recognised as political in nature. This trade-off is particularly pertinent for urban mobilisation as it is riskier than its rural counterpart due to the strength of the security forces, state surveillance, and the condensing of time and space (see Bell, 1990; Gillespie, 1980; Guillén, 1973, pp. 237–41; Hobsbawm, 1994, p. 169; Le Blanc, 2013; Pizarro Leongómez, 2021, 93–95; Staniland, 2010, 1624).

Decades of social movement research has confirmed that recruitment to urban militant groups commonly develops along networks of social ties rooted in trust and the anticipation of reciprocal obligations regarding security and support. These ties are often derived from existing non-violent politicised networks mobilised prior to the adaption of insurgent violence (Boulanger Martel, 2022a; Della Porta, 1988; Jentzsch, & Masullo, 2022; McAdam, 1986; Staniland, 2014) and family or personal ties (Medellín Pérez, 2018, 37; Parkinson, 2013; White & White, 1991). These fragmented networks can then be strategically mobilised and connected through 'bricolage' (Boulanger Martel, 2022b) or 'brokerage' (Tilly, 2003). However, due to urban mobilisation's vulnerability to infiltration by security agencies and practises of insurgent compartmentalisation, whereby militants are only in contact with others in their immediate cell or unit, it can be difficult to expand a movement's constituency once immediate networks are exhausted. Accordingly, this article shows that insurgent movements engage in incipient forms of rebel governance as a means to generate ulterior social ties beyond their existing networks. The provision of needed services (for e.g. local policing or intervention in housing/labour disputes) facilitates 'moments of encounter' (O'Connor & Oikonomakis, 2015), generating social ties in insurgents' immediate social environment. These can evolve from affiliative, to weak and eventually the strong ties usually required for active support or recruitment to insurgent group. Although, there is not always a causal relationship between the

E-mail address: francis.oconnor@wur.nl.

[1] In this article, the concept of insurgent constituency refers explicitly to Stefan Malthaner original use of it (2011, p. 29).

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2023.102930
Received 26 April 2022; Received in revised form 4 May 2023; Accepted 12 June 2023
Available online 3 July 2023

provision of rebel governance and popular support,[2] it often enhances insurgent movements' moral and pragmatic legitimacy (Worrall, 2017, 715) and provides the opportunity to generate wider networks of social ties that comprise insurgent constituencies.

Drawing on extensive primary data including interviews with former commanders, militants and supporters (See Appendix 1), this paper takes the M-19's urban mobilisation (1974–1990) as a case study to examine the relationship between clandestinity, territorial (non) control and rebel governance. Its core question asks, how insurgent movements foster the social ties needed for constituency development when forced to operate clandestinely and without territorial control in urban environments. This article makes a number of specific theoretical and empirical contributions. Firstly, theoretically it provides evidence to show that the dangers envisaged by insurgent theorists of urban mobilisation (early annihilation by the security forces) and by social movement theorists (compartmentalised clandestinity leading to isolation) can be mitigated by acquiring a supportive constituency derived partly by the provision of forms of rebel governance. Secondly, it identifies a significant limitation in the rebel governance literature due to its insistence on insurgent movements' possessing territorial control as a scope condition. Using the case of the M-19, the article highlights that movements can and do provide incipient forms of governance without territorial control, even when they are forced to mobilise clandestinely or oxymoronically in a grey-zone of 'public-clandestinity' (Interview 1). It contrasts the M-19's divergent experiences in Bogotá and Cali: in Bogotá and its environs the M-19 operated overwhelmingly in clandestinity with no territorial control, while in Cali it enjoyed limited periods with a much stronger presence resembling conventional understandings of territorial control as well as periods of clandestine mobilisation. The cases thus serve as illustrative examples of different forms of control and how this impacted the M-19's efforts to create a supportive constituency. As an ulterior assessment on the relationship between clandestinity-control-rebel governance, it addresses a brief interlude of non-clandestine public mobilisation through the establishment of Peace Camps in 1985 in both Bogotá and Cali (See Medellín Pérez, 2018, 88–89; Vásquez Perdomo, 2005, 208–9). Finally, it presents a strong empirical case study of the M-19 practises of rebel governance and support networks, this focus redresses an imbalance in much (excellent) published work on the M-19 which has tended to focus on its de-mobilisation rather than its insurgency (Florez-Morris, 2007; García Durán, Grabe Loewenherz, and Patiño Hormaza, 2008; Söderström, 2016)

The article first discusses the relevant literature on insurgent support networks, highlighting the rural slant of much work on insurgency and critiquing rebel governance literature's neglect of urban insurgency. It continues by conceptually addressing how incipient forms of rebel governance can be implemented by movements' operating clandestinely and without territorial control and how this can lead to the generation of social ties to consolidate a supportive constituency. It outlines the data and methods used in this article, before proceeding to briefly introduce the M-19. Building on detailed single case studies focusing on Cali (Holguín Pedroza, 2014) and Bogotá (see Medellín Pérez, 2018), the article compares the two as distinct spatial contexts, thus providing an illustration of within-case variation and the spatial inconsistencies of insurgent mobilisation. The article concludes by outlining the contemporary relevance of rebel governance and urban constituency building, discusses the difficulties inherent to urban mobilisation and the generalisability of the article's findings before suggesting a number of avenues for future research.

[2] See for instance, locally unpopular education practises provided by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) (Stewart, 2021, 37).

2. Theoretical discussion

Conventional insurgent trajectories saw urban political elites retreat to isolated rural areas where they could operate relatively free from state surveillance (McColl, 1969; O'Connor & Oikonomakis, 2015; Wickham-Crowley 1993). Much of the literature on insurgent interactions with their support networks is derived from paradigmatically rural insurgencies. This is certainly true of the classic insurgent handbooks and manuals from the successful rural campaigns, in China (Mao Tse-Tung, 2015), Cuba (Guevara, 2002) and Vietnam (Giáp, 1970), contrasting with the much mythologised but short and relatively vague *Mini Manual of the Urban Guerrilla* by Carlos Marighella (2002). Although, the subsequent emergence of terrorism studies and social movement work on violence focused predominantly on small urban based underground violent networks (Crenshaw, 1981; Della Porta, 1995; Wiktorowicz, 2005), this did not extend to broader insurgent campaigns with urban components. The more recent field of rebel governance also draws on predominantly rural cases where insurgent movements boasted substantial territorial control in Colombia (Arjona, 2016), in Sri Lanka, the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan (Mampilly, 2011) and Uganda (Kasfir, 2005). However, urban insurgency is not a new phenomenon as evidenced by the Latin American urban guerrillas of the late 1960s and early 1970s like the Tupamaros in Uruguay and the Montoneros in Argentina (Le Blanc, 2012), as well as instances of urban insurgency in the North of Ireland (Bell, 1990; Ó Dochartaigh, 2022; Sluka, 1989; White & White, 1991), many of which also entailed forms of rebel governance.

The emergence of the rebel governance sub-field in the study of civil wars has provided a valuable shift away from the minutiae of insurgent combat to address broader insurgent repertoires. Rebel governance has been summarised as "the set of actions insurgents engage in to regulate the social, political, and economic life of non-combatants during war" (Arjona, Kasfir, and Mampilly, 2015, 3). At first glance rebel governance seems particularly well suited to addressing urban insurgent movements. In contrast to rural guerrilla campaigns which often emerge in regions with low populations, urban movements by definition, occur in locations with high population densities. This ensures that any insurgent efforts at service provision or resource redistribution are spatially accessible to more people and because urban actions are more extensively covered by the media than comparable ones in the countryside, they are likely to have greater media resonance.

Much of the prevailing rebel governance literature is limited by its conceptual reliance on insurgent territorial control as a scope condition for forms of insurgent governance (Malthaner & Malešević, 2022, 5). Drawing on Kalyvas' (2006) theoretical framework, Kasfir defines territorial control as "the capacity of a rebel group to keep its enemies out of a specific area" (Kasfir, 2015, 26). Arjona further clarifies that the rebel governance framework "does not seek to explain social order in areas where armed organizations do not want to control territory" (2016, 13). More recent work has doubled down on the importance of control, looking at how rebels engage with "captive civilian populations" (Mampilly & Stewart, 2021, 15; See Anders, 2020; Breslawski, 2021; Rubin, 2019; Stewart, 2018; Stewart & Liou, 2016; Welsh, 2022). Yet, the majority of insurgent movements never obtain territorial control, thereby excluding them as empirical case studies to further test and refine rebel governance's conceptual underpinnings.

In spite of the increasing prevalence of urban conflict (Brathwaite & Konaev, 2019), it has been long argued that "insurgents tend to be universally weak in cities' because it is easier for the authorities to 'police and monitor the population"(Kalyvas, 2006, p. 133), and urban environments tend to impede the occupation of territory by insurgents (Le Blanc, 2013, 799). Notwithstanding these limitations, many urban movements do attempt to provide forms of rebel governance even though they less frequently boast territorial control. In fact, the provision of incipient forms of governance can lead to insurgent embedding in communities, generating legitimacy and can actually beget territorial

control rather than derive from it (Jackson, 2018, p. 25; Ledwidge, 2017, p. 33; O'Connor, 2021, pp. 50–51; Waterman, 2022).

A further issue with the insistence of territorial control is that armed conflict develops in a territorially inconsistent pattern (Gutiérrez Danton, 2022, 5–6; O'Connor, 2021, p. 48; Ó Dochartaigh, 2013, 120; Waterman, 2022). This ensures that levels of control and practises of governance vary spatially, insurgents can possess territorial control in one rural area, be in the process of actively extending their presence in another rural region, while being in retreat in former strongholds, all the while engaging in clandestine urban mobilisation elsewhere or in diaspora communities in order to supplement their rural campaigns. Rebel governance's insistence on territorial control as a scope condition ensures that it can only address insurgent governance in their strongholds, thus providing a potentially misleading, selective snippet of more successful efforts at insurgent governance (O'Connor, 2022).

Insurgent theorists have concluded that armed groups must demonstrate their competence to their supportive constituency even when they still operate clandestinely (Ahmad, 1982, 249), thus *predating* their territorial control. As Che Guevara asserted, insurgent movements must mobilise "not only within the liberated area, but also have connections in the adjacent areas. Precisely through these connections it is possible to penetrate a zone for a future enlargement of the guerrilla front"(2002, 81). Accordingly, to focus predominantly on areas of insurgent territorial control is to focus on only part of the insurgent process. Areas of insurgent rule comprise usually "more complex, sometimes overlapping, complementary, or conflicting zones of control and hybrid forms of domination over parts of a population"(Malthaner & Malešević, 2022, 7) or are characterised by multi-layered governance (Kasfir, Frerks, & Terpstra, 2017). An understanding of insurgent control as being more nuanced and not simply a part of a zero-sum dynamic with the state, is key to understanding rebel governance in urban environments.

As part of the security-operational capacity trade-off (McCormick & Owen, 2000), movements based in cities tend to rely more frequently on clandestine mobilisation than their rural counterparts. A key characteristic of clandestinity is its ubiquity in insurgent experiences: most insurgent movements emerge from clandestine networks prior to public expansion. At times clandestinity is a calculated insurgent strategy, but commonly clandestinity occurs in the wake of the repression of non-violent political movements. Much of the existing literature focuses on the constraining elements of clandestinity, focusing on spirals of movement decline rather than cases of movement growth from clandestinity (della Porta, 1995; Zwerman, Steinhoff, & della Porta, 2000).[3]

The provision of forms of urban rebel governance are one way for insurgent movements to embed themselves in their immediate socio-spatial environments. Granovetter argued that "embeddedness […] stresses […] the role of concrete personal relations and structures (or "networks") of such relations in generating trust and discouraging malfeasance"(1985, 490). For insurgent movements, social ties generated through incipient forms of governance serve a bridging function with their constituencies. Simply put, people cannot support groups with which they have no contact and through governance initiatives, insurgents physically emerge from the shadows creating points of tangible contact – albeit often brief ones - with their would-be constituencies. "Networks [of social ties] bridge the structural gap between individuals and social movements, and thus bring people closer to opportunities for mobilization" (Passy, 2001, 175). These initially weak social ties can become strengthened by repeated interaction, and as they potentially become stronger social ties, they "can help overcome barriers to collective action and encourage engagement in high-risk behavior by creating social rewards and punishments" (Thurber, 2019, 975). Stronger ties then serve as the sinews binding insurgents to their constituencies, and facilitate the emergence of a shared normative order replete with reciprocal responsibilities toward one another (O'Connor, 2021, pp. 41–43). They thus play a key socialisation/politicisation role in the creation of new shared identities with broader publics beyond insurgent members personal networks, thus mitigating the potential dangers of insurgent isolation inherent in clandestine mobilisation.

Rebel governance can take various forms, most commonly starting with the provision of policing mechanisms for areas or social constellations neglected purposively or due to lack of state capacity by the state (Mampilly, 2011, p. 17; Wickham-Crowley, 1990, 482). The imposition (often violently) of a degree of societal order benefits the movement itself as it results in fewer grounds for state forces to intrude in area of insurgent support and to civilians who welcome enhanced security and predictability. The social ties developed through insurgent policing (for e.g. when a local resident contacts an insurgent to report on criminal issue) also serve as conduits of wider information, thus allowing insurgents better orientate themselves in a specific environment by focusing on local grievances and identifying potential allies which are locally powerful (See Arjona, 2016, 56). This can be followed by expansion into the provision of other services such as the establishment of education or health facilities, of course, in the absence of territorial control the institutionalisation of such services is challenging. Even from a position of clandestinity, insurgent groups can engage in what Gutierrez Danton has referred to as armed advocacy, and use "their coercive capacity to favour sympathetic communities and improve, quantitatively and qualitatively, the State provision of services" (2022, 20). This can happen as prosaically as an armed commando unit offering protection to an electrician while they 'unofficially' connect houses to the electricity network or by the intimidation of select municipal officials to extend services to a particular neighbourhood. Such initiatives allow urban militants remain relatively secure while providing services and building relationships to their constituency.

One can look at practises of rebel governance as constellations of social ties between insurgent groups and their constituencies in specific spatial environments. Governance practises are spatially highly inconsistent, varying between the rural and the urban, across neighbourhoods and country valleys. Yet, to date the rebel governance field has conceptually neglected space; building on social geography insights which argue that as "there are no purely spatial processes, neither are there any non-spatial social processes" (Massey, 1995, p. 51), one can consider the spatial embedding of an insurgent constituency (in a particular city or neighbourhood) not simply a question of geographical happenstance but rather a relational process not simply as a question comprising social ties, influenced but not wholly determined by the physical environment. Thus, explaining why insurgent mobilisation in urban environments can and does indeed occur, and how it is cemented through forms of rebel governance. Although, such governance initiatives are often fragmentary, they incrementally weave together to form a normative order binding armed groups and their constituencies, wherein insurgent actors' coercive capacity is restrained by its moral obligations and desire to maintain local legitimacy (Ó Dochartaigh, 2022; Schlichte & Schneckener, 2015).

As valuable as the perspectives from social geography have proven to better understand the spatial dynamics of patterns of support for urban insurgency, there are also certain physical imperatives which characterise urban mobilisation that go beyond social constellations, for e.g. certain cities like Cali were more conducive to urban insurgency due to their proximity to rural insurgent strongholds, allowing insurgents to flee to the countryside when pressure became intolerable in the city. Indeed, some neighbourhoods within cities are more conducive to insurgent initiatives due to their elevation or the composition of its

[3] A notable addition to this literature is the work of Finkel (2015), which examines resistance in Jewish ghettoes to Nazi occupation. However, in distinction to most urban insurgencies, the cases examined by Finkel had less of a political dimension as the Nazis sought not to crush a political movement in particular but sought the extermination of the Jewish people per se. Therefore, insurgent secrecy took priority over any short or medium term political projects.

buildings, for e.g. built from stone rather than timber and tin. In any case, while the political advantages of urban mobilisation are clear, it is an arduous undertaking and in the words of an M-19 commander … "in the city, we suffered […] losses much quicker, […] in the city we died easier (Interview 1)".

3. Data and methods

This paper draws on a several different data sources, primarily a period of fieldwork in Colombia where fifteen interviews were completed with former M-19 militants, commanders and sympathizers in Bogotá in spring 2018 as part of a research project at the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt.[4] Follow-up fieldwork to this preliminary round of interviews was interrupted by the COVID pandemic. The interviewee sample comprised eleven males and four females; it included four grassroots militants who actively participated in the movement's activities for varying durations and ten senior militants who occupied various officer and commander positions for protracted periods. The logic of the sampling process included both insider and outsider perspectives of the movement by interviewing members and sympathisers and political rivals/allies who engaged with the M-19's mobilisation, but 'external' perspectives in this paper are limited to a single interview with an EPL militant. Efforts were made to balance interviews with militants who had been active in different geographical areas for e.g., in Bogotá and Cali and spatial realms for e.g. rural and urban guerrillas. However, this was difficult to systematically implement as most interviewees had been active in multiple roles and regions. Interviewees were contacted through a combination of snowball and opportunity sampling. Accordingly, it cannot be taken as either a geographical, gender or role specific representative sample. Such sampling limitations are consistent with qualitative research on conflict or armed movements because the sampling process is never fully within the sole control of the researcher (Malthaner, 2014, 182) as access must be negotiated with interviewees, ethical obligations must be respected and logistical challenges mitigated (see O'Connor, 2021, pp. 14–15). In order to be as transparent as possible about the methodological foundations of this research, while maintaining the security of interviewees, details of the eleven interviews cited in this paper are included in Appendix 1.

This interview data is supplemented with an intensive analysis of M-19 primary sources, including press reports, internal reports and communications (inter alia M-19, 1978; 1983; 1977) and all issues of the M-19's publication *Oiga Hermano* available in the digital archive of the *Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica*,[5] totalling 309 primary documents of differing sizes ranging from single paged documents to ones dozens of pages long. This data was coded according to sixteen different codes using MAXQDA focusing on the M-19's interactions with its constituency including different forms of rebel governance, interactions with other movements and interactions with the state. The data was also coded spatially and chronologically, identifying the lowest level of geographical indication such as urban neighbourhood and streets or rural village. Finally, a series of biographies, memoirs and auto-biographies of former militants have also been analysed and coded (Grabe Loewenherz, 2000; Mariño Vargas, 2019; Patiño, 2017; Villamizar, 2002; Vásquez Perdomo, 2005), along with several extended interviews conducted during their mobilisation in the 1980s (Jiménez Ricárdez, 1986; Lara, 2002).

4. Short overview of the M-19

The M-19 emerged in the early 1970's as part of the second wave of guerrilla movements in a national context of mass social unrest and political discontent. The first wave of insurgent movements founded in the 1960s were characterised by strong ideological positions: the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo*, (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia- People's Army, FARC-EP) was closely bound to the Marxist orthodoxies of the Colombian communist party, the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (National Liberation Army, ELN) aligned with a Guevarist stance and the *Ejército Popular de Liberación*, (Popular Liberation Army, EPL) was Maoist in orientation. Strategically all three were committed to rural insurgency (Chernick & Jiménez, 1993, 190–91; Pécaut, 2019, p. 24). The M-19 was established by a number of militants who had been expelled or willingly left the FARC-EP and in substantial part by elements of the populist *Alianza Nacional Popular* (National Popular Alliance, ANAPO) party, which were dismayed by the electoral fraud of the 1970 Presidential election (Le Blanc, 2012, 112). Its members tended to have a disproportionally middle-class composition; an internal M-19 survey in 1977 showed that half of its members were of a petit-bourgeois background (M-19, 1977; see Boulanger Martel, 2022a, 8; Florez-Morris, 2007).[6] The M-19 stood out from its revolutionary counterparts for its commitment to urban mobilisation and idiosyncratic - for the time and political context - ideological discourse. Firstly, as former M-19 commander Navarro Wolff succinctly stated the M-19's thinking: "the jungle with all it entails in terms of isolation, is the best place to survive but the worst to triumph" (in Jiménez Ricárdez, 1986, 100).[7] Secondly, it actively rejected the political abstraction and dogmatism of the existing revolutionary groups. It promoted what it conceived of as a locally appropriate ideology focused on Colombian nationalism centred around the figure of Simon Bolívar, democracy and anti-imperialism rather than any specific leftist doctrine (O'Connor & Meer, 2021, 132–33). Its non-sectarian stance facilitated greater unity and co-operation with other revolutionary movements (O'Connor & Meer, 2021, 138–39; Villamizar, 2002, 329). It focused on innovative communication techniques and prioritised symbolic acts of armed propaganda which attracted national and international attention, such as the theft of Simon Bolívar's sword, the seizure of a huge amount of army weaponry on New Year's Eve in 1978, the hostage taking of international diplomats during a siege at the Dominican Embassy in 1980 and most controversially (and arguably detrimentally to its reputation) the siege of the Palacio de Justicia in 1985. It combined these 'spectaculars' with the locally popular, hijacking of necessary goods like milk and clothes before distributing them in poor neighbourhoods and comprehensive campaigns of urban mobilisation in support of housing campaigns, union strikes and for periods of time in Cali, a form of parallel urban administration. All such activities at their most basic level generate new social ties between insurgent movements and their constituencies. Importantly, from 1977, the M-19 also engaged in a dynamic rural guerrilla campaign, where it enjoyed some military successes, most notably at the battle of Yarumales in 1984. It adhered to the strategy of concentrating its forces in relatively large groups and confronting the army, before re-grouping and confronting them again elsewhere (Interview 2), which impeded it from consolidating long term rural territorial bases like groups such as FARC-EP. Albeit, in certain areas in the south of the country, it functioned as the only recognised authority in the relative absence of the state, where it patrolled openly armed and in uniform, implemented an insurgent justice system which inflicted

[4] Many thanks to my friend and mentor Gory Suarez for her invaluable guidance and support during this period of fieldwork.

[5] Many thanks to Jakob Meer for his outstanding research assistance in this phase of data gathering and analysis.

[6] Rural recruitment tended to result in a broader range of social classes, including many rural poor (Interview 2).

[7] The ELN made some efforts to mobilise an urban guerrilla presence most notably Barrancabermeja and FARC-EP later established an urban front *Red Urbana Antonio Nariño* mostly active in Bogotá. Thanks to José Antonio Gutiérrez Danton for pointing this out.

punishments including executions (Interview 3). It even established schools and networks of rudimentary health services in Caquetá and Huila (Interviews 1&2). The M-19 de-mobilised in 1990, before going on to briefly play an outsized role in the political fortunes in Colombia in the early 1990s through its successor party *Alianza Democrática M-19*, before thereafter declining in political relevance (Boudon, 2001; Boulanger Martel, 2022a; Guáqueta, 2007; Söderström, 2016).

4.1. Clandestinity in the M-19

Clandestinity within the M-19 took two forms: a securitised compartmentalisation within the movement, which was designed to limit infiltration by state agents, as well as a more nuanced clandestinity visá-vis its constituency. While compartmentalisation on security grounds was needed, it also made it difficult for active sympathisers to actually join the movement in the absence of pre-existing social ties (See Boulanger Martel, 2022b; Medellín Pérez, 2018, 32). Simply put, if you did not know somebody in the movement it was difficult to access it. This extremely cautious approach was re-addressed at its Sixth National Conference in November 1977 when the leadership encouraged greater contact with its constituency. The latter form of clandestine mobilisation echoes revolutionary analyses that emphasised the somewhat paradoxical importance of leading "a consistently clandestine existence with the support of a favourable population in the neighbourhoods where the police and the army will be misinformed and harassed from all sides" (Guillén, 1973, p. 240). The M-19's urban mobilisation was concentrated in two of the country's biggest cities, Bogotá, and Cali. In its early years, it recruited from the university milieu and a subset of ANAPO activists, particularly in a party faction *ANAPO Socialista* for its incipient constituency (Boulanger Martel, 2022b, 29; Medellín Pérez, 2018, 36; Villamizar, 2002, 295). From the outset, the M-19 took issues of operational security and compartmentalisation extremely seriously. It took rigorous measures to maintain the identity of its members even from one another at its Second National Conference in October 1973 (Villamizar, 2017, 356). As Vásquez Perdomo explained:

> […] "we already knew how to behave, knew what not to know, how to protect your real identity, name, surname, residency, and family contacts. We were living in clandestinity right from the start" (Interview 4).

Meetings were held in cafes, where militants met under assumed names and in partial disguise. A female member explained that she used to straighten her frizzy hair, wear glasses or a hat, and change her clothing style from wearing skirts to wearing trousers (Interview 5). Nevertheless, there were limits to such compartmentalisation, as many recruits originated from the same student and even high school radical milieus, so when militants would meet following strict security protocols, they would simply encounter people they already recognised thus defeating the principle of secrecy (Holguín Pedroza, 2014, 186). Most militants led a form of double-life maintaining their jobs and families and engaging at the same time in revolutionary work (Medellín Pérez, 2018, 39). This dual life was conducted by many students, but also individuals with prestigious careers such as university deans (Interview 3), or middle-class jobs like schoolteachers (Interview 1), officials in banks and even a police captain (Interview 6). This secret existence continued until militants were 'burned' when their dual identities became known to the authorities,[8] at which point they were forced to go fully clandestine and abandon any semblance of a normal life, moving from safe house to safe house or alternatively join the rural guerrilla fronts.

[8] During the 1984 peace negotiations, several senior militants were obliged to become public faces for the movement. When the peace process broke down shortly afterwards, they were obliged to become fully clandestine or leave for the rural fronts (Interviews 6 & 7).

Nevertheless, as the movement tried to reach out to the masses, it necessarily imperilled its security. An internal M-19 communication lamented that "for many comrades, 'opening ourselves to the masses' led them to abandon our security measures". The same communique exhorted members to maximum caution when recruiting new members to avoid spies (M-19, 1977). In this process of actively pursuing popular support, a different form of clandestine mobilisation was employed, "a clandestinity in the midst of the social movement […] protected by the popular movement. A clandestinity with much secrecy but one also with much contact with the community" (Interview 6). One where 'burned' militants moved daily from safe house to safe house, rather than anonymously living in rented apartments, they stayed with families that sympathised with the movement.

One of the key challenges of clandestine mobilisation as outlined in the literature is that armed groups become detached from their constituency, focus merely on survival and spiral into ideological obtuseness (Della Porta, 1995, 132–33, Della Porta, 2013, 204–35; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2017, pp. 160–61; Zwerman, Steinhoff, & della Porta, 2000, 95). Yet, the M-19's clandestinity in the midst of its constituency was an antidote to isolation from the masses. As a former urban militant explained: families were proud and happy to have somebody from the movement in their house – notwithstanding the personal risk to them – as "it implied that [the movement] trusted them, felt secure with them and had affection for them". Nevertheless, these evenings turned into friendly interrogations, with the hosts curious to learn as much as possible about the movement (Interview 6). It is thus in such intimate proximity, albeit replete with some security precautions, that what a senior M-19 officer called the "politics of affection" could develop (Parra, 1987), emotional ties forged in the shared furnace of the risk of state repression and torture if caught by the authorities.

4.2. Rebel governance without territorial control: Full clandestinity in Bogotá

The establishment of a constituency that is willing to risk the grave consequences of supporting an insurgency is not easily achieved. M-19 activists operating from their earlier basis of a clandestine dual-existence had laid the groundwork for this politics of affection to develop. Aside from a creative communication strategy which included running cryptic advertising campaigns, the interruption of TV signals to broadcast directly into urban dwellers houses (Interview 15), and the use of a locally resonant language and symbolism (O'Connor & Meer, 2021, 143), the M-19 sought to immediately engage in forms of incipient governance to improve the livelihoods of the masses of rural-to-urban migrants that had flooded to the country's cities. Unlike, the protracted mobilisation strategies of Colombia's other revolutionary movements, the M-19 was conscious that it did not originate from the masses but rather from a small group of cadres of more middle class origin and was thus obliged to urgently establish mass support (M-19, 1977). In order to better root itself in its constituency, the M-19 underwent a comprehensive restructuring at its Sixth National Conference in November 1977 becoming a political-military organization (*Organización-Político-Militar*, OPM). A change which sought to transform what at the time was a vanguard movement into a mass movement "capable of mobilizing and coordinating mass support in armed struggle. To organize grassroots support, especially among labour unions, neighbourhood associations and student groups, the OPM needed 'integral militants', i. e. activists that formed part of the target organizations and social sectors"(Le Blanc, 2012, 128; see M-19, 1978; Villamizar, 2002, 336–37).

To this end, M-19 commandos hijacked milk trucks and redistributed the milk in poor neighbourhoods. The masked militants quickly distributed the seized goods, engaged in some propaganda for the movement before disappearing back into the urban hubbub. Although other revolutionary groups criticised such gestures as mere populism (Interview 10), they were much appreciated by the residents of impoverished neighbourhoods and quickly became a key part of the M-

19's repertoire (Interview 1). These 'Robin Hood' actions were not limited to milk, but also involved the distribution of other necessities like sugar, clothes, bread and even toys (see García Durán, Grabe Loewenherz, and Patiño Hormaza, 2008, 11)[9]. These actions were not without significant risk due to the proximity of police patrols and often ended in shoot-outs and the capture of militants. In one notorious incident, an M-19 commando was surrounded while on an aborted milk redistribution mission in the Diana Turbay neighbourhood of Bogotá in 1985, and all eleven militants were killed by the police, with evidence suggesting that at least some were extra-judicially assassinated after surrendering. (El Espectador, 2014).

In general rather than adding additional political demands to the social tumult of the mid 1970s and 1980s, the M-19 preferred to promote existing ones advanced by the broader left (Le Blanc, 2012, 122). For e.g., the M-19 lacked an organic relationship with the trade union movement but sought to win support in the sector by externally intervening in strikes and disputes. The M-19's first known killing was that of José Raquel Mercado, the president of the Workers' Central Organisation of Colombia (*Central de Trabajadores de Colombia*, CTC). In the course of nationwide labour disputes in 1976, the M-19 decided to unilaterally kidnap Mercado to enhance striking workers' leverage in the dispute. Mercado was widely viewed as corrupt and according to M-19 commander Jaime Bateman, following a revolutionary trial it was clear that "he had completely submitted himself to imperialism"(in Lara, 2002, p. 215). After a popular consultation during which workers, unions, student groups and ordinary civilians were encouraged to share their verdict on Mercado by writing it on the walls of the city, Mercado was given sleeping pills and then shot (M-19, 1976; Villamizar, 2002, 317–23). Similar hostage taking also occurred in the case of the Indupalma boss Hugo Ferreira Neira in 1977, however he was released unharmed after workers' demands were conceded (Alternativa, 1977). Innumerable lower profile initiatives in support of trade union demands were conducted by the M-19 winning it some popular sympathy for its willingness to actively support workers campaigns. The killing of Mercado in particular, overlaps with practises of armed propaganda thus it arguably lies on the conceptual margins of rebel governance. Armed propaganda "seeks to transmit a message to the population, the enemy government, or both, through the application of direct, coercive action" (Brum, 2014, 390). Yet, in Mercado's case, it was not just a symbolic attack on allegedly co-opted trade union elites but a direct intervention to materially influence an ongoing dispute pertinent to the M-19's constituency, thus also a form of rebel governance. Additionally, the M-19 involved its constituency in determining his fate with its crude 'popular verdict', putting it in a different category to other acts of armed propaganda it committed such as the theft of Bolivar's sword which were conducted independently of the M-19's constituency. Thus, notwithstanding the ambiguity of the specific case of Mercado, the M-19's efforts at implementing a type of crude but at times effective revolutionary justice to further the interests of its would-be constituency, can be considered a form of rebel governance.

Its most concrete success in Bogotá and its surrounding area was its involvement in the housing struggle. By the 1970s, Colombia's cities had rapidly expanded as rural dwellers flocked to them to escape conflict and penury in the countryside. They tended to settle in the so-called pirate neighbourhoods in "the poverty belts"(García Durán, Grabe Loewenherz, and Patiño Hormaza, 2008, 9) around the cities, occupying plots of lands and building improvised dwellings and then gradually attempting to regularise ownership titles and access to services. The M-19 immersed itself in these struggles, protecting local activists, co-ordinating land seizures and building houses. On occasion, they actually built entire neighbourhoods such as Nuevo Corinth in Bogotá's Suba district (Interviews 6 & 8) and Bolívar 83 in nearby Zipaquirá (Jimeno, 2022). Typically, M-19 militants operating clandestinely used their organisational knowledge to help communities communicate with municipalities, identify, and assign suitable plots to occupy and defend them from the police. Much of this organisation occurred on an unarmed basis but the M-19's implicit capacity for violence strengthened the hand of the residents. Importantly, these initiatives in Bogotá and surrounding districts were accomplished without any form of territorial control, the M-19 worked with and through the people, identifying locally relevant problems and then practically addressing them rather than assuming broader control over specific neighbourhoods. A former militant explained 'every Sunday all the community gathered, and we worked on the water and sewerage system" (Interview 6). Once neighbourhoods were established, the movement continued to organize the residents to campaign for further services from the city and built schools and kindergartens (Interview 8). Therefore, the M-19 had appropriated the responsibilities of the state, which was insufficiently committed to or unwilling to provide housing and municipal services in these neighbourhoods. The M-19 engaged in a mixture of 'armed advocacy', obliging the state to fulfil its obligations but also 'state substitution' by actually providing collective goods itself (see Gutiérrez Danton, 2022) The M-19 was thus deeply embedded in these neighbourhoods, enjoying local acknowledgement and protection from the masses but nonetheless operating from the shadows in a form of clandestinity with no territorial control.

4.2.1. Rebel governance with partial territorial control: Public clandestinity in Cali

The M-19's early mobilisation in Cali bore many similarities with that of Bogotá but evolved to differ dramatically in scale and ambition. Cali enjoyed a significant geographic advantage because it is adjacent to the Cordillera Central, a branch of the Colombian Andes, providing ideal conditions for insurgent movements, and close to the Valle de Cauca an M-19 stronghold.[10] Accordingly, the movement could ferry militants and supplies from these secure areas to the city. Importantly for the M-19's strategy of bringing the war to cities, the Valle de Cauca is also heavily populated, thus combining favourable geographic and social conditions (see Navarro Wolff in Jiménez Ricárdez, 1986). In the 1970s Cali was marred by the absence of public services, for e.g., 44% of its streets were unpaved and 34% of houses had no access to a sewage system (in Holguín Pedroza, 2014, 179). The city in general, and its peripheral neighbourhoods in particular, had also experienced years of political mobilisation prior to the arrival of the M-19 through the actions of progressive religious organizations and a vast array of fragmented and clandestine socialist movements and parties (Interview15). Beginning from late 1983, the M-19 had a comprehensive presence in two large poor districts on the margins of the city, Siloé and Agua Blanca. By 1985 the M-19's armed units openly patrolled these districts in uniform. When students from the nearby revolutionary hotbed, University del Valle left to join the guerrillas, instead of departing for the mountains they joined these urban guerrilla units (Interview 1). The district of Agua Blanca had between 350,000 and 400,00 residents at the time, and although the M-19's claims to serve as a form of government there, are probably overstated (Navarro Wolff in Jiménez Ricárdez, 1986), it had enormous influence and a degree of territorial control in parts of both Agua Blanca and Siloé, thus allowing a more ambitious form of urban rebel governance.

The M-19's emergence in Cali was similar enough to that in Bogotá. Its initial recruits were drawn from the universities and high schools who concentrated on acquiring resources and arms for the movement

[9] In rural areas such redistributive actions reflected the local needs of inhabitants. In Nariño, one guerrilla explained how they used to raid warehouses containing goods like wellingtons which were much sought after by people in the countryside (Interview 9).

[10] To give an idea of the M-19's strength in the area, along with the Commando Ricardo Franco, it temporarily seized the industrial town of Yumbo close to Cali on August 11th' 1984 (see Valencia, 2019).

with occasional symbolic actions like the occupation of the Universidad Santiago de Cali in 1974 (Holguín Pedroza, 2014, 180–84). These clandestine networks then proceeded to venture into the peripheral neighbourhoods. A former commander, Hipólito explained that they arrived to distribute milk in the neighbourhood of el Vergel in Agua Blanca, a neighbourhood renowned for desperate poverty with houses made from mud, straw (*bareque*), cardboard and tin. As Hipólito recalled:

> "there were 9 or 10 of us, with small arms, balaclavas and M-19 bandanas, […], we arrived there, we made our speech, we raised our flag and banners [….] and the people, the citizens, the population received us with applause and affection" (Interview 1).

Again, as in Bogotá, these initiatives were used by the movement to establish social ties and embed itself in the neighbourhood, to seek out local sympathisers and to identify places to cache weapons and documents, safe in the knowledge that militants always had a fallback option of fleeing to the safety of the nearby mountains and guerrilla strongholds in surrounding countryside, a luxury it did not enjoy in Bogotá.

The mobilisation in Cali developed rather more comprehensively than in Bogotá, especially with regard to how the M-19 could move in urban space. This can be seen in the concrete example of the use of balaclavas by the M-19. The wearing of face coverings is a key technique to concealing one's identity thus allowing the pursuit of a 'dual-life' as militant and everyday citizen. Yet, the wearing of a mask places a barrier between its wearer and its intended audience, which is a significant problem when attempting to build popular trust and legitimacy. The mask not only conceals but also depersonalises, transforming its wearer from a specific individual to an anonymous vehicle of violence (Feldman, 1991, p. 53). And as the M-19 sought to transform itself away from a vanguard to a mass movement, at its VII National Conference in 1982, M-19 commander Jaime Bateman encouraged members to abandon the wearing of masks. On one particular evening in the neighbourhood of el Vergel in the district of Agua Blanca in Cali, after a particularly warm welcome and invitation from the locals to stay permanently in the neighbourhood, the local commander Hipólito took the decision to permanently stay rather than retreat into clandestinity. That very night he "ordered his men to remove their masks, and […] [to] stay permanently in Agua Blanca" He recalled that this was "a political decision because clearly it [operating openly] was more risky" (Interview 1). This led them to operate "a form of clandestine public life (*una forma de vida clandestina pública),* which is a Macondian[11] contradiction [….]. I had to operate with a public presence, remain active but at the same time not allow us to get caught" (Interview 1). This prominent experience of public clandestinity and relatively ambitious urban rebel governance was brought to an in end in late 1985 when a huge military offensive and days of intensive urban fighting, particularly in Siloé where the guerrillas had dug trenches and other defensive structures, forced the insurgents to withdraw to the safety of the surrounding countryside. Aside from a significant but fleeting military occupation of several Cali neighbourhoods with its allies in the Batallón América in 1986, the M-19'was never in a position to regain a comparable territorial presence in the city.

4.2.2. Public rebel governance: Peace camps in Bogotá and Cali

In addition to these distinct contrasting spatial experiences of clandestinity, there was a particular timeframe where more public mobilisation and governance was possible. After winning the presidential election in 1982, Bellisario Betancur initiated dialogue with the country's various revolutionary movements for a peace process, including the implementation of a 1982 amnesty which saw the release of a few hundred M-19 guerrillas[12] (see Ramírez & Restrepo, 1988). The process culminated in an agreement signed in Corinto in August 1984 between Betancur's government and the M-19,[13] leading to a poorly adhered to ceasefire. After a tense interregnum and the targeting and killing of a number of it senior members, the M-19 relaunched in insurgency in June 1985 (see Villamizar, 2019, 175). The M-19 used this strange window of chronically violent peace to concretely launch its plans to *ser gobierno* or 'to be the government', thus shifting its popular attention to its ability to effectively provide forms of governance. Following a national strike in early 1985, the M-19 launched a network of Peace Camps in peripheral neighbourhoods of Cali and Bogotá, which rapidly expanded to number forty camps in a range of cities (Navarro Wolff in Jiménez Ricárdez, 1986, 93). These camps lasted for around two and a half months and were improvised settlements in open spaces with some awnings for shelter from the weather and some basic necessities donated by the local residents. However they were not insignificant in scale, one camp in Ciudad Bolívar in Bogotá had a dormitory for around 80 militants (Medellín Pérez, 2018, 87). They were designed as spaces in which the M-19 could explain the difficulties of the ongoing peace process, outline the objectives of the M-19 and to directly address the daily problems – to govern - in the neighbourhood (Interviews 1, 3, & 8). Due to their public nature, other progressive non-violent actors such as Liberation Theologist priests (Medellín Pérez, 2018, 91) also frequented them. Thus, highlighting that public outreach could serve as a multiplier of social ties in comparison to more cautious clandestine mobilisation.

Even in such an open context and with such dense interaction with the public the M-19 nevertheless continued to implement security measures. A female militant explained that in her neighbourhood in Costa Rica in the district of Suba in the north of Bogotá, the local peace camp was two blocks from her house, but she never outed herself as a militant there, and only frequented meetings there as an ordinary member of the public (Interview 8). Initially the camps continued with the habits of clandestine mobilisation before they were purposefully opened up to include wider participation in their routine assemblies with local inhabitants (Holguín Pedroza, 2014, 209). Importantly, the guerrillas present were unarmed, and no weapons were permitted, but the camps maintained an insurgent character. M-19 used the opportunity to raise unarmed militias the *Milicias Bolivarianas* who underwent basic training and drilling, again highlighting how the more public context facilitated the construction of more diffuse social ties, many of which developed into more encompassing commitment after the closure of the camps.

The militias addressed local problems identified by the surrounding residents. As a former militia member stated: "our job was to do the work that state did not do"(in Holguín Pedroza, 2014, 212). The M-19 cadres and its militia implemented a wide range of activities from punishing local criminals, intervening in domestic disputes, providing security on public transport, organising medical visits and vaccination campaigns, provision of nurseries for children, paving roads, extending sewage and electricity connections and of course the protection of the camps from elements of the security forces (See Holguín Pedroza, 2014, 208–23; Jiménez Ricárdez, 1986, 13–16; Lara, 2002, pp. 276–78; Medellín Pérez, 2018, 86–98; Vásquez Perdomo, 2005, 208–209, Interviews 1,3,6 & 8). This reflects Parkinson and Zaks' observation that insurgent participation is not limited to carrying weapons (2018, 278), and many local collaborators had weak ties to the movement limited to occasionally storing weapons or doing favours for the M-19's (Medellín Pérez, 2018, 69). Importantly, these governance initiatives were not necessarily done at the barrel of an M-19 rifle, being mostly conducted

[11] Referring to the fictional town of Macondo in Gabriel Garcia Marquez' novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

[12] Figures vary from 215 to 467 released M-19 prisoners (Ramírez & Restrepo, 1988, p. 95).

[13] It was also signed by the EPL, see Lara (2002, p. 363) for the full text of the agreement.

by local residents who rather importantly were understood as having the armed strength of the M-19 underpinning their mobilisation. This again coincides with the nuanced concept of armed advocacy (Gutiérrez Danton, 2022, 20). However, as the peace process sundered, and after assassination attempts on senior M-19 members such as Maria Eugenia Vásquez Perdomo and Antonio Navarro Wolff occurred, the risks of such a public mobilisation became apparent. As one militant explained "everyone who was at the front of the camps, [they] were all completely identified" (Interview 8) and as state security forces moved against these camps, it killed and disappeared dozens of activists (Vásquez Perdomo, 2005, 210). Thereby forcing militants, including many recently mobilised militia members to flee to the relative safety of the rural guerrilla fronts. The Peace Camps were the zenith of the M-19's urban mobilisation and although the movement continued its actions in various cities, they were once again more clandestine in nature and reduced in scale. Notwithstanding their short duration, their impact and further embedding of the movement in popular neighbourhoods reaffirm the relative difficulties in clandestine mobilisation compared to contexts where more open and stable interactions with one's constituency are possible.

5. Conclusion

The election of former M-19 guerrilla Gustavo Petro as President of the Republic of Colombia in 2022 demonstrates the ongoing political importance of the movement to the country's fortunes in recent decades. Notwithstanding its size relative to other revolutionary forces, the M-19 capitalised on its insurgent mobilisation to project itself into the national political consciousness, far beyond any actual military threat it ever actually posed to the state. Its political popularity around the period of its demobilisation, as evidenced in polling data at the time was substantial (in "Boletin Internacional: Pizarro Candidato Presidencial" 2014).[14] Although the initial support for its post-insurgent political party *Alianza Democrática M-19* fragmented and declined (Boudon, 2001), the legacy of its armed campaign never fully receded. This article has taken a step towards understanding how in spite of security imperatives and the restrictions of clandestine mobilisation, the M-19 mobilised an urban constituency, embedding itself in Colombia's heaving cities. It showed the movement established networks of social ties which allowed it to take root in environments neglected both by the state and to an extent by other armed revolutionary groups. Theoretically, the article has shown that the isolation and insularity of urban armed groups predicted by social movement theories is not inevitable. Even in the absence of territorial control, by engaging in incipient forms of insurgent service provision, urban movements can successfully generate social ties beyond their existing networks. It further draws into question the rigid adherence to insurgent territorial control as a scope condition to analyse rebel governance by showing that insurgent territorial control is not necessarily a precondition for governance. Finally, by comparing insurgent experiences in two cities it introduces a spatial perspective to account for geographical inconsistencies in patterns of insurgent support, demonstrating that territorial control or the lack thereof is too blunt a conceptual tool to understand the complex vagaries of overlapping patterns of insurgent-incumbent control dynamics.

Although, these theoretical arguments are based on the historical case of the M-19 that de-mobilised more than thirty years ago, they are also of relevance to better understanding past and present urban conflicts. Urban insurgent movements that succeed in obtaining local legitimacy can prove resilient and present different political challenges to incumbent governments than rural movements due to their broader resonance, comparative access to the media and constraints on state counter-insurgency measures (Staniland, 2010). At a more fine-grained level of analysis, practises of social tie building by insurgent movements also overlap with violent extremist movements' efforts at recruitment in western societies ranging from far-right provision of services in the so-called national liberated zones envisaged by German neo-Nazis (Miller-Idriss, 2019, 41–42). Notwithstanding, its neglect by the rebel governance field, urban insurgency is an ongoing phenomenon, ranging from historical anti-colonial campaigns in cities like Algiers and Dublin, to more recent instances such as the Kurdish urban uprising in Turkey in 2015 and the persistent war in Syria. As successful or enduring insurgency usually only emerges where movements are embedded in their constituencies and have some degree of legitimacy and support, the way movements mobilise in cities deserves more comprehensive analysis. This article has shown that the basis of such a constituency can be derived from incipient practices of rebel governance thus how movements engage with and provide governance to their constituencies must continue be taken seriously as an academic agenda.

However, the difficulty of urban insurgency should not be underestimated thus limiting the generalisability of this article's findings. Notwithstanding, the political impact of the M-19's urban campaign and the strong constituency it established in the cities, once the government focused its military might on the movement, its militants were largely forced to retreat to either deeper clandestinity or to its rural fronts. Even though its campaign adhered closely to the urban revolutionary template: clandestinity amongst a supportive population, living separately but fighting together, coordinated with a rural guerrilla campaign (Guillén, 1973, pp. 240–41): the peak of M-19's urban mobilisation was short-lived. In spite of security efforts and compartmentalisation, counter-insurgent efforts successfully infiltrated and interrupted the M-19's units and support networks leading to mass arrests. Detained suspects were routinely tortured by Colombian security and although detainees attempted to 'hold out' at least for a few days before 'breaking', to allow their comrades time to clear out of safe houses, these measures undermined the M-19's urban structures and intimidated its potential supporters (See Mariño Vargas, 2019; Vásquez Perdomo, 2005, 134–35). But the M-19 avoided the destruction of its urban forerunners in Uruguay and Argentina because when the conditions for urban mobilisation deteriorated, its militants could flee to the relative safety of the rural fronts. Accordingly, if an urban campaign is to be successful it does indeed seem to be dependent on having a parallel rural one (Guillén, 1973, p. 244). This is also likely the reason why the M-19 did not become ideologically detached from its constituency, unlike the some of the cases addressed in the social movement literature (Della Porta, 1995, 132–33, Della Porta, 2013, 204–35; Zwerman, Steinhoff, & della Porta, 2000, 95), where clandestinity was *the refuge* from state, a destination, rather than as in the M-19's case, a stop along the way to broader insurgency.

The article's findings hint at potential avenues for further research, notably more detailed assessment of the ties between urban and rural units and support networks, and a more explicit comparison between patterns of social tie creation in urban and rural environments and if in the absence of clandestine restrictions, constituency building in rural areas proceeds differently than in the cities. It also calls for greater analysis of the legacy of insurgent constituencies, in areas where the M-19 were strongly embedded for e.g., particular neighbourhoods like Nuevo Corinth, did their support persist in the post conflict phase? Additionally, one could disentangle social ties engendered through the M-19's governance initiatives and others developed through family and pre-existing political relations. Finally, comparisons on the spatial dynamics of its constituency building would merit comparison with other urban groups like the Tupamaros and Montoneros and groups that bridged urban-rural mobilisations like the IRA in the North of Ireland and both the well known anti-colonial struggle and the later civil war in Algeria.

[14] Thanks to Francisco Gutiérrez-Sanín for his help in tracking down this document.

Declaration of competing interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

Acknowledgements

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No101024078.

Appendix 1

No.	Name	Interviewee Description
1.	Hipólito	Male M-19 Commander with experience in urban mobilisation in Bogotá and Cali and in the rural areas.
2.	—	Male M-19 Commander in rural areas
3.	A. Navarro Wolff	Male M-19 Senior Commander in urban and rural areas
4.	M. E. Vásquez Perdomo	Female M-19 founding member and commander and with experience in urban and rural mobilisation
5.	—	Female M-19 Urban militant
6.	—	Male M-19 Commander in the urban structure in Bogotá
7.	—	Male Senior M-19 militant active in both urban and rural structures
8.	—	Female M-19 militant in the urban structure in Cali
9.	—	Male M-19 militant in rural structures
10.	—	Male M-19 militant in the urban structure in Cali
11.	—	Male EPL militant

References

Ahmad, E. (1982). Revolutionary warfare and counterinsurgency. In G. Chaliand (Ed.), *Guerrilla strategies: An historical anthology from the long march to Afghanistan*. Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press.

Alternativa. (1977). El Secuestro de Ferreira: Lo Que Buscaba El M-19. *Alternativa*. . (Accessed 12 September 1977).

Anders, T. (2020). Territorial control in civil wars: Theory and measurement using machine learning. *Journal of Peace Research, 57*(6), 701–714. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343320959687

Arjona, A. (2016). *Rebelocracy*. Cambridge, U.K. ; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Arjona, A., Kasfir, N., & Mampilly, Z. C. (Eds.). (2015). *Rebel governance in civil war*. Cambridge ; New York, NY ; Melbourne, VIC ; Delhi ; Singapore: Cambridge University Press.

Bell, J. B. (1990). Revolutionary dynamics: The inherent inefficiency of the underground. *Terrorism and Political Violence, 2*(2), 193–211. https://doi.org/10.1080/09546559008427061

"Boletin Internacional: Pizarro Candidato Presidencial.". (2014). *Oiga Hermano, Hermana*, 2014 http://www.oigahermanohermana.org/article-boletin-internacional-pizarro-candidato-presidencial-125142711.html, 2014.

Boudon, L. (2001). Colombia's M-19 democratic alliance: A case study in new-party self-destruction. *Latin American Perspectives, 28*(1), 73–92. https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X0102800105

Boulanger Martel, S. P. (2022a). ¡*Zapatero, a tus zapatos*! Explaining the social engagement of M-19 ex-combatants in education and social work institutions in Colombia. *Third World Quarterly, 43*(4), 760–778. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2021.2022979

Boulanger Martel, S. P. (2022b). Rebel Bricoleurs? Brokerage, Institutional Bricolage and Operational Capacity in the Formation of M-19 in Colombia. In *Conference paper presented at CRS Annual Conference. Belfast*.

Brathwaite, K. J. H., & Konaev, M. (2019). War in the city: Urban ethnic geography and combat effectiveness. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 1–36. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2019.1672159. October.

Breslawski, J. (2021). The social terrain of rebel held territory. *Journal of Conflict Resolution, 65*(2–3), 453–479. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002720951857

Brum, P. (2014). Revisiting urban guerrillas: Armed propaganda and the insurgency of Uruguay's MLN-Tupamaros, 1969–70. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 37*(5), 387–404. https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2014.893403

Chernick, M. W., & Jiménez, M. F. (1993). Popular liberalism, radical democracy, and marxism: Leftist politics in contemporary Colombia, 1974-1991. In B. Carr, & S. Ellner (Eds.), *The Latin American left: From the fall of allende to perestroika* (Vols. 61–83). London: Latin America Bureau.

Crenshaw, M. (1981). The causes of terrorism. *Comparative Politics, 13*(4), 379–399. https://doi.org/10.2307/421717

Della Porta, D. (1988). Recruitment processes in clandestine organizations: Italian left-wing terrorism. In B. Klandermans, Greenwich, & Conn (Eds.), *From structure to action: Comparing social movement research across cultures*. JAI Press.

Della Porta, D. (1995). *Social movements, political violence, and the state: A comparative analysis of Italy and Germany*. Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Della Porta, D. (2013). *Clandestine political violence. Cambridge studies in contentious politics*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Demetriou, C. (2007). Political violence and legitimation: The episode of colonial Cyprus. *Qualitative Sociology, 30*(2), 171–193. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-007-9060-2

El Espectador. (2014). *Reabren caso de la masacre de la leche del M-19*. El Espectador. December 12, 2014 https://www.elespectador.com/judicial/reabren-caso-de-la-masacre-de-la-leche-del-m-19-article-532855/.

Feldman, A. (1991). *Formations of violence: The narrative of the Body and political terror in northern Ireland*. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press.

Finkel, E. (2015). The phoenix effect of state repression: Jewish resistance during the Holocaust. *American Political Science Review, 109*(2), 339–353.

Florez-Morris, M. (2007). Joining guerrilla groups in Colombia: Individual motivations and processes for entering a violent organization. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 30*(7), 615–634. https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100701385958

García Durán, M., Loewenherz, V. G., & Hormaza, O. P. (2008). The M-19's journey from armed struggle to democratic politics. *Berghof Series. Resistance/Liberation Movements and Transition to Politics*.

Giáp, V. N. (1970). *The military art of People's war: Selected writings of general Vo Nguyen Giap*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Gillespie, R. (1980). A critique of the urban guerrilla: Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil. *Journal of Conflict Studies, 1*(2).

Grabe Loewenherz, V. (2000). *Razones de vida*. Bogotá: Planeta.

Granovetter, M. (1985). Economic action and social structure: The problem of embeddedness. *American Journal of Sociology, 91*(3), 481–510.

Guáqueta, A. (2007). The way back in: Reintegrating illegal armed groups in Colombia then and now. *Conflict, Security and Development, 7*(3), 417–456. https://doi.org/10.1080/14678800701556545

Guevara, C. (2002). *Guerrilla warfare*. Lanham (MD): Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Guillén, A. (1973). *Philosophy of the urban guerilla*. New York: Morrow & Co.

Gutiérrez Danton, J. A. (2022). Rebel Governance as State-Building? Discussing the FARC-EP's Governance Practices in Southern Colombia. *Partecipazione e Conflitto, 15*(1), 17–36.

Hobsbawm, E. J. (1994). *Revolutionaries: Contemporary essays* (Phoenix).

Holguín Pedroza, J. A. (2014). *Militancia Urbana y Accionar Colectivo Del M-19 En Cali, 1974-1985*. Cauca: Un Enfoque Teóricamente Situado'.

Jackson, A. (2018). *Life under the Taliban shadow government*. Overseas Development Institute. https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/12269.pdf.

Jentzsch, C., & Masullo, J. (2022). Violent or non-violent action? Wartime civilian resistance in Colombia and Mozambique. *Political Geography, 99*(November), 102761. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2022.102761

Jimeno, A. M. (2022). Gustavo Petro, clandestino en Zipaquirá. *Cambio Colombia (blog)*. May 27, 2022 https://cambiocolombia.com/articulo/poder/gustavo-petro-clandestino-en-zipaquira.

Jiménez Ricárdez, R. (1986). Entrevista Antonio Navarro Wolff M-19: Paz y Guerra en Colombia. *Cuadernos Políticos*. March 1986.

Kalyvas, S. N. (2006). *The logic of violence in civil war*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kasfir, N. (2005). Guerrillas and civilian participation: The national resistance army in Uganda, 1981-86. *The Journal of Modern African Studies, 43*(2), 271–296.

Kasfir, N. (2015). Rebel governance - constructing a field of inquiry: Definitions, scope, patterns, order, causes. In A. Arjona (Ed.), *Nelson Kasfir, and Zachariah Cherian Mampilly: Vols. 21–46. Rebel governance in civil war*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kasfir, N., Frerks, G., & Terpstra, N. (2017). Introduction: Armed groups and multi-layered governance. *Civil Wars, 19*(3), 257–278. https://doi.org/10.1080/13698249.2017.1419611

Lara, P. (2002). *Siembra vientos y recogerás tempestades: La historia del M-19, sus protagonistas y sus destinos*. Bogotá: Editorial Planeta Colombiana.

Le Blanc, J. (2012). *Political violence in Latin America: A cross-case comparison of the urban insurgency campaigns of Montoneros, M-19 and FSLN in a historical perspective*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars.

Le Blanc, J. (2013). The urban environment and its influences on insurgent campaigns. *Terrorism and Political Violence, 25*(5), 798–819. https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2012.700656

Ledwidge, F. (2017). *Rebel law: Insurgents, courts and justice in modern conflict*. London: Hurst & Company.

M-19. (1976). Que El Pueblo Decida. *M-19 (blog)*. http://www.oigahermanohermana.org/article-que-el-pueblo-decida-123768431.html. (Accessed 15 February 1976).

M-19. (1977). Carta Nacional No. 1. *El Blog de Oiga Hermano, Hermana (blog)*, 1977 http://www.oigahermanohermana.org/article-documentos-en-la-historia-del-m-19-cartanacional- 124384567.html.

M-19. (1978). *Concepcion y Estructura de La organizacion politico militar del M-19*. Sexta Conferencia Nacional.

M-19. (1983). *Reunión de La Direccion Nacional Conclusiones Febrero de 1983*.

Malthaner, S. (2011). *Mobilizing the faithful: Militant Islamist groups and their constituencies*. Frankfurt: Campus: University Presses.

Malthaner, S. (2014). Fieldwork in the context of violent conflict and authoritarian regimes. In D. della Porta (Ed.), *pp. 173–95. Methodological practices in social movement research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Malthaner, S., & Malešević, S. (2022). Violence, legitimacy, and control: The dynamics of rebel rule. *Partecipazione e Conflitto, 15*(1), 1–16.

Mampilly, Z. C. (2011). *Rebel rulers: Insurgent governance and civilian life during war*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Mampilly, Z., & Stewart, M. A. (2021). A typology of rebel political institutional arrangements. *Journal of Conflict Resolution, 65*(1), 15–45. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002720935642

Mao Tse-Tung. (2015). *Mao Tse-Tung on guerrilla warfare*. Pickle Partners Publishing.

Marighella, C. (2002). *Mini-manual of the urban guerrilla*. Montreal, QC; Toronto, ON: Abraham Guillen Press.

Mariño Vargas, F. A. (2019). *Y Después de Todo… El Perdon Sobre La Vida, La Tortura y Seguir Viviendo*. Bogotá Colombia: Desde Abajo.

Massey, D. B. (1995). *Spatial divisions of labor: Social structures and the geography of production*. New York: Routledge.

McAdam, D. (1986). Recruitment to high-risk activism: The case of freedom summer. *American Journal of Sociology, 92*(1), 64–90.

McCauley, C., & Moskalenko, S. (2017). *Friction how conflict radicalizes them and Us* (Revised and Expanded Edition). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

McColl, R. W. (1969). The insurgent state: Territorial bases of revolution. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 59*(4), 613–631. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8306.1969.tb01803.x

McCormick, G. H., & Owen, G. (2000). Security and coordination in a clandestine organization. *Mathematical and Computer Modelling, 31*(6), 175–192. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0895-7177(00)00050-9

Medellín Pérez, I. (2018). *La gente del sancocho nacional*. Bogotá: Editorial Universidad del Rosario.

Miller-Idriss, C.. The extreme gone mainstream: Commercialization and far right youth culture in Germany. http://www.vlebooks.com/vleweb/product/openreader?id=none&isbn=9781400888931.

Moriarty, J. T. (2010). The vanguard's dilemma: Understanding and exploiting insurgent strategies. *Small Wars and Insurgencies, 21*(3), 476–497. https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2010.505479

Ó Dochartaigh, N. (2013). Bounded by violence: Institutionalizing local territories in the North of Ireland. *Nationalism & Ethnic Politics, 19*(1), 119–139. https://doi.org/10.1080/13537113.2013.763499

Ó Dochartaigh, N. (2022). The rules of hijacking: Coercion and legitimacy in the 'urban Statelets' of the IRA. *PARTECIPAZIONE E CONFLITTO, 15*(1), 107–120.

O'Connor, F. (2021). *Understanding insurgency: Popular support for the PKK in Turkey*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

O'Connor, F. (2022). *Routinised insurgent space: Spatial dimensions of insurgent-civilian relations and support." workshop presented at the the margins of insurgent control: Spaces of governance*. Wageningen University and Research.

O'Connor, F., & Meer, J. (2021). The M-19's ideological Sancocho: The reconciliation of socialism and Colombian nationalism. *Small Wars and Insurgencies, 32*(1), 127–151. https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2020.1829861

O'Connor, F., & Oikonomakis, L. (2015). Preconflict mobilization strategies and urban-rural transition: The cases of the PKK and the FLN/EZLN. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly, 20*(3), 379–399. https://doi.org/10.17813/1086-671X-20-3-379

Parkinson, S. E. (2013). Organizing rebellion: Rethinking high-risk mobilization and social networks in war. *American Political Science Review, 107*(3), 418–432.

Parkinson, S. E., & Zaks, S. (2018). Militant and rebel organization(s). *Comparative Politics, 50*(2), 271–293. https://doi.org/10.5129/001041518822263610

Parra, A. (1987). "A POLITICA Y LOS AFECTOS.". *Gente Eme*, 1987 http://genteeme.blogspot.com/2017/04/la-politica-y-los-afectos-afranio-parra.html, 1987.

Passy, F. (2001). Socialization, connection, and the structure/agency gap: A specification of the impact of networks on participation in social movements. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly, 6*(2), 173–192. https://doi.org/10.17813/maiq.6.2.v6u4wg67x87w943h

Patiño, O. (2017). *Historia privada de la Violencia: La crisis colombiana de mediados del siglo XX contada por los descendientes de sus protagonistas*.

Pécaut, D. (2019). *Modernización y enfrentamientos armados en la Colombia del siglo XX. Translated by Alberto Valencia Gutiérrez* (1st ed.). Programa Editorial Universidad del Valle. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv14jx75s

Pizarro, Leongómez, & E. (2001). *Insurgencia sin revolución: La guerrilla en Colombia en una perspectiva comparada*. Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores.

Ramírez, S., & Restrepo, L. A. (1988). *Actores en conflicto por la paz: El proceso de paz durante el gobierno de Belisario Betancur (1982-1986). Bogotá: CINEP : Siglo Veintiuno*.

Rubin, M. A. (2019). Rebel territorial control and civilian collective action in civil war: Evidence from the communist insurgency in the Philippines. *Journal of Conflict Resolution.* , Article 0022002719863844. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002719863844. July.

Schlichte, K., & Schneckener, U. (2015). Armed groups and the politics of legitimacy. *Civil Wars, 17*(4), 409–424. https://doi.org/10.1080/13698249.2015.1115573

Sluka, J. A. (1989). *Hearts and minds, water and fish: Support for the IRA and INLA in a northern Ireland Ghetto*. Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press.

Söderström, J. (2016). The resilient, the remobilized and the removed: Party mobilization among former M19 combatants. *Civil Wars, 18*(2), 214–233. https://doi.org/10.1080/13698249.2016.1205565

Staniland, P. (2010). Cities on fire: Social mobilization, state policy, and urban insurgency. *Comparative Political Studies, 43*(12), 1623–1649.

Staniland, P. (2014). *Networks of rebellion: Explaining insurgent cohesion and collapse*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Stewart, M. A. (2018). Civil war as state-making: Strategic governance in civil war. *International Organization, 72*(1), 205–226. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818317000418

Stewart, M. A. (2021). *Governing for Revolution: Social Transformation in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Stewart, M. A., & Liou, Y. (2016). Do good borders make good rebels? Territorial control and civilian casualties. *The Journal of Politics, 79*(1), 284–301. https://doi.org/10.1086/688699

Thurber, C. (2019). Social ties and the strategy of civil resistance. *International Studies Quarterly, 63*(4), 974–986. https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqz049

Tilly, C. (2003). *Collective violence*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Zwerman, G., Steinhoff, & della Porta, D. (2000). Disappearing social movements: Clandestinity in the cycle of new left protest in the U.S., Japan, Germany, and Italy. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly, 5*(1), 85–104. https://doi.org/10.17813/maiq.5.1.0w068105721660n0

Valencia, E. (2009). *"La Toma de Macondo". Ciudad Vaga*. https://ciudadvaga.univalle.edu.co/reportajes/la-toma-de-macondo/ (Accessed 17 October 2019).

Vásquez Perdomo, M. E. (2005). *My Life as a Colombian Revolutionary: Reflections of a Former Guerrillera*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Villamizar, D. (2002). *Jaime Bateman Biografia de Un Revolucionario*. Bogotá: Editorial Planeta Colombiano.

Villamizar, D. (2017). *Las guerrillas en Colombia: Una historia desde los origenes hasta los confines*.

Villamizar, D. (2019). Colombia: 70 Years of guerrilla war. In D. Kruijt, E. R. Tristán, & A. M. Álvarez (Eds.), *Latin American guerrilla movements: Origins, evolution, outcomes* (Vols. 168–81). New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429244063.

Waterman, A. (2022). The shadow of 'the Boys:' rebel governance without territorial control in Assam's ULFA insurgency. *Small Wars and Insurgencies, 0*(0), 1–26. https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2022.2120324

Welsh, B. (2022). Your space or mine? Competition, control, and the spatial profile of militant violence against civilians. *Journal of Peace Research.* , Article 00223433221091597. https://doi.org/10.1177/00223433221091597. October.

White, R. W., & White, T. F. (1991). Revolution in the city: On the resources of urban guerrillas. *Terrorism and Political Violence, 3*(4), 100–132. https://doi.org/10.1080/09546559108427129

Wickham-Crowley, T. (1990). Terror and guerrilla warfare in Latin America, 1956–1970. *Comparative Studies in Society and History, 32*(2), 201–237. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417500016467

Wickham-Crowley, & T, . (1993). *Guerrillas and revolution in Latin America: A comparative study of insurgents and regimes since 1956* (1st Princeton). Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.

Wiktorowicz, Q. (2005). *Radical Islam rising: Muslim extremism in the west*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Wood, E. J. (2008). The social processes of civil war: The wartime transformation of social networks. *Annual Review of Political Science, 11*(1), 539–561.

Worrall, J. (2017). (Re-)Emergent orders: Understanding the negotiation(s) of rebel governance. *Small Wars and Insurgencies, 28*(4–5), 709–733. https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2017.1322336