Global Health in Times of Violence

Edited by Barbara Rylko-Bauer, Linda Whiteford, and Paul Farmer

Contributors: Philippe Bourgois, Paul Farmer, Didier Fassin, H. K. Heggenhougen, Carolyn Nordstrom, James Quesada, Barbara Rylko-Bauer, Merrill Singer, Linda Whiteford
Fault Lines

Carolyn Nordstrom

Maybe you hear it and maybe you don’t. Sometimes you hear it in your memories and wonder if it was the gunshot or the sound of your fear. You think the bullet should make a sound when it hits you. But it doesn’t. It’s your breath you hear, coming out, like an explosion.—Catorzina

A youth takes a step, hears an explosion.

Perhaps she stepped on a landmine. Or found her flesh no match for a bullet. It might have been an internal explosion, the sound a heart makes when it stops beating. Cause of death: no medicines. Or maybe the cause was a sex tourist exploiting the cheap prices of desperation in a war-torn nation, or an international ring forcefully rounding up laborers for domestic and agricultural labor. In any case, the youth was hungry.

The world did not see. The explosion was far removed from the media’s watchful eye, the academic gaze, the crush of urban life. Shock waves spread, but no technology recorded the disturbance. Populations consoled themselves with the “fact” that if they did not see it, “it never happened and besides they deserved it,” as Edward Opton (1971) found in his classic study of people’s responses to news of war atrocities. And if it did happen, it was “far away and not us”—geographically, politically, culturally.

Shock waves always have an impact, even if they are not seen or acknowledged. An earthquake can level towns a great distance from its epicenter—if the towns rest on fault lines.

In the case of war and institutionalized inequality, fault lines do not reside within landmasses, but in certain political, economic, and ethical relations that span the world’s countries. Fault lines are flows—often
unrecorded—of goods, services, monies, and people that precipitate unstable inequalities, uneven access to power, and unevenly distributed resources. They represent fissures in humanity.

Myriad fault lines exist in the world today. All run internationally and are interrelated, linking war zones and countries at peace, superpowers and the disenfranchised alike. The fault lines presented here are not tangential to the world’s core institutions, but central. This chapter explores examples that coalesce around an act of violence—the youth, Catorzina, struck by a bullet, and her subsequent search for health, both personal and social.

Weapons profiteering and illicit arms trade reaping hundreds of billions yearly represent one fault line. The vast extra-legal markets in necessities like medicines, food, industrial supplies, and energy, as well as the massive, unrecorded financial flows these generate, are others. Institutionalized value systems that justify profiteering and exploitation, with a concomitant gutting of social services, are more intangible but equally powerful fault lines. And because activities generating these instabilities are intended to consolidate economic and political power, often via legal and extra-legal, state and extra-state practices, the people involved generally work to avoid accountability and evade public and legal scrutiny. This process of forging invisibility is, itself, a fault line. Recognizing the ways in which legal and ethical indeterminacy are manipulated for gain is a step toward illuminating solutions.

This chapter was initially presented (School for Advanced Research, October 2006) when the US economy was widely considered strong and healthy. In following fault lines generated in the USA, I predicted that a systemic economic crisis was looming which would hit the country’s core institutions and those situated along zones of instability—and this would link ultimately to experiences of average people in war zones half a world away (see also Nordstrom 2008). Now that the September 2008 economic meltdown has occurred, my goal has evolved to show that without understanding the concrete realities of fault lines and their interrelationships in the world today—without making the invisible observable and accountable—we cannot resolve these crises in a healthy way nor avert future ones. My research suggests that the impact of this current meltdown will reconfigure global bases of political and economic power more than is generally assumed.

These fault lines can be followed, mapped, and researched. I tracked them ethnographically, on foot so to speak, for three years (2001–2002, 2003, and 2005–2006): south to north, from Africa to Europe, and then east to west, through Southern Asia and the Pacific to the United States. This is grounded ethnographic research concerned with hyper-place, with situated flow and populated movement, and with the worldview generated within these. I traveled legal and illicit trade routes and talked with the people populating both: investigated extra-legal commodity, “people,” and money laundering; stood on the frontlines of wars, exploitation, and health care in conversation with what people variously call the heroes, scoundrels, and victims; and followed the fault lines generated in political, economic, and social systems internationally. Mapping these, by definition, is a global endeavor. The linkages radiating out from the youth and the explosion run deep: weapons traveling internationally to take a life originate in global industrial centers; employees from companies in these centers may take a sex tour; tomatoes that the denizens of peace time, anywhere, put in their salad are a few pennies cheaper because a youth is forced to work the fields.

People in peace time locales feel secure in the economic prosperity that is the “logical” outcome of these (largely unseen) linkages to the world’s explosions. But this logic is illusory. If we, in the rest of the world, had watched this youth, had seen the explosion, and would explore the fault lines leading out from this casualty, we might realize that the vulnerabilities of violence are neither “far away” nor “not-us.”

Quite the opposite: the health of countries worldwide is at risk, especially those that authorize the acts of power; oftentimes, these are the world’s cosmopolitan centers. In the very acts of power that render violence, inequality, profiteering, and exploitation exist the vulnerabilities that lead to political and economic collapse.

**CATORZINA AS THE EXPLOSION**

Catorzina and I were walking down the street one day in Luanda, Angola. We saw a young girl of perhaps six lying curled up on the sidewalk sleeping. She was wearing a pink dress, the kind you wear to church on holidays. The girl had clearly just lost her home—reason as yet unknown. She had chosen to sleep in the most open place there was, on the sidewalk at an intersection just before it enters the street. “She wants to be found,” Catorzina said. “It’s a good thing one of us kids found her first.” I looked at Catorzina curiously, waiting for an explanation. “You know, before the others found her.” “Others?” I asked. A grimace flashed across her face: “The ones who use kids.”

We started across the street toward the girl. Catorzina took my hand, a child of twelve about to parent a six-year-old. She mused, “I was about that age when you and I met.” I met Catorzina several years before she was a young child recently turned
family. The children have developed sophisticated codes of conduct governing their communities (figure 4.1).

As an older responsible, part of her duty to her community is to teach the younger members about threats. Most threats are human: police attacks, military conscriptions, sexual predators, traffickers. Her group had warned me the first time I visited them: "In the middle of the sentence we sometimes just run. Disappear down paths no one sees. If you get caught, there’s maybe no coming back.” They then explained to me, just as they explained to the little ones, about being taken by the military, maybe to fight or maybe to labor in the diamond areas. Or taken by the police to clean their stations and provide sex. Or by those who take them off to faraway places and force them to work, or by predators.

These children are as good as my colleagues at mapping extra-legal realities. And they know something beyond our professional “wisdom”: These are not merely survival strategies, nor the faces of twenty-first-century violence. These are about health care—about sicknesses that pervade not only bodies but also entire social universes.

Catorzina is the site of the explosion, the crisis, the epicenter of the earthquake. Catorzina is a word in Angola that means “fourteen-year-old.” It is a generic name given to all youth who are forced to live in, work in, or fear the streets and the “business” of adults. As used by adults, the term implies that the youth is “old enough”—to be forced to work, to have sex with, to harm at one’s whim—but not old enough to have the power to fight back.

Catorzina lives on the streets, a victim, first of war and then of poverty and a world of inequalities. Here is a story repeated countless times across the globe, a silent story, a silenced story—for that is how the explosions come to pass.

The fault lines radiating out from this epicenter are generally intended to be invisible to analysis: this is the lure of power. Yet the invisibility is merely an illusion: a construction of politics and the control of information.

To follow the influences of political and economic decisions as they ripple from the world’s centers of power to its so-called margins is a familiar study. There are excellent data on the impact trade policies, proxy wars, and structural adjustment programs have on disenfranchised workers and on countries struggling to step beyond poverty (Chabal and Daloz 1999, 2006; Ribeiro and Escobar 2006; Stiglitz 2003, 2007).

Catorzina prompted me to reverse this view and trace the linkages from her life, as well as that of her community, out to the larger world, across peacetime and war-torn countries, from urban streets to superpower centers, from poverty to (seemingly) plenty, by following the global repercussions.
of political violence, impoverishment, and unequal access to justice and markets. In this light, Catorzina becomes a lens on global vulnerabilities.

Curiously, Catorzina is likely to be more knowledgeable about the global patterns of political and economic fault lines that affect her health than are formal professional analysts. She cannot afford the cost of illusion. The people who profit from these power equations are also well versed in the global flows of privilege, power, and goods—they know that such gains, whether legal or extra-legal, convert easily to authority and domination. What Catorzina recognizes, however, that the profiteers often do not, is the global cost of the fault lines.

### FAULT LINE #1: CATORZINA TAKES A DIRECT HIT

An estimated 639 million small arms circulate the globe (Stohl 2005). Fourteen billion bullets are produced globally each year (BBC News 2006).

One hit Catorzina.

She bears the scar, the physical reminder of weapons used in the attack on her home and town years before. She lived. Many of her friends and family did not.

The street community has a rule: it takes in any child in need. Most have encountered weapons: as targets, as child soldiers, as post-war witnesses to crime and police violence. In Angola alone, the hundreds of thousands of children living on the streets who have seen armed violence are joined by hundreds of thousands more who do not live on the streets.

Multiply this across the countries of the world, from the war zones ranging across Afghanistan to Sudan and Myanmar, to the “peace zones” of armed nations like the United States. Arms have affected the lives of hundreds of millions.

At the most direct level, bullets, weapons systems, and militarized ideals of security have to travel from creation to target. This is a journey of untold proportions, for the magnitude of the profits is obscured in the shadows of the extra-legal and the extra-state. Arms industries are among the highest grossing businesses, reaping more than a trillion dollars a year legally worldwide. The majority of the Fortune 500 companies offer products or services for military use—with top defense contractors including Rolls-Royce and General Electric, as well as Lockheed Martin and Halliburton (Defense News 2006). Estimates on unrecorded arms sales—both small arms and major weapons systems—run from an additional $200 billion to $500 billion yearly (Farah and Braun 2007; Naim 2006).

A weapon sold is a sale, whether or not it is legal. Some businesses might argue that unrecorded sales are more favorable: laundering unrecorded (and thus untraceable) monies into legal economies (through legal businesses, stock markets, and financial institutions) can offer significant control of those markets. This is a very twenty-first-century form of global warlordism.

It is not a world relegated to criminal organizations. Nor is it relegated solely to weapons systems: weapons are brokered for resources and commerce contracts, as Gilliers and Dietrich (2000) have shown with regards to multinational corporations and government weapons and oil contracts. In the United States, major players include former government security and intelligence personnel (Naylor 2005) and legitimate national and multinational corporations, as John Perkins documents for companies such as Bechtel, Halliburton, Stone & Webster, and Brown & Root:

Economic hit men (EHMs) are highly paid professionals who cheat countries around the globe out of trillions of dollars. They funnel money from the World Bank, the US Agency for International Development (USAID), and other foreign “aid” organizations into the coffers of huge corporations and the pockets of a few wealthy families who control the planet’s natural resources. Their tools include fraudulent financial reports, rigged elections, payoffs, extortion, sex, and murder. They play a game as old as empire, but one that has taken on new and terrifying dimensions during this time of globalization. (Perkins 2004:i)

Something else is sold along with these business practices: belief systems. Somewhere along the line from weapons production to use of arms, the idea is professionalized that it is okay to target Catorzina (Enloe 2007; Hinton 2002; Mohanty 2003). As long as the truth is kept invisible—

This one fact results in a number of fault lines: if casualties such as Catorzina are recognized, medicines and health services must be made available to treat them, social services are needed to educate them, and laws must be implemented to protect them.

There is a subtle but powerful connection between profiteering and a failure of social services, for profiteering does not produce taxes or social services. It is a power loop, and one that generally runs offshore. Money moved offshore (outside the country of origin) seldom promotes development; it generally falls outside tax, accounting, and legal jurisdictions of the home country. This is the institutionalization of inequality. Of not seeing. It is, in the world writ large, what Paul Farmer (2003) calls the “pathologies of power.”
FAULT LINE #2: CATORZINA’S HEALTH “CARE”

The bullet didn’t kill Catorzina. But the lack of health resources almost did.

This is not just a reflection on the problems of providing critical social services in war zones. It’s also about global values and the curious realities of markets. It’s about power and creating invisibilities. “Do you realize,” Catorzina said, “you can buy a gun here cheaper than medicine?” We looked at each other and shook our heads: in the scheme of things, it costs less to shoot people than to heal them.

But that’s not the end of the story. Few studies exist on the amount of counterfeit and substandard drugs in the world, a startling fact, given that about 25 percent, and in some countries up to 60 percent, of marketed medicines are estimated to fall into this category (Guadagnino et al. 2007; Wondmagegnehu 1999).

“Come,” Catorzina said, “we’ve got to go get medicines.” Having been tended by others when she was wounded, she now provides the same service. The children’s communities have a strong ethos of mutual help. Though I had been studying health care services in war zones for years, these children gave me a whole new level of understanding—they taught me how to do an ethnography of “street medicine.” Catorzina took me to a street lived with people sitting at the curb who were tending a cardboard box or a small wooden table filled with medicines: antibiotics, aspirin, TB drugs, birth control pills, cancer drugs, vitamins, blood pressure pills, to name a few. Some offered medical supplies. “Here,” Catorzina waved at a man walking down the street with a large duffel bag slung over his shoulder, “he’s good. We like his meds. For antibiotics, he has X (naming a famous pharmaceutical company), and we find these work best for this kind of infection.” I was taken aback by the extent of her knowledge. The man came up to us, listened to what Catorzina asked for, matched into his bag, and handed her the antibiotic. She looked at me expectantly.

“How much?” I asked, getting money out of my pocket. The price in Angolan kwanzas equaled two dollars. This was a fraction of the price the legal pharmacy (where extra-legal medicines also exist) charged for the same drug.

A massive extra-legal market in pharmaceuticals and medical supplies exists in the world. In Angola at this time, the majority of pharmaceuticals I investigated were in some way extra-legal: drugs smuggled or sold clandestinely and counterfeit drugs sold in both legal and illegal outlets. In many areas I traveled, no legal pharmacies existed. Only “street drugstores” existed.

I realized that as much money can be made in extra-legal medicines and supplies as in illegal narcotics and arms. Yet, far less is known about the first; comparatively few research or media reports exist, and films do not spotlight pharmaceutical-smuggling kingdoms. This is not a “random” lack of knowledge; it is constructed. Why?

The extra-legal trade in weapons, the first fault line discussed here, is widely recognized. But far less documented is a world of highly profitable and sometimes dangerous extra-legal commodities and services. Pharmaceuticals are juxtaposed here with weapons as an example of related fault lines “made invisible.”

Whether Catorzina becomes a statistic—whether she lives or dies—may rest on the little-discussed question and deeper ethical issue: Are all illegals equal? Is it better to smuggle pharmaceuticals to the locales where medicines are unavailable than not to smuggle them at all? Are counterfeit drugs better than no drugs?

A significant percentage of the world’s population shares in the irony that their lives may depend on smuggled, and perhaps counterfeit, medicines that reap literally untold profits for pharmaceutical companies—sometimes called the most powerful and most ethically suspect businesses today. Street sales constitute profit for pharmaceutical companies in two major ways. The first is direct: for many drugs, the cost of materials and manufacturing is quite low. The markups cover profits, advertising, research, bonuses, and the like—and perhaps less ethical pursuits such as shell organizations and sanctions-busting practices. Selling at one-tenth the cost often still provides a profit. In many instances, however, full price has been paid for the pharmaceuticals—imported for military, hospital, and development uses and then moved into the black market (Nordstrom 2004a). Legal companies can even benefit from counterfeit goods bearing their label. This second arena of profit is more intangible: establishing trade routes, name recognition, and brand loyalty is proverbial gold to businesses. What sells on the streets shapes larger social buying practices. This has been most visible in commodities like the Coke/Pepsi, Sony/IBM computers, and High Definition/Blueray video format wars for global markets. But the battle in drug markets is just as fierce (Saviana 2007).

These considerations are embedded in a broader irony. While the world’s attention is directed toward the “war on drugs,” extra-legal sales in pharmaceuticals quietly amass profits that can rival those of illegal narcotics. Similar fault lines to pharmaceuticals exist for other daily necessities, such as food, energy sources, and core industrial supplies (Nordstrom 2007; Singer 2008). In these cases, information that is not available is as interesting as what is: why should such invisibilities exist?

Ethnography on extra-legal pharmaceuticals and medical supplies is not overly difficult. In collecting firsthand field data on fault lines, I traveled to one of the international land borders where medicine enters Angola and looked at unrecorded trade; visited intercontinental ports where unrecorded medicines and supplies enter countries by multi-ton containers; interviewed street vendors about the unrecorded factories
around the world where they buy medicines; and talked with middlemen who move humanitarian, military, and government supplies into the streets, private clinics, and international re-sell. I also visited the World Health Organization headquarters in Geneva in the summer of 2002 and interviewed experts in illegal pharmaceutical activities, from smuggling to counterfeiting. All agreed that there are no adequate estimates of the scope of these realities. Esther Wondemagegnehu (Department of Essential Medicines and Pharmaceutical Policies, Quality and Safety) told me that studies conducted in Southeast Asian markets, for example, found that substandard drugs—with fewer, or less quantities, of the active ingredients than required, with wrong ingredients, with missing ingredients, or with no active ingredients at all—can account for between 5 and 25 percent of drugs tested (Wondemagegnehu 1999).

This one statistic throws the whole question of “the war on drugs” into new territory. I asked Mr. Wondemagegnehu, “Why do security forces focus their energies on illegal narcotics, while few beyond the WHO investigate illicit pharmaceuticals?” His answer:

In my personal opinion—I can’t speak for WHO and the UN here—it’s politics. Politics and simple economics. Look at Angola. The wealth is not evenly distributed. Why do we find illegal outlets in developing countries? Because the legal is expensive, highly taxed, unattainable. This same gap exists in the USA. As long as the gap between what people have and can have continues to increase, the majority of people are going to be affected, not only in terms of having to access illegal pharmaceuticals, but in all aspects of their lives. Illegal pharmaceuticals? The problem can be solved: share the wealth. Truth is, most problems relate to politics.

Here at the UN, dealing with the problems of illegal pharmaceuticals, we look at pharmaceuticals. We can’t talk of politics. We can’t talk of economics. We can only talk of pharmaceutical regulatory mechanisms. I think sometimes we aren’t giving the right advice. Perhaps we should be telling people to fight corruption, to advance freedom of speech, to advocate for a change of government in working to solve the problems of substandard and illegal pharmaceuticals.

During that same week in July 2002, I also interviewed Howard Marks, one of the world’s largest marijuana smugglers in the later twentieth cen-

tury. Both men, representing perspectives from opposite sides of the law, agreed on one thing in discussing the world of drugs. Illegal narcotics are luxury items that a minority of the population chooses to do. But every person on earth is likely to become sick at some point in his or her life, and most will require medicines. “Which is more dangerous?” both men asked.

This is an irony that cuts to Catorzina’s heart. She is well aware that today’s (transnational) robber barons deal in medicines, as well as hard resources, and that their gain is based on her loss (of salary, democratic representation, equality, health). At the same time, she calls the person who smuggles in affordable antibiotics a “Robin Hood.”

She is also aware that, either way, she lives within a global ethos that accepts the fact that children may be forced to sell themselves and their bodies in order to get life-saving medicines.

The final irony is in the very term health care. Who is it that cares? What exactly is it they care about?

FAULT LINE #3: THE (REAL) PRICE OF MEDICINE AND THE UNDERBELLY OF EXPLOITATION

A bullet opens a wound that all too often must be stitched shut with the patient’s labor or money. Another fault line entangles with the first two: international industries willing to exploit desperation. Medicine may be a service, but medicines are a business. What work, what services, are open to the Catorzinas of the world that will give them the resources to purchase health?

The International Labour Organisation estimated that 218 million children were working in 2004, 70 percent in agriculture. That same year, 126 million child laborers were trapped in hazardous work. Ten million children are forced to work in the sex industry worldwide; one million new children, mostly girls, enter the industry every year (Hecht 2008; International Labour Organisation 2005, 2006; Thakor 2007; UNICEF 2006b, 2009; United States Department of State 2008).

I watched the answer unfold one day. Soni, one of Catorzina’s best friends, was badly wounded by a hit-and-run driver. His mangled leg needed to be set and cast. And that required money. They took Soni to the hospital to see what the doctors would do with what little money they had. When the doctors refused to cast the leg without pay, the children asked how much this would cost. Then, every child in the community went out to make what money they could for Soni’s care. This was like taking a “double shift,” beyond the jobs they were forced to do daily in order to keep some food in their stomachs and clothes on their backs. They acted as porters, tried their hand at stealing, begged small work from merchants, ran errands for “bosses,” sold their bodies. Some adults (locals and foreigners alike) offered small jobs to help the children. Others abused their vulnerability and desperation.
“What,” Catorzinza asked me, “is it like for children in your country?” Only the luckiest have friends like her to help in such times of need, I replied.

I walked the streets many times with youth like Catorzinza across several continents. One of the first rules they learn is the same one that nations have internalized: resources buy you what you need. If Catorzinza needs medicines and medical care, she has little recourse to the oil, diamonds, gold, industrial systems, and control of labor that provide the hard currency to fuel economies.

What she has is her body and the labor it can do: male or female, she is used toward the sex, domestic, factory, and labor industries. The illegal sex industry (no country condones sex with minors) is the only one that offers immediate money if she needs medicines or is starving. One day when telling Catorzinza a story, I mentioned I had run away from home.

“I’m sorry,” she said.

“What?” I asked.

“That you had to sell yourself.”

“Why do you think that?”

“Because all girls have to. To eat... to live,” Catorzinza replied.

“But some boys don’t,” I started to point out.

“Lots do,” she interrupted.

“I know,” I said, “but the ones who don’t, can’t girls do like that?”

“Nope. We’re girls.”

When the level of sheer medical need is expanded from children living on the streets to the whole of Angola, the economics of desperation and the potential for profiteering are starkly visible. Life expectancy at birth is forty-two years for women, thirty-eight for men. More than one in four children die before reaching the age of five. Diarrheal diseases and pneumonia are among the common killers—diseases that respond well to medicines (WHO 2006).

The equation is straightforward: what are people willing to do to gain care for themselves and those they care for? Clearly, people will sell themselves if need be.

These exchanges are further grounded in transnational realities. Numerous excellent studies have pointed out that exploitation, whether of bodies or body parts, labor or health, follow cross-border lines of inequality from privilege to anguish and powerlessness (Bales 2004, 2005; Commission on the Status of Women 2003; Scheper-Hughes and Warquant 2003; United States Department of Justice 2007). Although firm statistics are not available, most agree that the number of humans trafficked each year runs into the millions, a number that rivals the slave trade era. Nearly half the people enslaved for agricultural, sexual, and domestic labor are children under eighteen (Ratstone 2007). Body parts follow these flows as kidneys and corneas, blood and hearts, are harvested from the poor in slums, prisons, and war zones to be transplanted into rich fields of waiting bodies (Scheper-Hughes 2004). The most dangerous of the profiteers view the war afflicted, especially the children, as a veritable hunting ground.

I first realized the true hazards facing children like Catorzinza when living in Mozambique in the final years of war. Enraged doctors in the country’s capital told me about a young girl who orphaned living on the streets who had been mauled to death by a dog that European pornographic filmmakers were forcing upon her for sex. The men simply left the country to avoid prosecution. Such filmmaking companies are international, highly profitable, and, tragically, successful.

Such global exploitation illuminates a deeper dilemma of health: how healthy is an economic morality, shared globally, predicated on a willingness to sell Catorzinza’s body and services illegally? These fiascos run deep. People worldwide sit down to affordable meals linked to children’s work in agriculture. To even ask about Catorzinza is to face the moral dilemma of paying more for daily living.

This concerns not only individual lifestyles but also national policy. Control of markets, finances, and economic systems determines dominion in the nation-state. The Catorzinzas of the world, to some, are profit calculations. On a spreadsheet, it matters little whether the economics are legal. Ethics are an optional part of the calculations, as Randy Martin (2007:5) writes in noting that “empire is back.”

When these practices are incultated into political institutions of the world’s cosmopolitan centers, fault lines become embedded in the foundations of societies’ services and ethics.

FAULT LINE #4: CLEANING UP

Catorzinza was sitting at the feet of one of the adult women grouped around the street entrance of a large, international nongovernmental organization (NGO).

“That,” Catorzinza said, looking at me seriously, “is what I want to learn to do.” The women were street money-changers. Dollars and pounds and marks and yen running through Kwanza, the Angolan currency. It is the act of exchange, not the commodity of dollars, that is the foundation of profit. Virtually everyone changed money at the street rate: the NGO foreign workers who supported development, the lawyers who wrote the laws, the people who ran honest businesses, and the police who hustled extra-legal traders.
As I have written elsewhere (Nordstrom 2004a), street currency rates—not official financial institutions—set the realities of the world’s economies. Catorzina, a street vendor, could already see this. Power, when one remembers to look, is visible.

It might seem strange to include a discussion of money laundering in an exploration of fault lines surrounding war and health. But laundering, like commodity smuggling, is about power. Yielding monies legally does not offer as much political and economic control as yielding unrecorded monies in unaccountable ways.

The sums are far from insubstantial: Naim (2006) estimates money laundering at 10 percent of the global GDP (gross domestic product), or around $6 trillion a year. The figure is higher if we add all unrecorded monies from everyday necessities like medicines, food, and core industrial supplies. This represents a continuous flow of untracked electronic money through companies, stock and bond markets, financial institutions, government coffers, and service organizations, ad infinitum in the post-electronic age of instantaneous, borderless, global transfers.

Laundering offers the ability to manipulate economies, achieve political power, and shape development by means that are outside regulation and the control of law. Indeed, in some cases, the sheer magnitude of the accumulated asset base of laundered proceeds can be used to corner markets—or even small economies” (McDowell and Novis 2001b). As well as criminals, legal businesses participate, according to economist R. T. Naylor:

If underground entrepreneurs—from stock market manipulators to cigarette smugglers—must launder money, so too must legitimate corporations, to disguise a bribe or kickback. Even government agencies have recourse to the apparatus to break an embargo or fund a coup in some rival state. . . . The offenses that generate serious money are committed by eminently respectable citizens who run big-name corporations by day and patronize the opera at night. Their take comes in corporate checks, stock options, and kickbacks deposited into offshore slush funds by foreign suppliers. (Naylor 2005:137)

While countries and their financial institutions decry laundering, they may covertly welcome these transactions. A bullet sold represents profit for the weapons manufacturer, regardless of the sale’s legal status. Similarly, money flowing through a financial institution is money that it can use and profit from, regardless of how that money was generated. These gains—industrial and financial—are generally taken as the backbone of a country’s “health” and an index of its power in the contemporary world. It is a deceptive health.

(NOT)-SEEING, (NOT)-US

Catorzina’s group stopped by one night to see me, with that curious blend of exhaustion and energy kids have as the sun sets on a long day surviving the streets. I brought out a large drawing pad and pencils for them. Creating art took precedence over dinner, safety, and work. The children fanned out over the street and draped themselves across anything flat enough to draw on: sidewalks, military jeeps parked in the street, shop entryways.

Catorzina sprawled on the ground next to me, drawing a large man with a huge erect penis looming over a young girl. As the children came, one by one, to show me their art, I noticed the same theme repeated again and again, by boys and girls alike. Many of the dominating figures had assault rifles and guns for penises or as extensions of their arms. Some were men in uniforms. Others were denizens of the streets. Some looked to be people for whom children were forced to work, in industry or in agriculture. All were drawn to represent “the global cosmopolitan” and not one ethnic or national identity.

Fault lines are often rendered “unspeakable.” So the children “draw truth to power” (figure 4.2).

Behind the bullet that hit Catorzina is a set of legal and illegal industries spanning the globe that is capable of producing twenty-first-century robber barons (see Nordstrom 2007). Yet, one of the most curious findings of my research is the extent to which Westerners do “not-see” the extra-legal and its impact in the world. Few textbooks outline the mechanisms by which successful companies exploit illegality; few experts have done hands-on fieldwork within the extra-legal and can speak authoritatively on the topic. For example, the USA is unprepared to catch the Madoffs (the Wall Street financier who masterminded the Ponzi scheme that netted more than $50 billion) and the Blagojeviches (the Illinois governor impeached on corruption charges) until their crimes reach ruinous proportions, much less predict economic crises like that beginning in 2008.

To demonstrate the extent to which the extra-legal has been inculcated into core institutions, I detail here a conversation I had in 2001 with the chief financial officer (CFO) of a prestigious, well-known multinational corporation, famous in world markets for more than two centuries. Upon meeting him, I explained my interest in gaining a better understanding of how large-scale transnational industries deal with the informal, undeclared, and
illegal. The CFO poured a cup of coffee, sat down in a comfortable position, loosened his tie, and said that he would speak frankly, granted that I not use his name or that of his corporation:

Okay, there are many aspects to this. Informal—sure, it's a fact of life. But let's start at the top. I'm responsible for the final economic work of this corporation. I believe in what this company is doing. I'm not going to Jimmy the accounts at this level.

But you ask about nonofficial activities, and I have to respond. The truth is, look at the guy at each level going out to the field. Start at the top, and take the example of going into a new country.

He explained the seemingly endless departments and people you have to work through to get anything done. Some, he said, want to develop their country legitimately; others want personal bribes, kickbacks, larger business-venture partnerships. Governments can impose regulations and restric-

We have to juggle all of this. Our people doing these negotiations are on the frontlines, so to speak. They come back to us, to the officers, to the board, and tell us the final word on what they have managed, and we forge our response. We develop an approach that can meet public scrutiny. But what goes on behind those closed doors, that's their business, their work.

Walk it down a level. So a project gets started in some country. Some guy is out on a production site, and he has to get things done. He has to get parts, supplies, labor, contracts, transport, negotiations, you name it. He is beholden to us at corporate headquarters. And he is beholden to the conditions and the people out with him. He needs something, and the only way to get it is on the black market. He plays with customs, he crafts "creative" ways to get around policies, he greases the palms of people he depends on. That is how it works. But he doesn't send this to us in a report. He doesn't come up to headquarters or meet with an officer of the corporation and talk about these things. He does it and turns in the kinds of reports the system expects. He gets things done, or he risks losing his job.

You can walk this all the way down the line. The people working for this manager know they have to get the job done. If they don't, there are others willing to step in. And so they do it. And they don't write this up in reports for the site manager any more than he writes it up for us.

I guess we know it. I guess we know how it works. But we don't. Because this all works by not asking. We ask for the formal reports. We know not to ask for the, ah, details. This is how the vast nonofficial works—how it is both possible and undisclosed at the same time. It is a fact of all business.

One of the CFO's most interesting statements is, "I guess we know it.... But we don't. Because this all works by not asking." Stanley Cohn (2001) delved into the question of how people, and indeed entire societies, can
NOT-SEEING severe and widespread suffering, threat, and violence—from systems of crippling inequality to systematic political torture and genocide. How do people see things like Nazi genocide or the plundering of a nation's resources right in front of them yet simultaneously "not-see" them? Cohen distinguishes between "knowledge" and "acknowledgment," noting that information can be received but not registered: "There seem to be states of mind, or even whole cultures, in which we know and don't know at the same time" (Stanley Cohen 2001:4–5). Denial is always partial, Cohen's work is groundbreaking in showing that entire societies can develop unwritten agreements about what can be publicly acknowledged, without people ever being told what to (not) notice or being punished for "knowing" what has been deemed as publicly "not-known.

One of the more potent forms of denial Cohen explores, particularly in the context of Catorzina and fault lines, is "magical realism"—people believing that something cannot be taking place because the action is illegal. In a related vein, he considers Primo Levi's question about why German Jews failed to see the many warning signs of impending danger in the 1930s. The explanation is summed up in an old German adage: "Things whose existence is not morally possible cannot exist" (Stanley Cohen 2001:141). Cohen's solution is stark in its simplicity: make it difficult for people to say they "don't know."

Part of not-seeing is to make the public argument that "those" who exploit the Catorzinas of the world are the pathological outcome of corrupt regimes—"other" corrupt countries and dangerous mafias. The eternal "not-us." By recognizing these corrupt systems as deplorable, a general public reaffirms its own ethics. But this, too, is an illusory act. The point has been made here that citizens of all countries may find their stock markets seemingly stronger, their food cheaper, and their sexual desires pandered to by averting their gaze, by not asking hard questions, thus allowing the crises to continue.

But there are more direct accomplices. Most of the profit(eering) discussed in this chapter, and indeed in the world generally, entails international exchanges. Weapons flow across continents, and resources flow back to pay for them; products from agricultural and industrial labor grace tables and buildings worldwide; trafficking avoids detection and prosecution by using cross-border tactics. Each of these categories needs sites of production, transport routes, warehousing, and managers of consumption. Each of these sites requires "the average workforce." Visualize moving one gun, or girl, from birthplace to a site of labor. This requires a cast of hundreds: factory workers or "employment agencies" to "create a product; people in bus, train, and shipping industries to move them, as well as agents at borders and ports; managers along the way to buy, sell, package—and in the case of the girl—feed, clothe, and tend; people to rent and sell houses and offices; others to maintain and repair commodities and provide medical treatment for the trafficked girl; companies that advertise and provide protection and enforcement; bankers and accountants to manage and launder profits; and, finally, lawyers to provide legal counsel. And the customers.

Economics, in other words. "Us." "Our" economies, whoever we are in the world.

WEAVING THE FAULT LINES TOGETHER: GLOBAL CRISIS PATTERNS

Catorzina understands global fault lines better than most researchers I know. "The big men' come from other countries to sell guns and buy up our country," she said one evening as we sat at the sea's edge watching the sun set. "They have the big pockets and the big cars, and they want Angolan oil and diamonds, and sex without Venus's shirt [condoms]. And we sell it because they have what we don't. Maybe they can buy us, but their eyes are blank, they have lost heart. It is we who keep and break and keep heart. But what can you know of this? You don't see this in your country."" I replied that a quarter of the children in the USA survive below poverty level. "Then this will kill our world, if we don't fix it," she replied seriously.

For countries and groups aspiring to power, sovereignty requires cash that trades on international markets, not a weak national currency. Cash requires resources. Resources require (cheap) Catorzinas. The more labor, the greater the sovereignty/profit. The cheaper the "bodies," the greater the sovereignty. As long as it is not officially recognized.

States find themselves in a position in which they gain perceived economic and political strength by breaking state law. The result is the same, whether Western corporations are providing weapons systems for oil contracts or states are complicit in large-scale resource exploitation and prostitution rings (Global Witness 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007; Naim 2006; Ross 2004). These activities can bring in billions of dollars yearly for a single country. Consider the fact that only 53 countries (out of 185 worldwide) have a GDP of more than $100 billion. Forced labor (including sex exploitation) brings in $31 billion a year, according to International Labour Organisation estimates (2006). One hundred and six countries have GDPs below this figure (International Monetary Fund 2007).
Sovereignty is built, quite literally, on the backs of people like Catorzina. Sovereignty requires economic solvency to undergird political authority, and that solvency rests on people like Catorzina to harvest resources into commodities, and these into internationally recognized currencies.

The final irony is that those who create and maintain these networks of profit are, themselves, as vulnerable to destabilizing quakes along fault lines.

In fact, countries that host the commercial and financial powerhouses—those most often associated with prosperity and superpower status—are likely to suffer the most severe crashes when pressures arise. They are building the top of a house of cards by taking out cards from the base, using the very resources that sustain the nation—including their economic and governing systems. The consequences are direct and uncompromising.

As basic social infrastructure and programs decline and as a country’s resources are increasingly used in the government/industry exchanges and extra-state profit seeking outlined above, countries are less able to meet even moderate crises: environmental disasters, political violence, epidemics, runs on financial institutions. The list is extensive. It is precisely at the moment when states are forced to mobilize resources that truth is exposed: many resources turn out to be nonexistent because they have been channeled into global elite industry and profit(exchange) markets. Even trying to reach the populace can be hampered when many have profited by misusing a workforce and therefore keep the workforce invisible.

The inability to respond to Hurricane Katrina in the USA provides an example of trying to marshal services at the national level that simply are not there. Years after the crisis, fractures continue to plague the region. Children suffer from a debilitated school system, with African American students ranking at the bottom of state accountability assessment scores (Delpit and Payne 2007). The economy remains fragmented. Cases of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), contrary to all definitions, are rising, and little by way of effective treatment is available. Speaking more broadly, the current recession is exacerbating a critical shortage of social services at a national level, one that will be felt for decades to come. Robert Pear (2009) reports: “The Obama administration reported Tuesday [May 12, 2009] that the financial condition of the two largest federal benefit programs, Medicare and Social Security, had deteriorated, in part due to the recession. As a result, the administration said, the Medicare fund that pays the hospital bills for older Americans is expected to run out of money in 2017.

The Social Security Trust will be exhausted in 2037.” Add to this the full magnitude of unrecorded flows of monies and resources laundered through the world’s financial systems—more than one dollar in ten—and it becomes apparent that the controls put in place against exploitation and market collapses do not have power over a significant percentage of financial transactions.

Many have been taken aback at the extent and severity of the 2008 economic crisis and the difficulties in overcoming it. If analysts cannot see the world’s fault lines, they cannot see that pouring a trillion dollars into troubled businesses is pouring considerable sums into these fault lines, which, by definition, cross the borders of countries, legality, and ethics in unrecorded—and thus unaccountable—ways. Yet, clear precedents show that an “economic quake” can bring a country to its knees (Strange 1996).

For example, the Asian economic crash of 1997 demonstrated how many of the banking systems were throughputs for extra-legal monies and market systems (Chen and Kwok 2007). In addition, the repercussions across time and space can be seen in the related 1998 market crash in Russia, where $5 billion of the international loans provided by the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were stolen upon their arrival in Russia on the eve of meltdown. International linkages were again exposed. The USA suffered a serious economic downturn during this time, exacerbated partly by such practices as the Bank of New York’s (the sixteenth largest asset holder in the USA) laundering as much as $10 billion from Russian organized-criminal money skimmed from the WB and the IMF in Russia (Kutchninsky 2002; World Bank 2001).

I studied the 2001–2002 crash of the South African rand (precipitated, in part, many experts agreed, by unrecorded, financial manipulations) and its deleterious impact on the entire country’s standards of living. Numerous businesses went broke; the cost of daily necessities increased to the point that the average population could not meet food, energy, health, and educational needs. Governmental services were curtailed, and health/standard of living indices suffered. A few—those with the financial resources to weather the crash and gain all the business of those who went broke—made a veritable killing (Nordstrom 2007, 2008).

Behind the activities creating fault lines are “ethics” that effectively gut the stability of economies and governments. When the pathologically abusive—that which violates rights and endangers lives, such as forced labor and fake medicines—is institutionalized within social systems, the lines of il/legality are strongly blurred for a society writ large. In our home locales worldwide, average businesses cook their books and abuse undocumented
labor; average citizens fuel the illegal sex industry, make and buy counterfeit information technology, avoid taxes, sport (fake) Guccis. These actions carry deeper values: how many people getting a "massage" from a Catorzina, an underage person forced into the global sex industry, will empathize with the child's plight? Or work to uphold the laws preventing profiteering and providing social services to people like Catorzina? Hitting closer to home, how many of us consider that by turning our heads away from seeing the pathways that provide our reasonably priced food, we are creating a pervasive ethos that will affect our own work rights. Ultimately, the well-fed will have to face the question: will we be treated differently in global industry than Catorzina?

David Heakteth, who heads the International Assistance Branch of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, UK, captured this point in a discussion about crime we had in 2002:

Some cocaine smugglers just aren’t bad people. When I’ve arrested some of them, they say, “Hey, I work eighteen hours a day, and this is the only way I can feed my family.” And I say, “Hey, it’s illegal, and I have to bust you.”

But at the end of the day, the whole system doesn’t hold together totally. Who makes the rules? The dominant class. How does this compare with some poor family with three kids who get choked out of their flat. What are the morals? Where are the good and the bad? How do we balance the values of money with caring societies?

Enough people do express outrage at the pathologies of profiteering to make those engaged in harmful extra-legal activities expend considerable energy to keep their actions, their trade routes, and their abuses invisible to formal accounting.

Because the most successful of profiteers control more monies than the GDP of many countries, creating invisibility is not overly difficult. Laws target low-level criminals. Security forces are directed to bust the street-level mules and not the CEOs of legitimate corporations who do not declare arms sales. The media and pundits rage endlessly against illegal narcotics, but little attention is directed toward pharmaceutical companies producing substandard drugs. Street crime is presented as more threatening than white collar crime. And this despite the fact that while a life may be lost to street crime, billions can be lost to substandard medicines, or that white collar crime can empty the coffers that support critical social services to countries.

It is critical in considering fault lines to remember the sheer fragility of governing systems. The history of the human race is often charted by the development and collapse of systems of political organization. As fault lines buckle under pressure, elite political and economic regimes can survive for a while through the combination of diverting national resources to industry, maintaining stark systems of inequality to ensure profits, gutting social services, creating extra-legal financial empires capable of shaping national economies, and using violence to enable these systems.

But there is a time limit on this. Financial systems ostensibly based on legal transactions but, in fact, shaped by the unregulated extra-legal will not stay stable. When banking systems fail, the financial justification for the state falters. When social services (that ensure food, clean water, safe housing, medicines, critical transport, and security) are not in place, state institutions lose viability.

These lessons of fault lines are perhaps more visible in what has been contentious termed “failed states”—from the Soviet Union to Somalia, from the poppy fields of the Golden Quadrangle in Southeast Asia to the gold mines along the Amazon. Following these fault lines as they move out globally can prove more difficult. Citizens can be loathe to recognize signs of vulnerability in the countries that sustain them. Sheila Gonzales of the Port Authority of Los Angeles brought the mechanisms of Stanley Cohen’s work on (not)-knowing alive one day when she was giving me a port tour in 2004. We were discussing why so little formal information exists on the intersections of the global supply chain and extra-legal economics, and she commented:

People don’t want to look at the big picture because they are opening Pandora’s box. What happens is that they open the box and see all kinds of trails: Who’s linked in? What are the linkages? There are always bigger boys out there.

There’s the problem now of ILCU #13 [the longshoremen’s union] saying security isn’t adequate because supposedly empty containers leaving the country aren’t always empty and one exploded recently. Well, who is putting cargo in these empties, and how? Is it the small fry marginal breaking the law, or is it a valued big name in the industry?

If you even ask this question, if you even consider that it might be the latter, this leads to Pandora’s box. How far does the trail go? So it remains an unspoken topic. It’s like there are two levels
of knowledge. The first is the face people want out there: “Sure, there’s security. Sure, we trust the reputable corporations. Sure, the empty’s empty.”... And then there’s what is really going on.

In the final analysis, these fault lines are among the best predictors of health: of the individual, the community, and the state. Countries carry no guarantee of permanency. As Catorzina lives and dies, so too does the world. Such are the interconnections.

EPILOGUE: BEING HUMAN

One day, a group of the children living on the streets were sitting with me at the ocean’s edge, leaning against fragments of walls and bits of art crumbling under the legacy of war and the weight of need. The children had been working and had invited me along to see their day: visiting the friendly stores that might give a hand out, “dumpster diving” for treasures, looking for small work. They were taking a break. Out of curiosity, I asked them what it was to be human. I was interested in how they would respond. In all honesty, I did not expect a penetrating existential answer.

One pointed to his chest, where the heart resides. Several shook their heads and pointed to their heads. I wondered what kind of depth their ideas had. Did they just mean “having a heart, having a mind?”

Then one child pointed to his throat, and all the others nodded in agreement. Less adept at kids’ shorthand, I raised my eyebrows quizzically. The child explained, “It’s not just having heart—caring, not just thinking life. It’s both. And then going on to give all this voice.”

And therein, I thought, rests at least part of the answer to solving these global fault lines. They thrive in invisibility. They wither under scrutiny and a serious commitment to rights.

Catorzina would easily understand the experiences of the other protagonists populating this volume. She would be able to sit and talk with Paul Farmer’s patient Faustin, cry with Barbara Rylko-Bauer’s mother Jadzia, share Daniel’s pain with James Quesada, give voice to the silences of Didier Fassin’s friend Joseph, empathize with Elsie’s plight as recounted by Merrill Singer, recognize the different kinds of violence identified by Philippe Bourgois, and understand the suffering endured by refugee girls who move across the pages of Linda Whiteford’s work.

She could comfortably sit and talk with our group of authors and answer Kris Heggenhougen’s question: “Shouldn’t we be diagnosing social pathologies of power? Isn’t that our job?”

She knows what we are just uncovering, that there are no margins, that accounting must account for everyone, that in her wounds can be read the wounds that can cripple the world. She would find most formal economists and academic analysts woefully ignorant of the truths of economy and power. She lives the themes that link these chapters in the book together, recognizing that no matter how deeply the structures of inequality and violence run in our world, fighting back is “worth something.”

She would be silenced by the contemporary academy: she’s just a child from Africa.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the University of Notre Dame for funding this research, to the School for Advanced Research for hosting us, and to Barbara Rylko-Bauer, Paul Farmer, and Linda Whiteford for all their gracious support.

Notes

1. The term extra-legal refers to all activities that fall outside legality as it is formally defined and used in law and law enforcement. This includes illegal, illicit, informal, and undeclared, unregistered, and unregulated actions.

2. The war in Angola ended formally in 2002. There were several decades of war before that, first the war for independence against colonial rule and then, with independence in 1975, a war for the control of political process, which was backed heavily by the Cold War superpowers.