

Editorial

New perspectives on citizen security in Latin America

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The concept of 'citizen security' came to prominence across Latin America during the late 1990s, concurrent with a growing perception that the region was becoming increasingly beset by rising crime and insecurity, and that this new wave of violence differed from prior hegemonic forms in that it did not threaten states or governments, but principally affected the everyday lives of ordinary citizens.¹ The approach "marked a sharp departure from traditional policies of state or national security" by focusing on quality of life and human dignity, and "the re-conceptualised social and political keyword of citizen security was encoded with other concepts of freedom and universal rights, and positioned to represent the concrete as well as intangible elements of the public good", as Marquardt² points out. In other words, the concept projected security as "a cultural construct involving an equalitarian form of sociability, an environment freely shared by all".³

Having said this, while debates about citizen security initially focused on insecurity as a developmental problem,⁴ in recent years they have ar-

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¹ See Frühling, H.; Tulchin, J. S. & Golding, H. A. (eds.), *Crime and violence in Latin America: citizen security, democracy, and the State*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2003; and Neild, R., "From National security to citizen security: civil society and the evolution of public order debates", paper for the International Center for Human Rights and Democratic Development, Montreal (Canada), 1999, at <<http://www.umass.edu/legal/Benavides/Fall2005/397U/Readings%20Legal%20397U/9%20Richard%20Neild.pdf>>, accessed 27 May 2013.

² Marquardt, K. M. "Participatory security: citizen security, participation, and the inequities of citizenship in urban Peru", *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 2012, 31, (2), pp. 174-189.

³ Arriagada, I. & Godoy, L., "Prevention or repression? The false dilemma of citizen security", *Cepal Review*, 2000, 70, p. 112.

⁴ See for example Ayres, R., *Crime and violence as development issues in Latin America and the*

guably shifted towards conceptualising security as the developmental issue. The World Bank's 2011 *World development report* is a case in point in this respect, explicitly contending that it is critical to "accept the links between security and development outcomes",⁵ for example. This marks a critical departure. Such a linking of security and development abandons the ethical commitments underpinning development, replacing (utopian) goals with (pragmatic) outcomes as the measure of progress. Nowhere is this more evident than in the fact that a major *World development report* policy recommendation concerns strengthening the 'legitimacy' of institutions in order to enable them to reduce violence more effectively, but simultaneously grounds this legitimacy in the capacity of these institutions to limit violence rather than issues such as inclusion, participation, or representation.⁶

This highlights very well the way that the notion of 'citizen security' has become 'technicalised'. Partly due to its wholesale adoption by international organisations such as the World Bank, but also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) or the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), it is more often than not defined and discussed in extremely vague and vacuous terms. The UNDP⁷ for example defines citizen security as "a comprehensive and multi-faceted strategy for improving the quality of life of a population", while the IADB's most recent policy recommendations proposed to implement citizen security in the region include such meaningless platitudes as "consolidate and integrate multi-agential knowledge and action", remember that "all security is *glocal* (global + local)", as well as the fact that "security is a public good that is coproduced through the participation of civil society and the responsabilization of state actors".⁸ This kind

Caribbean, World Bank Latin American and Caribbean Studies Viewpoint Studies Series, The World Bank, Washington, D.C., 1998.

⁵ World Bank, *World development report 2011: conflict, security, and development*, The World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2011, p. 276.

⁶ See Jones, G. A. & Rodgers, D., "Policy Arena: The World Bank's World Development Report 2011 on Conflict, Security, and Development: a critique through five vignettes", *Journal of International Development*, 2011, 23, (7), pp. 980-995, for a more extensive discussion.

⁷ UNDP, "Issue brief: citizen security", Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, United Nations Development Programme, 2013, p. 1, at <[http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/crisis%20prevention/07022013_citizen_security_issue_brief\(English\).pdf](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/crisis%20prevention/07022013_citizen_security_issue_brief(English).pdf)>, accessed 27 May 2013.

⁸ Beliz, G., *Gobernar la seguridad ciudadana en América Latina y el Caribe: amenazas, desafíos y nudos estratégicos de gestión*, Documento de Debate N° IDB-DP-215, Sector de Instituciones para el Desarrollo, Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo, Washington, D.C., 2012, pp. 1-2, at

of literature unfortunately very much dominates discussions, and to this extent, this special issue of *Revista Estudios Socio-Jurídicos* aims to contribute to trying to re-focus these towards a more meaningful and critical reading of the concept.

We begin with a contribution by Desmond Arias and Mark Ungar, which was previously published in the US journal *Comparative Politics* in July 2009. In their article, they identify four major short-comings to citizen security debates that are still very much relevant today, and illustrate these by drawing on their respective research in Brazil and Honduras. Arias and Ungar first point out how most studies of citizen security policy formulation focus on the issue without examining the political relationships that determine reform design and operation. Second, they highlight how by situating itself within human rights debates, the citizen security literature tends to portray security issues as a technical problem to be solved, rather than as a political issue that implies ethical and ideological choices. Thirdly, they contend that scholars and policymakers tend to oversimplify state-society relations in reform efforts, and see the latter as principally involving top-down forms of implementation. Finally, they describe how most studies of Latin American citizen security examine individual country cases and neglect cross-cultural comparison, thereby losing out on a proven medium of valuable insight. All of these criticisms still apply today, and we hope that by publishing a Spanish translation of this landmark contribution to debates about citizen security that this special issue will contribute to spreading its critical analysis more widely.

The next contribution, by Daniel Míguez, focuses on the way experiences and senses of insecurity articulate together in ways that are by no means obvious and straightforward, and how certain types of configuration can lead to particular types of public demands in the security arena. Drawing on the example of Argentina, Míguez highlights how it is less the actual levels of insecurity that are important in determining security policies, but

<http://comunidadyprevencion.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Gobernar_la_seguridad_ciudadana_en_Am%C3%A9rica_Latina_y_el_Caribe_Amenazas_desaf%C3%ADos_y_nudos_estrat%C3%A9gicos3.pdf>, accessed 27 May 2013. Original quotations: “Consolidar una identidad que integre saberes y acciones multiagenciales”, “Toda seguridad es ‘glocal’ (global + local)”, and “La seguridad es un bien público que se coproduce con la participación de la sociedad civil y la responsabilización de actores estatales”.

rather how certain citizen populations experience insecurity, and moreover how certain paradigmatic events can concentrate the senses and lead to outcome that are very much out of step with reality. This is well illustrated in the following contribution by Myriam Janneth Román Muñoz, where she draws on her ongoing research on Santiago de Cali's 'Plan Cuadrante', tracing Cali citizens' perceptions of the Plan and, more specifically, Police action in implementing it. Román particularly highlights the ambiguities and contradictions surrounding citizens' perceptions regarding the Police and its action, highlighting the paradoxical manner in which the Police are often seen as a source of insecurity yet are also the vector for securitization in Cali.

Ana Milena Montoya Ruiz's contribution focuses on citizen security from the perspective of the right to the city, considering the notion from a gendered perspective, something that is clearly urgent in the face of increasing 'femicide' in México (Ciudad Juárez) and Central America (Guatemala and El Salvador). Montoya describes how cities are not gender neutral spaces, but rather very much produce and reproduce inequalities between men and women –including for example by fostering a feminization of poverty– and there is consequently a real need for citizen security policies that build on notions about the right to the city to be re-thought explicitly in gendered terms that go beyond classic injunctions not to reproduce patriarchal structures. Similarly, Juan Camilo Rivera's contribution explores how uncritical considerations of citizen security that do not take into account the legal frameworks surrounding the action of security organizations, including in particular their access to private information, their scope for secrecy, and institutional oversight, will inevitably misunderstand some of the forces powerfully shaping citizen security policy. Drawing on an analysis of a recently introduced bill attempting to regulate Colombian intelligence services, Rivera shows how while the latter does limit the scope of secrecy and provide a means for control, there are also significant gaps that can potentially lead to intelligence services ignoring individual rights, particularly with regard to privacy, in the name of citizen security.

Finally, the special issue is rounded off with the two book reviews that offer appreciations of two important recent contributions to the literature around citizen security and insecurity. Firstly, Diego Armando Varila Cajamarca reviews Gabriel Kessler's *El sentimiento de inseguridad: sociología del temor al delito*, a landmark study of the fear of crime in Argentina that

deconstructs the way in which the phenomenon emerges and spreads –something that is particularly revealing in a society that compared to the rest of Latin America is perceived to currently suffer lower levels of violence (even if the work of Javier Auyero [2013] suggests that this may have more to do with Argentinean violence being spatially distributed in a very circumscribed manner than levels of violence actually being much lower...)–. Secondly, Astrid Verónica Bermúdez Díaz reviews Andreína Torres, Geannine Alvarado, and Laura González's *Violencia y seguridad ciudadana: algunas reflexiones*, one of the most recently published state of the art on the notion of citizen security and its policy implementation, focusing in particular on the under-studied Ecuadorian case, which draws on the extensive experience and expertise of Flacso and IDRC-sponsored research.

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