Human Security and Chronic Violence in Mexico

New Perspectives and Proposals from Below

Gema Kloppe-Santamaría • Alexandra Abello Colak

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Introduction. A conceptual and empirical contribution to resignify security in Mexico

Jenny Pearce

This book is the outcome of a methodological response to the challenge of researching multiple forms of violence in Latin America and in Mexico in particular, aiming to simultaneously generate action to reduce them. It has roots in an academic discussion around the mutations of violence in post authoritarian and post civil war regions of Latin America, and their relationship (or not) to old and new forms of criminality. At the same time, it emerges from histories of community activism and organization in the face of complex problems of violence and criminality. These two (conceptual and empirical) sources of methodological innovation have resulted in efforts, narrated in this book, to construct a genuine dialogue of knowledges between academy and community, aimed at better understanding violence, the logics of its reproduction and to generate proposals for security policies that reduce it.

This methodological response is also rooted, therefore, in Latin America's history of participatory action research. In that sense, it has an orientation towards research that also contributes to addressing problems and their origins *together with* those who live them. This is why we talk about a methodology that 'co-constructs' knowledge with those experiencing the realities of violence and crime in their everyday lives, but who have very limited influence on the policies to address them. This is the meaning of *'from below'*. This introduction to this volume will first explain a little more what is meant by *'from below'* in practice, before clarifying the concepts that frame the research and which have simultaneously been explored through it. It will discuss two concepts ('Human Security' and 'Chronic Violence')

which have been particularly crucial to the research and why and how they have informed it and been informed by it. It will then draw out some of the key ways in which each chapter of this book throws further light on these concepts and their potential relevance to rethinking the security crisis in Mexico and beyond.

'From below': A methodology and orientation for researching violences

While it may seem counterintuitive to use participatory methods in contexts of extreme violence, the logics are in fact quite clear, without downplaying the risks.[1] Violence limits space for individual and social action, but at the same time it provokes a yearning for 'action'. At times this takes the form of support for repressive and punitive interventions to establish an 'order' by whatever means, including violence. This is a reflection of how failure to address violence, crime and insecurity can generate authoritarian citizenship (Pearce, 2017a, Pearce, 2017b). As the essays from the fieldwork illustrate, it is disorder and chaos that most panic populations, especially those living in the poorest areas where people live close together and cannot avoid violence in their neighbourhoods. It is why people in Sánchez Taboada, Tijuana, for instance, 'prefer' the selective violences of today to the violences between criminal groups at the height of their fight for control of the local drug marketplace and trafficking corridor in the 2008-10 period (See Chapter on Tijuana in this volume). However, this does not mean that people do not seek other options. Only they have to know that they will be accompanied, supported and protected at the same time.

Just as participatory action research builds on the argument of Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire, that people without wealth are not without

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[1]Mitigating the risks, protecting research subjects and researchers was a high priority for this project and are discussed in detail in Chapter six.

knowledge, so the methodology behind the research in this book (and discussed in detail in Chapter one) seeks to engage that knowledge to both diagnose the problem of violence and crime but also to make proposals for policy responses that reduce both. It is knowledge derived from experience, of living multiple forms of violence and in the midst of criminal economies, which can help the academic and policy world understand the contextual and differentiated logics of both. Academic knowledge is helpful to explore these problems. It builds on comparative learning, on analytical approaches and debates and discussions between scholars of the problem. Policy knowledge, at its best, develops an understanding of what does and doesn't work. However, recent history suggests that these are not enough. Diagnosing the problem in a complete way requires methodologies capable of entering into the way people live and experience violence and crime and drawing out the way these experiences alter the way people interact with neighbours and their impact on individual and collective emotional as well as material wellbeing. Quantitative methods, short term policy interventions and field visits by researchers do not on their own get to the full picture of these experiences. At the same time, a methodology that only diagnoses and then feeds the diagnosis to policy makers and other academics without engaging with those who live the problem, falls short, ethically and practically. It will mean that people are treated only as sources of information not as sources of the change itself.

In the field of violence, criminality and security, and especially in the contexts of what this research calls 'chronic violence' in Latin America (to be discussed below), the premise of this book and the research it is based on, is that there is actual and potential agency in most violence affected neighbourhoods, for reducing violence and collaborating actively with the delivery of a public security policy with that goal, while ensuring it is accountable also. While the implementation must be in the hands of public services, a consciousness around 'security' must be built within the society

and particularly among its most insecure communities. This is because this research has also developed from a premise, as discussed in the chapter on the methodology, that the idea of 'security' remains deeply contested in Latin America, and that of 'public' security even more so. The methodology of the research behind this book within an orientation 'from below', will be spelt out in detail in Chapter one; this introduction captures its significance to the enterprise captured in this book as a whole.

Reconceptualising violence and humanising security

Why reconceptualise violence?

A great deal of discussion has taken place on violence in Mexico. This introduction will not rehearse the arguments or repeat the statistics which are amply discussed in the chapters of this book. Its aim rather is to explain why the research in the book refers to violence as 'chronic' and the need to rethink violence in order to make visible its multiple expressions and the risks of inter-generational transmission.

The history behind the concept of 'chronic violence' comes from a study of civil society participation in Colombia and Guatemala as part of a broader study for the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, commissioned by four Dutch co-financing agencies and which included Guinea, Sri Lanka and Uganda (Pearce, 2007). Colombia at the time was still war torn, while Guatemala was considered 'post war'. Working with different civil society groups in both countries, it became clear that this distinction invisibilised the ongoing violence in the latter, while reducing those in Colombia to violence between armed actors and their impacts on civilians caught in its midst. Both countries actually experienced a spectrum of violences from war-related to state, to neighbourhood, to school, to prison and to household. This led to the need to rethink how violence is constructed as

a problem, particularly in Latin America. From this, the idea of 'Chronic Violence' emerged, defined in the following way:

> The precise parameters of 'chronic violence' need statistical refinement. It is common to measure the intensity of violence. Civil wars, for instance, are defined by more than 1,000 deaths per year. Our understanding of 'chronic' means that high rates of violence are sustained over several years, which may include civil war situations but need not. Rates of violent death are a reasonable measure of intensity...But violence does not always result in death. Chronic should also apply to contexts where acts of violence are recurrent in different spaces and over time. Our definition of chronic violence is therefore three dimensional, including space, time, and intensity components. A working definition might be: where rates of violent death are at least twice the average for high and low income countries respectively, where these levels are sustained for five years or more and where frequent acts of violence not necessarily resulting in death, are recorded across several socialisation spaces, including the household, the neighbourhood, the school, inter community and the national state public space (which brings in disproportionate, sanctioned and non sanctioned acts of violence attributed to state security forces). Protracted civil wars would come into this definition but so would other post war contexts where violence has remained embedded in social interactions and state-citizen relations. In the future, a global (chronic) violence index could be constructed and correlations produced with the human development index (Pearce, 2007: 07).

Over the next decade, Tani Adams took the discussion further. Together we conducted workshops in Mexico, Guatemala and Washington at the Woodrow Wilson Centre and Tani went on to produce a developed and thoughtful treatment of the concept in a paper published just after her untimely death: *How Chronic Violence Affects Human Development, Social Relations, and the Practice of Citizenship: A Systematic Framework for Action*' (Adams, 2017). In this paper she argued that chronic violence is re-

produced by diverse micro to macro processes (Adams, 2017: xiii). The latter, which include structural factors, range from extreme poverty and growing perceptions of social inequality, historical legacies of conflict and violence, forced migration and displacement, the persistent weakness of security-oriented political reforms to socially destructive impacts of urbanisation policies, certain forms of economic development, as well as climate change and environmental destruction. Secondly, she argues that this form of violence threatens the capacity of individuals to develop in healthy ways, physically, mentally and socially. At the micro system level, for instance, Adams draws attention to traumatisation experienced by parents and how this impacts on their ability to forge secure bonds with their children. Exposure to chronic violence impacts on peoples capacity to build and maintain constructive social relations (*ibid.*: xiv), it separates and alienates different social sectors from each other, fosters the use of direct justice when people feel abandoned by state law enforcement and judicial agencies. And Adams argues that (*ibid.*: xv):

> Rather than perceiving violence as a series of discrete problems (i.e. domestic, youth, gang, school, criminal, political violence, each with its own solution), we understand it as a systemic phenomenon with multiple causes and effects.

This is the real value of re-conceptualising violence. We can rise above the tendency to select certain violences that matter and we can see the problem of 'violence' itself. In the process, we begin to recognize that all violences have impacts and they are all significant. We can also recognise those violences which do not produce a 'body', in other words the many disappearances that take place in Latin America, including at least 37,000 in Mexico since 2007. But also, this enables us to recognise how violence reproduces itself through all the spaces of socialization and over time, both in lethal and non lethal forms, it becomes a problem which cannot be ad-

dressed through one-off policy responses and interventions. A broader understanding is necessary in order to fully appreciate the varied logics of its reproduction. It requires us to discriminate between what is due to 'crime' and what is due to new configurations of social relationships, where violence in one space of socialization impacts on other spaces. This can in certain contexts, favour the turn to violent and non violent criminality, such as the failure of the state to deal with it (impunity) or the active collusion of state agents, in the police for example. However, this is not inevitable or linear, it requires us to understand the contextual logics. Social expectations adapt to a climate of impunity and rising thresholds of 'acceptable' or unavoidable violences. Criminality grows and flourishes amidst increasingly violent resolution of conflicts and competition in the illegal economy. Only a 'third party' can intervene to address this, but it is precisely a third party in the form of an equitable and impartial rule of law or a police force dedicated to the protection of citizens which is missing in Mexico and other parts of Latin America. It is in such contexts that we can describe violence as 'chronic', requiring new responses that delve deep into the logics and social contexts in which it reproduces through time and space.

Humanised and human security

The general tendency of governments, restricted by political temporalities of electoral cycles, is to seek a 'quick fix' to these problems. The Calderón government in Mexico (2006-2012) thought that such a quick fix meant bringing in the strongest force, the military, which had a 'national' security remit and which was not so corruptible as the local police. It also meant targeting the visible heads or *capos* of criminal enterprises. It is widely accepted in the academic literature (and see Farfán this volume), that rather than diminish violence and criminality, this approach diffused it, as organ-

ised criminal groups re-formed in response to the assault on specific leaders, and new mutations of violent criminality emerged. The homicide statistics bear witness to an apparent crossroads when the Mexican state confronted selected organised crime groups. Whereas between 1990 and 1998, there was an average of 16 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, this declined to 10 between 1999 and 2007, but it then rose to 19 between 2008 and 2015, and to 24 in 2011 (Instituto Nacional de Estadisticas y Geografia, quoted in Zepeda, 2018: 127).

In a context of growing insecurity, cruel expressions of violence, including disappearance, torture, feminicide and forced displacement, it became clear that the security offer from the State was not only inadequate but part of the problem rather than the solution. The chapters in this book illustrate this. They show the profound suspicion and lack of confidence in the police as well as the justice system amongst citizens living in neighbourhoods directly affected by varied expressions of violence and crime. Farfán (this volume) shows how confidence in the justice system has actually decreased over recent years, and that 93.6% of crimes were never reported in 2017. Our field research in Sánchez Taboada, Tijuana, for example, shows that the police are known to work *with* rather than against local drugs dealers. In Nuevo Almaguer, Guadalupe, the police beat up and even torture the young guys hanging out on the streets smoking marijuana, driving them into criminality rather than away from it. The latter exemplifies 'inhumane' security, and is why this study calls for a 'humanised' security, which treats people with respect, not as potential wrongdoers, and reduces violence. This prevailing model is the kind of security which not only dehumanises but also reproduces violence in the process. The very public security agents who are there to protect and mediate conflicts for the citizen, actually act violently and often criminally. The story of the young women beaten by her husband in Apatzingán, is an example of the damage a dehumanising security does. She was brave enough to denounce this abuse to the police, one

of whom took a fancy to her and offered to visit her, whereupon he was killed by local armed men. When the policeman's colleagues came to investigate, they ransacked and stole from the young woman's house. It is not surprising that the 'cifras negras' that reveal how few crimes are reported, are so high in Mexico.

This dehumanising security falls most heavily on the poor of Mexico. The wealthy can buy their security. The poor are left to the uncertainties of a poorly funded and implemented public security service. And it is this inequality in security provision that leads to the second conceptual discussion in this section, which is the use of 'human security' as a framing concept for the research process, and how this concept was in turn enriched by the methodology 'from below'.

Human security is a concept that emerged at a time (the post Cold War 1990s) when a progressive window opened in the UN system, which tried to challenge the 'national' state-centred security approach of the Cold War and also its focus on the physical aspects of security and freedom from direct violence. By opening up to the wider realm of insecurities felt by many, particularly in the poorest nations of the world, the concept of 'human security' also turned attention to the multiple arenas in which such populations feel 'insecure'. Thus the concept highlighted seven fields of insecurity: Personal, Political, Economic, Community, Food, Health and Environmental. This opening and widening, however, also led to criticisms from those who feared it would be impossible to devise policies that could address all these insecurities, while it also diminished attention to those physical insecurities that still threatened many lives. For some, also, the discussion, was connected to the post Cold War neoliberal expansion, in which a 'humanitarian', essentially Western driven political and economic agenda, was embedded in the human security project.

However, there have been some interesting evolutions in the concept since its iteration at the end of the Cold War, as well as efforts to refine it

from within and outside the UN system, and to explore its implementation potential in more detail. An Inter-Agency Working Group on Human Security was set up including the three pillars of the UN system: development, peace and security, and human rights. By 2005, three components of 'human security' had been articulated by then Secretary General, Kofi-Annan: freedom from fear, freedom from want (both in the original concept) but now freedom to live in dignity (United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security). A meeting of the UN General Assembly in 2012, adopted resolution 66/290, which gave some significant further dimensions to the concept of 'human security' and agreed the following (United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security b):

> …That human security is an approach to assist Member States in identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood and dignity of their people. Based on this, a common understanding on the notion of human security includes the following:
> (a) The right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair. All individuals, in particular vulnerable people, are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential;
> (b) Human security calls for people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented responses that strengthen the protection and empowerment of all people and all communities;
> (c) Human security recognizes the interlinkages between peace, development and human rights, and equally considers civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights…

Over time, also, the argument has been made that humanitarian challenges arise from multiple factors that are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Des Gasper and Oscar Gómez (2015: 112) have argued that the concept has 'neither shrunk to personal security nor stayed in seven boxes'.

The elasticity of the concept is in fact an advantage, because it enables precisely the interrelatedness to emerge, between conditions that generate threats and which cannot usefully be seen in sharply distinct categories. Thus, the authors argue:

> 'This emphasis on the expanding circle of the human security idea must not be understood as a dismissal of research and practice in relation to organized violence. Personal physical security is fundamentally important. But declarations that only intentional violence, organized violence…and/or violence in public spaces should be the focus in all 'human security' analysis are highly questionable. Such steps lose much or most of the value —added from a human security perspective, which looks at the threats to how people live and can live and which adds value through person— centred attention to the intersections of multiple dimensions of life. Domestic violence, unorganized crime, physical damage from environmental events or from accidents, and many other matters are all often greater threats than intentional/ organized/ public/political violence (*ibid*.: 112-113).

In Medellín, the Observatory of Human Security[2] chose this name for their collective in 2007, precisely because 'human security' resonated with residents of the city's poorest Comunas who participated alongside academics from the University of Antioquia. They articulated the concept but confirmed it inductively from listening to community researchers and communities. The latter did not want to choose *between* the physical insecurities that impacted on their daily lives, and their fears of harm due to minimum daily subsistence, to the search for decent housing and health services, for an educated future for their children and for jobs to ensure that their sons did not join the local gangs or *combos*. The residents recognised precisely the value of the 'interrelatedness' of multiple insecurities.

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[2]The importance of the Observatory to this research is discussed in Chapter one.

This research and action project was well aware of the controversies surrounding the Human Security idea, but when the methodology was used in Tegucigalpa, the women of the neighbourhoods of the Honduran capital, also embraced its relevance to their daily experiences. It is this receptivity from those living multiple insecurities that led us to frame our action research in Mexico in this concept and to see if we could clarify its relevance and limitations further through the research. In field visits 'human security' often generated comments such as '*this* is the security we need', for example, from a resident of Sánchez Taboada in Tijuana, when I asked whether 'human security' resonated (Pearce, Field Diary, March 2017). And at the same time, an incipient intellectual debate in Mexico had opened up around the concept. Edgardo Buscaglia (2013), for example, found in the idea of 'human security' a framework for moving both beyond repression and prevention in terms of security policy. While prevention matters, it needs he argued 'shift in orientation', which recognized the need for inter institutional coordination and geographical focus in key socio economic domains, in particular labour, health and education. This would make it more difficult for mafias to capture the social fabric through drugs, people and migrant trafficking or other legal and illegal services. He argued:

> Organised crime is an unwanted social and economic phenomenon, and not a military phenomenon that can be prevented or erased through the use of repression. As an economic expression, organised crime grows and feeds from the regulatory shortcomings of the states. It gains from markets that have excessive complexity or lack regulatory frameworks. This means that the criminal enterprise offers everything the state cannot offer, be it due to its shortcomings or its absence. This is why the legislators claim that drug-trafficking is the fifth source of employment in the country, even above that of Mexican oil (Pemex) and the timber industry. Therefore, when some Mexican intellectuals demand a new framework of public policies to strengthen national or public security (at best they claim the strengthening of both), it is clear that they have

lost sight of the complete picture. They do not see that Mexico suffers from huge blind spots and regulations shortcomings that feed the economic presence of criminal groups (…) (2013: 272).

Human Security thus not only resonates on the ground, but it also opens up a new horizon for addressing problems of organised crime and violence. This recognises the varied insecurities that diminish human dignity but which also reproduce violence and/or crime. The sense of vulnerability and precariousness of life is apparent in varied examples from the neighbourhoods where we have worked and discussed in the chapters that follow. However, the debate on 'Human Security' has not flourished in Mexico. On one level, therefore, this book aspires to develop it further, through our action research process and showing how the interconnections between distinct domains of insecurity are experienced on the ground. In this sense too, it aims to address the four deficits in public security policy making outlined by Catherine Camacho in her chapter: its politicisation, its lack of coordination alongside inter institutional competition, ineffectiveness on the ground of municipal and state policy implementation processes and attacks on local authorities. A truly effective governmental security programme, she argues, needs citizens who can safely discuss the problems they face, develop proposals and know that they will be listened to by policy makers working together across the institutional sectors.

'Being listened to' is precisely what most Mexican citizens living in contexts of chronic violence and criminality cannot imagine. And without a sense that what you say matters, many do not speak. We found many silences in this research. However, the co-construction of human security agendas was part of the process of recovering the potential for agency in these neighbourhoods, through connections between academics, practitioner academics and residents. This book illustrates that not only do we get to understand better the logics and effects of violence reproduction, we can

demonstrate this capacity for proposals 'from below' to reduce violence and criminality. The following section of this introduction outlines briefly some of the key issues addressed by the contextual chapters and how over two years of relationship building, listening and learning, our methodology demonstrated the potential for a better understanding and response to insecurity and chronic violence in Mexico.

Learning through listening and exchanging knowledges: Introduction to the case study chapters

The case study chapters that follow contribute a rich, ethnographically informed, set of insights into how people in some of the poorest communities of Mexico live multiple insecurities and a sense of abandonment by the State. The chapters nevertheless show that if they are listened to, people can develop proposals to address the problems they face. In this sense, the UN General Assembly are onto something, when Resolution 66/290 speaks of 'protection and empowerment'. However, this does not 'just happen'.

The following chapters detail the many obstacles that hinder the people's access to their own voice and capacity to act in such contexts. All our case study neighbourhoods in fact, have emerged through settlement patterns in which people have migrated from a range of locations in Mexico in search of opportunities and a better life. They are mostly marginal neighbourhoods in which the State has failed to guarantee minimum services and rights. Nuevo Almaguer in Guadalupe, Sánchez Taboada in Tijuana and Lázaro Cárdenas in Apatzingán, all share these characteristics to different extents. Even today, when we returned the Human Security Agenda to residents of Nuevo Almaguer, for instance, they recalled with pain the time when those in the upper part of the neighbourhood had arrived, and there was nothing offered in support. One member of the community remembered

how water would flood the house that she and her partner had had to build themselves, with their often children sleeping just above the water line.

In Acapulco, such is the corruption, daily violence, economic vulnerability and lack of basic education, health and other services, that the co-construction process was simply too dangerous for communities and researchers. This serves to highlight the challenges of ensuring communities contribute to policies that will reduce violences and insecurity. 'Protection' is vital to 'empowerment'. The challenges were also severe in our other three neighbourhoods, but we managed over time and through our relationships on the ground between academic, practitioner academic and community researchers to build connections with different residents and construct Human Security Agendas with them. The case study chapters recount the processes involved, the difficulties and the learning. Below are some of ways in which the themes discussed above have been enriched by the participatory approach to research.

Chronic violence, trauma and the inter-generational cycles of violence

Our hypothesis that plural violences and the lived experiences of insecurity must be understood contextually and through the active participation of those most impacted, is explored through each chapter. The idea of 'chronic violence' is given meaning when in Apatzingán, we hear how citizens have lived historic waves of violences to which they have had to adapt. Prior 'containable' violences in certain socialisation spaces, diffuse and intensify through other spaces as, for instance, the lemon and avocado economy entered into collapse in the 1970s and Apatzingán and nearby villages became nodes in the production and transport of synthetic and other drugs to feed an expanding US market over later decades. As criminal organizations

coalesced in the region and gained hegemony, the State responded with a militaristic and violent intervention. However, violence has not diminished, rather it has intensified and multiplied. It is likely that there was always violence in the home, however, as Lázaro Cárdenas neighbourhood became a recruiting ground for young men, in particular, into criminality, so tensions increased in family spaces. Similarly the school became a space where boys as young as eight dreamed of being *sicarios*, as one head teacher told us (Pearce, Field Diary, April 2018), and drugs became available in the school itself, reproducing the tensions of the street. With very little dignified and reasonably paid work (economic insecurity), young men grow up tempted by the quick route to money, selling drugs locally and some end up working for organised crime. Here the violences reproduce and criminality mounts, with the State using violence often indiscriminately to address both and further undermining confidence in 'public' security as an option. The authors of the Apatzingán case speak of 'progressive trauma' amongst the citizens of the town.

In Sánchez Taboada, Tijuana, the authors speak of their permanent dialogue with residents of one of the most insecure neighbourhoods of one of the most violent cities in Mexico. Once again, there is a history to this violence, intertwined with the rise of criminal groups and their disputes but not reducible only to those logics. The local gangs were not the same as the heavily armed and organised traffickers who emerged later in the 2000s. The 'unliveable' moments of shootouts in the streets amongst the latter, has deeply traumatised the population, who see it as originating from 'outside' the neighbourhood. Violence and its origins are 'constructed' by people trying to make sense of the horror they live, but it also inhibits analysis of all the factors involved in its reproduction, including that of the State itself. Through dialogues, the research team, which includes a community researcher (as in all our cases) living in the neighbourhood, other insecurities are recognised, such as the environmental insecurity in one of the zones of

the neighbourhood, where the instability of the soil caused by geological faults provoked the collapse of 300 homes, and without further triggering any governmental action. And political insecurity is named, reflecting the manipulation and division of communities by clientelistic political parties and the corruption of the local police.

In Nuevo Almaguer, the differential way that violence impacts on women, young people and older people emerges strongly. The Observatory of Human Security in Medellín had added 'insecurity of women' into the 7 domains highlighted by the UN. In all the research, this is one of the violences, that of the intimate space of socialisation, that proved most difficult to discuss with communities. Seeing violence only through the lens of criminal actors, offers a limited understanding, however, of how violences impact on the way children grow up in the home, and can mean that violence transmits between generations, differentially impacting on men, women and young people. In Nuevo Almaguer —as in all the cases— this topic could only be discussed after much trust was built. However, once women opened up about their own experiences and that of their daughters, a pattern emerged to explain depression, sadness and pain. Security policies that do not encourage the visibilising and naming of these violences of the intimate space will not interrupt the intergenerational transmission of violence. They must be linked to fair approaches to justice and the rule of law, as with all the other violences and criminality activities, reducing impunity and building the trust of public institutions which in turn will reduce insecurity, violence and crime.

Resignifying security in Mexico: Detail, place and space

In each of the chapters, what stands out is the variations of each context and, at the same time, the similarities of the patterns and expressions of

insecurity. Without taking these variations in context into account, however, security policy will fail to touch the lived realities of citizens. These varied contexts are explained by social and economic histories, as well as the particular histories of organised crime, the role in the drugs trade (*e.g.* production, corridor, local sales), and the interventions of the State. These contextual details matter enormously to the meanings attached to security. To be effective, any security approach needs to take them into account. However, the re-signification of security to put people at its heart (*i.e.* human security) —and this means all people, including the young men in danger of recruitment into criminal activities— starts from understanding how people live insecurity. Where people live and how they connect to each other are vital components.

The importance of place to people's sense of belonging cannot be underestimated, even when they have migrated, as many of the people we worked with had. In some cases, it was forced migration to make way for a 'modernising' project as in Sánchez Taboada, Tijuana. Perhaps because much migration is about the search for livelihoods, a dream of feeling settled, building a secure place from which to progress and see ones children progress, place is at the heart, and forced displacement, as happens almost invisibly in Apatzingán, for example, is a source of renewed trauma. Space must then be explored not in terms of 'emptiness' but in terms of the social relationships that are formed in these places of violence and insecurity and how they are impacted by constant uncertainty and fear. The latter, in turn, impacts on social relationships and the trust between people. Many speak of the rupture in the 'social fabric' due to violence and criminality. What this means in practice, is precisely the social relationships which form social space and give meaning to place, to locality. In our research team, we had many discussions about whether we should talk about 'communities', when referring to the neighbourhoods where we worked. The idea of 'community' did not seem appropriate when the 'social fabric' was so torn and

people were afraid to go out in the street or use 'public spaces'. At the same time, the people we worked with talked of 'their community', arguably something they imagined, but this made it no less real in their search for belonging, connections and the sense of safety that living with others in solidarity and support can give. Humanizing security, the research in this book shows, requires understanding these yearnings and why, without alternatives, they can translate into authoritarian instincts for order at whatever cost. It is equally possible, to resignify security in ways that overcome such instincts, and by focusing on violence reduction as the driving component, alongside attention to the multiple insecurities that generate vulnerability, fear and sometimes adaptation to or passive acceptance of a violent and criminal economy. The other aspect of this research is precisely to seek the agency that exists in these places and spaces for humanising security and for security policies that reduce violences.

Agency and human security to reduce violences in Mexico

The chapters in this book show how difficult that search is, but that it is not impossible at all. In the process of co-constructing Agendas for Human Security with different groups within each of the neighbourhoods where we worked, our research team saw the potential for social action and for proposals to policy makers that exist in the most adverse of contexts. Each neighbourhood produced its Agenda to be used as an instrument for proposing alternatives to the current security offer. They each contain suggestions for action aimed at the community itself, the civil society groups that work in each neighbourhood or in the municipality, and to the government itself, at local, state and national levels. The proposals cover the range of problems that people live, but are not a list of those problems. They are rather focussed suggestions on how, by putting human beings at the centre of se-

curity, security is not reduced to repression and prevention per se. Prevention suggests short lived interventions. However, our research shows that our neighbourhoods require tailored accompaniment and protection for those seeking to rebuild their 'social fabric', to overcome the tendency to see young men as 'enemies' and to understand the implications of a lack of long term horizons for self fulfillment. The words accompaniment and protection are key. Security can make participation possible, open up debate about these contextual dynamics of violence reproduction, ensure state actors are accountable to active citizens conscious of their security needs and of what makes security human and humanized.

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Co-constructing security "from below":
A methodology to rethink and transform security in contexts of chronic violence

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Introduction

Levels of violence in several countries of Latin America and the Caribbean make this region one of the most violent in the world. This situation brings up urgent challenges for the production of knowledge in the social sciences and academia in general. The complexity and persistence of this phenomenon in the region not only calls for a commitment to improve analytical frameworks and tools to understand violence, insecurity and criminality, but also to bring forth ideas that can contribute to better address these problematics.

Despite the fact that Latin America's scholars have produced an important amount of knowledge regarding public security, this has so far focussed on the statistic fluctuations of the most visible effects of violence and criminality, neglecting other manifestations of the current crisis of insecurity. In exploring the steady growth of insecurity in the region, academic attention has also targeted the functions of the state and its institutions. Several studies carried out by academics and international institutions have highlighted the limitations and weaknesses of the institutions responsible for providing security and justice, and of the processes of designing and implementing policies (for instance PNUD, 2013). Other studies have contributed to recognise the negative effects of hard-handed approaches and reactive responses (for instance Wolf, 2017) and the importance of dedicating more efforts to collecting evidence regarding the outcome of prevention programmes. Although academic literature regarding public security, often supported by

international agencies, has contributed in promoting institutional reforms and improvements in the construction and implementation of preventive policies (Dammert, 2013), the production of knowledge regarding insecurity and violence seems overrun by the magnitude and complexity of the problem and by the speed of its mutations (Abello Colak and Angarita, 2013).

Accordingly, there are still many shortcomings in research regarding security in the region. As far as impact is concerned, for instance, we do have an idea of the economic costs of the problem (Jaitman, 2017), but not of the magnitude of its social, cultural, political and health impact, be it on an individual, collective or community level. We also lack information regarding differential ways in which violence and insecurity affect specific groups and individuals according to gender, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity or race, sexual orientation, etc., and how daily experience of violence interconnects with the severe socioeconomic deprivations faced by a large proportion of the Latin-American population.[1] Similarly, we know very little about the dynamics and mechanisms of violence reproduction in the framework of what is called chronic violence (Pearce, 2007; Adams, 2017), and about the responses and survival techniques used by people living in extreme vulnerability.[2]

The methodology used in this research project, implemented in four Mexican cities, aims at providing new evidence regarding certain aspects of violence and insecurity that have as yet not been sufficiently explored in academic investigation concerning the region. This methodology involving the co-production of security knowledge, has been developed through various experiences of collaborative research between academics, members of civil and community organisations, and members of communities in the UK, Colombia, Honduras, and, more recently, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Jamaica.

[1]For recent contributions on the subject, see Gottsbacher and de Boer (2016).
[2]See Auyero, Burbano de Lara and Berti (2014).

As analysed in this chapter, the methodology of "co-construction of security from below" posits a way of carrying out research on the complex security problems faced by communities which are particularly affected by high levels of violence and criminality. Its aim is not only to reach a better understanding of the situation regarding insecurity in local contexts, but also to identify measures and actions that can improve the living conditions of these communities. In this sense, the creation of Local Agendas for Human Security seeks both to map the results and proposals co-constructed with the communities in a clear, readable and visual document, and to provide tools that allow to further imagine and implement security policies that do not reproduce violence.

The principles that guide the action-research methodology implemented in this study will be detailed below, as well as its origins and relation to the human security approach. Subsequently, we present an analysis of the methodology's implementation process in Mexico, more specifically in Acapulco, Apatzingán, Guadalupe, and Tijuana. These are the four cities where the methodology was adapted to produce Human Security Agendas with communities of four neighbourhoods. Finally, the chapter concludes with an analysis of the main difficulties and potential issues that arose during the implementation process of this methodology in the Mexican context.

Security "from below": Guidelines for the production of knowledge with communities in contexts of chronic violence

The methodology of "co-construction of human security agendas" implemented in four Mexican cities[3] originated in the systematisation of an investigation conducted between 2011 and 2013 by a multidisciplinary team formed by the "Observatorio de Seguridad Humana" (OSH) of the University

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[3]In the framework of the research project "Co-construyendo seguridad humana en México: Una metodología y plan de acción de las comunidades hacia el Estado (2016-2018)".

of Antioquia, Colombia, the Department of Peace Studies of the University of Bradford, UK, and several community organisations of Medellín, with the support of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) (OSH, 2014a, 2014b, 2016).This project drew from previous experiences in the development of participative research methodologies in the UK[4] and Medellín.[5] The result was the creation of the first Human Security Agenda for the city of Medellín (OSH, 2014) involving the active participation of young people, members of the LGBTI community, displaced persons, and women and children from different parts of the city.[6]

This methodology was implemented in Medellín, a city that presented such levels of violence as to be considered the most violent city in the world during the 90s, and which, since the mid-2000s, had become a reference in successful urban initiatives. For the last 16 years, the communities we worked with had been the targets of state intervention in the framework of what is known as "Modelo Medellín". The methodology revealed how different communities experienced different types of insecurity and their capacity for agency in problematising and facing the impacts of the interventions that had been carried out (Abello Colak and Pearce, 2015). In Honduras, the methodology has been used in Tegucigalpa since 2012 to work with women from marginalised neighbourhoods affected by high levels of violence. These women managed to successfully place their demands for policies and responses to their needs within the public debate. Moreover, they have developed feminist forms of organisation and mobilisation through the construction of human security agendas (CPTRT *et al.*, 2016, CEM-H and CPTRT, 2018).

The co-construction of human security agendas in Colombia, Honduras and Mexico is situated in a wider intellectual and practical effort we call

[4]Pearce (2010).
[5]Observatorio de Seguridad Humana de Medellín (2012).
[6]Especially from comunas 1, 6, 8, and 13.

"co-construction of security from below" (Abello Colak and Pearce, 2018). "Co-constructing security from below" implies rethinking responses but also actively transforming security policies in contexts of chronic violence, such as those found in several Caribbean and Latin American cities. This rethinking and transforming must be carried out with those who are directly affected by violence and insecurity. The epistemological foundations of this methodology draw from various sources. Firstly, Orlando Fals Borda's and Paulo Freire's contribution to Latin-American thought have been fundamental for the development of participatory action-research methodologies and popular education (Freire, 1970; Fals Borda, 2006). The methodology is also informed by peace studies, a discipline with a normative horizon promoting the multidisciplinary and meticulous analysis of social dynamics and systems that contribute to the construction of more just societies devoid of violence (Curle, 1971; O'Connel and Curle, 1985). Also influential is the work of Boaventura de Sousa Santos, especially his notion of epistemologies of the South (De Sousa, 2000), and finally, critical anthropological approaches applied to research on violence and security (Goldstain, 2010).

These different approaches have helped to identify some of the principles upholding the methodology. The first is the renunciation to the dichotomies of traditional and positivist science that separate the observed from the observer. Contrary to traditional methods of research, these approaches acknowledge the researcher's implication in the participants' socio-political context. In this sense, it calls for the researcher's engagement and proximity to the "studied" subjects. The latter, moreover, are considered active subjects within the process of knowledge production.

The second principle that sustains the methodology is the acknowledgement of the diversity of knowledges owned by the actors involved in the research process, be it researchers or participants, and the possibility of establishing a constructive dialogue between them in order to produce a new type of knowledge. This approach values both knowledge based on

experience and on academic inquiry, recognising that the exchange between these two types of knowledge enhances the capacity to produce effective solutions based on experienced realities.

The third principle claims that the dialogue between different types of knowledge and their production require a normative horizon. This means that the goal of knowledge production is not only to understand social phenomena and contribute to the academic debate, but also to transform living conditions. The knowledge that is produced must therefore be relevant to those who take part in the process, and instrumental in transforming and improving their reality. As a consequence, the research must be geared towards the development of actions that guide societies in creating ways of organising and interacting in juster and non-violent forms. Importantly, action-research processes informed by these principles suppose that all those who are involved, i.e., researchers and participants, are willing to reassess their own preconceptions and assumptions regarding the social problems they are studying, and that they participate in processes of awareness-raising that seek to mobilise the capacity of people to act upon their own reality.

The methodology to construct security agendas with communities, as one aspect of the efforts to develop forms of inquiry that contribute to the co-construction of security from below, is guided by these epistemological principles, and takes as analytical and conceptual reference the human security approach outlined by the United Nations in 1994. The methodology proposes the construction of security agendas that include participative and reflexive diagnoses of the multiple threats, vulnerabilities and fears that affect the personal and collective wellness of the communities and hinder the enjoyment, fulfilment and defence of their rights. They also include proposals collectively produced by the community and the researchers which target different actors (authorities, civil organisations and communities). The proposals and ideas in the agendas seek to create community

contexts with guarantees and certainties which enable the enjoyment of a serene and dignified existence.

To implement research projects involving security co-construction from below, the working teams have always included the participation of *community researchers*. These researchers are members of the communities where the research takes place and have a particular interest in the production of knowledge. Moreover, as leaders or residents who work for the common good and the community's well-being, they enjoy recognition and respect within their own communities. The community researchers who are part of the working teams collaborate with the academics in every step of the research process. Their active participation seeks to materialise the co-production and the dialogue of knowledges not only within the research teams, but also between these and residents from the neighbourhoods where the study is carried out.

As mentioned previously, the methodology's analytical and conceptual framework focusses on human security, in particular the proposal to centre the analysis of the citizens' needs and expectations on seven domains: personal, political, economic, community, food, health and environment.[7] This approach allows to broaden the scope and to analyse security problems beyond the dynamics of crime and the statistical fluctuations of homicidal and high-impact crime rates. From the perspective of people's daily experience of insecurity and violence, the notion of human security enables the discussion with different groups on the diversity of problems that affect their own and the community's security.

Diagnosing the situation of security in a community through the human security approach reveals the problem's complex aspects. Accordingly, in each case, different social, political, economic, institutional, cultural and environmental phenomena appear as connected and favouring the repro-

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[7]In order to highlight and include the form in which women experienced insecurity and violence, the implementation in Mexico also involved the specific aspect of "women's security".

duction of several forms of violence and insecurity. On the one hand, the notion of human security allows to identify links between different problems that favour chronic violence in each context and possible fields of action and intervention. On the other, it enables the establishment of dialogues (Kostovicova, 2012) and opens spaces for reflection and discussion with sectors that have been excluded from these debates, notwithstanding the fact that they have been the most affected by insecurity.

Even though some spaces have been opened to allow for participation in the field of public security, in Latin America, the debate has been dominated by experts and influential sectors. Additionally, violence and insecurity in the most affected communities imply that people face severe limitations and risks when participating in formal spaces to discuss security problems. Significantly, the level of power and control held by illegal groups in many communities also means that these groups have the capacity and disposition to threaten and deter the community's participation in activities that are contrary to their interests. Accordingly, discussions regarding security problems linked with the dynamics of organised crime entail multiple risks for both the population and the researchers. In this context, taking into account the fear that is often present in these communities, the notion of human security in the framework of the methodology acts as a *key concept*, opening the discussion to topics that are often banned or silenced by means of a perspective and format that makes them less risky. This is achieved by including problematics that are outside the scope of what is traditionally considered security, but that are nonetheless strongly related to it, such as, for instance, poverty, lack of basic infrastructure, access to dignified jobs.

Another key aspect of the methodology is that, through the construction of local agendas, it seeks to contextualise and democratise the debate on security. The methodology acknowledges that not everyone experiences violence and insecurity in the same manner. Therefore, it seeks to enhance dialogues with communities that have been severely affected, while at the

same time recognising the diversity existing within these communities and including the voices of different social groups. For this reason the construction of the agendas involved dialogues with women, children, young or elderly people, displaced populations, LGBTI community members, afro-descendants, and indigenous peoples. This not only acknowledges the particularity of every neighbourhood but also the visions, needs, and proposals of the different sectors. Furthermore, it guarantees that the proposals are geared towards informing intervention strategies and public policies to be more relevant to the local context, and to its resources and capacities.

Human security agendas in Mexico:
Deconstructing their co-construction

With the support of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) of the UK and the Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (CONACYT) of Mexico,[8] three academic institutions of both countries joined forces to adapt the methodology of co-construction of security agendas and apply it in four Mexican cities.[9] The aim was to reach a better understanding of the phenomena of violence and insecurity in the country and to bring forth ideas for improving security policies. The multidisciplinary team of researchers selected four cities presenting chronic violence, where state and non-state responses had been implemented. These cities have furthermore been severely affected by organised crime, as it has influence on state institutions and communities. These criteria sought to comprehend the different ways in which violence and insecurity are expressed locally.

[8]Through the Newton Fund and the Fondo de Cooperación Internacional en Ciencia y Tecnología (Foncicyt).

[9]London School of Economics and Political Science, the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM) and the Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE).

As will be explained in chapter five, the city of Apatzingán was selected because this emblematic locality became the laboratory for a new security strategy against organised crime in 2006. Additionally, high levels of lethal violence and a complex panorama of legal and illegal armed actors turned it into one of the most violent municipalities of the country.

The geographical location of Tijuana makes this city vital for the country, due to its proximity to the US, its important flows of goods and migration, and its position as a crossroads for all kinds of legal and illegal transactions. As explained in chapter three, this city experienced a crisis of violence between 2008 and 2010 that prompted the implementation of institutional measures, actively supported by the business sector. Although the measures managed to contain the armed clashes at the time, they did not prevented the high levels of violence that in 2017 turned Tijuana into the fifth most violent city of the world.

Guadalupe is a municipality in the outskirts of the city of Monterrey, and was chosen for similarly high levels of violence, which escalated into a particularly extreme crisis between 2008 and 2011. In chapter four, we explain how this motivated a series of interventions and programmes on the part of municipal, federal and state institutions, civil associations and international cooperation organisations. This city would allow us to explore the perception of the citizens on a great number of different interventions, and to analyse mutations in violence dynamics.

Finally, Acapulco was selected for being one of the cities most affected by the deterioration of security. Similarly, its characteristics allowed to explore the impact of the crisis on different sectors of the population that in this case depend on a local economy of tourism, which has been devastated by violence.

One neighbourhood in each city was strategically selected according to its high levels of violence and insecurity. These particularly affected neighbourhoods where accessible to researchers and offered possibilities of co-

operation with the residents. In the case of Apatzingán, the neighbourhood (*colonia*) was Lázaro Cárdenas; in Tijuana, neighbourhood Sánchez Taboada; in Guadalupe it was Nuevo Almaguer; and in Acapulco, Balcones de Costa Azul. Once these zones had been chosen, a key step in the process was to find community researchers and to form local research teams. The idea was to meet people with community work experience in their neighbourhoods, who would have no partisan interests or be identified as representatives or intermediaries for a particular party, and who of course would be willing to collaborate on the research. They were identified with the help of civil society organisations, religious communities, schools, and previous contacts of academics involved in the project.

Contrary to what had been done in Colombia and Honduras, in Mexico, besides the academic and community researchers, a number of pracademic (practitioners-academics) researchers were invited. These researchers, apart from their academic training, were also experienced in working with marginalised communities through previous collaboration with NGOs. These researchers were key to enable the dialogue between community researchers and academics, and between local teams and the communities themselves. Their job was to create links between the community and the academia, certainly in contexts in which there had been very little experience in autonomous community organisation, and where there had been no previous contact with academics.

The aim was not to produce a comparative analysis of the dynamics of violence in the four mentioned cities, but rather to inquire into a series of common analytical categories with the residents of particularly affected neighbourhoods. These categories were: *1)* Factors and environments that affect human security; *2)* Perceptions of the outcomes of responses by state and non-state actors to facts and environments that affect human security; *3)* Community responses regarding factors and environments that affect human security; *4)* Proposals produced by the community to improve human

security; *5)* Perceptions within the community regarding armed actors present in the neighbourhood.

Accordingly, the research was both qualitative and exploratory, and guided by a matrix of analytical categories and sub-categories that allowed to understand insecurity in the four cities and provide material for the construction of local human security agendas with the communities. Although the stress in the construction of these agendas was mainly placed on opening spaces for community participation, the research process included exchanges with officials and members of civil organisations in each of the four cities. This is why the information gathering phase included interviews and regular meetings with these strategic actors.

The research process involved a total of 25 people working simultaneously in four different cities. The methodology was new for most of the staff, and the contexts were particularly complex in terms of violence. This required an arduous process of methodological adaptation to and familiarisation with participative action-research methodologies. During the first nine months, the team was trained with weekly online working sessions that allowed to approach the methodology's principles and the definition of criteria for their implementation.

The working sessions were complemented with several methodological support visits by the project's director and coordinator from the UK, including general meetings with the entire team in Mexico City. Moreover, weekly and monthly gatherings were held via Skype during the entire duration of the project in order to ensure the coherence of the methodology's implementation in the four cities, and to discuss the difficulties faced in each context. Additional weekly discussions were encouraged on the basis of topics and reflections proposed by email to the team. This aimed at motivating collective reflection on key topics. The participants were all required to keep field diaries in order to record conversations and observations and to be able to exchange their reflections on the process in a more systematic

manner. The diaries also helped in identifying key findings in each category. Their analysis and the systematisation of information was carried out with NVIVO software codification to provide as much precision as possible.

Before activities could begin in the communities it was necessary to develop security protocols to guarantee that the work would be done according to ethical and security guidelines for the participants and the research team. This was implemented with the support of security advisors in Mexico and advisors in methodological issues from Colombia. As further explained in chapter six, the protocols were revised and approved by the ethics committee of the London School of Economics and Political Science, and reassessed regularly. Besides these protocols, we devised an app for smartphones for the exclusive use of the researchers. The app included a panic button, and was also useful to ensure a quick and secure collection of the community researchers' and pracademics' findings.

Once the protocols were defined, the teams engaged in immersion activities with the help and guidance of the community researchers, who were familiar with the local contexts. The teams managed to improve and strengthen their relationship with the community and to be acknowledged by the residents via exploratory walks, guided visits, and active participation in events of religious or social relevance (mother's day, *Via Crucis*, Christmas celebrations, patron saint festivals, etc.). It was important to be part of the community's daily life and dynamics. In the case of Tijuana, for instance, the team joined neighbourhood committees in their meetings with local authorities to discuss responses to the disasters caused by landslides that affected 300 families of the neighbourhood. It was thus paramount to earn the recognition and trust of the community, not only in order to enable a dialogue of knowledges, but also to create ties, and even to reduce possible risks for the research team. Apart from building trust with members of the community, immersion activities allowed the researchers to understand

the communities' contexts and to identify the groups that would be willing to participate in the co-construction of agendas.

As will be seen in further detail in this chapter, the research team had initial difficulties in understanding the purpose of the methodology, and to recognise what the construction of agendas could do to improve the deplorable local realities. Additionally, it was hard for the teams to make people understand what this research project was about, and, most of all, that contrary to other actors who often approach these communities (political parties, civil organisations, cooperation agencies, religious organisations, officials, etc.), this research project did not offer any material or welfarist retribution. The communities were used to transactional or clientelistic interventions by actors that are foreign to the community, creating expectations that were beyond the scope of this academic research.

Despite these difficulties, the teams progressively managed to establish relationships based on trust and to motivate the participation of key actors from each community. In Tijuana, for instance, the team worked with young people from two parishes and with groups of adult men and women. Altogether, 61 residents of neighbourhood Sánchez Taboada participated, and the team talked with a total of 15 individuals who were either public servants or members of the civil society. In Apatzingán, the team worked with 63 residents of the neighbourhood, including adult men and women and young people, and a group of elderly persons. The team also worked with 53 individuals who were members of citizen collectives and civil organisations, religious leaders and civil servants. In Guadalupe, the team worked with 61 people from neighbourhood Nuevo Almaguer, including a group of young people from a school and another group affiliated to the community, and several adult men and women. They also carried out meetings and interviews with officials of the municipal government and representatives of civil society organisations.

Many different activities were carried out in each of the neighbourhoods in order to motivate the dialogue of knowledges with the community. Conversations and participative activities were organised with different groups around the five analytical categories mentioned previously. The activities were adapted to the dynamics and characteristics of each group. For instance, in Guadalupe, activities with young people included games and recreational exercises, even making a *radionovela*; with the women, beside more intimate conversations in some neighbour's house, the team organised cooking sessions.

In Tijuana, Acapulco, and Guadalupe there were also conversations that included making *collages* and drawing maps (problem tree, dream tree, visual representations of the community's problems); in Apatzingán, the format of *círculos de paz* [peace circles] was successful[10] in creating trust. Beside these activities, the project included participative workshops in audiovisual production, attended mostly by young people. In these workshops, guided by an academic expert in documentary making, they created audiovisual 'letters' that represented and reflected upon the realities of the neighbourhoods and upon positive aspects of their lives. In the beginning, and when security conditions made it difficult or impossible to gather people in public spaces, group activities were complemented with individual conversations.

This kind of work with the community and the constant presence of the team in the neighbourhoods, not only the community researchers, but also the pracademics and academics committed to become part of the community as members of a research team, enabled the creation or re-opening of spaces to gather and interact. To a large extent, the escalation of violence

[10]Spaces for dialogue inspired in indigenous traditions. These sessions enhance comprehension, empowerment and connection among the participants who talk about difficult situations and emotions keeping a sense of positive possibilities and encouraging good relationships and mutual support (Boyes-Watson and Pranis, 2015).

and insecurity had caused the disappearance of these spaces in the communities. As a consequence, division, fragmentation and high levels of suspicion are common characteristics to all the neighbourhoods in which we worked. Progressively, the activities allowed people to meet their neighbours again and to think about the problems which affect them and how they could reestablish and reinforce human links within their communities.

Several proposals included in the Human Security Agendas are directed towards the reconstruction of the social fabric and the communities' capacity for autonomous organisation. In Apatzingán, for instance, one of the concrete results of the agendas was the creation of the city's first citizen collectives network. This network seeks to keep developing some of the ideas included in the agenda and create their own projects to consolidate these initiatives.

Although participative activities were organised in the four cities, in Acapulco, the level of insecurity in the neighbourhood prevented safe access to the community as early as October 2017. As a result, it was impossible to continue to work on the project and co-construct local security agendas. In Apatzingán, Guadalupe and Tijuana, preliminary versions of the agendas were approved by the communities and improved through participative activities in order to reassess and adjust the diagnoses and the proposals with different groups. These activities not only enabled the appropriation of the agendas by the residents, but also created opportunities to analyse the different visions of different groups regarding several problematics. For instance, in Guadalupe, young people had the opportunity to reassess the opinion of the adults on who was responsible for violence and insecurity in the neighbourhood, and to come up with proposals to support young people in a way that was better adapted to their daily experiences.

The local agendas revealed a horizon of local realities, not only with the problems highlighted by the community, but also with problematics identified by the research team, that for some reason the community found diffi-

cult to mention and recognise. This was the case with forced displacement in Apatzingán, and the individual and collective trauma caused by violence, both of which were recognised as silenced problems. In Tijuana, beside the issues brought up by the community, the team identified hidden situations such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, the impact of violence on children, unfavourable pedagogical conditions, and the existence of authoritarian and violent responses by the community in the face of the authorities' inaction.

Once the local agendas were constructed, the team decided to produce a national agenda. This would highlight some of the process' learnings that could be relevant to the national debate. A series of principles were selected and identified as indispensable to a human security policy in Mexico. Concrete responses were given to address the factors that contribute to the perpetuation of chronic violence. Among these are: the recognition of multiple forms of violence, not only those linked with crime; to address the traumatic and progressive impact caused by violence; to actively involve women, young people and victims in the design of strategies to respond to violence; to make violence socially unacceptable; to include local actors in the design, implementation, and evaluation of interventions; to create opportunities and spaces for citizens to gather and associate collectively and independently; and finally, to fight clientelism.

An important part of the process was the socialisation and circulation of the local and national agendas. Various activities were organised in the different communities, in some cases including members of the communities, representatives of civil organisations, officials, and local authorities such as the municipal president of Apatzingán, and, in Guadalupe, the police. Additionally, several events took place in Mexico City which involved academics, officials, and representatives of civil organisations working on a national level. These activities gave the opportunity to discuss with key actors the outcomes of the research process, but also to give local actors the

chance to reappropriate the agendas. Even though this final phase marked the formal completion of the project, we hope it encouraged local actors to use the agendas as tools for their own projects and initiatives. This means that the final phase actually inaugurates the project's purpose of contributing to local transformation.

In Mexico, as in Colombia and Honduras, where security agendas have been constructed using the methodology from below, the research process and the type of relationships and spaces created or strengthened with the co-construction method opened possibilities for different actions, which are difficult to anticipate during the planning and implementation of the project itself.

The difficulties of co-construction in Mexico

Importantly, the methodology's implementation in Acapulco, Apatzingán, Guadalupe, and Tijuana was an opportunity to rethink its potential and the challenges of participatory action-research in contexts of chronic violence. As seen in the case of Acapulco, a city where it was impossible to carry out the activities that had been planned, dynamics of violence and insecurity in the most affected communities certainly represent an impediment to research on security. Nevertheless, previous relationships between the communities and other actors, and the community's level of organisation existing when co-construction projects are to be implemented are equally important.

In the different communities, clientelism and long-standing relationships with political parties have weakened and severely damaged social ties. Added to the general increase in violence levels since 2007, this has reduced communities' capacity to respond to the problems affecting them. Widespread transactional and welfarist relationships with political parties

and civil organisations required greater efforts on the part of local research teams, who needed to prove that they did not belong to any political project or institution. In Guadalupe, they were even interrogated by local leaders who acted as intermediaries between the community and political parties.

Besides these difficulties, which inhibited participation, the political culture of clientelism raised expectations among the inhabitants of the neighbourhoods, who assumed they would receive some kind of concrete or material retribution for their participation in the research project. In these contexts, and due to the lack of previous work experience between the academia and the communities, it appeared difficult for everyone to recognise the potential benefits of a participative research project with the community, with the sole concrete promise of creating Security Agendas. Questions such as: what are we proposing to the community?, what kind of incentives will motivate residents' participation in this project?, what is the project going to change for these people?, etc. were constantly on the minds of all the members of the research team and the participants. These questions were to a large extent the product of the local political culture, but also of the difficult economic and security situation in which the residents live.

Because of the extremely vulnerable context and endless privation, with families about to lose their homes because of landslides, mothers who had lost their children to violence, young people deprived of opportunities, jobs, or even the possibility to enjoy recreational spaces to gather and spend time in healthy manners, abandoned elderly people, and women for whom it was difficult and risky to join the activities because of retaliations from their husbands, it was to be expected that people participating in a research on human security would hope to see more concrete changes in their realities, even if these were beyond the possibilities of a two-year academic project.

Expectations grew when the proposals and initiatives for the improvement of human security began to be discussed with the communities. At this point, it became clear that some members of the community and some of the

researchers expected to be able to intervene rather than only carry out research. The pressure to engage in intervention activities in the communities they were working with had not been experienced by the researchers in Medellín or Tegucigalpa. In Medellín, the academics had always worked with community organisations and community researchers who had their own agendas for action and mobilisation. In this sense, the line separating the production of knowledge carried out in the framework of the academic project and intervention activities proposed independently by the local organisations and the community researchers who belonged to those organisations was much clearer. In Tegucigalpa, the research projects were developed in active alliance with Oxfam. The agency is highly capable, trained and funded, and is also experienced in supporting programmes for communities, which filled these expectations for "intervention". The communities of Mexico, on the contrary, lacked community organisations, and the community researchers were under strong pressure to be more active on the field.

To ease this tension and to respond to the particularities of the Mexican context, a series of criteria was developed in order to collectively decide when and how the research team would carry out intervention activities with the community. These criteria helped the team to evaluate the relevance of activities in the community, while taking into account the team's capacities, the costs and risks involved, and the advantages and coherence of these activities in the process of co-construction. Furthermore, the aim was to stick to the principles of the methodology and to avoid reproducing the paternalistic behaviour that had been identified in the communities. Below is an example of the use of the matrix that was created to decide wether the Apatzingán team should or should not participate in the rehabilitation of a pitch in the neighbourhood, an idea that had been voiced during the talks with the community:

Level of Engagement	Resources and Capacities (During / After)	Advantages	Costs, Disadvantages and Risks (Real / Potential)	Coherence with the Process (contribution to the Security Agendas)	Adherence to Security Protocols
1	*During* Time (requires few other resources)	–Potentially contributes to the awareness process	–Potential conflicts	++++++++ Very high, if it is done as intentional strategy	*Security Risks* Current-Intermediate-Low
2 Rehabilitation of the Pitch		–Disposition to collaborate	–Our role could be misinterpreted		
3		–Possibly triggers other initiatives	–What if we are associated to Pronapred?		After ?
	After ?	–Reciprocity	–Other actors with interests in the pitch will show up		
		–Proof that other, non-clientelistic practices are possible	–A political actor could show up and want to appropriate the process		
		–Proof of action as part of the Agenda			
		–Possibility to discuss about public spaces			
		–Possible link to other actors (women, men, collective efficiency)			

Having a series of clear criteria helped the team to manage the pressure to realise concrete interventions in the neighbourhoods. As the process of construction of the agendas continued, with the realisation of validation activities it progressively became clearer for everybody that the agendas had a real potential. More importantly, it was clarified what kind of activities and relationships were being built as part of their construction.

More generally, the participatory process brought about a series of difficulties for the researchers themselves. The latter were indeed required to adapt to the rhythm of the community, to learn to listen, and to challenge their own assumptions, while at the same time remaining critical towards the community's input and contributions. Academics, pracademics and community researchers were faced with the process of discovering and appropriating their own role in the project, an aspect that was not clear from the start and caused many uncertainties within the team. Additionally, the academics faced the risk of losing total control over the research, as when working with communities they had to be willing to adjust to the local actors' realities, to include their ideas, to allow people to appropriate the process, and to let the construction of the agendas lead to unexpected results. Finally, there were also interrogations coming from the traditional academia, which in the field of security is dominated by quantitative approaches. The interrogations questioned the rigour and representativity of the findings of qualitative action-oriented methodologies.

The potential of the methodology of "co-construction of security from below" must be assessed according to how its results and findings contribute to the academic and practical debate on security, but also according to the local context and the realities of the communities with which the work was done. In this sense, in Mexico, the methodology revealed the diversity and complexity of violence and insecurity, their profound impact on individuals and communities, but also the communities' capacity for potential action. Additionally, it enabled more constructive relationships among

members of communities who had lost spaces and opportunities to gather and coexist. It additionally enabled the creation of constructive relationships between the community and the members of the teams. For all the people involved in the process, it was a great opportunity to prove that it is possible to think of forms of interaction outside the models of clientelism, paternalism and academic extractivism.[11]

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that the methodology offered the possibility to reconsider assumed truths as to Mexico's major problem today. More clearly, it provided evidence that violence is not only or mainly connected to the illegal drug business. It also allowed to create spaces wherein to imagine a multidimensional security policy, based on local specificities and on a more humane vision of the security provision to deactivate chronic violence instead of feeding authoritarian expressions of citizenship and state power. In this sense, the methodology also revealed the relevance of the human security approach to rethink how to prioritise communities and how to reach more coherence in social and security policies based on local realities.

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Beyond the war on drugs:
Violence and security in Mexico
Cecilia Farfán Méndez

On the first day of December 2018, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) took office as the president of Mexico. The rate of homicides was by then higher than when his predecessor, Enrique Peña Nieto, took office in 2012, and considered the highest since 1990. For experts on security, the spiral of violence is obvious: in the decade between 2007 and 2017, 240,575 people were killed, and more than 37,000 have gone missing.[1]

The details reveal the tragedies unfolding in different parts of the country. The case that most resonated internationally was that of Ayotzinapa, when 43 students went missing in Iguala, Guerrero, in September 2014. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights (CIDH, by its initials in Spanish) refuted the "historical truth" of the Mexican government according to which the 43 students had been kidnapped by municipal police, and delivered to the criminal group *Guerreros Unidos*, who killed them and burned the bodies in the garbage dump of Cocula. The CIDH claimed this version was false, because evidence showed that the bodies could not have been burned in Cocula given the setting's conditions. They also revealed that a number of facts had not been investigated, evidence had been tampered with, and errors had been committed regarding the protection of the victims, which "entailed greater risk for their lives, and in some cases probably precipitated death or its subsequent development".[2] To this day, besides having

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[1] http://www.beta.inegi.org.mx/contenidos/saladeprensa/boletines /2018/EstSegPub/homicidios2017_07.pdf [accessed on 24 September 2018]; and https://www.gob.mx/sesnsp/acciones-y-programas/registro-nacional-de-datos-de-personas-extraviadas-o-desaparecidas-rnped [accessed on 24 September 2018].

[2] http://www.senado.gob.mx/comisiones/derechos_humanos/docs/Informe_ayotzinapa.pdf

hindered the GIEI (Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts, by its initials in Spanish) from concluding its work in Mexico, the Attorney General's Office (PGR) has not accepted the CIDH's recommendations, nor a federal court's order to form a truth commission.[3]

Elsewhere, in an interview with the New York Times in November 2017, the prosecutor of Veracruz asserted that the place was "a giant [clandestine] grave".[4] In the face of the state's failure and unwillingness to locate the disappeared, the parents have created associations which, with their own resources and with donations, search the clandestine burial sites with the hope of finding their children. In Ciudad Juárez, in the course of 2010, the most violent year ever recorded, 70 persons were murdered per week. Now, even though the homicide rate has diminished in the city, the suicide rate has increased. According to a study carried out by the Autonomous University of Ciudad Juárez and the Family Centre for Integration and Growth (*Centro Familiar de Integración y Crecimiento*) in 2016, 12,000 people —1.3 percent of Juárez's total population— tried to kill themselves.[5]

How has Mexico, a country of middle income and no declared war, reached these levels of violence? The prevailing narrative of the media claims that the high rate in homicides is the result of activities related to drug trafficking.[6] This explanation implies that all groups who are involved in drug trafficking are inherently violent, and as a natural consequence of

[3]https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2016/04/160424_ayotzinapa_giei_informe_final_an

[4]https://www.nytimes.com/es/2017/11/20/desapariciones-forzadas-mexico-veracruz-violencia/

[5]https://theconversation.com/rising-suicides-in-mexico-expose-the-mental-health-toll-of-living-with-extreme-chronic-violence-99131

[6]From an academic perspective, there are at least two meta-narratives that have attempted to resume the arguments and explain the increase in violence. Benítez, Rodríguez and Quintanar (2018) detail six categories: socio-economic background, institutional weakness, external influence, governmental action, conflict between criminal groups, and failure of the state. Similarly, Zepeda Gil (2018) examines seven causes: governmental action, criminal conflict, inter-governmental non-co-operation, state weakness, external influence, socio-economic backcloth and criminal war against the state.

their struggle for territory, they would inevitably have conflicts which would, in turn, cause a great number of human losses.

If this version can serve as mental shortcut, the information we have a decade after the escalation of violence reveals a much more complex scenario, implying numerous factors are involved in the deterioration of security. Additionally, drug trafficking in Mexico is more than a century old, not a recent phenomenon. In this view, if the homicide and other crimes rates have increased in the last decade, but the culture and distribution of illegal drugs is more than a century old, how do we account for the last ten years' violence?

This chapter analyses the impact of drug trafficking in the upsurge of violence related to the "war on drugs" from 2007 until now. Drawing from statistical analyses of the different manifestations of violence, the chapter traces the need to understand and study violence beyond the issue of homicides. Additionally, drawing from the findings outlined in the other chapters of this book, this text posits the need to go beyond a narrative that exclusively focuses on the groups involved in drug trafficking as producers and reproducers of violences.

The chapter is divided in four sections. The first briefly exposes the consequences of the decision to fully involve the armed forces in the struggle against drug trafficking and analyses how this decision increased both the levels of violence that characterised interactions between the state and the drug trafficking organisations, and the conflicts among and within these groups themselves. This analysis is important for two reasons: the unprecedented level of involvement of the armed forces in the struggle against drug trafficking, and the negative impact of their actions in the exacerbation of violations of human rights in Mexico.

The second section outlines a critical analysis of the narrative that explains violence as being the result of conflicts or confrontations among groups involved in drug trafficking. On the basis of a discussion about their

structure and organisation, this section asserts the need to revise our understanding of the drug trafficking groups and rethink their impact on the violences that affect the country. The third section examines extortion and domestic violence as cases of non-lethal violence affecting the population daily, but having received less attention on the part of the academia and public programmes. In the context of this research these violences are seen as part of what we call chronic violence, violence that "is reproduced in different spaces, carried out by a great diversity of actors, and persists in time".[7] We will see that these violences are strongly related to lethal violence, even if the correlation is not obvious. The fourth section is the conclusion.

The Mexican State *vs.* drug trafficking organisations

Although the struggle against drug trafficking is not a recent issue for the Mexican State, its frontal character and the leading role of the armed forces (Army, Navy and Air Force) began with ex-president Felipe Calderón's term in December 2006.[8] In his first speech as president he declared that insecurity had become "the main problem of states, cities, and entire regions," adding: "I know that it will not be easy nor speedy to reestablish security, that it will take time, that it will cost much money, and, unfortunately, also human lives. But rest assured that this is a battle that I will lead on the frontline, a battle we must fight, and that, united as Mexicans, we will win".[9]

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[7]*National Agenda, Towards a Human Security Agenda for Mexico: For a Security that Does not Reproduce Violence.* 2018. See: http://www.lse.ac.uk/lacc/assets/documents/AGENDA-NACIONAL. pdf

[8]For a detailed account of Calderón's security strategy, see Luis Astroga*"¿Qué querían que hiciera?": inseguridad y delincuencia organizada en el gobierno de Felipe Calderón*, [What was I supposed to do? Insecurity and organised delinquency in Felipe Calderón's government] Mexico, Grijalbo, 2015.

[9]http://calderon.presidencia.gob.mx/2006/12/palabras-al-pueblo-de-mexico-desde-el-auditorio-nacional/#b3 [accessed on 24 September 2018].

A few months later, in March 2007, after announcing his Security and Anti-Crime Strategy (*Estrategia Integral de Prevención del Delito y Combate a la Delincuencia*), Calderón claimed:

> The reason for this struggle is very clear: we are not leaving the courses of our lives and our country in the hands of criminals, much less will we give space to those who pretend to poison the bodies and souls of our children, of our kids, and our young through violence and drug addiction […] in the six years to come, we will do all we can to save ourselves from the claws of drugs and the danger of crime.[10]

According to a report by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the U.S. Senate, president Felipe Calderón justified the inclusion of the armed forces in the combat against organised crime because corruption pervaded the Federal Police and the Attorney General's Office (PGR, by its initials in Spanish). Indeed, in 2005, more than 20 percent of the public servants of both institutions were being investigated for criminal activities.[11]

It is important to mention that even when the discourse on security was mainly being produced and circulated by the Federal Executive power, the deployment of the armed forces in the struggle against drug trafficking was supported by the majority in the three levels of the government, and in the beginning also by the citizens. For instance, two surveys cited in the National Development Plan (*Plan Nacional de Desarrollo*) (2007-2012) report that the population's level of acceptance of the involvement of the army to fight drug traffickers ranged between 88 and 89 percent.[12] In January 2007, after the launching of the *Operación Conjunta Michoacán*, the then-Gover-

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[10] http://calderon.presidencia.gob.mx/2007/03/el-presidente-calderon-en-el-anuncio-de-la-estrategia-integral-para-la-prevencion-del-delito-y-combate-a-la-delincuencia/#b2 [accessed on 24 September 2018].

[11] *U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. The Merida Initiative: Guns, Drugs, and Friends*, 2007.

[12] *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2007-2012*, Presidencia de la República, Estados Unidos Mexicanos, pp. 67-68.

nor, Lázaro Cárdenas Batel, expressed his gratitude to the president: "a gratitude [...] shared by thousands of people in our state, who were demanding a reaction with these characteristics, this structure, and this determination".[13]

Furthermore, in August 2008, the National Agreement for Security, Justice and Legality (*Acuerdo Nacional por la Seguridad, la Justicia y la Legalidad*, ANSJL) acknowledged that

> organised crime has harmed the social fabric and has found shelter in entire families and communities. The challenge is indisputable and not to be delayed [...] Society demands, justly, that the authorities take a clear engagement in creating solid, honest, and efficient security institutions [...] to end impunity and corruption and to firmly confront crime in all its expressions.[14]

The agreement was backed by the Federal Executive power, the governors, the head of the then Federal District of Mexico, the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, the Judicial Power, representatives of the municipal governments, the media, civil society organisations, business associations, and even religious congregations. The participation of the three levels of the government and civil society organisations proves that the "war against drugs" was not only "Calderón's war," and that the deployment of the armed forces was originally supported by various sectors of society without any serious debate on the conflicts that this measure could exacerbate. Particularly important is the gradual deterioration of three conflicts: groups of drug traffickers against the state, drug trafficking groups against their rivals and conflicts within the drug trafficking groups themselves.[15]

[13]http://calderon.presidencia.gob.mx/2007/01/diversas-intervenciones-durante-la-visita-y-saludo-a-las-fuerzas-federales-en-Apatzingán-michoacan/ [accessed on 24 September 2018].

[14]http://www.oas.org/juridico/spanish/mesicic3_mex_anexo24.pdf

[15]Farfán-Méndez, 2016. In this research we call organised crime those groups that have a chain of command/authority, division of labour, and continuity (Finckenauer, 2005), whereas drug trafficking groups are those which correspond to the former definition and are involved in illegal drugs business.

The attack on these organisations elicited a hard-handed response from those who would not simply quit such a profitable business. In the face of military intervention, they sought to protect crops, production centres, smuggling routes, territory, money, and, in some cases, their personal integrity. The clash between the state and these groups caused dynamics of violence that go far beyond shootings, and have had deep and long-term consequences for the rule of law and the protection of human rights.

During the first 100 days of Calderón's term, several operations were launched jointly in Michoacán, Guerrero, Baja California, Sinaloa, Chihuahua, Nuevo León and Tamaulipas. In 2006, the seven states added up 3,873 homicides from a total of 10,454 for the entire country. By 2011, the most violent year of Calderón's presidency, and one year before the end of his mandate, homicides in Mexico escalated to 27,213, which corresponds to 24 per hundred citizens, i.e. more than twice the rate of 2006.

In the face of this wave of homicides, the government spread a narrative of "cockroach effect" or displacement of crime. In other words, precisely because the strategy against drug trafficking was working, criminals fled the territories were the operations were carried out, which explained the increase of violence in other regions.[16] In contrast with this narrative, which emphasised the alleged success of the operations against drug trafficking organisations, national and international non-governmental organisations began to denounce the drawbacks of this security policy. In 2009, Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that the armed forces had incurred in severe violations of human rights in the course of their activities, including forced

[16]For instance, in 2007, after the Tijuana Operation, in which the army disarmed more than 2,200 agents of the municipal police to verify if their guns had been used in criminal activities, the governor of Sonora (close to Baja California) warned that "the only thing the deployment of troops will cause is a 'cockroach effect'", i.e. that the criminals would simply go to neighbouring states. https://www.proceso.com.mx/204624/golpe-propagandistico-la-militarizacion-de-tijuana [accessed on 24 September 2018].

disappearances, killings, torture, sexual abuse and arbitrary detention.[17] That same year, Amnesty International claimed that "the cases that have been reported reveal a model of severe violations of human rights carried out by members of the armed forces during activities of security provision corresponding to civil authorities".[18] Violations included forced disappearances, extrajudicial executions, torture, and arbitrary detentions.

In 2011, HRW reported: "more than strengthening public security in Mexico, Calderón's war fuelled the climate of violence, impunity, and fear in many parts of the country".[19] One year later, Amnesty International declared: "we have been voicing our concern for years now, regarding reports that include torture, and cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatments carried out by members of the military and by federal, state, and municipal police".[20] In 2013, HRW concluded: "the war against drugs has produced disastrous results. Not only did it fail to weaken criminal groups, it also dramatically increased severe violations of human rights by the armed forces".[21]

Empirical studies on the use of lethal force by the Mexican troops support the claims of these organisations. The Lethality Index 2008-2014 report (*Indice de Letalidad*), published in 2017, focussed on the confrontations between the forces of the state and alleged members of criminal organisations between 2008 and 2014. It reveals alarming tendencies, including increasing opacity by the Secretary of National Defence (SEDENA, by its acronym in Spanish) regarding official statistics.[22] According to the

[17]https://www.hrw.org/report/2009/04/29/uniform-impunity/mexicos-misuse-military-justice-prosecute-abuses-counternarcotics

[18]https://www1.essex.ac.uk/armedcon/mexiconewreport.pdf

[19]https://www.hrw.org/report/2011/11/09/neither-rights-nor-security/killings-torture-and-disappearances-mexicos-war-drugs

[20]https://www.amnestyusa.org/reports/known-abusers-but-victims-ignored-torture-and-ill-treatment-in-mexico/

[21]https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/02/20/mexicos-disappeared/enduring-cost-crisis-ignored

[22]C. Silva Forné, C. Pérez Correa and R. Gutiérrez Rivas, "Índice de letalidad 2008-2014: menos enfrentamientos, misma letalidad, más opacidad", *Perfiles latinoamericanos*, 25(50), pp. 331-359.

authors, the death of ten or more civilians for every security agent killed in confrontations suggests that lethal force is being used much more than necessary. According to the SEDENA's data, in 2008 the proportion was of 5.1 civilians per official killed in confrontations. By 2011, however, it reached 32.4. Several printed media claim that by 2014, the number of civilian deaths per soldier had reached 53. The ratio between civilians and marines is even larger: in 2009 it was of 24, and by 2014 it had reached 74.[23]

The lethality ratio —the number of civilians killed per wounded civilian in a confrontation— also indicates an excessively heavy-handed approach. According to official data, the deadliness ratio of the army increased from 1.6 to 14.7 between 2007 and 2012. This means that if in 2007 1.6 civilians were killed for every wounded civilian, by 2014 there were 14.7 civilians killed for every civilian wounded in armed confrontations. Even if the rate for 2014 only corresponds to the first trimester of the year, it reaches 11.6 deaths per wounded. The army's official reports do not allow to assess these rates, since in 85 percent of the reported confrontations there are no data. Press releases, however, "assert possible extrajudicial executions".[24] A number of researchers have requested the publication of data after 2014 to continue evaluating the use of lethal force in the struggle against drug trafficking. However, after the publication of the Lethality Index 2008-2014 report, the SEDENA has refused to give information that would permit to continue evaluating the lethality ratio.[25]

The involvement of the armed forces in the struggle against drug trafficking has also had negative consequences for the legality and legitimacy of criminal trials.[26] Data from the 2012 Survey of Incarcerated Population

[23]*Idem.*

[24]*Ibid.*, p. 345.

[25]Personal communication with the author, August 2018.

[26]B. Magaloni, A.L. Magaloni Kerpel and Z. Razú, "La tortura como método de investigación criminal: El impacto de la guerra contra las drogas en México", Política y Gobierno, vol. xxv, no. 2, second semester 2018, pp. 223-261.

(*Encuesta a Población en Reclusión del Sistema Penitenciario Federal*) evidences the systematic dismissal of the protection of human rights within the struggle against drug trafficking organisations, and the use of torture as a method for criminal investigation. For instance, before 2006, the armed forces carried out 14 percent of the total detentions. This rose to 30 percent with the beginning of the war on drugs.[27] Before the war started, the army had a probability of beating of 0.26, and of 0.21[28] of committing torture (electric shocks, branding, asphyxiation, drowning, crushing with heavy objects, or inflicting stab wounds). However, once the frontal war on drug trafficking organisations was launched, these probabilities rose to 0.77 and 0.72, respectively.[29]

This evidence does not imply that before the armed forces were deployed the Mexican State had an impeccable record regarding the protection of human rights, which was only degraded by the war on drugs. However, evidence from national and international civil society organisations, and academic research based on reliable sources reveal how the militarisation of the functions of public security that formally correspond to the civilian police caused a crisis of human rights that goes beyond drug trafficking.

Conflicts between drug trafficking organisations

The most common accounts of the violence perpetrated during the last decade focus on the supposed confrontations between drug traffickers, popularised in TV series such as *Narcos, El Señor de los Cielos, El cártel de los Sapos*, and movies like *Sicario*. The explanations, apparently intuitive, are

[27]*Idem.*
[28]The probabilities are on a scale of 0 to 1, in which 0= something that never occurs and 1=something that always occurs.
[29]B. Magaloni, A.L. Magaloni Kerpel and Z. Razú, Z., *op. cit*.

based on the premise that the aggressive nature of these groups worsens the conditions of a market that is inherently violent.

However, the analysis of the conflicts between different groups brings up more questions than answers. If it is true that these conflicts exist, their causes are generally unknown, as are the possible attempts at mediation and all the actors involved, which includes state actors. These unknown facts are important because the causes of and the ways to resolve these conflicts reveal different levels of sophistication among drug trafficking groups and, as a consequence, the selective use —or absence of— violence and its effects on the population. The claim that confrontations are inevitable, and the alleged violent nature of the groups hides the fact that not all organisations involved in illegal drug trafficking carry out their activities in the same manner. This is to say, all of them are criminals, but not all of them act in the same ways.

During the first years of the "war on drugs," official sources claimed that the conflicts between rivals were mainly due to the decrease in cocaine demand in the U.S. (Garzón and Bailey, 2016; Castillo, Mejía and Restrepo, 2014; Valdés, 2013). According to this version, this decrease had forced the groups to compete for a smaller market and seek other income sources through other criminal activities such as extortions and kidnappings. As a consequence, the different groups were struggling for the control of the territory, causing the escalation of violence in the country. If it is true that cocaine demand dropped, the illegal drug market as a whole actually grew. According to official data, in 2008, 20.1 million people aged 12 or older had used some kind of illegal drug in the last 30 days in the U.S., which corresponds to 8 percent of the population aged 12 or older.[30] By 2017, this

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[30]http://www.dpft.org/resources/NSDUHresults2008.pdf. It is important to acknowledge that according to the SAMHSA, data for the period before 2015 are not comparable to data of 2017 due to methodological changes. In this sense, even if the data of 2008 and 2017 give a model on drug consumption in the U.S., the prevalence of consumption cannot strictly be compared.

figure reached 30.5 million people, which means one in nine Americans, or 11.2 percent of the population aged 12 or older.[31]

Additionally, even if the production of cocaine decreased between 2005 and 2013, it again increased by 56 percent for the period between 2013 and 2016, reaching historical levels of production in 2017, with an estimated 1,379 tons.[32] It is therefore false that traffickers were competing for other sources of income and became *necessarily* involved in extortions and kidnappings. Even if violence can be attributed to shifts in the drug market, this could only be a partial explanation, as not all Mexican groups are involved in cocaine trafficking with the same degree of sophistication or association with their Colombian peers. For instance, evidence contained in accusations against Mexican individuals in the U.S. reveals that whereas the Sinaloa (or Pacific) organisation has commercial partners in Colombia and buys cocaine in the andean country, the *Zetas* bought cocaine in Guatemala and lacked the Sinaloa group's commercial contacts with Colombia. Furthermore, the separation of the *Zetas* from the Gulf organisation took place in a period of increasing demand for synthetic drugs (2007-2010). These drugs can be produced locally, and do not require vertical integrations like the international transfer of illicit drugs.[33]

As revealed by an analysis of the structures —hierarchies *vs.* networks— of the drug trafficking groups, there are organisations that are more likely than others to diversify their criminal activities due to the logic of their business model.[34] Contrary to hierarchical structures, which develop human capital, networks hire their staff on the basis of their experience in specific tasks, and present a high personnel turnover and no development

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[31]https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/cbhsq-reports/NSDUHFFR2017/NSDUH-FFR2017.pdf

[32]https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Colombia/Colombia_Monitoreo_territorios_afectados_cultivos_ilicitos_2017_Resumen.pdf

[33]Farfán-Méndez, *op. cit.*

[34]*Idem.*

of human capital. For instance, a network structure hires a *sicario* for its skills as hired killer. Instead of acquiring more knowledge and responsibilities and being promoted within the organisation, as would be the case in a hierarchical structure, the *sicario* knows he has no chances of professional growth in the group, as by its very design there is no possibility of ascension. This lack of investment in time and human capital, both in the group and on the individual level, entails no motivation for long-term involvement, and in this view, the profits made today are more valuable than profits to be made in the future.

The rates of homicides and kidnappings for 1997-2014 reveal how a diversification in criminal activities is more common among groups with network structures —*Zetas*, *Familia Michoacana* and *Caballeros Templarios*— than among those which have a hierarchical structure —Sinaloa. This is why kidnappings are more common in places operated by groups with network structures as compared to states with hierarchical groups.[35] This does not imply that hierarchical groups do not resort to violence, but rather that they display a certain amount of *selective* use of violence.

Data from the National Survey on Victimisation and Perception of Public Security from the National Institute of Statistic and Geography (INEGI, by its initials in Spanish) reveal that people who live in Sinaloa feel less insecure than people in Michoacán and Tamaulipas, which are considered the operation centres of the *Familia Michoacana* and the *Caballeros Templarios*, and the *Zetas*, respectively. This is important because even if Sinaloa has had higher homicide rates than Tamaulipas and Michoacán, the number of kidnappings remains lower. Charts 1, 2, and 3 show data regarding these three states and other states discussed in this book (Baja California and Guerrero). It is interesting to note that in all cases, the perception of insecurity is worse in the states than nationwide.

[35]*Idem.*

Chart 1
PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION WHO FEELS INSECURE IN THE FEDERAL ENTITY

Entity	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Tamaulipas	83	83	84	84	87	86	85
Michoacán	76	76	80	82	80	72	78
Sinaloa	81	76	78	72	71	72	75
Baja California	58	52	52	54	53	57	73
Guerrero	73	74	87	80	87	85	84
Nuevo León	85	86	80	73	71	74	75
National	70	67	72	73	73	72	74

Source: Own elaboration with data from the INEGI.
Tamaulipas, Sinaloa, and Michoacán are included as bases for drug trafficking organisations; Baja California, Guerrero, and Nuevo León are included to draw a comparison with the research project.

Chart 2
HOMICIDE RATES PER 100,000 INHABITANTS

Entity	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Tamaulipas	32	46	25	26	19	22	32
Michoacán	19	18	20	20	19	29	36
Sinaloa	69	48	42	39	37	43	53
Baja California	25	17	23	21	25	32	60
Guerrero	70	76	65	49	68	71	71
Nuevo León	45	38	19	11	9	12	13
National	24	22	19	17	17	20	25

Source: Own elaboration with data from the INEGI.
Tamaulipas, Sinaloa, and Michoacán are included as bases for drug trafficking organisations; Baja California, Guerrero, and Nuevo León are included to draw a comparison with the research project.

Chart 3
KIDNAPPING RATES PER 100,000 INHABITANTS

Entity	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Tamaulipas	3.82	3.62	5.66	7.48	6.49	4.33	3.86
Michoacán	2.92	3	4.28	1.82	.67	.54	.62
Sinaloa	1.18	1.2	1.3	.7	.40	.47	.46
Baja California	1.95	.90	.98	1.19	.32	.40	.36
Guerrero	3.94	4.71	5.87	3.10	2.27	2.01	1.91
Nuevo León	1.06	1.25	.93	.80	.41	.52	.67
National	1.24	1.21	1.43	1.17	.88	.92	.93

Source: Own elaboration with data from the Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System (*Secretariado Ejecutivo del Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública*). Tamaulipas, Sinaloa, and Michoacán are included as bases for drug trafficking organisations; Baja California, Guerrero, and Nuevo León are included to draw a comparison with the research project.

In short, if it is true that conflicts between organisations do impact public security, to interpret these conflicts as necessary results of an illegal drug market has reduced our understanding both of the criminal groups and of the diversification of their criminal activities. The narratives of the conflicts built based on stories of *individual* members of these groups have prevented a full-fledged analysis of the organisations and of the conditions of the market that allow the rise of specific criminal activities. In the case of Mexico, the increase in kidnappings and extortions partially obeys the incentives network-structured groups find in these activities. To ignore the structural differentiation of the organisations will keep producing wrong and reductionist diagnoses of the confrontations between drug trafficking groups. The next section examines other forms of violence that go beyond the war on drugs.

Beyond the war on drugs: Invisible violences

Trust in public institutions and their role as providers of justice has dropped in the last years. According to data from the INEGI, in 2017, 93.6 percent of

the crimes were not reported or no preliminary investigation was conducted. In 33 percent of the cases, the victims did not report the facts because they considered it was a waste of time, whereas 16.5 percent refused to report because they did not trust the authorities. Even though the absence of reports is a problem in Latin America as a whole, Mexico presents a higher rate than countries like Brazil or Colombia, where the percentage of unreported crimes is 80 and 76 percent, respectively.

These figures also reveals how little we know about other violences occurring in the country, be it because people do not report, or because these are not considered violences pertaining to public life. Many non-lethal violences remain invisible in the public debate, but just like homicides, they have long-standing consequences for the communities. The following section offers a brief analysis of two types of non-lethal violences, namely extortion and domestic violence. This is not to say these are the only or most important violences that occur, but we have found that they significantly impact the communities with which the research process was carried out in Apatzingán, Tijuana, Guadalupe and Acapulco.

Chart 4
PERCENTAGE OF UNREPORTED CRIME PER STATE

Entity	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Baja California	80.9	82.5	84.8	89.9	90.3	89.5	92.2	89.2
Guerrero	96.2	96.2	95.5	96.7	95.8	97.5	98.3	96.8
Michoacán	94.7	92	94	94	93.6	92.9	93.8	92.7
Nuevo León	94.9	94	93.2	93.3	92.9	92.8	93.7	93.9
National	92	91.6	92.1	93.8	92.8	93.7	93.6	93.2

Source: Own elaboration with data from the INEGI.

Extortion

Data from the INEGI reveal that extortion is seldom reported in Mexico. Whereas the dark figure of crime is 93.6 percent, the estimated dark figure for extortion is of 98.2 percent. This means that even though it is one of the most common offences in the country —in 2018, 15 of the 32 federative entities reported it as the most common offence—, lack of information prevents us from understanding how it affects people on a daily basis. This is relevant because whereas 93.2 percent of extortions are committed via telephone, in Acapulco, Apatzingán, Guadalupe and Tijuana, the research revealed the prevalence of "cobro de piso" [extortion fees] in all kind of formal and informal commercial activities.

Chart 5
EXTORTION RATES PER 100,000 INHABITANTS

Entity	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Tamaulipas	4.65	4.5	6.5	5.4	4.91	2.99	5.02
Michoacán	4.13	7.61	5.76	4.43	.94	.39	.45
Sinaloa	4.83	4.3	3.96	4.43	4.29	3.46	1.68
Baja California	10.87	12.05	10.32	8.48	6.34	4.95	5.64
Guerrero	2.45	3.80	4.94	4.48	4.04	5.55	4.85
Nuevo León	1.27	4.03	5.77	7.52	10.01	12.14	12.96
National	3.97	6.22	6.94	4.83	4.24	4.31	4.57

Source: Own elaboration with data from the Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System (*Secretariado Ejecutivo del Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública*).

Extortion in Michoacán has gone as far as to internationally impact the prices of the state's two main crops, namely limes and avocados. In January 2014, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that *La Familia Michoacana* and the *Caballeros Templarios* claimed a "tax" of $2,200 from small producers,

whereas major packers and handlers payed $15,000 a month.[36] With exportations of around 500,000 tons of avocado corresponding to nearly one thousand million dollars, it was estimated that the criminal organisations of Michoacán earned around 150 million only from extorting avocado producers and packers.

The research in Apatzingán also revealed how the criminal groups determine which day the limes may or may not be picked and establish *narcobloqueos*, blocking the only way in and out of the city. In this manner, extortion not only affects the businesspeople and the owners of the crops, but also the workers, who have less possibilities of being hired for legal activities, and as a consequence become more vulnerable to recruitment by criminal groups. Additionally, in Apatzingán, this kind of control over the most important economic activities of the area creates the idea that criminal groups are capable of controlling the territory in a way the state cannot.

However, businesspeople in the formal economy are not the only victims of extortions. The research revealed that people involved in illegal activities are also affected, and that the nature of their businesses, prevents them from reporting extortion to the police.

For instance, in Acapulco and Guadalupe, *pirata* taxis operating without license have been charged extortion fees by criminal groups. Paying fees allows them to work in certain zones, because they can serve as *halcones* [street level informants], or collaborate in local drug dealing. Notably, in 2012, 13 taxi drivers were killed in Acapulco and Guadalupe in 24 hours, which reveals the prevalence of this problem.[37] The vulnerability of the taxi drivers has important consequences for the mobility of people who live in marginalised areas. For instance, in Acapulco, women living in zones where

[36]J. de Córdoba, *The Violent Gang Wars Behind Your Super Bowl Guacamole*, 31 January 2014 [accessed on 4 March 2015, the Wall Street Journal:] http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052 7023032777045793492835841213444

[37]https://www.lavanguardia.com/sucesos/20120411/54283627598/violencia-narcotrafico-deja-13-taxistas-muertos-mexico.html

there is no public transport have a tendency to take taxis with other women or men, but never alone, since they know this turns them into easy targets for taxi drivers, who are themselves the victims of other criminal actors. Even women working for the tourist police in the port told us they prefer to wait until other colleagues finish their shifts, and take a taxi together rather than leaving on their own.

Besides the economic cost of extortions for the formal and informal economies, the process revealed that this crime causes a deep feeling of defencelessness, since the victims feel they cannot recur to the authorities. In neighbourhood Sánchez Taboada, Tijuana, people know that the street stalls that sell food on market days are charged extortion fees and believe that the municipal police are the main beneficiaries of this money. Because of this, even if they would like the stalls to remain longer, they understand that the sellers work shorter hours in order to pay lower extortion fees.

The crisis of security in Mexico and the failure of the state in its role as security and justice provider has increased the opportunities for criminals to make profits. Additionally, extortion affecting corporation owners and employees of the formal and informal economies clearly fuels the impunity cycle existing in the country, with the added misfortune that it further weakens the trust in the state.

Domestic violence

According to the 2013 Global Study on Homicide of the United Nations (UNODC), domestic violence in the family or the couple disproportionately affects women. In 2012, nearly half of the female victims of homicide had been murdered by their partners or by a member of their family, as compared to less than 6 percent of the male victims. Accordingly, while men are killed by male strangers, women are killed by those with whom they are

supposed to have relationships of trust or affection.[38] This is important, because among the most significant findings of our research were the silences regarding domestic violence and how it is considered a distant problem and distinct from lethal violence. Notably, even if the four teams worked in very different contexts, the conclusion regarding domestic violence was similar: the people facing this type of violence refuse to discuss it, because it is considered a private issue.

The silences we encountered locally are consistent with the tendencies in the country. According to the National Civic Femicide Observatory (OCNF, by its initials in Spanish), in 2017, only nine states provided information for the entire year, with which it was impossible to assess femicides in the country as a whole.[39] Official data indicate a growth of 52 percent from 2014 to 2017 in the number of murdered women, but there are no details giving basic information like the ages of the victims, the methods used in the murders, the places where they were found, and their relationship with the murderer or murderers. Notably, of the four communities we worked with, three —Acapulco, Apatzingán and Guadalupe— have implemented a gender alert which is activated to coordinate actions of emergency in cases of femicidal violence.

Co-construction is doubtless a useful methodology to turn the silences into voices. Nevertheless, the first step towards this goal is to create a supportive structure that can provide the possibility to discuss domestic violence; and to better understand how it is connected to other violences, particularly to lethal violence against women.

[38]https://www.unodc.org/gsh/
[39]https://observatoriofeminicidio.files.wordpress.com/2018/05/enviando-informe-implementac-iocc81n-del-tipo-penal-de-feminicidio-en-mecc81xico-2014-2017-1.pdf

Conclusion

This chapter examined the role played by drug trafficking organisations in the escalation of the different violences in the country by analysing the particular deterioration of two conflicts: the ones involving the state and drug trafficking groups and drug trafficking groups against other similar groups. The analysis reveals how the intervention of the armed forces exacerbated a human rights crisis. The armed forces are not only responsible for forced disappearances, torture and extrajudicial deaths, but their participation in tasks related to public security provision has had consequences for the legality of due process.

Additionally, even if conflicts among drug trafficking organisations can increase levels of violence, the diversification of criminal activities is not inherent to the illegal drug market. Drug trafficking organisations present differences in their business models that determine how they resort to violence and the probability that they engage in kidnappings and extortions.

The rise of other criminal activities cannot be considered solely through the lens of drug trafficking. Even though this has indeed entailed other criminal behaviours, there are other, non-lethal violences, that considerably affect people's lives and communities. For instance, extortions fuel the feeling of defencelessness among communities, and the perception that real force and capacity is in the hands of criminal groups and not those of the state, and further reinforces impunity cycles. In the same vein, silence regarding domestic violence must be linked to lethal violence, particularly to femicides.

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Narratives of violence in the Sánchez Taboada neighbourhood, Tijuana:
Between abandonment and active citizenship

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Introduction

For more than a decade now, criminal violence has been a particularly important issue in Mexico. This is not only due to the significance of the war on drugs in the country's public agenda, but also to the actual impact of the sudden upsurge and intensification of this violence. In 2008, the second year of President Felipe Calderon's term, Mexico's rise in homicides was palpable both regionally and locally. In the state of Baja California, the homicide rates rose from 15.01 in 2005 to 33.20 in 2008. It further increased to 48.9 in 2009 and 47.29 in 2010. Significantly, the city of Tijuana saw the rates rise from 39.5 in 2005 to 52 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2008, reaching 78.74 in 2010.[1]

Official discourses usually explain this escalation as being the result of a bloody struggle between the different groups that run the illegal drug trade[2] (Escalante, 2011; Azaola, 2012). This explanation on the current situation of insecurity in Tijuana is further relayed by the media and by public opinion.[3] Consequently, the strategies devised to respond to violence are based on this explanation, and therefore geared towards a policy

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[1]These figures are drawn from the INEGI's data and the population projections of the Conapo.

[2]Escalante argues against this interpretation, questioning the hypothesis of a war only among illegal groups. Without denying its existence, he posits the possibility of identifying other actors, mainly political, who partake in criminal violence.

[3]According to the National Survey on Victimisation and Perception of Public Security in Baja California, in 2017, 64 percent of the surveyed consider insecurity as the main problem. Drug-trafficking appears only in the eighth place, with 20,7 percent. Fieldwork nevertheless indicates that people perceive insecurity and drug trade as inextricably linked, and homicides are understood as the result of disputes between actors involved in drug trafficking. Whatever the actual relationship,

of repressive security[4] that has had serious consequences for the population. Among these consequences are the numerous forced disappearances reported in Baja California and the murder of people trapped in confrontations between criminal groups and state security forces (Robledo, 2017; Shirk 2014). This view on the crisis in Mexico has also allowed the state to focus its security policy on the groups that are identified as responsible. The narrative also helps citizens make sense of the violence affecting them. This interpretation, however, is insufficient to account for the reality of communities that are highly affected by the escalation in violence. On the contrary, it is detrimental to the analysis of insecurity in Mexico and of violence dynamics and the ways people experience, interpret, and cope with this violence.

In this light, and in the framework of the methodology "from below" described in the introduction to this book, the present chapter focuses on a narrative elaborated by the people of Tijuana to interpret the violence that has affected the city over the last 10 years. On the bases of the work carried out with residents of Sánchez Taboada neighbourhood, we believe that this narrative makes the understanding of the complexities of the insecurities in the area difficult to understand. On the other hand, we identified that it has nevertheless allowed the people to express the abandonment they experience on the part of the state, which is a consequence of the (real or perceived) link between the state and criminal groups.

The chapter is structured as follows: first, we present a general overview of the violence that has spread over Tijuana in the course of the past decade, including the escalation of criminal violence and its role in the history of the city. Subsequently, drawing from the fieldwork carried out in

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homicides nevertheless cause a rise in other offences which directly affect people from the neighbourhood.

[4]These policies include increasing the presence of police, patrols and guns, and a war-oriented approach to citizen security, incorporating the participation of the armed forces in domestic security.

neighbourhood Sánchez Taboada, we outline the narrative built by residents to make sense of the violence they have experienced in the last ten years, highlighting how this narrative hinders the understanding of the more complex issue of the different insecurities they endure. Thereafter, we present the findings regarding these insecurities, observing the concatenating processes that favour their chronic character. Finally, we propose a discussion on the responses constructed from below that imply an effort of coordination between the state, the community, and civil society.

The history of a city swept by criminal violence

As a border city, Tijuana has not been spared the dynamics of illegal drug trafficking. The authorities have long been involved in the business; the history of Tijuana shows that, as early as the first decades of the twentieth century, more intensely between 1915 and 1919, then again between 1923 and 1929, the governors of the state of Baja California sanctioned the establishment of American gamble houses, brothels, and liquor stores which provided important financial profits (Astorga, 2003). Around the 1940s, control over the illegal drug trade, hitherto regulated mainly by the states, passed into the hands of the central government. Towards the 1980s and 1990s, however, prohibition policies in the U.S. and the shifts from drug production towards services and traffic, and the demise of the political monopoly of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), brought changes to the regulation of the Mexican domestic drug market (Snyder and Durán, 2009: 73). These adjustments favoured more permissiveness regarding illicit businesses, and encouraged corruption among officials, who became increasingly linked with criminal actors. All these aspects enabled the progressive autonomy of the illegal drug business and challenged the historical

limits imposed by the government on the use of violence (Shirk, 2014; Palacios and Serrano, 2010).

In the 1980s, the Tijuana Cartel controlled drug trafficking using intimidation and violence. This violence, however, was characteristic of the disputes and violent retaliations *within* the criminal business to keep control over businesses and territories. It was, in this sense, perceived as contained and reduced to that particular sphere. Therefore, although the city's history includes violence at all times, until 2008, the levels of homicidal violence in the city were not comparable to those of what we call the first wave of violence (from 2008 to 2010), during which homicide rates soared (see charts one and two).

Chart 1
HOMICIDES TIJUANA 2000–2016
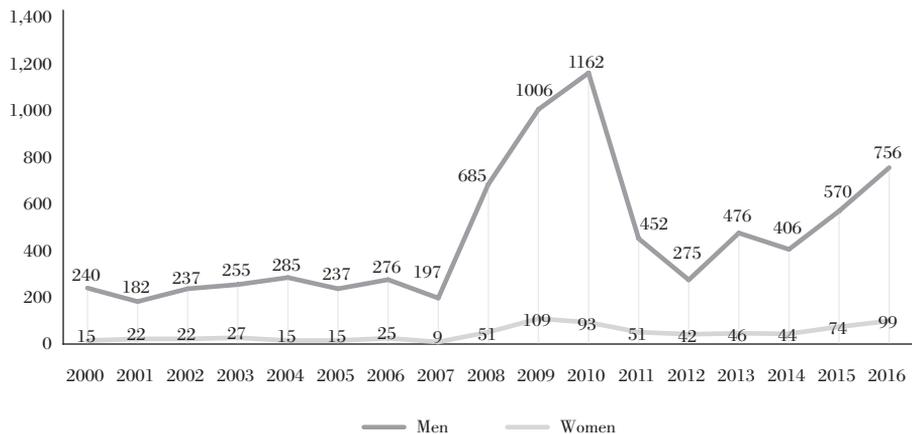
Source: Own elaboration based on homicide rates reported by the INEGI.

Chart 2
HOMICIDE RATES TIJUANA
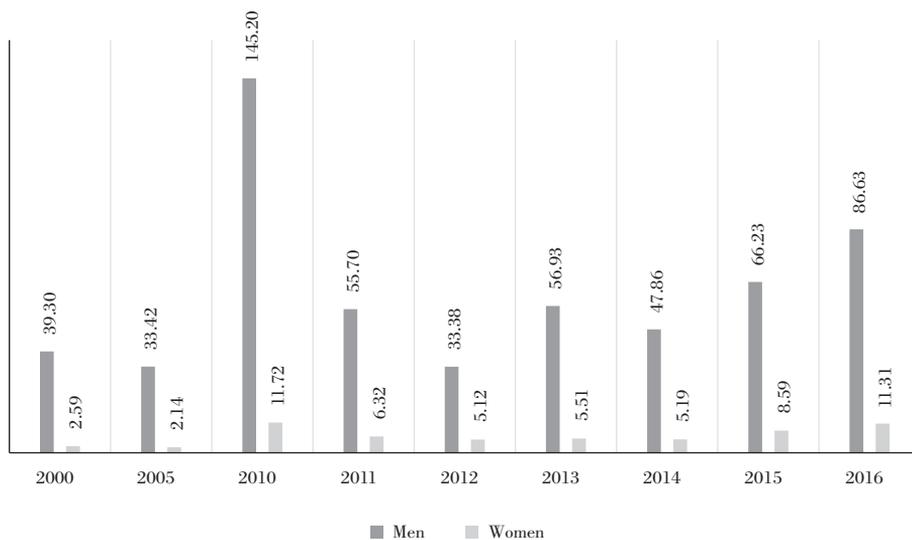
We unsuccessfully tried to obtain data for the period between 2006 and 2009 from the Conapo. These were, apparently, unavailable.
Source: Own elaboration on homicide rates reported by the INEGI and the Conapo.

As shown in charts one and two, the spike in homicidal violence took place between 2008 and 2010. Meneses (2013) relates this to the dismantlement of the Arellano Félix Cartel and the shifts and internal disputes that subsequently arose within this organisation. The homicides mainly targeted young men aged between 15 and 34. However, even if in proportional terms the majority of the victims and perpetrators were young men, we must pay attention to the increasing number of women affected during the same period, as reflected by both charts.

Besides the increase in homicides, during those years there was a rise in forced disappearances, as reported by the *Asociación Ciudadana Contra la Impunidad* (ACCI). The organisation denounces an escalation in disappearances in 2007, which coincides with the period during which the federal government intervened forcefully in the war on drugs (Robledo, 2017).

In addition to these crimes, if we observe charts three and four, we clearly see how armed robberies in businesses and on the streets and non-violent car theft increased during the same period. This shows that common offenders found favourable conditions in times of trouble and generalised violence, and that they benefited from violence waves caused by criminal groups involved in drug trafficking and by the authorities violent interventions. People's living conditions were clearly affected by this state of affairs, and residents needed to resort to strategies to cope with real and perceived insecurities, as revealed by the following testimony:

> […] We were paying attention to ourselves, no longer to the city. We were extremely stressed out […]. If eight of us went out to a restaurant, first four of us would eat, while the four others would remain outside, then we would switch. Because our lives depended on being constantly careful. We could not by any means afford to be careless (Emiliano, interviewed on 3 October 2012) (Contreras, 2017: 712).

Chart 3
VIOLENT THEFT IN TIJUANA 2006–2018
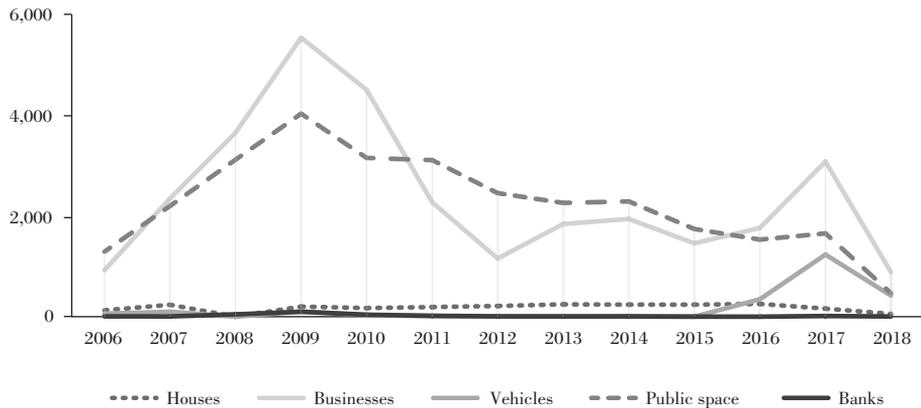
Source: Own elaboration with data from the Baja California SSPE.

Chart 4
OTHER OFFENCES TIJUANA 2006–2018
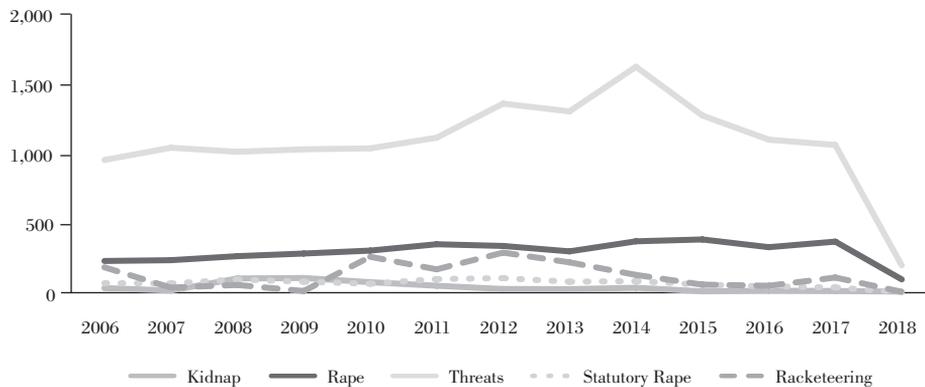
Source: Own elaboration with data from the Baja California SSPE.

As indicated by Robledo (2017), gangs of *sicarios* created by criminal groups linked with drug trafficking are involved both in local drug dealing and in common delinquency. Moreover, the Mexican war on drugs affected the state's protection capacity, since the majority of resources and efforts

were allocated to the war, causing the neglect of common offences (Ramírez, 2013).

In the face of this situation and under the pressure of the state's business sector, which was affected by the crisis of violence, the three levels of the government carried out a joint operation called "Operativo Conjunto de Baja California" or "Operativo Tijuana".[5] The strategy is currently acknowledged by officials and businesspeople as a model of security which succeeded in pacifying the city, not only causing a drop in homicides,[6] but also a decrease in armed business robberies. This proves that, especially regarding common offences, the pressure exercised by the business sector managed to elicit a firm reaction on the part of the government.

However, among the actions included in the plan, which promoted zero tolerance towards and dismissal of police officers linked with organised crime (Contreras, 2017), were also procedures that violated the human rights of several agents. As reported by the National Human Rights Commission in Recomendaciones/2001/087, various agents were forced to declare they had participated in illegal activities and accuse colleagues of having done so too.[7]

Today, as can be observed in charts one and two, lethal violence is increasing again, alarming Tijuana's public opinion. In 2017, 1,897 homicides were reported, with rates of 100.77 homicides per 100,000 citizens.[8] According to a report by the "Consejo Ciudadano de Seguridad de Baja

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[5]The operation started on 2 January 2007, and included the deployment of 3,296 men, gathering the National Defence, the Marine, the Federal Public Security (SPF) and the Attorney General's Office (PGR).

[6]It must be observed that later rates have not dropped to the levels of before 2008.

[7]The document mentions, inter alia, the 25 cases of arbitrary detention and torture of members of the police by military agents. During fieldwork, we were told that one of the strategies of the purge was to send policemen who were suspected of collaborating with drug traffickers to operate in enemy territory, so as to induce them to quit the institution. In some cases, this strategy led the men to their death.

[8]According to information provided by the "Consejo Ciudadano para la Seguridad Pública y la Justicia Penal, A.C." https://www.seguridadjusticiaypaz.org.mx/biblioteca/prensa/category/6-prensa

California",[9] this upsurge in lethal violence in 2017 and the first semester of 2018 (approximately 1,201 homicides) also entailed an increase in business robbery (1,572), car theft (4,865), kidnappings (nine cases) and deprivation of liberty (120), and has triggered fierce reactions from the public opinion, especially from the business sector, who demands that the authorities again attend to and solve this problem.

Even though in 2017 and the first semester of 2018 lethal violence reached unprecedented levels, the population does not perceive the situation as equal or worse than that of 2008-2010. In spite of the fact that their levels have been dropping, people actually tend to worry more about personal insecurity linked with common offences.

Making sense of the violence in the Sánchez Taboada neighbourhood

The methodology from below, which underpins this participatory research, allowed to establish a permanent dialogue with residents of neighbourhood Sánchez Taboada.[10] As one of the most insecure places of the city, home to several illegal groups linked with drug trafficking, more specifically gangs working for the Tijuana and Sinaloa Cartels, the neighbourhood is a particularly interesting case.

In the course of this research, we learned that the community remembers the years between 2008 and 2010 as a period of unprecedented brutality, during which the escalation of violence in the city produced what can be considered a "siege." Attacks in broad daylight, both in residential and in business zones, and the number of victims resulting from the shootings

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[9]Crime incidence in Tijuana https://vivirsegurosbc.org/incidencia-delectiva/tijuana/

[10]We worked with 61 persons, of which 15 were adult women, 18 adult men, 17 young women and 11 young men.

were highly significant for the population and are recalled as a difficult experience:

> I remember that at the time it was very difficult to go out to the city's public spaces. Once I left my house and went to work, and saw someone hanging from a bridge, something that had never been seen before. One could easily come across corpses in the city, narco-messages and dismembered bodies. We stopped going to spots, to bars, to public places (Interview with municipal official, Sánchez Taboada, May 2018).

In neighbourhood Sánchez Taboada, people retrospectively see those moments as unbearable. They remember the change, from having active public lives to seeking shelter indoors and keeping away from the daily shootings as the main security strategy. To avoid becoming victims of the violence, people changed their behaviour, their schedules, their use of public spaces, and remained mostly at home.

In terms of temporality, people constructed a notion of "a before" and "an after" 2008 to refer to their security and peace of mind, something that can be perceived in Tijuana's society in general. In this narrative, people tend to talk about better times in the past, when, before the sudden outburst of violence, crime in the neighbourhood was mostly visible in disputes between the gangs (*barrios*) of the four sectors that form the neighbourhood. This violence could cause serious damage to the youths who were members of the gangs, but it was not a lethal violence that affected the rest of the population:

> I was born here, I went to school here, I remember we used to walk openly there, there were groups of kids, they threw stones at the buses, the *burras*, when only those green-and-cream buses used to drive up here. Rivalries were different: stones, kicks, clubbing, something like that, but now, it is much

heavier, they pull out their guns and they kill you (Adult woman, women Focus Group, Sánchez Taboada, March 2017).

The gang that established its territorial presence in the neighbourhood also functioned as a regulator of criminal acts. The arrival of guns to the *barrios*, however, is for people the main source of significative changes in the struggles and of course in the ways they, the residents, were to be witnesses of the violence:

Gangs still exist, but they have changed. It used to be about respect, as in "I want to earn respect in this place," and now the problem is about having one's own place "to do whatever I want and others have to respect my rules because I say it and it is not about how much they respect me but about property and doing what I say." I think this is what has brought the problem of the guns to another level (Adult woman, women Focus Group, Sánchez Taboada, March 2017).

Perea (2016) mentions that some members of the *barrios* were already dealing drugs in the neighbourhoods, particularly after U.S. border security and control policies had been tightened, which benefited the growing domestic market. Yet no such cruel and vicious expressions of violence as those which began in 2008 existed then. Participants claim that the dynamics of those so-called *barrios* or gangs shifted from non-lethal violence, concentrated on earning respect, towards a more delinquent nature, which operates violently and is related to drug dealing. The introduction of guns[11] and the drug market have become fundamental driving forces and have caused shifts in identity dynamics that support the life of these gangs and their relationship with the communities. For Perea (2016), the violence

[11]Importantly, as described by Guillén and Meneses (2013), the northern border has been a zone of constant commerce of high caliber guns and ammunition. These guns are sold in the U.S. with hardly any regulation and introduced to Mexico with very little difficulties. According to InSight Crime, 70 percent of the guns involved in crimes committed in Mexico that have been retrieved and tracked were legally acquired in the U.S. McDougal, Shirk, Muggah and Paterson (2013) claim that between 2010 and 2012, a total of 253,000 guns were bought in the U.S. and smuggled into Mexico.

exercised by the gangs that operated in the neighbourhood used to be checked by the links between their members and the community. Today, people claim that this relationship is lost, and, as mentioned by Santamaría (2014), the instrumental links of these groups with organised crime have made them more independent from the community, increasing the distance between ones and others, and transformed them into violent and lethal agents within their own space. They are no longer "our boys," but have become "them," the members of criminal gangs that people have to cope with.[12]

The distance with criminals living in the neighbourhood has also enabled people to create the idea that lethal violence has been imposed by actors foreign to the community. They often mention that the neighbourhood "used to be different," and that this violence was brought by the narco-culture of people from Sinaloa. *They*, rooted in a drug traffickers' culture, have caused the deterioration of life conditions in Tijuana, *they* are responsible for the exaltation of the lives of drug lords in the city.

> Those who are from Tijuana will not let me tell lies. This kind of thing did not exist in this city. This kind of music we hear now, *banda*, *corridos*, and such; and then came the immigrants, with the devaluation, during López Portillo's term [1976-1982], and things went awry (Field notes, December 2017).

Accordingly, the construction of this alterity allows to locate the responsibility for their problems on "others," which serves as mechanism to give sense to the violence they are experiencing. To assign "others" with this violence enables its integration into the flow of daily life, particularly if it was not part of their lives before. They therefore recur to the stigma of the "Sinaloense" as the source of the city's evil. Beside this construction of the "Sinaloense" and "foreign" culture as the sources of insecurity, there is also

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[12]We tried to understand how this shift had taken place. People generally told us that the arrival of the drug business, and particularly of the disputes between cartels, had meant three possibilities for the gang members: death, prison, or collaboration.

a discourse on how the neighbours leave their houses and migrate to the U.S. to work, which causes the arrival of unknown people:

> Yes, some people have left the city, left their house, they rent it, without verifying who will be the tenants. Now we are surrounded by people from the Pacific, and they are foreign people, and we, the people here, are prisoners of our own places (adult woman, women Focus Group, Sánchez Taboada, March 2017).

The "other," the outsider, is the bearer of the harm that affects their tranquility. There is, additionally, a narrative about the victims. Regarding the first wave of violence, in 2008-2010, it is understood that lethal violence was a consequence of the arrival of the Sinaloa Cartel, struggling against an already reduced Tijuana Cartel over the control of the territory. It appears that, additionally, the police and the army joined the struggle by implementing their own actions against drug trafficking, which generally increased the levels of violence.

When comparing the violence of that period to what occurs today, people tend to mention that beside those who were part of organised crime groups, there were also "innocent" victims, who had nothing to do with the disputes. This made violence even more unbearable. The perception of violence as indiscriminate gave them a feeling of constant uncertainty, in which being out on the street meant being a potential victim.

However, narratives surrounding the homicidal violence that affects them today reflect official discourses of it being part of score settlings between the different groups who seek to control micro-trafficking within the city. This narrative pervades the understanding of violence among the neighbours, and is associated with a decrease in indiscriminate attacks and the fact that murders now tend to occur in zones where the presence of criminal and drug-trafficking groups is high. According to this new narrative, only those who are involved in the business should fear their lethal

violence. This particular way of understanding violence is strategic for those who live in the neighbourhood. In the face of the uncertainties caused by the previous period, and the generalised fear they left behind, explaining lethal violence as an issue concerning only those who are engaged in drug-dealing allows to keep some amount of certainty, security, and control over their own lives. On the other hand, this narrative of selective violence which only affects the "others" or the "criminals" undermines the collective concern regarding a critical element of human security, namely the right to live as a fundamental right, and, particularly, young people's right to live, for they are the majority of the victims.

Even though the construction of alterity inherent to the idea of violence as part of the settling of scores allows to make sense of and cope with it, this also becomes an obstacle to a more complex understanding of the situations of human insecurity they are experiencing, and of how these situations are correlated in reproducing and protracting violence within their community.

Violences and insecurity from below

As mentioned earlier, the process of action-research promoted a reflexive process with members of the neighbourhood regarding the different insecurities they experience based on dimensions that are the pillars of human security: personal safety, political security, community safety, environmental security, economic security, health security, food security, and women's safety. The first four were foregrounded as problematic within the neighbourhood.

Personal insecurity is perceived as the main problem in Sánchez Taboada. Initially linked to the wave of violence of 2008 that forced people to remain indoors, violence seems to strike in a more selective manner, but remains nevertheless strongly present. As a consequence, the population

has had to modify the ways in which they occupy the neighbourhood and how they interact with their neighbours:

> …I used to go out at night and come back home after 2 am and my neighbourhood was quiet, but now it is 9 pm and we can hear police patrolling everywhere and, yes, I am actually afraid to go out at night. This is why I come home around 8 pm. Yes, it is scary, yes, it impinges upon your freedom, because all this hinders you, because of everything that is happening, and when I hear that someone has been killed, we do not come out until the next day, because, my mother tells me, it happened in this or that street and where (young man, Focus group with youths, Sánchez Taboada, January 2018).

Residents have perceived a shift in how murders are being carried out, which informs them that the risk of becoming a victim is minor to that of the previous period. Their perception of insecurity, however, remains acute, because both murders and other crimes that for them are linked to the dynamics of micro-trafficking are on the rise around them (car theft, street robbery, burglary, and the consumption of stimulants). These offences, which inhibit and limit the free use and enjoyment of streets as public spaces, are reinforced by the geographical configuration of the neighbourhood. In people's minds, small streets, passages, and alleys in the area make it easier for the criminals to move and escape from the police. Also, issues of infrastructure such as the lack of public lighting increase criminal possibilities and people's vulnerability, particularly that of women and girls.

Nevertheless, personal insecurity increases with what we have identified as *political insecurity*. On the one hand, the latter is related to the level of distrust of the population towards institutions and authorities, and, on the other, to the fragmentation of the community promoted by local political parties.

In small businesses, where we know (I am not mentioning any names or places here) officials themselves come and take the money, then, they do not burn everything [the drugs], they even sell what is not going to the other side [the US], they steal it from the narcos and distribute it here, and this is where the slaughter starts (Adult man, men Focus Group, Sánchez Taboada, March 2018).

Distrust towards the authorities began taking shape as links between the police and criminal organisations were increasingly identified. The purge of 2008-2010, and the events within the neighbourhood have brought citizens to perceive police officers as accomplices of criminals. If in the previous period the police were associated to security risks because they were target of attacks by criminal groups (Contreras, 2017), currently, the risk is now associated to use their authority to commit crimes against the community.[13]

This political insecurity has caused a feeling of abandonment among people in the face of a state that should guarantee their protection. This feeling has favoured a deeper reflection on their relationship with the state and the different dimensions of human security that are not being attended to by the authorities. On the other hand, as far as political parties are concerned, people have identified how these interact with members of the community according to electoral opportunism rather than to a genuine concern for their situation and needs. Parties have a tendency to promote actions within the neighbourhood, mainly of charitable character, resorting to the militant leaders of specific sectors. In this sense, both the party in office and the others rely on their own base, i.e., local leaders and the groups that support them, who receive and manage allocations. Because these expenditures are mostly distributed among base voters, the help barely reaches the

[13]Adult woman, women Focus Group, Sánchez Taboada, March 2017.

vulnerable fractions of the population that most need those relief pro-grammes.[14]

> I used to go to the community centre breakfast, but I was told that if I did I would not receive help from the promoters, so I think I better stay here […] They take us to the meetings, they brought us to have breakfast with the governor, and so, there we get little bits of help (Dialogue with elderly woman, field notes, December 2017).

This kind of relationship with citizens via intermediaries has been recognised by participants as the link between political insecurity and community insecurity, since these mechanisms strengthen the party and its members, rather than the collective body, thereby becoming an obstacle for the community's organisation as a space of empowerment.

Finally, people from the neighbourhood have identified the environmental problem as an additional obstacle to their human security. Regarding *environmental insecurity*, there are two main issues; on the one hand, in sector I of the neighbourhood, damage of the soil, worsened by the water plumbing's lack of maintenance, has eroded local infrastructure's foundations, slowly causing the degradation of many houses. The homes of 300 families have so far been lost due to this situation. Beside the material losses, this problem affects people's mental health due to high levels of stress, nightmares, and general anxiety regarding the future:

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[14]A survey carried out in 2015 by the "Colegio de la Frontera Norte" (Colef) in zones of severe and extreme levels of poverty in Tijuana revealed that only 0.07 percent of the people have access to nurseries, either from the IMSS, ISSTE, DIF, or others; 0.01 percent have access to daycare by Sedesol; 0.03 percent are part of the national programme for scholarships in higher education; 0.04 percent receive help for school breakfasts from the DIF; 0.07 percent are part of programme "Bécate" and STPS scholarships; and 0,16 percent receive primary education scholarships. These data prove that the implementation of social assistance programmes is carried out selectively, since the help does not reach the population that most needs it.

My only worry used to be to decide what I would eat, but no, my life has rad-
ically changed, I think it is because my human security has decreased, I have
to worry about plumbing problems now, I have to work on it, it has been chang-
ing our lives for the last three years now […] it has psychologically affected
us, since now it is a nightmare to be here, but often people insist on remaining,
because they have nowhere else to go (adult man, men Focus Group, Sánchez
Taboada, February 2018).

This situation has affected many of the founding families of the neigh-
bourhood, who feel forsaken because the state has only offered solutions
that do not solve the loss of their houses. This worsens the feeling of aban-
donment by a state that shows no reaction nor commitment regarding their
needs.

On the other hand, waste and pollution are notorious problems they
clearly share with other parts of the city. Besides living in a place that is
topographically difficult, since not all parts of the neighbourhood are acces-
sible by vehicle, families' lack of information regarding waste management
has transformed some areas into garbage dumps, worsening the problem of
pollution and giving an overall aspect of disorder and abandonment.

Insecurity in a context of abandonment: Relations with the state

As mentioned previously, the feeling of distrust is partly due to the police's
participation in criminal activities. People living in this neighbourhood are
aware of this and have therefore learned to develop individual strategies to
cope with insecurity, and to expect less from the police in the framework of
their functions. This feeling has made them aware that they are in a position
of abandonment regarding the attention and prevention that should be pro-
vided by the state in terms of security. This awareness, as far as personal

security is concerned, has also entailed a reflection on other human security dimensions that are being neglected by the authorities.

The dialogue with residents of neighbourhood Sánchez Taboada reveals that distrust towards the state has been present since the beginning, and was reactivated by the disaster in sector I. The residents of this zone remember arriving at the place 40 years ago as part of the relocation plan of Zona Río, which was presumably a hazardous area. Zona Río was nevertheless developed, and became one of the city's most prominent neighbourhoods. For them, this proves that the state deceived the citizens, which further adds to the lack of trust towards institutional actors.

In other fields, such as the provision of services, people have learned to cope with the neglect of the state and the slow responses of the authorities. This has brought about informal strategies to solve their needs:

> One of the problems we face is the lack of public lighting, here, in the neighbourhood, it causes serious problems. Whenever a street lamp burns out, we go to the sub-delegation, and we ask for a replacement, as we should, but noooo, there's no answer. Finally, one day we saw the man of the light company, he was fixing other problems that had been reported, and we asked if he could fix the lamp. He did help us, and we gave him some money for that. So why should we waste our time reporting to the sub-delegation, if nothing is going to happen anyway? Better to just call the man when we need him, and he comes and helps us, because it is scary to remain in the dark here (Collective interview with elderly women, Sánchez Taboada, January 2017).

In this sense, the lack of institutional response to the needs of the neighbourhood ends up being solved by informal resources as surviving strategies, which in turn discourages the demands that should be made regarding the state's responsibilities in providing public services. Similarly, this abandonment has thwarted the construction of a citizenship that recognises itself as endowed with rights. Fundamental rights such as education

or security are considered privileges and products of individual effort and merit. For example, the absence of secondary schools[15] was obvious to the research team, but not for participants. It is, for them, part of the "norm," that if you are not accepted by a state school you have to pay for a private school. Accordingly, education is not considered a public good, especially in zones where the young are more likely to be recruited by criminal groups.

Both this institutional neglect and political parties' practices hinder processes of community participation and favour vertical relations mediated by leaders who stand between the state and the citizens. In this model, citizens behave as favour-receiving subjects (Sánchez, 2013). Obviously, in a context of chronic violence pervaded by criminality, active citizenship is inhibited, and so are demands for state protection; first because of the weakness of organisational processes in the communities, and secondly because they fear backlashes from institutions that are believed to be colluded with criminals. On the other hand, chronic violence limits citizens' freedom of speech, their freedom to act, and to interact, and their ability to gather and formulate proposals regarding their needs. As observed during the fieldwork of this research, silences and fear of speaking about certain topics hinder the community's capacity to imagine and formulate responses.

Co-constructing proposals from below

The research carried out in neighbourhood Sánchez Taboada allowed to create spaces to meet and debate, which were not defined by partisan attitudes or governmental dynamics. At the outset, the idea of having a space that did not fit the logic of "political party meetings" was not clear to the different groups, as their experience of collective gatherings had hitherto been limited to those dynamics. Towards the end, however, participants

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[15]The same survey carried out by Colef indicates that 70 percent of the young population living in poor and very poor areas does not attend high school.

identified the possibility of exercising active citizenship, including the choice to have autonomous voices, and deliberate collectively on the situations and problematics affecting them, and explore possible solutions.

During the first attempts at forwarding proposals, the participants emphasised those which were to a larger extent the responsibility of the community. These initial formulations revealed how the community had internalised the state's abandonment and its neglect in resolving issues of public character. Because of this, they preferred to recur to self-management to enhance their human security. However, exercises in discussions and debating gradually helped them to explore beyond the scope of the community and think of the fundamental role that the state is supposed to play, not only regarding their rights, but also as the creator of conditions that allow the communities to put forward their needs and the solutions that are best for them. In this sense, the participants insisted on the need for a coordinated effort from different instances (state, civil society, community) to act and face the issues they identified.

Despite the lack of protection, and the neglect the citizens have experienced in the face of criminal violence, one of the most relevant issues was that the community maintains the recognition of the state's regulatory role and its legitimate monopoly of power.[16] For this reason, an important aspect of the proposals to improve personal and political security is related to the effort that has to be made by the state to vet public institutions, not only the police, but all those that have been proved to somehow engage in illegal actions. This would effectively restore the broken trust in constitutionality.

As with the state, people from the neighbourhood asserted that the projects implemented by civil society organizations should be constructed on the basis of the community's own view of their wants and possible solutions.

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[16]There were nonetheless some insinuations regarding extrajudicial forms of punishments, and validations of repressive acts violating human rights carried out by the authorities in their struggle against criminal groups.

This included that actions carried out by civil society organisations should avoid charitable or welfarist aspects and propose sustainability in the long term.

Regarding themselves as a community, participants made particular emphasis on the need to create spaces for meeting to collectively build solutions to improve their security. Other points that were identified as essential to improve security within the neighbourhood were actions like collective environmental management, the promotion of arts and sports as possibilities for human self-realisation and for the development of children and young people, and the strengthening of the organisational capacities of the community.

Final considerations

We have described how residents of neighbourhood Sánchez Taboada have experienced a decade of difficulties regarding public security. We have also related that this has caused the community to remain sheltered and to reduce circles of trust and friendship. The construction of the problem of insecurity in the country's, the state's and the municipality's public agendas as a problem caused by "others" equally manifests in the narrative of violence elaborated by members of the community. This narrative presents violence (particularly homicidal violence) as selective. In this view, it is mainly caused by and affects "others." This hinders the configuration of a collective awareness that sees this experience as a social drama impinging on all aspects of life.

Even though criminal violence has caused people to become extremely concerned with their protection and to narrow their social circles, it has also enabled reflections regarding the neighbourhoods' relationship with the state. Accordingly, armed violence, beside its concrete impact on the popu-

lation, has also allowed to highlight the systematic abandonment on the part of the government. People recognise now that the authorities' efforts to guarantee security and decent living conditions have been weak and scarce. In this sense, the process highlights how these institutional practices have created a situation that is unbearable for the population. Spaces to reflect and discuss propitiated by this participatory research contributed to the construction of new notions of collective action outside the scope of political parties or the government. The dialogue with the members of the community allowed to posit the idea of an active citizenship, capable of self-organising, managing, and coordinating with institutional instances and civil society in search of better security conditions.

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Moving uphill:
Social violence, marginalisation, and the co-construction of a security agenda in Nuevo Almaguer

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Introduction

As of the 19th century, the city of Monterrey has been a symbol of industrial development in Mexico. However, like in most parts of Latin America, the profits of this economic growth are unfairly distributed. Nuevo Almaguer is a semi-urban settlement with average to high levels of marginalisation in the municipality of Guadalupe, which is part of the Monterrey metropolitan area, located in the north of Mexico.

Nuevo Almaguer is an interesting and complex case study for the analysis of chronic violence within the framework of the different dimensions of human security. Since its foundation in the 1980s, this place has undergone important processes involving interpersonal violence. Intense cycles of criminality took place between 2010 and 2013, which from 2013 to 2015 elicited a series of responses from the government (the federal government, the state, and the municipality), international agencies (The United States Agency for International Development [USAID]), and civil society organisations. Nuevo Almaguer is both materially and geographically marginalised. It was initially built in the 1980s by poor people who invaded the place illicitly with the help of social leaders who gave the plots to the first settlers.[1] Between 2012 and 2015, as a consequence of the escalation in in-

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[1] In 2012, the population of Nuevo Almaguer was of 4,696 people (USAID-PCC, 2012: 15) out of a total of 678,006 residents in the municipality of Guadalupe and 4,653,458 in the metropolitan area of Monterrey (INEGI, 2010). The exact population of Nuevo Almaguer is difficult to assess, given the contradictions in the establishment of the exact boundaries of the territory and the continuous demographic growth towards higher areas of Cerro de la Silla. Several sources (INEGI, INE, Fomerrey, and

security and violence, several public policies, social programmes, and projects aimed at the prevention and decrease of violence and crime were tested in Nuevo Almaguer. Accordingly, it was selected to be one of the "polygons" of intervention in the framework of the National Programme for the Prevention of Crime (*Programa Nacional para la Prevención del Delito*, Pronapred). The general goal of this project, created in 2012, was to "attend to the risk factor and protection linked to violence and crime" (General Law for the Social Prevention of Violence and Crime: Articles 20 and 21).

In the framework of this general goal, a vast array of situational (mainly through the "Guardia de Proximidad," a new police in the municipality), social (governmental programmes and international cooperation initiatives), psycho-social, and community (civil associations) interventions were carried out in Nuevo Almaguer for the prevention of violence and crime.

This chapter discloses the main conclusions arrived at during the participative research with the "methodology from below" in Nuevo Almaguer between 2016 and 2018. With fieldwork, and by engaging in a dialogue with the residents, we identified that the drop in homicides does not coincide with decreases in other forms of violence and insecurity in the neighbourhood. The "security from below" co-construction methodology is ideal to document patterns of chronic violence, as it is not exclusively based on the assessment of homicides, but rather on the multiple violences experienced by the people, and seeks to improve and humanise the provision of security. In this sense, beyond the issue of homicides, this chapter exposes the different forms of violence that affect the people of Nuevo Almaguer. It

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the municipality of Guadalupe) use different delimitations to define the neighbourhood; some people living in nearby settlements (Vicente Ferrer, Unidad Piloto) identify as residents of Nuevo Almaguer. In some cases, their identity card indicates that they live in Nuevo Almaguer, even though other maps, and municipal, state, and federal references say the contrary. This difficulty in identifying and delimiting the territory stems from a marginalisation pattern and the lack of interest in providing clear limits to the settlement. In the course of the research, it was decided that people living in the surrounding streets who identified as members of the community and were interested in participating in the process should be included, despite the formal delimitation of Almaguer (INEGI).

also tackles the different insecurities existing in the neighbourhood, related to the personal, community, and property dimensions of the paradigm of human security. This chapter also posits that the government's interventions mentioned above have not reinforced the people's responsive and organisational capacities in the face of insecurity, neither have they changed the relationship between the community and key institutions such as the police.

The violence caused by political differences among members of the community of Nuevo Almaguer is long standing, originating in the initial distribution of plots carried out between 1985 and 1990. This recent past and the intimidation processes deployed by local leaders affiliated to political parties have curbed and inhibited citizen participation. Since these people act as intermediaries between the community and municipal officials, the citizens prefer to avoid autonomous organisation for fear of losing the benefits of governmental aid programmes. Moreover, the lack of trust among neighbours, who suspect each other of being linked with drug trafficking, has limited self-management and autonomous organisation in the neighbourhood.

Regarding issues that severely affect the people's wellbeing, the lack of economic security (one of the dimensions of human security) is one of the main structural causes of the feeling of insecurity in Nuevo Almaguer. In particular, the women have a differentiated experience regarding their social status and vulnerability. The normalisation of violence in daily life, among others, makes it often difficult to reflect on the issue. The young (both students and non-students) agree that police brutality is one of the major concerns regarding their personal security in the area. Complex problems between the police and the young include irregular practices such as arbitrary arrests, torture, and inhuman, cruel and humiliating treatments.

The research revealed that the presence and impact of illegal armed groups in Nuevo Almaguer have been decreasing considerably since 2013,

which is the year when the *Zetas* and the Gulf Cartel were driven out of the municipality. Although between 2016 and 2018 armed young people pertaining to gangs, *sicarios* (operating individually), and some armed traffickers were identified, neither the research team nor the participants reported seeing other illegal armed groups in Nuevo Almaguer.

These elements serve as starting points for the analysis presented in this chapter, which is structured as follows: the first section presents a brief analysis of the history of violence in the municipality of Guadalupe and in neighbourhood Nuevo Almaguer. Next, we list the main findings obtained from empirical investigation in 3 categories, namely *1*) geography and marginalisation as structural risk factors for social violence; *2)* the threats to the human security of the women in Nuevo Almaguer; *3)* community engagement patterns and clientelism. Subsequently, we analyse the social harm caused by violence, and present information regarding shifts in the community's outlook. Finally, we examine the process of creation of an agenda in Nuevo Almaguer, and forward a review of the main findings.

The development of violence in Guadalupe/Nuevo Almaguer

Between 1940 and 1970, increasing migration and growing birth rates, coupled with declining death rates, accelerated the demographic growth of Monterrey. Consequently, space became increasingly scarce, causing irregular settlements in the municipalities around the city, forming the Monterrey metropolitan area. The city is home to an entrepreneurial elite committed to protecting the peace and wellbeing. This delayed the arrival of violences related to organised crime that pervaded other Mexican regions as early as 2006-2007 (USAID, 2012: 11; Segob 2015: 9). This notwithstanding, in 2009 and 2010, Monterrey became the background of severe clashes between criminals and of territorial disputes attributed to the *Zetas* and the

Gulf Cartel or their agents present in the city. The complex consequences of the rise of violence in Monterrey cannot be separated from the heavy-handed response of the federal government against drug traffickers. Similarly, municipal and state police collaboration with criminal groups caused historically unprecedented episodes of violence in the city (García-Álvarez, 2017: 115).

Guadalupe is the poorest and most marginalised municipality of the Monterrey metropolitan area. As such, a series of risk factors are concentrated in the zone, such as social exclusion and inequality, factors which are correlated to violence and insecurity, be it personal or involving the community. The difficulties faced by the inhabitants not only create an insecure environment but also socialisations problems, hindering the integration of the population. Additionally, Guadalupe is the second most populated municipality of the Monterrey metropolitan area, while also the third smallest. This means that it presents the area's highest population density. The state of Nuevo León has a density of 72.5 inhabitants per square kilometre, and Guadalupe a density of 5,710 inhabitants per square kilometre (INEGI, 2010). The high density is evidently a risk factor for the exacerbation of violence, insecurity, and problems of social coexistence (Lab, 2010: 56).

As mentioned previously, several programmes were implemented in Guadalupe by the government and USAID between 2013 and 2015 to control violence and crime. During this period, Nuevo Almaguer was turned into a priority zone (polygon) for these programmes. However, once the larger part of the funds was spent, social organisations, international cooperation agents, and most of the institutions interrupted the prevention programmes in Nuevo Almaguer. The population naturally felt they had been used and abandoned.[2]

[2]Adult woman, Focus group with women "*Árbol de Problemas*," Nuevo Almaguer, 12 February 2017. Adult woman, Focus group with women "Sueños y Miedos," Nuevo Almaguer, 27 October 2017.

Physical and social marginalisation are fundamental factors that determine the patterns of violence documented in Nuevo Almaguer. The neighbourhood, with its narrow streets, was as an ideal space to hide for criminal groups like the *Zetas* and the Gulf cartel. In the worse period of the clashes, between 2010 and 2013, these groups recruited young people from Nuevo Almaguer to work for them, mainly as *sicarios* or informers, and in a few cases as small-scale drug dealers. Shootings and violent confrontations were extremely common during this period (USAID, 2012: 11).

Chronic violence and human insecurity in Nuevo Almaguer

The concept of chronic violence and the perspective of human security allow to assess a series of violences beyond homicides that have severely affected the people of Nuevo Almaguer. Guided by the accounts and reflexions of the people, we describe below some of the main expressions of chronic violence and insecurity in Nuevo Almaguer.

Geography and marginalisation as expressions of economic, personal, and community (in)security

Since 2010, important works of urban renovation have been carried out in Nuevo Almaguer. However, infrastructure and services have not reached all the homes equally. Within the frame of human security, considerations on community security expressed by the participants revealed that the people living in the lower area of Nuevo Almaguer were considerably favoured, as compared to those living in the intermediate and upper areas, where several streets have remained unpaved, lack waste recollection services, public lightning, and transports.[3] The availability or absence of public lighting

[3]Several municipal officials admitted that the community's geographical isolation and marginalisation are the causes of recurring antisocial behaviours (not necessarily criminal) in Nuevo Alma-

causes a sense of differentiation between the inhabitants of Nuevo Almaguer, related to their being closer to or further from development and integration with the municipality and the broader Monterrey metropolitan area.[4] As early as at the first exploratory walk, the research team identified this correlation between marginalisation and the geographical location of the houses. From the point of view of human security, this difference in the availability of public services also causes a feeling of inequality related to physical security.

The accounts of two elderly people (a man and a woman), who recalled their arrival in Nuevo Almaguer 26 years ago, is consistent with the narratives of several people who collaborated with the project, as these reflected patterns of violence, clientelism, and corruption in the context of their arrival.[5] Shortly after their marriage, the couple looked for a place to live. They were told they needed to seek an agreement with "la lideresa" regarding the price of one of the plots of land and the best moment to occupy it. This is how they arrived in Nuevo Almaguer, "living in the open, with only rocks, no services". The same couple recalls how they managed to obtain the material for the construction of their house. Besides help in digging, breaking and aligning the stones of the hill, they bought materials, brought by trucks to the lower part of the neighbourhood by "la lideresa" and her "political connections". It was impossible, at the time, to reach their plot with a vehicle, since there was no pavement, and the streets had not been mapped yet. According to the woman, "no one came here because they wanted to. If we had had more money we would never have stayed".

Nuevo Almaguer was thus created out of violent and illegal acts. The legacy of these origins remains present in the feeling of vulnerability and

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guer (Meeting with municipal authorities, 1 February 2017). It is important to emphasise that authorities and inhabitants agree in the recognition of these structural risk factors in Nuevo Almaguer.

[4]Mrs LM, Focus group with women "Sueños y Miedo", 2 October 2017.

[5]Mrs E and Mrs N, In-depth interview with elderly people, 10 July 2017.

property insecurity of its inhabitants. The initial owner of various plots of land that were later occupied (especially in the upper area) to form the community has had difficulties in obtaining the regulation of various parcels that remain legally uncertain. Furthermore, only the municipal and state authorities are habilitated to regulate plots and implement public services for the people who over the years built their dwellings on these plots; their will to respond to these needs is far from obvious.

Evictions (enforced by authorities or owners) are common in these irregular areas of the Monterrey metropolitan area. The people of Nuevo Almaguer who participated in the research process expressed that they felt themselves and their families threatened by evictions due to the lack of property titles. The absence of regularisation regarding the plots causes a feeling of extreme vulnerability among the people, and debilitates their personal security.

In this sense, factors such as geography and marginalisation have played a role from the start in Nuevo Almaguer, and have been at the root of problems related to at least three dimensions of human security, namely the personal, economic and community-related. The people of Nuevo Almaguer committed an offence by settling on irregular plots. They furthermore collaborated with persons such as "la lideresa" in order to obtain a plot, paying for it and thereby knowingly or unknowingly recognising them as legitimate intermediaries, despite their illegal activities.

The geographical isolation has caused this couple and other people to feel marginalised, vulnerable, and an easy target of violent actors, especially those spurred by "la lideresa" to invade previously sold plots of land. According to their narrative, "la lideresa" had a group "of approximately 10 men" who roamed the hill looking for plots left vacant by their owners, even for a very short time, in order to invade the parcels and start building. The same person who sold the land illegally coordinated groups to reinvade the plots, build on them, and propose the houses to other potential buyers.

Threats to the human security of women in Nuevo Almaguer

Another important finding, documented via the participative research-action methodology, corresponds to the differentiated manner in which violence and insecurity affect the different dimensions of human security of the women of Nuevo Almaguer. The first of these differentiated feelings of violence is highly situational. From the first to the last focus group of Nuevo Almaguer, the women expressed severe feelings of insecurity in the streets, and assigned the source of danger to two main agents: young drug addicts and "foreign" people. Most interventions carried out by different official or international agents and by civil organisations in Nuevo Almaguer were designed with gender perspective. They did not, however, manage to comprehend the important subjective dimensions in the perception of insecurity among the women. With this research process, it was possible to identify the feeling of (subjective) insecurity among the women living in Nuevo Almaguer, especially those living in the higher areas. None of the women who collaborated reported personal sexual assaults. Nevertheless, they talked about various cases of sexual abuse in the neighbourhood, the worse of which involved rape and femicide. The majority of the women in the focus groups talked about sexual harassment targeting themselves, their daughters, and their granddaughters. The participative research-action methods helped in creating an atmosphere of trust, which allowed some women to talk more freely about violence in the household. From there, we began to explore the issue of domestic violence.

Violence in the family is regarded by the women of Nuevo Almaguer as an experience that causes illnesses such as depression, more severely if mistreatments are added to infidelity. According to some accounts, churches have stood as refuges in cases of depression and recurrence of suicidal

thoughts. However, the churches do not seem to have prevented the reproduction of abuses.[6]

Importantly, reports by women of Nuevo Almaguer who collaborated in this research bring forth important elements to examine violence against women in the framework of chronic violence, since women are involved in increasing spirals of violence that affect their social relationships and their capacity to get involved as citizens (Pearce, 2007; Adams, 2012). Additionally, the research revealed the existence of important female networks in Nuevo Almaguer. It is nevertheless difficult for many of the women to recognise these networks as supportive and, in turn, to believe in the transformative potential these can have, when developed beyond the circle of very close neighbours.

During an activity carried out in one of the houses of Nuevo Almaguer, two women gave accounts of violent acts occurring in the streets, causing great fear. In particular, they commented on how street violence affects businesses.[7] This situation directly weakens four dimensions of these women's human security, namely the personal, the economic, the food-related and the community-related. In turn, the debilitation of human security directly affects the exercise of human rights. Therefore, when the women of Nuevo Almaguer suffer threats in the streets and at home, the possibility to break with the dependence that keeps them caught in cycles of violence is prevented (Olamendi and Salgado, 2017: 47).

The reactions of the men of the community in the face of violence and their own social vulnerability are quite different. For instance, a teenager of Nuevo Almaguer indicated that he carried a knife (which he showed to the group), only to defend himself whenever necessary.[8] The only woman of the group said: "those are for the young, or for prostitutes. Prostitutes carry

[6]Adult woman, Focus Group pastry activity, 3 October 2017.
[7]Focus Group pastry activity, 3 October 2017.
[8]Focus Group with students, CETIS, 18 May 2017.

knifes, but not respectable women." Clearly, notions of masculinity, and what it means to be a "respectable woman" contribute to shape behaviours and strategies adopted by men and women in the face of insecurity.

In the same vein, several in-depth interviews carried out later with men of Nuevo Almaguer revealed how the men join to take revenge in cases of neighbourhood conflicts. For instance, in an interview with an adult man,[9] he made clear that he called the other adult men of the community whenever it was necessary to resolve a problem or confront someone violently. This man asserted that it was very common to "take revenge".[10]

The young of Nuevo Almaguer: Juvenile delinquency, conflicts with the police, and discrimination/stigmatisation processes

After the pilot test and the exploratory walks in Nuevo Almaguer (January-February 2017), the research team decided to carry out diverse activities with two separate groups of young people, one who attended school, another who did not. The first field activities showed a differentiated experience of violence and crime between the groups.

Regarding young people who attended school, the team reached an agreement with the overseers of the CETIS 101, a technical secondary school, in order to work with the students who were from Nuevo Almaguer. The research with young people not attending school was carried out in the streets and several spaces pertaining to the community via diverse calls. The participative research-action method with young people revealed something important regarding their vulnerability when burglars break in their homes. In such cases, the young agreed, it was legitimate to break in other houses to "retrieve" articles similar to those that had been stolen from their

[9]18 April 2018.
[10]Longitudinal studies and other academic surveys do not fully account for sensitive information, such as organised revenge mechanisms between male neighbours. F (man) and L (woman). Focus group with students, afternoon shift, CETIS Guadalupe, 18 May 2017.

own families. One of the young men commented he had stolen a cellphone that very morning to compensate for his own cellphone being stolen the day before.[11] The rest of the group approved of this act, which was not considered wrong but compensatory. The group's response reveals a distorted culture of legality caused by recurrent processes that weaken the young's personal security in Nuevo Almaguer. The daily disappearance of low-value objects in their neighbourhood causes mechanisms of adaptation and resistance that bring them to act illegally, and legitimise their acts with a discourse of compensation.

In later conversations with the students of the CETIS, the team perceived a sense of abandonment by the authorities as mediators or arbitrators to solve problems in a non-violent way. The students said that they do not recognise the police as close to and friendly with the population. They think that the previous administration acted exactly like the present one: they do not answer emergency calls, and enter the community only in repressive actions, to extort and falsely incriminate people.

The creation of a proximity police has traditionally been understood as one of the main successful achievements reported in multi-sectorial interventions between 2012 and 2015 in Nuevo Almaguer. However, the co-construction methodology not only revealed that the people ignore the existence of a "Guardia de Proximidad" in the municipality, but that they also deeply distrust the local police. Several focus group discussions and in-depth interviews indicated that adults share the negative perception manifested by the young regarding the police.

For other young people of the community (who do not attend school), it is quite common to see the police enter the neighbourhood and attack them, beat them, and submit them to different kinds of abuses, including torture. The absence of trust towards the authorities prevents the people from re-

[11] F. Focus Group with students, afternoon shift, CETIS Guadalupe, 18 May 2017.

porting these acts, it is therefore not possible to find public records or official reports of these cases.

Another recurring issue among young people is the discrimination of which they perceive they are the victims, and the way they are stigmatised by the adult population of Nuevo Almaguer and people outside the community. Among the actors that most severely stigmatise them are the police, both the local and the state police. It is interesting to note that the young of Nuevo Almaguer (as compared to young people in many other parts of Mexico)[12] clearly know the characteristics that distinguish the security forces operating in the area: municipal police, "Fuerza Civil," research police, "Federales," army, military police, marines. This knowledge stems from difficult interactions and complex victimisation processes. These findings stand in stark contrast with the diagnoses of previous multi-sectorial interventions carried out in Nuevo Almaguer.[13] Testimonies by young people clearly prove they were not aware of the creation of "proximity police" units, and denounce chronic violence mechanisms between the police and the young, attested by severe cases of abuse and mistreatment.

Regarding stigmatisation processes, both young people and adults use vocabulary such as "cholo" and "drug-addict" when they refer to the behaviour of a young man of the community they perceive as different or unwanted. To belittle young women, they almost invariably use the term "prostitute," occasionally complemented by the adjective "pot-smoker". These

[12]National Survey on Victimisation and Perception of Public Security INEGI, 2018, sections two and three.

[13]Two important surveys were carried out in 2012 regarding crime, socio-demography, and the "Guardia de Proximidad" in Nuevo Almaguer. The first was commissioned by USAID (*Plan Maestro Comunitario de Prevención del Delito y de la Violencia. Polígono Nuevo Almaguer, Guadalupe, Nuevo León, 2012*), and the second by the Office for Domestic Affairs (*Sistematización de la Implementación de la Guardia de Proximidad en el Municipio de Guadalupe, NL, 2015*). In its "Diagnóstico situacional," the first report includes a section on the young population of Nuevo Almaguer. It mentions that they do not have severe problems with the police (USAID 2012: 29); the second report (Segob 2015: 12) signals that the young population knows and supports the work carried out by the "Guardia de Proximidad".

words not only discriminate and reinforce violence cycles in Nuevo Almaguer, they also marginalise the population, more importantly the women, who, as a consequence, have to cope with policing of their behaviour in public places, since they are easily labeled "prostitutes" when they are not inside their homes caring for their brothers or relatives.

Marginalisation by stigmatisation not only causes those who identify as the majority to distrust and suspect the "others;" it also directly blames these others for the violence and crimes that affect the community. Exploratory walks, focus groups, and in-depth interviews, all revealed the recurring stigmatisation of those who are considered different.[14] Young people who tend to gather outside are considered delinquents, event if they actually do not commit offences or incur in antisocial activities such as listening to loud music, litter the street, draw graffitis or insult passers-by, among other things.[15]

There is an ambivalent position regarding the impact of illegal armed groups in Nuevo Almaguer before their expulsion in 2013. Initially, the research team agreed (later confirmed by various testimonies, especially by female focus groups)[16] that the presence of illegal armed groups was a constant threat to the community, that limited the possibility to use public spaces originally designed for leisure. According to testimonies by focus groups of women, of young people attending school, young people not attending school, and interviews with elderly people, the presence of these illegal armed groups caused an increase in consumption and distribution of drugs among the young of the community.

The presence of these groups and the violence with which they function have also divided the neighbours and hindered peaceful coexistence. How-

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[14]Focus group with young people, 12 May 2017.

[15]These "antisocial" acts are not considered offences by the criminal codes of either Nuevo León or Mexico.

[16]*Cf.* audio of initial Pilot Tests (Focus Group with women), 2 February 2017.

ever, both in interviews and in focus groups, several participants mentioned that the armed illegal groups (as long as they were not involved in clashes with their rivals) could be stability agents, because "no one else enters the neighbourhood".

With the removal of the *Zetas* and the Gulf Cartel from Nuevo Almaguer, the presence of illegal armed groups decreased drastically. There is currently, however, a group of young people that gathers on street corners to drink alcohol and use drugs. They could be linked to criminal activity, but they are acknowledged and respected by the neighbours, some of which admitted having asked them for help to solve personal problems that call for a "settling of scores," like beating or threatening a person who has offended them. This also reflects the community's response to social problems, avoiding state action due to the distrust towards both the police and the judicial system, which, again, leads to the reproduction of the violence that affects the community.

Response and intervention analysis

The processes of co-construction of knowledge led by the research team and the community (mainly women and young people) motivated various discussions and yielded diverse considerations on the response of the community and the authorities to the problems identified in Nuevo Almaguer. In most cases, the community's response was rather feeble, if at all. Most people passively waits for help from the municipality, in exchange for which they collaborate with neighbourhood leaders who work for the municipal authorities. Some neighbours (all of them women) have tried to rally and autonomously claim services and rights. These initiatives have been slowed down by local leaders who work for the municipality or who are affiliated to political parties.

The models of clientelism and dependence identified in Nuevo Almaguer favour a citizenship whose activity depends on the cyclical projects offered by the government and by non-governmental actors, and by a state represented by the municipal authorities. Far from being effective, these authorities base their proximity to the community on agendas and interests linked to the preservation of power, and do not necessarily fit a logic that encourages agency within the community. In other words, the direction taken by citizenship in Nuevo Almaguer is totally contrary to social development and the reinforcement of autonomous power.

One of the most interesting and apolitical examples of community organisation is the solidary sale of food products in the "ex Capilla". With the collaboration of the state authorities of Nuevo León, Cáritas Monterrey collects perishable and non-perishable food, donated or sold at very low cost by the distributors of the local supply centre and some supermarket chains, creating a food bank. All the products are still fit for consumption, but about to reach their expiration date. In Nuevo Almaguer, a group of well-organised women with leadership skills formed a committee of volunteers —originally trained by "Ciudadanos en Apoyo a los Derechos Humanos" (CADHAC) in the 1990s— who are in charge of the transportation and bookkeeping, and coordinate their neighbours in Nuevo Almaguer, Unidad Piloto, and Vicente Ferrer. The neighbours make grocery parcels, organise the spaces of distribution, sell the groceries, and clean the spaces. Men and women work together exercising self-management and effective coordination.

What is different about this process? Why does this group of women from Nuevo Almaguer collaborate in a solidary sale of grocery parcels and not in other processes of democratic development and participative citizenship? Observation of and participation with this activity revealed that the bonds that link these women with the Catholic church have been fundamental to the existence of this project. Since Cáritas is a religious civil organisa-

tion, it has made it easier for them to find legitimacy and recognition of their efforts among their neighbours, families, local leaders, even themselves.

Proposals from below

In addition to the identification of chronic violence patterns that have had an impact in Nuevo Almaguer, in a process of co-construction, the participants and the team forwarded proposals to decrease chronic violence and its effects. Chart one lists the most relevant proposals.

Chart 1
SYNOPSIS OF PROPOSALS FOR THE HUMAN SECURITY AGENDA
OF NUEVO ALMAGUER, LINKED TO THE REDUCTION OF CHRONIC VIOLENCE

Social problem	Proposals	Target
Presence of drug dealers and burglars	Many young people are aware of the immediate consequences of their participation in drug dealing, but not of the harm caused to people and communities as a whole. Our proposal is to work with this group, stimulating their participation in voluntary training programmes for work and self-employment.	Governmental authorities
	Organise training in community mediation in the neighbourhood with the participation of young people and as much neighbours as possible, in order to all realise the importance of communication for the resolution of our problems.	
	Organise walks with policewomen or groups of neighbours to patrol the areas that have been declared dangerous, such as the Las Chivas pitch. The young and adult women of the neighbourhood believe that policewomen are more honest and less violent than the men, which is why we think we would feel safer with them.	
	Build a community centre in a location that is easily accessed, not in the upper nor in the lower area; this could allow the neighbours and the authorities to watch movements within the neighbourhood.	
	Create groups of watching neighbours, independent from the municipality, who can alert the neighbours in case of dangerous events such as shootings, fights or any danger on the streets, not forgetting people who do not use social media.	Community
	Avoid resolving our neighbourhood problems with violence, avoid insulting and being abusive towards others. Even if something is upsetting us, try to resolve it by talking or with the neighbourhood judge, and tell others to do the same in order to promote respect.	
Alcohol and illegal drugs consumed on street corners	Involve the families in programmes for young people implemented in the community.	Governmental authorities
	Avoid judging drug dealers and drug consumers. The better solution is to reflect on how we can all get involved in their rehabilitation, to reach harmony within the neighbourhood.	
	Turn the programmes for young people into permanent programmes, most of all those that promote living together peacefully, and help them find jobs and be more secure. The programmes so far have been highly successful, but have been discontinued.	Civil Society

Situations affecting the security of the women	Support the collective reconstruction of the history of our neighbourhood, acknowledging the founding members and important personalities such as adults, leaders and young people who have made a difference. Support a reflection on the future we want for Nuevo Almaguer and its people.	Governmental authorities
	Amplify the reach and scope of programmes that support women who have been victims of violence. These programmes are implemented by the institute for women and other agents, but should be increasingly available to the women of Nuevo Almaguer.	Governmental authorities
	Create daycare funded by the government and managed by women of the community. This, besides providing jobs, allows the women to be solidary with the other women of the community.	
	Perpetuate and broaden existing programmes for men, most of all those tackling issues of domestic violence and gender issues.	Civil Society
	Create cooperatives of women in order to promote economic activities as formal continuity to the training provided by the government and civil organisations.	Community
	Support and engage with workshops such as "women weaving the history of the community". This allows to acknowledge the history of Nuevo Almaguer and its inhabitants, enhances working together and creating relationships among women.	
Situations that affect the security of the young	Improve the police's training in human rights, in order to promote a decent behaviour towards the young people of the community, to build trust, to allow us to feel secure when a patrol approaches, and to fight corruption.	Governmental authorities
	Organise workshops to create proximity between the police and young people in order to improve their relationship.	
	Be sensitive to the reality of the young; avoid thinking that because they are young, they automatically are delinquents. Reach out to them and communicate to understand them, and see if we can help them instead of only judging.	Community
	Fund activities for the preparation of candidates to admission exams for secondary schools, college, and universities, and for the regularisation of school subjects. This can be done within the neighbourhood with the help of students who fare well at school and can help the others.	Governmental authorities

Conclusions

The findings of the research carried out in Nuevo Almaguer in the course of two years reveal the existence of very complex factors that generate and perpetuate violence in the neighbourhood. Among these factors are geographical isolation and marginalisation (differentiated access to development), the complex appropriation and understanding of the culture of legality (starting with the illegal invasion of plots of land 20 or 30 years ago and perpetuated in antisocial conducts today), social vulnerability caused by the absence of property regulation, gender and domestic violence, segregation and stigmatisation of young people and women, the existence of cycles of revenge, inter-generational conflicts, and harassment by local party leaders.

In the face of this intricate scenery, it is important to observe that the methodology of "security from below" allowed to create and validate information on chronic violence that is not available via quantitative methods, nor via the authorities' regular approaches to the population. The trust that was created between the research team and the participants allowed for dialogues and open and honest interaction, and for the analysis of problems from a decidedly realistic perspective.

The most serious limitations to the implementation of this methodology were the apathy and weariness of the locals in the face of social interventions that have hitherto yielded very limited results, and the fear of retaliations by party leaders for their participation in a project that was neither partisan nor governmental. This did not, however, prevent the elaboration of a Human Security Agenda based on the analysis of violence and insecurity, with input and proposals that reclaim the voices of the people of Nuevo Almaguer.

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See, hear, and be quiet:
Chronic violence in Apatzingán and the need for human security constructed from below

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Apatzingán is a paradigmatic example of the failure of a public policy designed and imposed "from above." Mainly belligerent and punitive, this policy targets symptoms of violence rather than the long-standing plethora of economic and socio-political factors that are its breeding ground and propitiated its growth into the epidemics it has become.

Ex-president Felipe Calderón's so-called "war on drugs" (2006-2012) was launched in Apatzingán with the "Operativo Conjunto Michoacán." Since then, the municipality has been a laboratory for failed and counter-productive public policies that have increased insecurity and contributed to the propagation of different expressions of chronic violence, which have sparked a progressive and degenerative collective trauma.[1] If violence and insecurity have extended to all of Mexico, it is at the local level —as in the case of Apatzingán— that its expressions are most alarming, with the decay of human security, crime incidence, and the Mexican state's inability to respond equally and effectively to the demands for security provisions by all the members of the communities.

In Apatzingán, the government's inertia and the rise of criminal activity have had a progressive and constant, if differentiated, impact on the population. No improvements or attempts at improvement on the part of the government were perceptible in the course of this process. The inaction

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[1]Progressive trauma is "the harm caused by institutionalised violence to concrete individuals. It extends to all members of society, the structures they create, social norms, and the institutions that structure citizenship based on values and principles that once were hegemonic. It is a process of profound alteration of political, cultural, and social institutions" (Kovalskys, 2006: 2).

and/or disengagement of the municipal authorities have been particularly concerning, as they have increasingly delegated their responsibility in matters of security to federal and state authorities via the "Mando Único" and other centralised prevention programmes implemented "from above" that have proven ineffective. Apatzingán is a particularly interesting case, because contrary to explanations assigning criminal violence to the absence of the state or to institutional weakness, in this municipality the government had the possibility to act, but turned into one more generator and reproducer of violence.

This chapter explores how in Apatzingán, more specifically in neighbourhood Lázaro Cárdenas, the people have endured historical waves of violence and insecurity, in the face of which they have developed various individual and collective adaptation and mitigation strategies. These strategies, some of which are legal and some not, reproduce and generate new forms of violence. In some cases, these lead to an increasing level of defencelessness and progressive-degenerative trauma.

The differentiated responses of the people in their efforts to gain some level of security have depended on their material (socio-economic conditions) or immaterial resources (connections with state or non-state agents). In this sense, the possibility to access alternative provisions of private or public security is actually part of a set of privileges derived from the resources mentioned above. This weakens the capacity for individual and collective agency and hinders the possibility of a change of strategy that turns security into a public good to which all citizens can claim equal access.

The aim of the present chapter is to analyse the complexity of chronic violence in neighbourhood Lázaro Cárdenas from the point of view of the methodology of co-construction described in the introduction, and to consider the possibility of constructing a local human security agenda that contributes to improve security. The chapter is divided in five parts. The

first will give a brief overview of the history of violence in Apatzingán; the second will focus on a diagnosis of violence and insecurity from below. The third part will tackle progressive trauma as the most noticeable implication of chronic violence, followed by a review of the institutional factors that enable chronic violence and progressive trauma. Finally, we will present some possible responses to chronic violence and its impact, aiming at co-constructing a more humane and inclusive security provision.

Apatzingán's long history of violence and insecurity

The current situation of violence and insecurity in Apatzingán has deep historical roots and a reach that could be characterised as endemic (Zepeda, 2016). Mostly rural, with good weather and fertile agricultural soils, the region of Tierra Caliente in which the municipality is located is propitious for marihuana and opium poppy culture, but has also an important supply of mineral and forest resources. The region presents extensive elevated and isolated areas that easily escape the control of the state and have historically been used as sanctuaries for rebel or criminal groups. It is additionally located close to zones of economically important sea and land infrastructures (Maldonado, 2010, 2012; Gledhill, 1995). Over the decades, the isolation of the area has prompted a particular mode of behaviour in the locals, who tend to put individual interests above legality, and family above the social group. Their moral code presents networks of silence and solidarity related to their place of origin, which facilitates illegality and diverse complicities. Drug trafficking organisations have taken advantage of this disposition, gathering strength by imposing their lifestyle and driving social mobility (Maldonado, 2012).

Beside the violence perpetuated by criminal organisations, the region has also been hit by state violence, which has been instrumentalised to

criminalise political dissent (Maldonado, 2010, 2012; Guerra Manzo, 2002 and 2017; Romain Le Cour, 2014; Zepeda 2016, 2016) and to implement practices typical of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) such as clientelism, corporatism, and conditioned welfarism. These practices have demobilised or decreased the potential of social movements and autonomous citizens.

The cultivation of stimulants in the area dates back to the 1970s, boosted at the time by the lime and avocado crisis that hit the region's most important crops, and as a result of the growing demand for drugs in North America and Europe (Valdés, 2013). In the last decade, Apatzingán and a couple of other municipalities have become the main producers of the synthetic drugs (crystal methamphetamine) elaborated in the clandestine laboratories of Mexico. If to this we add the profits available from the extortion of legal and illegal economies, the zone appears highly lucrative for criminal organisations. This has no doubt fuelled the conflicts between these groups and different state-related entities, and clashes among the groups themselves (Zepeda, 2016: 189).[2]

As mentioned previously, state-related violence figures importantly in the history of this region. Consequently, Tierra Caliente has traditionally been "stigmatised as a region inhabited by uncivilised and violent individuals with a tendency towards illegal activities" (Maldonado, 2012). This has provided the government with justifications for the implementation of pacifying policies (González, 1991). De facto pacification or "pax narca" has been reached and established several times via implicit pacts or open complicities of municipal and state authorities with different hegemonic

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[2]Criminal groups seeking the monopoly of the different illegal trades in the region and the state have succeeded one another abruptly, thereby provoking several waves of violence and reorganisation. Among the most prominent representatives are *Los Valencia* or *Los Milenio* (*ca*. 1989-2003), *Los Zetas* (ca. 2003-2006), *La Empresa-Familia Michoacana* (*ca*. 2006-2011), *Los Caballeros Templarios* (*ca*. 2011-2014), some autodefensa (vigilante) groups (2013-2014), and currently *Los Viagra* (brothers Sierra Santana) (Valdés, 2013; Gil, 2015b). Additionally, there are now other criminal cells of the *Jalisco Nueva Generación* cartel and the *Nueva Familia Michoacana*.

criminal groups (Zepeda, 2016). These "complicity agreements" go far beyond simple corruption, and are based on tacit mutual benefits, such as electoral funding in exchange for apparently democratic elections (Ernst, 2016b: 4). In this context, both the *Familia Michoacana* and the *Templarios* managed to establish a "criminal territorial monopoly" that was partly the reason for the temporal decrease in violence at specific moments (Zepeda, 2016: 168).

On 11 December 2006, president Felipe Calderón Hinojosa's administration launched a frontal assault on organised crime. "Operativo Conjunto Michoacán" implied the coordination of the different federal, state and municipal security actors to jointly confront armed gangs. The target was the complete eradication of production, sale and distribution of illegal drugs, and the decrease of violence against the civil population (Gil, 2015b). Since then, the municipality of Apatzingán has remained central in the federal government's security programmes.[3]

In response to the pervasive presence of organised crime and the terror regime imposed by delinquent groups, the "Movimiento de Autodefensas Michoacano" emerged in February 2013 (Guerra, 2017). This vigilante movement was repressed by the government, as it threatened the latter's monopoly on the legitimate use of force. On the other hand, the autodefensas endorsed the responsibility for the provision of security in their communities, and claimed the state was failing in its duty as security provider (Zepeda, 2016).

The federal government reacted somewhat belatedly with the creation of the Commission for Security and Comprehensive Development (*Comisión para la Seguridad y el Desarrollo Integral*) in the state of Michoacán, which

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[3]Three specific actions prove this. Firstly, the agreement on the implementation of a centralised police force, the "Mando Único" in October 2015. Secondly, during Peña Nieto's presidency and until 2016, the municipality was one of the main foci of the National Programme for the Social Prevention of Violence and Crime. Finally, Apatzingán remains an active beneficiary of the "Programa de Fortalecimiento para la Seguridad" (Fortaseg, previously Subsemun).

operated in 2013 and 2014 (Gil, 2015b). The commission implemented a counter-insurgent offensive against the *Caballeros Templarios*, establishing a temporal alliance with some autodefensas groups. Despite the huge amount of resources provided, the Commission failed to reestablish the rule of law. On the contrary, the intervention profoundly affected the federal pact with the entity, disintegrating municipal police forces (such as the police of Apatzingán in 2014) and inadequately substituting these with federal police and soldiers, and, subsequently, with the "Mando Único." The operation also recurred to the old strategy of cooptation and criminalisation of dissent. The members of autodefensas that refused to subordinate by turning into "Guardias Rurales" were criminalised and persecuted, or violently eliminated (Castellanos, 2015).

In short, the historical factors that have led to high levels of violence and insecurity in the region are of structural and symbolic-cultural nature. The federal government's militarised intervention has increased the damage caused by this and has hindered the possibility to build the social conditions for peace in the region.

Assessment of violence and insecurity from below

The analysis presented here is the result of a participative, action-oriented research process carried out between 2016 and 2018, which involved dialogue and knowledge exchange with 116 locals, of which 63 were residents of neighbourhood Lázaro Cárdenas, and 53 were relevant socio-political agents from the municipality of Apatzingán. The research activities included conversations, peace circles, leisure activities, among others, and allowed to build trust and encourage reflection on problems of security and on the different expressions of violence in the city. The research revealed that the people of neighbourhood Lázaro Cárdenas live in a victimised com-

munity, besieged by several forms of violence, by the predatory hegemony of crime, and by the intermittent presence of a militarised and punitive state that is unable or unwilling to guarantee the security of all its citizens.

The process evidenced the disparity in the provision of public security caused by a dependence on the availability of material and immaterial resources. During field work, we observed that the upper area of the neighbourhood is the most marginalised and presents the lowest levels of well-being among its residents. Accordingly, this area also lacks basic public services and presents numerous irregularities regarding the property of the land (many plots are abandoned and a great number of crimes are allegedly committed there). The streets are still unpaved, which hinders the access of public security agents and turns the area into a convenient zone for criminal groups. This neighbourhood was chosen as case study because it is the largest and most populated neighbourhood in the municipality, and because it presents severe socio-economic disparities. It is also an important geo-strategical location for criminals involved in drug trafficking.[4]

This research draws from previous analyses on the violence produced both by confrontations between criminal groups for the territorial control and the heavy-handed response of the state (Ernst, 2016; Guerrero, 2018; Zepeda, 2016). However, we claim that the violence in Tierra Caliente, in Apatzingán, and in neighbourhood Lázaro Cárdenas in particular must be analysed beyond the number of homicides (lethal violence), and include the consideration of non-lethal forms of violence that harm and cause permanent and even transgenerational trauma to numerous population groups.

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[4]Currently, the neighbourhood is also the background to a struggle between two major criminal groups, the *Viagras* and the *Jalisco Nueva Generación* cartel (CJNG). It is important to mention that both the neighbourhood and the municipality are controlled by the first, who characteristically recur to extreme actions to keep their control on the population, such as selective executions, forced recruitment of young people, and extortion; they set fire to businesses and cars (narco-blocades) to demand the liberation of their arrested members or extort unwilling businessmen. All this has negatively impacted the capacity for agency of the citizens and the municipal agents in general.

The use of chronic violence as conceptual framework (Abello Colak and Pearce, 2009; Abello Colak, 2018: 295-296) and the implementation of the participative methodology of co-construction of human security allowed to understand and reveal the complexity of other violences that are overshadowed by high-impact crimes such as homicides. As shown in the following examples, these other violences take place in more personal interaction spaces and in community spaces:

At home: the most intimate dimension of the community. Here, we found types of violences that are known but silenced for fear of condemnation by other family members. Domestic violence, disintegration, and the absence of special care for those in vulnerable positions, such as elderly people, were recurring and relevant topics. The testimony of a young mother reveals a situation common to the women of the neighbourhood:

> One day he came and without a word he threw me on the bed, he hit me and took my child from me, it was my eldest but he was still a baby back then, maybe two months old. He hit me so hard my nose began to bleed, it felt wet, and I looked at the blood and felt very angry, my blood was boiling, it helped me get up and as he did not expect I hit him as hard as I could, with all my forces, I remember he even turned and I said "he will not find me and hit me again" and I ran (Young mother, Lázaro Cárdenas, 27 March 2018).

At school: these spaces have become places where different types of drugs are consumed and the violence witnessed at home is reproduced. The teachers have identified severe cases within the school community, such as "cyber challenges" that encourage suicide or self-flagellation and forced displacement. The school authorities also claim that children who witness or suffer domestic violence are more likely to drop out of school.

In public spaces: there are but few recreational spaces in the community. For this reason, people gather in small shops provided with fruit machines

and noisy jukeboxes, where alcohol is sold illicitly.[5] The street has also turned particularly risky for the young, since criminal groups can more easily recruit them there, be it willingly or by force. Also, different police forces have a tendency to arrest young people gathered outdoors on charges of being "suspicious," and in some cases they have to be bribed or else the young end up in the cells of the Public Ministry. The following testimony exemplifies what young people experience in public spaces:

> They arrest kids to fill the records, and because this has become a source of income for the police. The boys cannot even walk around with a lighter without immediately becoming suspicious. They are constantly asked which group they belong to (Focus group, mother, Lázaro Cárdenas, 18 July 2018).
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> My oldest son was forced to become a *sicario*, then his brothers wanted to be like him. Now my oldest is dead and one of his brothers is in jail (Interview, mother, Lázaro Cárdenas, 12 April 2017).

At work: economic security based on fair employment is one of the concerns and most urgent needs of the people of neighbourhood Lázaro Cárdenas. Offers are scarce and most jobs are underpaid and lack the most basic rights, stability, or sanitation. This problem is worsened by the actions of criminal groups, as reported by a young worker of the community:

> It doesn't matter wether you have a degree, it doesn't matter if you are a lime picker, there are no jobs. The most you can expect if you have no degree, I am talking about secondary school degree, is to pick limes. And now it is not even possible to work daily, since organised crime has imposed restrictions on lime farmers, on producers, about which days they are allowed to harvest and which days they are not (Interview, young worker, Lázaro Cárdenas, 25 July 2017).

[5]According to the State Commission against Sanitary Risks (*Comisión Estatal de Prevención de Riesgos Sanitarios*, Coepris), Apatzingán is the municipality with the highest levels of underage drinking (Coepris, February 2017).

In state institutions: one of the acute problems that hinder the construction of security is the citizens' lack of trust in the authorities. Plenty of experiences linked with corruption, harassment, extortion, violence, and impunity on the part of public officials were reported to the research team, as exemplified by the following story:

> It is worse when it is a police officer who intimidates you and steals from you, because you expect that from criminals, but when the person that is supposed to protect you harms you, you remain totally alone and vulnerable…so where do you go? (Field diary, interview with a mother, Lázaro Cárdenas, 18 July 2018).

Progressive trauma: Most apparent consequences of chronic violence

> …After what has happened to us, there is a kind of very severe social psychosis that does not favour collective action (Interview with teacher, Lázaro Cárdenas, 13 July 2017).
> …And then I wake up and tell my daughter: since then they have taken away our peace, our tranquility. Because you wake up with a feeling in your heart like what's going to happen? The noise wakes you up because outside you hear shots, I don't know if everything is [inaudible] but you can hear cars, motorcycles…or shots (Interview with widowed mother, Lázaro Cárdenas, 19 April 2017).

From the first time we came in contact with the community we perceived a wariness and a defensive attitude towards the research team, similar to how a victim would behave. The community of Apatzingán, and more particularly the people of neighbourhood Lázaro Cárdenas have suffered the impact of a great number of violences that have profoundly harmed all aspects of daily life. Many members of the community have been extensively

exposed to critical experiences, witnessing cases of extreme violence perpetrated by diverse agents in different public and private spaces; they have lost relatives, friends, acquaintances; they have had to learn how to live with fear and be silent. These experiences have had a profound impact on the physical and mental health of the people and on the social fabric of the community. In the absence of accompaniment and guidance in how to process these experiences they cause what is called progressive trauma.

However, it does not suffice to reveal the ongoing harassment perpetrated by illegal agents for the control of the territory. Other problems must be highlighted, such as stress, anguish, and despair caused by distinct insecurities like the absence of opportunities, of basic services, problems of urban planning, socio-economic disparities, absence of decent job opportunities, of leisure, sports and cultural spaces, among others. In this context of exacerbated violence and insecurity, the people of the municipality of Apatzingán, and particularly the residents of neighbourhood Lázaro Cárdenas suffer from social trauma. The community is hurt and imprisoned, forced to normalise the horror to be able to survive. The people can be seen as a collective victim facing a process of progressive and degenerative trauma. "See, hear and be quiet" has been imposed as the community's survival motto. This situation has a severe impact on the younger residents, as clearly expressed by the following narrative:

> My daughters wake up in the middle of the night: "Mommy, I was dreaming that I was being kidnapped, that they had my little sister, that I ran and ran…" I mean, are these dreams for a little girl? Even dreams are insecure now. My little daughters are insecure (Interview with mother, Lázaro Cárdenas, 30 March 2017).

The progressive nature of this trauma is due to the conjunction of diverse ongoing processes. Firstly, this collectivity lives under the weight of an armed conflict between criminal groups that have caused thousands of

deaths, which significantly worsened with the beginning of the war against drug traffickers. Additionally, the community quasi-permanently witnesses attacks, kidnappings, and murders, and experiences extreme expressions of violence.

> If someone challenges these groups, then he is always in danger, he or she stands on the edge of the cliff [...] On the other hand, unfortunately, many people is not involved, but cornered (Interview, young man, Apatzingán, 20 February 2017).
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> Here, people have learned to make do with anything, people learned to adapt. The criterion is to have no criteria, to shut up and not protest in any way. Total submission. Do as if you don't see, you don't hear. This as a kind of passive resistance, since anyone who dared to protest or denounce was killed or threatened (Interview with priest, 18 April 2017).

The process of progressive trauma has also increased due to the absence of justice, denunciation, and reparation measures. Similarly, psychotherapeutic or psychosocial treatments are unavailable. The accumulation of damage is also visible in the break of the social pact, hindering the possibility of healthy relationships and making violence a valid mode of interaction in interpersonal and community relations. This situation worsens when state agents re-victimise the victims, or deprive them or their relatives of their rights. In turn, progressive trauma worsens with the structural or symbolic violences within the community. There is a strong feeling that *if you do not get involved, nothing will happen to you*, and a persistent narrative claiming that violence is selective and that "they kill each other among themselves," further asserting that "you remain neutral, let them do whatever they want," since "those to whom something happened were in one way or another linked with the criminals" (Interview, lime farmer, Apatzingán, 18 July 2018).

The young, in particular, have faced multiple forms of direct and indirect violence, such as the highest homicide rates, forced displacements, and discrimination due to the prevailing stereotypes that prevent them from enjoying their rights and reach their full employment potential. In this sense, the trauma of the young is also related to narratives that represent them (mostly the young men) as a "lost generation, which is why it is better to capitalise on the children, since there is nothing left to do with the young" (Interview, female shop keeper, Apatzingán, 20 February 2018). This mentality has justified their ongoing marginalisation, both in social projects and governmental programmes.[6]

As individuals, the young are under constant threat of being recruited by criminal cells operating in the area. In the course of this research process, we collected the testimony of a mother who lost two of her sons in violent interrelated circumstances. The oldest son was recruited by force, and once he was incorporated, his younger brothers decided to join voluntarily, lured by the weapons and the feeling of power associated with violence. Two of her sons were imprisoned and murdered after serving sentence, one by the opposed criminal group, the other by the police during a chase (Interview with neighbour, Lázaro Cárdenas, 12 April 2017).

The ongoing stigmatisation and the possibility of being recruited by organised crime has forced the young of Apatzingán to take shelter in the private sphere, or chose between exile, join criminal groups, or only communicate with their peers through social networks.

The vulnerability of the young and the children is manifest in the absence of cultural symbols, elements and spaces on which to build the values of a community. The different accounts of the interviewees allowed to reveal that collective and identity processes are infused with what Maldonado

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[6]Of course there are important exceptions such as certain civil society working groups. However, these have not been able to change stereotypes and present the young as a particularly vulnerable group which needs urgent and particular attention.

(2010) calls "cultura ranchera," defined as a mode wherein a community sets personal values above legality and family prestige above the common good. This social trait, in a context where the rule of law is absent and criminal groups control the social order, has resulted favourable to a process of acculturation, wherein the values and icons of the members of criminal organisations become the cultural reference and the predominant aspirational model for the community.

> The criminal groups have managed to marginalise cultural references and expressions. They have displaced tradition, diversity and local identity. They have appropriated music and public space, relegated cinemas and theatres, removed literature, and erased dance and visual arts. They have reinforced the narrative that claims violence is the sole source of power, and this is reflected in the people's aesthetic expressions and appreciations (Field diary, Apatzingán, August 2017).

In the face of the state's inability to enforce legality and establish the rule of law, the community moves between the lawful and the criminal (Maldonado, 2010). Even though criminal activities are considered illegal, especially those of high impact such as assault, homicide, kidnappings, and others, participation to activities like cultivating, producing, or selling drugs (as far as this does not imply violence) have historically been considered legitimate by the community (Guerra, 2017).

In short, there is a set of aspects which have effectively undermined individual and collective action among the people of Apatzingán and the residents of neighbourhood Lázaro Cárdenas in particular. These aspects include the presence of an authority perceived as incapable of providing security, the construction of a voluntary or forced social base to organised crime, the absence of a culture of legality, and the profound socio-economic disparities that reinforce structural and symbolic violence among the people.

Institutional factors that enable chronic violence
and progressive trauma

> Maybe you don't know what it is to live where there is no authority (Interview, neighbour, Lázaro Cárdenas, 22 July 2017).
> What hurts and outrages the citizen is corruption, impunity (Interview, elderly man, Lázaro Cárdenas, 6 May 2017).

There are important challenges involved in breaking cycles of violence and interrupting the progressive trauma they cause on people and communities. One of these difficulties lies in the negative perception of those charged with the design or implementation of public policies. In general, there is a tendency to harshly criticise the efficiency of their actions, their capacity to fulfil their role, and their actual operative abilities to execute their tasks. However, the most important criticism focusses on the alleged collusion of public officials with organised crime. In the slightest cases, the authorities are accused of being permissive and negligent, but in other they involve collusion and complicities. Beyond direct accusations and probable collusions, what stands out is the certainty of the inability of the three levels of the state to enforce the law and regulate public life. Even when the institutions show a certain amount of disposition to fulfil their role as warrants of security as a public good, many voices within the community consider that the interests represented by most institutions are not those of the citizens.

This is reflected in a profound contradiction between daily experience of insecurity and political discourse. Security has become the brand of official speeches, and in municipal development plans and intervention strategies, the context of violence has yielded a discourse where security is the indisputable priority. However, results and indicators allowing to assess these security strategies are practically inaccessible for the citizens. In-

deed, when we scrutinised local public policies, we came across a total opacity regarding security actions carried out by the municipal authorities. The pages are non-existent, the charts are empty, and indicators are incomplete.[7] Significantly, security-related engagements included in the Municipal Development Plan were discarded the moment the centralisation of the police forces was signed with the "Mando Único," entirely delegating the responsibility to state and federal competence.

This situation, added to the progressive centralisation of the design and implementation of public security policies by federal authorities, posits serious doubts regrading the real capacities of the municipality to fulfil its constitutional obligations regarding security issues.[8] This has caused the citizens' ignorance of the programs or policies available to them, which hinders their capacity to demand rights or obtain public services. It also encourages the perception that programmes and actions are carried out discretionally and promotes practices geared towards the privatisation of security (watchmen, private guards, and other similar functions).

There are moreover precedents proving that the intervention of the state has increased the levels of insecurity. This was the case of the direct intervention of the federal state to "restore the rule of law" in 2014 with the Commission for Security and Comprehensive Development of the State of Michoacán. With its discretional characteristics, the project caused a feeling of imposition, impunity and corruption. Most of all, it was considered another violent strategy to "pacify," using repression to try to resolve a conflict that had structural and historical causes.

All in all, to this day, the different security policies implemented in Apatzingán by the government have been insufficient or unsuccessful.

[7]See http://www.Apatzingán.gob.mx/transparencia/index.php
[8]For instance, until October 2018, the process for the creation of a new municipal police force, started in 2016, remained unfinished, and the "Mando Único" system prevailed.

The long process of chronic violence experienced by the people of the neighbourhood has encouraged some of them —"fed up" by this state of impunity and injustice— to legitimise or favour harsher measures that violate the basic human rights of the people incurring in criminal activities. In some cases, people have approved violent acts of retaliation among the criminal groups, or the excessively violent response of governmental authorities towards those they consider "outlaws".[9] The combination of high rates of impunity and, corruption, and the retaliation threats for denouncing illegal situations promotes extreme strategies such as the creation of auto-defensas ("self-defense") groups, or other informal actions that contribute no doubt to the reproduction of violence and the degradation of the rule of law.

Rethinking responses to chronic violence and their impact: Who's security?

The recent history of the municipality of Apatzingán proves that the framework of security "from above," which pretends to regain territorial control and imposes security using violence, has contributed to conceal the life conditions of those who are most directly hit by the effects of chronic violence. Conversely, the "from below" methodology of this research posits a perspective that does not substitute the responsibility of the government in

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[9]For instance, one of the interviewees responded to the extrajudicial executions of some members of the ex-autodefensas group called "G250," in January 2015: "I place myself in the shoes of the families, these people have done them much harm, and I think they must be glad now because they must be thinking 'now you can feel what I have felt'" (Interview, neighbour, Lázaro Cárdenas, 2 December 2016. Another commented: "People said that they deserved it, because they were involved in those businesses, those jobs, people wish they would finish all of them, not only those ones" (Interview, neighbour, Lázaro Cárdenas, 18 February 2017). One of the members of the ranchers association responded: "We need a revolution, yes, kill all those people [...] There is nothing else to be done than to create groups of avengers. We want true justice, popular justice" (Interview, elderly man, Apatzingán, 22 July 2016).

public security, but recognises the capacity of the people who endure and experience violence to understand and act within their reality by resorting to their capacity to construct security.

The Local Human Security Agenda of Apatzingán, constructed with the locals, collects the voices of people who face situations that threaten or harm their quality of life. This collective work enabled a diagnosis that is closer to the needs of the community, and expresses the concrete wants of the different population groups. By means of a horizontal dialogue with adult men and women, and young and elderly people, we managed to uncover the immediate problems affecting the people's personal safety, economic security, community safety, and environmental, health, political, and gender security.

By means of several participative methodologies, the Agenda allowed to identify urgent problems and acknowledge alternatives voiced by the people who participated in the process. The Agenda became a mechanism to bring forth ideas that can be built into collaborative plans for action with the government, the social organisations and collectives, and the members of the community themselves. Most of the elements comprising these ideas are so far not being identified within public security policies. Beyond innovative responses or comprehensive solutions, the conversation from below fostered the expression of the locals and encouraged proposals that the community could identify as their own and as being within their reach, in the face of this problem of insecurity and violence they want to solve.

Among the proposals that were collected, the basic demand for authorities to fulfil their function stands out. They are called to reinforce the capacity and competence of public officials working with security issues, especially the police forces. They are asked to clearly commit with the victims and engage into mechanisms of protection and access to justice. Additionally, there is a demand for ways of approaching the community and protracting public services within it; for better social spaces, and for strate-

gies to make legal economy more attractive. They are also asked to acknowledge the problem and act accordingly.

Organisations and associations were asked to enhance processes of awareness and training to identify and acknowledge violent practices perpetuated in daily life. They were invited to collaborate in support networks, especially for women and vulnerable groups, particularly the young. They were also asked to help female entrepreneurs trying to start businesses and help them with training and connections; to organise celebrations, and cultural, sports, and recreational activities, especially at nightfall, when the young tend to socialise more, in order to reclaim public spaces.

The community was requested to encourage the involvement of the young, and to promote solidarity and collective work. They called for their participation in community activities such as sweeping the streets, gathering for celebrations, strengthening the relationships among the residents, and to organise and act collectively.

The following chart presents the different expressions of violence identified in the community, and some of the proposals voiced by the people of neighbourhood Lázaro Cárdenas:

Space	HS dimension	Problematics	Some examples of proposals
At home	Personal	Domestic violence	For the governments: Reinforce shelters for women, girls and/or victims, where they are not re-victimised but supported psychologically and receive urgent economical and emotional help.
	Community	Stressed and disintegrating families	For the community: parents should not send their kids to buy alcohol and should reflect on the example they give with their own actions.
At school	Health	Drug addiction and despair	For the governments: train teachers of the community in pedagogies that involve learning civic duties, the respect of the law and contribute to the well-being of the other members of the community.
	Political	Obstacles to community organisation	For the governments: Reclaim abandoned spaces controlled by criminals and habilitate these as spaces for leisure and socialising, or as community and art centres.
	Community and environment	Spaces that make it hard to love and enjoy the city	For the governments: reduce environmental pollution with better waste collecting and management, recycling waste as much as possible.
	Community	Lure of narco-culture	For the civil organisations: propose and promote educational, artistic and sports activities, such as contests and sports tournaments, to promote a healthy collective spirit and the pride purported by public and legal forms of success.
At work	Economic	A threatened and "sequestered" local economy	For the governments: make legal economy more attractive than illegal activities a) For us, this means to support businesses without the need for having fruit machines, selling piracy products or any other product promoting vice, such as selling alcohol to minors. b) The procedure to create businesses should be easier and cheaper, and taxes to these businesses should be alleviated
	Health	Lack of psycho-social support	To the governments: create care centres to integrally treat addiction as an illness, so that families do not need to recur to private centres, which are expensive and less professional

Conclusions

The complexity of the situation in Apatzingán cannot be reduced to a problem of criminal competition for illegal economies, as has been suggested by several governmental and academic sources. The work carried out with the people via the methodology of participative research-action from below problematises this approach and makes visible the insecurity that thousands of families experience daily. Beside identifying the origin of the violences, this research allowed to identify the factors that reproduce them, as these are mechanisms that enable violence to mutate and expand into multiple dimensions, be it in the domestic sphere or in the complex public spaces of socialisation and economic production.

As a result, we conclude that Apatzingán is a community imprisoned by chronic violence, which is in turn rooted in mechanisms of socialisation and reproduction that favour the implementation of illegal livelihood strategies and instrumentalise and normalise violence as a way to survive. "See, hear and remain silent to survive in Apatzingán" has become a desperate strategy that restricts the margins of the few groups that remain active in the fields of poverty reduction, environment, or art.

The situation of violence and insecurity in Apatzingán is the result of public policies that were designed and implemented from above and have favoured military and repressive actions, which are alien to and counterproductive for the communities and their local needs. This context is also the result of structural problems that contribute to reproduce multiple forms of violence and insecurity that have not been addressed comprehensively, such as corruption, impunity, and the prevailing socio-economic inequalities.

Organised crime is not the only factor behind the violence and insecurity in the municipality. Indeed, governmental actors have also indirectly

generated violence by colluding with organised crime, and directly by being themselves involved in abuses and murder.

Nevertheless, even in this neighbourhood hit by chronic violence, the methodology of co-construction from below allowed to explore more intimate and silenced aspects of the community's troubles, thereby revealing that even in the most complex situations we can find young people who say: "we are also life," or mothers who remain firm in their desire for peace, organising into groups they have named "women who do not give up." As repeatedly emphasised by a group of women: "The only way to live well, is to *all* live well" (Focal group of women, Lázaro Cárdenas, 18 July 2018).

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Research in contexts of violence:
Challenges and strategies to co-produce knowledge "from below" and break the silence
Armando Rodríguez Luna and Falko Ernst

Introduction

Academic research in contexts of violence and insecurity faces a central dilemma: to reach a better understanding of the dynamics of these phenomena presupposes physical proximity. This naturally calls for the immersion of the researchers in the affected spaces, and, as such, the temporary coexistence with the protagonists, be it victims or perpetrators. Both are indispensable to the production of scientific knowledges that seek to influence the elaboration and improvement of public policies. However, this proximity is often considered too dangerous to be feasible, and the perception that this is an "impossible mission" prevails in the academic community (Rawlinson, 2008). This view does not come from nothing, but derives from the actual risks of carrying out immersion fieldwork in "dangerous spaces," where a state that is supposed to guarantee fundamental rights has often been replaced by illegal armed agents (Clunan and Trinkunas, 2010). Mexico is one of these spaces, or at least certain areas or zones of Mexico.

Besides a spike in levels of violence, the launching of the so-called "war on drugs" in 2006 brought about an unprecedented crisis in freedom of speech, and, as a result of this, also in academic and journalistic research. This derives from the fact that research, in its role as gateway to transparency and knowledge, is the most powerful resource against the illegal power networks driving the security crisis in contemporary Mexico. Journalistic and academic research have the power to tear off the masks of those hiding behind their appearance as public servants —servants of the

law. As such, journalistic research has been violently persecuted as a threat. Between 2000 and the end of October 2018, 120 journalists have been killed in Mexico.[1] Organisations such as Article 19 have recorded 1,986 assaults on journalists between December 2012 and February 2018, which is nearly twice as much as in the previous presidential term.[2] All this under the protection of impunity rates above 90 percent for serious crimes in Mexico.[3]

Those who intimidate, attack and use violence against people who are dedicated to reporting the news and understand the causes of violence in Mexico are allowed to do so without facing the consequences. The impact goes beyond the visible cases of murdered journalists who have become the symbols of impunity in the media.[4] The climate of violence, impunity and fear has transformed the very bases of journalistic profession and its protocols. Journalists, claim, for instance, that in order to be able to pursue their work and remain alive they practice self-censorship. In practice, this means that certain names and issues are not brought up. The result is a "light" version of journalism that does not investigate into the reality of power and violence in Mexico, which in turn causes the prevalence of a negotiated and limited freedom, silenced areas and absence of analysis and understanding.[5]

Researchers working in academia are not usually subjected to such restrictions, as not a single academic, until now, has been killed during

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[1]"Periodistas asesinados en México" Article 19. Accessed on 29 October. Retrieved from: https://articulo19.org/periodistasasesinados/

[2]*Democracia simulada, nada que aplaudir*, Article 19, 2018.

[3]*Índice Global de Impunidad México 2018*, Universidad de las Américas Puebla, 2018.

[4]Among other non-resolved cases are the murders of Regina Martínez in Veracruz in 2012, of Rubén Espinosa in Mexico City in 2015 and of Javier Valdez in Sinaloa in 2017.

[5]For reflections on how Mexican journalists attempt to negotiate their professional tasks amid this structural and physical violence, see Antonio Olalla and Jessica Hernández, "Periodismo en México: la autocensura como método de supervivencia", *Público*, 8 July 2018. Accessed on 29 October: https://www.publico.es/internacional/sinaloa-periodismo-mexico-autocensura-metodo-supervivencia.html

research related to violence. This does not mean, however, they are entirely free. To begin with, studies regarding organised crime in this specific geographic context present a gap between empirical realities and conceptual proposals (Finckenauer, 2005: 63), which make them highly dependent on official figures and their partialities (Chambliss, 1975; Paoli, 2002; Bovenkerk *et al.*, 2003).

Understandably, in Mexico, self-censorship is frequently practiced as a self-protection strategy; as such, it plays a similar role in academic production. It is common to hear researchers claim they do not address certain topics or avoid certain zones to prevent risks. Some academic institutions located in highly conflictive areas effectively negotiate their permanence by keeping away from "heavy" topics, such as the local operations of independent armed groups, and most of all the political web that supports their activities.[6] The price to pay is high, as this largely undermines the academic potential to effectively analyse and later mitigate the Mexican conflict.

This very distance, and the gap between reality and concepts is what the "methodology from below" described in the introduction seeks to overcome, not only by means of academic research as such, i.e., the extraction of data for academic purposes, but by means of a process of co-construction of security based on the dialogue between researchers and the population. Nevertheless, this ambitious yet much needed purpose actually increases the possible risks and involves larger ethical challenges than those of a "normal" research process. This is due to the fact that, contrary to the researchers who come from other places, both the community researchers and their families, and the citizens actively involved in the process, would remain in their communities after the research would be finished.

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[6]Confidential interviews and conversations with academics from various regions of Mexico between 2011 and 2018.

In the following sections, we start from a brief analysis of the situation of journalism in Mexico. Given the absence of in-depth studies within the academy itself, the approach to journalism was helpful as a starting point from which to identify the power and violence dynamics that are part of the reporters' context in the places where we carried out our research. Furthermore, it helped us in understanding how we, as this research's security advisors, reacted when faced with the challenges mentioned above. We elaborated a security protocol with the different teams in order to identify and minimise the possible sources of risk for the teams and the locals involved in the process. Finally, we discussed the specific measures, and their sometimes limited implementation in the course of the project.

Problems for journalistic research in Mexico

Freedom of expression and journalistic research are fundamental elements of democracy and human rights. In this sense, the principal activities performed by journalists, such as gathering and giving information, documenting and researching on human rights violations, corruption, violence and undue use of power, among others, make them key actors in the creation of a better informed society by ventilating information on the public arena and feeding political debate.[7] Nevertheless, journalists face several difficulties involved in these activities, which of course vary according to the political, social and criminal context of practically every state and region of the country. The political practices implemented by the regime that governed the country during most of the 20th century were disrupted by the upsurge of organised crime. These practices were characterised by selective censorship, and favouring certain media above others in the allocation of public

[7]Sergio García Ramírez and Alejandra Gonza, *La libertad de expresión en la jurisprudencia de la Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos*, Mexico, Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos y Comisión de Derechos Humanos del Distrito Federal, 2007, p. 17.

funds. The dependence of media outlets on official advertisement was above all used to control contending voices, a mechanism that was similarly used by the owners of media corporations to control the journalists.[8]

In the current Mexican context, criminal groups not only seek control over certain routes and territories to develop their illegal businesses, they also strive to control information in order to use the media and the journalists in their favour. Corruption, threats, and violence against journalists have become mechanisms of local control used both by criminals and colluded state agents. According to the "Informe 2018" on freedom of speech in Mexico, elaborated by the "Colectivo de Análisis de la Seguridad con Democracia" (Casede) and Simo Consulting, 90.4 percent of journalists feel they are more vulnerable than the rest of the population because of their job. This very high level of risk perception is partly due to their being exposed to different kinds of violence. For instance, throughout their careers, 82 percent of them have been intimidated for carrying out their journalistic tasks, 77 percent have been harassed, 65 percent have been threatened, 34 percent suffered physical violence, and 29 percent were illegally deprived of their freedom.[9]

On the other hand, in the last 17 years, 130 journalists have been killed, 10 percent of which were women. Additionally, in the last 12 years, 20 journalists have gone missing, and 52 news outlets were attacked. In the same vein, between 2006 and 2017, 34 human rights defenders were murdered, 40 percent of which were women, and 4 have disappeared.[10] This data yields a rather unpleasant picture of the situation affecting journalists

[8]See Jacinto Rodríguez Munguía, *La otra guerra secreta: los archivos prohibidos de la prensa y el poder*, Mexico, 2007.

[9]*Informe 2018 Libertad de Expresión. Seguridad y protección para periodistas y personas defensoras de derechos humanos*, Mexico, "Colectivo de Análisis de la Seguridad con Democracia" University of Las Américas, Puebla, Seminario de Violencia y Paz, 2018, currently in print.

[10]National Human Rights Commission (CNDH, by its initials in Spanish), *Informe de actividades del 1 de enero a diciembre 2017*. Accessed on 28 July 2018: http://informe.cndh.org.mx/images/uploads/menus/30110/content/files/Informe_cndh_2017.pdf

who investigate in dangerous contexts, or who cover violence-related topics linked with organised crime. Among the direct effects is of course censorship, self-censorship being one of its aspects. In a traditional definition of censorship, the state is considered the sole agent endowed with the authority to limit or correct information.[11] It exerts pressure on the media through official advertisement and, in local contexts, by directly threatening the journalists. Concretely, censorship is an attempt at hindering the dissemination of information that a politician believes will affect them personally or affect the government. The usual procedure is by insinuation or "request" of non-disclosure, or by the deformation of facts or circumstances. In Mexico, however, censorship has increasingly been involving organised crime. Since these groups have reached important territorial presence, they have also acquired the power to censor informative content in the media and thereby affect freedom of speech. Drug traffickers have also been known to use media outlets to spread messages or to intimidate rivals. The collusion between some agents of the state and organised crime has greatly favoured this phenomenon. Particularly on the local level, both politicians and criminals seek to take control over the flow and content of information.[12] This creates new dynamics of control, coercion, corruption, and violence, which of course entail more risks for investigation.

Although it originates in the same imposition, self-censorship includes the subjective factor of choice on the part of the journalist or the media. In the first case, the journalist fears economic or physical retaliations. The necessary condition for this is coercion involving at least two actors, one of whom is the journalist. In other words, the decision to practice self-censorship is derived partly from fear and partly from the prevailing corruption.

[11]Robert Justin Goldstein, *Political Censorship of the Arts and the Press in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, UK, Palgrave Macmillan, 1986, 232 pp.

[12]Ministry of the Interior, *Estrategia Nacional de Fortalecimiento en Seguridad y Justicia para medios de comunicación en México*, November 2012, Mexico, p. 36.

In the specific case of Mexico, the result is the limitation of investigative reporting, especially on a local level. The immediate consequence of this is that journalists are forced into a state of vulnerability, which directly affects the professionalism of their activities. It is therefore not a coincidence if, according to the survey by Casede and Simo, only 34.6 percent of journalists consider that the local media enjoy the freedom to openly inform without fearing retaliations. According to the same survey, 73.1 percent claimed that censorship concerns topics related with the government, politicians or public officials; 65.4 percent considered that topics related with organised crime are being censured; and 60.6 percent reported that issues related with private actors are being censured.[13] This means that these three actors exert significant control over information through coercion, corruption, or violence.

In order to gain a better understanding of how these challenges are expressed and to perceive their consequences in particular localities of Mexico, it is useful to analyse at least three cases reflecting three different contexts. Areas of Michoacán, Tijuana and Monterrey were selected for the research outlined in the other chapters of this book. The different chapters seek to depict the political, criminal and social characteristics of each case in regard to the risks implied in journalistic research.

The formation of a zone of silence in Michoacán

Michoacán has been the most documented case of the way in which a locality can gradually come to be controlled by organised crime groups. The effects on freedom of speech and the free press were radical. It started with threats and attacks against the owners of media outlets and journalists. Subsequently, the media was used to send messages to rival criminal groups,

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[13]*Informe 2018 Libertad de Expresión. Seguridad y protección para periodistas y personas defensoras de derechos humanos, op. cit.*

and finally, once the territory was defined, first in favour of *La Familia Michoacana*, then the *Caballeros Templarios*, the groups themselves developed a communication strategy. The final result was the formation of a zone of silence that could only be breached by certain special correspondents sent by national or international media who were selected and accepted by the criminal groups themselves.[14]

It is important to understand that violence is an intrinsic aspect of the socio-political relations in the state. Accordingly, violations of human rights in Michoacán can be understood as a practice corresponding to these kind of relations and are not, therefore, limited to the actions of the government. This implies at least two things. First, that society perceives violence as an integral part of their relationship with the state's authorities; secondly, that the actors in charge of implementing the power of the state do this according to these historical and social dynamics.

Six examples can be brought up here:

1) Originally, the Familia Michoacana was created to confront the Zetas and to prevent them from continuing to kidnap and extort the population;
2) The expansion of legal mining companies towards illegal mining exploitations entailed collusion with local criminal groups in order to guarantee the stability of illegal exploitations and the exportation of minerals to China and India. The companies naturally resorted to violence to secure the business;

[14]We recommend Article 19, *Silencio forzado. El Estado cómplice de la violencia contra la prensa en México, Informe 2011*, Mexico, 2012; also Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (CIDH) *Informe Anual de la Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos 2017*, vol. II, Washington, 2017; Salvador Maldonado Aranda, "Drogas, violencia y militarización en el México rural. El caso de Michoacán", *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, vol. 74, no. 1, January-March 2012, Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales-UNAM, pp. 5-39.

3) Between 2006 and 2011, in the heyday of the *Familia Michoacana* and later the *Caballeros Templarios*, some women recurred to criminal groups to punish their own husbands or boyfriends who, in accordance with the prevailing *macho* culture, abused them;

4) Relations between teachers' organisations and political and governmental groups to prevent social unrest were also tainted by violence;

5) *Autodefensas* groups that emerged between 2013 and 2015 to confront the *Templarios* used violence and vengeance to retrieve certain territories, and subsequently took control of illegal drug and mineral traffic;

6) The recomposition of criminal groups with defined territories and extremely violent practices has again turned the region of Tierra Caliente into the silence zone it was six years ago.

In Michoacán, threats against journalists and defenders of human rights are effectively carried out. This level of engagement consolidates fear and self-censure, significantly reducing the margins of freedom of speech. Importantly, the most recurring aggression has been disappearance, especially in Tierra Caliente.[15]

Because of the territorial and socio-demographic characteristics of the area, journalists, civil society organisations, and members of organised crime and *autodefensas* groups are part of the same social fabric. This has made the control of information easier to exert, as family and friendship networks and informants are easier to identify. In this sense, insecurity affects journalists and human rights defenders equally. Perhaps the difference

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[15]"Corresponsal de Televisa en Michoacán y otro periodista asesoraban y cobraban con 'La Tuta'" ["Televisa correspondent in Michoacán and other journalist were advisors to and payed by "La Tuta""], Aristegui Noticias, 22 September 2014 http://aristeguinoticias.com/2209/mexico/corresponsal-de-televisa-en-michoacan-y-otro-periodista-asesoraban-y-cobraban-con-la-tuta/; "13 periodistas asesinados en Michoacán en los últimos 10 años" ["13 journalists murdered in Michoacán in the last 10 years"] CB Televisión, 27 June 2017, https://cbtelevision.com.mx/13-periodistas-asesinados-michoacan-los-ultimos-10-anos/

is related to the differentiated type of denunciation they carry out, and how much they exhibit public officials, criminals and *autodefensas*.

Political corruption and criminal violence in Tijuana

In Tijuana, some news outlets have opted out, refusing to cover and investigate topics related to organised delinquency. They focus their research mainly on the government, particularly on the private lives of certain public officials, in order to find evidence of corruption.[16]

This has been the cause of important antagonism between journalists and municipal public officials, creating distrust and wariness among them. Journalists claim that the municipal authorities themselves are encouraging the corruption of journalists, forcing them to resort to illegal practices by favouring the media who pay to obtain the authorities' support. Similarly, journalists claim that the fields of security and justice lack three fundamental aspects that would reduce their vulnerability to corruption and violence.[17] Firstly, the prevailing opacity regarding information on security and justice; secondly, the absence of a strategy for risk assessment for vulnerable groups (journalists, migrants, human rights defenders, among others); thirdly, there are no formal or legal mechanisms to regulate the relations between public servants and the media or journalists. On the other hand, the authorities consider that organised crime has established links with the media and gives them privileged information. From the point of view of the government, these relationships have exposed journalists and made them more vulnerable to violence.[18]

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[16]Interviews with officials of the government of Tijuana, Baja California, in the framework of the Casede research project with Freedom House.

[17]Interviews with officials of the government of Tijuana, Baja California, in the framework of the Casede research project with Freedom House.

[18]Interviews with officials of the government of Tijuana, Baja California, in the framework of the Casede research project with Freedom House.

In short, there is a prevailing climate of distrust both among journalists and between journalists and government officials. Journalist associations existing in the city are very important to counteract this perception, such as the *Asociación de Periodistas de Tijuana* or the *Asociación de Comunicadores de Baja California*. However, not all of them have the necessary strength and legitimacy. After all, the strongest associations largely depend on the prestige and convening power of the journalist who leads it. On the other hand, although corruption is a prevailing factor in the journalists' field, it affects independent media and reporters more acutely because they are located outside the loyalties and allegiances of politicians, business people and criminals.

It is important to mention that the power of political groups in the municipality extend their influence to certain economic fields, particularly the service sector, be it as owners or shareholders.[19] Similarly, this also represents a risk factor for journalists, particularly when they cover instances of corruption. Of course, we must not forget that Tijuana is a highly strategic place for drug trafficking. Therefore, the risk factor is present at all times. The only difference is related to the characteristics of the criminal group who controls the territory, and the kind of relationship it establishes both with the press and with society. In this sense, self-censorship remains the primary self-protection strategy in periods of high levels of violence. On the long run, however, the self-censorship of certain journalists implies more vulnerability for others, because it isolates and exposes those who do not engage in this strategy.

[19]Mario Maldonado, "Jorge Hank Rohn y su multimillonario negocio de apuestas" [Jorge Hank Rohn and his multi-millionare gambling business"], *El Financiero*, undated, http://www.elfinanciero.com.mx/blogs/historias-de-negoceos/jorge-hank-rhon-y-su-multimillonario-negocio-de-apuestas.html; Ricardo Ravelo, "Hank Rhon y Peña Nieto: crimen y política" [Hank Rohn and Peña Nieto: crime and politics"], *Proceso*, June 2011.

Game of elites and control of the news in Nuevo León

In Monterrey, the larger printed or electronic media generally call the shots and determine the margins of the freedom of the press in the city.[20] Their interests often find space to negotiate and even achieve consensus with the political, business and industrial elites. This means that the media are not subordinated, but have the power to place their interests beside those of the political and economic elites. In this game, reporters are often used as pawns, since they are sent to cover and make notes, or editorial managers are asked to choose their front covers, according to alliances or disagreements among the members of these elites. Consequently, information generated by the media reflects the power games of the elites, but is not necessarily representative of the freedom of the press or the freedom of speech. This control turns pliable when it implies defending norms and values that define the identity of the "regiomontano" (demonym for the people of Monterrey, T.N.), because all information that questions or negates what is generated from this power circle is alien to the norms defended by it.

In fact, the dominant presence of the larger media hinders the creation of organisations that defend the rights of journalists. Corporate logic prevails, reflecting the values and social norms of the city rather than those of any social organisation that defends collective rights.[21] This is also visible in the academic programmes of the important universities of Monterrey, which stand out because they direct the graduates to the labour market in the field of public relations or advertisement.[22]

[20]Newspapers such as *El Norte* or *El Porvenir*, and TV corporations like Televisa or TV Azteca and Milenio. To dig deeper into the influence of the media in political and ideological discourses in Monterrey we recommend Lorena Frankenberg's "Monterrey y sus organizaciones mediáticas. Un retorno al estudio de la ideología a través de cuatro comunicadores" ["Monterrey and the organisation of the media. A return to the study of ideology through four communicators"], *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, Tenerife, no. 63, 2008, pp. 294-302.

[21]*Ibid.*

[22]Interviews with journalists of Monterrey, Nuevo León, in the framework of the Casede research project with Freedom House.

There are nevertheless, as in every important city, independent media, and a citizenry that is organised and strives to build spaces with more freedom of speech. The problem is that there are but few of these spaces, and very scarce organisation among journalists.

Risk factors for journalistic activities in Mexico

After having described the particular issues observed in each of the three places where this research was carried out, we will now detail some of the risk factors linked to journalistic practice in Mexico. These risks are both related to the legal and institutional context in which the job is carried out and to the specific characteristics of the profession.

Risk factors related to the legal and institutional context:

- Labour conditions: most reporters work freelance and are underpaid. For instance, Gregorio Jiménez, journalist in Veracruz, murdered on 11 February 2014, earned 20 pesos (1.3 dollars) per published note.
- Social conditions: working without contract means there is no social security such as health care, savings fund, bonuses, etc.
- Judicial framework: the judicial system of Mexico is overrun; according to the INEGI's National Survey on Victimisation and Perception of Public Security (ENVIPE) 2014, impunity reaches a national level of 93.8 percent.[23]
- Legal framework: absence of laws and institutions specialised in freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Additionally, one of the great deficiencies of the institutions in charge of providing justice is related to human rights awareness and training.

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[23]According to the INEGI, this includes non-reported crimes, reported crimes without preliminary inquiry, and those in which it is not specified whether they were reported or an inquiry was launched, divided by the totality of offences per hundred.

Risk factors related to the journalistic profession:

- Professional training: despite the growing number of graduated journalists (even if not all of them studied journalism or communication sciences), most reporters are unqualified. On the one hand, this directly affects the quality of their production, on the other, it makes them vulnerable to the context of corruption and violence, as they do not have the resources and skills to verify information.
- Division within the profession: there are divisions among journalists practically all over Mexico, due to several factors like distrust, ideological positions, individualism, etc.

Nevertheless, the most negative effects for journalism are censorship and self-censorship, fear, and mistrust. The majority of reporters do not realise the social importance of their job. Many of them work in the news because they have no other option, which does not motivate them to become qualified, since they do not have the vocation needed in any professional activity.

This has, however, also an impact on those who are motivated and professional and produce scrupulous and high-quality news. This kind of journalists are thoroughly aware of the importance of their jobs in the shaping of public opinion and democracy. Negative effects are various, and some may be dangerous. In terms of labour, unqualified journalists without professional career and training, who rely only on their "experience," contribute to the system of unliveable low wages and the deplorable contractual conditions that prevail in Mexico.

On the other hand, these journalists do not produce valuable information; it is actually quite common for them to simply reproduce official information from press releases. Be it due to ingenuity or corruption, these journalists are also more vulnerable to the local power relations involving

managers and owners of media outlets, businesspeople from information agencies, political parties, government officials, and criminal groups.[24]

It is precisely this vulnerability which puts independent and professional journalists at risk. In local contexts of high levels of corruption and violence, it is easier to control the flow of information and distort it when there are journalists who are willing to help in return for higher incomes. It must be acknowledged that, in some cases, Mexican journalists have been forced to work for the organised crime groups or for the government.[25]

Identification of sources of risk and elaboration of a security protocol

The risks factors described above point at a context of dissolution of the social and political order which characterises the "global south." In these contexts, non-governmental (armed) agents display various levels of "alternative order" functions (Davis, 2009; Arias and Goldstein, 2010). This was not only a topic studied in the scope of the research project, but it also had important implications regarding the best way to avoid possible risks for the members of the teams and the locals who interacted with them.

Controlling information is an important asset for non-state armed groups who seek to retain control over their respective territories. Given these circumstances, keeping a low profile and conducting undercover investigations was out of the question.[26] It was taken for granted that these actors would hear about the presence of the research teams, and that they would

[24]Interviews with journalists from Chiapas, Ciudad Juárez, Cuernavaca, Mexico City, Monterrey, Morelia, Oaxaca and Tijuana in the framework of the Casede research project with Freedom House.

[25]Even though there is no data or verified testimonies that have been juridically or journalistically investigated, these practices are often mentioned in interviews with journalists. The impossibility of investigating these claims is of course linked to the risks involved.

[26]There are a number of examples of researches that were conducted undercover, and some even managed to infiltrate criminal networks (Adler, 1985; Scheper-Hughes, 2004).

keep an eye on their activities. In this context, contradiction in official declarations regarding the process and the presence of the teams could have provoked adverse and potentially violent reactions, not only for the teams, but also for the locals. This was important enough to decide to be totally transparent and guarantee that the members of the community who were going to participate would do so in full knowledge of the scope and aims of the research. In the face of this, the main challenge appeared to be more related to communication than to physical security per se. We therefore produced a narrative that, once internalised and coherently reproduced by all the members of the teams, would make clear that neither the objectives of the process nor the presence of the teams would stand against the interests of criminal actors. It was, to this end, underlined that the project was purely academic, that there was no link with state security actors, and that the idea was to interact with the local communities.

In this project *Impression Management* (the attempt to influence the perception of the local populations regarding the researchers and their presence), Sluka's golden rule for researchers in "violent social contexts" (1990), took the form of a uniform and unaltered narrative. This narrative was key to prevent any kind of misunderstanding, and thereby any action against the members of the team and the locals. To lessen the probability of misunderstandings, it was considered favourable to adopt visible signs that supported the said narrative. To achieve this, when they first met the people of the communities, the members of the teams wore t-shirts with the project's logo, and badges that proved they were part of an academic effort and not a political or profit-making group. Both measures sought to create the complete identification of the team and propitiate transparent interaction with the communities.

The latter aspect was important, since most of the places where the research was carried out were not well-known to the researchers, which forced them to partly give up the hope of being able to define the main

models and social interactions before starting field work. It was therefore difficult to define the spaces that the teams could occupy within the communities, and accept, somehow, that "you don't do fieldwork, but fieldwork does you" (Simpson, 2006). To accept this, however, in conditions that would not totally contradict reasonable safety expectations, implied also a careful use of the language. It was therefore previously agreed that the teams would be careful with certain terms, including the names of non-state armed actors. Even the use of the word "security" in describing the goals of the project was debated for a while, since it was feared that it would create distrust and fear among the participants. This can be read as a certain form of self-censorship similar to what was mentioned above, but can also be considered a process of linguistic adaptation on the part of people discovering local norms from the outside. As underlined by Goldsmith (2003: 111), in scenarios of uncertainty and volatility, "adaptability is a necessary response". Paradoxically, to renounce to have total control over field work processes appears both as a mechanism that guarantees a minimal level of security, and as a source of potential risk (see also Jacobs, 2006).

The elaboration of a narrative that would not be threatening to local power groups was therefore an important tool to prevent possible retaliations against the members of the team and/or the locals. Beside this, we identified non-specific risks, i.e. risks existing independently from the implementation of the processes on the local level. As mentioned elsewhere in this book, each of the studied neighbourhoods presented high levels of violence and high-impact crimes, including lethal violence such as homicides, disappearances, kidnappings and armed conflicts.

In the face of such challenges we developed a series of technical and standard techniques both for every day activities and for emergency cases. First of all, it was agreed that certain schedules were to be respected to walk outdoors, and that no one would walk in certain dangerous zones at night. Communication channels were established between certain members of the

teams, according to which, if someone failed to report at certain pre-established times, a locating protocol would be activated immediately. If this should fail, we would activate connections with trusted state agents to guarantee a swift search, which is the first step in the face of such events. Simultaneously, the teams were advised to closely follow local news to identify possible exacerbation of local problems and, if needed, to decide to evacuate the place.

A cellphone app was created to facilitate the collection of information by the members of the teams and increase the capacity of reaction in the face of an emergency. It was downloaded on the phones of all the members of the teams, and included on the one hand, the possibility to upload documents and work notes directly to a secure server of the London School of Economics, and, on the other, a panic button. This button would immediately activate the previously described security chain by sending a signal and the location of the person who needed help. The panic button was meant as a resource in case a danger or emergency would arise and require a swift reaction from the other members of the team and, if necessary, from the authorities.

To a certain extent, the implementation of the security protocols was also to be negotiated in regard with the daily activities of field work. Several members of the research team found it unpractical to follow the protocols every day and in all circumstances. For instance, it had been agreed that nocturnal activities would be kept as scarce as possible to avoid extra risk. In some cases, however, interactions were only possible at night due to community members job schedules. Also, a progressive departing from security protocols was noticeable in certain cases. This was to a large extent due to the fact that the researchers became familiar with contexts that were initially treated more cautiously because of the general belief that they were dangerous. In other cases, the very fact of having to follow strict protocols

was perceived as contrary to the nature of academic work. One of the researchers said it was "something in the style of the CIA."

The measures established with the team to protect the activity and integrity of the researchers were to a large extent drawn from the risk prevention protocol elaborated by the "Colectivo de Análisis de la Seguridad con Democracia" and Freedom House.[27] The document presents practical advice and resources for the analysis, prevention, and evaluation of risks for journalists. It highlights the importance of producing evaluations and analyses focused on the local context, and to develop collaborative protection networks between the academia, civil society and journalists. One of the pending tasks is to develop security protocols that respond to the specific needs of academic, non-journalistic research activities in insecure contexts. The measures described above could serve as basis for future initiatives.

Conclusions

The challenges to journalistic or academic research in Mexico are mainly derived from power dynamics imposed locally by various actors, which can be either political, social or criminal. The norms, the logic, and the actors vary according to the socio-historical context of each territory. As proved by the available data, however, assessment of risk, and protection and self-protection strategies are driven by fear and distrust, and display an absence of proper training.

The high levels of victimisation, like the upsurge of violence, are elements that spur fear among those carrying out field research. This is manifest in a kind of self-censorship that inhibits research activities that gather information by means of ethnographic or journalistic methods. Communicating with communities living in violent contexts becomes difficult as far

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[27]Available in https://www.casede.org/PublicacionesCasede/ProtocolosFH-CASEDE/CASEDE-Pro-Periodistas-02.pdf

as fear cancels dialogue. The possibilities to obtain information about the violence experienced by these communities are contained in emotional catharses that must be translated into material for interpretation and analysis.

The power exerted by criminal actors disrupts the community's coexistence and legality norms and gives them authority. This implies that the flow of information about what is going on in those places is determined by the groups that wield power through violence, and, as a consequence, freedom of speech is either restricted or altogether canceled. This has created important obstacles to the analysis of the impact of violence in the social dynamics of the communities. The research process carried out by the teams and described in other chapters of this book was an important attempt to overcome these challenges and give an account of the way this violence is perceived and experienced in those territories.

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Obstacles to the formulation of public security policies in Mexico.

An opportunity to include the voices of the communities

Catheryn Camacho

Introduction

The most traditional definition of the concept of public policy states that their design, implementation, and assessment are the exclusive responsibility of the state. First, because a large and diverse amount of human, financial and institutional resources are required to solve public issues that are considered priorities by the powers that be. Secondly, because they can only be implemented by the state, since they may call for "the modification of laws, programmes and projects, the allocation and redirection of resources (public funds and taxes), or the regulation of certain activities" (Tapia, 2010: 13). Thirdly, because the public issues that will be integrated in the government's agenda are chosen within the political sphere. However, public policies respond primarily to their specific economic, political and social environment. In this sense, they do not solely involve the state, but rather the entire nation, with its institutions and the individuals who are part of it.

In the current context, given the high levels of insecurity and violence in Mexico, and drawing from the knowledges produced by the methodology of co-construction of "security from below" applied in the study of four Mexican cities from 2016 to 2018, this chapter foregrounds the importance of opening spaces for the participation of citizens in the formulation of public security policies. This chapter also reexamines the difficulties involved in the formulation of preventive policies in the field of security. It further claims that, given the challenges posed by multiple institutional and cul-

tural parameters, this kind of methodology demonstrates the relevance of the inclusion of the voices of the communities and the citizens in the formulation, implementation and assessment of public security policies. We also insist on the urgent need to make the voices of the communities heard by the government, particularly those of the communities devastated by violence and insecurity.

In order to achieve its goal, this chapter is divided in three sections. The first addresses some of the obstacles that, on the political level, have hindered the formulation of a security strategy that responds comprehensively to the voices of the communities. This section will allow us to better explain the complexity present in the formulation of public policies in matters of security. The second section outlines some of the obstacles which hinder the existence of bottom-up participation in the country's security policies. Specifically, we will elaborate on the difficulties presented by communities that have experienced particularly intense levels of chronic violence. Finally, the third section gives a general overview of the public prevention policies produced in the field of security over the last 12 years. The aim is to analyse the opportunities involved in the implementation of a comprehensive security strategy, and to contextualise the importance of citizenship participation in the country's public security policies.

Main problems in the formulation of public security policies in Mexico

Public policies are affected by the political, social, and economic context in which they are embedded and respond to the interests of the political or governmental actors that create them. I will refer here to four of the principal obstacles that have hindered the formulation of a security strategy that comprehensively responds to the needs of the communities: *1)* political goals; *2)*

noncooperation and inter-institutional competition; *3)* municipal and state inertia regarding security tasks; and *4)* attacks on local authorities.

Among the factors that have most affected the formulation of public security policies in Mexico is the general tendency to pursue individual benefits or the benefits of political parties. One of the most significative examples of this is the disappearance of the Secretariat of Public Security (*Secretaría de Seguridad Pública*, SSP) at the outset of Enrique Peña Nieto's administration.

López and Fonseca (2013) explain in detail how the disappearance of the SSP, which, to a great extent, had been considered a key pillar of the strategy against crime by the two previous National Action Party (PAN) governments from 2000 to 2012, mainly obeyed to the Institutional Revolutionary Party's (PRI) interests. The new administration needed to send a clear message implying that the PAN had failed in matters of security and that it was necessary to eradicate a structure that had been instrumental to that failure, and create a new strategy. If, however, the strategy of the PAN and the efforts of the SSP were unsuccessful in their response to the insecurity problems of the time, the return of the PRI also meant losing an institutional memory that could have provided useful lessons on what had failed and what had been successful in the 12 previous years. Nevertheless, and because the protraction of the PAN's actions was not politically attractive to the PRI, there was a clear setback in Peña Nieto's security strategy, which encouraged institutional overlapping and perpetuated the incoordination between the different branches of the government.

Another example of the harm caused by political interests in security strategies was the lack of commitment to the implementation of the General Law of the National Public Security System (*Ley General del Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública*, LGSNSP).[1] A possible cause of its non-operabil-

[1]According to the first article of the LGSNSP, the goal of this Law is to regulate the integration, organisation and coordination of the National Public Security System (*Sistema Nacional de Seguri-*

ity may be that governors and mayors —most of them members of the PRI— did not see the political benefits to be gained by reporting to a president of a different party (PAN).[2]

A second obstacle to the formulation of public security policies is the lack of institutional coordination between the different branches of the government. This stems from a general evasion of responsibilities and the overlap of the functions of a great number of governmental dependencies (Gereben *et al.*, 2009). Since competencies regarding security and justice procuration and implementation are referred to in several articles of the constitution, it is difficult to have a clear overview of the roles, attributions, and responsibilities in the execution of the different tasks involved in the security and justice systems. As a consequence, a great number of programmes overlap in goals and functions. This has affected the capacity of the institutions in charge of the prevention and control of criminality to act in a coordinated and efficient manner (CIDE, 2017).

In Tijuana, for instance, there is inter-institutional overlapping in the activities carried out by the SSP of the state and the city council, particularly in the field of crime prevention through the reclaiming of public spaces. In this case, it is to be noted that the programme of the city council is embed-

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dad Pública), to organise the distribution of competencies, and to establish coordination between the federal, state, and municipal governments in matters of public security. The law details the creation, attribution and distribution of competencies among the different institutions in charge of public security such as the National Council on Public Security (*Consejo Nacional de Seguridad Pública*), the Executive Secretary of the National Public Security System (*Secretario Ejecutivo del Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública*), the National Council for Justice (*Conferencia Nacional de Procuración de Justicia*), among others. It also refers to the improvement of the police and their information systems, the possible mechanisms to enable citizenship participation, and the responsibilities of public servants, among others.

[2]Since there were no retaliations against governors who did not comply with the certificates and evaluations required by the LGSNSP regarding assessment and trust control of state and municipal polices, a strong message was sent to the local governments implying that the law would be approved de facto, until another party would take office. This is further proved by the episode in which the Senate approved the proposal of the priista parliamentary group to extend the 2012 deadline for state and municipal polices to sit their exams to 2013. By then, a new government would be in charge (Hernández, 2015).

ded in the strategy of the recently created Secretariat of Agrarian, Land, and Urban Development (*Secretaría de Desarrollo Agrario, Territorial y Urbano,* SEDATU), which is, in fact, a federal dependency[3] This institution, which oversees the management of agricultural land, is de facto participating in the implementation of public policies designed towards the development of safer cities and better social cohesion. However, none of the institutional strategies of the SEDATU is related to security, neither is it part of the comprehensive strategy formulated by the National Security Commission (*Comisión Nacional de Seguridad*, CNS) or even the SSP. This example is also relevant because since it is not a programme coordinated with the actions implemented by the Secretaría de Seguridad Pública of the state of Baja California, their functions overlap and the results are dissolved. Moreover, since these programmes are not complementary or comprehensive, the population see them as isolated and repetitive efforts.

Inter-institutional competition or rivalry, often invisible, weighs considerably on the results of public policies, and is related to the two former issues. Frequently, federal programmes imply tasks which in theory require the collaboration between different dependencies or governmental orders. At best, these tasks are carried out independently, but most often they are implemented in an almost competitive manner, since one dependency's command over another is strongly resisted, especially when financial resources are involved (Herrera-Lasso, 2013).

The research team who worked in Tijuana perceived this kind of inter-institutional competition between the state's SSP and the Municipal Institute for the Youth (*Instituto Municipal de la Juventud*, IMJUV). From their perspective, the lack of coordination between both institutions has made the work of the IMJUV invisible, at least in the neighbourhood that was studied

[3]This office is mainly in charge of "the planning, coordination, management, generation, and execution of public policies regarding territory management; to secure decent housing and urban and rural development; additionally, it must ensure legal certainty to the agrarian nuclei" (SEDATU, 2018).

(Sánchez Taboada), considerably limiting their capacity for action and forcing them to find support with other institutions such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) with regard to funding and impact potential[4] (see chapter three on Tijuana in this book).

Paradoxically, besides inter-institutional rivalry in prevention issues, there is a notable refusal to carry out security tasks in violent and insecure places, which leads us to the third problem, namely the manifest inertia of the municipal and state authorities regarding security. The central issue here is that after almost 20 years of military presence in most states of the Mexican Republic, incentives for the municipal and state authorities to build their own capacities to reduce violence have practically and progressively disappeared.

In Apatzingán, for instance, the local research team discovered that the municipal authorities in charge of security tasks are totally subordinated to the strategies orchestrated from and implemented by the federal state. This has unknowingly made them even more vulnerable to the presence of criminal groups. Although some efforts should be acknowledged, such as the creation of the Municipal Proximity Police, after working with several members of the community, the team found out that the people were not even aware of this police's existence, even less of their tasks. On the other hand, they were perfectly informed about the SSP's operations in the area of Tierra Caliente via the "Mando Único" (see chapter five on Apatzingán in this book).

This finding was further supported with evidence provided by federal governmental actors, both executive and legislative. Representatives of these sectors agreed that, in the face of the high rates of violence recorded in the country in the last decades, state and municipal authorities had a tendency to evade responsibilities, such as the investigation and persecu-

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[4]Interview with Nohora Niño Vega, academic researcher of the Tijuana Team, 15 August 2018.

tion of homicides or disruptions of the public order. Their argument was that drug trafficking and organised crime were the responsibility of the federal authorities (federal officials, third work meeting, 9 October 2017).

By evading their duties regarding security, the state and municipal authorities have not only reduced their capacity to protect citizens, but they have also become more vulnerable to the order imposed by criminal actors. This seems paradoxical because despite the fact that the country is in the midst of a democratisation process, there is an increasing likelihood for the local authorities to face violence and attacks affecting their personal security.

From the beginning of the war on drugs in 2007 until October 2014, organised crime groups have killed 82 mayors, 64 municipal officials, 13 candidates, and 39 political leaders and activists (Trejo and Ley, 2015). According to information published by the National Mayors' Association (*Asociación Nacional de Alcaldes de México*, ANAC), from the beginning of Peña Nieto's presidency until 31 December 2017, 60 municipal presidents were killed, 33 of which had already left office, 22 were still serving, and four had been freshly elected. Additionally, it is estimated that today a municipal president in Mexico is 12 times more likely to be killed than a normal citizen (Calderón, 2018).

Murders of local politicians are more common because criminal groups are particularly affected by shifts in local governments. This is why according to data from the 2018 Political Violence Indicator (*Indicador de Violencia Política*), between 8 September 2017 (official beginning of the federal electoral process) and 30 June 2018, 627 attacks against politicians and candidates were recorded preliminarily. Among these, 80 percent targeted candidates or authorities aspiring to municipal offices.

Given the current discredit of the municipal authorities, it would be easy to conclude that all dead mayors were colluded with the criminal actors; however, it is important to question whether they were the victims of

attacks because they protected the criminals or because they were unprotected in their struggle against organised crime. Some mayors take office while being allies or members of criminal organisations, some are bribed or given financial support to their candidacy, others still are threatened into serving criminal groups, and some are killed for refusing (Trejo and Ley, 2015). In this context, it appears logical that local authorities have very few reasons to engage in any kind of security strategy. However, as mentioned before, this fuels the vicious circle that perpetuates chronic violence in the communities.

Clearly, these four factors have encouraged the debilitation of security strategies and give us a glimpse of the difficulties involved in the formulation of an effective security strategy. However, the research project allowed us to understand the complexity of the different kinds of violences and how these vary from city to city, even from one neighbourhood to another. In the following section, I will describe the population's co-responsibility in the weakening of the country's security structure.

Obstacles to community participation

There are several deterrents that hinder the participation of the communities in the design and implementation of public security policies; however, and for the purposes of this chapter, we will address *1)* divided governance, and *2)* the power relations between institutions and the communities that have been affected by corruption and impunity.

According to Desmond Arias (2017), the concept of "divided governance" explores the conditions under which certain illegal armed groups coexist with other state and non-state actors, and refers to the primarily contentious relationship that is established when an illegal armed actor controls a community.

In these contexts, illegal armed actors coexist with other kind of organisations and local actors, and must therefore negotiate with local groups to reach their economic and political goals. Although the communities that present these kinds of relationships are not in a situation of constant conflict but rather in a "tense peace",[5] confrontations with police forces are common, and so are intense conflicts with external criminal groups when the latter seek to expand their territorial influence. However, the illegal armed groups also tend to provide some kind of security to the communities, since by doing so they increase their legitimacy with the citizens and remain shielded from state repression (Arias, 2017).

The research process revealed the existence of this kind of governance in the communities that were studied. In Apatzingán and Tijuana, for instance, many of the participants mentioned that at certain moments the power of illegal armed actors allowed these to keep certain common offences under control (kidnappings and robberies, for instance). Additionally, various participants talked about how the order imposed by these groups was considered acceptable and preferable to the chaos that was unleashed when these groups entered in competition with one another or when the state confronted them violently, because their violence did not, as in the latter cases, indiscriminately affect the population.

The implicit acceptance of this kind of governance also reveals that when faced with deep trauma and chronic violence, people refuse to participate in changing the situation, since this is considered a very severe risk factor. There is furthermore evidence that before the drug trafficking organisations became violent and predatory, the communities did not consider them a threat to their security. Either because their presence was economi-

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[5]The term used by Desmond Arias to explain that this kind of peace is typical of contexts of chronic violence, where the criminals have regular clashes with the state or other criminal actors that seek to exert some level of influence on their territory. This peace is therefore situated in a context of intermittent violence.

cally beneficial or because they genuinely did not perceive them as a problem, these organisations grew with the active and passive complicity of the local communities and authorities (Santamaría, 2015).

In Acapulco, for instance, it is interesting that some agents of the municipal security forces claim that they had not thought about joining the local security forces until, in the absence of a criminal hegemony, violence had been unleashed in their neighbourhood (Second work meeting with the research team, 22 April 2017).

In communities that have been subjected to what Viridiana Ríos calls violent equilibrium (2013), violence caused by drug trafficking is reinforced and perpetuated in a vicious circle in which the authority divides criminal groups by attacking them. In these cases the existence of some kind of governance is also a product of the risk implied in talking about violence, and more importantly in organising to face it.

In all the case studies, the teams perceived very deep traumas, either personal or collective, that considerably affected the people's disposition to talk about personal issues that were linked to the situation of insecurity. The case of Apatzingán is the most representative. As detailed in the chapter about this city, people have been forced to hear, see and remain silent about everything related to security. They admit, nevertheless, that at some point they felt safer with the order imposed by the *Caballeros Templarios* than with the current situation (see the correspondent chapter).

The second obstacle to an effective bottom-up citizen participation is the fact that the relationships between the institutions and the communities are profoundly affected by corruption and impunity. In communities with severe levels of marginalisation, most violent acts are not reported for fear of retaliation or because they do not trust the authorities, and the offences remain unpunished. In the neighbourhoods were we worked, the local teams also identified fear and distrust towards the authorities and the security actors, which were products of the feeling of vulnerability caused by the same

authorities. Not only because they do not protect the citizens, but also because, as reported by many people, they threaten, harm, or extort them, and protect the criminals.

In Nuevo Almaguer, for instance, one of the neighbours reported that a woman who sold tamales on the street, besides being constantly extorted by the police, who claimed their "mordida" [slang term for bribe] in exchange for being allowed to continue to sell her tamales, did not receive any kind of protection. On one occasion she was robbed, and despite the fact that they had identified the culprits, the police simply ignored her report (Field notes of the Guadalupe team).

This is worsened when the authorities involved in corruption are part of the judicial system. The fact that the police, the public ministries or prosecutors, the judges, and the directors of the prisons are involved in profitable illicit acts not only undermines the population's quality of life by affecting the social fabric and peace, it also distorts the social contract by affecting the interaction mechanisms between the society and the authorities. This is further proved by hidden crime figures, i.e. the number of crimes that are not reported or that did not elicit investigation, which reaches 93.6 percent nationwide (Envipe, 2017).

This is also why the institutions that present the lowest levels of trust are those that are most in contact with the citizens. For instance, in the four study cases, as explained in the corresponding chapters, the people of the neighbourhoods explicitly expressed their distrust in the municipal police. Data from the 2017 National Survey of Victimisation and Perception of Public Security (ENVIPE, by its Spanish acronym) confirm the low level of trust regarding security institutions. Only 51 percent of the surveyed reported trusting the work of the municipal preventive police. In the case of the Army and the Marine, trust levels ascend to 85 and 88 percent, respectively.

The research team of Acapulco even found that the communities preferred the presence of the marines to the municipal or even state police. The participants categorically asserted feeling safer with the federal forces, because the police (local and state) were colluded with organised crime (Second work meeting of the research team, 22 April 2017). This means that the distrust of the population is not only a product of the authorities' incapacity to provide justice, but also originates in their participation in extortion, power abuses and human rights violations. The distrust and fear of the authorities, added to the high levels of corruption and impunity and the absence of a dialogue between the community and the institutions are the perfect combination for the protraction of a negative inertia in the citizenship-state relationship regarding security.

In contexts of violence, the communities need to be protected and accompanied in the process of constructing safer environments (Abello and Pearce, 2009). For this to be feasible, accessible spaces of dialogue between the communities and the state are essential.

After having outlined the obstacles that have affected the participation of the citizens and their collaboration with the state, I will now refer to the opportunities available, both in the institutions and the communities, to incorporate the participation of the citizens in the country's security policies.

Opportunities for citizen participation in the debate
and design of public security policies

The two last presidential administrations revealed how the last two presidencies have favoured punitive and reactive approaches[6] in their dealings with violence and crime. The politics of Felipe Calderón's administration (2006-2012) are a perfect example, since the key pillar of its security strategy was the confrontation criminal organisations through the involvement of the Permanent Armed Force (FAP, by its initials in Spanish).

Arguing that public security can become a national security issue when the criminal activities become a risk for the integrity, stability and permanence of the Mexican State (CISEN, 2014), the FAP ended up fulfilling tasks that in principle were the responsibility of the states and the municipalities, and, more importantly, of the civilian polices. This considerably modified the dynamics of the struggle against criminal groups and increased the levels of violence in the country.

Even if he demarcated himself from Calderón's strategy, Enrique Peña Nieto (2012-2018) not only maintained the presence of the FAP in various states, but he also removed the pre-established deadlines of their interventions, making them practically permanent. Additionally, he strengthened this security approach by creating the National Gendarmerie, a new civilian force with military training. If we add the approval under his government of the Interior Security Law, which establishes that the president is habilitated to command the intervention of the FAP anywhere in the country, it is understandable that many national and international human rights organisations and the citizens themselves claimed that militarisation had been hitherto

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[6]The punitive approach is basically geared towards the punishment of the criminals. The reactive approach refers to the reaction of the state in the face of crime and violence. The preventive approach seeks to understand the originating causes of crime and, according to this, develop a prevention strategy. The latter also contemplates the multiplicity of actors.

the sole security strategy adopted by the government to face organised crime.

This notwithstanding, even if punitive interventions overshadowed all other policies, both Calderón and Peña Nieto also carried out significant actions to implement prevention policies.

During Felipe Calderón's administration, the punitive strategy against drug trafficking was combined with the establishment of the legal and institutional bases required for a new national prevention policy. Initiatives such as "Limpiemos México"[7] were created, which reinforced prevention programmes related to drug abuse and school violence. Resources allocated to Subsemun[8] were increased, the General Law for the Social Prevention of Violence and Crime (LGPSVD, by its initials in Spanish) was proclaimed, and the strategy *Todos Somos Juárez* (We Are All Juárez) was implemented (Novoa and Ramírez-De-Garay, 2008), to mention only a few examples. Additionally, the National anti-Crime and anti-Violence Strategy (ENPDyCD, by its initials in Spanish) was implemented. This programme sought to attend to the origins of crime and proposed the creation of citizen committees for public security as links and intermediaries with social organisations for the inquiry, analysis, formulation, and articulation of proposals related to public security, and the assessment and evaluation of institutional programmes (Comprehensive Strategy for the prevention of Crime and Delinquency, 2007). Another effort of Calderón's administration was the Mérida Initia-

[7]"Limpiemos México" (Clean up Mexico) pursued three goals: to eradicate drug addiction and delinquency in schools, retrieve public spaces for the benefit of the families, and fight addictions and reinforce prevention programmes.

[8]Subsemun is an allocation for the municipalities, and in some cases for the states, to reinforce municipal security institutions. The resources are intended to cover aspects like the prevention of crime, the assessment and trust control of operative elements of the municipal police institutions, their training and equipment, and the creation of public security data bases, among others. The beneficiaries of Subsemun are chosen according to the population of the municipality, the crime incidence, and the characteristics of the municipality as either touristic zones, border zones, metropolitan areas or areas close to crime hotspots. The beneficiaries must add 25 percent of the federal resource from their own funds. This programme is now called Fortaseg.

tive, particularly the prevention strategy promoted by the latter.[9] Various efforts were combined in the Violence and Crime Prevention Programme, with the support of cooperation agencies such as USAID to train local actors in designing and implementing social prevention.

President Peña Nieto's administration further boosted the preventive approach by adopting it as the key pillar of its security strategy. During his speech after he took office on 1 December 2012, he announced the five principal axes of his public security policy, insisting that he would "place the citizen and his family in the centre of the security policies" (Presidential Speech, National Palace, 2012). This was the origin of the National Crime Prevention Programme (Pronapred). Subsequently, he complemented this strategy with the enforcement of the General Victim's Law and maintained allocations such as the Public Security Contribution Fund (FASP) and Subsemun, thereafter called Security Strengthening Programme (Fortaseg). The latter's goal is to strengthen the municipal capacities and implement significative actions for the prevention of crime (Novoa and Ramírez-De-Garay, 2018). Similarly, several programmes were created within the framework of the National Development Plan 2013-2018[10] to transversally tackle specific issues linked with gender violence, human traffic, crime, social prevention, civil justice, school violence, proximity police, and others.[11] These efforts (and many more that have been promoted in different levels

[9]For more information about the Mérida Initiative we advise to refer to "Hoja informativa Iniciativa Mérida-Panorama general de la Embajada de Estados Unidos en México." Available from: https://photos.state.gov/libraries/mexico/310329/july15/MeridaInitiativeOverview-jul15-sp.pdf [accessed on 12 October 2018].

[10]The National Development Plan 2013-2018, published in the *Official Journal of the Federation* on 20 May 2013, establishes the National Goals for a Peaceful Mexico, Inclusive Mexico, Education of Quality for Mexico, Prosperous Mexico and Global Responsibility. Additionally, there were transverse strategies such as Productivity democratisation, Modern and Close government, and Gender perspective.

[11]Such as the *Programa Nacional de Seguridad Pública*; the *Programa Nacional de Procuración de Justicia*; the *Programa Nacional para la Prevención Social de la Violencia y la Delincuencia*; the *Programa Integral para Prevenir, Atender, Sancionar y Erradicar la Violencia contra las Mujeres*; the *Programa Nacional para la Igualdad y No Discriminación*; the *Programa Nacional de Derechos*

of the government) reveal that, despite the emphasis given to an offensive strategy, there are also important initiatives and institutional frameworks to promote preventive approaches.

These projects imply the possibility to attend to the social and economic roots of violence in Mexico. The co-construction of human security from below can be added to these efforts and diagnoses via the Security Agendas created with the communities (see the chapters on Apatzingán, Guadalupe, and Tijuana in this book). The Agendas reveal other types of violences and various problems that affect human security which, even if not typified as high impact crimes, considerably affect the communities' life and wellbeing.

Reflections on human security agendas constructed from below

Security is an issue that affects all citizens. For a strategy or government programme to be truly effective, it needs to be backed by an organised citizenship. It is not enough to have quantitative information or intelligence teams if the intervention and input of all the involved is not taken into account, and even less if the voices of the communities hit by violence and insecurity are left out. This chapter identified structural challenges like political reshuffling, inter-institutional competition and inertia regarding security tasks, cultural issues related to corruption, impunity, tense peace and divided governance between the criminals and the state.

In contexts of chronic violence, all the invisible violences that can only be identified with the collaboration of the communities must be included in the diagnoses and policy proposals. These add to the general understanding, but, more importantly, the co-construction process *transforms* citizen-

ship by giving it responsibility and calling for its participation in the strategies needed for the construction of more democratic coexistences and safer environments.

With the two-year research process we reached the conclusion that the studied communities' exposure to chronic violence has negatively impacted the different dimensions of their security and has had considerable effects on their security provision.[12] Accordingly, a series of local proposals were identified with the communities in order to respond to the main problems that affect them, established in the Local Agendas for Human Security.

In the face of this situation, and with the results obtained from this process, the potential of creating safe spaces for discussion with the community is reaffirmed, as it enhances the dialogue with the community and the active participation of the people in developing tools that favour a deeper multi-sectorial vision of the threats and causes of insecurity and violence.

The conclusion is, in short, that public policies cannot be public until they include the voices and proposals of the communities themselves.

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[12] For more detail, see Annex X for the National Agenda produced by this research.

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Conclusions

Rethinking violence and insecurity in Mexico: key lessons of co-constructing security from below

Gema Kloppe-Santamaría and Rafael Fernández de Castro

The recent history of violence in Mexico reached a tipping point in 2007. This was not only the year in which the Mexican government, led by President Felipe Calderón, launched an offensive strategy against drug trafficking that would completely overturn the country's security context; that same year, the number of homicides started to grow, reversing a historical downward trend that began in the 1940s.[1] Since then, violence and insecurity have spread dramatically, including non-lethal crimes such as kidnappings, extortions, domestic violence, and robberies.[2] This has been accompanied by increasingly dramatic and cruel forms of violence, such as the public exposure of mutilated or hanged bodies. Although violence is not a foreign phenomenon in the history or the social and political context of the country, the phenomenon has undeniably changed both in form and intensity.[3]

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[1] The rate grew from 8.1 homicides per 100 thousand inhabitants in 2007 to 21.5 in 2010, according to data from the UNDOC. UNDOC, *Global Study on Homicide 2013*, Vienna, Austria, March 2014. For historical data regarding homicides in Mexico, see Pablo Piccato, *Estadísticas del crimen en México. Series Históricas, 1901-2001*. Accessed on 1 November 2018. http://www.columbia.edu/~pp143/estadisticascrimen/EstadisticasSigloXX.htm

[2] See data from the INEGI's National Survey on Victimisation and Perception of Public Security.

[3] There is a sustained and growing literature by historians documenting the country's long history of violence. Until recently, this aspect had been overshadowed by studies focussed on the mechanisms of the institutions, on the co-optation promoted by the hegemonic party (PRI), and on the allegedly exceptional stability of Mexico as compared to other Latin American countries. See, for instance, Pablo Piccato, *A History of Infamy: Crime, Truth, and Justice in Mexico*, Oakland, CA, University of California Press, 2017; Paul Gillingham, "Who Killed Crispín Aguilar? Violence and Order in the Post-Revolutionary Countryside," and Alan Knight, "Narco-Violence and the State in Modern Mexico", in Wil Pansters (ed.), *Violence, Coercion, and State-Making in Twentieth-Century Mexico*, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 2012.

In the face of this, many studies have been published in the last decade, seeking to understand and make sense of the insecurity crisis in Mexico. As happened previously in Brazil and Colombia, two countries that have accumulated an admirable amount of knowledge on the matter, various specialists sought to disentangle the causes of violence in Mexico and emphasize its impact on democracy and on the social fabric.[4]

Without pretending to be exhaustive, it is possible to assert that the majority of the contributions and discussions surrounding violence and insecurity in Mexico are located within three main fields. First, studies that have attempted to explain the factors involved in the last ten years' rise in homicides in the country, be it nationally, regionally, or locally,[5] second, studies that have sought to understand the conflictive dynamics between the state and criminal groups, and within criminal groups themselves;[6] third,

[4]In 2012 and 2013 the authors worked on the elaboration of a UNDP report on citizen security in Latin America, "Seguridad Ciudadana con Rostro Humano" (2014). Interviews with Brazilian and Colombian scholars revealed that, both in quality and quantity, the study of violence in said countries had reached a point of sophistication and depth that was still lacking in Mexico. Examples of this include the use of and access to geo-referential crime statistics in the case of Brazil, and the richness of ethnographical studies and knowledge-building projects promoted in Colombia by the Observatory of Medellín. See *Regional Human Development Report 2013-2014, Citizen Security with a Human Face: Evidence and Proposals for Latin America*, United Nations Development Program (UNDP). http://www.latinamerica.undp.org/content/rblac/en/home/idh-regional/

[5]Tensions between political actors at the different levels of government, the rupture of implicit agreements between criminal groups and state actors, and the changes in the nature of the drug market in Mexico are the three main factors underlined by these studies. Angélica Durán Martínez and Richard Snyder, "Does illegality breed violence? Drug Trafficking and State-sponsored Protection Rackets", *Crime, Law and Social Change*, vol. 52, no. 3, 2009, pp. 253-73; David Shirk on lethal violence in Mexico, research by Guillermo Trejo and Sandra Ley on the rise in violent homicides against local PRD candidates. Fernando Escalante, "Homicidios 2008-2009. La muerte tiene permiso", *Nexos*, 1 January 2011: https://www.nexos.com.mx/?p=14089 [last accessed: 2 December 2018]; Laura Calderón, Octavio Rodríguez and David Shirk, "2018 Drug Violence in Mexico Report", *Justice in Mexico*, Instituto: https://justiceinmexico.org/2018-drug-violence-mexico-report/ [last accessed: 2 December 2018].

[6]Guillermo Trejo and Sandra Ley, "Why Did Drug Cartels Go to War in Mexico? Subnational Party Alternation, the Breakdown of Criminal Protection, and the Onset of Large-Scale Violence", *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 51, no. 7, 2018, pp. 900-937; Benjamin Lessing, *Making Peace In Drug Wars: Cartels and Crackdowns in Latin America*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics, 2017; Javier Osorio, "The Contagion of Drug Violence: Spatiotemporal Dynamics of the Mexican War

studies that focus on the impact of violence on democracy, both in terms of the citizens' trust in the authorities as in the popularity and acceptance of repressive or extralegal measures taken by the state to control crime.[7]

Despite the richness of these studies and their undeniable contribution to the understanding of the multiple causes and consequences of violence in Mexico, it is clear that there are several analytical gaps that need further attention. One of these gaps refers to the need to look beyond homicides to understand violence in Mexico. Although homicide is indeed the most dramatic expression of violence, in the experience of the people living in the most dangerous areas of the country, it is neither the only nor the most important manifestation of violence and insecurity. In places like Tijuana, for instance, despite the fact that lethal violence reached an unprecedented level during the year 2017, the people of neighbourhood Sánchez Taboada told the team that, for them, common offences, and not homicides, were the major threat and source of insecurity. As detailed in the chapter dedicated to this city, this is largely due to the fact that lethal violence is considered selective, and therefore its effects are perceived as less harmful and unpredictable than crimes such as robbery. It is thus believed that robbery affects every one, whether or not they are involved in illicit business.

Besides this need to avoid focusing only on homicides, and as contended in several chapters of this book, the analysis of violence and insecurity in Mexico needs to reach beyond explanations centred either on drug traffic or on the policies designed to fight it. In the four study cases of this research —i.e. Acapulco, Tijuana, Guadalupe and Apatzingán— illegal drug traffic and the struggle against armed groups involved in this traffic

on Drugs", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *Special issue on Mexican drug violence*, vol. 59, no. 8, pp. 1403-1432.

[7]Andreas Schedler, *En la niebla de la guerra: los ciudadanos ante la violencia criminal*, Mexico City, CIDE, 2015; Daniel Zizumbo-Colunga, "Explaining support for vigilante justice in Mexico", *Americas Barometer Insights*, 2010, no. 39; José Miguel Cruz and Gema Santamaría, "Determinants of Support for Extralegal Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean", *Latin American Research Review*, currently in print, to be published in vol. 54, no. 1, March 2019.

have left an important mark on the people. However, in all those places, violence did not begin in 2007 with the so-called war on drugs, and its escalation was not exclusively due to conflicts or clashes for the control of the illegal drug market. As thoroughly discussed in the chapter on Apatzingán, "the city where the war on drugs was launched," violence originates in decades-old and ongoing dynamics of abandonment and neglect on the part of the state. The lack of basic public services and infrastructure, the lack of opportunities in education and employment, and the intermittent and repressive presence of the state have turned Apatzingán into a place where the impact of violence has caused traumas that are clearly being transmitted from one generation to another.

The four localities we worked in the course of two years give a rich and varied picture of the manifestations of violence in Mexico. Selected in part because of this variability, but mostly because of the opportunities they offered in terms of the participation and engagement required for a methodology of co-construction, these neighbourhoods allowed to shed light on some factors that have not received due attention in the specialized literature on violence and insecurity in Mexico. These factors lead towards a diagnosis that goes beyond homicide and violence related to drug traffic. They also reveal a series of challenges and possibilities related to the design of responses and the creation of local security agendas based on the voice and experience of the inhabitants of the neighbourhoods most severely hit by violence.

We detail here a number of these factors. They represent both "keys" and answers to rethink violence and insecurity not only in Mexico but also in Latin America at large.

Diagnosis from below: speaking of "violences" in the plural form

One of the main explanatory factors that rise from this project is that violence does not have one but many manifestations, which are expressed across different socialisation spaces, transmitted through generations, and manifested intensely and steadily in time. Jenny Pearce, co-researcher of this project, speaks of "chronic violence" to refer to this phenomenon.[8] In the framework of this project, this chronic violence was obvious in the experiences shared by the neighbours of the studied localities. In general, the media, politicians, and decision-makers focus only on homicides, especially when criminal groups linked to drug trafficking commit them. The research process, however, revealed that this manifestation of violence is only the tip of the iceberg. A multiplicity of violences hide behind these homicides, from domestic violence to gender violence and harassment of young people, particularly of young males, by the authorities and by criminal groups.

Patterns of abuse, discrimination, and violence against women within the domestic sphere were identified in all study cases. This has not only negative effects on the women's physical and mental health, but also on their participation in the public life of the community and on the violence dynamics experienced by their children and relatives within the home. Violence and harassment perpetrated against young people was equally visible in all study cases. In Nuevo Almaguer, Guadalupe, for instance, the young claimed they were stigmatized by both the adults of the community and the municipal police. In Apatzingán, on the other hand, young people are not only exposed to harassment on the part of the authorities, but also to the possibility of being recruited by criminal groups. In Tijuana, the

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[8]Jenny Pearce, "Violence, Power and Participation: Building Citizenship in the Contexts of Chronic Violence", IDS *Working Paper* 274, Brighton, ids, March 2007.

young feel constantly discriminated against by the police, who sees and treats them exclusively as potentially violent and dangerous subjects. The vulnerability of young people and the general perception that they are somehow involved in crime explain why some of the neighbours of Lázaro Cárdenas in Apatzingán refer to them as a "lost generation."

As raised by Cecilia Farfán in this book, there is currently a limited understanding of non-lethal violences occurring in Mexico. Extortion, for instance, has a clear impact on both the economy and the feeling of defencelessness and insecurity of the victims, who cannot report the facts because of possible reprisals. Similarly, domestic violence and violence at school have turned these socialisation spaces, traditionally perceived as protected spheres wherein skills and freedoms can grow and develop, into places of vulnerability and neglect.

To understand how these "other violences" take place requires an approach that goes beyond statistics, official data, or the media as sources of information. Within this project, violence against the young and the women, extortion, and intimidation on the part of state actors are part of these violences in the plural form, that members of the research team identified through the dialogue and knowledge exchange implied in the methodology of "co-construction of security from below".

Making sense of violence: the shortcuts and traps of insecurity

Another important finding of this research is the existence of certain narratives or discourses elaborated by the communities in order to make sense of the violence they experience. In the face of ongoing and pervading vulnerability and threats, both by criminals as by the authorities, which should, in principle, provide protection, the communities have elaborated certain narratives to explain violence. These narratives tend to be rooted in the

existence of "others" —either young people, or people foreign to the community— who are the designated culprits of the murders, extortions, and robberies that affect them.

In the case of Tijuana, as detailed in the corresponding chapter, violence is clearly depicted as caused by the arrival of people foreign to the community. Specifically, the inhabitants of neighbourhood Sánchez Taboada speak of a narco-culture and violence brought by the people of Sinaloa and by people linked to the criminal groups of this state. According to their experience and perception, before the arrival of these groups, the neighbourhood "was different," meaning there was more respect for the life and physical integrity of the inhabitants. Similarly, as already mentioned, in Guadalupe the young are looked upon with suspicion by the people of the community and by the police who interact daily with the inhabitants of Nuevo Almaguer. The result is that young people are not only stigmatized, but also marginalized and seen as individuals who, despite being members of the community, are those "others" that threaten the people's security.

As revealed by these examples, the impact of these narratives of violence has been deeply harmful. Even if it has allowed the community to label and give sense to a violence which would otherwise seem arbitrary or totally out of control, these narratives are based on erroneous perceptions and prejudices that only exacerbate existing divisions within the communities. The discourses that identify "others" as the offenders also contribute to legitimise reactive and repressive measures, as they divert the attention from the structural and institutional causes of violence.

Similarly, these narratives usually promote a vision that defines violence as selective, or concerning only those who are doing "shady business". As described by Catheryn Camacho, this increases the population's tolerance to repressive measures or to forms of governance that involve some degree of collusion between state actors and criminals, accepted as

long as this produces a truce that does not totally disrupt the security of the communities.

The teams working in the four localities identified the existence of similar narratives. The fact that the methodology proposed seeks to go beyond mere diagnoses enables the establishment of spaces for discussion in the communities. These discussions, in turn, allowed to critically assess the community's responsibility and capacity for change on the basis of their own construction of security. In Guadalupe, for instance, the neighbours of Nuevo Almaguer identified that they could be part of the change if, for instance, they created more opportunities for the participation of the young, and by treating them fairly and with dignity. In Apatzingán, the people of neighbourhood Lázaro Cárdenas came up with the idea of implementing artistic and pedagogical activities as part of their local security agendas in order to promote collective identity, the culture of legality, and the participation of all the members of the community.

Political life and culture at the local level: the intermittent presence of the state and patterns of clientelism

The work carried out in the four localities revealed important aspects related to the presence and reach of the Mexican state in local issues of security. It also exhibited the political dynamics that characterise communities affected by multiple violences. This was accomplished through dialogue and the gradual building up of trust between the researchers and the participants, and gives an example of the complex and detailed understanding of security that can be reached through this kind of methodology.

An important finding in this field refers to the presence of the state in the communities. As explained in the chapter on Apatzingán, problems of insecurity and violence do not necessarily derive from the absence of the

state, but are more specifically linked to a particular form of presence. This presence is in these cases mainly repressive and intermittent, implemented by means of militarised security operations that, far from co-constructing security with the populations, are based on a logic of armed opposition to criminal groups, and not on trying to protect the people and to provide security as a public good. In Apatzingán, the presence of the state is manifested in a double and apparently contradictory manner. In this sense, it has been thoroughly present regarding the struggle against drug traffic and organised crime, but totally absent in terms of encouraging local security capacities and providing basic public infrastructure and services. Acapulco presents a similar situation. Even if local agendas could not be created because of the risks ran by the research team, a dialogue was nevertheless carried out with the community. These discussions revealed that in this city, the presence of the state and the expenditure on infrastructure and services have been uneven and selective, clearly favouring the areas and neighbourhoods related to tourism, and leaving those that are not considered economically important aside. In the same vein, the security provision and public expenditures related to crime prevention and security have been unequally distributed, leaving entire groups and neighbourhoods to themselves and to informal, improvised and even illegal practices to gain security.

The issue of the selective or intermittent presence of the state brings us to the second important finding of the research process, which is the existence of patterns of political clientelism. This phenomenon hinders the creation of autonomous spaces from within civil society, and therefore the existence of services of truly public character, which includes infrastructure, services, and security.

As depicted in the chapter on Guadalupe, in neighbourhood Nuevo Almaguer, these patterns of clientelism and corruption were present in the neighbourhood since the very beginning. Nuevo Almaguer was created irregularly by actors who promised to support the families arriving without

land or resources. Illegal settlements are a source of ongoing property insecurity for the inhabitants. Dynamics of clientelism remained operational in the subsequent decades, manifested in programmes and projects dependent upon political and electoral changes. These dynamics have not only undermined the trust of the people in the authorities, but also hindered the creation of autonomous spaces of discussion and self-reliance independent from illicit networks or from the different political groups that stand behind these networks.

Similarly, in Tijuana, the research team and the people of neighbourhood Sánchez Taboada reported the detrimental effects of clientelism and political divisions on citizenship and on the community's capacity for organisation. In fact, it was at first difficult for the team to convince the inhabitants that the research process did not obey political interests or electoral benefits, and that it was precisely seeking to provide a space wherein they could talk about their needs and demands in an autonomous manner. In Acapulco, on the other hand, the population complained that politicians only showed up during their campaign, and were never seen again after the elections. These dynamics of clientelism required the teams in all the localities to insist on the intrinsic value of participating in a process of co-construction and on how a dialogue on their needs would have a positive impact on their lives.

Despite all these challenges, it was clear to the teams how the discussions gave the people of the communities a chance to express their wish to become the very agents of the changes they wanted. In this sense, they answered positively to the possibility of creating spaces that would remain independent from political groups or interests. One of the lessons learned in this research process was therefore that the political culture of clientelism is reversible and can be transformed through the creation of autonomous spaces for dialogue aiming at the transformation of social reality.

Furthermore, as asserted by Catheryn Camacho, despite the fact that in the last ten years the emphasis of the country's security policies has been maintained on repressive actions, it would be false to contend that no important efforts have been made by the Mexican State. In this sense, the intermittent, partial, and fundamentally repressive presence of the state in the localities we have studied could also be potentially reversed. There are indeed both programmes and institutions with clear intention to act upon the social roots of violence in Mexico. One of the first steps to reinforce the legitimacy and viability of a more integral security policy is the identification and correction of the negative impact caused by inter-institutional rivalry, their lack of coordination, and the politicisation of these efforts. The next step would of course be to recollect the voices of the most heavily affected communities and incorporate the proposals "from below".

Co-construction: creating spaces to rethink violence and to act

The array of discoveries we have presented here are undeniably highlighted by the kind of knowledges and by the desire for transformation promoted by the "co-construction of security from below". As described by Alexandra Abello Colak and Jenny Pearce in the methodological chapter, this methodology seeks "not only to rethink, but also to actively transform security policies in the contexts of chronic violence present in several Caribbean and Latin American cities. This rethinking and transforming must be carried out with those who are directly affected by this violence and insecurity."

The aim of this methodology is therefore not only to make a diagnosis on insecurity based on the perception of the people experiencing it directly on the local level, but also to think *with* the people of these communities, in order to define steps and responses to take in order to build a security

policy centred on the people, on their integrity, and on forms of togetherness that does not reproduce the violences and dynamics of discrimination and exclusion that have hitherto been among its characteristics.

The co-construction of local security agendas with the communities allowed us to seize the importance of the local for a better understanding of insecurity in Mexico. These agendas reveal how violence and crime are expressed in specific manners in each locality, but also how each locality has a series of specific demands and proposals. The local level, more specifically the neighbourhood, is an important laboratory to rethink security. Obviously, the proposals created in the capital are generic and unfit to the local model.

Beside the local aspect, the co-construction revealed the importance that three sectors of society have, or should have, in the design and implementation of security policies in Mexico, namely the young, the women, and the businesspeople. Generally speaking, young people are less likely to be attracted by discussions about security. It is very clear, however, that their specific vulnerability in the face of violence turns them into a key factor in matters of security. Beyond the stigmas and discrimination dynamics, all the statistics indicate that in Mexico, as in Latin America in general, young men make up the bulk of both victims and perpetrators. Therefore, their participation in the process is crucial in order to come up with proposals from below, i.e., from the communities themselves.

Regarding the young, one of the surprises of the research process was that, for the young men, migration to the US does not seem to be a prospect. This means that, contrary to what was very common a decade ago, young people of the communities in the four cities we studied do not have in mind leaving Mexico as a way of escaping either violence or poverty. This is re-

markable, given the fact that three of the four cities —Acapulco, Apat-zingán, and Tijuana— have strong migrating traditions.[9]

The women are also a social group with fundamental importance in the formulation of security policies and in the transformation of the communities. Whether they are employed or not, it is the women who usually take the time to attend gatherings and events in the neighbourhoods. They are also often present in spaces related to their children's education, and when local authorities or organisations call the people to a gathering. As a whole, the research revealed that despite the fact that women are a group that faces violence both in the public and the private sphere, they are generally more willing to discuss and share their experience, and to endorse leadership in projects that aim to improve their children's future.

Finally, the business sector should definitely assume a more important role in the construction of security. In Tijuana, for instance, the "Consejo Ciudadano de Seguridad Pública" is headed by a businessman who does have a thorough knowledge of the situation and the dynamics of violence in the city. His diagnosis, however, presents two flaws. First, it does not focus on the local, or it seems as if since the new violence is occurring in the poorer neighbourhoods, it is less important than the violence of 2007-2010, which took place in the central zone of the city. Secondly, homicide is excessively emphasised, which, as we have seen, tends to hide other very important violences. What was perceived, both in Tijuana and Acapulco, is that businesspeople have an ambivalent position regarding the condemnation of violence. They use information, supposedly to put pressure on the authorities, but at the same time they do not want "to make too much noise"

[9]The decrease in migration is appalling: at the peak of this phenomenon, 770 thousand Mexicans migrated to the US, whereas only 140 thousand migrated in 2010. See, for instance, Ana González Barrera, "More Mexicans Leaving Than Coming to the U.S.", Pew Research Center. http://www.pewhispanic.org/2015/11/19/more-mexicans-leaving-than-coming-to-the-u-s/ [last accessed: 1 December 2018].

by publicly denouncing violence because this might have a negative impact on tourism and other economic activities.

As mentioned in the first part of this conclusion, knowledge on violence and insecurity in Mexico has been informed by diverse studies and diagnoses produced in the last few years. The methodology based on co-construction and on the exchange of knowledges seeks to contribute to the current debate on security in Mexico. Our findings suggest that neither statistics on homicides nor analyses centred on drug traffic and anti-drug policies suffice to describe the multiple forms of insecurity and violence experienced by people living in the most affected neighbourhoods. The methodology nevertheless entails certain important challenges. As discussed by Falko Ernst and Armando Rodríguez Luna, the risks for the physical integrity of those who seek to know the causes and dynamics of violence are real. Even thought so far the main victims of threats and intimidations have been journalists trying to understand and inform on the logics of the criminal groups, doubtless this type of research, with its emphasis on the local, could put academics at risk for revealing the complexity of the violences experienced in the communities.

Beside the security protocols implemented in the course of this investigation to prevent and respond to the risks in which the participants were involved, it is clear that this methodology would greatly benefit from the existence of tighter links of trust and collaboration between civil society, community, and government. This might be the most challenging aspect of the matter, given the current rupture between society and state in the communities. It is, nevertheless, an aspect that could very much improve the security of the participants —both researchers and members of the community— and create bases for a more positive and constructive "from bottom to top" dialogue in the field of security.

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The editorial process of this publication entitled
*Human Security and Chronic Violence in Mexico: New Perspectives
and Proposals from Below,* took place in Mexico City
during December 2019. The edition process was finished in Mexico City
on December of 2019 and was entrusted
to this publishing house.

This book is the result of two years of participatory and action-oriented research into dynamics of insecurity and violence in modern-day Mexico. The wide-ranging chapters in this collection offer a serious reflection of an innovative co-construction with residents from some of the most affected communities that resulted in diagnoses of local security challenges and their impacts on individual and collective wellbeing. The book also goes on to present a series of policy proposals that aim to curtail the reproduction of violence in its multiple manifestations. The methodological tools and original policy proposals presented here can help to enable a radical rethink of responses to the crisis of insecurity in Mexico and the wider Latin American region.

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