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WORKING GROUP: TRANSNATIONAL ASPECTS OF CITIZEN SECURITY

PRESENTER: ALEJANDRA MOHOR

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1. DIFFERENTIATED EVOLUTION OF STATES IN SECURITY MATTERS

During the last decades in the Americas, citizen security has been considered a central problem that states must address. Probably since the mid-70's, concerns about crime prevention and police performance have become topics of interest for both the academia and public policy officials. The North American countries are pioneers in these matters: Some examples are the "National Crime Prevention Workshop", organized in 1975 by the Centre of Criminology at the University of Toronto and funded by the Canadian government, and incipient research works such as *The Kansas City Preventive Patrol Experiment: a Summary Report*¹, from 1974.

However, at that point in time, the rest of the continent was undergoing an infinite number of internal conflicts, civil wars and military dictatorships, all of which would slow down significantly the inclusion of these issues on the political and social agenda.

This fact could be seen only as a historical reference, but it would largely determine the evolution of public policies on citizen security. Therefore, these different historical contexts would help to define key aspects such as the strength of institutions. We are talking about differentiated stages of evolution.

Another aspect that is important to consider when analysing security from a transnational perspective has to do with cultural components. These components are not only related to how violence and crime are manifested in each territory, but also to those characteristics that should be considered distinctive of each area while trying to reproduce intervention initiatives or strategies that were considered good practice in a given context.

Notwithstanding the foregoing – that points out that each situation has its own particularities – there exist several elements that are common to the region, and characteristics of crime dynamics which challenge us to take a supranational approach toward the establishment of mechanisms of collaboration, analysis and feedback of a transnational nature.

¹ Kelling, George L., Tony Pate, Duane Dieckman, and Charles E. Brown. 1974. Washington, DC: Police Foundation.

The issues of continental importance are multiple and have different levels of complexity. Some of them impose greater urgency than others. Below, we are going to enumerate – although not exhaustively nor meticulously – some of the most relevant issues for today’s Americas.

2. TIME FOR REFORMS

The vast majority of the countries of the continent have begun, and in many cases completed, processes to reform their justice systems; in penal matters, they are moving from an inquisitorial model toward an accusatory one. The Justice Studies Center of the Americas (JSCA) is making significant contributions to the analysis and exchange of experiences on these subjects. The implementation of the reformed criminal procedure model has presented challenges to multiple actors within the system. Police forces, for instance, have been confronted with new procedures for conducting criminal investigations which have had direct effects on their performance. In this regard, it is particularly relevant to note how the relationship between prosecutors and investigative police officers has been addressed and developed.

The United States’ experience in matters such as Pre Trial Services has gained importance in this process, while contributing to the optimization of the use of the preventive detention based on technical arguments, for example. This will be a key issue – particularly in Latin America – due to the intensive and often indiscriminate use of preventive detention, which results in an overloading of a prison system that already shows signs of a generalized crisis throughout the region.

The reform of police institutions has been another characteristic of this period. Due to the need to professionalize these forces, important transformations have been promoted; as a result, the states in the Americas currently have police institutions with higher levels of democracy and technology. This tends to increase income and training standards, and also generates and legitimates oversight bodies with a focus on community work. Therefore, they are more likely to open up, and to be accountable to civil society.

It must be said once more that these are generalizations, and that local realities are very disparate. As it has been already noted, Canada and the United States have transited different paths. For example, as early as 1998, D. Bayley had identified changes in the United States’ police institutions that were quite similar to the aforementioned ones. By that year, Latin America was through what we might consider an initial process. As for the Caribbean, they are probably still at an early stage.

Despite these advances in reforms to police institutions, there are still major gaps that must be addressed by states. In particular, it is necessary to establish standards for the use of force that include special rules (laws and regulations) which should be accompanied by training systems and by mechanisms of internal and external oversight.

Undoubtedly, the experiences in some countries have been very relevant to show what has been necessary in others, and to inform decisions regarding implementation. We could then point out that the impulses for reform are transnational, and that the pioneers’ experiences have been fundamental for those who came behind.

3. LEGITIMATING AND STRENGTHENING CRIME PREVENTION

The growing importance of citizen security as a demand from the citizenry – that in Latin America has surpassed poverty as a priority problem for the inhabitants and ranks second only to unemployment² – is accompanied by ideas on how to address it.

In the period from 1994 to 2001, then mayor of New York Rudolph Giuliani – inspired by the broken windows theory – installed the concept of 'zero tolerance' in order to combat crime, which increased police control over acts of disorder and over incivilities, even if they did not constitute a crime.

The results achieved by Giuliani were at the very least questionable. While a decrease in crime rates was observed, this policy had side effects on the justice and prison systems. As well, it affected police institutions with respect to the excessive use of force and the arbitrariness of their actions – behaviours that were not properly investigated and punished.

Despite all this, in some countries in the south of the continent, the effect of Giuliani's strategy can be seen even today. It is very common to hear that the '*iron fist*' is the best strategy for reducing crime. Its results have been questioned in Central America in relation to the *Maras* (gangs) issue: not only did the iron fist not solve the problem, but it has worsened it by adding violations to fundamental rights and to different international conventions that protect children and teenagers.

In spite of this strong general preference for actions of control over crime prevention, the significant progress achieved has popularized a multi-causal conception of crime and violence, which requires a comprehensive and multi-sectorial approach.

Canada is probably the most advanced country in this regard. The country's history of legitimizing prevention began in the 70's, as it was pointed out earlier in this document. Among other things that can be highlighted, Canada currently has an institutional framework and a national strategy on prevention, robust and systematic evaluation mechanisms, and an independent technical body for support.

Recently, the Dominican Republic has actively included strategies for crime prevention in its Democratic Security Plan (2010?) promoted by the Ministry of Interior and Police. It incorporates programs such as *Barrio Seguro* (Safe Neighbourhood), which includes sub-programs for social and situational prevention.

Similar initiatives that integrate social, situational and/or community prevention, and are focused on territorial units (neighbourhood and/or district/municipality) have been developed throughout our countries. Such is the case in Chile and Guatemala, for example.

This is also an area in which international and supranational cooperation becomes extremely relevant. International organizations have contributed with the 'initial capital' and the transfer of methodologies to intervene locally in matters of crime prevention. In Chile, for example, two pioneering programs that include crime prevention began due to a large IDB loan: *Comuna Segura Compromiso 100* (Safe

² According to data from Latinobarómetro, 2009.

Community Commitment 100) and *Barrio Seguro* (Safe Neighbourhood, a project that integrated prevention and control in neighbourhoods with high socio-criminal vulnerability). Even though none of these programs are currently in effect, they permitted the installation of the basis for developing national policies in this subject.

Additionally, models such as *Communities That Care (CTC)*, which were driven by research done in North American countries, have been useful as intervention prototypes for countries with lower levels of academic development, particularly with regards to the implementation of systems to track, monitor and evaluate their own initiatives.

The latter topic is a critical subject for Latin America and the Caribbean. On the one hand, there have been attempts to reproduce programs that have shown moderated impact in the northern countries, without considering the particularities in the targeted places. When an intervention model is transferred, it is not adapted to the local reality and the expected results are not adjusted. For example, due to resource constraints, health professionals are replaced by social technicians who would perform follow-ups half-yearly instead of weekly. Therefore, even though a 'modest' version of the original model is put in practice, expectations to achieve the same results as the prototype are kept. Since these goals cannot be accomplished, the initiative is considered a failure.

4. REGISTRATION SYSTEMS

Commonly, comparative studies of situations of crime and violence turn to the log of homicides in order to compare data. This is not a theoretical choice supported by the relevance of data, but it is the alternative researchers and analysts find to perform transversal analysis. There are several initiatives that aim to create models for the partial standardization of national systems of crime registration. They face at least two difficulties: On one hand, the diversity in the legal classification of crime; and on the other hand, the disparity in local information systems.

From 2008, the *Universidad del Valle* (Colombia) – funded by the Regional Public Goods Program of the Inter-American Development Bank – has been developing a notable attempt in this regard through a project named "Standardized Regional System of Indicators for Citizen Security and Violence". The countries that are participating in this initiative are Peru, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Colombia, Uruguay, Argentina (local government of the city of Buenos Aires), Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guyana, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay and Jamaica. The project description expresses its goal of contributing to the "agreement on joint proposals for intervention in transnational phenomena." Interestingly, the list of participating countries has increased considerably since the project started (at first, they were only 7 countries). This reflects the countries' interest in being part of an integrated system that gives them more and better tools for decision making.

SHORT BIO OF THE PRESENTER: ALEJANDRA MOHOR

Chilean sociologist, graduated from the University of Chile. She has worked in research and in public policy, education and citizen security studies. In the latter field, she has coordinated various projects implemented by the Centre of Studies in Citizen Security (CESC, for its initials in Spanish) in Central America and Mexico. Over the past 8 years Alejandra Mohor has been dedicated to citizen security issues that relate to the reform of justice and police systems, serving as Department Coordinator at the Centre of Studies in Citizen Security (Institute of Public Affairs, University of Chile). In 2010, she assumed the position of Coordinator of the Crime Prevention Department at the aforementioned center and, since then, she has been performing various research, outreach and educational activities.

Alejandra Mohor has lectured on research methodologies and formulation of indicators, among other topics. She has organized and participated as a teacher in training sessions, and in seminars on citizen security in Latin America.