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# Violence and Urban Governance in Neoliberal Cities in Latin America

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**Abstract:** This paper explores the responses of Latin American governments to the phenomenon of high levels of criminal violence and social conflict in Latin American cities. The region has the highest homicide rates in the world and the some of the highest levels of ongoing social protest. It outlines a neoliberal urban security model that has emerged in Latin American cities alongside urban political economy regime supporting ‘competitive cities’. It examines its impact on controlling crime and creating more inclusive urban space drawing on examples from México City, Bogotá and Caracas. It argues that urban segregation is driven by the spatializing of security and the selective support for urban development / renewal. The project of making cities safe for people and investment is accompanied by securitization, the risk management of ‘dangerous’ urban spaces through repression. Making cities safe involves the management of the level of crime and the level of fear, the objective and the subjective impact of urban violence. Citizen security programs seek to address citizen insecurity through participatory citizenship but they often also reinforce urban segregation and exclusion not inclusion (Goldstein 2010).

**Keywords:** Violence, urban governance, citizen insecurity, securitization, Latin America.

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## 1. Introduction

After the democratic transitions from state repression under authoritarian and military regimes in the 1980s and 1990s, Latin American societies unexpectedly experienced a surge in criminal violence in the 2000s. The region now has the highest homicide rates in the world with an average 25.6 per 100,000 population and an even higher concentration in the big cities. What is called the ‘new violence’ in the social science literature (Koonings and Kruijt 2005, 2007, Goldstein 2010, Sanchez 2006) refers to a broad spectrum of violence—homicide, assaults, drug violence, political violence, domestic violence—and its social effects—pervasive fear and vulnerability obscured by the public normalization of violence and impunity (Moser *et al.* 2005, Muggah 2012). Demographically the victims of homicide are overwhelmingly young males aged between 15–24 years and from the poorest urban districts (Briceño-León, Villaveces and Concha-Eastman 2008). Those responsible for the violence include individuals, criminal gangs, the police, the military and private security.

How to respond to this violence has become a pressing political and policy concern of governments throughout the region. This paper examines urban security responses to manage high levels of urban violence in three big cities in Latin America—México City, Bogotá and Caracas. It argues that an ‘urban security model’ has emerged based on three components—urban renewal, securitization and citizen security—in response to neoliberal urbanization in which development has been decentralized focused on ‘competitive cities’ creating a nexus between neoliberal urbanization and urban security policy. The paper argues that the convergence of urban development and security reveals the multi-scalar articulation of markets and violence in the city. This includes both legal and illegal markets with specific security/violence networks of transnational, national and decentralized institutions and markets to protect and/or guarantee them (Elwert 2003). Urban governance therefore, becomes an exercise in managing urban fragmentation characterized by spatially differentiated citizenship, legal protection, rights and quality of life in Latin American cities.

Urban security policy has been shaped by the perceived causes of urban violence. The ‘new violence’ literature identifies the ‘weak state’ and ‘social inequality’, exacerbated by neoliberalism, as the primary causes of violence (Arias and Goldstein 2010, Auyero 2007, Koonings and Kruijt 2005, Sanchez 2006). The ‘weak state’ refers to the problems of impunity, the failure of the legal system, inadequate or corrupt policing and the loss of control over the monopoly to use violence. The impact of neoliberalism on ‘social inequality’ refers to the imposition of structural adjustment policies (the Washington Consensus) overturning the statist Import Substitution Industrialisation [sic] (ISI) national development model in Latin America. In other words, urban violence is seen as the product of a crisis in state sovereignty and control on the one hand, and of the social and economic conditions (increased poverty and vulnerability) produced by neoliberal policies including the reduction in state social spending, privatization of services (health, education, welfare, policing, transport) and deregulation of labour markets on the other (Portes and Roberts 2005). Urban security policies represent decentralized responses to larger processes of state structuring and the reorientation of national development models.

The ‘new violence’ literature on Latin America emphasizes the loss of a state’s monopoly over the control of violence through either ceding or outsourcing security. The result has been the emergence of ‘violent pluralism’ where ‘multiple violent actors operate within the polity and maintain different and changing connections to state institutions and political leaders, whether those states are officially democratic, authoritarian or otherwise’ (Arias and Goldstein 2010, p. 21). In the history of state formation in Latin America, violent pluralism has been the norm. The state has rarely monopolized the institutions of violence (especially in Central America) but had to share them in the ‘field of state power’ with external agents, local and regional power holders, private armies and criminal gangs (Holden 2004). By sharing/ceding control over the use of violence the state has created overlapping legal and illegal spaces or ‘grey zones’ (Auyero 2007). But even though the state’s monopoly control over violence may have diminished to varying degrees the state’s capacity to deploy violence has greatly increased. Holden (2004) makes the general point that in Latin America technologies of violence have greatly increased the state’s capacity for repression through the rescaling of violence with imperial intervention. During the Cold War, United States (US) supported counterinsurgency intensified Latin American state capacity for repression through

US military training, transfer of military technologies and intelligence sharing. In the post Cold War period continued, US interest in the control over internal security has seen a shift from providing support and training from the military to the police through US internationalization and militarization of a policing State (Huggins 1998). In countries such as Mexico and Colombia the 'War on Drugs' has also seen enormous resources poured into security, as well as the mobilization of paramilitaries, to reinforce the coercive power of states.

Neoliberal globalization has not simply diminished or weakened the state but forced it to change its role in economic development and social protection. Concepts like the 'global city' (Sassen 1991) and 'megaslums' (Davis 2006) have characterized the rescaling of key cities as the product of deterritorialization and the erosion of the state. However the state, as Brenner (2004) argues, has not so much declined as changed its role and been forced to rescale and reterritorialize development by shifting its focus from national development to 'competitive' urban and regions. The 'neoliberalisation [sic] of urban political-economic space' has created new forms of urban governance based on economic deregulation and decentralization supported by state infrastructure spending and public-private partnerships (Brenner and Theodore 2002, p. 376). However in the cities of the South, unlike the North, urban security policy has been an essential component of neoliberal urbanization to manage its polarizing social impact—for example, urban segregation, informalization of work, social marginalization and crime (Rodgers 2007)—and popular resistance to specific development projects—for example, the privatization of essential services, mining ventures, new dams, urban renewal and slum clearance—has also been repressed. The '*Caracazo*' in Caracas in 1989 (Lopez-Maya 2002), the 'water wars' in Cochabamba in 2000 (Olivera and Lewis 2004), the '*corralito*' or '*Argentinazo*' in 2001 (Rodgers 2010) in Buenos Aires and the recent mass urban protests against the social costs of mega-events (World Cup and Olympic Games) in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo (Habel 2013) are all examples of mass urban protests against the impact of neoliberal reforms on citizens.

Two themes dominate the analysis of the impact of neoliberal restructuring in Latin American cities: firstly, the changed role of the state in society and secondly, the increase in urban crime and citizen fear of crime (Caldeira 2008). Neoliberal structural reform changed the economic role of the state in Latin America from the dominant ISI state development model to the market-oriented strategic support for neoliberal urbanization and resource exploitation. 'Policies of deregulation, liberalisation [sic], privatisation [sic], reduction of the state's activity, and the limitation of social rights...were imposed with few constraints in Latin America, in some cases after all resistance had been crushed through repressions' (Lander 2005, p. 20). The combination of the national debt crisis of the 1970s and the impact of authoritarian political demobilization in Latin America created the conditions for the implementation of neoliberal programs (Martin 2005). The response to increased crime and insecurity has been to make security an integral part of defending neoliberal urban regimes. The privatization of urban space has been reinforced by the privatization of security as the wealthier citizens have bought protection in the form of private policing and gated communities (Ungar 2007).

In Latin America state rescaling to support ‘competitive cities’ has dovetailed with the pattern of post-authoritarian restructuring of governance through democratization and state decentralization. Urban governance has promoted local participation of citizens to help deepen democratization by dismantling the authoritarian structures of the central state (Guarneros-Meza and Geddes 2010). The election of local mayors has been a signature policy of decentralization designed to break the power of centralized clientelism controlled by the traditional political parties. Urban security policy has emerged to support neoliberal urbanization focused on urban renewal. The logic of the market and the logic of security have converged in an urban project to make cities safe for investment and people. Security policy has become less a vehicle to establish national legal order than a strategy to manage disorder and risk and to create an unevenly regulated society (Humphrey 2012). This shift in the conception of security as risk management has underscored change in the state-citizen relationship in Latin America in which citizenship rights have become increasingly socially and spatially differentiated (Pearce 2011). As a consequence urban policy directed towards economic competitiveness and decentralized participatory citizenship has produced increasingly fragmented cities and societies where, in extreme cases, spaces of high levels of economic growth, investment and security coexist with high levels of violence, illegal economies and insecurity as happened in Mexico and Colombia (Navarro and Vivas 2012, Higginbottom 2005).

In order to promote neoliberal urbanization the state in Latin America has localized urban security to guarantee the freedom of the market ‘by law, authority, force, and, *in extremis*, by violence’ (Harvey 2000, p. 179). Urban security policy is concerned with guaranteeing urban development, targeting high crime areas and managing feelings of citizen insecurity. The ‘urban security model’ that has emerged in Latin American cities is based on urban renewal, securitization and citizen security. Urban renewal involves urban redevelopment through investment and urban planning. Securitization seeks to manage disorder by urban cleansing and surveillance. Displacement is the product of the ‘cleansing of the built environment and the streets from the physical and human detritus wrought by economic deregulation and welfare retrenchment so as to make the city over into a pleasant site of and for bourgeois consumption’ (Wacquant 2008a, p. 199). Surveillance involves managing crime as risk by targeting particular categories and spaces constructed as dangerous—usually the poor and urban slums. In Latin America securitization refers to *mano dura* (strong hand) policing increasingly understood as militarized policing of the poor through slums raids (Wacquant 2008b). Examples of *mano dura* policing include ‘war on drugs’ in Mexico and Colombia, ‘social cleansing’ by police in Brazil’s favelas and ‘trigger happy’ (*gatillo fácil*) policing in Argentina targeting street youth are examples of securitization (Pita 2004, p. 437). Securitization is an authoritarian response to crime which undermines the rule of law through resort to emergency powers (Iturralde 2010).

While securitization seeks to order and clean urban space for renewal and exclude crime, citizen security policies are designed to enhance the quality of life in renewed urban space. In Latin America the concept ‘citizen security’ has emerged as a new human rights framing of the shared regional problem of crime, citizen insecurity and impunity. The term was coined to distinguish the discourse of security under authoritarian regimes from security under democracy (Fontana 2009). Citizen security programs seek to empower citizens through local

participation in neighbourhood safety and to help hold politicians and police accountable. In Latin America these participatory citizenship programs are policy expressions of decentralization designed to deepen local democracy through citizen participation, to reform authoritarian state structures and to undermine the clientelist politics of the traditional parties (Goldfrank 2011). The scope of participatory citizenship programs has included the initiatives for participatory budgeting, neighbourhood assemblies and community policing (Rodgers 2012). Citizen security refers not just to fighting crime but ‘the need to create an environment conducive to peace’ and therefore greater ‘emphasis on activities to prevent and control the factors that generate violence and insecurity, rather than purely repressive or reactive behaviours to consummated acts’ (Fontana 2009, para. 20).

The implementation of the urban security model rests on three elements—urban renewal, securitization and citizen security. What varies is the emphasis on these elements shaped by what are seen as the primary causes of, and solutions to, urban violence. The analysis combines the ‘urban security model’ identified here as a response to neoliberal urbanization with the differentiation of the three urban security frameworks proposed by Moncada (2011, p. 4)—that is, a ‘reactive urban security framework’, ‘situational urban security framework’ and ‘redistributive urban security framework.’ The ‘reactive urban security framework’ emphasizes securitization, that is, urban violence is seen as a problem of criminality. The ‘situational urban security framework’ emphasizes citizen security and participatory programs, that is, urban violence is seen as a problem of the lack of civility. The ‘redistributive urban security framework’ emphasizes urban renewal, that is, urban violence is seen as a problem of social inequality. However the urban security profile created by each policy emphasis merely obscures, but does not exclude, the implementation of the other elements. The following analysis examines urban security policy profiles of México City, Bogotá and Caracas as case studies in the application of the ‘reactive’, the ‘situational’ and the ‘redistributive’ urban security frameworks, respectively. Thus in México City violence was approached as a problem of criminality and illegality, in Bogotá violence was approached as a problem of uncivility and in Caracas violence was approached as a problem of social inequality and poverty. All were concerned with the production of urban order and expanding the right to the city but they varied in their success in the reduction of urban violence.

## **2. México City: Reactive Urban Security Framework**

Crime and the fear of crime became pervasive in México City from the early 1990s, resulting in the increasing avoidance and withdrawal from public space and social interaction. In the period 1990–1996 the reported rates of robbery, property damage, fraud, and extortion more than doubled from 1,059.0 to 2,434.3 incidents per 100,000 inhabitants and robberies with violence increased from 38.5 per cent to 55.5 per cent (Davis 2012). Recent public opinion surveys show that ‘39 per cent of México City’s residents (and 20 per cent nationally) are fearful of public spaces; a startling 77 per cent will not go out at night, and 48 per cent consistently avoid public transport’ (Davis 2012, p. 44). The Downtown area, considered as amongst the most dangerous in the city, became the focus of a ‘Rescue Plan’ (2001) for rejuvenation through large-scale investment in urban redevelopment and an urban security initiative.

The rescue of the historic centre was a response to the uneven impact of neoliberal restructuring had had on Mexican urban areas. The neoliberal agenda of state down-sizing, trade-liberalization and free-market principles had severely impacted industrial manufacturing in México City, the old centre of ISI state led development (Davis 1994). The uneven impact of neoliberal restructuring in Mexico led to the emergence of distinct local urban regimes in opposition to, or in support of, the new neoliberal political economy. Goldfrank and Schrank (2009) characterize these contrasting urban regimes as ‘municipal socialism’ and ‘municipal neoliberalism’ the former resisting neoliberal urbanization and the latter embracing it. The uneven legacies of authoritarian political demobilization and socialist activism in Mexico also shaped local responses to neoliberal urbanization (Martin 2007). Leftist mayors (Party of the Democratic Revolution—PRD) in México City, López Obrador (2000–2005) and his successor Marcelo Ebrard (2006–2012), combined the urban politics of redistribution directed towards welfare and poverty alleviation with the competitive politics of public-private partnerships for urban renewal.

In 2001 the Rescue Plan for México City was launched by an alliance that included federal authorities, Mayor Obrador and business led by Carlos Slim (Crossa 2009). Securitization became a major focus of the urban renewal plans. The *Giuliani Report on Mexico City* (2003) recommended using statistical mapping to create a ‘police topography’ of high crime to concentrate policing (Campesi 2010). It also recommended the ‘no broken windows’ management of urban space to remove signs of urban decay. Mayor Ebrard established the *Autoridad del Centro Histórico* (Historic Centre Authority) to address ‘problems of policing, crime, and urban quality of life’ and to economically revitalize the historic centre of the city through investment in real estate development, heritage tourism, and cultural consumerism (Davis 2012, p. 49). The aims of urban renewal were to tackle crime and police corruption, rescue Downtown through real estate investment and redevelopment, attract affluent consumers and create jobs for local residents. The plan was based on a public-private partnership to transform urban space at the expense of the poorer residents.

Crime and insecurity in the Downtown area were closely associated with growth of informal street vending ‘facilitated by clientelistic networks between street vendor organisations [sic] and local state authorities’ (Beck and Müller 2012, p. 6). The presence of the street vendors was a symptom of the overflow of vendors from the traditional market area (*La Merced*) as well as the impact of neoliberal restructuring on the city and large-scale informalization of employment and urban impoverishment that had resulted. A ‘Civic Culture Law’ implemented strict policing by increasing the number of low-level ‘nuisance offenses’ punishable by up to 36 hours detention legitimized repressive policing of the poorest population (Campesi 2010). Targeting the street vendors for removal was seen as the displacement of criminality and the expansion of a ‘frontier of legality’ (Becker and Müller 2012, p. 5).

While the rescue of historic centre of México City has been seen as successful in terms of urban renewal and reduction of crime securitization has not resolved crime but only contained or displaced it. As Becker and Müller (2012) observe, the main Downtown area targeted for securitization, *La Merced* district, has not yet been incorporated into the tourism brochures as safe urban space. The underlying logic of urban renewal and urban security is urban spatial



segregation as the solution for safe cities. Diane Davis (2012) characterizes urban redevelopment in México City as producing two ‘publics’ in the same city:

‘one comprising [sic] those citizens who use the streets and other public locales (even though problems of crime and insecurity put them at risk when they go public, thereby limiting their freedom of movement), and another comprising [sic] citizens who move through a semi-privatized urban world accompanied by surveillance cameras, security personnel, and private armoured cars, all of which allow them a degree of free movement in public spaces, but keep them physically or technologically separated from the “other public”’(p. 52).

The use of crime mapping and arrest targets as part of securitization resulted in an increase in police abuse in the metropolitan area of Mexico City (Campesi 2010). The problem of police impunity was exacerbated by their local autonomy, extralegal police culture and their role as local brokers and clients for protection. Their lack of accountability has also limited the effectiveness of citizen security programs to enhance community policing (*Policía de Barrio*) and cooperation over local security (Müller, 2010). Davis (2012, p. 53) found that citizens were reluctant to raise problems about ‘police corruption and criminal impunity in their neighbourhood when those very same police are sitting across the table, armed with their note pads and badges (and potentially identifying citizens by face and address), and known to be involved in crime as much as fighting it’. Moreover the promotion of citizen security at the neighbourhood level was undermined by the resilience of the old political clientelist structures which contributed to corruption (Müller 2010).

### **3. Bogotá: Situational Urban Security Framework**

In the early 1990’s Bogotá was described as ungovernable and in the grips of the violent drug business. It had a very high homicide rate, growing numbers of robberies and kidnappings and growing numbers of firearms. The city had become the main destination for people displaced from war in the countryside that settled undergoing rapid urbanization and extensive slums. Despite these problems in just over a decade the leadership of two independent mayors, Mayor Antanas Mockus (1995–1997, 2001–2003) and Mayor Enrique Peñalosa (1998–2000) transformed Bogotá through radical urban planning, investments, a new citizen culture and security measures. The very high homicide rates were more than halved from 81 per 100,000 in 1993 to 30 per 100,000 in 2002 (Rojas 2004). The change was celebrated as a ‘metropolitan miracle’ (Sanín *et al.* 2009) and attributed to the emphasis on citizen security policies designed to recover public space and enhance the ‘quality of life’ rather than securitization. The approach has been characterized by Moncada (2011) as a ‘situational urban security framework’ in which urban policy is directed towards altering the cultural and social environment to achieve greater citizen security. It borrowed from the ‘no broken windows’ approach implemented by New York’s Mayor Guiliani which constructed criminal violence as a problem of a lack of norms and social disorder (Beckett and Godoy 2010).

The ‘miracle’ was initiated with the election of Mayor Antanas Mockus (1995–1997), a controversial and flamboyant ex Rector of the National University of Colombia, as an

independent and anti-politics candidate. His campaign was based on ‘No P’—No Publicity, No Politics, No Money (*plata*), No Parties (Pasotti 2013, p. 43). He won a mayoral election in which only 30 per cent of the electorate actually voted. His election occurred at the unique moment in an environment of anti-politics, the radical decentralization of government and elections to the municipal level (1991 Constitution), business activism around urban renewal and the erosion of traditional political parties. Mockus’ signature policy was the creation of a new ‘urban-citizenship culture’ (*cultura ciudadana*)<sup>1</sup> based on promoting greater individual civility and responsibility. His approach was to transform the problems of security into the problem of coexistence (Rojas 2004). Urban-citizenship culture consisted of ‘the ensemble of habits, activities and shared minimum rules intended to create a feeling of belonging, facilitate coexistence in the urban space and leading to respect collective goods and to recognize citizens’ rights and duties’ (Mockus 2001, p. 3). While the playful quality of his policies captured the public imagination and attention the key to the policy was the combination of technocratic management (no corruption, no nepotism) and the direct communication between the mayor and the citizens.

Urban-citizenship culture was based on the idea of active citizenship to engender collective responsibility. ‘Coexistence required closing the gap between law, morality and culture thereby fostering a sense of disapproval for illegal actions on the part of a disenfranchised citizenship that had little respect for traditional top-down authority’ (Pasotti 2013, p. 44). Urban-citizenship culture was not something ‘inherited from the past’ but had to be encouraged through social interaction and communication between the mayor and citizens and between citizens (Galvis 2011). Mockus advocated the responsibility of government to socialize citizens in new forms of non-violent behaviour and communication. For example, his pedagogy of social regulation by citizens rather than legal sanctions saw him issue ‘citizenship cards’ in shape of a hand and ask citizens to communicate with each other by approving or disapproving traffic behaviour. He sent mimes into busy traffic intersections to ridicule bad driving and he even dismissed the traffic police and replaced many with these mimes (Buendía 2010). Mockus approached violence as a public health problem to be managed by bio-political strategies of population management. For example, to communicate the seriousness of the problem of violence and the impact of the policies

‘stars were painted on the streets to mark the spots where citizens had died in traffic accidents. The administration compiled statistics of the number of “lives saved” over the year through antiviolence policies, and the central cemetery produced a number of empty graves for citizens to visually realise [sic] the policy impact’ (Pasotti 2013, p. 48).

In order to reduce alcohol fuelled violence he legislated the ‘*ley zanahoria*’ (the carrot law) to close bars and clubs at 1pm—to publicize the law he carried around an enormous artificial carrot. Mockus also staged a symbolic vaccination of 45,000 children and adults throughout

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<sup>1</sup> The term ‘*cultura ciudadana*’ is translated in different ways by different authors. In an article Mockus (2012) who promoted the term is translated as ‘citizenship culture’. Another is the ‘culture of citizenship’ which Rojas (2004) associates with decentralization. Sanín *et al.* (2009) is the most useful in capturing the urban basis of this cultural and social enlargement of public (urban) space through citizen communication and interaction.

Bogotá to protect them against the epidemic of violence. All his policies were monitored by regular public opinion surveys by the Observatory of Urban Culture to communicate to citizens their effectiveness. As well as business, international development agencies including the World Bank and UN agencies and NGOs such as *Fundación Social* (Social Foundation) supported Mockus' programs as violence reduction initiatives to help consolidate the peace (Moser 2000). Mayor Peñalosa, the successor of Mayor Mockus<sup>2</sup>, launched his own urban renewal project: *Por la Bogotá que Queremos* (For the Bogotá We Want) which involved large-scale urban planning and redevelopment to shape people's behaviour and enhance democratic participation in the city (Rojas 2004). His plan focused on the improvement of transport (public over private transport), creating land banks and parks, and building libraries, public housing and infrastructure. The '*Transmilenio*', a high-capacity transportation system composed of articulated buses with the capacity to transport 660,000 passengers a day, transformed the use of public space in Bogotá. It enhanced the urban property values, opened up new opportunities for urban investment and renewal and occupied 'the number one place in the perception of quality and confidence in the public service system (Rojas 2004, p. 305).

While these innovative and well publicized citizen security policies have been celebrated for reducing crime and citizen fear in Bogotá urban renewal and securitization were an essential part of the equation. The independent mayors could not have succeeded without the backing of business and their own vision to transform Bogotá into a global city. The Bogotá Chamber of Commerce (CCB) had already initiated civic projects for property protection and neighbourhood watch to counter crime before the election of the independent mayors. The CCB's interests in increasing the competitiveness and internationalization of Bogotá were aligned with the goals of Mockus' citizen security projects to recuperate public space and to enhance the quality of urban life as (Moncada 2011, p. 223). Moreover the international acclaim of Mockus' policies as a 'metropolitan miracle' attracted international recognition in the form of good ratings for credit and business friendliness and as an urban security model for export. Mockus, and subsequently Peñalosa, became international celebrities on the international speaker circuit to promote their urban development and security models (Moncada 2011, Dalsgaard 2009). The redevelopment of Cartucho, a slum area notorious for crime, drug dealing and crowded with street vendors, in the centre of the city is a case in point. Before urban-citizenship culture projects could be implemented the area had to be recuperated as public space—that is, cleansed of slum dwellings, drug dealers and street vendors (Moncada 2011, p. 228). In other words, the area had to be recovered as public space through securitization and urban renewal before it could be made a space for the fostering of urban-citizenship culture. Securitization was also integrated with citizen security as a biopolitical lens for managing crime. Securitization required classification and the crime mapping to produce statistical information to make visible crime and measure the effectiveness of policies—that is, which areas to target. In other words, statistics became a means by which the mayor communicated to citizens the strength of urban-citizenship culture. At the same, time crime mapping concealed the realities of class and race that underpinned the distribution of crime in the city (Moncada 2010).

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<sup>2</sup> Mayors can only serve one term.

A major critique of Bogotá's urban miracle is that it was very uneven. While crime was reduced in one area through the 'recuperation of public space' it was displaced onto another, for example, the drug dealing of Cartucho was displaced into other areas of the city (Bargent 2011). Moreover the idea of the 'right to the city' underlying the citizen security model was conceived as equality to enjoy public space, not inequality. It enhanced some aspects of urban life—for example, the promotion of public transport and bicycles over cars, the creation of libraries and parks, improved public life through greater security—it was not directed towards redistribution. Underlying the cultural model was a shift in the construction of citizenship and rights. As Galvis (2011, p. 153) argues, 'a reterritorialization [sic] of citizenship at the level of the city also implied a particular re-imagination of the middle classes' role as urban citizens'. Instead of the developmentalist state model promising the middle class entitlement that each family should have 'a house, a car and schooling' the promise was now social harmony in public space. The right to the city became 'a redistribution of recreation and enjoyment in public that struck a chord in local middle classes at the same time that nestled their aspirations of having a world-class, internationally recognized city of their own' (Galvis 2011, p. 148). In practice the local implementation of urban-citizenship culture was conditional on social acceptance. Hence when community associations in wealthier middle class suburbs beautified parks they were judgmental about who was entitled to enjoy it on the premise that only the 'right kind of subject' should enjoy the environment (Galvis 2011, p. 140). The idea of the ideal middle class citizen produced through order resonated with a much older idea of liberal citizenship in Bogotá embodied in the *Sociedad de Mejoras y Ornato*—Society for Improvements and Embellishment (SMO)—established in 1853. The SMO viewed public order and aesthetic urban improvement as a vehicle for improving the citizenry (Galvis 2011, p. 207).

The situational emphasis of urban security policy in Bogotá obscures its multi-scalar dimensions. While citizen security projects focused on the municipality they were aligned with decentralization and the creation of a competitive urban regime in response to neoliberal globalization—that is, the desire of the CCB to make Bogotá a global city. Urban-citizenship culture became the centrepiece of the project to produce a new public order and urban aesthetic to attract domestic and international investment, credit ratings and international tourism. Also the citizen security emphasis directed towards urban renewal in Bogotá contrasted with the securitization emphasis at the national level—the war against FARC, the 'war on drugs'. On the one hand the different urban security emphasis was an expression of the mayor's urban security responsibility under the 1991 Constitution, on the other it revealed the spatial compartmentalization that has occurred with the uneven development engendered by neoliberal urbanization and the state's outsourcing of violence to regain territorial sovereignty and challenge the illegal and highly profitable drug business. In Bogotá the political independence of the mayors made them less vulnerable to national pressure and party clientelism to follow a *mano dura* approach to crime. Nevertheless the mayors came into conflict with the military over security laws such as the ban on weapons which the military opposed on the grounds that guns should be removed from delinquents, not decent people. US support for 'Plan Colombia' (1999–2004) to combat drug production and trafficking and the state's alliance with paramilitary interests to combat FARC and were the multi-scalar context of security in Bogotá (Benker 2008, Higginbottom 2005).

#### **4. Caracas: Redistributive Urban Security Framework**

Urban violence has been growing in Caracas since the early 1990s. Indeed, the homicide rate increased from 12.5 per 100,000 in 1990 (Velásquez 2006) to around 120 per 100,000 currently. In politically polarized Venezuela views on the causes and solutions to crime and urban insecurity highlight very different ideological positions. While the Chavistas support a redistributive urban security framework to address crime the anti-Chavistas support a reactive urban security framework. For Chávez and the Bolivarian governments crime is a product of the structural violence of capitalism and the solution to crime involves the reduction of poverty, which they attribute to the neoliberal policies of the 1990s. For the anti-Chavista opposition, violence is the product of state failure to police the criminal poor because it is incapable or unwilling as a consequence of their politicization or corruption. Both sides also hold their own conspiratorial views of violence as politically inspired and multi-scalar. Chávez and the Bolivarian governments see violence as evidence of destabilization from outside intervention (eg. US imperialism, Colombian paramilitaries), while the opposition views violence as evidence of the Chavistas' repressive mode of governance. Capriles, the opposition presidential candidate during the first post-Chávez election campaign (April 2013), accused the government of being '*los enchufados*,' those 'plugged into the state' and more interested in "milking the state" rather than protecting citizens' (Hansen 2012).

The redistribution of state oil income has been the centrepiece of the Bolivarian project for social justice as the solution to citizen insecurity. Redistribution has involved increased social spending on health, education, welfare and employment directed towards the poorest and social mobilization through 'participatory citizenship', a concept outlined in Article 62 of the 1999 Constitution introduced by Chávez (Hawkins 2010, p. 36). Mobilization through citizen participation has evolved over different Bolivarian governments. Initially the aim was to 'harness existing forms of participation' (the NGOs and community associations that emerged through decentralization in the 1990s) then to 'sponsor participation' and, in latest phase, to 'centralize participation' (León and Smilde 2009, p. 3). Citizen participation was designed to empower citizens, to make state institutions democratically accountable and to instil socialist values in citizens. Just as Mayor Mockus in Bogotá combined urban development with the fostering of citizen values through 'urban-citizenship culture' so too Chavez promoted social justice alongside the formation of the socialist citizen—the former promoted neoliberal urbanization while the latter promoted more equitable citizenship. The Bolivarian social missions combined social spending and participation, which evolved into 'Grand Missions' for large-scale social projects, for example, *Grand Mission Vivienda Venezuela* (Housing Mission), *Grand Mission En Amor Mayor* (Retirements benefits) and the *Grand Mission A Toda Vida Venezuela* (promote fitness, sports and cultural activities).

Chávez and the Bolivarian governments have confronted the apparent paradox that between 1998 and 2013 they successfully reduced poverty but failed, so far, to stop the rise of violent crime. Urban security policy and citizen security have increasingly become central issues for the Bolivarian revolution because they go to the heart of the whether a Bolivarian state project and socialist ethic can reverse the effects of fragmentation based on neoliberal urbanization, decentralization and the market logic of the 1990s (Lopez-Maya 2002). The Bolivarian National Plans for Development Plans between 2001–2007 and 2008–2013 only mention

citizen security as an outcome of economic and social development rather than as part of a security policy focus (Briceño and Gabaldón 2012). It was only recently that securitization was adopted as part of urban security policy.

Redistribution also involved the recuperation of urban space to reverse the urban segregation, privatization and social polarization of Caracas. Neoliberal policies of the 1990s had resulted in the privatization of government, upper / middle class retreat into gated communities and the privatization of security. Moreover the policy of decentralization, which introduced the election of mayors, resulted in the fragmentation of government and the devolution and / or outsourcing of control over the use of violence. It fragmented policing by increasing the number of police forces from 105 to 135 (el Achkar 2012a, p. 94)—each municipality having their own police force. Soraya El Achkar, head of the National Experimental University of Security (*la Universidad Nacional Experimental de la Seguridad*, UNES), denounced the impact of decentralization on policing as a ‘national disaster’ (El Achkar 2012b). The creation of a National Police Force to train police based on a uniform curriculum from a human rights perspective and to integrate the municipal police forces is one example of the Bolivarian project to re-centralize state institutions and establish a unified legal and policing authority.

Expanding the ‘right to the city’ for the urban poor by opening up access to public space has led to conflict over whose rights take priority. The Bolivarian governments’ growing sensitivity to criticism about high levels of crime and citizen insecurity has produced a conflict of interests between the rights of the poor to the city and the state’s ordering and cleaning urban space to showcase the urban fulfilment of the Bolivarian project. When they came to office in 1998 Chávez and the Bolivarian mayors had supported expanding the right to the city for the urban poor and allowed the rapid increase in the number of street vendors from around 20,000 in 2000 to 72,000 in 2002 to sell their goods in parks, plazas and avenues throughout the city (Rojas 2010, p. 58). For example, in the municipality of *El Libertador* Mayor Freddy Bernal had originally supported the vendors’ rights to get access to the city centre to sell their merchandise but in January 2008 he reversed this decision and banned them from the historic city centre. He ordered the city police and National Guard to remove street vendors from all public spaces and ‘rescue the public spaces of the city from the plague of the informal economy’ (Bernal, Public Speech, 2008)’ (Rojas 2010, p. 13). Given the importance of the informal sector where more than 50 per cent of the workforce is employed, many of them street vendors, the order resulted in major economic hardship and led to protests and grievances that the promised compensation was not delivered.

The securitization of the street vendors demonstrated that the redistributive urban security framework and fostering a socialist ethic in citizens was not enough to control crime. Nevertheless the securitization of the city centre to produce ordered urban space was not primarily to attract investment, although it was marketed as a stimulus for tourism. The Mayor made the historic city centre a showcase of the progress of the Bolivarian revolution recuperating public space to enhance the quality of life and well-being of citizens. President Maduro’s recent statement about citizen security policy characterizes the Bolivarian project as an incremental process of contesting and occupying urban space. His citizen security ‘Mission for Peace and Life’ aims to produce ‘territories of peace’ which are neither ‘invasive,

repressive, authoritarian or capitalist’ but playgrounds of peace ‘to play sport, hold cultural meetings, work meetings and worker education’.<sup>3</sup>

The Bolivarian social missions and participatory citizenship have significantly reduced inequality and expanded the ‘right to the city’ but crime has continued to rise. Even more problematic is the fact that the highest homicide rates occur in the poor urban municipalities where the missions have been directed and Chávez and the Bolivarian governments’ main electoral support is found (Dominguez 2011). Hence the paradox is that despite their success in achieving greater equality, violent crime remains high. What this highlights is the tension in the Bolivarian project between participation and social mobilization on the one hand and state control and recentralization on the other. Participation and social mobilization have been employed to achieve collective goals and mobilize support whereas state centralization has been pursued to reverse decentralization and deinstitutionalization, but they have proceeded at different paces. In Venezuela both social mobilization and state recentralization are seen as perpetual Bolivarian projects, a Venezuelan ‘perpetual revolution’ as Steve Ellner (2011, p. 249) describes it.

Most commentators identify weak state institutions as the cause of continuing high levels of criminal violence—that is, ongoing impunity, the number of guns in the society, the poor or absent policing and the politicization of the judiciary (Castaldi 2006, p. 478). While Chávez and the Bolivarian governments have made significant progress in addressing inequality through oil financed state social spending and social mobilization they not been able to recentralize the state to effectively recover monopoly control over violence and establish an effective national legal order quite so quickly. First, the existing decentralized state is defended by the anti-Chavista opposition to resist recentralization and second, the new Bolivarian state, the ‘communal state’, is an incremental project building parallel state institutions designed to eventually replace existing ones, for example, the communal councils as participatory organizations to replace the existing municipalities. The most radical attempt to install a new ‘geometry of power’ by reconstituting territorial, political and governance structures through the 2007 Constitutional referendum was rejected.

## **Conclusion**

Urban security policy has become an integral part of the state response to neoliberal globalization in Latin American cities. The shift from state developmentalist models to the support of ‘competitive cities’ has explicitly connected the goal of making cities safe for citizens with the attraction of business and investment. The impact of state rescaling and re-territorialization has been to reinforce the patterns of urban segregation and inequality which urban security policy has usually served to reinforce. The uneven impact of neoliberal urbanization has been matched by the uneven impact of urban security policy mapping a new topography of variable citizen rights and protections. Some urban spaces become ‘securitized’

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<sup>3</sup> Maduro llama a construir territorios de paz para combatir inseguridad *el tiempo.com.ve*, 18 March 2013, [online], <<http://eltiempo.com.ve/venezuela/politica/maduro-se-reune-con-jefes-de-logistica-y-movilizacion-del-comando-hugo-chavez/83628>>.

to contain crime while others are locally ‘democratized’ through citizen security programs designed to actively involve citizens in municipal decision-making, budgeting, community policing.

The implementation of urban security policy is shaped by the perceived causes and solutions to urban violence and citizen insecurity. The public profile of urban security policy—the way national, regional or municipal governments characterize crime and the solutions to it—usually emphasize securitization, citizen security programs or urban redevelopment. The ‘reactive urban security framework’ emphasizes securitization, the ‘situational urban security framework’ emphasizes citizen security and the ‘redistributive urban security framework.’ Yet the particular profile of urban security profile obscures the other components of the urban security model. Hence the ‘metropolitan miracle’ of Bogotá based on citizen security and the international promotion of the mayors as celebrities was underpinned by a strong public-private partnership and securitization. In Caracas the Bolivarian project emphasized a redistributive framework, which was increasingly supplemented by securitization in the face rising urban violence despite the success in reducing inequality.

Urban security policy in México City, Bogotá and Caracas highlight different responses to state rescaling. Neoliberal urbanization was accompanied by decentralization and the devolution of significant resources and security responsibilities to municipalities. The rescaling of the state through decentralization produced distinctive restructuring of urban space in each city. Urban segregation shaped urban political economies but also social and political divides. The most dramatic case has been Caracas where the impact of neoliberal restructuring in the 1990s fragmented the city and entrenched decentralized power. The Bolivarian project emerged as a response to the social crisis engendered by the dual process of decentralization and deinstitutionalization in the 1990s. Ironically they promoted participatory citizenship as a strategy of mobilization, and after the 2002 attempted coup support for the Bolivarian revolution, but at the same time the recentralization of the state to recover control over state institutions.

The emergence of urban security policy to support neoliberal urbanization has usually reinforced social and spatial divisions in cities rather than help overcome them. Securitization is a short-term authoritarian solution to crime based on exceptions thereby undermining the rule of law, that is, a conditional citizenship. Moreover it has also created an environment of impunity in which police, private security and vigilantes (Muggah 2012). Citizen security programs have also been criticized as exclusive even though they are framed as human rights. They foster middle class subjectivities and ideas of agency in urban areas targeted for renewal. Citizen surveillance and policing of the presence of undesirables effectively produce social conformity. When citizen security programs have been implemented in poorer districts it has been found that local practices can end up perpetuating social divisions and inequality anchored in surviving clientelist networks (Lombard 2013).

Urban security policy in Latin American cities reveals the multi-scalar processes of contemporary neoliberal urbanization. Urban security policy is part of state rescaling which reinforces urban segregation set in motion by the processes of competition and privatization. Even the case of Bogotá, which celebrated an inclusive democratic city project based on



urban planning, infrastructure development and a urban-citizen culture, was based on a very circumscribed idea of equality—the equal enjoyment of public space. The sustainability of this project has been recently called into question after the symbols of positive urban transformation—the *Transmilenio* bus system, strong investment in urban redevelopment, declining homicide rates, etc—measured by indices established to publicize success in the ‘How’s Bogota Going’ (*‘Bogotá como vamos’*), start to go backwards (Romero 2011).

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