Humanizing Security through Action-oriented Research in Latin America

Jenny Pearce and Alexandra Abello Colak

ABSTRACT

This article critically reflects on the use of action-oriented participatory research to rethink violence and security in Latin America. It draws on 12 years of such research (2008–20) in Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica and Mexico, working with communities living in the midst of chronic violence and criminality. Despite innovative experiments, security policies and practices in the region continue to be dominated by counterproductive militarized responses that have failed to address violence and crime. The study argues that in order to challenge politically potent punitive approaches to security and to highlight the interconnected social and economic drivers of insecurity, communities living these realities need to develop their own understanding of 'security'. This can be used to inform sustainable solutions that address people's complex experiences of insecurity on the ground. The article brings the agency of those living amidst chronic violence into the security debate through participatory action research. It demonstrates that people living amidst such violence can contribute to making public security equitable, accessible and capable of protecting them while addressing the conditions that reproduce violence and crime without reproducing further violence. This is what is meant by 'humanizing security'.

INTRODUCTION

Over a decade ago, we wrote an article entitled 'Security from Below' (Abello-Colak and Pearce, 2009, republished in 2018). The article explores the shift from state-centred to human-centred security, and how this shift exposes the difficulties that the state faces in protecting people from complex forms of insecurity and chronic violence.[1] The analysis argues that security should always be regarded and provided as a public service. 'Security from below' does not replace the state. The article puts forward the case for increasing the capacity of people to think about their security and to define collectively the values and norms that should inform state provision. Only in this way can citizens make the state accountable and contribute to the possibility for a violence reducing security provision, underpinned by democratic principles (Abello-Colak and Pearce, 2018: 17). The notion of building 'security from below' seeks, therefore, to enable citizens to question appeals by politicians to repressive forms of security, which deny the rights of some in the name of protecting others, or what has been termed authoritarian citizenship (Pearce, 2017a, 2017b).[2] It also seeks to avoid citizens reproducing violence themselves through 'uncivil' responses to the security and justice system's failures (Snodgrass Godoy, 2006). In addition, it questions 'participatory' approaches to security which do not develop a prior process with citizens, enabling those most adversely impacted by multiple insecurities to articulate their experiences and generate proposals relevant to them.

In Latin America, one of the most violent and unequal regions in the world, militarized security in various forms continues to predominate (Flores-Macias and Zarkin, 2019). Militarized strategies in the region have proliferated in response to the expansion of local and transnational criminal economies and violent conflicts over their control. Waging 'war' on drugs and crime has been the default strategy of most governments in the region. The cost has been high in terms of the violation of human rights and further reproduction of violence and insecurity. At the same time, incidences of gender-based violence are also high (UNODC, 2019), while the 10 countries with the highest rates of child homicide in the world are all in Latin America (Save the Children, 2017). These and other social, economic and political forms of violence have had particular impacts on poor communities

---

[1] Violence is' chronic' when homicide rates exceed the global average for five years or more and when multiple forms of non-lethal violence reproduce across socialization spaces: for example, from the intimate, to the street, to the school and to the prison. 'Chronic violence' refers to a time and space matrix and multiple forms of violence in everyday life, lethal and non-lethal, which generate traumatic individual, familial, intergenerational, social and political effects (Adams, 2017; Pearce, 2007, 2020).

[2] Support for repressive policies, including greater trust in the armed forces than the police, remains high in Latin America as has been documented through Latin American Public Opinion (LAPOP) surveys (available from https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/core-surveys.php).

in this highly urbanized region of the world (Moser, 2004) and have been prompted by 'shifting territorialities of governance and power' (Davis, 2020: 206). The ongoing crisis of security is exacerbated by the disconnect between the state's objectives and the everyday and differentiated experiences (for example by gender, generation, sexuality, class, race and ethnicity) of those who are being 'secured'. These reflect a wide range of domains of insecurity alongside dangers generated by evolving 'criminal systems' (Wolff, 2017: 561) and their varied logics of violence. This suggests that a new security perspective is required in this and other regions where citizens live under conditions of chronic violence. Our argument is that such a new perspective, a 'humanizing' perspective, must be co-constructed *with* communities, both to address their lived realities of complex insecurity, but also to enable thinking about non-militarized and violence-reducing alternatives. In other words, without the knowledge, experience and participation of those most impacted, a humanized 'people-centred but publicly delivered security' (Abello Colak and Pearce, 2018: 12) remains elusive.

Since 2009, we have been engaged in a collaborative and multi-site participatory research process aimed at giving empirical and methodological depth to this argument. Rather than leave security to security specialists alone (Luckham, 2009: 2), our original article argued that citizens should be encouraged 'to think about their security as they do about their food, livelihood and human rights; it is of equal importance' (Abello Colak and Pearce, 2018: 12). This requires, we argue, a *humanized security consciousness*. However, what does this mean in practice? And how would raising awareness of security problems among highly affected residents and calling for their participation avoid replicating violence reproducing responses? This article is about the participatory research process aimed at exploring these questions, conducted with poor urban (and some rural) communities of Latin America over more than a decade since the first article was written. By working with people to co-produce practice-oriented knowledge on security, researchers explored how previously voiceless, victimized and fearful citizens might not only participate in, but also (re)shape, security debates among and between civil society, local and national state actors.

This article sets out the problematic debate around conceptualizing security as it has evolved since the 1994 Human Development Report (UNDP, 1994) ushered in the idea of 'human security', challenging state-centred notions and paving the way for a vital rethink about who security is for. The article explains why 'humanizing security' captures better the need for engaging actively with those most impacted by chronic violence and crime. Then it discusses the context in which the methodological approach has been developed, by exploring the contemporary crisis of security thinking and practice in Latin America and the failure of current security approaches to introduce sustainable, violence reducing solutions. It describes the methodological approach — and its episte-

mological assumptions — which the authors have co-developed with local partners. Finally, the article summarizes key findings from the research and critically reflects on what it has contributed towards rethinking security in the areas where the authors have worked. It concludes that local contextual understanding built with people around their diverse experiences can produce new ideas and practices about security. In this sense, humanizing security is not about inviting residents to enhance police intelligence gathering or to help implement strategies that have already been designed without their input. It is to work *with* communities to develop their own understandings and proposals on how to address their security needs and daily experiences of violence. It is also to support them and create channels so they can take these proposals into decision making spaces and use them to help re-think the purpose and delivery of security policies.

'HUMANIZING SECURITY' OR 'SECURITIZING HUMANITY'?

There is still no consensus in the academic and policy literature on security regarding either its meaning or what kind of security can protect citizens while enabling personal fulfilment and capacity to participate in social and public life. For example, is security only about the protection of people against actual physical violence? Or is it about the absence of risks to the enjoyment of happiness, physical health and a secure income (Herington, 2015, 2019), which also constructs subjective feelings of security and well-being?

The idea of security has both objective and subjective components, a differentiation, which Philippe Bourbeau (2015: 10) argues runs through many disciplinary approaches to security. On the one hand, security is an objective and measurable reality. On the other hand, it is a socially constructed perception of dangers and the production of knowledge associated with discourses of threat and well-being. Bourbeau argues that the emergence of human security 'has put the objective/subjective divide at the forefront of scholarship' (ibid.: 11). It has also taken security out from the secrecy associated with intelligence, military and defense circles, opening up security thinking to new domains of life. The notion of 'human security' refers to the protection of people's lives, livelihoods and dignity from cross-cutting threats such as hunger, diseases, repression and economic or environmental crises which affects peoples' lives across seven dimensions: economic, personal, community, political, environmental, food and health (UNDP, 1994). 'Human security' offers the possibility of refocusing security thinking practices on the protection of human life and making security provision responsive to contemporary and interconnected human problems.

However, this very broadening of the idea of security also exposes it to many critiques (e.g. Buzan et. al., 1998; Krause, 2004; Paris, 2001). Rather than 'humanize security' the concept was

accused of securitizing humanity (Khong, 2001: 232). Critics argued that subjecting more and more domains of human life to the logics of 'security' might adversely impact on well-being and human rights without enhancing the physical security needed for protection against violence and criminality (Booth, 2007: 323-24). This is particularly relevant in Latin America where the securitization of complex social problems, such as poverty alongside urban fragmentation, have led to the construction of certain sectors of the population as 'threats' and thus justified the use of stigmatizing and violent responses against them. However, connecting more domains of life to security is not necessarily to cede these domains to a state manipulated discourse which ultimately justifies more control over human freedoms and choices. The concept of 'human security', much updated since its original formulation in 1994 (see United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, 2018), enabled us with our research partners to explore the objective 'facts' of security/insecurity as experienced by citizens *together with* their subjective 'feelings' and 'beliefs', and how both impact on their capacity to act consciously, as human beings and as citizens in specific environments. Herington's philosophical exploration (2019) highlights the importance of what he calls 'belief-relative security', as necessary to rational life planning, in turn widely accepted as prudentially valuable. This goes beyond the adverse consequences of believing oneself at risk, which then engenders feelings of fear and anxiety. It refers to 'a rational and agency-centred sense in which our lives are diminished by a lack of security. Thus, insofar as being able to exercise our agency is considered a central prudential, moral, and political good, we may have good reason to promote belief-relative security' (ibid.: 200).

Recognizing that belief-relative security is necessary for agency to plan the future resonates in the objective contexts in the poorest communities of Latin America and elsewhere, where chronic violence and a lack of a sense of the future shapes behaviour, particularly amongst young men (see Baird, 2018). When posed in this way, the link between subjective feelings of (in)security and objective realities emerges as the vital component of an adequate security policy and not one that manipulates the former in order to politically exploit the latter. In Mexico, Edgardo Buscaglia argues that 'Human Security' makes it possible to move beyond the dichotomy of 'repression' or 'prevention' and encourages inter-institutional coordination to address the reasons why mafias capture the social fabric of communities through drugs, people and migrant trafficking and legal and illegal services. Drug-trafficking is the fifth source of employment in Mexico, even above the oil and timber industries (Buscaglia, 2013: 272).

Other critiques of human security have pointed to the limitations in its operationalization, and the ease with which it can be emptied of its 'critical' implications for politics and economics (Newman, 2016: 1166). Newman argues that while human security offers a 'framework for praxis for security research' that engages with policy and security practices in ways that other security analyses

neglect, such research must preserve the critical nature of the concept (ibid.). Malverde (2014: 383) adds that it is time to 'turn the gaze … on the very wide variety of activities and practices that are being carried out under the name of "security"'. Grasping how these practices play out in specific contexts with those that experience them, is precisely a way of applying a critical approach to 'Human Security' and exploring its potential (or not) for transforming them.

We found that the concept of 'human security' resonated with people on the ground and their everyday experiences, as it did not assume one kind of objective threat or risk. The concept was in most cases the starting point for bringing the subjects (and victims) of insecurity into a constructive dialogue and the search for solutions. It proved itself able to open up subjective beliefs which could then be assessed against objective experiences *together with* participants. These include the 'activities and practices of security' highlighted by Malverde (2014: 283), which in poor communities are often offered by a range of violent state and non-state actors. This, in turn, enabled an inductive process by which participants could identify the kind of security which corresponded to objective realities as well as to subjective feelings due to lack of basic prudential goods. Essential to the process is the way participants discovered their agency in this field. This inspires the idea of 'humanizing' security that captures the dynamic and rights-oriented process made possible when such agency is activated. As Bourbeau (2015: 8) argues, security is a dynamic, complex and unfinished process that needs to be reproduced all the time. By humanizing this process, the participatory methodology enabled those living in the midst of objective threats and associated feelings of insecurity to gain some agency over policies and practices claiming to deliver 'security', but which took no account of their daily experiences and needs. This also enabled a critical engagement with 'Human Security', a concept which tended to take the active agency required to transform security thinking and practice somewhat for granted.

THE OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE CRISIS OF SECURITY IN LATIN AMERICA

Violence and criminality are unresolved and intensifying challenges for Latin America. In terms of the most common comparative measure, that of homicides, the region has the highest levels of homicide in the world, and homicide is the leading cause of death for 15- to 49-year-olds (Roser and Ritchie, 2020).[3] Homicides are often used as a measure for criminality, but as with violence, they

---

[3] In 2017, less than 0.1 per cent of deaths were the result of homicide in most of Western Europe, 0.5 per cent in North Africa, Asia and Oceania, and 0.7 per cent in the United States, while it was over 9 per cent in Honduras, over 8 per cent in Venezuela, 7 per cent in Guatemala and 6 per cent in Mexico (Roser and Richie, 2020).

conceal multiple expressions of the phenomenon.[4] Since the end of the Cold War and from the early 1990s onwards, Latin America has drawn upon a range of security frameworks to address these challenges: from citizen security, to repressive and forceful (*mano dura*) security, to pacification and social urbanism, alongside many iterations of security sector reform. These experiments have taken place through various regime types, during periods of economic growth and economic crisis and have included efforts to reform policing. However, they have mostly failed to disentangle themselves from the authoritarian, militarized and corrupt practices embedded in the region's history and politics.

Understandings of democratic security or policing, as Bonner (2020) argues, are underpinned by varied and often conflicting political assumptions about inequality, violence/repression and democracy, participation and rights. In the end, the right and centre-right assumptions tend to prevail, even when governments turn left. Davis (2006) argues that police corruption and resistance to reform worsened as Mexican democracy deepened in the 1990s. The left-wing government of Lopez Obrador, elected in Mexico in 2018, committed itself to changing the militarized approach established since 2006 in the pursuit of a 'war' against drug trafficking, but the formation of Obrador's new National Guard police force relies heavily on the army. Samet (2019: 287) shows how in Venezuela, President Maduro 'traded the hand of social justice for the gauntlet of security', choosing a punitive, hard line approach over his predecessor's (President Chavez) emphasis on the social and economic roots of crime. In El Salvador, the centre-left government of Mauricio Funes that took office in 2009, despite a pre-victory engagement with reversing the previous right-wing governments' repressive approaches, reintroduced hardline policies six months after taking office (van der Borgh and Savenije, 2014). Elsewhere, varied efforts to reform and demilitarize the police have been introduced, particularly with variants of community and proximity policing (Fruhling, 2012).

Experiments in community participation have also been developed to bring citizens closer to security provision. Police resistance to such societal involvement has however undermined the most empowering of these processes (Gonzalez, 2016). Coupled with discourses that held citizens responsible for dealing with security problems, these participatory approaches led to differential forms of participation and unbalanced experiences of citizenship for different sectors of the population (Marquardt, 2012). Ultimately, the region's history of state human rights abuses, ongoing corruption, embedded distrust of the police within communities and underpaid and undertrained lower

---

[4] In one third of Latin American households, at least one person was robbed in 2017, over 1,000,000 cars are stolen each year and millions of personal items are resold in secondary markets (Bergman, 2018: 5).

ranks remains a key obstacle to change (Ungar and Arias, 2012). The criminalizing and violent responses to intensifying social protests across the region (Doran, 2017) are evidence of the difficulties to changing entrenched practices in police and other security institutions.[5]

As Moser (2004: 11) points out, a growing 'industry' of direct and indirect interventions around prevention and reduction of urban crime and violence in Latin America and South Africa has been consolidating since the 1990s. A later review of citizen security interventions by Muggah and Aguirre (2013: 10) noted that the proliferation of efforts to promote security sector reform and more civilian accountability and oversight had become a 'crowded market', with multiple agencies mobilizing varied visions, methodologies and metrics of success. Many of these originated in bilateral and multilateral institutions, such as the EU, Inter-American Development Bank, Organization of American States, United Nations Development Programmes, USAID, the US State Department and the World Bank , complemented by non-governmental and private sector groups. 'Citizen security' includes broad-brush shared approaches to institutional strengthening, preventive policing, judicial reform and youth rehabilitation. More than half of these have focused on common crime, with some attention to youth, organized and gender crime, but less than 1 per cent on state crimes, such as extrajudicial killing, police misconduct, or crimes in prisons (ibid.: 9). Even less attention has been placed to addressing 'white-collar' crimes such as tax evasion and corruption.

Political pressures and incentives at the global (notably the US War on Drugs, see Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales, 2018) and national levels have undermined the reforming security agenda. Rather, it has been converted into some headline-grabbing initiatives.[6] The most iconic example is the city of Medellín in Colombia, where homicide rates have declined impressively (Abello Colak and Pearce, 2015). The so-called 'Medellín Model' (Bahl, 2012; Brand and Davila, 2011; Maclean, 2015) was taken up in varied guises in other cities, such as Monterrey and Ciudad Juarez in Mexico and Rio de Janeiro in Brazil (Gay, 2017), where new 'models' emerged.[7] The limitations of the security model in Medellín have become apparent (Doyle, 2019; Humphrey and Valverde, 2017). Local gangs and criminal organizations in Medellín, as in other cities such as Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, still have strong influence in marginalized communities despite increased

---

[5] In 2019, police repression against street protestors resulted in at least 345 eye injuries amongst protesters in Chile (*The Guardian*, 2019). And in Colombia violent police responses to nationwide protests in 2021 left at least 44 protesters killed and 1,650 injured across the country (*The Guardian*, 2021).

[6] Former Mayor of New York, Rudy Giuliani, for example, marketed his 'law and order' approach with high profile and highly paid visits to Latin America (Pearce, 2020), claiming that zero tolerance for 'broken windows' and increased arrests for petty crime could turn urban crime round.

[7] The 'We are all Juarez' initiative in Juarez and the Pacifying Police Units in Rio de Janeiro were influenced by Mexican President Calderon's visit to Medellin in 2009, and Sergio Cabral, governor of Rio's visit in 2007.

state intervention, not only because they exercise violent forms of social ordering and conflict management, but because they have inserted themselves in the provision of local services (Abello Colak and Guarneros Meza, 2014; Blattman et al., 2021; Davila, 2018; Feltran, 2020). Additionally, while drugs trafficking is still a driver of insecurity, other forms of criminality have grown, such as extortion (Bedoya, 2017), local drugs selling, recruitment of adolescents and young men, and sexual exploitation of young children and adolescents (Abello Colak and van der Borgh, 2018; Alcaldía de Medellín, 2018).

The emblematic example of Medellín underlines challenges in sustaining security innovations in contexts where symbioses between the state and criminal actors can be productive of the latter's survival as well as the reproduction of violence (Pearce, 2010). As Desmond Arias (2017: 10) highlights based on the cases of Rio de Janeiro, Medellín and Kingston, 'armed group relationships with the state generate not just violence but also systems of order'. In these systems criminals sometimes control homicides, while other crimes go grossly under-reported.[8] Rather than being part of the solution, state actors and entrenched clientelistic networks (Hilgers and Macdonald, 2017: 14) are embedded in the problem. Violence in Latin America is entrenched in social, economic and political life, and criminalities grow as weak state deterrence capacity (Bergman, 2018) has been overwhelmed by the demand for and profits from illegal enterprise.

Today, despite experimentation in security approaches, there is a huge disconnect between frameworks from above and realities on the ground and great distances between the lived realities of poor and wealthier communities. As Singer (2017: 78) notes, although the risks of being victims of crime have increased for all groups, the wealthy are much less likely to report feeling unsafe in their homes. Unequal experiences of insecurity sharpen social constructions of the 'poor' as sources of the problem (and the target of 'security') (Campbell, 2020; Gledhill, 2015). Samet (2019: 289) suggests violent crime has generated a correlation between 'demands made in the name of crime victims and the strain of punitive populism that entrenches racial, ethnic and socioeconomic inequality' (ibid.).

Security experiments have not taken account of the intersections between the multiple domains of insecurity in which so many live in the region, alongside impunity, abuse by state actors and corruption. Working through security challenges *with* poor communities is not only a way of bringing their realities from the ground to the policy makers at the top, and the varied civic actors in between. It is a way of challenging the seductive manipulation of 'punitive populism' by discussing

---

[8] In Mexico, the National Survey of Victimization and Perception of Public Security estimated that in 2018, 93.2 per cent of crimes committed were not registered or had not been investigated (INEGI, 2019: 31).

alternatives with them. These include the principle that security should be an equitable and accessible public good, which addresses objective experiences and subjective feelings generated by lack of access to the means for a dignified life. And that it could do so without reproducing more violence. This is what we mean by the conscious action or agency for 'humanizing security'.

HUMANIZING SECURITY THROUGH PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

This article is based on a body of action-oriented research conducted between 2008 and 2020, which started in Medellín, Colombia[9] and was then adapted and developed in 2011 through various funded projects in 11 cities in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica and Mexico[10] (summarized in Table 1), including some of the cities with the highest homicides rates in the world.[11]

[insert Table 1 here]

Our research involved collaborations between universities, civil society, grassroots organizations and residents of vulnerable neighbourhoods. Cities were selected based on high levels of violence and crime, the presence of armed actors, accessibility for research teams and existing relationships between research partners and residents. The innovation in this research is the effort to work *with* the latter as active partners in the co-production of security knowledge and forms the empirically grounded basis for the proposition of 'humanizing' security. To the best of our knowledge, this type of action research on security is the first of its kind in Latin America. The use of participatory research in the field of security is generally scarce,[12] although the turn to 'everyday realities' and the incursion of ethnographically informed approaches to International Relations and security studies (Salter and Mutlu, 2013) have led to analyses that recognize people's gendered experiences

---

[9] We have worked with the Observatory of Human Security at the University of Antioquia in Colombia since 2008, developing methods to research security 'from below'. This collaboration lead to successful applications for funding that enabled the implementation of various research projects since 2011.

[10] The authors participated in the design and implementation of these projects. For the Newton Fund (ESRC/CONACYT) project in Mexico, as Principal Investigator (Pearce) and Research Coordinator (Abello Colak). The article will not discuss all the case studies, for reasons of space, but will draw on themes that have stood out across them.

[11] In 2015 and 2016 San Salvador had the highest homicide rate in the world with 190 per 100,000 inhabitants. Tijuana has been in that position since 2018 with 138, while Acapulco with 110, Kingston 57 and Tegucigalpa 43 have also been included in the 50 most violent cities ranking (Citizen Council on Public Safety and Criminal Justice, 2019).

[12] Important exceptions are: Firchow, 2018; Kostovicova et al., 2012; Muggah and Moser-Puangsuwan, 2003.

of insecurity and reveal the role of agency and subjectivity (Lemanski, 2012; MacGinty, 2014; Vaughan-Williams and Stevens, 2016).

The researchers worked with residents living in areas where people are exposed to multiple threats (economic, political, community, environmental) and subjected to violent and exploitative practices by state and non-state actors. They are also subjected to differential and stigmatizing forms of public 'security' that undermine their rights and agency despite rich histories of self-organization. These histories are sources of action and thinking against violence and crime, as much as contexts for the latter to flourish. Recognizing the latent if not actual agency for re-imagining security in such contexts has to be demonstrated and to do so, the research turned to Latin America's history of participatory action research.

South-North Learning to Rethink Violence and Security

The methodological approach has roots in the original body of thought and practice produced in Latin America around participation and research as a tool for generating knowledge for action (Fals Borda, 2006; Freire, 1970). Initially applied by Pearce in the context of Bradford, in England, following a riot in 2001 and the ensuing tensions amongst communities (Pearce and Milne, 2010), epistemological principles and methods were further developed in iterative fashion in Medellín, with a team from the University of Antioquia in Colombia, and gradually rolled out with local actors in the other contexts (Abello Colak and Pearce, 2019).

The aim was to build an approach commensurate with the complexities of varied terrains, but capable of generating broader insights and practically relevant concepts. The case study approach only exemplifies possibilities, although each case study was used to impact on higher scales of decision making.[13] The result is a methodology for the 'co-construction of security from below' (Abello Colak and Pearce, 2019: 40), that brings together diverse groups of researchers with different types of knowledge (e.g. academic, experiential and practical). Research teams have always included academic and community researchers[14] working together throughout stages of the research process, including data collection and analysis, production of outputs and dissemination. In four cities in Mexico (Acapulco, Apatzingan, Guadalupe and Tijuana) the research project also involved pracademic

---

[13] Where possible dissemination activities were organized with police, local and national security committees, mayors and municipal officials. In the case of Mexico, researchers presented to the National Congress.
[14] Residents of selected communities interested in producing knowledge and recognized and respected by other residents as leaders or as neighbors who work for the community.

researchers. Having both academic training and practical experience as members of civil society organizations,[15] pracademics facilitated the constructive dialogue between community and academic researchers.

We used qualitative and participatory methods to capture local practices and sense making that different groups (young people, women, children, indigenous communities, afro-descendants, members of the LGTBI community and victims of displacement) deploy on the ground in the face of traumatic realities of violence and crime. These methods took many forms, including participatory mapping, participatory documentary, graffiti-tours, peace circles, performances, '*huerta-escuela*' (sowing and learning gatherings), role-play games, training workshops, and were combined with focus groups, semi-structured interviews and participant observations. By combining and adapting academic methods and community practices, researchers worked with groups of residents to co-produce new understandings of events, situations and processes that generate insecurity in communities; to assess the impact of interventions by state and civil society and to identify new actions and strategies that could improve security and well-being for residents. The aim was not just to record 'complaints', but to encourage propositional thinking. In five cities (Apatzingan, Guadalupe, Tijuana, Medellín and Tegucigalpa) this approach enabled the co-production of Agendas for Human Security.[16] These contained the participatory diagnostics of problems prioritized with residents along the seven dimensions of human security and proposals for state institutions, civil society and communities themselves.

The premise of this form of research is that knowledge production is an interactive and not extractive process — it is a co-production. This is a challenge to positivist social science that posits that truth is only found through standing outside the object of knowledge (Pearce, 2008). Here, the quality of relationships built with the 'researched' mattered for the claims to truth, as well as the possibility of knowledge converting into action and impact. The methodology seeks to contribute to addressing the complex problems faced by communities, in agreement with Reason and Torbert's argument on the role of academic inquiry:

> since all human persons are participating actors in their world, the purpose of inquiry
> is not simply or even primarily to contribute to the fund of knowledge in a field, to de-

---

[15] This is the case of the research carried out in Tijuana, Acapulco, Apatzingan and Guadalupe in Mexico (2016–18).

[16] For more on agendas co-produced in Tijuana, Guadalupe and Apatzingan, see: www.lse.ac.uk/lacc/publications/Co-constructing-Human-Security-in-Mexico. For more on Medellín, see: www.repensandolaseguridad.org/publicacioness/cartillas/item/towards-a-security-agenda-for-medell%C3%ADn-from-the-perspective-of-its-communities.html?category_id=26. For Tegucigalpa, see: /www.oxfam.org/fr/node/10240

construct taken-for-granted realities, or even to develop emancipatory theory, but rather to forge a more direct link between intellectual knowledge and moment-to-moment personal and social action (Reason and Torbert, 2001: 4)

By recognizing the plurality of knowing processes, this approach enabled those whose knowledge is often dismissed, on the grounds it is 'only' from experience or practical proficiencies or non-linguistic (Heron, 1996), to enrich evidence and deepen action-oriented understanding. The sections below focus on accumulated learning that came through the varied iterations of the methodology. Using illustrative examples from the various research sites we analyse how it can contribute to new forms of security consciousness that can inspire new security thinking and practice.

TRANSFORMING SECURITY 'WITH' VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

We argue that it is possible for people living in the midst of violence to contribute to humanizing security policies and practices and to resist authoritarian political appeals or passive acquiescence to state and nonstate armed actors. The methodology for demonstrating this potentiality is extremely demanding given the contexts. Working on this theme with communities requires commitment to process rather than rapid outcomes and quick fixes. The summary of these complex processes addresses challenges and potentialities, while drawing out the significance to transformations in security thinking and practices, of bringing those most impacted into the debate.

Building an Ecology of Knowledges of Insecurity

The methodology thrived more rapidly in contexts of prior social organizing. In Medellin, for example, it benefitted from the experiences of non-governmental groups in poor areas of the city, who had worked on human rights and social organizing in the midst of chronic violence for many years. Community researchers often came from activist backgrounds and the balance between their experiential knowledge of their communities and academic knowledge and demands of a research project required constant (re)balancing. This balance has been an ongoing challenge that required identifying an 'ecology of knowledges' (De Sousa Santos, 2014: 71) and a typology of the range of knowledges, for example, from the theoretical-methodological and historical-hermeneutical of the academics, to the social practices developed by grassroots organizations to address violences (Gomez Ramirez, 2014: 14).

In Medellín, the methodology revealed how distant the construction of municipal public policy was from the everyday lives of poor communities (Abello Colak and Pearce, 2015). Residents had to build their own responses to risks to lives and livelihoods, such as the working group of the Displaced in Comuna 8,[17] built in the midst of forced displacement and other violences. This form of collective action alleviated residents' problem of food insecurity, at least temporarily, by planting community allotments. It stood out in contrast to the obsession of Medellín to position itself internationally: 'in order to generate a good image, a Green Belt was proposed, also security cameras and technologies against delinquency, etc … the consequences of what the State does in the community to respond to insecurity, instead of helping solve problems, often ended up creating more insecurity' (Hernández-Chaverra et al., 2014: 111).

In Tegucigalpa, Honduras, international NGOs and local groups were the catalysts of the research process. They built on the histories of feminist civic activism, which had had a positive impact on women from some of the poorest neighbourhoods who participated in the research. Here, some basic funding and credit from the NGOs enabled these women to bring in incomes while they worked on the research process. Researchers analysed their particular experiences,[18] the steps they take to protect themselves where possible, and why they prefer to trust gangs rather than the police. They identified a 'patriarchal urbanist vision' in the way their neighbourhoods are organized, which meant that women cannot enjoy public community spaces, nor discuss the problems they face. They also drew attention to the poor conditions of the streets, the absence of a sewage system, street lighting, public services and transport which put women at greater risk, physically and emotionally. Here people live alongside clandestine cemeteries and houses where criminal groups torture, dismember women's bodies, rape and murder (Diaz et al., 2019: 199). Through the research, women rejected state repressive and militaristic responses. In their 'Agendas of Human Security' women prioritized the need for critical thinking on violence for creating consciousness amongst residents and public transport workers of the rights of women and for strengthening education that provides tools for people to live together without violence. They also prioritized the participation of women in decision making at the community, local and national levels and suggested purging the police force (ibid.: 222). As in the other cities discussed, women in Tegucigalpa were able to present their 'Agendas' to key actors in an open town hall meeting. Using performances, they also described what it was like to live with daily violence to a diverse audience that included police officers. The women also won a seat at the local security committee of the Central District of Tegucigalpa, which

---

[17] This is an initiative created by victims of forced displacement living in Comuna 8 to generate solutions to their needs. Through self-organizing they created vegetable gardens for the community. They also organized to demand recognition of victims' rights and participation in the city's urban planning projects.

[18] Between January 2018 and February 2019, there were 205 femicides in Honduras, 33.17 per cent in 9 of the 13 neighbourhoods of Tegucigalpa where the research took place (Diaz et al., 2019).

enables them to bring their experience, knowledge and proposals to this strategic space for public security discussions.

Recognizing and Addressing Differentiated Experiences

One of the aims of the methodology is to explore how violence and insecurity differentially impact on varied social groups, why some people are drawn in as perpetrators and others as victims, and why these are often interchangeable categories. In all cases the research was consciously organized to work with women and young people and other particularly vulnerable groups. For example, in Medellín it also involved children, displaced people and the LGBTI population; in Acapulco afro-descendants and indigenous communities; in Apatzingan the elderly and in Cheran and Nebaj, young Indigenous women. Working with these groups generated rich insights and many important details of what is like to live with constant insecurity, and it also generated proposals for sustainable solutions to improve security and prevent crime and violence. Young people, for instance, felt stigmatized as 'dangerous' and identified the police as a key source of insecurity in their neighbourhoods (Marín Silva et al., 2014). They wanted dignifying jobs and educational opportunities, but with curricula adapted to the differential needs of society and with gender pedagogy included. They also wanted workshops to raise awareness of the human rights of children and young people, so that abuse could be recognized and dealt with consistently and not through one-off interventions. This was key to addressing the lack of synchronicity between their socialization experienced at home and on the streets and in schools (Hernández-Chaverra et al., 2014: 106–07).

In contexts of varied indigenous identities, there were also nuances and insights into how to better approach the violences and insecurities experienced by these communities. In Cheran, a key problem was the violence and abuse young women experience in public spaces, and when they are forced to live with their husband's family after marrying. Until the research was carried out, this problem had not been addressed in community discussions around security, which traditionally focused on strategies to protect the community from the incursion of criminal groups (Romero Rios et al., 2019). In Nebaj, Guatemala, young women participants from the Ixil community associated violence, which does not have a direct translation in their language, to 'invade the body', conveying its somatic impact on victims. They drew attention to the everyday 'invasions', including mothers against children, male sexual violence against women and assassinations of female leaders who made demands for better health, well-being and services. Indigenous women highlighted that any real change needed to be based on revisiting local traditions and recovering ancestral knowledges

that had been the basis of resistance to different forms of domination and discrimination since colonial times. However, many people acknowledged they are so focused on survival that such recovery is a difficult task (Corio Lopez, 2019).

Analytical and Conceptual Leaps: From 'Human Security' to 'Humanizing Security'

In every context where the methodology was used, material was produced which showed that participants were not just complaining about their condition but were putting forward proposals from a human security perspective. It was through this broad umbrella that the research demonstrated that participants could re-think dominant security practices. Most, but importantly not all,[19] rejected the reactive militaristic emphasis that the state gave to the problem, while recognizing that gangs and organized crime were real threats. Militaristic responses were associated with many violations of human rights, which impeded the search for solutions and their own participation.

Women and many young people were very clear that militarizing 'solutions' did not solve the daily violences and threats they experienced. Nor did they want to be stigmatized by the police and be vulnerable to forced recruitment into armed groups. In Guadalupe, Mexico, the prevalence of 'dehumanizing forms of security' manifested in the way police beat up and even torture young guys hanging out on the streets smoking marijuana, drove them into criminality rather than away from it (Badillo et al., 2019:111).

Not all the case studies used the 'human security' concept as such, as the aim was to enable communities to decide upon, rather than impose, a 'security' concept. However, there was clear receptivity to it in all research contexts, or to concepts that captured the integral and multidimensional nature of security and the *interconnectedness* of multiple experiences of insecurity. The Ixil of Nebaj, for instance, associated security with the protection of the 'web of life' that enables their ancestral holistic idea of 'Buen Vivir', and to the restoration of 'trust' in different spaces (home, community, schools, public spaces) (Corio Lopez, 2019:135-37). Explorations of what a 'safer space' is for women and youth living in the selected communities in Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica and Mexico revealed that it included relational and material components. It implied material conditions to live with dignity and reliable and fair access to services and employment, as well as supportive and protective networks and relations among residents and between them and state institutions (Abello Colak and Angarita Cañas, 2019).

---

[19] Some participants initially expressed views that justified some forms of violence. However, as the research process advanced, the majority critically questioned their assumptions and identified solutions that challenged violent responses.

Thus, 'human security' emphasizes the necessity for rethinking policy frameworks away from repressive responses. Building the kind of resilient social fabric and environments where people have access to services, economic opportunities and protections necessary for dignified life (subjective security) and constructive and non-violent human relationships is essential. By putting the needs of people at the *centre* of security policies, actions to address everyday violence as well as organized crime, can begin to shift from repression to rehabilitation and restorative justice. 'Humanizing security' thus requires the analytical and conceptual leap that 'human security' makes possible, and which strongly resonated with participants. However, only conscious capacity to act or 'agency' can take the research towards such a big leap in security practices, in other words, the acts and actions of 'humanizing' are essential.

Enabling Actual and Latent Agency

'Agency' revealed itself as key to a future change in strategies, beginning at the subnational and community levels. Key to all research sites is how prior histories of community activism impacted on the process of identifying and formulating proposals to humanize security. Medellín stood out, where communities arising from informal settlements had even developed their own local development plans in the past, and had acted when the state did not, sometimes with the support of small NGOs. Such history had inspired a constellation of grassroots organizations that catalyse residents' contemporary efforts to deal with marginalization and to resist violent actors.[20]

Most of the research sites were originally informal settlements. As Jota Samper (2017) highlights, self-governance structures which enabled these communities to challenge the State, also gave better capacity to manage local criminal organizations. However, this resilience and collective efficacy fragments with population density growth. Fragmentation over time as communities expand alongside the damaging impact of violence means that histories of agency often have to be rekindled through the participatory research process and the support of local NGOs. The fragmentation is often exacerbated by gangs, armed groups and conflicts between them and the State. In Tijuana, for example, residents remember that before 2008, violence in the neighbourhood was due to inter-gang fights, which impacted on gang members but not on other residents. However, the arrival of guns in the area, linked to the micro trafficking of drugs, changed the dynamics, as gangs claimed and violently defended territory (Niño Vega et al., 2019: 116). Lethal violence grew and gangs began to

---

[20] Youth groups using arts to counter the State's military operations and recruitment by criminal groups are particularly important. These have gained local and international recognition (Fisher-Yoshida et al., 2017).

lose connections with the communities they grew up in. Residents began to blame the 'new violences' on 'outsiders', such as migrants from the Mexican state of Sinaloa, and in particular the arrival of the Sinaloa Cartel, and inter cartel battles followed by police and army intervention. Violence became indiscriminate and fear spread. However, this changed again as one group came to dominate and violence was used selectively. Residents came to believe that victims were exclusively those engaged in criminality. As the research brought people together to analyse what had happened and to talk about the varied moments of insecurity they had experienced (ibid.: 122), the role of the police and political parties emerged as another variable in the fragmentation of the community. The former were once potential victims, but now they were seen as complicit in the criminality. And political parties deepened mutual distrust within the community by interacting with it on the basis of electoral calculations, offering help to residents on the basis of votes.

This political factor was particularly relevant in Acapulco, Apatzingán and Guadalupe. Capacity for self-governance from original settlements erodes or is limited by clientelistic political practices. In Guadalupe, where the initial distribution of plots had created many mutual suspicions and insecurities, local leaders affiliated to political parties still acted as intermediaries between the community and municipal officers. Residents preferred not to organize autonomously, fearful of losing access to government benefits (Badillo et al., 2019: 123-24). Political parties were identified by residents as divisive forces that not only fostered conflicts, but also weakened their capacity to develop resilience and collective efficacy in response to security problems. Attempts by local political leaders to control any form of association in this community even created obstacles to residents' participation in the research.[21]

Other sources of fragmentation are the way insecurities impact on so many socialization spaces. In Apatzingan, the process opened up many silences (Parra Rosales et al., 2019: 138), around, for instance, the extra vulnerabilities experienced by older people, neglected at home as relatives focused on immediate threats. Schools had become centres for drug consumption, while law enforcement was feared and distrusted and homes were too often threatening spaces for women and children. Suicides and forced displacement were identified by teachers as major problems facing their students. The streets, in particular, were dangerous for young men, who could be recruited by criminal groups while playing on slot machines, or arrested as 'suspicious' by the police, to fulfil arrest quotas. The common phrase used by residents in Apatzingan: 'See, hear and be silent in order to survive in Apatzingan' (ibid.: 141) was the same phrase people used in San Salvador and Medellín to survive such complex contexts of insecurity.

---

[21] On one occasion, one of these leaders in Guadalupe reproached a female resident for participating in our research activities without her authorization (Research diary, 09/18/2017)

Despite these divisive logics and experiences of trauma and fear, the research process revealed that residents had many ideas on how to address these problems and wanted to act upon them. Rebuilding spaces for social interaction was one of them. In Tijuana, residents suggested designing and implementing a 'community lab' to foster community organization with the support of local NGOs. In Tegucigalpa, women brought specific proposals in the Agenda to the Local Security Committee of the Central District and gained a permanent seat at this key local institution that shapes security provision in their locality. In Apatzingán, connections were made with an informal group of women called 'Women Who Don't Give Up' and other small 'collectives' who organized cultural events for young people and children and activities for the protection of animals. These groups who, given the dangerous context, felt they could only tackle these less controversial subjects, decided through the research process to create a network for the advancement of the 'Agenda of Human Security'. The process was given impetus in 2018, when a local educationalist and entrepreneur supported the creation of an Observatory of Human Security in the local University and brought in the community researcher to work with him. This observatory is now one of the 34 certified and citizen-led observatories that exist in Mexico. It monitors the security situation in the Apatzingan valley, promotes the implementation the Agenda of Human Security co-produced and promotes coordination between local authorities, security institutions and civil groups in response to security problems in the Michoacán state.

Latent if not actualized agency was thus apparent in all research sites. However, it needed support if authorities were ever to listen seriously to the proposals collectively identified. The research process enabled academics and their institutions to support these incipient forms of agency, inspired by 'humanized security consciousness' and which gained traction in the course of that process.

CONCLUSION

This article has argued that security thinking and policy in Latin America remains trapped by historical authoritarian and militaristic practices and the great social and economic disparities between citizens. The majority of people live in contexts of extreme economic vulnerability, discrimination, human and physical insecurity, leading to objective realities of physical risk alongside subjective lack of well-being and capacity to plan the future. This, in turn, is intensified by illegal economies which thrive in such contexts and undergo ever more complex mutations as criminality becomes more organized and the state colludes and/or represses, eroding any trust in government institutions. Only a large-scale rethink of the security paradigm can tackle the embedded and constantly evolv-

ing character of crime and violence. And this requires the active involvement of those who experience these phenomena most intensely in order to build a sustainable alternative that works for them. This is necessary to counter the entrenchment of authoritarian views among citizens propelled by repressive responses that continue to be recycled without positive impacts on security. Rethinking security in the region requires methods for overcoming material and social divides through a knowledge exchange process which can strengthen the capacity of academics, civil society groups and state agencies to work with communities from the ground up, taking local contexts, histories and socio-cultural differences into account. A humanized/humanizing security is one that enables participation from precisely those sectors of society that live the consequences of its repressive form and enables reflections on the value of a human-centred and violence-reducing public security provision – one that is accessible to all.

The methodological approach showed that a 'humanized security consciousness' amongst people who live in contexts of chronic violence and multiple insecurities can be co-constructed. This does not automatically translate into a change in security provision. However, it opens up public discussion over time and establishes the right of communities to be involved. It challenges the efforts by politicians to foster authoritarian expressions of citizenship, which deny rights to some in the name of 'security'. It fosters better connections between civil society organizations working on human rights and security issues and community groups. It disseminates new understandings of the purpose of security, i.e. it must protect women, children and youth from abuse; security actors must be accountable to citizens and enable rather than repress their participation in public life. And it contributes to a new narrative of security focused on protecting people and interrupting inter-generational cycles of violence reproduction, thus 'humanizing security'.

REFERENCES

Abello Colak, A. and P.E. Angarita Cañas (2019) 'Construcción de Espacios Seguros: Lecciones del Diálogo de Saberes con Jóvenes y Mujeres de América Latina y el Caribe', ['Constructing Safe Spaces: Lessons from the Dialogue of Knowledges with Youth and Women in Latin America and the Caribbean'] in P.E. Angarita Cañas and C. Sánchez Henao (eds) *Connections: Safe Spaces for Women and Youth in Latin America and the Caribbean*, pp. 129–64. Buenos Aires: Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO).

Abello Colak, A. and C. van der Borgh (2018) 'Everyday (In)Security in Contexts of Hybrid Governance: Lessons from Medellin and San Salvador'. LSE Research Briefing. London: London School of Economics and Political Science.

Abello Colak, A. and J. Pearce (2015) 'Securing the Global City? An Analysis of the "Medellin Model" through Participatory Research', *Conflict Security and Development* 15(3): 197–228.

Abello Colak, A. and J. Pearce (2018) '"Security from Below" in Contexts of Chronic Violence', *IDS Bulletin Archive Collection* 49(1A): 11–19.

Abello Colak, A. and J. Pearce (2019) 'Co-Constructing Security "from Below": A Methodology to Rethink and Transform Security in Contexts of Chronic Violence', in G. Kloppe-Santamaria and A. Abello Colak (eds) H*uman Security and Chronic Violence in Mexico: New Perspectives and Proposals from Below,* pp. 35–70. Mexico City: ITAM–MAPorrua.

Abello Colak, A. and V. Guarneros-Meza (2014) 'The Role of Criminal Actors in Neighborhood Governance', *Urban Studies* 51(15): 3268–89.

Adams, T. (2017) 'How Chronic Violence Affects Human Development, Social Relations, and the Practice of Citizenship: A Systematic Framework for Action' Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/how-chronic-violence-affects-human-development-social-relations-and-the-practice (accessed 24 June 2020).

Alcaldía de Medellín (2018) *Explotación Sexual Comercial de Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes Asociada al Turismo en Medellín* [*Commercial and Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents Associated with Tourism in Medellín*]. Medellin: Alcaldía de Medellín.

Arias, D. (2017) *Criminal Enterprises and Governance in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Badillo, P., N. Gallegos, J. Salgado and K. Samaniego (2019) 'Moving Uphill: Social Violence, Marginalisation, and the Co-construction of a Security Agenda in Nuevo Almaguer', in G. Kloppe-Santamaria and A. Abello Colak (eds) H*uman Security and Chronic Violence in Mexico: New Perspectives and Proposals from Below,* pp. 109-–30. Mexico City: ITAM-MAPorrua.

Bahl, V. (2012) 'Murder Capital to Modern Miracle? : The Progression of Governance in Medellín, Colombia'. DPU Working Paper No. 143. London: University College London.

Baird, A. (2018) 'Becoming the "Baddest": Masculine Trajectories of Gang Violence in Medellin', *Journal of Latin American Studies* 50(1): 183–210.

Bedoya, J. (2017) 'La Coerción Social Extorsiva y el Milagro de Medellín: La Contra Cara de un Modelo' ['Extortive Social Coercion and Medellin's Miracle: The Other side of a Model'], *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 42(3): 400–16.

Bergman, M. (2018) *More Money, More Crime: Prosperity and Rising Crime in Latin America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Blattman, C., G. Duncan, B. Lessing and S. Tobon (2021) 'Gang Rule: Understanding and Countering Criminal Governance'. NBER Working Paper No. 28458. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Bonner, M. (2020) 'What Democratic Policing Is … and Is Not', *Policing and Society* 30(9): 1044–60.

Booth, K. (2007) Theory of World Security, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

van der Borgh, C. and W. Savenieje (2014) 'De-Securitising and Re-Securitising Gang Policies: The Funes Government and Gangs', *Journal of Latin American Studies* 47(1): 149–76.

Bourbeau, P. (2015) 'A Multidisciplinary Dialogue on Security', in P. Bourbeau (ed.) *Security: Dialogue Across Disciplines*, pp. 1–21. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brand, P. and J. Davila (2011) 'Mobility Innovation at the Urban Margins: Medellín Metrocables', *City* 15(6): 647–61.

Buscaglia, E. (2013) *Vacíos de Poder En México: El Camino de México hacia la Seguridad Humana* [*Vacuums of Power in Mexico: Mexico's Road to Human Security*]. Mexico City: DEBATE.

Buzan, B., O. Waever and J. de Wilde (1998) *Security a New Framework for Analysis*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

Campbell, Y. (2020) *Citizenship on the Margins State Power, Security and Precariousness in 21st-Century Jamaica.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (2018) *The Internal War: How the Fight Against Drugs is Militarizing Latin America*. Buenos Aires: Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS).

Citizen Council on Public Safety and Criminal Justice (2019) 'Ranking 2019 de las 50 ciudades más violentas del mundo' ['Ranking 2019 of the 50 Most Violent Cities in the World'. Mexico City: Citizen Council on Public Safety and Criminal Justice. www.seguridadjusticiay-paz.org.mx/sala-de-prensa/1590-boletin-ranking-2019-de-las-50-ciudades-mas-violentas-del-mundo (accessed 9 May 2020).

Corio Lopez, J.L. et al. (2019) 'K"ujb'ab'k'u'l: La Confianza como Pilar de la Historia, la Memoria, la Defensa de la Vida y el Territorio en Nebaj, Quiche, Guatemala' ['Trust as Pilar of History, Memory and Defence of Life and Land in Nebaj, Quiche, Guatemala'] in P.E. Angarita Cañas and C. Sánchez Henao (eds) *Connections: Safe Spaces for Women and Youth in Latin America and the Caribbean*, pp. 129–64. Buenos Aires: Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO).

Davila, L.F. (2018) *Reglas, Crimen y Orden: Un Estudio sobre la Seguridad en Medellín [Rules, Crime and Order: A Study of Security in Medellín]*. Medellín: La Carreta Social.

Davis, D. (2006) 'Undermining the Rule of Law: Democratization and the Dark Side of Police Reform in Mexico', *Latin American Politics and Society* 48(2): 55–86.

Davis, D. (2020) 'City, Nation, Network: Shifting Territorialities of Sovereignty and Urban Violence in Latin America', *Urban Planning* 5(3): 206–16.

De Sousa Santos, B. (2014) *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide*. London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.

Díaz, M.V., J. Espinoza, E.M. Flores, D. Matamoros (2019) 'Voces e Iniciativas Comunitarias de las Mujeres: Construir Espacios Seguros en un Contexto Patriarcal en Tegucigalpa, Honduras' [Women's Voices and Community Initiatives: Building Safe Spaces in a Patriarchal Context in Tegucigalpa, Honduras], in P.E. Angarita Cañas and C. Sánchez Henao (eds) *Connections: Safe Spaces for Women and Youth in Latin America and the Caribbean*, pp. 97–229. Buenos Aires: Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO).

Doran, M. (2017) 'The Hidden Face of Violence in Latin America: Assessing the Criminalization of Protest in Comparative Perspective'. *Latin American Perspectives* 44(5): 183–206.

Doyle, C. (2019) 'Perceptions and Realities of Violence in Medellin, Colombia'. *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy* 8(2): 149–66.

Fals Borda, O. (2006) 'The North-South Convergence: A 30 Year First-person Assessment of PAR', *Action Research* 4(3): 351–58.

Feltran, G. (2020) *The Entangled City Crime as Urban Fabric in Sao Paulo.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Firchow, P. (2018) *Reclaiming Everyday Peace: Local Voices in the Politics of Measurement and Evaluation after War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fisher-Yoshida, B., J. Lopez and A. Civico (2017) 'Youth Leaders and the Arts: From Conflict to Strategic Community Building.' *Journal of Peace Education and Social Justice* 11(2): 133–151.

Flores-Macias, G. and J. Zarkin (2019) 'The Militarization of Law Enforcement: Evidence from Latin America', *Perspectives on Politics* 18(1): 1059–78.

Freire, P. (1970) *Pedagogía del Oprimido* [*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*]. Montevideo: Tierra Nueva.

Fruhling, H. (2012) 'A Realistic Look at Latin American Community Policing Programmes', *Policing & Society* 22(1): 76–88.

Gay, R. (2017) 'Criminal Factions, UPPs, and Militias', in T. Hilgers and L. Macdonald (eds) *Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean: Subnational Structures, Institutions, and Clientelistic Networks*, pp. 75–94. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gledhill, J. (2015) *The New War on the Poor: The Production of Insecurity in Latin America*. London: Zed Books.

Gómez Ramírez, H.C. (2014) 'Los Desafíos en la Coproducción del Conocimiento' ['Challenges in the Coproduction of Knowledge'], in Observatorio de Seguridad Humana, *Nuestras Voces Sobre Seguridad Humana en Medellín,* pp. 1–33. Medellín: Universidad de Antioquia.

Gonzalez, Y. (2016) 'Varieties of Participatory Security: Assessing Community Participation in Policing in Latin America', *Public Administration and Development* 36(2): 132–43.

The Guardian (2019) 'Chile: UN calls for Prosecution of Police and Army over Response to Protests', *The Guardian* 13 December. www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/13/chile-un-prosecution-police-army-protests (accessed 5 March 2020).

The Guardian (2021) 'Amnesty Condemns Colombia Police Brutality after Scores of Protesters Killed', *The Guardian* 2 August. www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/aug/02/colombians-mourn-after-deadly-protests-as-amnesty-cites-unlawful-repression (accessed 06 September 2021).

Herington, J. (2015) 'The Concepts of Security, Liberty, Fear and the State', in P. Bourbeau (ed.) *Security: Dialogue across Disciplines*, pp. 22–44. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Herington, J. (2019) 'The Contribution of Security to Well-Being', *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy* 14(3): 179–203.

Hernández Chaverra, B.E., D.E. Quintero Ruiz and L.E. Giraldo Lopera (2014) 'El Estado ¿en acción? Políticas Publicas: Una Mirada desde las Comunidades Vulnerables de Medellín' [The State in Action? Public Policies from the Perspective of Vulnerable Communities in Medellin], in Observatorio de Seguridad Humana, *Nuestras Voces Sobre Seguridad Humana en Medellín,* pp. 79–118. Medellín: Universidad de Antioquia.

Heron, J. (1996, reprinted 1998) *Co-operative Inquiry.* London: Sage Publications.

Hilgers, T. and L. Macdonald, (2017) 'How Violence Varies', in T. Hilgers and L. Macdonald (eds) *Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean. Subnational Structures, Institutions and Clientelistic Networks,* pp. 1–36. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Humphrey, M. and E. Valverde (2017) 'A Tale of Dual Cities: The Urban Miracle and Humanitarian Crisis Maps of Medellin (2002-2015)', *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research* 23(2): 159–77.

INEGI (2019) 'Encuesta Nacional de Victimización y Percepción sobre Seguridad Publica' ['National Survey on Victimization and Perception of Public Security']. Aguascalientes City: National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI). www.inegi.org.mx/contenidos/programas/envipe/2019/doc/envipe2019_presentacion_nacional.pdf

Khong, Y.F. (2001) 'Human Security: A Shotgun Approach to Alleviating Human Misery?, *Global Governance* 7(3): 23 –36.

Kostovicova, D., M. Martin and V. Bojicic-Dzelilovic (2012) 'The Missing Link in Human Security Research: Dialogue and Insecurity in Kosovo', *Security Dialogue* 43(6): 569–85.

Krause, K. (2004) 'The Key to a Powerful Agenda, if Properly Delimited', *Security Dialogue* 35 (3): 367–68.

Lemanski, C. (2012) 'Everyday Human (In)security: Rescaling for the Southern City', *Security Dialogue* 43(1): 61–78.

Luckham, R. (2009) 'Introduction: Transforming Security and Development in an Unequal World', *IDS Bulletin* 40(2): 1–10.

MacGinty, R. (2014) 'Everyday Peace: Bottom-up and Local Agency in Conflict-affected Societies', S*ecurity Dialogue* 45(6): 548–64.

Maclean, K. (2015) *Social Urbanism and the Politics of Violence: The Medellín Miracle.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Malverde, M. (2014) 'Studying the Governance of Crime and Security: Space, Time and Jurisdiction', *Criminology & Criminal Justice* 14(4) 379–91.

Marín Silva, JA., H.C. Gómez Ramírez, K. Montoya Castañeda, (2014) 'Hechos y Situaciones que Afectan la Seguridad Comunitaria' ['Events and Situations that Affect Community Security'], in Observatorio de Seguridad Humana, *Nuestras Voces Sobre Seguridad Humana en Medellín,* pp. 35–76. Medellín: Universidad de Antioquia.

Marquardt, K. (2012) 'Participatory Security: Citizen Security, Participation, and the Inequities of Citizenship in Urban Peru', *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 31(2): 174–89.

Moser, C. (2004) 'Urban Violence and Insecurity: An Introductory Roadmap', *Environment & Urbanization* 16(2): 3–16.

Muggah, R. and K. Aguirre (2013) 'Mapping Citizen Security Interventions in Latin America: Reviewing the Evidence'. Oslo: NOREF. www.igarape.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/265_91204_NOREF_Report_Muggah-Aguirre_web1.pdf. (accessed 24 June 2020).

Muggah, R. and Y. Moser-Puangsuwan (2003) *Whose Security Counts?: Participatory Research on Armed Violence and Human Insecurity in Southeast Asia.* Geneva: Small Arms Survey.

Newman, E. (2016) 'Human Security: Reconciling Critical Aspirations with Political "Realities"', *British Journal of Criminology* 56(6): 1165–83.

Niño Vega, N.C., L.A. Flores Flores and B.R. Cortez Velasquez (2019) 'Narratives of Violence in the Sánchez Taboada Neighbourhood, Tijuana: Between Abandonment and Active Citizenship', in G. Kloppe-Santamaria and A. Abello Colak (eds) H*uman Security and Chronic Violence in Mexico: New Perspectives and Proposals from Below,* pp. 103–36. Mexico City: ITAM-MAPorrua

Paris, R. (2001) 'Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hor Air?', *International Security* 26(2) 87–102.

Parra Rosales, L.P, E.D. Perez Lara, J.C. Franco Gutierrez and A.P. Vallejo Chavarria (2019) 'See, Hear, and be Quiet: Chronic Violence in Apatzingán and the Need for Human Security Constructed from Below', in G. Kloppe-Santamaria and A. Abello Colak (eds) H*uman Security and Chronic Violence in Mexico: New Perspectives and Proposals from Below,* pp. 131–63. Mexico City: ITAM-MAPorrua

Pearce, J. (2007) 'Violence, Power and Participation: Building Citizenship in Contexts of Chronic Violence' Brighton: IDS

Pearce, J. (2008) 'We Make Progress because We are Lost' Critical Reflections on Co-producing Knowledge as a Methodology for Reaching Non-Governmental Public Action'. NGPA Working Paper Series No. 27. London: London School of Economics.

Pearce, J. (2010) 'Perverse State Formation and Securitized Democracy in Latin America', *Democratization* 17(2): 286–306.

Pearce, J. (2017a) 'Conclusion: The Politics of Violence Control in Latin America', in D. Carey and G. Santamaria (eds) *Violence and Crime in Latin America,* pp. 240–56. Norman, OK: Oklahoma University Press.

Pearce, J. (2017b) 'Authoritarian and Resistant Citizenship: Contrasting Logics of Violence Diffusion and Control in Latin America', in J. Mackert and B. Turner (eds) *The Transformation of Citizenship*, pp. 127–46. Abingdon: Routledge.

Pearce, J. (2020) 'Violence and the Latin American City: Security and Open Citizenship in an Age of Disorder', in Turner, B. et.al. (eds) *Urban Change and Citizenship in Times of Crisis. Vol. 3. Figurations of Conflict and Resistance*, pp. 15–34. Abingdon: Routledge.

Pearce, J. and E.J. Milne (2010) *Participation and Community on Bradford's Traditionally White Estates.* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Reason, P. and W. R. Torbert (2001) 'The Action Turn: Toward a Transformational Social Science', *Concepts and Transformations* 6(1): 1–37.

Romero Rios, L., et al. (2019) El Caso de la Comunidad Autonoma de Chera22n, Mexico y la Resistencia de sus Mujeres [The case of the Autonomous Community of Cheran, Mexico and its Women's Resistance] in P.E. Angarita Cañas and C. Sánchez Henao (eds) *Connections: Safe Spaces for Women and Youth in Latin America and the Caribbean*, pp. 129–64. Buenos Aires: Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO).

Roser, M. and H. Ritchie (2020) 'Homicides'. OurWorldInData.org. www.ourworldindata.org/homicides (accessed 16 January 2020).

Salter, M. and C. Mutlu (eds) (2013) *Research Methods in Critical Security Studies: An Introduction*. London: Routledge.

Samet, R. (2019) 'The Subject of Wrongs: Crime, Populism and Venezuela's Punitive Turn', *Cultural Anthropology* 34(2): 272–98.

Samper, J. (2017) 'Eroded Resilience, Informal Settlements Predictable Urban Growth Implications for Self-Governance in the Context of Urban Violence in Medellin, Colombia', *UPLandD -Journal of Urban Planning, Landscape and Environmental Design* 2(2): 183–206.

Save the Children (2017) 'End of Childhood Report, 2017'. Fairfield, CT: Save the Children US.

Singer, M. (2017) 'Crime, Violence and the Police in the Americas', in M. Cohen, N. Lupu and E. Zechmeister (eds) *The Political Culture of Democracy in the Americas, 2016-17*, pp. 69–96. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University. www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/ab2016/AB2016-17_Comparative_Report_English_V2_FINAL_090117_W.pdf (accessed 3 November 2020).

Snodgrass Godoy, A. (2006) *Popular Injustice: Violence, Community and Law in Latin America*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press

Ungar, M. and E.D. Arias (2012) 'Reassessing Community-oriented Policing in Latin America', *Policing and Society* 22(1): 1–13.

UNDP (1994) *Human Development Report*. New York: United Nations Development Programme.

United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (2018) 'Human Security Milestones and History'. www.un.org/humansecurity/ human-security-milestones-and-history/ (accessed 18 November 2019).

UNODC (2019) *Global Study on Homicide: Gender-Killing of Women and Girls.* Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Vaughan-Williams, N. and D. Stevens (2016) 'Vernacular Theories of Everyday (In)security: The Disruptive Potential of Non-elite Knowledge', *Security Dialogue* 47(1): 40–58.

Wolff, M.J. (2017) 'Policing and the Logics of Violence: A Comparative Analysis of Public Sector Reform in Brazil', *Policing and Society* 27(5): 560–74.

Jenny Pearce (corresponding author; j.pearce3@lse.ac.uk) is Research Professor at the Latin America and Caribbean Centre, London School of Economics in England. Previously she was Professor of Latin American Politics and the founder and Director of the International Centre for Participation Studies (ICPS) 2003-2014 in Peace Studies, University of Bradford. Her latest book is *Politics without Violence: Towards a Post-Weberian Enlightenment* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

Alexandra Abello Colak (a.l.abello-colak@lse.ac.uk) is a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at the Latin America and Caribbean Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science in England. Her research focuses on dynamics of violence and security provision in cities affected by chronic violence, and on methodological innovations for security research.