

# Introduction: Safety as a civil right

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Safety is one of the first citizens' rights, intimately linked to life protection. It has two convergent meanings (in English, safety and security). One says as much the mechanisms that anticipate some risk or assure the good functioning of the things, preventing them from failing; as the guarantees to preserve or protect people and things from harm, defend and prevent them from being taken away. Risk and harm are the key words, together with the defense and guarantee ideas (security is a certainty, a guarantee that something is going to be fulfilled, of that the defense is infallible). As a result, tranquility.

If we refer to the city, we have to speak about its dangers. The first one, undoubtedly, for its historical meaning in urbanism, the fire. But also the possibility of floods and other nature dangers, the earthquakes, the volcanoes, the detachments. It is necessary to mention the dangers derived from the industrial activity, the technological risks (notably: the motor traffic), the nuclear risk and the consequences of sanitary order (even the urban stress), the pollution (even the noise). Also the derivatives of social pathologies, the types of urban crime and violences. And finally, though not in last place, certainly, the risk of the war and the warlike aggressions.

Of all these aspects there is abundant regulation, as much state as local and international one, that tries to guarantee the citizens' protection face with such dangers. The fire or building stability laws, for example, form a part of the first urban development regulations and have helped to modify decisively the civil typology and uses. There are also, ever since, abundant procedure and ordinances to guarantee "the public order" and prosecute the crime: another set of procedure that, as we know, has also had notable effect in the urban conformation.

The same thing can be said of technical instruments. The technical answers to the risk of fire, the earthquake-proof measures, the prevention before natural catastrophes have improved notably (though they have costs difficult to support in many cases). The military technology has also modernized, doing obsolete, once again in history, old and very expensive defense mechanisms adapted to a previous war condition. The police are provided with new and sophisticated instruments to fight against the crime, and logistic and administrative planning instruments develop everywhere to manage the risks. It can be said that the arsenal of technical and juridical means is extraordinary, since never before in history.

And nevertheless, is there more security in our urban society? Is it attended to the fulfillment of the safety right by firmness? The response is not easy. It is necessary to consider the meaning of the security and the right value. Since this one supposes to every citizen the faculty to demand the authorities that they do as much as possible to guarantee our security. Can it be answered affirmatively? It is difficult, among other things (and for the relating to the moment circumstances of every country and juridical area), the difficulty of defining once and for all the meaning of security and risk.

The most typical text on the question these years is, undoubtedly, Ulrich Beck's already old essay on *The society of the risk* (original of 1986), and we can recount to this work some of the texts that are included in the present Report. He alludes to a postindustrial and postmodern society in whom the shortage does not occupy the first plane of the debate, but the "distribution of risks" that the own society generates. His principal thesis, which impoverishment ("poverty risk") that maintain the city in tension the last two centuries, has replaced with another type of social situations of danger that "exercise a essentially different logic of distribution: modernization risk affect later or more early also those who produce them or benefit from them, (and) contain a boomerang effect that makes classes scheme to blow up, (in a way) that rich and powerful are not sure either in front them", they are put in evidence by Loïc Wacquant (in "The penalisation of poverty"), for whom security policies of the advanced societies (recounted principally to police and penitentiary dispositions) cannot be understood "without placing them in frame of the most wide transformation of the State, bound to employment mutations and sway of forces relation between classes and groups that fight for its control".

One of Beck's more repeated theses in this Report is the one that refers to the secret character of a lot of new risks, that though "they cause systematic and often irreversible harms, they usually stay invisible". Such risks "only can be transformed, extended or limited, dramatized or minimized". Some affirmations that are corroborated by Carolyn Whitzman (in "Safer Cities, Gender Mainstreaming, and Human Rights"), for whom "most of what is written about crime prevention and community safety still focuses on the 'presenting problem': many stories on personal security of the women, for example, remain secret, and rare times they are raised as social problem. The right to a sure city implies, undoubtedly, "to make more visible hidden injustices". Daniel E. Cantoni shares this point of view (to see "The conversion of a citizen in a violent and insecure Buenos Aires"), and he considers which cannot be put off "to contribute the safety debate", that will add to put at disposal of the

citizens a wide and authentic information about the crime and your statistical evolution, “for the citizenship takes knowledge of criminal reality in their zone in order to develop technologies and preventive tactics that modify and attenuate the situation of insecurity”. A concept on which insists Carlos Lozano Ascencio (“The social perception of uncertainty: or our facility for feeling insecure”), underlining that the perception about potential risks or perfect disasters is perceived in an extraordinarily determined way “as be the forms in which the mass media present them”. We perceive and interpret the uncertainties “with independence of being immersed or not in these emergency situations. So, it is assured, and for long time, the easiness that we have to feel insecure in this world”.

Another of the most mentioned texts, about the fight against the insecurity in the cities, is of Mike Davis’ opusculé entitled *Beyond Blade Runner. Urban control: the ecology of the fear* (2001). The principal thesis is the existence of a “narrow link” between the ascent of the neoliberalism and the diffusion of the very repressive and differential (by neighborhoods) public policies of security, with the consequent dismantlement of the social helps and the prodigious development of the prison system, it’s well exposed by before mentioned Loic Wacquant. But also it is possible to read it in Rafael León’s works (“Insecure cities, urban shielding and urbanistic simulated urban planning. Social fragmentation, lack of communication and phobias and the cause and effect of modern urban planning”), the one who understands that the different zones of the city are “provided” with closings and strengthening “by means of psychological barriers” defined by a fear to violence and a city conception as armoured product destined for the market “voyeurist”. A systematic fear leads to degradation of certain areas that, “depending on certain particularities, they are capable of being introduced on this market to produce high economic benefits”: social fragmentation, lack of communication and phobias as origin and product of the current urbanism. Equally Davis’s text resounds in Daniel Wagman’s work, though putting the accent in the immigrant newcomers to the great city (in “Areas of ill-repute. Immigrants, the city and security”). The poverty is not as much -supports Wagman- one of the reasons of criminal activity of certain neighborhoods as social practices that are formulated there. What creates insecurity does not have to see with “the features and the nature of the immigrant persons”, but “the policies and not the neighbors those who construct ghettos and insecurity”.

In the same line of focusing the safety question from singular points of view (besides the one already commented of C. Whitman) other texts appear. This way, Joël Yerpez (in “Urban areas and an ageing population, urban planning and the elderly”) indicates the problems that can turned for elders of the current dispersed urbanism, in which car dependence and the ascent of new communication and information technologies, “draw a city where the role of the third party age can be difficult”, and where insecurities of all kinds (to the delinquency, to the traffic, etc.) affect them of special form. For her part, Susana Ordóñez (“The woman besieged – the female city”) thinks that “the woman safety ‘in her circumstance’ -besieged- does not correspond with citizenship safety, which must be a real security, practical and existential”; and she understands that current situation analysis would allow to find “ways of urban policy that help the cities to be the most egalitarian social structures, not only between classes, but between genres. And consequently surer and more joust cities”. An intention that Suzanne E. Speak extends to the case of homeless people (“The right to safety in the city. Homelessness and safety in the city: a developing countries perspective”). She considers (and documents) that, opposite to public common perception of the homelessness, as much in the western cities as in the least developed countries, as “beggar and malevolent people”, the certain thing is that, “more that to be perpetrators of crimes and violent acts, the homeless are rather victims of them”.

One of the crucial matters, on having studied urban safety, is undoubtedly that of violence, in all its manifestations. It has determined, and continues doing it, urban form. Two Bogota authorities, Antanas Mockus, ex-Mayor, and Hugo Acero Velazques, ex-Undersecretary of Security, expose the features of security policy that has managed to reduce homicides rate in the city up to a 3% in the last 10 years (in “Crime and Violence in Latin America: encouraging achievements in Bogotá”). A policy based on the “managing institutionalization of security and civil cohabitation and to progressive definition of a public policy on this matter”, founded on the prevention, planning, public follow-up, civil participation and cultural politics. Daniel Luz, for his part (in “Safety on the streets, human safety”) informs about the State difficulties “to preserve sovereignty, territorial control and inspire popular adhesion”, that generate a “loss spiral of legitimacy and of disorder and fragmentation creation” that finally ends in new forms of urban violence. On having analyzed the favelas of Brasil case he indicates the need to act by means of “mechanisms of communication with population, practice of dialogue and search of consensa”, there where repression has only served to distance State of civil population.

As D. Luz indicates, mentioning a well known text of M. Kaldor, is increasingly difficult to distinguish between “war” (the violence among states), organized crime (the violence of private groups organized with generally economic purposes), and violations of human rights to great scale. Its presence in the city is in any case determinant. It is necessary to bear in mind, according Gregory J. Ashworth (“War in the city”), that the conventional war (supported by regular forces under an official control) has not been habitual in cities for the difficulties that it contains (it absorbs armies, exhausts rapidly to personnel, and the urban battle is difficult to control, etc.). But, if we consider also other forms of war, in the future cities will become our battlegrounds”, as says Stephen Graham (“Wars of the Cities”). The aims of the contemporary war “are the basic spaces, symbols, and support systems of everyday urban life (...).The everyday sites of cities are thus geopolitical charged as

never before". And everything indicates that soon we will be witnesses, if not victims, of cybernetic assaults, as extension of the new "infrastructural warfare".

The debate on the urban mechanisms of security is usually centred on two types of devices: the design of passive solutions of security urbanization and the establishment of closed communities. On the latter Shin Lee and Chris Webster ("Urban Rights and Private Communities") link their emergency as response of the market to dominant demand of security (in the most wide sense), in absence of a serious provision on the part from the public sector. It should not be surprised, in their criterion, "that both the rich and the poor communities invent manners of organizing the independent city -or, in more positive form, in association with the state", and they claim a more rigorous study before support or penalty founded on merely ideological approach. For her part, Sonia Roitman ("Gated communities and the right to safety") centres on social, environmental, functional and economic implications, concluding that with this system "city is done more fragmented and divided" and "socially segregated". With regard to the passive mechanisms one presents the design that the National Capital Planning Commission has elaborated of the Avenue of Pennsylvania, in Washington ("Security Design Transforms Washington, D.C."), an extract of the Plan of Security and Urban Design which principles and concepts are proposed as a model for similar actions in other cities. It starts from training security perimeters in critical areas (around buildings as the Capitol or the White House) that balance the security requirements with the need to support the opening and vitality of public sphere in the same zones.

Finally, Dario Padovan presents a study ("Social capital, insecurity and fear of crime in Padova") on the social mechanisms that generate insecurity, based on the analysis of structure of relations and social confidence. He observes big disruptions among diverse levels of perception and expression of insecurity and fear among a few zones and others of the city, and he denounces how "the political elites, taking advantage of this situation, play upon sources of this insecurity, emphasizing the generalised worry about the lack of personal and collective security". Jaume Curbet (in "The social scene of disaster") considers, in front of the new catastrophic horizon of beginning of 21st century, "displeasing our attention from fatalistic contemplation of natural dangers evolution towards the lucid observation of the fundamental reasons that, from the corresponding dynamic processes - economic, social and political- generate conditions of insecurity that, in turn, determine vulnerability of a few certain populations". According this author, "the priority aim of an indispensable global governance cannot be other different that to guarantee the totality of population the access to necessary minimum of food resources, refuge and personal security" to face that horizon.