Introduction: the securitization of Latin American cities

Introdução: a securização das cidades latino-americanas

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One of the many challenges in the study of issues such as security, urban violence, control, and surveillance in Latin America is to identify the particularities of this continent in comparison with other parts of the globe. Fear of terrorism is, for example, not as present in the Latin American psycosphere (Santos, 1996) as it is in other continents, except perhaps for the Colombian case. Intriguingly, the fact that Brazil has recently hosted a major sporting mega-event (Fussey & Galdon, 2011), the FIFA Football World Cup, and will soon be hosting another world-scale event, the forthcoming Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games, has not had a significant influence on this phenomenon. Terrorism in Brazil and in the majority of Latin America is still associated with a distant threat. Our fears, on the other hand, remain much more local and mundane.

Keeping in mind the obvious dangers of oversimplifying Latin America into one homogenous block of countries, it is clearly the case that certain similarities can be identified. In this continent, fear, for example, is mainly related to everyday criminality, which is, among other factors, an indirect consequence of the immense inequality of most of its cities. Latin America is full of spatial contrasts and spatial injustices (Soja, 2009) that are frequently translated into clashes and conflicts. The social pressures of consumerism, together with the large-scale inaccessibility to the means of possible participation in such consumption, are some of the key issues for the high incidence of crimes in the region. As Wacquant (2008) points out, the conjunction of abysmal inequality with grossly inefficient, or sometimes non-existent public services, and massive unemployment in the context of a polarized urban economy has evolved into the scourge of many cities in Latin America. This is clearly a condition that only exacerbates delinquency.

The high rates of violent crimes, such as homicides, are also a consequence of the critical presence of organized crime. This is particularly the case in the world of illegal drugs. The intense territoriality of drug trafficking is frequently translated into confrontations between rival groups, or between drug dealers and the police, over the domain of specific areas. The unpredictability of these clashes is an important cause of fear in Latin America. Other less violent but still severe crimes, such as corruption, although undeniably widespread throughout the majority of Latin America, do not seem to be an equally relevant source of insecurity. But fear also varies according to neighborhood, lifestyles and income: while rich groups mainly fear the poor, it is not uncommon for the poor to fear the police.

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In many Latin American countries there is a very tangible distrust of the police and other forces of order, a consequence of the fact that more than half of these countries were subjected to military dictatorships in the last century. The authoritarian regimes influenced the way security is perceived and promoted by creating a sense of distance between law enforcement agents and individual citizens. The democratic transition, far from being exempt from difficulties, has generated a scenario of institutional emptiness, where the old practices have not yet disappeared and the new ones have not been fully consolidated. This ambiguity has directly impacted the regulation and control of crime. Democracy, paradoxically, seems to take away the capacity of coercion of the state (Hinton, 2006), often leading to a scenario in which a "firm hand" is needed to end the high rates of criminal activity.

In Brazil, the approach of the police towards citizens is frequently aggressive and top-down - an unfortunate legacy of the military period. Such militarization is not only present in the organization of the police forces but, rather, in general society and the sense or meaning of space as a whole. Both Souza (2008) and Graham (2009) point out this new military urbanism, in which the techniques, ideas, doctrines, rules and application of the military's own power is used to manage risk and danger, crime and criminal violence, or even the threat of terrorist acts in the urban space.

A foreigner unfamiliar with the Latin American landscapes would immediately be surprised by the abundance of security equipment. Fences, cameras, high walls, watchtowers, and gates are practically omnipresent in most of the medium and large cities. The process of securitization is a consequence of both the high criminal rates that have followed from the democratization of these countries and the effect of intensification - whether genuine or simply perceived - of fear of urban violence. The latter, in particular, seems to be the main driving force behind the intensification of the use of security equipment.

The fear of violence has led to the intensification of urban forms dedicated not only to protect, but also to segregate (Caldeira, 2000). Neighborhood spaces such as the residential "zones" in Mexico (Zamorano & Capron, 2013) or the "barrio cerrados" in Argentina, stand out by being gated and having mechanisms for controlling access based on video surveillance systems, fingerprint reading technology, and identification cards. The architecture of the houses inside these ensembles is in some way homogeneous and clearly influenced by the model of North American suburbs. Inadvertently, we end up importing not only the structural model, but also the sociological repercussions: the exaggerated fear of "the other" present in the North American context is somehow reproduced. This closure of residential zones represents a type of political manifestation in the quasi-military, or almost feudal defense, of a position of privilege that is under siege not only by the increasingly dangerous threat of delinquency, but also by the economic transformations that began to occur during the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s (Arteaga, 2011). Fear of violence is confounded with fear of "the other": the poor, the black, the indigenous, the marginalized in general. Added to that, securitized urban forms are also a consequence of a commodification of security in the neoliberal Latin American city. If public institutions are inefficient to guarantee security to citizens, those who can afford to do so pay for their own private security by, among other things, buying homes inside gated communities, hiring private security companies, or installing surveillance systems.

Thus it is evident that Latin American cities are becoming not only increasingly divided, but also increasingly monitored. The most evident example is the proliferation of video surveillance cameras, both public and private. With this spread of surveillance instruments throughout the urban environment, it is becoming nearly impossible for an individual to avoid the gaze of these monitoring eyes. Taking a walk along the streets is enough to be somehow digitally recorded. Surveillance, however, goes far beyond conventional video surveillance, as it includes a set of many different technologies and practices. In addition to cameras, we can cite the appearance of several technologies such as mobile and wearable devices (smart phones, digital cameras), drones, biometric tools, identification cards, etc. Despite the fact that the majority of these technologies were actually invented on other, richer continents, they are constantly being imported and tested in the Latin American context through a process of adaptation or "tropicalization" of such systems.

Surveillance was turned into a central mechanism for pushing forward the logic of predatory planning that is linked to the burgeoning array of private military and security operations. The effect is, as it has been occurring in other cities on a global scale, "a radical

ratcheting up of techniques of tracking, surveillance and targeting, centered in both the architectures of circulation and mobility – infrastructure – and the spaces of everyday life" (Graham 2010, p. 21).

Although not as present as it is in Europe and North America, "surveillance studies" is a promising and growing domain of research in Latin America (see, for example, the works of Machado (1993), Bruno et al. (2010), Cardoso (2012), Melgaço (2013), Castro & Pedro (2013), Bruno (2013), Parra (2013), Pimenta & Melgaço (2014), Doneda & Mendes (2014), Arteaga (2011, 2015) among others). The consolidation of the field coincides with the creation of the Latin American Network of Surveillance, Technology and Society Studies (LAVITS) (www.lavits.org). Founded in 2009, the LAVITS research network is a platform for discussion, exchange and debate around the sociotechnical circumstances that enable the deal with digital information. The motivation behind the call for papers that preceded this special section came from one of the several meetings and discussions promoted by this network.

The papers selected for this special section address, in different manners, the particularities of the process of securitization of Latin American cities. Cities of three countries, Argentina, Chile, and Brazil are considered. The articles cover more than just topics on the question of surveillance; they also address issues of spatial segregation, urban militarization, and prisons.

The session starts with Craig Paterson in a discussion on the use of electronic monitoring technologies, such as bracelets, not only as an alternative for imprisonment and directed to the punishment of offenders, but also for victim-oriented purposes. The author, by elaborating on the specific case of Buenos Aires, highlights how such technologies are being used with the pro-active intention of protecting victims. Paterson depicts the evolution from offender-oriented generation EM, present in England and Wales, to its development into a more victimological perspective, or EM 2.0 as he calls it. Comparative work in surveillance is rare, and this paper not only covers this important topic, but also reflects on the policies involved in the exchange and adaptation of technologies between two very different settings.

Yves Jouffe, Diego Carvajal Hicks, and Alejandra Lazo Corvalan's "Prends soin du metro" make an additional contribution to the discussion on surveillance, in this case about different forms of control in the underground system of Santiago, Chile. Surveillance, as David Lyon (2001) has already pointed out, is not only related to the notion of totalitarian control, but is also an issue of care. It is exactly the unclear boundaries between these two facets that make surveillance such a complex and polemical subject. Using Foucault as their point of departure, the authors describe how, in their case study, there is in fact a hybridism of "care-control". The operators of the underground system work on this ambiguity by controlling through a discourse of care. Moreover, as a consequence, people who are being cared for by the operator are expected to care for the underground in return.

In her studies on Pacification Police Units (UPPs), Desiree Poets discusses the attempted integration between the "pacified" favelas and the "formal" city of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. The UPPs are analyzed as a sovereign act of "drawing lines of distinction" between lives that are considered to be worth living and those that are deemed to be politically worthless "others" (Agamben, 1995). She describes the background in which UPPs were introduced in the context of the militarization of spaces. It is particular relevant that it is precisely some of these poor spaces that are attractive to the neoliberal interests related to the preparation of the city for the hosting of sporting mega-events. The author shows how, in the post-dictatorial Brazil, neoliberal reforms and democratization have resulted in an authoritarian penal state that targets the marginalized as its "internal enemies".

By bringing in the example of the Brazilian city of Belo Horizonte, Eugênia Cerqueira examines the impacts of the increase in gated communities in the city's urban sprawl. The author shows how, inspired by the logic of segregation and fortification promoted by wealthy classes, lower income classes have begun to emulate their economic superiors by building similarly exclusive architectures. She analyses how, in the circular movement of a self-fulfilling prophecy, inequalities and fear press the real estate market to offer securitized properties, which, in return, end up increasing segregation and inequalities.

Finally, in the last article of the session, James Humberto Zomighani Junior turns the discussion to what is possibly the most evident urban materialization of issues of security, control, inequalities and surveillance: the prison. Working with Milton Santos's idea of the two circuits of the economy (Santos, 1979), the

author highlights the implications of the spread of new prisons towards the interior of the state of São Paulo, Brazil.

When seen together as a whole, these five texts open up new research themes for the study of the urban space in Latin America. In their own ways, they each bring to the table a sense of how security and surveillance technologies create mechanisms that may accentuate the process of urban segregation, fragmentation, and exclusion. They also suggest how new geometries of power and dominance question traditional ways of thinking the distinction between The Private and The Public. Moreover, they discuss processes of discipline and control over certain sectors of the population; processes that correspond to the logic of the neoliberal economy on a world-wide scale but, importantly, have mutated into their own unique incarnations in Latin America.

If we were to name one subject that the texts address only tangentially, it would be that of resistance offered by the individual or collective actors to these processes of securitization, urban militarization, and the increase of surveillance practices. In relation to the latter, the expansion of social networks and the massive spread of technologies that allow for resistance and bottom-up surveillance should be granted greater attention in future research. This would give a better idea of how the Latin American securitized city is being constructed in the tension between the verticality of neoliberal power and the horizontality of social organization.

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