

Elements for Evaluating and Managing the Situational Complexity of Insecurity and Violence in Mexico

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semblance

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"Not until the hole in its path is filled
will the water run further on
Mencio

Abstract

The social crisis and crisis in the State of Mexico are added to various complex social processes and phenomenon, which are necessary to understand, act upon and acquire commitment, by citizens, communities, social organizations and decision-makers. It is necessary to deconstruct the level of critical interrelationship and interdependence in the intimate, everyday sphere of violence with the sphere of public policies and government decisions on crime and its prevention.

Keywords: Social Crisis, State Crisis, Evaluation of complexity, Managing the complexity, National Learning about violence and crime, Mexico.

Introduction

"We are capable of improving our understanding and thus better understanding what has happened before, which does not imply absolute certainty of either", states the Transcendental Hermeneutics Philosopher Karl Otto Apel (Recás, 2008), a thought which we may associate with the need to

constantly assign new meaning to the construct of knowledge, that is, revision of the thinking on reality and now-a-day social demands.

At the same time, pretending to better understand social reality in its complexity cannot be exhausted in the constellation of the object which may be measured. This

implies recognizing how social reality, on one hand, spaces (in permanent construct) of concomitant, coexisting meanings, as well as displays of the subject, from the individual to the various forms of collective displays, and on the other hand, that social phenomenon are not totally determined, but rather strongly undetermined: the idea of construction (captured the third of Karl Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach*), which assumes that this space of indetermination is what allows man to build; in other words, man shall be written and shall not write, he shall be spoken, as Castoriadis says, and shall not be the one to speak" (Zemelman, 2011:37).

The crisis of violence and public insecurity in present day Mexico may also be seen within this philosophical prism of the need of an updated understanding from the viewpoint of *transcendental hermeneutics* or from the viewpoint of *complex thinking* (Morin), which we shall approach here in the form of knots of complexity in which the diagnostic aspect is concentrated along with approaching the acting/problematization/intervention where probable public policy and socio-institutional decisions should be made, in order to reformulate the system of answers and proposals which are present today in the face of social phenomenon which involve more crime and violence.

This involves a crisis of the State, a linking of knots of complexity which join together events, happenings, challenges, placing the common man at a higher level of demands in their public and private spheres (he not only has to worry about his own pressures and survival, but at the same time he is demanded to reinvent himself in order to answer the evermore

extreme surroundings of every-day insecurity and violence), in which policies of security and decision-makers at various levels of public administration show the limitations of their reach and the staging of their complex reconsideration or reformulation:

Reconsidering not only involves the modification of the names we use in social work (user, for example) but also questioning what we are trying to say when we talk about "the fairest possible". In our field there is a discursive vanguard which claims equality: thinking of people as "subjects" and not as "objects;" a whole academic production set in motion. On one hand is presented the right to be different, and on the other the right to be equal. The former, usually causes discriminatory practices and policies since it demands a meaning which is not found in daily life, while the latter seeks to achieve equality in an economically unequal society, capitalist hegemony becomes invisible, which translates into the reproduction of practices of domination.

Both claims should be reconsidered and re-worked in order to not fall into cultural fetishism —part of the new progressive culture which is invading social science— which involves by way of all manners to see the Other as equal or as "accepted" as another. This means trying to equalize without taking into account what this is doing to the Other. "If I say that we must tolerate the differences of the Other, it is because I am beginning by assuming that I have the right to establish that there is a difference in the Other; and even before that, that there is Other". Grüner proposes to think in reverse, it is rather the sameness of the Other which makes us find differences. Looking

at this from the micro-social viewpoint, it is possible to visualize that not only on the macro-political level is this established, but it is also reproduced at the social bases, from the viewpoint of the "new poor", for example. It is significant to hear the subjects who are in this condition establish striking differences with the "structurally poor". The question which arises is, is this a matter of racism or fear of falling into the same situation? These differences are not built by the subjects autonomously; there are various apparatus put into play which influence their perception, placing them on one side or the other.

If we think of it genealogically, defining subjects and building definitions of them is a matter which has been debated within Social Work. The subject must be understood from the point of view of various aspects which cross through him, from the universal as part of humanity, as a socially determined subject —his micro-social space—, with a history and belonging which give him identity, unique and unrepeatable, in the sense that he is charged with representations and meanings —popular consciousness— which affect his perception of his needs, with a specific condition with respect to social problems (Maier, 2005).

II. Progressing without uprooting systemic structural problems

Legislative debate and reforms, decisions on public policies in the Mexican public security system and criminal justice system have deployed bills which were meant to be tools for institutions and governments to progress towards improved security and justice: single command of police in the hands of state governments; greater coordination between security institutions; oral

trials; control of confidence of police organisms; elimination of municipal police; militarization of police commands and corporations; progressive video vigilance and selective exposure of spectacular detentions of high and low impact crimes occurring in critical urban spheres; extradition and/or capture of drug lords of Mexican drug-trafficking; greater public expenditures for security and social prevention of delinquency; maximum sentences for minor crimes.

However, these bills have not had an important dimension of evaluation in the existing government sphere and security systems, in the procuring of justice and prevention as key organic spheres of the Mexican State. In fact, the evaluation of the growing complexity of violence and lack of security has not been constructed as an axis for the actions of the institutions, and therefore, on one hand, the human, material and technological efforts tend to be squandered and scattered, and on the other hand, the scenarios of extreme abuse and actions of government authorities, police and the military become an ever-growing risk, hand in hand with a society which is evermore amnesic of the nature of every-day violence, crouching within their priorities and daily worries and the messages and experiences of various levels of testimonials of governmental and institutional failures.

The lack of this evaluation and management of the levels of the complexity of growing violence and insecurity demands more and more integration of social, criminogenic, contextual, econometric, police, organizational and military diagnosis in which the contributions of Victimology, public health, experiences derived from

action of the State against organized crime, treatment of gangs, the narco-economy linked to territorial control and domination of governments, since the quality of diagnosis, of the evaluation and management of the complexity is the best way to dimension whether the State, its institutions, governments, actors and citizens are responding to the expansion of the social problems connected to the causes of violence and crime.

Knots of complexity of the socio-economic casualization, violence and crime

This is notorious in at least 10 critical and complex dimensions of the cyclic, non-linear intensive nature of the dynamics of crime, violence and insecurity which endanger the life of ever-more Mexicans in big cities, but also in places where institutionalism is precarious: police lawlessness and corruption; inaccessibility of legal authorities; territorial control in the hands of caciques, criminal communities and drug organizations.

Vision logic, acting logic, strategic logic

Knot complexity: government actors, social organizations, society as a whole in the face of the crisis of the State, watch as their communicating vessels, their systems of social and political protection unravel, their communication systems and procurement capacity for attaining socio-economic goals and expectations for confronting the problem of violence and incidence of delinquency are fragmented.

It is important that professionals in intervention, social diagnosis and the

structure of public policies with social, healthcare and educational policies broaden their horizons of analysis in order to understand and propose solutions to the present social phenomenon; the failure of public policies combined with processes of decision making which are far from realistic, contextual.

It is not only a matter of poverty and extreme poverty, but also of social inequalities and social relations with socio-familial, socio-school and socio-labor relations which push to the limits the pernicious effects of the absence of ethical congruence between thinking and action, of a culture of legality and practices of mediation and dialogue, of ethics of differences and mutual recognition, of non-exemplariness in the prudent exercise of authorities at the social, professional and family levels.

Articulated Logics in the form of baselines for strategically articulating the service and performance of the State in matters of security and justice

Knot complexity: the confidence crisis within institutions cannot only be attributed to a growing demand for tangible results and citizens' demands which usually surpass the capacity of response of institutions in charge of security and justice, but is also a reflection of the ever deeper paradox: the institutions are not dimensioning that the present crisis of the State —of ungovernability, lack of confidence in authorities, corruptibility and the implosion of the capacity of the system to deliver justice and eradicate impunity—, is fundamentally associated with an even greater social crisis. The economic model is reproduced with schemes of evermore selective educational

opportunities and questionably formative quality which disillusion the student in the classroom and offers young people and university students the assurance that more and better education does not mean a more promising future.

Evaluation of public policies in synchronic and diachronic paths

Knot complexity: What should be changed in the processes of decision making, in the chain of command and the processing of information, in the logics of interrelations between public policies and contexts of growing complexity?

Divergence of institutional diagnosis with social diagnosis and strategies for intervention

Knot complexity: although we are not at the zero point in progress of information systems, statistics and capacity of observation of the problems on a daily scale and in institutional, academic and government spheres, the processes of evaluation, monitoring and registering of the erogeneity in the production of acts of violence and crime show important levels of diagnostic dispersion and fragmentation.

Between the local, state and federal governments it is obvious that each one pursues independent efforts, reinvents institutional programs, squanders funds, unlearns social and government experience which the country has been through in the past decades, decreasing the ability to make diagnosis associated with public decisions, dispersing the quality of the systems and lines of action, endangering the decision-making capability of the teams which design and carry out policies, with the substantive changes which take place

in complex scenarios associate with crime and violence.

Unraveling the complex micro-cosmos where families and young people live today, as well as those who live, reproducing the violence and horror from early ages, placing their faith in life (or death) among hitmen, gangs and drug traffickers, making up an exceptional challenge for all social science and for the professionals of social intervention. Ethics of complex thought implies an ethic of diagnosis and intervention in keeping with the social crisis, the dismembering of families and harassment of poverty, unemployment, social orphanage for more and more people, in a nutshell, the same complexity of critical environment in which reality itself is to be changed forever in the shortest time possible.

Design and reliability of the key indicators of violence and insecurity

Knot complexity: organizations of civic society and the average citizens may share information with police, criminal justice system, local/community personnel based on growing updates on indicators of victimization, violence and crime which at institutional levels have not been noticed. At what price and what is the basis of co-responsibility and capacity of institutions for eradicating trends of impunity and corruption?

Evaluation of the impact of public policies of security and justice

Knot complexity: the effectiveness of the offer of programs for the prevention of violence and crime are based on their conceptualization, at the same time in professional logic from which people are

defined as victims or crimes are perpetrated; the objective of anti-crime programs and the real capacity of the teams of professionals to meet them; the strategies of articulated intervention with the capacity to manage complex environments (not only on the technical side, not only on the side related to the professional profile, but also to have the possibility of discerning levels of complexity of the problems involved, the causalities of the phenomenon and the way in which they are qualitatively evolving within the contexts of public actions).

It is important to anticipate the quality of the results of managing the complexity based on quality in the offering of government programs, public policies, and the correspondence between policies, laws, institutions and ethic culture of public exercise in matters of security and justice.

Levels of comprehensive processing and validation of relevant information in public policies of security and justice

Knot complexity: the link between relevant information systems and qualitative research proves fundamental: it refers to the micro and macro scales of the problem of violence; collecting citizens, organizations and communities' proposals which experiment with the horizontality of the problem of the complexity of violence and crime, which are reflected in the levels of indefinable inconsistencies: technology not only at the level of registry, but in the strategic processing of information, of the heterogeneity of the social and community contexts, in decision making conscious of the high and differentiated levels of complexity

which are involved in experiences of victims of delinquency and violence.

Evaluation of the impact of public policies of security and justice

Knot complexity: the impact is associated with the capacity to generate levels of reciprocal confidence, collaboration, co-responsibility of citizens and institutions, among neighbors, among social leaders and communities, among organizations of civic society and local governments.

Teams of professionals of public policies of security and justice

Knot complexity: degree of autonomy for decision making aside from decision-makers themselves; the possibility of restructuring the design of programs and public policies based on the dynamics, imperatives and qualitative evaluations which imply knowledge of the integral cause of problems and their specific nature along with the dynamics of violence and crime which they interact with.

Teams of professionals have to have the ability to measure and evaluate the progress in social indicators of violence and crime which do not necessarily respond to the logics of the justice and criminal justice system, but rather to the dynamics, social relations responses that the people themselves offer up and reproduce in their own complex contexts.

Public investment to be used to fight crime and violence should be re-oriented by the teams of professionals who carry out public policies in terms of greater coherence and realism of objectives and



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government plans and viable institutional responses and social processes which may really have a horizon and solution of lasting continuity: the recovery of the experience and learning of politicians and government mistakes in previous management; the assumption that providing public spaces is not equivalent to a process of social cohesion or that the community takes over its spheres of extreme violence: it is important to size up and evaluate new criteria and indicators so that communities/organizations/governments have better responsiveness to pressing ineludible problems of social interest, achieving, in Luhmann's sense, that each system establish its own complexity, instability and consequences (Luhmann, 1998: 205), by definition differential for each social actor, community, institution and government.

Culture of inter-disciplinary professional information

Knot complexity: relevant information systems, of key socio-criminal indicators, of knowledge of the coherent, up-dated variables and indicators, based on the specific demands and problems imposed by each socio-criminal sphere.

Innovating the quality of public policies in keeping with the complexity of the problems of insecurity and violence for people and contexts

Knot complexity: substantially modify the logics of analysis, diagnosis, intervention, institutional and government actions, prioritizing indicators, processes, temporariness, resources, equipment and training for strategic action against perpetrators and produces of crime and violence.

*Innovating social
and government responsiveness*

Knot complexity: in the decade of the 90s Osborne and Gaebler wielded the importance of governmental reinvention. It is important that the progress and capacity of transformation be tangible at the level of reforming programs and policies, in the quality of the results of public policies, the capacity to influence processes of citizen participation and new community commitments in everyday life, among others. Otherwise, inertias, regressions and socio-political processes of citizen manipulation which favor discredit, inconformity and social distancing of authorities and institutions will continue to drag the processes down.

The criminal justice system has reached its limits in many complex scenarios of violence and crime: to what age should the legal age for incarceration be lowered, given the recurrence of adolescents in tragic events of perpetration of crimes against other adolescents? Are schools responsible determinants in school violence or bullying that take place there? Are public policies aimed at drug trafficking indirectly influencing the criminalization of young people associated with the problems of drug consumption and who are seduced by the long arms of criminal drug organizations? What is the importance of the link between economy and culture, between the capacity to link together local/community development, formative processes and economies of local and regional markets?

It is important to evaluate the progress and results of the institutional systems, of the government's capacity of self management for responding to crime and violence

in keeping with international standards: from the teams of professionals involved; the experience of models of intervention and focalized public policies on trial; from the viability of innovative legislation; avoid implementing dysfunctional public policies which do not attain the objectives of preventing the recurrence of drug consumption in young people, penalizing to the maximum criminal behavior of adolescents, not socially and culturally sizing up strategies, laws and public policies against crime and violence.

*Sizing up the social processes
in their global projection*

Knot complexity: Ever more mental illness and psychopathic disorders are cropping up, regardless of the degree of social and economic progress countries make. At the same time the micro-physics of social relations derived from social networks, through the influence of internet, is important in modifying patterns of behavior and in processes which alter mental health.

Now we hear a lot about fibromyalgia (the syndrome of chronic pain of unknown origin) and, while the basis of diagnosis is diffuse muscle-skeletal pain, there are also other clinical manifestations which have an influence: fatigue, sleep alterations and import changes in one's state of mind, for which the prevalence of diagnosis, differential diagnosis and therapy are not always timely and effective. At the same time, verbal communication, the modification of ties of confidence, the exposure of intimate privacy on a global scale involve an almost anonymous social process, in building and displaying one's personality and aspirations, fears, insecurity, interests

and relations through which the symptoms may be activated or deactivated, intensely and indiscriminately, ties to others, a melting pot in which, for being a migrant, having homosexual preferences, x religious affiliation, or state an opinion in a certain way on a matter of mediatic interest, may be the object of disapproval, humiliation, xenophobic behavior, virtual or real harassment and even attacks on one's physical integrity, producing suicide or creating conditions favorable to criminal coercion, contraband, human trafficking; all of this without undermining the way in which to achieve education and formative processes in social networks with a greater capacity for projection in communities of students, from the part related to ethic vales, exemplariness of the academic mentors on line and the capacity to form teachers capable of understanding the world of social networks and technological/cybernetic revolution to efficiently adapting to the patterns of virtual behavior/interests/aspirations of students.

Final thoughts.

Deconstruction of complex socio-systemic learning

In fact, it is important to make a shift from the dimension of citizen and policy/government in the face of social phenomenon ever more deeply rooted in violence and crime.

The shift must be hermeneutic, epistemological, contextual which crosses over social and systemic complexities from lessons learned in local and national contexts, in the international experience itself. Given that there have been difficult conditions in which the Mexican State has sent presidential, institutional and multilateral

bills, without proof that they reach manageable complexes in the treatment of socio-delinquent and socio-criminal phenomenon, contributions between social and community systems, while ever wider gaps arise between the aspirations of the citizens and Mexican society, what part of the existing social and economic model should we restructure and what shall we preserve?

This is not only a problem of poverty and inequality from the point of reformulation of public policies, but a need that the administration and governments in each change of power, succession and reelection of heads of institutions and cabinets assume the commitment to present transparent accounts: the exercising of power should be transformed, the niches of solidarity and efficiency, found once again. We need to reform, deregulate and at the same time regulate more efficiently various spheres of social life and actions of the State, under comprehensive and contextualized watchfulness, strategies and diagnosis, the combination of which involve various routes which cross over each other. At this time the salt mines of the critical problems may refuse to yield to silent transformation in favor of life in a society with less violence, fewer deaths and less crime.

It is only then that the first step of reformulating the evaluation and management of the complexity against crime and violence in which the anti-drug policy which has resulted in a bloody and indiscriminate war which has proved socially costly for the country shall take place, in order to overcome the present State crisis. This implies recovering and reconfiguring



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the importance of the logics of thinking, acting and social intervention which take place in the area of crime and violence. This depends on the capacity to coordinate and educate within a diagnostic logic of quality work, of articulation of social actors and decision makers, of ties among citizens, institutions and government.

At the level of defining the agenda of public policies on security, above all at the state and local level, the integral and complex features of its design is ever more urgent (re-dimensioning the traditional functions of governments and the interaction between institutions and citizens), to the degree that the participation of more and more actors is required. This makes it indispensable to carry out thorough analysis of options of public policies, strategies and methods of social and community

intervention, in order to prevent local governments (fragile at building long-lasting impact and required to produce results in the short term), from applying and adopting solutions which have worked in other places.

On the other hand, at the level of municipal government, given the importance of the proximity to the agenda of citizens and concrete problems which affect the participation and public services, it is important to solve the problem of low levels of professionalization of public servants, which in turn creates fundamental inconsistencies for addressing policies, the internal coherence between resources, policies, programs and models of intervention, as well as the spaces of innovation for public/government action, in which not only the degree of citizen

participation and the co-responsibility of systems of prevention of violence and crime is measured, but also the impact and path of substantive, tangible benefits, both long and short term, diachronically and synchronically, of social programs aimed at vulnerable communities and groups.

The absence of more complex processes and at the same time easier links of interaction, knowledge of real causes, shared between citizens' organizations and government, shall continue the present and precarious levels of efficiency and quality of policies of security until there are more innocent victims at an ever-increasing social cost. This involves making early and profound changes in policies and resources; modifying the substantial offer of preventive programs and containment, made to order for each sphere, qualitative problems and comprehensive training at the systemic level of processing the key indicators and prudent and viable decision-making to lessen impunity, repression, complicity of politicians and drug-traffickers, day to day injustice in which the security system appears as an empty shell, non-viable and hopeless for those who have been touched by danger and blinded by known, indiscriminate and anonymous violence.

In the meantime, society must shed its naivety in relation to the idea that we are being faced with a crisis of the State which will eventually solve itself. Political systems, Mexican justice and the penal system must understand that the highly complex problems of violence and crime shall not be solved without new declarations of

public policies, processes of decision-making, teams of professionals to design, carry out and evaluate public policies and social intervention, with viable strategies carried out by politicians, government, police and public servants working closely, and in an informed manner with citizens, victims of crime and authoritarian actions of institutions themselves, but above all, capable of understanding that everyday material of symbolic violence (Bourdieu) spreads these brutal effects exponentially in families, environments and social relations: social violence, intimate violence and non-visualized violence, are then, the new *raison d'être* and the new complex objective of acting in the face of today's State crisis of Mexico that summons us.

The response to this social crisis which is now expressed in a complex State crisis (the tragedy of the students of Ayotzinapa, Iguala, Guerrero in 2014, the escapes and recaptures of Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, head of the Cartel of Sinaloa, the murder of a child at the hands of five children in Chihuahua in 2015 bear witness to this fact), will be hard pressed to improve in the future if policies of security are not reformulated in the country, if the criminalization of drugs is not dismantled, if the basis of everyday civic life is not modified: the systems of education or values, socialization of learning of social and political life beginning with teaching how to exercise power, continuing with substantially modifying how public policies really attend to the culture and qualitative dimensions of groups and communities; forming professional teams in public administration and in the diagnosis of problems which re-design programs and policies and which

are reflected in decision making which does not circumscribe the logic of short-term power and the manipulation of public opinion.

We must insist on the importance of reforming the model of society itself and

today's development on whose backbone the State may reenroll daily, overcoming the complexity made up by the present rules and values of a system of injustice, inequality and unemployment inherent in the contemporary economic system.

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