

Securitization and the security of citizens in the crisis of neoliberal capitalism

John Gledhill

When anyone mentions the theme of security and insecurity in Latin America, those words are most likely to conjure up images of crime and violence. That immediate connection may persist when we add the theme of inequality to that of security and insecurity, since there are various ways in which inequality and crime and violence might be connected. But thinking about inequality also encourages us to think more about economic insecurity. Economic insecurity is a complex issue. For some people it can be a more or less perpetual state of daily struggle to get work, put enough food on the table and meet basic family living expenses. For others, it is a nagging state of uncertainty about the future. Will I be evicted from this land one day? Will I lose my job and home and suffer downward social mobility? Will I lose my pension? Like the physical insecurity provoked by crime and violence, socio-economic insecurity can be experienced in a variety of class positions.

Even if statistics tell us that it is the lives of lower class people that are most degraded by both types of insecurity, *subjective* feelings of security and insecurity play an important role in shaping the politics of public security policy. If we want to understand what governments *can* do in particular historical moments we need to know what members of different social classes think is happening to their security and how they understand the causes of the changes that they perceive to be happening in their situations. Nevertheless, it no longer seems particularly contentious to argue that the decades of neoliberal capitalist development have significantly increased the insecurities of most of us. This is not simply a matter of failing to provide enough jobs or avoid periodic national crises, but a matter of systematic adjustment of the relationships between Capital and Labour to the advantage of Capital.¹ The present global crisis may be a product of neoliberal capitalist financialization, but I do not take the view that the responses of the G20 governments represent any fundamental structural change to the model likely to lead us into a new era. So the politics of what the rest of us do in this conjuncture remains important. In recent years, I am going to argue, a politics of “securitization” of social issues has become increasingly central to

efforts to manage the contradictions of neoliberal capitalist development. A critical analysis of securitization processes can help us to grasp the interrelations between economic and social insecurity issues and violence and conflict. My conclusion is that the securitization of poverty in furtherance of the current model of capitalist development generally makes the world more rather than less dangerous for most of us. It also heaps injustice upon injustice, deepening sources of inequality that are rooted in social stigma.

My definition of securitization is the social constructivist one developed by the Copenhagen School of International Relations.² When an issue is securitized it is transformed from a question that is politicized in the normal sense into one that supposedly threatens the very survival of states and their citizens. This involves the deployment of a discourse that redefines particular issues as matters of security and thereby justifies the use of exceptional measures to deal with them. States and elites, including the executives of transnational capitalist corporations, tend to be at the forefront in the construction of such discourses. But other social actors can in principle also contribute and their contribution can take the form of *contesting* the redefinition of an issue as one of security. This opens the way to a sociological kind of analysis of the conditions that reduce or increase the likelihood of securitization processes being contested. Consider, for example, how undocumented migration could be brought together as a “package” with issues of drugs and organized crime and even with international terrorism in a way that justified a more militarized approach to the security of the US-Mexico border. The shocking events of 9/11 2001 clearly had some immediate impact, but the longer-term acquiescence of broad sections of US public opinion probably reflects deeper anxieties.³ In part this is a question of the everyday insecurities experienced by large numbers of Americans in a country in which workfare has largely replaced welfare and medical care is far less accessible than in Europe. These are the kinds of conditions that turn poor people against poor people and deprived citizens and non-citizens against each other – as illustrated within the Latino population itself by the notorious mutual antagonisms between Mexicans and Puertorriqueños.⁴ But it’s also a question of the kinds of social and national identities that are desirable and meaningful to different groups of citizens in the United States, something that heightens sensibilities in ways that go beyond questions of immediate economic welfare.

The securitization of international migration issues is not restricted to the US-Mexico border, and migration is not the only issue now being securitized by governments and capitalist corporations under a model of accumulation which aims to break down the remaining barriers to the global mobility of investment and private appropriation of planetary resources. The issue of who should control water resources illustrates the paths that may be taken by securitization arguments in relation to justifications for transferring control of resources from the hands of poorer citizens. As Ecuadorian political sociologist Juan Fernando Terán notes, in this context securitization turns poor people into menaces to the security of ecosystems as well as states and other citizens.⁵

In a similar way, conservation of the remaining traces of Atlantic Forest on the hills of Rio de Janeiro has now become a justification for programs to build walls around slums. Advocates of this approach claim it will not only prevent the further expansion of these favelas by impeding new building beyond their present boundaries but also offer new possibilities for controlling crime within them. This is not just because armed traffickers will find it harder to attack from, or escape to, the *mata*, but because the plans also envisage closer police vigilance over movements in and out of the *favelas*. Although the residents will be “free” to come and go at their convenience, how convenient for others it could be if they had to do so through security checkpoints. It is therefore somewhat ironic that when, in 2001, activists inspired by the Black Panther movement in the USA installed gates and cameras around Rio’s second largest favela, Jacarezinho, this mimicking of the security systems of an upper class closed condominium in a space of poverty provoked an outcry not simply from the police, media and non-favela public but from politicians across the whole of the political spectrum. Although this initiative didn’t, in fact, play well with drug dealers or the majority of residents of Jacarezinho either, as João Costa Vargas points out, the scandal underscored the hegemonic nature of a conception that favelas were dangerous spaces that should be permanently subjected to “pre-emptive state and society-sanctioned” violent policing measures to “contain their evils”, since their inhabitants were incapable of organized and rational political action.⁶

What we see in debates around walling in favelas is how securitization arguments weave together different kinds of risks and threats to touch the differing sensibilities of diverse groups of citizens in ways that enlist public support for policies that threaten to enhance the territorial and social stigmatization that analysts such as Loic Wacquant⁷ and Mike Davis⁸ argue represent the future for growing sectors of humanity within the kind of globalizing capitalism that we now have. Later on I will challenge the bleak assessment of the capabilities of poor people to organize themselves provided by Wacquant's "advanced marginality" thesis, which ironically tends to echo some of the ideas of those whose despise *favelados*. Nevertheless, I will also argue that his analysis does identify important problems that are likely to be exacerbated by the securitization of poverty.

Critics of securitization are often accused of an irresponsible refusal to recognize the reality of threats and therefore the way collective social interests justify extraordinary measures, including the curtailing of civil liberties. But a social constructivist approach does not deny that there are real risks and threats in the world: its aim is simply to explore the political and social processes that define what is (and is not) constructed as a security issue at a given moment of time and why. This can, of course, lead to questioning of the underlying rationalities of securitization and the issue of whether the ostensible, publicly stated, rationality is hiding the role of other agendas and interests. But the most important issue is whether securitization actually leads to the construction of worlds that are safer for most people or has other effects that are counter-productive from the point of view of social justice and welfare. This is the theme that I want to explore in more detail.

Let me begin with what looks like a traditional kind of "national security" issue, the counter-insurgency war of the Mexican government against the rebels of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) in Chiapas. Although it rapidly transmogrified into a movement willing to negotiate new legislation on indigenous rights and autonomy with the federal government, the 1994 rebellion was initially presented as an "inauthentic" indigenous mobilization whipped up by urban guerrillas and/or foreigners involved in the Guatemalan insurgency. Even when the relationship between the Chiapas movement and indigenous peasant organizations that evolved long before 1994 in the Selva Lacandona region became more difficult to deny, it

continued to be presented as a “threat” to national integrity through claims that indigenous autonomy proposals threatened to Balkanize Mexico on ethnic lines and menaced the basic constitutional principles of equality for all citizens under the law. The government combined negotiations and an apparent commitment to conciliation with a variety of strategies designed to weaken support for the EZLN and disarticulate its grassroots support. The occupation of the state by one third of Mexico’s armed forces had immediate consequences for human rights, not least because ordinary footsoldiers drawn from other predominantly mestizo regions of the country often interacted with local people in an abusive way that reflected the underlying racism of a paradigm of nation-building in which retention of indigenous culture and identity marked a “backwardness” that could only be transcended through mestizaje.⁹ But it also provided the framework for significant social transformations and new forms of intervention in the everyday lives of local people.

The network of roads and military bases that the state constructed in Chiapas proved to be conduits for many things, including contraband and drugs, and the mere presence of large numbers of soldiers stimulated new economic activities, including prostitution. What it did not do was enhance local security. In the Las Cañadas region beyond the town of Ocosingo, armed robberies of buses and trucks became so frequent that travel by night became impossible, and assaults frequently occurred close to military check-points, suggesting complicity between the state security forces and the criminal gangs that perpetrated these attacks. This kind of insecurity had been unknown in the days when the peasant communities themselves took care of policing through their own regional organizations. It was politically convenient for the state since the suspects were always labelled Zapatistas by the security forces, which were never obliged to provide any proof of these claims since there were never any arrests, though known Zapatista supporters became increasingly vulnerable to arrest and imprisonment without due process for other alleged felonies. Human rights defenders raced between penitentiaries located in distant parts of the state and in neighbouring Tabasco trying to catch up with victims who were constantly moved to impede their effective legal representation.

But this was simply part of the strategy used to disarticulate Zapatista support. Its more benign side was the selective use of money from social development programs

funded by organizations such as the World Bank to get people to abandon the movement. The EZLN told its bases to reject the “bribes” offered by the government but it did not, by and large, manage to produce an equally attractive alternative through its own “autonomous” development projects, backed by the relatively small number of NGOs that it allowed to operate in its zone of influence.¹⁰ As a politico-military organization, the EZLN did attempt to impose sanctions against defectors, but its ability to impose its will was limited, relative to a more traditional kind of guerrilla movement, by a political strategy that was premised on showing some respect for the views of the base communities. So the deployment of resources by the state not only promoted defection but fostered factional conflict within communities in which some families remained loyal to the EZLN. Furthermore, promoting community factionalism and divisions was itself part of the security plan to pacify Chiapas. This included promoting religious divisions as well as building on other sources of local conflict, including local agrarian conflicts. The apogee of this divide and rule strategy was the unleashing of paramilitary violence. Despite the fact that some paramilitary groups emerged out of officially recognized social development organizations and the arms used often appeared to have come direct from government armouries, this kind of violence remained deniable. In the case of the infamous massacre of women and children associated with a pacific but pro-Zapatista diocesan group in the hamlet of Acteal in 1997, the way deniability was constructed proved especially interesting. Although the outcry caused by this barbarity made it necessary for the perpetrators to be arrested and charged, their defence team was able to draw on new legislation that permitted mitigating circumstances arguments to be premised on cultural difference. As Aída Hernández has shown,¹¹ this opened the way to presenting the violence as an example of “customary inter-family fights” in Tzotzil communities, detaching it from the counter-insurgency war. This is an example of a “win-win” situation in which cynical manipulation of stereotypes and prejudices not only defends impunity but reinforces a disempowering image of indigenous people as prone to violence and barbarity, mirroring the processes that put race, class, criminality and multiple propensities to violence together in the stigmatization of *favelados* in Brazil.

But a further significant aspect of paramilitarization in Chiapas was the way it exploited the frustrations of young, landless men in communities in which age and

landholding are important hierarchic principles. These kinds of processes take us beyond the simple production of divisions and conflicts because they strike at the capacity of rebellious communities to organize and manage themselves. The same logic is visible in the way indigenous autonomy demands have been answered by interventions that assert the inferiority of indigenous approaches to conflict regulation relative to the procedures of “universal” state-sanctioned law. As Shannon Speed and Jane Collier have shown,¹² in the case of Chiapas, it has been apparent that interventions that set aside indigenous procedures and seek to sanction community officials for abiding by them have been selectively targeted at pro-Zapatista communities and seem absent where communities are controlled by authorities loyal to the government.

In discussing these issues it is important not to romanticize “grassroots” or “traditional” ways of doing things. There is plenty of contention within indigenous communities that is concerned with reforming and changing local practices, not least in relation to gender. But we can, I think, see how measures justified in the name of increasing security for all can produce new forms of insecurity and conflict. Two further points need to be made about this. Firstly, counter-insurgency strategies may embrace tactics that are extremely risky in pursuit of their immediate goals of eliminating a threat to existing power structures. The long-term consequences of sowing the seeds of new conflicts and antagonisms are not easy to predict, and they may go a lot further than diminishing the quality of life of large numbers of people who were never even active participants in the original conflict. These can range from promoting rural-urban migration that creates new social problems to laying the bases for new challenges to security itself, including the unintentional promotion of armed groups that may be more criminal than political. Secondly, undermining existing forms of grassroots self-organization is also extremely risky. Indigenous justice systems in Chiapas may not be perfect but they have evolved on the basis of cultural premises adapted to local social structures, cosmologies and perceptions of the causes of social misfortune and conflict.

A qualified degree of cultural relativism is needed here. Many societies do not share the Western view, developed in different historical circumstances, that conflict and violence are anomalies. To the extent to which certain kinds of conflicts are seen as

part of the normal and natural order of things, procedures orientated towards pacification and de-escalating violence may prove more effective than procedures orientated towards individual punishment and retribution. Indeed, in one of the cases that Speed and Collier analyzed, the indigenous way of managing things almost certainly prevented the lynching that would have resulted from any attempt to follow the letter of the national judicial system with regard to the proper processing of the accused. What they were accused of was a crime that did not even exist in the federal penal code, using decapitated bodies to strengthen new bridges being built after unusually heavy rains had plunged the region into a deepening economic crisis. It might be considered desirable to encourage indigenous people to think about and deal with these issues in a different way in the longer term, but arguments founded solely on the alleged superiority of an official justice system that seldom even concerns itself with the issue of whether indigenous people can understand charges read to them in Spanish do not seem to offer a way forward. Furthermore, the episode that Speed and Collier describe occurred during a period of heightened economic insecurity, set in the context of longer-term structural changes that were adverse to the peasant economy. As Jean and John Comaroff have pointed out,¹³ before we write off the ideas about “occult economies of wealth creation” produced by indigenous peasants or the urban poor as symptoms of their “irrationality” and “backwardness”, we should perhaps ask ourselves whether the apparent growth of such ideas in recent years is not the other side of the coin to the rise of neoliberal capitalism. What could be more magical than the alchemy by which the institutions that drove the “financialization” of the “new economy” conjured up a “wealth” that we now see can only be guaranteed substance through a further state-mediated transfer of income from labour to capital?¹⁴

From the point of view of “national security”, operations in Chiapas might be judged relatively successful in the sense that the EZLN was contained and has had some difficulty breaking out of that containment despite various attempts. But Chiapas is only part of a more complex national scenario in which internal security has become increasingly militarized. Mexico’s neoliberal transition involved an apparent regime change in the form of an end to the unbroken seventy-year rule of the Institutional Revolutionary Party. But it seems to have resulted simply in a minor reconfiguration of power relations that has offered little in terms of economic or democratic returns to

the majority of Mexican citizens. Since the Mexican approach to neoliberal economics has further increased national dependence on the United States, the country now finds itself in an extremely vulnerable position. Yet in principle, the solution to all the country's problems was supposed to lie in a closer economic integration with the United States and Canada that would eventually bring all Central America and beyond into an expanding free trade area. Furthermore, free markets and free trade were assumed to enhance security by the Bush administration, culminating in the signing by Vicente Fox and Paul Martin of an agreement to form a tri-national "Security and Prosperity Partnership" to complement the NAFTA in a meeting in Waco, Texas, in 2005.¹⁵

Unlike the NAFTA from which it has sprung, the SPP agreement was not subject to any Congressional oversight and its recommendations to government are produced behind closed doors by civil servants and businessmen. Its main consequences were, firstly, to enhance US control over immigrants moving north by supplying Mexico with the means to increase surveillance of its southern border and secondly, to further strengthen Mexico's military security infrastructure in the name of fighting transnational crime. In both these contexts, the Fox administration showed little interest in making an issue of national sovereignty. The SPP was also supposed to bring other benefits, such as internationally coordinated responses to emergencies such as the appearance of new flu viruses, a task for which it has just proved almost comically ineffective. If, as seems the case, these kinds of health threats are actually the product of the particular kinds of food industries that free markets and free trade are spawning under the NAFTA, this seems to add to possible doubts about the security-enhancing consequences of free markets. But other contradictions seem even more glaring.

The first is that the violence perpetrated by organized crime in Mexico seems to be escalating rather than diminishing, to the point of provoking public protests. There has been no absence of theatrical military and police security operations under the government of Felipe Calderón, but there is now ample evidence that a considerable amount of this energy has been targeted at social movements and their leaderships rather than the cartels. This is not simply a reflection of the precarious way in which Calderón claimed victory in the 2006 Presidential elections but of the continuing

existence of substantial pockets of popular protest against the kinds of economic policies that he is committed to pursuing. Yet the fact that repression has been meted out to movements that do not appear to constitute a major political threat is perhaps indicative of the difficulties that the Mexican political and business classes face in convincing anyone that their economic model works well for anyone below the level of the transnational capitalist elite. As far as the war against drugs and transnational crime is concerned, state interventions may have some short-term impact on the shifting balances of power between cartels, but they seem to be increasing the extremes of violence involved in the control of the trade, while their logic continues to be completely disconnected from the social processes that shape patterns of drug consumption both north and south of the US-Mexico border.

This seems to be another area in which securitization is masking the impacts of the model that structures the development of the rest of the economy on this, its illegal “dark side”, not to mention the negative consequences of allowing those eager to advance that model to act undemocratically and sustain private economic interests through political patronage. Today’s bank bailouts at the expense of humble taxpayers were, we might recall, prefigured by Mexico’s Institute for the Protection of Bank Savings.¹⁶ But we also need to look deeper, at the growth of addiction in desolated rural towns as well as the slums of metropolitan cities, and at the human consequences of what is generally an unremunerative and short-lived participation in the lower depths of the drug economy. Take, for example, the images of “empowerment” offered by indigenous men in poverty stricken communities in isolated areas expressing their masculinity by carrying an AK-47 and pistols with them at all times, or a young Salvadorean socialized in a youth gang because his mother worked as a maid in Los Angeles whose social mobility consisted in signing up for work as an assassin for a Mexican cartel. Such are the fruits of a persistent and deepening uneven development.

The response embedded in the SPP and an increasing securitization of immigration across the US-Mexico border that the Obama administration seems to be endorsing is, however, to maximise the criminalization of all migrants. Although the presentation of migration to the North as a “terrorist threat” has tended to slip out of public discourse, the involvement of Homeland Security in migration affairs has deepened as

the agenda has focused more on containing transnational “organized crime”. The fortification of the northern border and vast increase in the number of border patrol agents has sometimes offended Anglo residents living in run-down frontier towns dependent on Mexican labour because the security forces are no longer embedded in their communities and tear up farmland with their vehicles in hot pursuit of migrants who are simply passing through.¹⁷ But it has also created a climate in which vigilantism can flourish.¹⁸ Securitization has, however, had an impact on the migrant condition far inside the United States, creating a situation in which arrest and deportation is far more likely than in the past. The new systems built by Homeland security deputize local police and are based on the premise that the hunt is on for criminal aliens.¹⁹ This seems to have come to mean any alien who can be found guilty of any kind of felony, however, minor. So we now have people guilty of minor traffic offences being incarcerated and deported. Workers who are legal residents of the United States can be deported for having a criminal record, and a broken tail light enables a traffic cop to make enquiries about a person’s migratory status. Using false papers to obtain work is now defined as the crime of “aggravated identity theft”. Although this regime is certainly tough on those who consume and possess drugs, albeit in a somewhat discriminatory way, targeting migrant workers is not likely even to pick up a great many people involved in the transnational criminal economy even at the most humble level. It is, however, clearly much easier for the Homeland Security Agencies involved in this drive to root out criminal aliens, ICE, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and CBP, Customs and Border Protection, to justify their continuing budget demands by the spectacular results to be achieved by picking easy targets.

What all this is doing is making a further contribution to the development of the carceral state and society. New detention facilities have been opened to support the apparatus of punishment and deportation, and most of these have been outsourced to private corporations such as the GEO corporation. GEO offers its services to governments worldwide, but it is particularly at home in the country that has the world’s largest prison population. But while the fact that someone who has served a sentence for some sort of felony can now be rearrested and transferred to ICE custody is making the prison industry recession proof, the most terrifying implication of these changes is that the list of crimes that justify deportation is growing. Legal residents

can also be deported once the Department of Homeland Security discovers that they have committed a “removable offence” at some point in their lives, and this might occur, ironically, if they were actually to seek US citizenship. The phrase “criminal alien” plays strongly in wedding US public opinion to this policy, whilst immigrants themselves are becoming increasingly nervous of walking down the street.

This, then, is the kind of security that breeds insecurity among relatively powerless people who have, nevertheless, tried to make their voices heard in US society through public protests that emphasized the economic contributions made by immigrant labour. Movements to gain public support for the immigrant cause are not aided by the tendency of Latino elites who see themselves as “Hispanic” to dissociate themselves from new immigrants, a process that is sometimes reinforced by the efforts of less affluent people who have achieved some stability in US society to do the same thing, particularly when they see their jobs as threatened. But mass street demonstrations by immigrant workers manifested an enormously significant possibility. One might argue that there is a broader economic rationality here in that DHS measures complement other laws that diminish the rights of immigrants as workers and their capacity to organize. However, the public and private security industry clearly possesses economic interests of its own through budget appropriations and contracts. Taxpayers might think again about supporting these policies if they were more conscious of the full costs of persecuting Latinos for traffic violations in order to deport them. Yet the other great argument against the carceral state, that it actually breeds more crime, has been around for a long time. This, like apparent ease with which “criminal aliens” can be painted as a threat, probably reflects the vicious circle through which fear of crime draws even less affluent citizens to favour retributive justice and the *mano dura*, as Teresa has shown so brilliantly in her work on São Paulo.²⁰

This kind of perspective can lead us to some very pessimistic conclusions, and none is more pessimistic than the “advanced marginality” model of Loic Wacquant that I mentioned earlier. Wacquant focuses our attention on the territorial stigmatization of spaces of poverty in which the only future lies in a personal escape that will simply make way for others, be they new immigrants or the unemployed children of kin and neighbours. Compounding stigmatization by poverty and race, spaces of advanced

marginality are spaces of high risk of being caught up in criminal and police violence. The sociability and capacity for self-organization of poor communities of earlier eras diminishes as household resources become ever more exiguous and income streams ever more precarious, making it difficult to sustain mutual help relations even between close relatives. Many of these spaces are now ethnically as well as socially fragmented. External social stigmatization draws people to assert their personal claims to dignity by stigmatizing other residents for being the real “marginals” who are bringing the community down through their criminal or anti-social activities. This replication of the logic of hegemonic models is especially easy where there are distinct waves of new residents with different social or ethnic characteristics. For Wacquant, a growing sub-proletarian “precariat” cannot turn the “spaces of relegation” that it inhabits into “places” from which to build political projects.

Wacquant’s purpose is to critique the carceral society and to call for new state policies. But his analysis suggests that it is the nature of contemporary capitalism that makes US “hyperghettos”, French *banlieus*, and Brazilian *favelas* similar at one level despite being different in others and the products of different histories. Yet even if the tendency to write about “slums of hope” in Latin America before the 1980s crisis was excessively optimistic,²¹ the model of a fissiparous “precariat” may be excessively pessimistic, even if many of the contradictions that it identifies are real enough. Let me try to demonstrate this with some examples from the Brazilian city of Salvador, the capital of Bahia..

In one large neighbourhood, established by militant defence of land invaded on what was then the edge of the city in the 1980s, successive crises in community organization have been followed by rebuilding efforts that have become increasingly focused on bridging political, religious and generational differences in the interests of securing greater leverage in negotiations with public authorities.²² The context is one in which a once peripheral area is now located on the principal vector of expansion of the capitalist city, surrounded by condominiums and new economy developments. Here militant traditions have reproduced a wariness of the state and a focus on demands, but they are reinforced today by new kinds of insecurity that bring people together. An uncertain land tenure situation perpetuates fears that the city government might seek to relocate some residents to remove this visible stain from a landscape

recently graced by the construction of a new Shopping Mall a few metres up the main road, or that some residents might be willing to sell out to developers.

Everyday economic insecurity is certainly substantial, although most people do manage to work regularly and informal work generally offers better returns and satisfaction than the very low paid “regular” jobs available. Although this neighbourhood was renamed Bairro da Paz from its original soubriquet of “the Malvinas Invasion” after its residents’ right to occupy the land was guaranteed by the state and city governments in 1987, it features on the Military Police list of the thirteen most dangerous areas in the Salvador Metropolitan Region, which has a population of over three million. Although violence resulting from competition to control the drug trade is not an everyday occurrence, young men do die at the hands of traffickers or police every few months. Yet the political pessimism of the “precariat” model does not seem appropriate here for a variety of reasons.

One is that the widespread participation of residents in Catholicism, Candomblé or Evangelical Churches means that religious leaderships can also function as political leaderships. Another is that there is a substantial presence of NGOs, especially Catholic ones. As well as providing social services such as crèches, the NGOs have incubated community political leaders. Thirdly, new political projects have emerged around the theme of black empowerment among young people participating in a range of Afro-Brazilian cultural groups. This new generation of leaders are critical of traditional ways of doing politics and often of the Residents’ Council, the main body that mediates the flow of public and private resources into the community. Their posture sits rather ambivalently between a desire to participate in the world of transnational black style and consumption and a militant black identity that wants to make the neighbourhood an “urban quilombo” founded on cooperatives. They tend to be ‘anti-capitalist’, yet most of their cooperatives are private-public partnerships, and a few will make it in Salvador’s booming music industry. Nevertheless, their activism and politicization is proving constructive. In this case, what are still comparatively high levels of insecurity do not seem to be foreclosing on the possibilities of strengthening the collective voice of a neighbourhood in which a variety of social actors are engaging in projects of “place-making” rather than seeking opportunities to

escape. This place-making includes a focus on the possibilities of changing the nature of policing and improving security from violence.

Bairro da Paz can be contrasted with another area in which poor people live surrounded by affluent citizens closer to the centre of Salvador on the Atlantic Coast. With a population of around 100,000, Nordeste de Amaralina is almost twice the size of Bairro da Paz, but much more densely populated, since the original leaders of the invasion agreed to collaborate with the authorities in limiting the number of new settlers in Bairro da Paz in the future. Violence between criminal gangs has always been significant in Nordeste de Amaralina, but residents are now complaining of increasing levels of risk of being caught in the cross-fire on the streets and in public places, which is hardly surprising given that two of the three police posts are now shut down, following a successful restructuring of the drugs trade by a local trafficker recently released from prison.

One can only speculate about whether this stay in prison strengthened this trafficker's position in the wider networks of organized crime, but it is not simply the police that he is menacing. The neighbourhood's grassroots activists and leaders are extremely nervous. The NGO running the major social project for young people in Nordeste de Amaralina, funded by the telephone company Oi, has now decided to move its operations to the safer environment of the historic centre of Salvador, following the murder of one of the participating adolescents. Bairro da Paz has a functioning *Balcão de Justiça e Cidadania*, a key initiative for making the justice system work better for poorer people. The *Balcão* of Nordeste de Amaralina has been closed down after the private university that supported it pulled out. The involvement of NGOs in Nordeste was never as extensive as in Bairro da Paz, but there had been a number of successful artistic and cultural projects in the neighbourhood, which now seems to be being abandoned by both the state and the third sector. The result is a deepening level of territorial stigmatization that does have tangible effects on, for example, residents' possibilities in the job market. It is also noticeable that Nordeste is coming to be seen as a particularly unattractive place to live by residents of other poor neighbourhoods.

But many existing residents cannot move out since their self-built houses represent a substantial investment. Although people do utilize their networks of kinship, affinity

and friendship to move to take up residence in other poor neighbourhoods that offer more attractive living conditions, narrow limits are imposed on this process by a model of urban development in which property developers continue to have considerable influence within government while the poor are largely left to solve their own problems of finding space for their growing families in a city which has never made adequate provision for their needs in planning for the future.²³

What we can conclude from this brief comparison is that the situation in territorially stigmatized areas is not always hopeless. In some cases, conditions do exist from productive collaborations between NGOs and grassroots community activists and there are contextual factors that promote stronger community organizations that diminish the disempowering and fragmenting effects of social differentiation and the internal conflicts between different groups, individuals and families even if they cannot eliminate such cleavages in the social fabric. These kinds of spaces encourage place-making projects that can make effective use of the discourses of citizenship rights and anti-discrimination that neoliberal governance itself has promoted. Yet such positive outcomes are fragile, especially in spaces like Nordeste where there is scarcely even any employment of residents in the immediately adjacent areas occupied by high-income residents, in contrast to somewhere like Bairro da Paz. But we can also see in Nordeste that a virtually complete withdrawal of public power can make a bad situation worse, and the security problems that make this situation so bad raise further issues about state action and state responsibility. The first months of 2009 have seen a marked increase in the number of most young people living in poor communities killed by the civil and military police in Salvador. Not only have parents of the victims frequently denied that their children were involved in trafficking, but elite military police squads (from RONDESP, the Rondas Especiais sub-unit of the capital's force) have been accused of extra-judicial murder of persons who were alive when they entered police custody. Crime of all kinds is a real problem in all parts of Salvador. During the heavy rains of early May, women stranded in cars on flooded roads became targets for assaults in full public view. So support for the *mano dura* is no doubt getting stronger. Yet is surely time to ask more forcefully whether this strategy enhances the security of anyone, particularly in a city like Salvador where it seems to be based on a rather hit and miss model of "racial profiling".

The drug economy has featured in every one of the situations I have discussed in this lecture. This highlights the fact that we are talking about a transnational system that involves linkages between powerful actors in politics and society on a continental, and indeed, sometimes transcontinental, scale. Shooting 17 year olds in *favelas* is not going to have any impact at all on that system. The periodic and theatricalized arrest of cartel bosses in Mexico does not seem to have had much of an impact either, and it could be argued that these kinds of operations add to violence by creating periods of instability while adjustments are made. Mexico's government has a longstanding tendency to use resources obtained for "wars" against drugs and crime against social movements totally unconnected with drugs and crime, while the United States leaves Mexico to deal with a system that its policies always represent as something that "comes from the South" while dedicating astonishing amounts of money to criminalizing migrant workers. All this can be made intelligible through a critical analysis of the underlying rationalities of "securitization" processes, but the big issue is what alternatives might be pursued and how they might be sold to public opinion should it be possible to create political coalitions willing to promote them.

If the economic model that is ultimately driving this is not going to change any time soon, then we probably have to make do with proposals that would not be very radical or novel. They would be about fostering new kinds of policing by better-paid and trained policemen who are not socially alienated from those they police, and not leaving the military to do jobs that they are not trained to do. They would be about insisting that local and national governments do not abandon the poor but intensify policies that produce absolute improvements in their living standards and quality of life. They would be about strengthening and protecting those NGOs that not only supply desperately needed services and bases for "hope" and social mobility to low-income populations but also strengthen people's capacity to organize themselves and overcome their differences. They would be about urban planning that goes beyond building walls round slums and focuses on creating new living environments better adapted to the social and economic needs of working people, inside existing poor neighbourhoods and, given the real problems of density, precarious construction and continually increasing demand that need to be addressed, outside those neighbourhoods as well. I hope that I have shown that today's frameworks of securitization generally work in the opposite direction to all these aims. They not only

tend to create more insecurity but all too often work to thwart the democratic impulses and forms of popular resistance that might make it possible to produce the deeper economic and political transformations that might truly produce greater security for all.

- ¹ Harvey, David. 2005. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- ² Buzan, Barry, Jaap de Wilde, and Ole Waever. 1998. *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- ³ Ackleson, Jason. 2005. Constructing security on the US-Mexico border. *Political Geography* 24 (2): 165-184.
- ⁴ De Genova, Nicholas and Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas. 2003. Latino rehearsals: racialization and the politics of citizenship between Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago. *The Journal of Latin American Anthropology* 8(2): 18–57.
- ⁵ Terán, Juan Fernando. 2007. *Las Quimeras y sus caminos. La gobernanza del Agua y sus dispositivos para la producción de pobreza rural en los Andes ecuatorianos*. Buenos Aires: Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales.
- ⁶ Costa Vargas, João H. 2006. When a favela dared to become a gated condominium: The politics of race and urban space in Rio de Janeiro. *Latin American Perspectives* 33 (4): 49-81, p 51.
- ⁷ Wacquant, Loic. 2007. Territorial stigmatization in the age of advanced marginality. *Thesis Eleven* 91: 66-77.
- ⁸ Davis, Mike. 2004. Planet of slums: urban involution and the informal proletariat. *New Left Review (N.S.)*, no. 26:5-34.
- ⁹ Stephen, Lynn. 1999. The construction of indigenous suspects: Militarization and the gendered and ethnic dynamics of human rights abuses in southern Mexico. *American Ethnologist* 26 (4): 822-842.
- ¹⁰ Barmeyer, Niels. 2008. Taking on the state: resistance, education, and other challenges facing the Zapatista autonomy project. *Identities* 15 (5): 506-527.
- ¹¹ Hernández Castillo, Aída. 2002. National law and indigenous customary law: the struggle for justice of indigenous women in Chiapas, Mexico. In *Gender, Justice Development and Rights*. Edited by Maxine Molyneux and Shahra Razavi, pp. 384-413. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- ¹² Speed, Shannon and Jane F. Collier. 2000. Limiting indigenous autonomy in Chiapas, Mexico: the state government's use of human rights. *Human Rights Quarterly* 22: 877-905.

- ¹³ Comaroff, Jean and John L. Comaroff. 2000. Millennial capitalism: first thoughts on a second coming. *Public Culture* 12 (2): 291-343.
- ¹⁴ Tsing, Anna. 2000. Inside the economy of appearances. *Public Culture* 12 (1): 115-144.
- ¹⁵ Carlsen, Laura. 2009. NAFTA's Dangerous Security Agenda. Americas Program Report. Washington, DC: Center for International Policy.
- ¹⁶ Gledhill, John. 1999. Official masks and shadow powers: towards an anthropology of the dark side of the state. *Urban Anthropology* 28 (3/4): 199-252.
- ¹⁷ Barry, Tom. 2009. Texas-New Mexico Border Series. Americas Program. Washington, DC: Center for International Policy.
- ¹⁸ Cunningham, Hilary. 2004. Nations rebound? Crossing borders in a gated globe. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 11 (3): 329-350.
- ¹⁹ Barry, Tom. 2009. Immigrant crackdown joins failed crime and drugs wars. Americas Program. Washington, D.C.: Center for International Policy.
http://americas.irc-online.org/pdf/reports/0904crackdown_CIP.pdf.
- ²⁰ Caldeira, Teresa P.R. 2000. *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation and Citizenship in São Paulo*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- ²¹ Eckstein, Susan. 1990. Urbanization revisited: Inner-city slum of hope and squatter settlement of despair. *World Development* 18 (2): 165-181.
- ²² Hita, Maria Gabriela and Luciana Duccini. 2008. Exclusão social, desafiliação e inclusão social no estudo de redes sociais de famílias pobres soteropolitanas. In *Procesos de urbanización de la pobreza y nuevas formas de exclusión social: los retos de las políticas sociales de las ciudades latinoamericanas del siglo XXI*, edited by Alicia Ziccardi, pp. 181-212. Bogotá: Siglo del Hombre Editores, Clacso-Crop.
- ²³ Gordilho Souza, Angela. 2000. *Limites do Habitar. Segregação e Exclusão na Configuração Urbana Contemporânea de Salvador e Perspectivas no Final do Século XX*. Salvador: Edufba.