

Social Sciences as a Driver of Public Innovation for Coexistence

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Abstract

Coexistence is a fundamental requirement for the exercise of the rights and duties of citizens and its preservation depends largely on the governance of public security. The crime prosecuting at the head of the police forces is insufficient for this preservation taking into account that it only moves the crime but does not eliminate its causes or restore the caused damage to victims. For this reason the present work describes different strategies to contain crime and its contradictions and suggests an interagency joint as an exercise of experimental innovation according to counteract the perception of insecurity. At the end, this article displays the benefits of collection and data analysis to support not just policing but also to establish baselines for future public policy. In this way it looks for building confidence scenarios and institutional credibility to the municipal level in advance to a Colombian post-conflict.

Keywords: Inclusion, coexistence, public safety, social innovation, institutional development, human rights.

Introduction

With the signing of the peace agreements, Colombia faces an important challenge to consolidate efforts in public safety. The signing of these agreements will end the oldest armed conflict in Latin America and requires local authorities to use all available equipment to prepare for a new reality where those former soldiers who maintain their criminal activity are going to test the effectiveness of the state to counter these new scenarios of violence. Institutional efforts should be concentrated in healing the victims, reconciliation and state presence in those areas of the country where the armed conflict was more severe or may even become more acute again while government agencies must optimize the implementation of new social programs designed to address social problems, which have to be verified and do not have a comprehensive assessment of its impact yet (Aquilino & Estévez, 2015).

Thus it is necessary to develop innovative social projects with existing resources and potential capacities of institutions which are present in these regions. Therefore, the National Police of Colombia, which is the primary law enforcement agency in the country with its 100% coverage of municipalities nationwide, becomes a key player in meeting the above mentioned challenges.

The policing as a constitutional mandate is intended to ensure the coexistence of Colombia's inhabitants, using the knowledge and experience in the service of criminal investigation and coexistence. In this context the social sciences are the transverse axis of policing (Tudela, 2011) and their study can provide significant value to address the coexistence requirements.

In its academic approach, this article reflects the optimization of local resources, applying methodologies of analyzing social phenomena through the collection and interpretation of existing data in local institutions or motivate the collection of data concerning issues of security and coexistence in a municipality, using the human resources of public institutions like schools and universities or community organizations such as Community Action Boards (JAL).

Similarly, this article proposes the joining of existing public programs which address some of these program's efforts towards reducing victimization taking into account the institutional nature of each government agency and the interpretation of statistical significance (Healey, 2014) of the results obtained or expected.

This result visualization helps to recover the confidence in state agencies as well as crime prevention by the control of the motivating factors of deviant behavior before they are translated into offenses.

Background

The strategies of citizen security in Colombia were defined by the Colombian police with exercises of territorial security management and the advice of some academics and public sector representatives. These strategies include models of monitoring and evaluation of measurement indicators but they have not involved municipal governments or local institutions with functions to make law as the plan was designed. Although the Safe Departments and Municipalities Program (DMS), was established in March 2004 (Colombian National Police [CNP], 2011) as a strategy for linking local rulers to public safety management, has improved inter-agency work the great majority of these results were consolidated from the police force and have not motivated a design of government plans that go beyond crime prosecuting.

DMS as an initiative of the Colombian police in coordination with the Ministry of Interior and Justice, head of the management of mayors and governors nationwide, reports its main achievement that mayors and governors are now aware of the importance of public safety in the development of a community (NCP, 2010) and that coexistence is not only achieved by repressive police work.

In the same way the municipal security plans made in the DMS scope are important attainments, although they are composed of a large percentage of police work in the streets and a small part is the administrative report of campaigns that try to visualize an operating budget as an extraordinary investment for security. These limited results are related to the fact that the Ministry of Interior left the program at the same time as international sponsors reduced their support (Martin, 2012).

However, a great achievement for the creation of these security plans at the municipal level was the beginning of the usage of insecurity diagnosis at the local level, which has collected data on crimes and has set goals for police work in order to reduce homicide. These municipal authorities have records to perform a preliminary analysis of geo-referencing other crimes and locations of the most affected populations. Correspondingly there are good practices achieved by police institutions in New York, USA and Queensland, Australia. These police forces implemented programs of comparative statistics (CompStat) to direct police efforts against crime (Roeder et al., 2015).

For example in New York was a reduction of eighty percent of the homicides in the range of nineteen years (Zimring, 2013) reaching a historic minimum of 333 homicides in 2014 (Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI], 2015), a decline that is associated with the implementation of CompStat in 1994 and the leadership of the mayors Rudolph Giuliani, Michael Bloomberg and Bill Di Blasio. In the case of Australia, authorities reported a significant crime reduction of 25 percent with a decrease of 3,200 felonies, since a local adapted version of New York's comparative statistics program was implemented in the Queensland Police Service (Mazerolle, Rombouts, & McBroom was implemented, 2007).

While these success stories are benchmarks to motivate continuous data collection in the municipalities and the strategic direction to use this information, it should be noted that the improvement of citizen security indicators do not have a single cause or that not only one program deserves all the merits of the good results. Thus, there was an analysis about the influence of other factors that helped reducing crime in the same period in which the police programs collected their successful results. In the case of New York political opponents of local mayors suggested that reducing the crack epidemic in New York (Fryer, Heaton, Levitt & Murphy, 2005) led to the decline in crime in the last part of the 90's. Another hypothesis is that was the reduction of the population aged between 15 and 29 years, combined with the abortion legalization for unwanted pregnancies in 1973, supports the reduction of criminal activity given that individuals with a high probability to commit crimes and that would grownup in vulnerable social circumstances were never born (Donohue and Levitt, 2001).

Therefore, statistical comparison exercises should not only lead the institutions to monitor the figures on crime and policing but must collect as much data as needed to get an idea of the factors affecting safety in each community. This analysis has to be based on the principle that each municipality is different and is affected by common factors which have different impacts on other communities (Martin, 2012). With this broader approach of the analysis of the positive and negative influences of cohabitation and coexistence, the territorial approach of security management cannot only focus on the successful results of certain crime prosecutions, since these can be transformed into another type of crime and even improve their criminal profitability.

Although a significant trend observed in Colombia was, that homicides were reduced from 56.21 murders per 100,000 inhabitants in 2003 to 26.49 in 2014 as well as 5.07 kidnappings in 2003 could be reduced to 0.63 cases ten years later. Other crimes as theft increased by 145 percent and extortion cases were quadrupled between 2008 and 2013, from 830 cases to more than 4,800 (Mejía, Ortega & Ortiz, 2015).

Thus in the case of kidnapping the interpretation is that this crime was transformed into extortion and changed its terms of profitability and reduction of used resources. While kidnapping requires infrastructure, transportation and people to reach the victim, the picture is very different for extortion where only the access to a phone line and a directory is sufficient for the perpetrator. This is consistent with the increased feelings of insecurity in the community, for which reducing some crimes do not contribute to reduce the fear of being exposed to other criminal actors. This feeling of fear and distrust in the city is the main threat to coexistence (Martinez, 2009), the menace to fundamental rights to move freely and exercise their condition into the community (United Nations [UN], 1948).

Therefore, the design of strategies to preserve public safety requires joint efforts from different angles where the persecution of crime plays an important but no single role. With records showing the relations between public health and sexual education and the improvement of certain indicators of violence, it is necessary to assess the responsibilities of public institutions related to coexistence and publish their local institutional efforts in this matter. These efforts led from each agency's perspective are contributing directly or indirectly to reduce the citizens' fears as much as the perception of insecurity is reduced (Vilalta, 2012).

Development

Understanding that the public safety is the absence of fears with which it is possible the exercise of the rights and duties of citizens. It is necessary to work on changing the perception of insecurity in a community, by various actions that build trust and ownership (Martinez, 2009). This confidence-building process requires thinking of different management of public safety and promotes innovation processes in the interaction of public institutions. For instance, institutions are focused on the offenders and criminal organizations capture but it does not let the impact of crime disappear and including criminal legal benefits for justice and criminal investigation collaborators may increase the victimization after the capture of the perpetrator (Karmen, 2015).

Therefore, the state must provide care to victims and the community to which they belong by reducing victimization during each stage of the planning process of a criminal conduct. Hence, the efforts have to be focused in preventing and restoring of victims. This does not mean that the criminal investigation shall be reduced; on the contrary the generation of trust exists because there is a timely response from the police forces (Weisburd & Braga, 2006).

In this order of ideas, the paradigms of criminal repression have to be transformed to guide to new ways to control crime and reduce its impact on society. Measures such as incarceration have detractors on their effectiveness given that there is no documented evidence about its effects on the reduction of crime (Clear & Frost, 2014). For example large cities in states like California, Michigan, New Jersey, New York and Texas in the United States have reduced its prison population and at the same time the crime has continued to fall (Levitt, 2004). For the years 1970 to 2000 studies found that incarceration probably reduced the crime but this decreasing relationship is not evidenced after the start of the current century (Roeder et al., 2015).

Moreover, overcrowding in penal institutions in Latin America has turned these institutions into crime schools for beginners and times of "cooling" for the most wanted criminals (United Nations Development Program [UNDP], 2013). To this reality the ineffective restoration of victims is also added especially in minor offenses and exposure of economic vulnerability of the offenders' family.

Regarding the restoration justice models, victims and perpetrators should agree on ways to compensate the caused damage with direct impact to society and increase the acceptance of this kind of justice alternatives (Karmen, 2015). Considering the importance of a clean public space to counter the insecurity feelings, the implementation of measures of social control such as graffiti cleaning or removing debris in vacant lots are alternatives with a positive impact to prevent recidivism and recover coexistence in a community (Shehayeb, Turgut & Kellett, 2007). Rethinking how to manage public safety should also consider that the traditional theories concerning the association of poverty with the configuration of crime require a more rigorous analysis. For example Kolkata in India "is not only one of the poorest cities in India and indeed the world, but also has the lowest rate of violent crime of all Indian cities" (Sen, 2007).

Similarly this Indian city has the lowest homicide rates, in 2012 reported 0.3 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants compared with 2.4 in London and 5.0 in New York (UNDP, 2013). Hence the question about the causes of crime relates to variables as inequality and lack of access to the government's attention according to the nature of the need to supply, which mostly are related to education, health and mobility (Pinker, 2011). Another social science study demonstrates a good research result that preventing school bullying decreases juvenile vandalism (Shaw, 2004) and how full-time educational programs with constructively occupation of children and adolescents time prevent gang formation and delay access to cigarettes and alcohol. Therefore, the educational projects as social investment have a higher effect on crime reduction than repressive measures (Raphael & Stoll, 2009).

In this sense every town has public institutions leading programs which can contribute to public safety by coordinating efforts to reduce the causes of deviant behavior. To begin, educational institutions not only have the responsibility to comply with standardized curricula but can also add value through the use of facilities, school practice and classroom projects that encourage social inclusion and the development of citizenship skills. Similarly, the institutions responsible for public health, promoting culture, recreation and sports have a very large operating margin to lead prevention campaigns with young populations.

It is important to consider that each municipal authority receives public expenditure accounts and reports about the development of preventive campaigns. They report minimum overall results given that these campaigns look for the concrete satisfaction of the institutional objectives instead of common goals inside of the local administration. At this point, the management of these institutions is measured by the implementation of the budget but not by the inter-agency work or resource optimization. Thus the starting point of this different way of managing the perception of insecurity must collect enough amounts of data about the fears associated with insecurity and also about available institutional programs to reduce this perception.

So far the goal is to set the baseline that enables to find some common goals of coexistence programs and alarms that requires short term attention. This procedure could start with a data collection exercise, which can be applied with students, residents and community organizations. Recognizing the nature of each institution, its institutional mission will be intact as well as its resources and programs, the only suggestion is to guide their programs' target population to those communities identified in the made diagnosis.

Once the first building exercises to institutional trust have been deployed it is necessary to measure the added value that each program can provide. This assessment brings a paradigm shift in how to improve the public management without change its institutional mission. Thus, municipal institutions would benefit from having information regarding to community needs like new areas to offer its services and products. For example, universities and institutions of technical education can focus on their academic research to the impact assessment of signed programs or even contribute to the improvement of public space where there is need for public lighting and urban redesign.

It should be noted that the construction of a system of public lighting using solar cells can be built by high school students with an investment of approximately \$ 60 per lighting unit (Social Housing Foundation [BSHF], 2014). Programs such as The Night Life Project are an example for the solution of public lighting in vulnerable areas with high poverty rates at very low costs (My Shelter Foundation, 2015) and with a high probability of linking and community empowerment.

As a second great moment of this recovery of confidence, it is necessary to visualize the already made progress. Here the results should feedback the initial diagnosis and show the evaluation of the implemented activities in terms of the offered benefit and the met need by each program.

Although accountability by public bodies is an obligation in Colombia (Committee on technical support of political accountability, 2014) this should not be confused with the monitoring progress in reducing the perception of insecurity. At this point the community must be in charge of review the program' results and contrast the addressing of inter-agency efforts with the needs transmitted by citizens.

Nowadays credibility is at the words of friends instead of institutions or expert speeches (National Observatory for Telecommunications and SI [ONTSI], 2011), therefore public administrations have to innovate in institutional credibility strategies to speak through the words of community members. In exercises of transparent public management this practice is cheaper and inclusive.

With this exercise of focused interagency integration on diagnostics of insecurity fears, the measurement indicators must be changed at the same time with the data collection in order to encourage the dynamics in the reporting of results and promptness in implementing solutions. Although the indicators are going to change, they should be stored in historical way to support the planning of public policies and investment projects from other levels of government.

As a proposal for connected resources optimization, this paper encourages improved governance, joining efforts to avoid the materialization of fears that build the perception of insecurity. This way of looking for results from a different perspective of each municipal agency does not require different resources than currently assigned. Also it can serve as a government alternative to increase scenarios for social inclusion, treatment of vulnerable populations and recovery of public confidence in their rulers and authorities.

Under no circumstances this proposal may be misinterpreted as an exercise in which the crime prosecuting is removed from responsibilities of the police and the institutions in charge of justice administration. The function of police as a result of the exercise of the social sciences is the main actor to allow linking victims, society and institutions in creating scenarios of coexistence and citizen security. In this way this paper tries to close the gap in public security management between rulers and the exclusive delegation of security issues treatment by the police. In this context, the populations most affected by violence and armed conflict will have more opportunities to access services offered by local institutions and organizations without being marginalized or treated differently. This approach allows the inclusion of ex-combatants in a holistic approach of human security, taking into account the responsibility of public institutions to create and maintain scenarios where citizens can fully exercise their rights.

Conclusions

Although the scientific practice of social sciences is a difficult issue to materialize in the exercise of the police function, given the complexity of human relationships and their measurement, statistics is the discipline that can be applied to display the efficiency and effectiveness of plans and programs. Taking into account that these plans have been designed to preserve public safety there is the necessity to constantly evaluate their impact on reducing insecurity generators and not only in the prosecution of crime.

The application of methods to data and result analysis allows suggesting the concentration of resources or otherwise to anticipate the negative effects of bad government practice in a specific population. It does not mean that in another group, the assessed strategy has had better results. The continuous need to collect data of the citizen's perception of different society problems should encourage the creation of software that generates diagnostic questions regarding different theories of victimization and customizes them according to the context of the target population.

The territorial approach of security management cannot rest solely on policing; the latter is a support to maintain coexistence but cannot counteract the harmful effects of victimization and decrease the distrust of public institutions alone. Building trust starts with the prevention and early resolution of security needs. But the immediate reaction of the police and the timely response of the justice administrations become negligible once the crime is committed.

Preventing the causes that produce the perception of insecurity is the main aim of the authorities and public institutions. Once a victim has been degraded in its rights and freedoms by an offender the fighting against the crime is lost. The crime or its attempt can cause irreparable damage to the victim having an impact on the entire community. Social innovation is a process that occurs within a community with or without the leadership of state institutions, but always with coordination between them. Hence, institutions such as the National Police of Colombia can take part and recommend the resources optimization of other organizations that are involved in various areas of the social sciences and can satisfy the common goal of "preservation and exercise of the rights and duties of citizens".

"The various threats to public safety should be addressed through differentiated responses that take into account their organization and the spaces in which they operate: the home, the school or the public sphere" (UNDP, 2013).

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