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**Perceptions of (Narco) Violence in Monterrey, Mexico**

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**Perceptions of (Narco) Violence in Monterrey, Mexico**

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# Perceptions of (Narco) Violence in Monterrey, Mexico

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My main interest is to do a comprehensive analysis, not precisely of data and statistics, but of the way in which *regios*, Monterrey residents, live and perceive the current wave of violence. This is the perception of violence, crime and fear in Mexico's so-called *post*-neoliberal era, focusing on Monterrey's situation. How do people talk about the increasing perception of violence? Has this perception of violence changed the way in which they live? Are there different perceptions of violence across classes? What does this discourse tell us about how they live/assimilate/reproduce the violence and fear in greater society? How can we make sense of it? I argue that fear of crime and violence are playing a crucial role in disciplining citizens' lives across classes and that their subjectivities and self-governing techniques, fostered by the neoliberal structure of government, have evolved in a very particular way.

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## Glossary

ALFA	Mexican conglomerate composed based in Monterrey
CEMEX	Cementos Mexicanos
CYDSA	Celulosa y Derivados S.A.
CASEDE	Colectivo de Análisis de la Seguridad con Democracia A.C.
FEMSA	Fomento Económico Mexicano S.A de C.V.
CEDEM	Centro de Desarrollo Estratégico Metropolitano y Territorial
CIDAC	Centro de Investigación para el Desarrollo en México
ICESI	Instituto Ciudadano de Estudios Sobre Inseguridad
ITESM	Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey
MAM	Metropolitan Area of Monterrey
PAN	Partido Acción Nacional
PRI	Partido Revolucionario Institucional
SNSP	Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública
UDEM	Universidad de Monterrey
VITRO	International glass Industrial Corporation based in Monterrey
WHO	World Health Organization

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Violence and fear have been a crucial variable in social change in cities and in people's lives all around the world. In Latin America, daily violence has been shaped in a way never seen in the past; taking place alongside an intensified globalization process. Latin America's reputation of being a violent region is not new, but the situation was quite different until the mid-1980s at least in homicide statistics. Some countries such as Mexico, Brazil and Venezuela, had the same homicide rates as the U.S., while the rates in other countries, such as Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Costa Rica, were two or even three times lower (Briceño-León and Zubillaga, 2002: 19). However by 1998, according to the WHO (the World Health Organization), violence was the leading cause of death among people in the year age group of people between 15-44 in Latin America and the Caribbean, and it was the fourth cause of death for the population as a whole (WHO, 1999).

Currently, there is a strong intensification of narco-related violence across Mexico, which is changing the ways Mexicans live their lives and perceive their surroundings. My aim is to look into one of the northern Mexico cities that have been involved in the "drug war", Monterrey, and investigate how people talk about and live in this situation.

My main interest is to do a comprehensive analysis, not precisely of data and statistics, but of the way in which *regios*, Monterrey residents, live and perceive the current wave of violence. This is the perception of violence, crime and fear in Mexico's so-called *post*-neoliberal era, focusing on Monterrey's situation. How do people talk about the increasing perception of violence? Has this perception of violence changed the way in which they live? What does this discourse tell us about how they live/assimilate/reproduce the violence and fear in greater society? How can we make sense of it? I argue that fear of



crime and violence are playing a crucial role in disciplining citizens' lives across classes and that their subjectivities and self-governing techniques, fostered by the neoliberal structure of government, have evolved in a very particular way.

Why should this research be done? Monterrey, as a case study of fear and violence, remains widely unstudied. In recent years, Monterrey, which is the capital of the Mexican state Nuevo Leon, has been caught in a widespread wave of crime and violence. Narco-violence and the State's actions towards it (including military operations, police purges and, lack of accountability) have changed the way in which the city is perceived and understood by the citizenry. Therefore, I think that taking on the analysis of experiences of violence and fear in Monterrey will broaden our knowledge of the social impact of the current wave of narco-violence in Mexico and will help us understand the broader macro/neo-liberal context in which Monterrey and its society is living the current wave of violence.

To understand what is happening in Monterrey I relied on different sources of information. I briefly look into crime statistics to give a background of crime studies and measurement tools in Mexico. But even when data and statistics are fundamental to understand and take action over the violent situation in Mexico and Monterrey, those figures do not talk about how people perceive and react to this situation. Because of this, I relied on interviews with residents and direct observation. Newspapers and online forums served as a public source of debates regarding security, corruption and violence as well. Since I am a resident of Monterrey, I also draw from my own experiences and from information I have been able to collect in my everyday life, through acquaintances, family and friends.

I consider this a cross-class investigation, since violence and fear runs along and across classes. I worked towards an analysis of the experience of violence as it has been

expressed in some zones of Monterrey and by residents of the metropolitan area of Monterrey, (MAM).

I did my research by interviewing residents of different areas across MAM. These residents include ones that live in poor working-class neighborhoods in Monterrey, such as La Campana, San Bernabé and Emiliano Zapata. These are *colonias* (neighborhoods) situated either on the periphery of the metropolitan area and/or up in the hills that run across the city. These enclaves originated at the late 1970s as squatters and remain historically conflictive and marginalized.

The middle class residents that I interviewed reside mostly in MAM's municipality San Nicolás de Los Garza – Colonia Anahuac, Colonia Chapultepec, Colonia Roble Norte – ; Cumbres and Colinas de San Jerónimo, in Monterrey. The residents of these *colonias* are part of the “middle-class” spectrum.

While some of them did not mind if I used their names, an important number of them were quite interested in how I was going to use their information and the possibility of me using their real names. I assured them that their personal information would remain anonymous.

I will divide my work into four parts. Part one will be a general overview of violence in Latin America as well as a detailed description of Monterrey and how studying the city is relevant for the understanding of the narco-related violence in Mexico.

Then, I review studies done in Latin America related to violence in the period of so-called neo-liberal regime deepening. I will be referring to studies on cultural neoliberalism, neoliberal and spatial governmentality and fear and perception of crime theory, which are mostly focused in North America and Brazil, but I found these studies useful to understand the Monterrey case.

Part three will deal with how the residents of Monterrey talk about their daily lives, how violence affected them and their fear of crime. I focus on the recurring topics of their talk and its structure. Also, I look into the role of the state and how its neo-liberal structure has shaped citizens' lives within a self-governing structure.

This part is divided into two main sections. The first one is focused on discourse surrounding the experiences and narrations of *regios* (Monterrey residents) that are low-income *colonia* residents. The other one is focused on my observations and discussions with middle class residents. While I know the term "middle class" is ambiguous, I found it useful to consolidate information. I also include newspaper and social media analysis to some extent, as well as information gathered from certain websites on the internet.

After that, I continue with my conclusions of how individuals in Monterrey have perceived insecurity and fear and how it has permeated into their lives. In other words, how crime, violence and fear have shaped people's lives.

Writing and researching about violence in my hometown has not been easy, it has been stressful and filled with feelings of uncertainty and anger. I did it while thinking of how to make a better country, a better city. With this research I hope to produce material that will help us understand the realities of Monterrey and strive to create a better city for all *regios*.

## **Overview**

In this section I will give an overview of some of the major transformations of Monterrey. This section is made up of crime and violence statistics from Mexico and Nuevo León. I am doing this with the purpose of giving the background of the crime and

violence information available, highlighting some major flaws and then continuing with violence perception surveys that will open the way to my core analysis.

Monterrey is the capital city of the northeastern Mexican state of Nuevo León. It is the third largest metropolitan area in Mexico and is an important industrial and business center. At the end of the 1970s, Nuevo Leon was the second industrial hub in Mexico, only after Mexico City. It was home to five of the most important corporations in Latin America (ALFA, CYDSA, CEMEX, FEMSA and VITRO). It was also during this decade that MAM was integrated. Between the 1960s and 1970s, both Guadalupe and San Nicolás de los Garza joined the metropolis, followed by Apodaca, San Pedro, Santa Catarina and Escobedo (Solis, 2007: 61).

MAM ranks first in economic competitiveness in Mexico. According to a study done in 2007 for the Ministry of Federal Economy by *Centro de Estudios de Investigación y Docencia Económica* – CIDE – MAM ranks first from 60 metropolitan areas in Mexico (Lara, 2008).

Just like other cities in Latin America, MAM has witnessed increasing trends of inequality, “opulence and indigence, luxury and penury, copiousness and impecuniousness” (Wacquant, 1999: 1641). MAM has been very influenced, both culturally and economically, by the overall globalization forces, especially by being so close to the border with the U.S.

The industrial structure of the state includes oil refining and heavy and light manufacturing. It also has a rich agricultural core, as shown by the orange belt on the map below, which is found on the southern municipalities of Allende, Montemorelos, Hualahuises, General Terán and Linares.

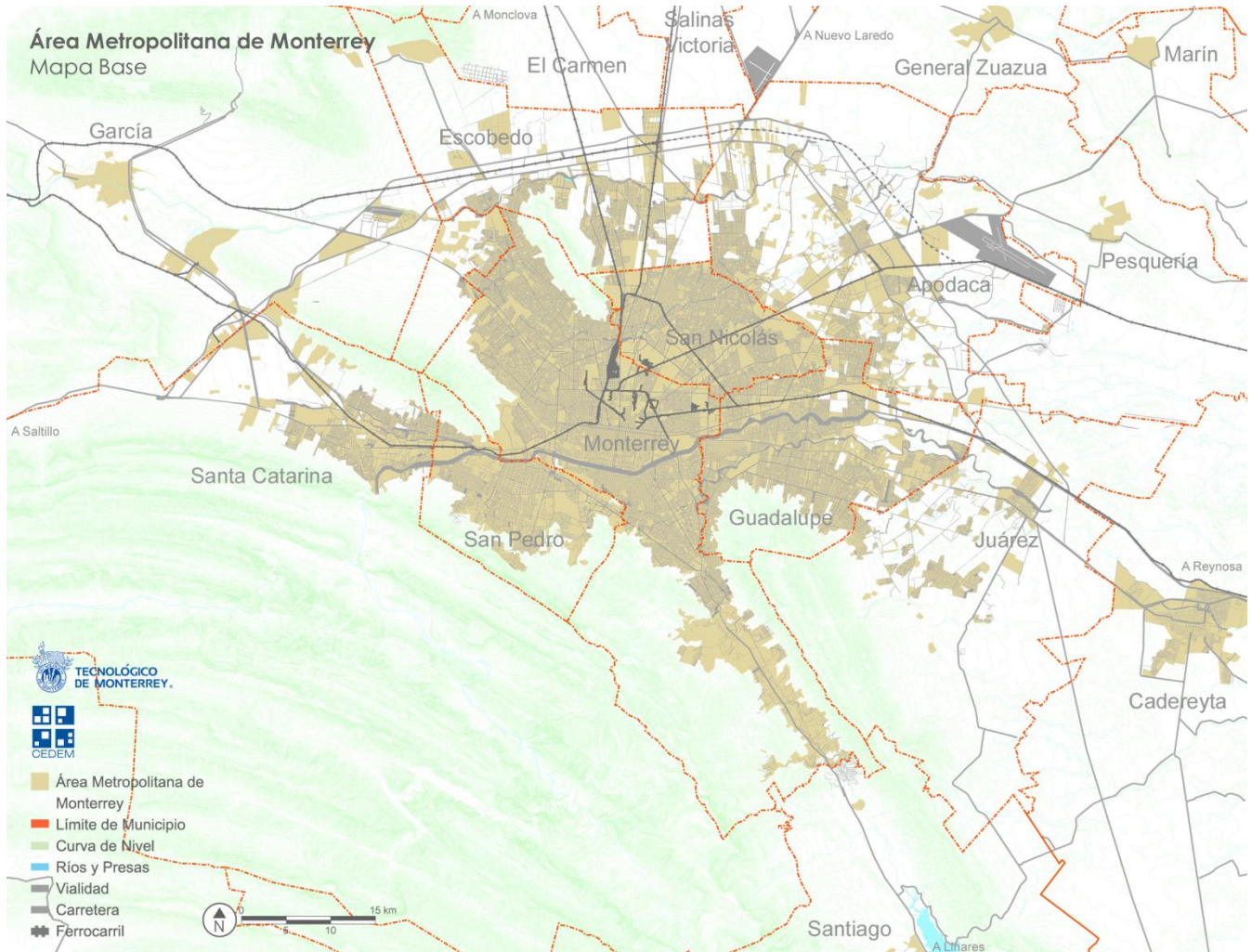
While industrial MAM and the orange belt enjoy economic wealth, the southern part of the state (including the municipalities of Galeana, Arramberri, Zaragoza, Doctor Arroyo and Mier y Noriega) remains poor largely due to climatic and geographic conditions that make the area unsuitable for agriculture and livestock.



Figure 1 - Map of Nuevo León

Figure 2 - Metropolitan Area of Monterrey Map.

(Gujardo 2002)



Impressive demographic growth occurred during the industrial boom of the city, from 389,629 in 1950 to 3,243,466.0 inhabitants in 2000, having the greatest growth during the 1970s and 1980s. The massive growth in population was crucial in the formation of the historically marginalized *colonias* around the city. “In 1965, 70% of male population was migrant, from which 63% had a rural background... at the end of 1960s, the migrant

absorption became difficult, because of its intensity and the lack of infrastructure and public service to accommodate such a huge number of new residents.” (Solis 2002: 61)

Table 1 - Total Population of MAM

INEGI(2000)

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	1995	2000
Nuevo León	740,191.0	1,078,848.0	1,694,689.0	2,513,044.0	3,098,736.0	3,550,114.0	3,834,141.0
AMM	389,629.0	723,739.0	1,254,691.0	2,011,936.0	2,573,527.0	2,988,081.0	3,243,466.0
Apodaca	4,915.0	6,259.0	18,564.0	37,181.0	115,913.0	219,153.0	283,497.0
Parte del AMM (%)	1.3	0.9	1.5	1.8	4.5	7.3	8.7
Escobedo	2,066.0	1,824.0	10,515.0	37,756.0	98,147.0	176,869.0	233,457.0
Parte del AMM (%)	0.5	0.3	0.8	1.9	3.8	5.9	7.2
García	4,769.0	4,091.0	6,477.0	10,434.0	13,164.0	23,981.0	28,974.0
Parte del AMM (%)	1.2	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.8	0.9
Guadalupe	12,610.0	38,233.0	159,930.0	370,908.0	535,560.0	618,933.0	670,162.0
Parte del AMM (%)	3.2	5.3	12.7	18.4	20.8	20.7	20.7
Juárez	2,839.0	3,166.0	5,656.0	13,490.0	28,014.0	50,009.0	66,497.0
Parte del AMM (%)	0.7	0.4	0.5	0.7	1.1	1.7	2.0
Monterrey	339,282.0	601,085.0	858,107.0	1,090,009.0	1,069,238.0	1,088,143.0	1,110,997.0
Parte del AMM (%)	87.1	83.1	68.4	54.2	41.5	36.4	34.2
San Nicolás	10,543.0	41,243.0	113,074.0	280,696.0	436,603.0	487,924.0	496,878.0
Parte del AMM (%)	2.7	5.7	9.0	14.0	17.0	16.3	15.3
San Pedro	5,228.0	14,943.0	45,983.0	81,974.0	113,040.0	120,913.0	125,978.0
Parte del AMM (%)	1.3	2.1	3.7	4.1	4.4	4.0	3.9
Santa Catarina	7,377.0	12,895.0	36,385.0	89,488.0	163,848.0	202,156.0	227,026.0
Parte del AMM (%)	1.9	1.8	2.9	4.4	6.4	6.8	7.0

## **Chapter 2: Public Security in Mexico and Monterrey**

One of the main concerns for Mexicans is the security issue. There are several organizations, both public and private, that take on a formulation of tools to measure crime and violence rates, as well as society's perception of it. I referred to databases from organizations such as ICESI, CASEDE, INEGI, SNSP and CIDAC, from which SNSP and INEGI is a governmental body. In general, all of them situate Nuevo León as one of the most secure states in México, and while its security problems were not as high as in states such as Chihuahua and Sinaloa – as of late 2009 – those think tanks recommended urgent measures to control and avoid larger problems. But there is a larger problem with criminality and violence numbers in Mexico.

According to CIDAC (2009) during 2008, the number of crime reports in Mexico grew 5.7% – from 1,622,302 to 1,714,771. Chihuahua came up as the state with higher criminal incidence and Baja California and Sinaloa as the states with more organized crime related violence. Also, according to CASEDE, Mexico City is the entity with more stolen cars and is below the national average for homicides and executions. All of the organizations have had obstacles gathering the necessary information to create congruent studies. The lack of information and the unwillingness of the Office of the State Attorney General to reveal numbers related to crime are the main reasons.

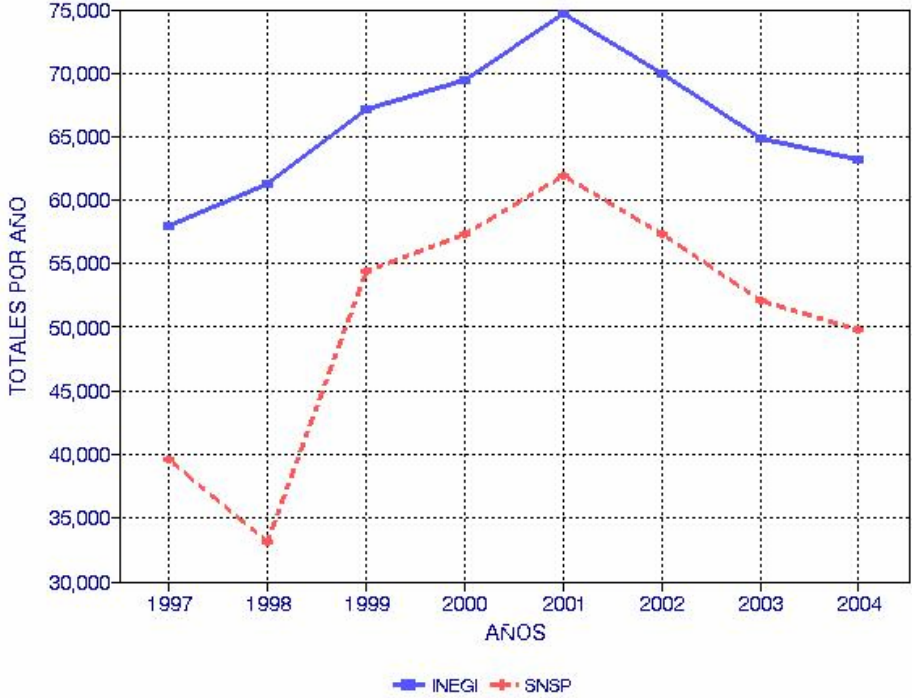
As a result, the organizations listed above took the lead on alternative measures and tools besides the official crime reports. They are creating surveys focused on perception and subjective experience of (in) security, which has been a tendency all around the world. (Koonings 2007: 41). At the national level, ICESI argues that only one in five victims report the crime (2010)



ICESI has pointed out a major flaw on the creation of criminality statistics in Nuevo León. “Nuevo León statistics partially justify two ‘official’ series of registered crimes, from SNSP and INEGI. They have, in theory, information gathered from the Office of the State Attorney General. Both reveal top crimes rates in Nuevo León municipalities. The series should be complementary – as in the other states’ relations – but actually INEGIs figures are 30.2% larger than SNSP’s.”

Graph 1- Registered crimes in Nuevo León According to SNSP and INEGI

(ICESI 2005: 3)



Official statistics on crime and violence in Mexico are generally considered untrustworthy. (Arango and Medina 2007) The most important factor that accounts for unreliable statistics is that government institutions are able to provide information only about crimes that are

actually reported to them and processed by the judicial system. Therefore, “real” crime rates can only be estimated if unreported crimes are taken into consideration.

In an official study sponsored by the federal congress (González Plascencia *et al.*, 2007) one of the main questions is how valid are official statistics. They admit that statistics are useful as far as pointing to the government institutional behavior and the way in which it defines and construct crimes, but lack systematic processes and offer a distorted image of reality, so they are unable to show tendencies.

### **Perception of violence and fear of crime in numbers**

As previously mentioned, several organizations have elaborate databases related to perception of violence and fear of crime in Mexico. ICESI is one of those organizations, which creates the ENSI report (National Survey on Insecurity) to generate victimization, social perception of insecurity indexes, as well as criminological policies proposals.

Below are two tables extracted from ENSI-2010, which includes information about perception of insecurity related to violence in several Mexican states. Besides Nuevo León, I chose to include states such as Baja California, Tamaulipas, Chihuahua and Sinaloa, as well as Mexico City, as they are considered the states with the most severe violence and insecurity problems. I added the state of Nayarit, which is one of the safest – and certainly not the only - states of Mexico with the objective of showing the tremendous differences between perception of violence in different locations of Mexico in statistics.

The table shows Chihuahua – where Ciudad Juárez is located – as the state with the highest insecurity perception, which actually lowered from 2008 to 2009. In the case of

Nuevo León, insecurity perception in this location is not as high as in Chihuahua, but rose from 2008 to 2009. Only in Nayarit and Chihuahua insecurity perception is overall lower.

It is important to point out the fact that the 2009 numbers for Tamaulipas are not available. In the ENSI report, ICESI quotes “The interviews done in Tamaulipas were not carried out in adequate conditions due to the surveillance of unidentified persons in several cities of this state.” (ICESI 2010).

ICESI’s ENSI report is one example of the diverse approximations to measure perceptions of insecurity/violence. These measures can go from affective fear reactions in specific settings (Nasar and Jones 1997, Van der Wurff *et al.* 1989) through to individual assessments of crime risk or incidence (O’Connell and Whelan 1996; Rountree and Land 1996). These measurement instruments show the continuous disagreement by researchers over the structure and measurement of fear of crime, along with constant discrepancies within research data, which appear to characterize this field of study.

One of the main contributions to the insecurity perception studies has been that its real rise or reduction is not completely corresponding to insecurity feelings (Garofalo 1979, Alvira 1982, Fernández 1994, Chiricos *et al.* 2000, Williams, McShane and Akers, 2000; González Plascencia, 2002). “After a reflexive critique, it is clear enough that citizen insecurity towards criminality is the product of a complex social construction where the effective crime risk has a relative marginal role (Baratta 1998 in Naredo 2001).

Table 2 - Perception of insecurity in different locations – 2008															
How safe you feel in the following locations?															
State	Home?			Work?			School?			Streets?			Supermarkets/Mercados		
	Safe	Unsafe	Do not know	Safe	Unsafe	Do not know	Safe	Unsafe	Do not know	Safe	Unsafe	Do not know	Safe	Unsafe	Do not know
Baja California	85.9%	14.0%	0.1%	75.4%	24.3%	.3%	70.1%	26.7%	3.3%	29.5%	70.1%	.4%	49.1%	50.4%	.5%
Chihuahua	80.1%	19.6%	0.3%	59.2%	39.9%	.9%	49.7%	49.0%	1.3%	20.6%	79.2%	.3%	27.8%	71.5%	.7%
Distrito Federal	83.1%	16.7%	0.2%	65.6%	34.1%	.3%	56.0%	43.0%	1.0%	21.1%	78.7%	.2%	34.5%	64.6%	.9%
Nayarit	93.4%	6.6%		84.5%	15.3%	.2%	87.1%	12.2%	.7%	63.0%	36.6%	.4%	69.4%	30.4%	.2%
Nuevo León	87.4%	12.4%	0.1%	76.3%	23.5%	.2%	74.0%	25.8%	.2%	30.8%	68.9%	.3%	39.1%	60.3%	.6%
Sinaloa	87.3%	12.3%	0.4%	70.2%	29.4%	.4%	69.9%	27.9%	2.2%	35.8%	62.7%	1.5%	39.9%	57.4%	2.6%
Tamaulipas	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: ICESI 2010

Table 3 - Perception of insecurity in different locations – 2008															
How safe you feel in the following locations?															
State	Shopping Malls?			Public Transportation?			Your car?			Highways?			Parks and recreation spots?		
	Safe	Unsafe	Do not know	Safe	Unsafe	Do not know	Safe	Unsafe	Do not know	Safe	Unsafe	Do not know	Safe	Unsafe	Do not know
Baja California	48.4%	51.0%	.6%	34.0%	64.8%	1.2%	57.3%	42.1%	.5%	38.4%	60.8%	.8%	42.9%	54.7%	2.3%
Chihuahua	32.2%	67.2%	.6%	23.6%	75.4%	1.0%	35.4%	64.1%	.5%	25.4%	72.8%	1.8%	27.7%	68.4%	3.9%
Distrito Federal	47.4%	52.5%	.1%	16.7%	83.3%	.0%	40.6%	58.6%	.8%	42.7%	54.0%	3.3%	31.9%	66.9%	1.1%
Nayarit	72.8%	27.1%	.1%	63.2%	36.6%	.2%	77.6%	22.2%	.2%	61.1%	38.6%	.3%	75.3%	24.1%	.6%
Nuevo León	51.5%	48.0%	.5%	25.6%	73.6%	.8%	54.9%	44.7%	.4%	39.0%	58.3%	2.7%	45.5%	52.8%	1.7%
Sinaloa	41.5%	55.4%	3.1%	36.3%	63.0%	.7%	52.0%	47.1%	.9%	41.0%	56.7%	2.3%	40.6%	51.9%	7.6%
Tamaulipas	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: ICESI 2010

Table 4 - Perception of insecurity in different locations – 2009															
How safe you feel in the following locations?															
State	Home?			Work?			School?			Streets?			Supermarkets/ <i>Mercados</i>		
	Safe	Unsafe	Do not know	Safe	Unsafe	Do not know	Safe	Unsafe	Do not know	Safe	Unsafe	Do not know	Safe	Unsafe	Do not know
Baja California	75.3%	24.5%	0.2%	65.4%	33.3%	1.3%	47.2%	51.4%	1.4%	29.9%	69.3%	.7%	43.0%	56.8%	.2%
Chihuahua	85.6%	14.4%		77.2%	22.4%	.5%	74.8%	22.4%	2.8%	38.6%	61.3%	.1%	48.4%	51.4%	.3%
Distrito Federal	79.9%	19.9%	0.2%	62.8%	36.3%	.9%	55.2%	42.6%	2.1%	21.2%	78.7%	.2%	35.5%	64.4%	.1%
Nayarit	94.4%	5.5%	0.1%	84.0%	15.9%	.1%	88.0%	9.4%	2.6%	67.3%	32.1%	.6%	71.5%	28.2%	.3%
Nuevo León	82.1%	17.9%		84.5%	14.9%	.6%	65.6%	28.6%	5.8%	34.4%	64.9%	.7%	47.7%	51.2%	1.1%
Sinaloa	82.1%	17.8%	0.1%	69.5%	29.5%	1.0%	55.5%	36.2%	8.3%	37.0%	62.8%	.2%	39.9%	59.7%	.5%
Tamaulipas	86.8%	13.1%	0.1%	72.8%	26.1%	1.1%	71.7%	22.3%	5.9%	44.1%	55.7%	.3%	53.7%	45.7%	.6%

Table 5 - Perception of insecurity in different locations – 2009															
How safe you feel in the following locations?															
State	Shopping Malls?			Public Transportation?			Your car?			Highways?			Parks and recreation spots?		
	Safe	Unsafe	Do not know	Safe	Unsafe	Do not know	Safe	Unsafe	Do not know	Safe	Unsafe	Do not know	Safe	Unsafe	Do not know
Baja California	42.6%	57.0%	.5%	28.1%	71.4%	.5%	52.2%	47.2%	.6%	32.8%	63.7%	3.5%	42.6%	55.2%	2.3%
Chihuahua	54.9%	44.9%	.2%	36.0%	63.6%	.4%	56.8%	42.2%	1.0%	42.9%	56.6%	.5%	53.2%	43.5%	3.3%
Distrito Federal	55.4%	44.2%	.4%	12.6%	87.4%		41.2%	57.9%	.9%	44.7%	52.9%	2.3%	36.5%	62.4%	1.1%
Nayarit	74.5%	25.2%	.3%	59.9%	39.9%	.2%	80.1%	19.5%	.4%	48.6%	50.1%	1.3%	70.7%	28.7%	.6%
Nuevo León	62.2%	37.3%	.4%	33.2%	66.2%	.6%	70.0%	29.4%	.7%	47.4%	50.5%	2.1%	52.8%	45.7%	1.5%
Sinaloa	43.1%	56.8%	.2%	34.9%	65.0%	.2%	50.7%	48.5%	.8%	35.8%	62.0%	2.3%	40.0%	57.9%	2.1%
Tamaulipas	59.3%	40.1%	.6%	43.5%	56.5%		61.1%	38.8%	.2%	45.7%	53.5%	.9%	55.8%	43.0%	1.2%

Source: ICESI 2010

Which mechanisms are shaping the citizenry perception of public insecurity and what is making the people feel more secure than others? The insecurity perception studies lead us to start with defining perception. By limiting and clarifying its definition, we can identify two of its components, one being objective and the other one subjective (Gudiño 2001):

- a) The objective component can be defined as the “real” insecurity present in the community. The objective aspect leads us to physical and completely verifiable. Its core lies on its probability levels, meaning the degree of certainty of the insecurity-generated event.
- b) The subjective component refers to the insecurity sensation. It is related to those stimuli that generate favorable or unfavorable attitude from a person to specific events.

According to this definition, the objective component is the crime rates within a specific region or city, where the probability of being victimized is higher than others.

In this sense, Nuevo León crime statistics show a decrease in reported crimes, according to INEGI numbers (2009), but ICESI and CASEDE numbers show that decrease is not considerable and they argue crime is actually increasing (which if you live in Monterrey, you will not take long to notice). Also, there is an increase of unreported crimes and it is worth considering that the real rate of crimes is higher than the official reports. The so-called *cifra negra* (black numbers) in Mexico, or unreported number of crimes, which is the result of the amount of crimes not reported and the faulted crime registries done by the authorities (Becerra Sánchez 2007: 108)

Bergman (2009) argues that there is indeed a sharp rise of criminality in Mexico since the 1990s and it is strongly interrelated to major social (neoliberal style) transformations in the 1990s. These transformations, such as unemployment, the

composition of relative size cohorts and the structure of labor market paved the way for the worsening of social conditions. So, it is because of the gradual decay of the social conditions in the country that the number of potential criminals, marginalized by the current economic and social system, increased.

So, the perception of violence and fear of crime in Mexico is not paranoia, not a false anxiety. Not even the slight reduction of reported crimes in official reports has reduced the violence perceptions of the citizenry. It is precisely this steady – and even increasing – level of fear of crime and violence that I am interested in studying.

### **Chapter 3: Violence in Latin America**

The contemporary escalation of violence in Latin America is not only rooted in expanding systematic state abuse but, rather, comes out of rapidly increasing crime feeding off the world cocaine market, the growth of the international arms trade, and the institutional state changes in an era of globalization (Arias 2006). It is thus a violence born of a process of global mutation, which fosters changes and interacts with local trends in countries having dependent economies.

Despite the dissolution of authoritarian regimes and the establishment of political democracy in Latin American countries, the region is plagued by pervasive violence. The structural violence and violations of citizens' civil rights contrast with the enforcement of their political rights. The "disjunctive" (Holston and Caildeira 1999) nature of democracy in Latin American is regularly cited as a proof of failure. This concept goes along with the view that violence is not merely the result of institutional failure or "social aberration"; rather, it is closely linked to the institutions and policies of economic liberalization and democratization (Arias and Goldstein 2010)

Urban violence in Latin America is then the result of a combination of complements and conflicts in the global and local dimensions, and in the traditional and modern social processes (García-Canclini 1995). This means that the economic, political and cultural trends of globalization, embodied in the new forms of business organization and technology, blend with the traditional forms of social organization within each region.

In Mexico, violence, especially narco-related violence, has escalated and become one of the main concerns of the current Mexican presidential administration. One of the main characteristics of the Calderon's administration, starting in 2006, is the severely



armed/militarized and repressive response to narco-threats which has been “blooming” in states and cities where narco-violence was not part of everyday news.

Narco-related violence has not been this common or this constant for many decades, since the 1920s when anti-marijuana and anti-poppy laws were created and the number of confrontations between traffickers and law enforcement. Luis Astorga (2001,2005, 2009) offers a detailed account of the evolution of narcotraffic in Mexico and the conditions in which narco-related violence has flourished. According to his analysis, at the end of the 1960s, violence began to rise, but it did not yet test the state’s capability to contain the perpetrators nor did traffickers challenge the state’s monopoly on the use of force. The state’s party system - which basically was a single hegemonic party, Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI - created after the Mexican Revolution, created a corporatist structure that would control the state for 70 years. So, narcotraffic thrived within this structure, which set the bases for security institutions with extra-legal attributes that allowed the state to do two things at the same time: protect civilians and contain drug trafficking. Because of this, narcotraffic would evolve as a subordinate order as long as the authoritarian-corporatist structure could be maintained. “The relationship between Mexico’s police, the traffickers, the steady rise in violence, and the growth in the domestic market for illegal drugs, began to change as the single-party state system began to unravel. The world market for illegal drugs was growing, as was the traffickers’ economic capabilities for corruption” (Astorga in Benítez 2009: 105). Cartels grew stronger and Mexico transitioned toward democracy in 2000 with Vicente Fox, opposition PAN candidate. Organized crime and state’s previous corporatist relation did not represent a priority for the new administration, at least not in the early years of the transition. No

structures were created to transplant the corporatist relation between the narco-traffickers and the state to the democratic era.

This omission would become evident at the end of the Fox; state fragmentation and evident weaknesses in the security of public services proved inefficient in facing the growing and diversified organized criminal organizations that once were subordinated to the corporatist order.

Criminal organizations became a direct threat for the state, spreading their activities territorially and engaging in violent confrontations to establish control and eliminate competitors. These organizations diversified their activities, from narcotraffic to piracy and kidnapping.

The starting point of the current violence wave in Mexico can be situated in Nuevo Laredo in late 2005. The Gulf and Sinaloa cartels, through Zetas and Negros<sup>1</sup>, started shootouts and assassinations for months in this border city, which the Gulf cartel had controlled. One police chief, Alejandro Domínguez Coello, lasted only hours from his swearing-in to his assassination and newspapers had to stop reporting the news for fear of retaliation.

The Fox administration response to this rise in violence was the implementation of *Operación México Seguro* (OMS): Police and military forces were deployed in streets, plazas and neighborhoods to combat the trade of drugs and contraband in states of Tamaulipas, Michoacán, Guerrero, Chihuahua and Baja California. In Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas shootings in 2005, OMS strategy was complemented with a strong federal

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<sup>1</sup> Both are groups of highly trained gunmen that were first hired as private mercenary army and have evolved in more complex criminal organizations on their own. Zetas work for Cartel del Golfo (Gulf Cartel) and Negros for Cartel de Sinaloa (Sinaloa Cartel)

movement: the Mexican army and federal police took control over the city, purged the municipal police corps and placed key police elements into investigation

President Calderón began his administration in 2006 with a quick and massive response to the drug-related violence, deploying over 6,500 soldiers and federal police agents to Michoacán, with *Operación Conjunta Michoacán* (OMC), followed by operations in several other states affected by drug trafficking and violence. Calderón said he would apply the full force of the state against the drug traffic and would grant “no truce and no quarter” in combating organized crime (Cruz and Garduño 2007).

Nuevo León, as highlighted before, was known as one of the safest regions of Mexico. The increasing violence in the country has affected this state also, where increasing drug-related executions are becoming a daily part of the news. In February 2007, *Operación Conjunta Nuevo León- Tamaulipas* deployed 3,499 soldiers, using three airplanes and six helicopters with the goal of capturing members of Gulf Cartel and Los Zetas (Grayson, 2009: 87). These events have had an effect in the way the people live and experience their city as public alarm and insecurity have spread.

### **Fear of crime in Latin America – Some explanations**

Crime is currently one of the top priorities of the political agenda throughout Latin American countries. Certainly, fear of crime dominates public discourse in most of these countries. In Mexico, considerable citizen demonstrations have protested against perceived government ineffectiveness in fighting crime. Fear of crime increasingly drives public policy, as citizens’ feelings of insecurity resonate in public officials’ proposals and election results. Academics have noticed how increasing rates of public insecurity can affect, mainly

on citizens' support for democracy (Azpuru 2000, Cruz 2000). In his investigation, Cruz finds that more interviewees (55%) will justify a military coup because of their fear of crime than for any other reason, outranking other issues such as high unemployment (28%).

Since the 1990s, fear of crime has increased progressively throughout Latin America. Even in countries such as Chile, frequently regarded as the "safest" in Latin America (Ward 2001, Ayres 1998), public insecurity dominates political and social discourse. However, while citizens and politicians have become increasingly preoccupied with fear of crime, scholars of the region for the most part have not. "Growing public insecurity has not coincided with theoretical and empirical academic research on the topic in Latin America. Indeed, empirical data on public fear of crime are scarce, and the data that do exist are frequently not available to the public or to scholars." (Dammert and Malone 2003: 80).

However, public fear of crime has been subject of profound analysis from U.S. academics, and Latin American scholars have already started to build research about Latin American public insecurity upon those previous works (Caldeira 2000; Rotker 1999). I could categorize the approaches to fear of crime into four general categories: One concentrates on the relationship between fear and social identity characteristics, such as age and gender (Pain 2000, Walkate 2001). There is other one that features the significance of structural factors in fear of crime analysis that is the city geographies, urban design features and the urbanization process (Caldeira 2000, Oviedo 2000). The third emphasizes the importance of the media (Gertz 2000, O' Connell 1999). As a fourth approach, there is a increasing recognition that informal control networks help to consolidate community relations, laying the groundwork for more trust and less fear (Crawford 1998). Finally, there are some scholars that relate fear of crime not only to individual characteristics or

structural ones, but to "other" insecurities as well. There is a growing understanding that fear of crime encompasses not only fear of criminal acts per se, but rather is a manifestation of a wide range of daily insecurities, including those related to economic, political, and social issues (Dammert and Malone 2003)

Also, a number of possible consequences of this particular fear have been identified by some scholars (Box *et al.* 1986): because fear lead to wealthier citizens protecting themselves and their property, or changing neighborhood (Sampson and Wooldredge 1986), the crime incidence crime may be shifted on to those already suffering from other social and economic disadvantages (Lea and Young 1984); it fractures the sense of community and neighborhood, and turn some public spaces into no-go areas (Morgan 1978; Wilson 1975); it reduces the appeal of liberal penal policies, like decarceration and rehabilitation, hence paving the way for more incarceration and punishment (Hough 1985; Langworthy and Whitehead 1986); it settles the base of dissatisfaction from which vigilante justice might grow and thus threaten the legitimacy of the criminal justice system, particularly when courts are seen as being weak, displaying more compassion for the offender than the victim (Scheingold 1984).

People that are fearful of being criminally victimized change their habits (Garofalo, 1981, Krahn and Kennedy 1985, Skogan 1986): They incline to stay more time at home, in surroundings they have made "safer", in their possibilities, with higher walls, chains bars and alarms. When they go out, they tend to avoid activities which they perceive as dangerous, like walking down some streets, getting too close to some "types of people", using public transportation, or going to certain forms of public entertainment or places. "For those fearing victimization, each e beyond the relative safety of home is like walking

through a minefield – at any moment, a purse may be snatched, a body assaulted, a sense of dignity affronted.” (Box *et al.* 1988: 341)

Because of its essentially distressing nature and its adverse consequences for community and individuals lives, fear of crime has become a major social problem. Although some of this fear can be linked to the actual amount of criminal activity, much of it is caused by other subjective perceptual and social structural factors.

Once fear of crime becomes a ‘cultural theme’ it helps to unify experiences (Garland 2001): One can as a result present as being fearful of crime, reproduce the story that someone had a crime-related incident, and in so doing can create an experience which is comprehensible to others. It is to imply that human subjectivity and experience can be shaped and subject to the productive effects of power at the micro level of experience and action; to what Foucault speaks of as the micro-physics of power that has the capacity to take hold of the body and inscribe it with meaning.

Regarding this concept with relation to slums, Mike Davis says that “slums are frequently seen as threats simply because they are invisible to state surveillance and effectively, “off-panopticon” (2006: 111). According to this explanation, one would suppose that individuals in such areas might be less constrained by what Foucault calls capillary effects of power, perhaps disciplining their practices around alternative sources of governance or even feeling less compulsion to adhere to normativizing or hegemonic discourses. (Becker 1963, MacLeod 1987).

Indeed, there are works within anthropology and sociology that take on this idea (Caldeira 2000, Goldstein 2003, Leeds 1996), identifying that material state presence is reduced in areas such as low-income communities (effective police force, adequate urban infrastructure, schools, hospitals, and so on). According to those studies, in these areas, the

“law” and rules are defined and enforced by local forms of governance (like gangs and drug traffickers) rather than “officially” recognized state actors. But is it necessary to have material panopticon presence to produce state? I would say no, and that citizens across classes are all disciplined, through different mechanism, but disciplined as well.

I suggest that within Foucaultian framework, the Mexican state very much persists across the different classes. How state is constituted through governmentality? Overlapping and sometimes intertwining with local forms of governance that have emerged in lieu of material state presence. Fear and vulnerability (social/economic) are certainly important factors in the disciplinary process, governmentalizing individual bodies through everyday activities. For Michel Foucault, the modern state apparatus governs through the “ensemble” of micro-practices, technologies, and self-disciplinary behaviors that individuals enact in everyday life (Foucault 1991: 102). He would say, “with government it is a question not of imposing law on men (sic), but of disposing things: that is to say, of employing tactics rather than laws, and even of using laws themselves as tactics – to arrange things in such a way that, through certain number of means, such and such ends may be achieved (1991: 95). This notion, governmentality, is less about governing by force as it is about the “production” of a population in which citizens discipline themselves, and more particularly their bodies, effectively enacting the state in their daily practice.

Foucault argues that the precise control of bodies in space is achieved through biopower (Foucault 1990). Brown writes about this concept: “biopolitics frames rationalities through which problems of the governed are discovered, classified, diagnosed and ‘solved’” (2009: 4). Timothy Mitchell conceived the Foucaultian state as an “effect” (1999: 89), constituted by and indivisible from the same social practices (including language and discourse) that constitute other apparent structures, such as the economy and

society. More directly, the state is the effect of governmentality made productive, operationalized through embodied practices that constitute (but not limited to) institutions of law, governance, health, education, etc. Secor says, “In everyday life the state is experienced and recognized through a multiplicity of sites, agents, institutions, techniques and regulatory practices” (2007: 33). It is precisely these everyday experiences that I am interested to analyze. Through observation, casual talks and interviews, along with media research, I gathered information to understand how fear of crime and violence are perceived by individuals and embodied in their everyday life. Before that, I will give as an introduction to the core analysis, an overview of Monterrey as well as a brief general idea of perception of violence and crime risk statistics. I believe this overview on the statistics is necessary to shed some light on the way in which fear of crime has been measured and studied. I believe this overview opens the way to my analysis of experiences of fear of crime and violence, where governmentality works through fear.



## Chapter 4: Monterrey – Citizens’ talk

I carried out interviews with a total of 9 residents, and I conducted the interviews asking them “how was everything”: how was life, work, family, etc. Also, I asked if they noticed any major changes in their city and environment within the last 2-3 years. The unanimous response was lack of security and narco-violence. Even during our conversations covering many topics, I focused in on their “violence talk”, their perceptions and fear of crime and how their routines have changed, if they had changed at all. My analysis is based on interviews, media information, and most importantly, direct observation.

Table 6 - List of interviewees

Interviewee	Gender	Age	Class	Neighborhood
Pedro	Male	Late 20s	Middle-low	Monterrey/San Bernabé
Gloria	Female	35	Low	Monterrey/Emiliano Zapata
María	Female	30	Middle-low	Monterrey/La Campana
Adela	Female	50	Middle	San Nicolás/Chapultepec
José	Male	58	Middle	San Nicolás/Chapultepec
Luis	Male	40	Middle	San Nicolás/Lomas del Roble
Alejandro	Male	24	Middle-upper	Monterrey/Cumbres
Juan	Male	27	Middle-upper	Monterrey/Cumbres
Marisa	Female	24	Middle-upper	Monterrey/Colinas de San Jerónimo

The manner in which Monterrey residents spoke about their thoughts and life within the context of narco-violence revolved around several topics. When I conducted the

interviews and engaged in direct observation in 2010, the city, just as the rest of the country, was living in times of economic recession. Monterrey is known as one of the most progressive cities in the country and certainly the strongest city in north Mexico, and without doubt it is one of the cities that recovered the quickest from the 2009 economic crisis. This happened in a context in which the city, known as being the top industrial hub in Mexico and home of powerful Mexican industries, has seen how its main corporations were sold to foreign transnational companies. For the purpose of this work, I focused most on their experiences of fear, distrust and violence.

The vanishing entrepreneurial spirit of the city, together with the narco-violence wave and the economic crisis, act as the scenario in which the interview was conducted. The state is increasingly mistrusted within the society on environmental matters due to their many unfulfilled promises in this area. Citizen's words reveal frustrations and uncertainties with the state. Most of them could not think of a time when the overall living situation was worse. All of the interviewees, (even the upper-class residents whom I thought would be more optimistic) show a tremendous distrust in the system.

*Nunca habíamos estado tan mal. ¿qué pasa con Monterrey? Siempre habíamos sido tan diferentes a todo México, nunca con estos niveles de violencia. Ahora uno se tiene que andar cuidando en todos lados, como si fuera Ciudad Juárez. (Alejandro)*

The fact that the past was a lot better was generalized, as explained by José,

*Necesitamos mano dura, alcaldes duros... como Mauricio<sup>2</sup>. A mí que me importa tener planes a largo plazo para mejorar la situación de los que “están en desventaja”. Yo quiero mi tranquilidad! Como antes! Mauricio está exagerando tal*

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<sup>2</sup> Mauricio Fernandez is the mayor of San Pedro for the 2009-2012 administration. I will talk about him in later sections.

*vez, es muy hoción y dice incoherencias, eso de su escuadrón de limpieza es muy exagerado... pero algo tiene que hacer! Y tiene razón que necesitamos alcaldes fuertes.... Cual es el mejor ejemplo que tenemos del mugrero que es nuestro gobierno actual? Medina! Que casualidad que todos nuestros problemas actuales van mano a mano con ese gobernador. (Alejandro)*

A recurring focus in the interviews was the desire for a stronger state, to “go back to the way everything was”. And if they are talking about past administrations, they are referring to more authoritarian politicians, with a strong legacy of the 70-year long PRI dictatorship. I identify this as a clear example of the indefinite idea of democracy and democratic values Monterrey residents have. This reveals an obvious concern of solving immediate, obvious problems that are present in the society. This tendency followed is common among most of the interviewees.

*Claramente algo está pasando. Monterrey es muy diferente al resto del país. Nos distinguíamos por ser la ciudad industrial, emprendedora, segura... Si todo México hubiera sido como Monterrey en sus buenos tiempos, ya no estaríamos pasando estos problemas... No nos hubieran contagiado de esos problemas de Tamaulipas y Chihuahua. Habría más desarrollo económico, más estabilidad. Pero no, todo se fue. (Alejandro)*

The difficult economic and social situation in which the residents find themselves was present in the interviews. Obviously, these hardships were experienced differently throughout different sectors of the Monterrey population.

I asked open questions, to discuss interviewees everyday lives, their thoughts about their lives in MAM, specifically in their *colonia*, and their overall satisfaction with the situation of their community. That was the basis for my interviews. After, the conversations

took their own course. Stories and anecdotes flowed while I focused on their talk about fear of crime and insecurity.

Before I give a detailed analysis of the citizens' talk, I would like to give a brief compendium of the main findings. There is a change in practices across classes, which is canalized in different ways. The overall premise is that as fear of crime and narco-violence increases in MAM, and government has proven unable to deliver in terms of public security, citizens protect themselves by all means possible. "Fear can be determined in relation to an individual's ability to exercise control over their own life and the behaviors and activities of others," (Bannister and Fyfe 2001: 809) and the ability to exercise control and to self-govern varies across classes, gender and age.

While the poor have seen how the city and their neighborhood have changed because of violence (both perceived and real), they do not have enough social capital or access to resources that can help them pressure the state for real presence within their residential area. Their neighborhoods are commonly known as being dangerous, which means that violence is not a new thing within their lives.

This contrasts with middle/middle-upper class residents' perceptions. A couple of years ago, middle-class residents would not have believed someone could get caught in a narco-crossfire in the middle of a main avenue of Monterrey. Now the situation is different: shootings in middle/upper-middle class enclaves, such as in the prestigious ITESM university campus and wealthy colonias, have put them in alert/fearful mode. A series of techniques to self-govern are within the reach of this class and are part of the changes in their everyday life routines: *blindajes* (armoring), security-oriented *juntas de vecinos* and social media/internet tools are examples of how residents have reacted to fear of crime and violence. The residents with the highest incomes have the possibility of leaving the country

to the U.S. – especially Texas. For example, Alejandro Junco owner of El Norte, the newspaper with most circulation in Nuevo León, moved to Austin, Texas for security reasons<sup>3</sup>.

Perceptions and changes on practices/routines also vary according to gender. Mothers tend to protect their children and make sure they do not move through the city by themselves. Sometimes this behavior is reinforced by state institutions: An example would be how some schools recommend parents that they should pick children up at the end of the day, as a security measure.

Men usually are the ones with the task of protecting their moms/wives/girlfriend/sisters. This is if they can “afford it” (e.g. Do women have to go out and work? Do they have a late night job? Is there a man in the family?). Men would pick them up or do errands so that women would not be out by themselves. I noticed that while most interviewees would avoid being out late at night, it was men that would go out if there was the need. For women it is quite common to have curfews imposed by their parents. Both men and women tend to live with their parents until they get married or they are in their late 20s/early 30s, so, the “you live in my house, you follow my rules” argument applies well into children’s adult life, mostly women’s lives.

Young adult men that took the lead in the use of social media to report and inform about ongoing narco-violence,. These men mostly used social media such as Twitter to report updates in ongoing shootings, like the one that took place in ITESM campus. Nevertheless, internet tools such as Twitter and Facebook have proven to be largely democratized and their use is expanding across the country.

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<sup>3</sup> One example is posted on Cortijo del Rio’s junta de vecinos’ blog. The post is called “Vámonos a San Antonio”, referring to the Texan city, which is one of the most popular destinations for regios to move because of the insecurity.

## Living in colonias conflictivas

I interviewed citizens of some of the historically poor zones in MAM. Two of them live in *colonias* that were created and/or expanded greatly during the Monterrey economic growth during the 60s and 70s. As previously mentioned in the introduction, these *colonias* started as squatters and infrastructure has grown tremendously since then. But still, they have unpaved roads, maze-like arrangement and low-quality public infrastructure. These settlements have been labeled as *colonias conflictivas* (dangerous neighborhoods), not only by the state, but also by the private sector. I noticed that certain companies may have to pay certain organization within these *colonias* so that they can deliver their services or products<sup>4</sup>. Residents from these *colonias* have seen how, in the past couple of years, the overall social and security has declined in the area where they live.

I observed and, specifically, interviewed three persons that either work or live in La Campana, Fernando Amilpa and San Bernabé. Two residents and one community activist shared some moments, as well as thoughts and reflections about their environment with me. Throughout our conversation, I perceived how their discussion concerning their neighbors and overall situation was not a very optimistic one. The image I saw while I visited the *colonias* is explained by Patricia Cerda (2009) in her study “Diagnóstico Situacional Sobre Violencia, Equidad y Género en Nuevo León”. She did research on the conflictive zones in MAM, where intra-familiar and urban violence have the highest rates in the state.

It is precisely in these areas that she identified the potential of the supposed 11,000 gang members to join organized crime as cheap labor. So, it is in an environment where

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<sup>4</sup> In 2007 I worked delivering letters and small packages from door to door for 2 weeks as part of my introductory training program in a document and package delivery company in Monterrey. I spent time with

household violence, lack of quality employment opportunities and high rates of school dropouts and robbery reports are the common denominators.

Since I focused on their perceptions of fear of crime and violence, which are increasingly related to Narco, I focused my interviews on how they feel and assimilate changes in their lives related to narco-images, such as the Zetas<sup>5</sup>,

*Aca las cosas ya no están igual que antes...*

*Que ha cambiado?*

*Antes claro que había violencia, y claro que estaba mal la cosa. Siempre ha habido gente que no trabaja. Muchos hombres se la pasan en la banqueta tomando. Hay peleas. Pero hace poco empezaron a llegar hombres a controlar las cosas.*

*Que cosas?*

*La venta de drogas. Mira, aquí siempre ha habido consumo. Aquí se dividían sus territorios y cada quien hacía su negocio, pero desde hace tiempo llegaron de afuera... zetas, o esos. Así les dicen...*

*-Como cuánto tiempo calculas que tienen de haber llegado?*

*Tal vez unos dos años. Y bueno, llegaron y hasta donde sé, todo cambió. La gente tiene más miedo. Antes se peleaban los chavos de las pandillas, no te voy a decir que era todo paz, pero ahora ya no controlan ellos su territorio, llegaron los zetas a cambiar, a reacomodar. Cuando ellos quieren, se desaloja una casa. Cuando ellos*

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<sup>5</sup> The figure of a criminal, a Zeta or narco, is an ambiguous one. There are not specific characteristics that would let us identify who is one and who is not. People tend to use it widely and there is not a fixed image to identify it. For example, a person that is driving a big truck with smoked windows could be perceived as a narco.

*quieren, quitan a un distribuidor y dicen quien va a ser... Ahora se matan pero porque los mandan, ya no deciden sobre ellos.*

*- Por ejemplo?*

*Me contaron que al hijo de mi vecina lo mataron y a los pocos días, el chavo que lo mató fue a ver a la mamá del que mató... Le pidió perdón, le dijo que fueron órdenes de arriba.... Estas cosas pasan, no quiero que creas que así es siempre eh, esta colonia le dicen conflictiva pero la verdad es que hay de todo, hay gente normal, gente trabajadora, por ejemplo yo, yo ni al caso con todo esas cosas, esos problemas... lo que pasa es que no está bien que exista la violencia y la facilidad de que el narco entre tan fácil, pero que le hacemos... falta mucho apoyo verdadero del gobierno, ni quien nos cuide más que nosotros y en esta época tan fea, pues con más ganas tener cuidado. Nosotros somos a final de cuentas ciudadanos, y seguimos siendo honrados y echándole ganas. (Gloria)*

The way she refers to the men that are all day drinking in the sidewalk and the fact that young men rely on selling drugs to survive is important to highlight. On one side, she says it always has been that way. So I would argue that for one reason or another, their opportunities to have productive lives and a regular job are not present. She says so as if it was a situation taken for granted. On the other side, she also acknowledges the fact that even though this has been the *colonias*' condition for a long time, the fear of crime and violence is perceived as increasing.

A low-class interviewed resident, Pedro, made some comments that can help us have a better idea of the marginalized communities' reality, especially the reality of the



now historically labeled “criminal” – young men. He is a 30 year old male resident of San Bernabé. He is very well-spoken and articulate and as we spent some time together, I noticed the easiness in which he could change and act towards an acquaintance and someone who was interviewing him for an academic research. He seemed to know when and where to change the way he behaves. He spent 12 years of his life in jail, because of, in his words, “living the violent lifestyle”, “*el mal camino*” (the bad/wrong way). He has a bachelor’s degree in psychology, and he is now in charge of giving ESPERE<sup>6</sup> workshops. He hopes to get a scholarship to pursue his master’s degree in forensic psychology.

*...Al principio los zetas si eran zetas, según lo que yo sé, o sea si habían pertenecido al Estado. Pero parte del problema ahora es que ya los zetas, son chavales excluidos. Ahora son pandilleros que se dejan llevar por ese espejismo*

*- Espejismo?*

*Si, tener cosas, tener una camioneta y una pistola, por ejemplo. Y con eso ya se meten en el juego de ellos. Este constructo social (en el que vivimos) la ideología dominante, capitalismo, promueve ser el mejor, ser el primero... para eso tienen que rodar cabezas... literalmente y no literal!*

*- O sea sus cabezas? Con tal de subir?*

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<sup>6</sup> *Escuelas del Perdón y Reconciliación* (Forgiveness and Reconciliation Schools) - “ESPERE promote the theory and practice of forgiveness and reconciliation not only in scenarios where cycles of social or political violence have become entrenched but also in the daily lives of people. ESPERE seeks to break these cycles of violence by transforming an individual’s anger and resentment into the ability to live in dignity, harmony and peace with others. By removing the emotional and cognitive barriers to reconciliation for both victims and perpetrators, ESPERE helps to rebuild key pillars of human existence: meaning in life, psychological and physical security, and social integration.” (Boston Theological Institute). He took an ESPERE workshop during his time in prison and credits it as the experience that changed his life. Now he imparts those workshops in places such as prison, churches, schools, etc.

*Si, promueve la competencia promueve la violencia y el consumismo. Aquí está muy estereotipado tener una camioneta, una cuerno de chivo, una 9mm. Lo que me llama la atención, es el rango de vida... vive rápido, muere rápido... Al tener este tipo de ideología, te voy a dar tanto por hacer eso... es una mejor propuesta que convertirte en un obrero. Algunos deciden eso...*

*-Entonces tu crees que este sistema de "reclutamiento" es lo que está cambiando desde hace tiempo la forma en que los chavos se meten en cosas violentas?*

*Si, vamos a decir que hay una pandilla de gente con 16 a 22 años. Existen chavales, de 10 -12 años que quieren pertenecer a la pandilla, porque en su casa se preocupan más por la comida y pagar la luz que por ellos. Buscan sentido de pertenencia. Tal vez has escuchado... que se dicen, familia, carnal, compa, brother, su familia! Entonces, bueno. Antes las riñas eran con piedras y palos, ahora 380, pero acá se mueve más R-15. De los pandilleros menores, los grupos dominantes, o grupos que se dedican profesionalmente a esto, identifican a uno que sobresale, por su violencia, sangre fría, represión de emociones, inteligencia, lo contactan! Y le ofrecen la camioneta y la pistola.*

*- Y cuanto tiempo tiene de eso? Tu qué piensas?*

*Pues hasta donde yo sé, desde que empezaron los zetas. No sé qué año... no mucho mucho.*

Both interviewees highlight the fact that residents of their *colonias* have no way to avoid being affected by the violence. Both talk about how they don't feel supported by the government. They talk about police/authority abuses, lack of meaningful job opportunities and high quality, empowering educational services. These can be interpreted as their awareness of the absence of the state; their awareness of their marginal position in the

society. One of the expressions of this awareness is how they rely on themselves on their security and not being able to trust the police forces. One of the measures of security that fits in this explanation is how parents are encouraged to pick up their kids from school, even the older ones that usually would go home by themselves, such as kids in *secundaria* (junior high school),

*Aquí mucha gente, los que pueden, ya van por sus hijos a la escuela. La escuela se los recomendó, porque se pone rara la cosa, ya no sabe uno que puede pasar! No siempre son balaceras, pero anda gente sospechos, policías, así que mejor que no se vayan solitos. Siempre nos cuidamos. (Gloria)*

The police institution is perceived as something they should be warned about and directly connected to criminal organizations,

*Los policías? Los policías vienen por su moche y se van, o son de los mismos, o no hacen nada, no los sé distinguir... unos dicen que no llegan hasta aca. Pero si! Si llegan! A cobrar si llegan! Siempre vienen a eso. Cuando hay balaceras o riñas, llegan después a controlar y sabemos todos aquí que se llevan a los chavos de la colonia que andan con los zetas, no se llevan a los meros meros. (Gloria)*

But at the same time, I noticed that when some street fight or something happened in the community, they still called the police. I asked Gloria about this and this was the answer I received: “Well Melissa, We have to at least try! Wouldn’t we be wrong if we didn’t even try?”. So it is some kind of double standard towards the police: citizens know they don’t do much for their safety, but they still hope for some change. This means that

even in practice citizens are not receiving “material state”, and though they know this, they still “do the right thing”.

And not only had the residents talked about the threat that came from the police, but also the negative effect that some teachers can have in kids that ultimately reinforce them to join gangs and criminal organizations.

I had the opportunity of working in one public elementary school located in a low-income, severely marginalized community for 6 months in 2000 and worked with a group of teachers as math tutor. I was really dismayed with the lack of engagement with the kids and how they would even discourage them to study harder. The mothers I talked to believed that this was the best they could do to raise their kids “the right way”. In the interviews I did in the low-income *colonias*, I perceived that same lack of trust in schools as a vehicle to improve their lives, but at the same time, a certain hope that sending kids to school was the best they could do within their means. While talking to Gloria about the role of school, she gave me a similar argument:

*Pues la escuela no es muy buena. Unos pasan muy apenas y pues otros que dejan de ir a clases. Pero las escuelas no creas que están solas, claro que mandamos a los niños, que clase de padres seríamos si no? Así los encaminamos a una buena vida.*

*- A una escuela que no es muy buena?*

*Pues que le hacemos! A parte, es un derecho de los niños, todos los niños deben de ir a la escuela, y más con la cosa tan fea, hay que tratar de educarlos bien para que hagan buenas decisiones y no se metan en esos negocios, que no se vayan por lo fácil.*

María, who works in a community center in La Campana with kids and women, explained to me how corruption amongst teachers is well-known in her community. I believe her points complicate the situation towards low-income residents' schools,

*A los niños que viven por aquí les falta mucho apoyo, aquí hace falta que haya escuelas de verdad, de buena calidad, así sería más fácil que no se metieran en problemas cuando crecen. Los grupos que llegan aquí a la colonia a apoyar en las escuelas, que son americanos, se encargan de que algunos de ellos sean apadrinados y puedan ir a la escuela, no trabajar, comprarse sus útiles, no todos reciben ayuda pero es algo. Han llegado a apoyar hasta chavos que quieren entrar a la uni, ha habido varios casos! Y aunque hay intentos de eso, hay mucha corrupción entre los maestros, ellos mismos les dicen que no van a llegar a ningún lado y les cobran por pasarlos.*

*- Como, les piden dinero A NIÑOS en cambio de una calificación?*

*Sí, hay muchos profesores que son así. Es algo que se escucha comúnmente, la gente no se asombra, y pues los niños desde chiquitos no le ven caso de ir a la escuela si los profesores les dicen que no pueden aprender.*

At this point, I would highlight and clarify some points. First of all, while different interviewees I talked to at different points in time perceived that violence is increasing and that crime is rising, the truth is that besides complaining about the poor presence of the state, they are enacting most of the protocols a “good citizen” should follow, and without a substantial material state presence. What drives most people to hold on to political discourses, “acquiescing to a wide variety of state knowledge” (Brown and Knopp 2006:

224) despite their negative perception of a state that has proved unable to provide the required resources to stimulate development within these communities? My interviewees used terms as “good citizen” “honest”, “hardworking” looking for a better upbringing for their kid, which is how they should visualize themselves according to a state, which seeks order and good performance from their citizens (things like be organized, send kids to school, adopt good behavior, etc). In times of crisis, when they feel that they should take extra precautions to remain “good citizens”, they stick to the rules of the same institution (the state) that constantly places them in the margins of the society, like making sure their kids go to a school that proves to be poor and inefficient. As said by Legg (2005: 139-140), this is the very expression of contemporary state through governmentality, creating the “self-regulating subject who would vote conscientiously, invest responsibly and work diligently, while moving about and maintaining the modern city with suitable civil pride”. These citizens are doing this not because someone is forcing them to do so, but because in their minds, these actions are the “right” things to do. This is, even when the state is materially absent in these zones and low-income populations live at the margins of the “secure/providing state”, citizens self-regulate in the way the state would expect them to.

María develops workshops about human development, and this is a good example of how citizens mechanisms work as tools to “create good citizens”, taking on their own risk avoidance,

*En los talleres y cursos que hemos dado aquí en La Campana, hemos intentado hacerles ver a los niños que ellos valen, que ellos valen por lo que son, tratarles de abrir el panorama y crear confianza en sí mismos. Tal vez no lleguen a ser los grandes ingenieros, doctores... pero hay algo en lo que ellos son buenos, habilidades que ellos puedan desarrollar sin vicios, sin meterse en problemas, que sean personas*

de bien. *Las mamás quieren eso para sus hijos. Hacer esto en una comunidad de bajos recursos, donde no hay lugares de esparcimiento, infraestructura, no es fácil y hemos visto como algunos se distancian al crecer.*

*- Se distancian de quien? Que terminan haciendo?*

*... Por ejemplo, uno de los chavitos que invité al taller venía con su hermanito, tal tenía unos 10 años y el hermanito de unos 5. Venían a las actividades del centro como apoyo escolar, veíamos tele y películas, se veía que eran felices, contentos. Yo sabía que el papá andaba en malos pasos, un día les pregunté que qué hacía su papá y me decían “es el chofer del general, a veces viajan”, yo creo que es de los Zetas. No sé a qué se referían con “general”, y yo veía al papá que todas las mañanas y tardes ahí estaba en su casa sin hacer nada y en la noche ya no se veía. Pasaron unos dos años y al más grandecito le cambió el semblante, ya no venía a los cursos y cuando pasaba por la calle ya no me miraba a los ojos. Se empezó a vestir como cholito... seguro que terminó en malos pasos como el papá. A algunos les logramos despertar la curiosidad de saberse valiosos y que pueden aspirar a otra vida, otros se quedan atorados.*

She emphasizes the fact that kids are immersed in an environment that makes them prone to fall into irregular activities, to look *cholito* (thuggish). She is not really convinced that the kids could have the opportunity of being professionals, which proves that she is conscious of a clear marginalization towards low-income kids. She points out that the low-income *colonia* has no public recreation spaces; the school system is not strong enough and in some cases negatively impacts the lives of kids. Apparently these characteristics are deeply entrenched and normalized within the lives of the residents of this community. The

interviewee that once was a gang member points out how easy and obvious is for some low-income *colonias* residents to join criminal organizations, the *espejismo* (illusion) is much tempting, gives status within the “dominant system” in which they are immersed and pays more than a legal regular job such as being an laborer in a *maquiladora*.

People have adapted their lives to the surrounding violence. As they talk they express a higher concern with their increasingly violent surroundings, and they articulated the need to become responsible of themselves and reaffirm their “good citizen” status. In other words, the perception of violence made them aware of the need to intensify their self-regulation. As Gloria said, “in these situations, if we do not take care of ourselves, who will?”.



## **Fear across population**

Middle and upper class residents experience and perceive insecurity differently than poor, lower class residents. Even though I am using the term “middle-upper” class very broadly, there are several strong connections between the two that differentiate them both from the lower class. When required in the text, I will distinguish between the two concepts.

Middle and upper class population have distinct encounters with the state when compared to their lower-class counterparts. As I previously said, the narco-violence wave has had broad impact on society, thus visibly affecting the *regios*' lives and spreading fear of crime. In this case, the term *Narco* works as an umbrella term that is widely used when referring to those responsible for the wave of violence. In this section I will address different accounts of how people have dealt with and talked about the wave of violence and how the police is perceived and some of insights around this institution in Mexico. Also, I will address the self-governance techniques that have flourished within this period of narco-violence.

From January 2010 to March 2010, there was a tremendous erosion in government trust and in increase in fear of crime and violence among the middle and upper class in Monterrey. Overall, their fear of crime and violence is interpreted as new, (“things used to be better, much better!”) which is not the case of the low-income residents. Surprisingly, most of the people were not concerned about the possibility of their children joining organized crime, but were more troubled by corruption and lack of security. They expressed stronger confidence in the fact the violence would eventually get better. The feeling of insecurity and fear of crime has increased since the intensification of narco-

violence in Monterrey. Before that, residents believed that Monterrey was a very safe city, and even stated that Monterrey was the safest city in Mexico.

The people I interviewed, drastically changed the way in which they perceive and moved around MAM. For some of them, the figure of the *Narco* and that *Zeta* is a very real one, as in the case of one of my interviewees that had to deal with a kidnapping in his family. For others, even when they have not been directly involved in a situation with criminal organizations, the *Narco*'s threat has been very real one. The increasing number of shootings on the city's main avenues as well as in upper-middle class neighborhoods, *narco-bloqueos* (the blocking-off of streets by criminal organizations) have catapulted MAM residents into a state of siege.

Since there is a clear lack of information, either coming from the government or the media, there is no way in which the MAM population can identify when/where/who/ is part of the violent shootings and killings around the city. Sometimes it is the army, sometimes the Mexican marines or the police, but overall, there is a high level of uncertainty. Who is good and bad in this situation? Who are they going after? Is anything happening at all? These sorts of questions are the ones that circulate in residents' minds.

The time I spent talking to people about their perceptions of the city, and with Alejandro helped me to establish a timeline of key changes taking place in the city.

*- So you feel like the city's situation has been changing... When would you say these changes started?*

*Lets see... I would say it all probably started with the increase of executions and kidnappings. Deja pienso... Si mal no recuerdo, yo lo veo como que empezó con las ejecuciones y con secuestros, que aca no se escuchaban tanto como en el D.F. Primero había narco-ejecutados y los encontraban en las carreteras. Monterrey-*

*Saltillo, Monterrey-Nuevo Laredo, Monterrey-Reynosa. Todo lo sentíamos en las afueras de la ciudad. Luego se metió el ejército y al parecer el narco, los zetas, como les quieras decir, se enojaron. Y ahí fue cuando hubo eso de los tapados, nadie entendió porqué, nadie nos explicó nada. Y pues de ahí para adelante se puso peor.*

*-Y que onda con los tapados?*

*Pues supuestamente eran acarreados de los narcos, taparon Constitución y creo que Gonzalitos [calles importantes]. Dijeron que los trajeron dándoles 500 pesos, mochilas, cosas así.*

*-De donde los trajeron?*

*Pues diiiicen que de la Indepe y colonias de esas. A mí no me tocó estar en el tráfico con los tapados, pero los que me contaron y las fotos que vi en El Norte, la gente se veía “humilde” (eufemismo de pobre), tapando la calle – la verdad se veían hasta divertidos-, y la verdad si parecían de la Indepe.*

He mentioned *Los Tapados* (the covered ones), a short lasting movement that I believe is important to address. *Los Tapados* are a massive, anonymous crowd made up of children, women, and presumably *cholos* (thugs), who gathered to block the main avenues of Monterrey, asking the army to leave the state. These people, automatically associated with the poor population of Monterrey, were feared and this was reflected in the news media. These groups have been faced by the state and federal police. The PGR- Nuevo León chief, Aldo Fasci, said that there is strong evidence to link the drug cartels with the *Tapados*' mobilization. According to the media and the authorities, the people, presumably from low-income *colonias* had been paid by the drug cartels to create chaos and fear in the city.

*Los Tapados*, are widely represented as people that “came out of the hills”. In

Monterrey, many hills are covered with low-income *colonias*, such as La Independencia. This *colonia*, supposedly infiltrated by los Zetas and mobilized in a one-week “pseudo-social movement.”

Newspapers in Mexico and around the world have published articles with titles such as,

*“Los grupos del crimen organizado le han ganado al estado el control de los barrios más pobres de Monterrey, se indica en reportes militares, censos oficiales de la policía estatal y estudios sociológicos”*(Osorno 2009).

The *Los Angeles Times*, published headlines like the following; “Mexico drug cartels buying public support - As traffickers recruit among the poor, their networks are being woven into the social fabric of the country... ‘It used to be you tried to help troubled youths. Now there are entire families involved in drugs, consuming and selling’ (Wilkinson 2009)

Other notable quotations include,

*“En el área metropolitana de Monterrey hay unas mil 600 bandas urbanas, veinte de las cuales están involucradas en el narcomenudeo. La policía local, en vez de combatir a los grupos ligados a “Los Zetas”, extorsionan a los jóvenes, los golpean e incluso les venden armas.”*(Frausto Crotte 2009).

These quotations illustrate that of the media and the authorities link the low-income population to the drug cartels, criminalize and abuse them through media and local police. This reinforces the stereotype that that the poorest population is linked to narco-trafficking, and that they are abused/used both by the police and Narco. But as the concept of biopolitics denotes, the headlines at the same time hide the relations of domination and resistance within those populations.

I asked Alejandro more questions about why he believes that the *humildes* join Zetas/drug cartels. He reinforced the fact that they join them because they do not have many meaningful options.

*Entonces porque crees que se unen a los zetas/narcos?*

*Pues porque en ningún otro lugar van a pagarles tanto! Supongo que han de ganar buena lana... deberíamos de unirnos tu y yo también, jaja!*

*- Y porque no te unes? Jaja!*

*Por que sera?... Porque tenemos más opciones? Porque tenemos más que perder que ellos?*

*- Y nosotros que perdemos?*

*No sé, pues tenemos educación, casa, comida... lo básico. Puede que ellos no tengan mucho que perder, que vean su situación lo bastante negra como para arriesgar la vida, libertad, familia, con tal de tener lana. Yo no arriesgo eso y la verdad no tengo necesidad. O sea, no soy rico, pero aceptemos, somos privilegiados.*

While this interviewee acknowledges that he has a better position in society and economy, there is another portion of the middle-upper class citizenry that thinks of the *humilde* people as uneducated, selfish and as not possessing total control over their decisions. Another interviewee, Juan, told me:

*Ellos se meten en eso porque quieren. Nadie los obliga! Tanto trabajo de obrero que hay, poquito dinero pero viviendo decentemente. Ellos solitos se meten en un negocio en el que nadie los obliga a meterse. Se necesita verdadera sangre fría para meterse a un negocio en el que si, ganan lana y le ayudan a su familia, pero a cambio de MATAR, de meterse con ciudadanos decentes, trabajadores, que todo lo que tienen es*

*porque lo han trabajado! Yo no soy rico, pero vivo bien, y lo que tengo LO GANÉ.*

*No como esos, robando, vendiendo drogas, de sicarios. Que empiecen de abajo, ni modo!*

This last line of thought is the one that predominates in the general sentiment. In order to understand the general discourse around the idea of poor and low class people joining the Narco, I found that the most popular newspaper in Monterrey could be useful. El Norte, the newspaper with the largest circulation in MAM, has an online version. In every article, people are able to discuss and share their thoughts regarding that specific article, in a section designated for comments. While it is an unregulated forum, and certainly it is only available to people with internet access and with a paid subscription to [www.elnorte.com](http://www.elnorte.com), it shows how Monterrey residents talk about local news and how they react to it without having to be interviewed.

In December 2009, a piece called “Pasa de Soldado a Sicario de Zetas” was published in [www.elnorte.com](http://www.elnorte.com). By only looking at the title, it is obvious how the person that decided to change from a low-paid, formal job, to a dangerous, high profile position in the criminal organization.

The article starts by saying that the *pistolero* (gunman), Juan D. Carranco, describes how he moved upward in the “criminal positions of narco-trafficking” and was eventually deployed in MAM municipality, San Nicolás de los Garza. He was a policeman until 2002 when he quit. “Besides working as a policeman, he only knew how to weld and use a typewriter.” (El Norte, Diciembre 2009) but he found out that he could not weld as well as before and that his typing abilities were not enough to find a well-paid job. He was severely indebted, lost his home and his wife, and his mother became ill. After 2 years of

unemployment and emotional and economic losses, “the *Zetas* criminal organization won a new member, a watchman as well as an auditor.” The article describes Juan Carranco, a low-paid policeman, as having had a hard time trying to incorporate himself in a legal, “good, workforce, but only the *Zetas* received and embraced him”.

In a somewhat exaggerated way the piece describes some of the reasons why people would join a criminal organization. Most of the comments left in the article showed no compassion or pity for the guy that had “no other choice” than joining the *Zetas* organization. Some of the comments were:

*“snif sniff poor guy huh?, haha such a bad article! Are we supposed to feel sorry about him? Do not take me as a fool (no me chinguen), this can be a telenovela! Life is not easy, suck it up! He decided to take that way of life. I don’t believe anything.*

*“The only thing they missed was to tell us “Join the Zetas, apply today!”*

*“Mechanographer? Yes, right! He surely has no skills (no sabe hacer ni un huevo). And yes, it is true, with such high levels of unemployment –government’s fault – even Globito (famous local clown) may be a sicario”*

For me it is clear that there is an overall consensus in the idea that people consciously choose to join the organized crime. Even when one of my interviewees recognizes how hard is the situation for poor people to position themselves in a positively viewed-job and that they are not privileged as him, it seems that they always find the means to blame the poor for their own poverty and of dismissing any other argument that could challenge this points. They argue around the common prejudice that poor, disadvantaged people are lazy, unskilled and unwilling to work hard.

## Thoughts about the police

Just like the low-income residents, upper-middle class residents have their views on the police. Their perception of the police has never been a positive one, as everyone is aware of the high levels of corruption. They have always been linked to bribes and widely mistrusted, but currently they are increasingly connected to organized crime. With the increase of military presence in Monterrey in March 2010, there was a registered rise in the number of state and municipal police elements and managers being detained. People paid great attention to the police role in violence and expressed that the police is one of the main sources of fear in people's everyday lives.

Adela lives in San Nicolás de los Garza, she is a housewife that takes care of her mother and lives with her husband, José, who manages a local tire shop. Her family's economic status has received harsh blows every time there is an economic crisis, the economic recession in 2009 being no exception. Her family has been affected by the wave of violence in MAM; one of her nephews, the son of her well-off brothers was kidnapped not long ago.

*Lo secuestraron... no lo podíamos creer. Mi hermano nos dijo hasta una semana después de pasó eso, ya que se los iban a regresar. A ellos les va bien, mi sobrino tiene un buen carro y al parecer eso fue lo que hizo que lo secuestraran. Antes esto le pasaba solo a los ricos, pero ya no! Ya hasta tenemos que checar bien a quién le contestamos en el teléfono, ya es bien común que nos hablen intentando sacar información de la familia...de hecho le logran sacar información a mi mamá, gracias a Dios nada serio, nos dimos cuenta y cuando marcaban les colgábamos el teléfono y hasta ahora no nos han vuelto a marcar. Ya tenemos mucho cuidado de*



*todo... De quien habla por teléfono, qué les decimos, de los que pasan por la calle... por ejemplo, de los que pasan ofreciendo lavar el carro, no se ven malas personas pero uno ya no sabe, no son de aquí, no los conocemos! En verdad ya uno no sabe cómo cuidarse en la calle y con eso de que agarran gente como los lavacoches para hacer trabajos sucios, secuestrar, robar, cosas más feas!... Es más, hasta los policías los ayudan a secuestrar, no hay nadie que cuide a la gente, no hay a quien recurrir.(Adela)*

My interviews suggest that it is not easy to identify a person's true intentions and that even a phonecall can be perceived as a potential threat. Appearance may not be enough to judge someone, but sometimes there are no other indicators someone can rely on. People can identify low-income, street workers, as criminals, as the ones that can be related to a criminal organization's cheap labor. The person interviewed above emphasized the fact that she cannot trust the man that washes cars because he is not from the *colonia*. By feeling this way, she is distancing herself from living among people that may be perceived as criminals. Also, although she is trying to express in such a way that she would not sound derogatory towards people that work in the informal sector, a certain degree of suspicion can be perceived in the way she expressed her fear of being mugged.

Not only had she expressed suspicion of people working in the streets, but she also feared the police. It is proven and even recognized by the government, that some elements of the state police are also part of the organized crime. In early March 2010, in a press release of the Mexican army, it was confirmed that *polizetas* (a term now used to refer to policemen that work with organized crime) had been part of the 31 *narco-bloqueos* around

the city in which about 60 cars were stolen. Not only those policemen actively facilitated these blockades, but also helped the *sicarios* that participated *escape* (hitmen),

*Ahora siempre anda la policía aquí. Ya tienen como dos años poniéndose con un tráiler en el estacionamiento del HEB, frente a parques... aquí se pone siempre en el parque que está a dos cuadras y vienen y nos dan rondines, con máscaras, parados en la caja de las camionetas... vienen a vigilarnos. Es muy raro estar en la terraza y ver que pasan estos a vigilarnos... me dan miedo, es muy molesto... no se que hacer enfrente de ellos. Sentirme segura? JA! A mi me intimidan, yo creo que a todos, dan miedo. En las noticias sale que ellos son los que les ayudan a los zetas, sicarios, esos. Como confiar en ellos? Por eso te digo que me dan miedo, si ellos andan aquí y son los problemáticos, en una de esas se traen sus tiroteos por aquí!*

The police abuses and corruption are especially notorious for several reasons. In times of democratic consolidation, in which “developing” countries like Mexico have adopted policies of inclusion, respect of citizenship rights, police corruption is normalized and seen as a given feature. It is clear that police corruption and abuses are becoming more obvious at least in the eye of the citizens, more so in the eyes of middle/upper-middle class, who had experienced violence rates never known to the middle class in Monterrey.

Police presence is increasing around middle class *colonias*, as the above interviewee confirmed. Mobile police stations are situated in different points around the city. In San Nicolás, I saw four of these stations, one just two blocks away from my interview. I also witnessed the army doing a routine round inside the *colonia*.

While running errands with my interviewee, I began to understand how the police interaction with residents could be a fearful experience. José lost his passport, or maybe misplaced it, and they had to report it to the municipal police station so that he could apply

for another one. They had been delaying this visit for some weeks, because of a shooting that took place in the station. “We see them everywhere” told me her husband. “who?”, I asked. “Zetas!... you see that Ford Lobo over there? How am I sure it is not one of those *sicarios*?... you can see how people just stop when they see one of those trucks”. Big trucks, such as a Lobo, an Expedition, or a Yukon, especially black ones, are intimidating. He went on saying,

*My daughter really got angry one time, maybe around a year ago... I was driving and suddenly one truck came from nowhere, really fast! And I noticed another huge truck after us trying to pass us and I would not let him, why should I? ... on that time I was not afraid of stepping into sicarios, who knew Monterrey would turn out like this!?... So, well, my 23- year-old daughter told me ‘what is wrong with you!? Let him pass us! Don’t you see? Tinted windows, huge truck? Zetas, dad!’ .... I told her that this was not Juárez! I did slow down and let him pass... they could be sicarios after all. Now I never forget what she told me, now is an everyday thing, watching our backs. Hope this ends soon.*

He describes how in a range of one year, his perceptions of fear and violence changed. The way in which he moves was different and now a simple truck represented a real threat, one that he thought could be either just a fright, or a shooting or even being kidnapped.

It did not take long to arrive at the central police station. The station looked busy, plain, and not fancy at all. There was a lot of movement; I suspect that this was like any other day there. When we got to the door, I saw one broken door with a sign that said “*No Abrir*” (do not open), and then I noticed a bullet hole in the bottom part of it. As far as I knew, the last shooting that happened over there was a little over two weeks ago. That was frightening and a reminder that violence can occur at anytime. “*Ni las apariencias guardan!* (they

don't even try to cover it up!)” José said.

We were sitting and I was beside a young woman, maybe in her 20s. We spent a long time over there, waiting to be attended. Eventually, I started speaking to her just to kill some time. She told me that she was an army dentist and that she was over there to report a robbery. Some of her belonging were stolen from her car while she was at the army base. “I know this is going to get me nowhere... but what else can I do?” she said. We talked about how distressing it is to look at the bullet hole, we all wanted to leave but we had to wait. I commented to her that I have never met an army dentist, and that I was curious about the life over there. She then said,

*Pues la verdad no quieres saber como estan las cosas ahi. Bueno, más bien... deberíamos saber todos como están las cosas ahí, para saber que tan fea está la cosa y no nos echaran tantas mentiras. Yo ahí soy solo dentista, pero estamos en la clínica de la base y vemos como todos los días llegan soldados, muchísimos soldados heridos o muertos. Eso no se ve en las noticias, en las noticias solo pasan cuando un sicario se muere o que si cuantos ciudadanos fueron heridos o muertos. Pero los soldados? A esos nadie los cuenta, las ambulancias no se los llevan. Los suben a los vehículos del ejército y se los traen para acá. La verdad me da enojo e impotencia... porque ellos son a los que avientan por enfrente de esta guerra. En esta guerra están metiendo a gente que la debe ni la teme... por parte del narco, tú crees que ponen a las cabecillas a balacearse? Claro que no, son los peones. Pues lo mismo pasa con los soldados. Les pagan una baba y mira como les pagan, ni siquiera los cuentan.*

Her words talk about the uncertainty of this “war”, as she calls it. The lack of information about what really is happening, about who is actually being killed, is part of the problem

that Monterrey is living. The lack of information blinds the community and hides the real costs of the violence. While citizens in general may feel insecure and distrust the police, and may or may not feel the same way about the army, they forget to recognize the ‘citizen’ within them. Most of the low ranking policemen and soldiers are low-income citizens who find themselves between the organized crime, supporting their family and part of the legitimate forces of the state.

While it cannot be confirmed that the armed forces are not infiltrated by corrupt elements, citizens consider them the only available alternative to remedy insecurity and have a better reputation within the society compared to the state police forces (ICESI 2009).

### **Perceptions on the state and government**

As I previously mentioned, even when the low-income residents talked about the government, it was the middle and upper middle class residents who are more concerned about corruption and perceived not a completely sudden, but a quick rise in violence around MAM in the last several years. MAM is one of the wealthiest metropolises in Mexico, and as such, a large percentage of its population fits into the middle class.

I identified different ways in which middle class residents have avoided facing violent encounters in areas such as home, work and leisure spaces.

In this section I am going to address my experiences within MAM middle class suburbs, the interviews I completed with some residents of San Pedro, San Nicolás and Monterrey and analysis of newspaper articles related to middle class reactions to violent events, government performance and overall perceptions of MAM

While most sources considered the increase of violence within the past 2-3 years with an

impressive and sudden rise in early 2010, there is other evidence to show how middle class communities have tried to “dodge” crime and violent situations.

Just like in other parts of Latin America, MAM residents that possess the capability of isolating them from the violence are, in different levels, doing so. From walls, gates and basic alarm systems to gated communities and even leaving the country, all are expressions of fear of crime and violence.

Most of the people I talked to have taken “security measures” at least on a temporary basis. Two of them built taller walls in their houses since mid-1990s, citing that they did so because they either someone tried to get into their house or they were actually robbed. In all the four neighborhoods I visited, including the observations I did around the city, I noticed the great amount of houses equipped with alarm systems such as ADT. Two of my interviewees use such security systems, and claim they have had them for around 2-3.

While they obviously have been taking these kinds of measures towards crime and violence for a while, in their discourse, they claim that “true problems” have arisen in late-2000s, with the increase of narco-violence. Security measures were taken to prevent robberies and other property crimes, which are different from the kind of crimes and violence displays linked to organized crime, such as kidnappings, extortion and random shootings in the city. Interviewed residents tended to focus on the narco-threat, the fear of finding them in the crossfire and actually most of them changed their routines just after very openly attacks to middle/middle-upper class zones happened.

*Que raro no? Que en una ciudad como Monterrey esté pasando esto en un parpadeo. Nosotros que nos hacíamos tan diferentes del resto del país. Sigo pensando que somos diferentes... espero que esto se acabe pronto... que tristeza! Extraño a Monterrey, antes todo era paz.*

*Ahora que lo pienso... fíjate como se dio. La familia de Hidalgo N.L. ya nos venía diciendo que la cosa estaba muy fea, que había zetas, que el pueblo ya no era el mismo. Nos decían que ni para qué fuéramos si no había nada. Uno de mis primos me decía que no pasaba nada, que no les hiciera caso, pero el que sabe si anda allá criando cabritos! En fin, allá tenía tiempito de estar supuestamente feo. Y acá de balacera en balacera nos empezamos a acostumbrar y cada vez pasan cosas más feas, pasaron de los pueblitos del estado a Monterrey ni cuenta nos dimos! Estos cambios se dieron rápido...muy feo (Adela)*

The case of Hidalgo, N.L. and the supposed “zeta” presence is not isolated, but something that apparently has happened in other non-metropolitan municipalities of Nuevo León. I analyzed newspaper reports that serve as evidence of the fact that strong organized crime presence in other municipalities such as Anáhuac, Montemorelos and Cerralvo has affected citizens’ lives since mid-2000s and the ones that could move, would likely move to Monterrey.

I noticed that people I talked with not only avoided visiting relatives in other municipalities of the state supposedly “plagued” by *zetas*, but also modified other activities that are part of their daily routines. They no longer run errands along, they avoid going out to clubs (especially ones directly linked to *narcos*) that started to distribute. In the metropolitan area, it is extremely calm after 8pm.

I noticed how people that have been directly related to someone that may have been kidnapped modify the way in which they move around the city. While I was in Monterrey, I realized that some of the people I socialized with, which were mostly from the same family or were connected through friendship, had been affected by the kidnapping of a person close to them. This person was “*levantado*” in a very busy main street. Supposedly, at first they only wanted the car he was driving, but as he refused to give them the keys, they finally kidnapped him. His closest family members established a rule that I noticed by the way they talked to each other. They decided to not go by themselves out of to the streets as much as possible. They would say, “you are going only if your brother goes with you, alright?” or “I’d rather wait for dad, I am not going by myself.” Also, as part of their technique to avoid risks, they sold their trucks (the family had five trucks) and changed them for more modest cars.

*La verdad queremos evitar cualquier cosa. Me he dado cuenta que no somos los únicos vendiendo los carros, es algo generalizado. Yo quería mucho mi camioneta pero que le hago... me da miedo! Hasta en El Norte salió que los carros seminuevos están a la alza, quien diría no? Nos empezó a ir mejor económicamente y tenemos que andar cuidándonos de estas cosas... adiós lujitos! (Marisa)*

Adela also has been taking precautions to avoid being in a position of risk, as evidenced by the following :

*Nosotros tenemos un solo carro, es 2002, no es de los que se supone que roban los zetas ni esos de los cárteles... y bueno, no somos ostentosos. Pero la cosa es que ya están agarrando parejo, nos tenemos que cuidar y bueno... no cambio el carro, OBVIO. Pero pues no hay que exponerse, solo tengo cuidado en la calle.*

*- Pero como te puedes prevenir de algo así? Tu que haces?*



*Pues jaja... no se! No puedo hacer mucho no? Nomás salir lo menos posible. Mis sobrinos y mi hija me dicen que ya nadie va al barrio... o sea, si van, pero al parecer ellos no. De un tiempo aca todos andamos medio paranoicos, pero pues como no!? Primero decían que era pura psicosis, puras mentiras pues... que los medios exageraban, que estaban haciendo pedo de más! Mandando mails con alertas para no salir... es más mi esposo me enseña a cada rato mails que dicen “mi vecino que es federal le dieron el pitazo de un tiroteo mañana”... y uno se lo cree a medias. O sea, dices “ay es puro pedo” pero luego te quedas con la cosita “y si si pasa algo” si me entiendes? Como con lo que pasó en el tec y balaceras en cumbres, colinas... Eso ya no es paranoia! SI puede pasar! Te das cuenta? Ya pasa en donde menos nos imaginamos... y que le hacemos? Pues tratar de cuidarnos, nomás eso queda, velar por nosotros.*

The above dialogue touches on a series of dilemmas that citizens find themselves in; uncertainty regarding possible encounters with violence and crime, overall fear of the possible risk and visible changes within their routine because of that uncertainty. They self regulate their moves because of their lack of confidence in public security displays, and affirm that there is no other way to be safe than “look out for ourselves”.

One interviewee talks about a “psychosis” that surrounds their everyday life and how it has transformed into something more tangible. Rumors about violence news have become very real experiences for citizens that used to see violence far away from their lives and living spaces. She is referring to two specific situations in which privileged citizens in the MAM felt a real threat from violent events because of the clash of state forces and organized crime. There was one shooting in uppwe-middle class colonia, Cumbres in 2009, and Colinas de San Jerónimo in March 2010 as well as the shooting in ITESM, or Tec, a

private and prestigious university in MAM in that same month.

While in the Cumbres shootings there were no civilian victims, in the March 2010 there were three fatalities; a woman that was accompanied by her husband and were caught in the crossfire and two graduate students.

These events have accentuated the precautions already taken by the citizens. In the next section I will address some ways in which people is adjusting to their lives within an environment in which narco-violence is perceived can be present in any time.

## **Self – management techniques from Middle-middle upper class**

I identified some of the ways in which the residents in general were organizing to confront possible threats to their security. A good number of middle class *colonias* are using their *junta de vecinos* to either pressure the state for some kind of protection but more importantly, to share protection tips and protect themselves within the neighborhood network. Other ways in which middle class citizenry is organizing and helping each other is through social media, such as e-mails, blogs, Twitter and Facebook groups. In most of the cases, not all of the neighbors are involved in these kinds of associations, which by no means are exclusive of middle class neighborhoods and not only address security issues, but of superior importance.

In summary, the privileged, higher-income populations are able to access different self-management techniques than lower income populations. These techniques resonate with what is called “spatial forms of governmentality”, which, although not considered exclusive to urban areas, it is considered of importance in neoliberal, modern cities, such as MAM. As it has been already mentioned, cities such as MAM, where acute economic disparities, difference in development levels and social capital can be found, neoliberal forms of governance can be found.

Fear is often used as a tactic of governance in instructing individuals to take preventative measures, in conducting behavior in order to reduce the risk of crime and victimization; a *governance-through-fear* (Lee 2007). As Lee explains, “This is that we are to be sensitized, through governmental instruction or advice, and constantly expected to evaluate, police, *govern* and insure our bodies and property against the wrongdoings of others” (Lee 2007: 85). This is a form of bio-politics aimed at the government of the self

(Foucault 1991). The *fearing subject* is a self-responsible active citizen whose role within the community includes keeping one's self and one's belongings safe. This has the effect of minimizing active and coercive state intervention in crime prevention but is intervention in itself, although of an apparently much less intrusive sort.

As there is a constant emphasis of decentralizing government and promotion of citizen inclusion in governance, together with the increasing fear of crime and inefficacy of the police to secure, people have been encouraged to participate in their own self-governance.

Whether by organizing *juntas de vecinos* to watch and protect their *colonias* and pressure the state to have more presence, or by creating virtual networks through the internet to show state abuses and share information about how to protect themselves, the middle class demonstrates that they have the required resources to operate spatialized systems or self-governance. This contrasts with the resources that low-income communities can mobilize: "Within the neoliberal regime of individual responsibility and accountability, populations are divided between those understood as capable of self-management and those not" (Merry 2001: 17).

I identified concrete ways in which high income residents are better able to self manage due to closer relations with the state govt. and higher purchasing power than other sectors of society. : *blindaje* of specific zones and mobilizing through *juntas de vecinos* are examples of action taken to achieve these changes. Groups were composed of mostly of head of household women over twenty five years of age; use of social media as "patrolling", which use is mostly centered in young adults and increasingly democratizing, but remains more accessible and effective in "patrolling" when the individuals can afford an internet mobile device.

## ***Blindando espacios (armoring spaces)***

*Los de la colonia se están organizando para blindar la colonia*

*- Blindar?*

*Si... quieren cerrar la colonia, hacerla como si fuera privada poniendo como rejas o alguna barda en las calles para que no por cualquier lado se pueda entrar.*

*-Para que están haciendo esto?*

*Pues porque han subido mucho los robos de carros, secuestros... hasta persecuciones y pues ya ves que uno que otro vecino está metido en cosas turbias, entonces se agarran a balazos. Si no nos cuidamos nosotros, nadie. Entonces muchos quieren eso, blindar y policías y pues ya contamos con vigilancia privada.*

The neighborhood committee in the middle-upper middle class *colonia*, Anahuac, is one of others that promotes the isolation of their colonia in the name of security. “Constructing safe, policed spaces requires resources that are not available for everyone. These strategies are limited to those who can mobilize them – typically people located in more privileged positions in class, racial, and gender hierarchies...New walled towns within cities allow wealthier individuals to retreat into privately secured spaces.” (Perry 2000)

Colonia Anahuac is one of the oldest and more privileged neighborhoods not only in the municipality of San Nicolás, but in MAM. It is usually the *colonia* in which the municipality’s mayor resides and is home to influential privileged residents. Along the same line of the municipality of San Pedro, Colonia Anahuac is using the term *blindar* (to

armor) their security discourse. As an old *colonia*, it is not arranged in such a way that it could be considered a gated neighborhood but it certainly shows characteristics of exclusion and isolation.

While the neighbors' committee in Anahuac emphasized their capacity to implement self-governance mechanisms in the neighborhood,, residents in contiguous *colonia* Chapultepec noticed the differences in which Anahuac residents were able to secure changes within their zone:



Picture 1 – Fence in colonia Anahuac

*En este estado nadie conoce a los alcaldes que votan. Nadie! De donde salen? Ese Larrazabal, me consta, se vino aquí enseguida a la Anáhuac (colonia de San Nicolás) unos meses antes nomas para poderse postular como alcalde del municipio. Y lo*

*mismo con el alcalde actual, creo! Y es bioquímico! El que sabe? Ni conoce a la colonia, aquí todos somos de San Nicolás, todos vivimos aquí desde hace mucho, y todos los que traen los problemas no son de aquí. Ni los Zetas o sicarios esos, ni el alcalde! Esta colonia es de familias de siempre. Y ahora con eso de que cerraron varias entradas a la colonia por el blindaje, para tener más seguridad.... Pues a nosotros nos hacen rodear su colonia para poder movernos, es un caos vial. Y bueno, nos avientan a nosotros el supuesto problema que quieren solucionar. Si llega a haber una persecución o algo así, pues nos va a caer acá... tal vez, no?*

Even when just being separated by some streets, historical and middle/lower middle class neighborhood Chapultepec has been affected by the *blindaje*. They realize that if the contiguous *colonia Anahuac* is gated, it means that they may be pushing the insecurity threat to the *colonia*'s surroundings.

The *blindaje* proposal has not only emerged from *colonia Anahuac* neighbors, but also has been part of the campaign proposals from Mauricio Fernandez<sup>7</sup>, the controversial mayor from wealthy San Pedro municipality. His administration's municipal development plan for 2009-2010 (San Pedro Government 2010) uses the word *blindaje* as key term for its objectives and strategies for development.

In the “*Blindar San Pedro in Security Issues*” section, his development plan lists permanent programs to “promote and diffuse the benefits of assuming a collective culture of civil protection and to encourage the self-protection, focusing on the

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<sup>7</sup> Mauricio Fernández, entrepreneur, artist and member of a wealthy family, has been involved in a series of political scandals related to narcotraffic. When he won the elections, he moved his family to the U.S. He was secretly recorded while revealing that he has questionable ties with Beltrán Leyva cartel, one of the most powerful in Mexico, and has taken a radical position to tackle insecurity in his municipality: “Perhaps only in Mexico could the mayor of a wealthy suburb run his own intelligence operation, complete with confidential informants inside organized crime and a network so formidable that he can announce the murder of a major mobster before law enforcement officials have even found the body.” (McKinley 2010)

contingency types that could affect each community sector” (San Pedro Government 2010). This plan was created with the participation of the Security Citizen Council, which has very restrictive membership requirements, such as having previously been a public official in security matters. He revealed some of his security strategy in an interview with Milenio news network:

1. Real estate rent control: Creation of a database with detailed information of landlords and tenants.
2. Restricted access to *colonias*: Setting checkpoints in certain locations of the *colonias*. These checkpoints usually include already existing security booths and police patrols that deploy in main avenues around the municipality, as long as the neighbors agree to have such kind of surveillance. I only noticed these operations around high-income enclaves.
3. Exclusive taxi cab service only for San Pedro municipality: Fernandez said that he had talked to the taxi union leaders and they agreed to create a San Pedro exclusive fleet. According to him, these units will be traceable and would only work in the municipality. “People have fear of riding a taxi cab... they should be able to go out at night and drink, have a good time without being worried, just like in other cities around the world.” In his talk he is assuming that the only ones taking a taxi cab are the ones going out to clubs, and that they only move around San Pedro. I have not yet observed a taxi with these characteristics.
4. Housekeepers and private security databases: This is a strategy formulated by both San Pedro citizens and government. It is managed by



the different *junta de vecinos* in *colonias* of San Pedro. In words of Fernandez, “These databases should include the information of chauffeurs, gardeners and housekeeping employees, so that we know who they are, where they come from and where they are”.

5. Aerial surveillance: He talks about it but there is no specific public information about this strategy.
6. Increasing closed circuit surveillance cameras: more cameras placed in main avenues and high-income areas, and linked to *Centro de Comando, Control y Comunicaciones (C4)* headquarters, created in 2008 and self described as the most modern security surveillance initiative in the country. There is no disclosure of information regarding the effectiveness of this strategy and citizens are increasingly suspicious of how these surveillance strategies are used. High levels of corruption within public security and politicians – like Fernandez’s questionable ties with drug cartel leaders – may lead to a criminal usage of these surveillance methods.

Perceptions of uncertainty and mistrust of public institutions have lead to a self-management consciousness in the residents, which happens to be one of the strategies employed by the state. The self-protection endorsed by the state is closely related to the concept of self-management of individuals. As the state promotes it in form of security recommendations through all sorts of media (T.V., internet, press releases) citizens have indeed adopted ways to protect and patrol themselves within their city.

## **Internet as a tool of self-governing**

There are several ways in which individuals are using internet, e-mails, blogs and social media to promote self-protection in a city that has been infused with fear of narco-violence and crime. Facebook and Twitter are the two main social media sites used around the world and Monterrey is no exception. Through these social media and microblogging sites, individuals are able to share information in real time. *Juntas de vecinos* are using blogs to post and communicate information about their *colonia's* situation, people are posting videos and tweets to show what is really happening in their communities and that media and/or the state are not reporting. In this section I will look into how individuals have adopted internet and social media to manage their everyday life contained by a progressively more violent city.

I noticed that other neighborhood committees around MAM are also organized and very vocal regarding security issues, which they list as a priority in their community's webpage. Most of those webpages also serve as forums to share advice or awareness regarding recent crimes around the neighborhood. In most cases, these messages were found on those websites "Recuerda que entre más atención te prestes a ti mismo, a tu familia y a tus bienes, más difícil será para el delincuente causar daño.", which I found out were also part of the list of security recommendations for citizens given by the government through its website.

### Text Box 1 - Colonia Cortijo del Río (2010) – Security Organization

Actualmente tenemos una nueva lucha dada la inseguridad que se ha incrementado en nuestra zona, con robos con violencia a casa habitación, asaltos a transeúntes, robo de automóviles y secuestros.

Ante esta situación queremos que esta página sirva como un medio de denuncia y organización vecinal para tratar de contener, estar alertas y combatir estos crímenes que tanto nos afectan.

- ¿Sabes que en las últimas semanas se ha incrementado el número de robos a casa habitación?
- ¿Ha sido tu, tu familia víctimas de la delincuencia?
- ¿Te has puesto de acuerdo con tus vecinos de cómo ponerse en alerta?
- ¿Sabes si alguno de tus vecinos ha sido víctima de la delincuencia en la zona?

Es necesario que nos organicemos para mantenernos alertas contra esta ola de DELITOS en nuestra querida colonia, como Comunidad Organizada debemos actuar para protegernos. Los invitamos a participar esta es una iniciativa generada por los mismos vecinos:

Denunciando ante las autoridades si has sido víctima directa de un delito y Denunciándolo aquí ya que esto pone en alerta a TODA LA COMUNIDAD.

Comunicando a la autoridad de una situación sospechosa de la que te percastes, y Comunicándola en este foro para alertar a TODA LA COMUNIDAD.

Si sabes de algún vecino o amigo del sector que haya sido afectado, invítalo a comunicarlo en este medio.

Invitando a tus vecinos a visitar este sitio para que estén enterados de lo que sucede en el área y participen. *Esto no significa que no denunciemos a la policía. Tal vez no sirva de nada, pero es nuestro deber como ciudadanos denunciar los delitos y aportar algo a la solución de este problema.*

(Italics added)

The SSP has a section on its website called “Recommendations for Citizens” with similar tips to those circulating *in juntas de vecinos*’ websites, which include basic tips to avoid being kidnapped and extortions such as follow a family agenda, avoid flashy clothes or cars, move cautiously around the city and try to avoid routine routes and schedules. Also,

there are suggestions on how to manage an ongoing robbery or violent situation which are circulating all over the internet through blogs, websites and e-mails. For instance, if someone is robbing you and is about to victimize you, do not try to fight him/her as you can be hurt. When the crime or any other violent encounter is over, do not hesitate and call the police. In other words, if someone tries to victimize you, you are in effect powerless. If the victim follows the advices provided by the website and took all precautions, this person was an unlucky victim, a responsible individual that suffered because of something that you could not manage. The individual can still have a role in managing the event. On the other hand, if the person did not pay attention to the previous advice and warnings, its incapability to self-govern is exposed and he or she forms a central part of his/her own hardship.

Citizens relying on the internet as a tool of self-governance are not limited to advice from websites. Social media networks such as Twitter and Facebook, which are intended to connect friends, family and coworkers through the internet, have proven to be very effective as a quick and immediate way of communication. They have been used to spread information of all sorts of types, including citizen reports on violent and criminal incidents. As these sort of tweets and notifications help individuals share information that can alert them from possible dangers around the city, they are increasingly working as protection techniques. This directly resonates to fearing subjects' management strategies, aiming to regulate their risks of being victimized.

According to public information gathered from both of these sites, Twitter has 67,000 Mexican users, whose average age is 20, and in which 56% of their users are men and 44% female, expecting to reach 350,000 accounts in August 2010 (Perez Bolde 2010).

Monterrey is the third most populated city, has 3.7% of the total population <sup>8</sup> and concentrates 24% of the twitter accounts in the country. Facebook has 10 million Mexican accounts, 49% men and 51% female, 36% between the ages of 18 and 24 and 27% between 25 and 34.

These media seem to be increasingly democratized, using Twitter and Facebook to warn about shootings around the city at any the moment. Citizens warn each other about the exact location in which suspicious people are, open shootings happening and also *tweet* when they stop. Individuals have opened a Twitter channel (or “trend”) called “#balacera”, to redirect any *tweet* related to narco-violence. This is not something that is happening exclusively in Monterrey, but the tweets related to Monterrey can be redirected by writing “#balacera#monterrey”. The Facebook change of status has a similar use for these kinds of posts. These are some examples of tweets and change of status related to narco-violence:

- “@XXXX balacera en morones!!! prieto #mty #mtyfollow #monterrey #balaceratec #balacera”,
- “XXXX @XXXX me reportan #balacera al sur de #monterrey , alguien sabe algo?”

A well known example of how the tweet strategy has been used is the day involves an encounter between the army and supposed *sicarios* happened in March 2010 within the prestigious private university ITESM campus in Monterrey, where two men were killed. The authorities said they were part of the organized crime, but while the shooting in ITESM was happening, a student that lived nearby tweeted and warned about it as he noticed that the two men killed were graduate students, not *sicarios*. This was later confirmed by ITESM president Rafael Rangel, not by the SSP office. Part of this tweet warning

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<sup>8</sup> Total population of Mexico is almost 108 million inhabitants.

importance, is that it was a breakpoint for the involvement of privileged middle-upper class citizenry such as the ITESM community in narco-violence attacks.

While I noticed that Facebook and Twitter is more popular among the young adults I interacted with, the older generation of the middle class is more prone to connect through e-mails and navigate via YouTube. It is through this media that they also share information and tips of how to react and assimilate narco-violence.

José showed me how he keeps himself updated about what is happening in Monterrey by maintaining close communication with his friends through emails.

*A parte de usar el internet para jugar póker y mandar chistes a mis amigos por internet, en verdad es impresionante la forma en la que podemos compartir información. Yo soy de los que manda información sobre cosas que pasan en Monterrey, no está de más pasar consejitos o recomendaciones para protegernos. Si, si, es cierto que algunos de esos e-mails que recibo a veces son falsos, como cuando mandan supuestas cartas de la SEDENA (Secretary of National Defense). También Mandan supuestas amenazas que escriben los malitos (narcos, zetas) avisando sobre algún tiroteo pero son puras falsas alarmas. Pero, y si no son falsas alarmas? Si en una de esas es verdad? Así que no me importa si pueden ser falsas, yo las mando*

*Como son esos e-mails? Porque no te importa que sean falsas alarmas?*

*Los e-mails dicen cosas como “tengo un amigo que su vecino tiene unos contactos que le dijeron que posiblemente iba a haber un tiroteo en el centro, en el barrio antiguo”. Muchas veces no ha pasado nada, pero te digo, como voy a saber que no es verdad? Yo no me voy a arriesgar. Ni yo ni mi familia. Has visto los videos*

*en YouTube? Mucha violencia en lugares que nunca imaginamos! Así que los fines preferimos quedarnos aquí en la casa, una carnita asada, algo tranquilo y no arriesgarnos!. Mi hija a veces hace corajes porque se quiere salir y yo le digo que no. Es que hay días que pasan muchas cosas, las vemos por la tele y en verdad, para qué arriesgarse? Sabe que es peligroso y ella misma no quiere salir y se queda aquí o va a alguna fiesta casera.*

*- Y que piensas de la gente que manda alertas, que sube videos de tiroteos y otros materiales relacionados con los hechos violentos que están pasando en la ciudad?*

*Bueno, se los agradezco gente! Si no tuviéramos este tipo de información, o más bien, si no tuviéramos los medios para difundir esta información, no podríamos saber que es lo que está pasando. Ni así sabemos a ciencia cierta qué es lo que pasa, pero bueno. Al menos nos damos cuenta que no es paranoia. Cosas horribles están sucediendo. EN VERDAD están sucediendo. El gobierno no dice nada al respecto y nosotros nos tenemos que andar diciendo qué es lo que vemos. Así que la verdad, internet es una gran forma de comunicación!*

*- Por qué dices que no sabes a ciencia cierta lo que está pasando?*

*Me refiero a que no sabemos quiénes son los buenos o los malos. Está la policía de nuestro lado? La verdad, quien sabe; hay mucha corrupción. Los tiroteos son entre los narcos y el ejército? Policías contra narcos? Quien es quien? Una vez vi un video, no e acuerdo si en la tele o en YouTube, pero era un tiroteo de policías contra policías. Por eso digo, quién es el malo? No sabemos. Así que por lo pronto yo mejor me cuido.*

This is an example of how people change their routines by recurring to internet tools and peer information. The same sort of example I found with Twitter and Facebook. Some persons would check their smartphones and the #balacera trend before going out or simply ask someone in their homes if there is no news about possible *narco-bloqueos* or some potentially risky incident.

As José said, internet information can be false.

*Si, hay información que puede ser falsa, hay unos e-mails que si se ven super falsos. Por ejemplo, la carta esa de la SEDENA, por favor! Tenía errores de ortografía! Hay gente que hace eso nomás de juego, nomás por asustar. Pero cuando uno ve videos de balaceras tomados por gente normal, como nosotros, de Reynosa, Juárez, Camargo, y obvio aquí en Monterrey; fotos de narco-bloqueos subidas a internet en el instante da miedo. Te empiezas a decir “esto no es mentira, no me estoy imaginando nada, ESTÁ pasando”. Por eso le pongo atención a lo que gente regular sube a internet.*

But not only regular people trying to avoid insecurity use internet. It has already mentioned how internet networks and media are democratizing<sup>9</sup> and there is no strict way to regulate blogs, Facebook or Twitter usage in Mexico<sup>10</sup>. Just like regular citizens, criminals have access to the internet. They also use those same internet tools to send messages to the government or enemies in general. Blogs like [www.elblogdelnarco.com](http://www.elblogdelnarco.com) and [www.narconews.com](http://www.narconews.com) circulate information about them, like text messages or videos. As with any other material, it is hard to know for regular individuals which messages or are

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<sup>9</sup> *If it is really democratizing or not is a very controversial topic.*

<sup>10</sup> This is not the case in other countries such as China, “China has a long record of Internet censorship, stemming from its fear of the political consequences that could undermine a dictatorial regime (Deibert 2002, Hong 2001)



legitimate. Videos are more convincing because of the explicit graphics they could have, such as taped executions.

It is the *fearing subject*, that self-responsible active citizen whose role within the community includes keeping one's self and one's belongings safe that looks for the best way to self-govern his body and mind within his possibilities.

## Final Remarks

At the time I finished this work in late April 2010, the murders linked to narco-violence were between 116 and 158 criminals, 19 cops, 6 soldiers and 17 civilians (El Norte 2010). In 2009, the count was 56 total. In April 22 alone, there were 13 executions in 17 violent incidents in Nuevo León state (3 took place in non-metropolitan Monterrey). The last incident attributed to narco-violence happened in Expo-Guadalupe, a traditional cattle exposition and music festival in metropolitan municipality Guadalupe, N.L., where 5 persons were killed. They were not killed by bullets, but by a stampede of people trying to run away from a musical event where presumably some detonations were heard. So far, the shooting has not been confirmed, but people were not going to stand there and ratify that it was indeed a shooting. I saw videos on YouTube and indeed, people were running and terrified. Hours before that, the PGR had a press conference about the 2 graduate students killed in ITESM campus, I also saw it in video on internet and, just like some the media reported – El Norte and Milenio – , and PGR was not able to give new information in the case. Most of the data presented was already known and they failed to clarify some central points: who killed them – either the military or *sicarios* –, what is the whole content of the closed circuit recordings confiscated to ITESM, and why soldiers took away the students' IDs and labeled them as *sicarios*.

Experiences of violence, either collective or individual, and fear of crime are playing a central role in citizen's lives and leading to more acute self management. The general perception of residents in Monterrey is that this violence is linked to *Narco*. It is true that not all crimes are violence that can be traced to organized crime, and that certainly, even organized crime can have different faces (Cartels, Zetas, *sicarios*), but in the general

imaginary, the concept of *Narco* always came up in as something surrounding overall violence. Experiences of violence, either collective or individual, and fear of crime are playing a central role in citizen's lives and reinforcing and reproducing a more acute self management.

Low-income, marginalized citizens, while systematically excluded from the *material* state in their specific residential zones, are also proof of governmentality effectiveness. This can be found in the reliable self-order/management of the low-income citizens I talked to. "The way they know how to act, perform and discipline their bodies when they enter spaces with greater intensities of material state presence" (Germany 2009: 735). In the hope of becoming more secure, individuals find themselves in a spatially fragmented city, where they have to self-govern themselves according to their possibilities.

Within the democratic neoliberal frame, fear of crime concept can be interpreted as an instrument of disciplinary and governmental knowledge, and one that now has its own productive capacities and effects. "We need to understand these in the context of increasingly neo-liberal forms of government and crime prevention strategies, the imperative to govern at a distance subjecting the objects of governance to the less direct disciplines of the market economy" (Rose and Miller 1992, Stenson 1993b in Lee 2007)

This is a characteristic of security on the democratic neoliberal state, which is the trend over Latin American countries by many scholars. It is the widespread consensus of democratic politics and systematic violence against citizens in "developing/consolidating" democracies that urges to a conceptualize state and democracy in Latin America.

Holston and Caldeira (1999: 694) identified that many new neoliberal democracies were experiencing a disjunction within the regime: "although their political institutions democratize with considerable success, and although they promulgate constitutions and

legal codes based on the rule of law and democratic values, the civil<sup>11</sup> component of citizenship remains seriously impaired as citizens suffer systematic violations of their rights. In such uncivil political democracies, violence, injustice, and impunity are often the norms.”I believe this is complementary to the concept of governmentality used in this work. They state that the civil component of democracy creates a productive mediation between society and state that is ambiguous, not dichotomous: “the civil sphere differentiates society from the political system by defending the former from the abuses of the latter; however, it also integrates the two by utilizing state power to confront relations of inequality and domination within society itself, and to shape people into certain kinds of citizen-subjects” (*ibid.*: 693).

So, within the neoliberal arrangement every individual has a role in “patrolling”, patrolling criminals, and of course, their own selves. Constant circulation and enacting of advices like “watch your back”, “do not go out by yourself”, “be sure to have a family plan for emergencies” within the Monterrey residents is an example of how the self-governance through fear is expanded and normalized.

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<sup>11</sup> “They use civil to refer to an aspect of citizenship, and citizenship to refer to the prerogatives and encumbrances of membership in the modern political community” (Holston and Caldeira 1999: 693)

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