



(In)security in the Americas : ideological frameworks, public policies and citizens' realities

A sequence of recent events, widely covered by the media, brought us to confront the issues of insecurity on the one hand and security policies on the other hand in American societies.

Whistleblower affairs and, in particular, the “Snowden case”, which revealed some of the practices of NSA, have had a global media impact. They have exposed the security strategies of the world’s greatest powers and brought the Orwellian vision of world politics up-to-date. In the past few years, the media spotlight has been put on other events: police violence against Afro-Americans in the United States, terrorist attack in Boston in 2013, as well as in the Parliament of Ottawa in 2014, not to mention older attacks such as the AMIA bombing in Buenos Aires in 1994, or the recent disappearance of 43 students in Ayotzinapa, in the Mexican State of Guerrero. Other “insecurity” facts happen so often that they pop out of the newspapers just as quickly as they appeared on their front-pages, to such a degree that we could think they have reached some sort of “normality” status: violence in jails, suppression of marchers, social violence...

What do these crimes, committed on citizens or by citizens, reveal about the ways in which politics consider deviance and (ab)normality today? How do the States legitimize violent and/or illegal action against civil societies? Who are the deviants? What public policies should be set up? Indeed, if a democratic State is partially defined by its monopoly on legitimate violence, what are the limits to this power?

To address these topics, micro approaches – considering everyday life in a police station, a local tribunal or a prison cell for instance – are welcome. Macro perspectives, dealing with larger social dynamics – such as mobilizations against mining projects in Peru (and their brutal suppression), or the trend in security privatization by transnational firms, such as Monsanto in Paraguay – will also be appreciated. Obviously, these different perspectives can be tackled through a diachronic lens. For instance, a long-term analysis of the very concept of security can be lead, showing its evolution from the colonization period to the “national security” regimes in the 1960s and 1970s.

It is often said that poverty and violence are correlated. Yet, several south-American countries have kept high levels of economic growth in the past few years. Did this affect social and/or clampdown policies? As a consequence, would it be possible to measure the “conservatism” or the “liberalism” of American States in relation to these factors?

Insecurity arouses social reactions. In situations of either natural disaster or conflict, or when State administration lacks credibility or representation, we can observe the development of self-defense committees. Likewise, in urban areas, insecurity is the main – and often consensual – argument put forward by neighborhood committees and public administrations to justify the privatization of public spaces.

In this new edition, we would like to spark off in-depth reflections on insecurity and security policies in the Americas, which can be fed by the observation of small interactions or attached to



broader political, cultural, and intellectual traditions, and rooted in the long history of the region. For instance, the evolution of prison universe can be taken into consideration as it carries lots of implications: political decision-making, jurisprudence, meaningful changes in prison population. All these can be used as tools to address the deep dynamics operating in social change. Prison population (thieves, drug traffickers, murderers, receivers, but also political opponents, union leaders, indigenous activists often considered as “terrorists”, etc.) somehow shows who the undesirable elements of a given society are.

And when it comes about these topics, the role of the media is often worth interrogating. Thus, crime often sustains political discussion and performs as an authoritative argument in the media. What role do the media play in the social perceptions of insecurity? How do governments use them? And how security or insecurity feelings are born? What for?

For its ninth edition, RITA wishes to address the notions of security and insecurity in the broader sense: through statistics reflecting macro-social trends, or through discourse analysis coming from civil society, with empirical or theoretical approaches, based on literary or journalistic material, as well as on the examination of judicial or penitentiary legislation in the Americas. Historical, ethnographic, political, sociological or urban approaches, among others, are welcome. How do these diverse phenomena give us the keys to understand social, political and economic realities from the past and present of American countries?

Champ libre (Free Field)

We remind you that RITA welcomes off-topic articles for the Free Field part of the review, composed of the three following sections: Sights on the Americas, Research Notes and Dissertation/PhD Summaries.

Research notes are papers presenting work in progress or completed research, whose focus does not match the issue topic. They must include a problematic question, entail a protocol research and be in the form of an academic reflection (cf. “Comment soumettre un article”). On the contrary, Sights is a section in which expression and form are free: field experiences accounts, journalistic or literary texts...

Please send your proposals (one page) until the 10th of September to revue.rita@gmail.com. Selected authors will be informed on the 20th of September, and will have to provide their article on the 15th of November 2015.

The Reading Committee will then evaluate the text: it might be accepted or refused, with or without modifications. The 8th issue will be released by spring 2016.

Proposals must be submitted in one page. The author(s) will clarify the problematic of their paper, their methodology and the arguments of their demonstration. We also expect the candidates to provide a short bibliography (except for Sights section) and five to six keywords. Finally, the author(s) will indicate clearly their names, affiliation, status and chosen section.

We recall that all papers must be original and not currently assessed by another journal.