Peace building from a commons perspective

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Abstract: This work analyzes the most frequent framings used to explain insecurity and violence in México and Latin America, considering the type of understandings and prescription they provide to public policies. We consider that Johan Galtung's systemic approach to violence offers an integral view of the processes that lead to social violence, and provides important elements for the social efforts committed with the construction of peace. We also explore the potential contributions of the "commons" perspective to the comprehension of the collective efforts needed to build a sustained peace, considered as a condition that exceeds the mere apparent absence of conflicts, and involves both, citizenship and the state at different scales.

1. Introduction

Violence in México has reached unprecedented levels since former president Calderón (2006–2012)[1] launched a war against drug dealing more than a decade ago. Security policy based on a strong concentration of power in the army and the federal police was mainly oriented to capturing the leaders of the drug cartels, leaving aside the complex social dynamics behind violence. Calderón's strategy also underestimated the cartels' capacities of response, leading to perverse unexpected outcomes the militarization of the country and the reconfiguration of increasingly violent drug cartels acting in a context of impunity that lead to their incursion into new illegal activities such as kidnaping, extortion, illegal mining and oil stealing. Violence has reached a point that it is generally perceived that the State has failed to protect citizens and provide justice, nullifying its essential function: the provision of peace and security.

Based on a short analysis of the recent increased violence in México, this paper aims to provide conceptual insights for the comprehension of this process and the construction of alternative strategies for peace-building that could be useful for social/peace activists, policy-makers and researchers. With this broad objective this work poses the following questions: Which are the key contributions of the main conceptual approaches used in the analysis of violence in México and Latin America?, Can peace and security be regarded as a common?. If so, which are the contributions of this framing to peace building?, Which are the roles of the State and of civil society in the processes of reconstruction of peace considered as a common?

Methodologically we briefly discuss the development of the crisis of violence in México, analyzing structural factors that favor violence, policies implemented during the last decade to address this crisis, and their unexpected implications. We then review some of the main conceptual approaches for the study of violence in Latin America and México, taking into account their policy implications; the ways in which they have framed different policy interventions and their contributions to violence reversal.

We propose that the multifactorial, systemic and complexity perspectives provide useful analytical and policy tools that jointly can contribute to the construction of a new conceptual-policy framework. We also find that Galtung's systemic approach to violence includes some elements of the other two mentioned frameworks and illuminates on the impacts of violence on diverse spaces of social life, resulting in particular insights for the purpose of peace-building. We also review the potential contribution of the theory of collective action and commons, proposing to regard peace as a common whose construction and maintenance need to be based on collective action of different types and scales. Taking into consideration

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[1] Calderón was the second president of the *Partido Acción Nacional* the first political party different to the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) which uninterruptedly governed México for 75 years.

the complexity and dimension of the task we propose that peace building needs to rely on polycentric governance that has largely been blocked in México by strong elite political and economic capture, resulting in a strongly centralized political system and a mostly disempowered civil society.

A full diagnosis of the expressions and impacts of violence in México is beyond the scope of our work. Our main objective is to contribute to a conceptual framework useful for the reconstruction of peace in the country.

Apart from this introduction this paper is composed of five other sections: general accounting of the evolution of violence in México; a review of the afore-mentioned approaches to violence; the reflection on the potential theoretical and policy contributions of the "collective action – commons" theory, to the under-standing of peace building as a polycentric process; a discussion of the results and reflections of the previous sections and the conclusions.

2. Evolution of violence in México

Large-scale production of poppy and marijuana in México started in the 1940s in response to the demand of the North American army during World War II, concentrated in the mountainous regions of Northwestern México. In addition, the extended border with the USA, has made México became the main area of transit of drugs coming from South America and Asia into that country since at least the 1980s. For more than 30 years drug-dealing was mostly tolerated by local governments and police. As drug production expanded into new regions in México, the economic and social influence of drug cartels increased. In the 1970s the U.S. government hardened drug policies: Nixon declared drug abuse as "public enemy No. 1", Reagan imposed a "zero tolerance" policy and George Bush promoted the direct involvement of American military and local para-military forces in the battle against drugs in Latin America. Far from reduc-ing drug production and traffic, tougher anti-drug policies lead to an increased "professionalization" and empowerment of the cartels, including the consolida-tion of stronger armed components and greater capacities to corrupt and extort local and state governments, including high officers of the federal police and the army (Maldonado-Aranda 2012; Enciso 2015; Zepeda-Gil 2016). From the year 2000 Mexican drug-cartels filled the niche left by the dismantling of the Colombian cartels, accumulating formidable power and wealth. During the Calderón administration (2006–2012) the value generated by drug dealing was similar to the value of oil production then the main commodity produced by México (Aguirre-Ochoa and Barbosa-Muñoz 2013).[2]

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[2] México is the main provider of marijuana and opioids to the USA, and the main transit territory of other drugs; 90% of the cocaine consumed in the US enters through México. The UN report on the Traffic of Drugs and Arms estimated that in 2012, 80% of the 15 million of illegal arms in México came from the US (Encinas 2016).

During the seven decades of continuous PRI rule, the Mexican government largely avoided direct confrontation with the cartels, maintaining violence at a relative low level. This attitude was largely followed by first opposition government lead by Vicente Fox. In response to Calderón's change of rules with his anti-cartels war, criminal groups also modified their traditional way of functioning, directly attacking the population and intervening in local elections seeking control of the municipal governments. The National System for Public Security (SNSP) documented that from 2006 to 2012 the average mean of (reported) crimes grew by 75% and the number of murders increased by 240% in relation to the previous six-year federal administration, while 100 municipal presidents were killed by criminal organizations (Azaola 2012; Bergman 2012; Maldonado-Aranda 2012; Encinas 2016).[3]

From January 2008 to May 2011, 234 cases of open confrontation between the army and the population were reported. In these confrontations 14 supposed criminals were killed for every deceased soldier and there were 35 civilian losses for each deceased member of the Marine forces. Between 2007 and 2012, reported kidnappings tripled, but, due to the frequent involvement of the police in this crime the majority of the cases go unregistered.[4] The involvement creates a high possible relationship between cases of kidnapping and those of forced disappearance, with real numbers remaining unknown. The 2010 "Barometer of Conflicts" report of University of Heidelberg stated that: "Violence in México is similar to that present in Iraq, Somalia or Sudan, where brute force is constantly used, in an organized and systemic manner" (Azaola 2012, 19).

In 2012, the PRI regained the presidency of the country largely due to promises to restore security, but the new PRI President Enrique Peña maintained the "drug war". The militarization of Mexican society, proposed by Calderón as temporary, has been assumed by Peña as permanent and legal; officially the army is the main provider of security, with de facto no obligation for accountability or response for abuses of human rights.[5]

A distinctive pattern of the new PRI government is a stronger repression of the press and criminalization of social protest, at levels similar to those of the so-called "Guerra Sucia" "Dirty War" of the 1970s. From 2010 to 2015, 80 journalists were murdered and 17 "disappeared". Numerous journals and radio stations have suffered threats and attacks, including the forced closing of the radio news program with the largest national audience, led by the prestigious journalist Carmen Aristegui. "Reporters without Borders" considers México to be one of the world's most dangerous places for journalists. The special rapporteur for freedom

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[3] These numbers correspond to the total murders, not only to those directly related to drug traffic.

[4] "*México denuncia*" an NGO working on impunity evaluates that in 2016 there were 43 non denounced cases per each denounce of kidnapping.

[5] The 2017 initiative of the presidency of México aims to establish the army as the main agency responsible for the provision of security.

of expression of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights has described the situation of journalism and governmental repression in México as "highly worrisome" (OEA-CIDH 2016).

In 2015 the SNSP reported that from 2012 to 2015, a total of 57,899 people were killed and 9384 were reported as "disappeared". From 2009 to 2015, México's National Human Rights Commission received 5800 complaints regarding military abuse.[6] An evaluation by Amnesty International found that during 2010–2015 denounciation of torture increased by 600%. Emblematic cases of violence against society at the hands of the army include the killings in Ayotzinapa, Tlatlaya, Ecuandureo, Apatzingán, Aquila, Ostula and Nochixtlán.

Both Calderón and Peña left aside the complex social dynamics behind violence and illegality: the weakness of the judicial system, the broad impunity for criminals and abusers of human rights and the widespread corruption. During the past decade México was evaluated as the second country with the largest margin of impunity,[7] with 90% of crimes remaining unsanctioned.[8] México has the lowest ranking in the "Index of Perception of Corruption" among the OECD countries (Transparency International 2012).

In 2012 it was estimated that Mexican cartels employed directly over 450,000 people and a further 3.2 million people's livelihoods depended on the drug trade, while in 2013 the number of Mexican youngsters[9] out of schooling or paid employment reached 7 million.[10] In cities like Ciudad Juarez up to 60% of the economy depended on illegitimate money making (Alba 1982). In 2014 the per capita costs of violence equated to $1430 dollars, 17.3% of the GDP while government's expenditure in security counted for an additional 6.5% of the GDP. In 2016 the Open Society Justice Initiative declared that the intensity and patterns of violence starting in 2006 proved that killings and forced disappearances at the hands of government agents and members of the criminal cartel such as "the Zetas" constitute crimes against humanity, as defined by the Statute of Rome of the International Penal Court, subscribed by México in 2006. (OSJI 2016, 15–16). That same year the "Global Peace Index"[11] evaluated peace conditions in México as being among the 20 worst in the world.[12]

In response to these failures of the State, other providers of security have appeared, operating legitimately and illegitimately. The uncontrolled explosion

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[6] Most of them remained unresolved.

[7] Index elaborated by the University of Las Americas, Puebla and the Council of Citizens and Justice of Puebla City, based on information of the World Bank, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Inter-American Development Bank. 59 countries are ranked.

[8] Additionally 46% of those under arrest did not have guilty verdict and there are only had 4 judges per each 100,000 inhabitants.

[9] Ages between 14 and 24 years.

[10] National Survey on Occupation and Employment 2013; "Realidad, Datos y Espacio". Revista Internacional de Estadística y Geografía.

[11] Created by the Institute of Economics of Peace.

[12] From a sample of 164 countries.

of violence has led to the "privatization of security" creating a highly profitable market of bodyguards and security equipment. Fencing of residential streets is a frequent practice that constitutes a privatization of public spaces. These types of measures are highly exclusive and often generate "public bads" such as loss of capacity to circulate and an increased presence of armed people in public places. Some drug cartels have acquired tight control over important territories while presuming to be providers of security as in the case of the cartel "Familia Michoacana" according to the testimonies of countless victims of extortion.

In this context of social decomposition and profound mistrust towards the government, groups of citizens and communities have created new types of social movements, institutions and practices of collective action for self-government and self-defense against crime, the army and the police, as well as groups supporting victims of crime and groups denouncing abuses by authorities. Among them it is worth mentioning: the Community Police forces present in hundreds of indigenous communities of the regions of "la Montaña and Costa Chica" in the violent state of Guerrero, the self-protection initiatives of the indigenous communities of Cherán and Ostula and the "self-defense" groups in the "Tierra Caliente" in the state of Michoacán. Even if the self-defense initiatives – of diverse origin and out-reach- have mobilized community participation, their scope has generally been limited to the reconstruction of basic local conditions of security, without solving structural and cultural factors that lead to violence. The assessment of these experiences is a pending task, up to now their outcomes are still limited as they constantly face not only aggression from criminal groups, but repression from the government, which tends to arbitrarily identify these self-defense groups of citizens with the criminal bands (Zepeda-Gil 2016).

Important social movements such as the "Movimiento por la Paz con Justicia y Dignidad"[13] and the broad social response to the murders of 43 students from Ayotzinapa have publicly denounced the inefficiency, corruption and authoritarianism of the security policy and judicial system. The civic groups created to search for disappeared people such as the "rastreadoras"[14] in the state of Sinaloa have committed to the painful task of finding and excavating clandestine graves and documenting the findings of human remains, a responsibility continuously neglected by the State.[15] These movements and the tragic events that gave rise to them have strongly shaken Mexican public opinion. The demands for democratization, transparency and accountability that these movements have raised aim to transform the structural conditions that generate violence in México, but up to

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[13] Created and led by the poet and journalist Javier Sicilia after the assassination of his son.

[14] The "trackers".

[15] Interview with the writer Juan Villoro in the context of the exhumation of one hundred bodies in a clandestine grave found by activists in Tetelcingo, Morelos state. http://www.zonacentronoticias.com/2016/05/mexico-es-un-pais-donde-las-victimas-se-han-convertido-en-investigadores-juan-villoro/. Zona Centro Noticias, May 31 2016.

now they have not been able to sustain a wide citizens' participation. Nor have they created an integral peace building agenda able to promote and articulate wide national participation.

3. Violence and insecurity framings and policy implications

Violence has become a recurrent theme in the field of Mexican and Latin American studies, though without a shared understanding of the dynamics that create and reproduce violence (Carrillo-Flórez 2007; Azaola 2009, 2012; Moriconi-Bezerra 2011a,b; Bergman 2012). The disparity of frameworks goes together with the absence of a public debate on security and peace and the tendency of governments to unilaterally impose repressive policies. With the aim of contributing to broaden the perspectives of this important debate we briefly review four of the main approaches used in studies on violence performed by academics and international agencies.

1. **The objective causal** perspective proposes that violence represents a conflict resolution mechanism that emerges when peaceful resolution means are no longer viable (Bergman 2012). This is the predominant perspective among policy makers and many citizens. Violence is regarded as an external force affecting social and political processes: Violence disincentivizes economic investment, hampers development, hurts democracy, and creates high economic and social costs (Buvinic 2008). Violence is reduced to observable acts, susceptible to be classified as crimes. Quantitative description of processes considered to be violent has a key importance, with the aim of basing policy design and the use of public force in hard data. The emphasis on data in the absence of explicative hypothesis leads to an oversimplification of social processes, while backing government's application of homogeneous security protocols of supposed technical expertise (Moriconi-Bezerra 2011a). The poverty of offenders and their subjective qualities (maladjusted, pathological, radicals) are regarded as the main causes of violence. There is a tendency to stigmatize poverty, and to regard poor groups as potentially dangerous. Diverse types of violence traditionally viewed as "natural" in public and private spaces (such as cultural violence and violence and discriminations against women and vulnerable groups) are external to the scope of this framing. The view of violent behavior as mere observable acts performed by specific individuals obscures the relations between specific violence and structural processes that promote violence that transcends individuals. This perspective has guide the "anti-crime war" in México, leading to an uncontrolled spiral of violence and a generalized climate of impunity (Azaola 2009; Moriconi-Bezerra 2011b).
2. **The multifactorial approach** recognizes the multi-causality of violence and the diversity of its expressions. Violence is regarded as a result of multiple causes and social dynamics that jointly create conflictive condi-

tions. Poverty, social exclusion and humiliation, are regarded as structural violence that unavoidably lead to the reproduction of violence (Carrillo-Flórez 2007, Scheper-Hughes quoted by Azaola 2012, 17). Following this view three main factors explain the exacerbation of violence in México: the traditional and mostly tolerated acts of violence in private domains that have accumulated and scaled; the decomposition of the institutions responsible for the provision of justice and security, and the deep inequality present in México.[16] Violent cultural patterns and the existence of a large black market of arms favor the emergence of extremely violent gangs and paramilitary groups. Drug-dealing is assumed to be a key factor in the dynamic of violence, though it is not considered independently but in the context of structural conditions that incentivize violence. Inequality is regarded as a condition that erodes trust and favors repressive and violent relations among different social groups (Wilkinson and Picket 2010). Using data of the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the United Nations Program for Development, Azaola (2012, 25) exposes the close relation of inequality and violence, showing that the most violent countries are not the poorest but the more unequal though the combination of inequality and poverty increases the potential for violence. México has the second highest degree of economic inequality in the OECD (OECD 2011). The bottom 10% in the income hierarchy disposes of only 1.36% of the national income, whereas the upper l0% disposes of almost 36%. Forty-six percent of the population is poor and 10% extremely poor (CONEVAL 2014). México's budgeted expenses for poverty alleviation and social development are only about a third of the OECD average (OECD 2011).

This approach also acknowledges the irreplaceable role of organized civil society for the contention of violence, recognizes the right to self-protection (Aldana and Ramírez 2012, 110) and emphasizes the need of public policies to be respectful and supportive of civic efforts (Carrillo-Flórez 2007, 147). The proposals deriving from this approach have been left unconsidered by the official security policies, while the need for the transformation of the socio-economic structure is considered by the official discourse to be unviable and contrary to economic growth. The right to self-defense against violence is defined as illegal and severely treated as such.

3. **The perspective of complexity** assumes the simultaneous presence of order and disorder in social life, the presence of contradictions, ambiguities and non-linear causalities in the genesis of violence. From this framework, the analysis of violence should follow three principles: dualities and contradictions should be assumed without intending to solve

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[16] Inequality in México has scaled up since the NAFTA was signed in 1994 (INEGI, Esquivel 2015). Between 1995 and 2015, México's GNP grew by 25%, but the fortunes of the 16 top richest Mexicans grew by 250%.

them in a dichotomist manner; products and outcomes are seen as causes and producers of those processes that create them; and knowledge of the parts can be enriched through the understanding of the whole, enhanced in its turn by the analysis of the parts (Moriconi-Bezerra 2011a). This approach recognizes the many paradoxes of themes such as crime, victimization and insecurity that resist dichotomist explanations and proposals of a mere technical nature. One of these paradoxes present in the process of intense violence in México applies to the victim-accomplice situation; victims who co-create their own malaise as they accept the values imposed by the established social order, through implicit consent or passive acceptance of suffering. When violence is tolerated it comes to be regarded as a natural, quotidian un-fulfillment of rules and norms that creates an *habitus* promoting illegality, impunity and increased violence. Moriconi-Bezerra (2011b) suggests that the contention of violence needs to be based in the promotion of values of respect for life and peaceful coexistence, through educational activities engaged in treating of the sources of violence and in the promotion of experiences that favor empathy and collaboration. These proposals echo those of historical pro-peace movements in particular the African-American civil rights movement and the anti-apartheid fight in South Africa, which stressed the importance of self-consciousness and dignity among victims of violence and the dialogue with oppressors, seen as perpetrators but also victims of violence (King 1957; Mandela 1994).

This approach has been out of the scope of the anti-crime policies imposed on Mexican society, though some NGOs and social movements such as the "Movimiento por la Paz con Justicia y Dignidad" took up proposals similar to this view, like the promotion of a public dialogue between victims and government officials.

4. Based on a **systemic perspective of violence** Johan Galtung uses the metaphor of an iceberg to represent the diverse dimensions of violence, where only direct violence is visible, while violence at the base – cultural and structural- is invisible. In cases of direct violence victims and aggressors are relatively easy to identify. The identification of victims and damages of structural violence, that result from oppressive and alienating social, political and economic structures is also relatively easy though it is much more complex to explain the causes and to identify those responsible as direct aggressors. Prevalent discourses do not include poverty, hunger, social exclusion and inequality as expressions of violence. Galtung defines cultural violence as "any cultural manifestation that can be used to legitimize direct or structural violence" such as expressions of racism, classism, xenophobia, misogyny and homophobia. Even if there are not apparent victims of cultural violence, it establishes codes, stereotypes, habits and types of relations that more sooner than later derive in direct violence against certain individuals and groups (Galtung 2004, 2). These

three dimensions interrelate, generating structures that inherently create and recreate violence and constantly obstruct the construction of peace. Peace should be based on culture and structures, as cultural and structural violence cause direct violence and violent actors use culture to legitimize the use of violence. Direct violence in turn reinforces cultural and structural violence (Galtung 2004, 3–4).

Cessation of violence and peace-building are complex goals that imply multiple dimensions of social systems. They demand extraordinary will and efforts specifically oriented towards deactivating the causes of conflicts and restoring equilibrium. Galtung proposes that visible and invisible impacts of violence take place in diverse spaces: society, persons, nature, the world, and time. The comprehensive understanding of the impacts of violence constitutes a starting point in the agendas for the reconstruction of peace. The various impacts of violence in diverse spaces need to be addressed in order to break the vicious cycles of violence, while facing solutions to the subjacent roots of conflict, the reconstruction posterior to direct violence (rehabilitation of damage inflicted to persons; the restoration of destroyed environmental goods; reconstruction of structural damage and cultural re-creation in response to cultural damage) and the reconciliation of the parts in conflict (Galtung 2001, 2004). In this complex context Galtung's framing of violence appears to enable a holistic understanding of why violence in México has reached unmanageable levels, and also of the reasons for the repeated failures of policies based exclusively on repressive confrontation.

We propose that the multifactorial, complexity and systemic approaches share important features such as the recognition of structural and cultural violence, and the need of diversified policy approaches that include the transformation of economic and political structures that create exclusion and abuses of power. In our view important insights for peace building are the pervasive impacts of inequality, the recognition of paradoxes and contradictions by the perspective of complexity, and the identification of the different spaces where impacts of violence are felt and rehabilitation measures need to be addressed (see Table 1).

As already mentioned, security policies in México are largely based in an "objective-causal" approach, seeking fundamentally to reduce direct and quantifiable expressions of violence through direct confrontation (Rico and Chinchilla 2002). Even if government statistics report temporary reduction of the numbers of crimes and victims in some regions, the wave of violence and un-governability affecting México has not been reverted. Elements of multifactorial and complexity approaches have been embraced by some civil society groups in particular regions, but up to now their initiatives have remained isolated efforts, not only lacking government's support but facing constant aggression from criminal and government forces. Peace building based on dialogue oriented to promoting a culture of peace and seeking to repair the harm of direct, structural and cultural violence in different spaces constitute unprecedented tasks, demanding important will, capacity and social creativity.

Table 1: Main conceptual proposals for the analysis of violence in Latin America.

	Main proposals	Proposed causes of violence	Policy proposals
Objective causal perspective of violence	– Violence regarded as an external force that affects society as a whole. – Violence reduced to observable facts "crimes"	– Poverty and subjective qualities of the poor (dangerous, anti-social, drug-addicts)	– Repression of criminals. – Emphasis on the capture of strong men of the cartels. – Security repressive protocols based on supposed technical expertise.
Multi-Factorial vision	– Recognizes structural nature of violence and the need of multidisciplinary-multidimensional approaches	– Violence results from diverse causes including "structural violence" (inequality, exclusion, violent culture). – Drug dealing is part of the causes of violence, in already violent contexts.	– Proposes multidisciplinary interventions and structural transformations. – Recognizes the need of reform of governmental institutions. – Recognizes the right to self-protection, and the role of organized civil society for the contention of violence. – Acknowledges the need of public policies supportive of civic efforts.
Perspective of Complexity	– Violence is a complex process full of paradoxes in themes of crime, victimization and insecurity.	– The origin of violence is multifactorial and paradoxical its proper understanding resists dichotomist explanations. – Contradictions are inherent to violence and peace building processes.	– The contention of violence resists proposals or a mere technical nature. – It needs to be based in the promotion of values of respect for life and peaceful coexistence and the promotion of experiences that favor empathy and collaboration.
Systemic framework of violence	– Recognition of various dimensions of violence: direct-visible violence structural violence and cultural violence. Impacts are experienced in different spaces: society, nature, persons, time.	These three dimensions interrelate, generating structures that inherently reproduce violence.	Peace needs to be constructed from culture and structures. This processes demands extraordinary will and efforts specifically oriented towards the deactivation of the causes of conflicts.

Source: Our own synthesis from literature review.

4. Peace and security as commons

Commons is a category increasingly used with various meanings and references. Based on the scholarship of the so called "New Commons" (Bollier and Helfrich 2012; Hess and Ostrom 2007, https://creativecommons.org/; Capra and Mattei 2015) we understand "commons" in a broad sense as shared resources (Ostrom 2010), not only used but managed – and sometimes built- collectively. The idea of the commons refers to goods, resources and natural or cultural systems, but also includes the role of communities and collective action (Hess and Meinzen-Dick 2006; Berge and Van Laerhoven 2011; McCay 2015). Commons communities practice cooperation and reciprocity, build trust and collective identities and develop the agreements, norms and rules that sustain governance of the commons (Cárdenas 2009).

The concept of commons includes but surpasses collective property regimes (Stern et al. 2002; Lynch 2002, Merino-Pérez 2014). Goods under collective property are commons, but in some contexts goods under public and even formal private property can also be "commons". Within the universe of the commons it is also possible to include different types of goods classified by Ostrom based on their conditions of excludability and rivalry-substractability. Common pool resources, club goods and public goods, but even private goods can become "commons" whenever a group claims rights over them and takes part in their use, management or creation, as in the cases of digital and cultural goods[17]. Common pool resources are often commons as difficulties of exclusion tend to favor shared use, while high levels of substractability demand shared rules in order to sustain collective use and protection. The definition and implementation of these rules should be based on collective action. Private goods[18] under some conditions can be "commons"; as in the case of money in micro-credit cooperatives and credit unions whose capitals are collectively owned and managed according to rules agreed upon by members. Goods classified by Ostrom's framework as public goods can become commons as their use – mostly open- enables collective access and benefit. Natural, cultural and knowledge goods, that are formally under public property are often managed based on co-management agreements between governments and nongovernmental actors (Poteete et al. 2010).

From several different perspectives peace and security are regarded as public goods because they are basic conditions of public interest, fundamental for social life. They are often regarded as public goods based on the presumption that their maintenance is solely responsibility of the state, traditionally conceived as the exclusive holder of legitimate violence (Weber 2005).

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[17] Contemporary English commons are generally lands or roads privately owned, traditionally valued and used by local communities. The recognition by the English Parliament of local traditional rights enables community members to take part in the governance and use of these commons. (Commons Act, 2016. http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/26/section/15).

[18] Goods of high excludability and high sustractability.

Institutional analysis has provided important conceptual tools for understanding of the failures leading to "tragedies of the commons"[19] (Van Laerhoven and Ostrom 2007). Analytical initiatives aiming to understand the "tragedies" of public goods are newer and fewer. Michael Heller's proposal of the "anti-commons" (Heller 2008) advances the concept that excessive (private) property rights in cases of knowledge commons, lead to "misuse" and paralyze innovation. Knowledge is a good of public interest whose excessive privatization threatens the creative processes that largely depend on knowledge remaining in the public domain. Heller's perspective provides important insights for reflecting on peace and security as commons. The crisis of violence in some regions of México can be read as situations of anti-commons, favored by the privatization of security.

One of the best known contributions of Elinor Ostrom to the understanding of institutions is that of the "design principles" associated with their robustness.[20] First proposed in 1990, these "principles" were inferred from a vast empirical analysis and have been largely validated and refined through more than two decades of empirical research on diverse types of common pool resources around the world (Cox et al. 2010). An important pending task is the research about the adequacy of the design principles to the analysis of the institutions involved in the governance of public goods and "new commons". Based on the analysis of groups of self-defense and community police in México we consider these principles also to be valid for understanding the provision of local security regarded as commons; particularly the principles that refer to the presence of: coherence, collective choice, autonomy, monitoring, sanctioning, conflict resolution and institutional nestedness (Ostrom 1990, 2005, 2009a,b).

From an institutional perspective peace and security are public goods, with low levels of excludability and substractability. Exclusion from these goods is not only difficult but senseless. Furthermore, deterioration of peace and security – as in the case of the so called "new commons"[21] -derives largely from "disuse". As public goods systematically face provision challenges, the large exclusion from security in particular spaces leads inevitably to the de-valuation of that space and to lack of commitment to the provision of improved security conditions. As discussed before, deterioration of peace and security in México is related to their privatization and the abandonment of areas under pressure by both the State and organized society. Initiatives such as the "auto-defensas" from Tierra Caliente, the autonomous municipalities in Chiapas, the indigenous communities of Cherán, Ostula and the community policies of the Tlapaneco, Nahua, Mixtec and Amuzgo peoples in Guerrero are based on a strong participation of communities in rule-making, monitoring, conflict resolution and sanctioning around the provision of local security. However an important missing condition is the absence of nestedness between these local efforts and institutions and the State.

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[19] Generally common pool resources.
[20] Understood as "rules in use" (Ostrom 1990).
[21] Such as knowledge and information (Hess and Ostrom).

State governments – captured by regional elites and sometimes by criminal orga-
nizations- have strongly repressed these initiatives, which threaten the status quo.
The national government has decreed them to be illegal and treated them as such.

This reflection acknowledges that the construction and reconstruction of the
diverse commons in different spaces involved in peace-building face varied chal-
lenges that cannot be addressed by institutional panaceas, general formulas or highly
centralized governance schemes. But framing peace and security as commons does
not imply ignoring the responsibility of the State, nor the need of State intervention in
the reconstruction and provision of peace and security. We consider peace and security
simultaneously as public goods and "commons", acknowledging the need of co-pro-
duction and co-management processes based on partnerships between the state, soci-
ety and local communities. We conceive peace-building as a process – with a strong
communitarian dimension- committed to the reconstruction and provision of different
nested cultural, material and social commons. From this perspective the relations of
society and the State in México should be reformulated based on the demands posed
by the construction of peace and security in diverse contexts and scales. E. Ostrom's
last version of the design principles, the presence of nested institutions and hers and
Vincent Ostrom's proposal of polycentric governance understood as social systems
with multiple decision-centers and limited prerogatives operating under general sets
of general rules (Polany 1989; Ostrom 2009a,b) seem particularly appropriate for the
reconstruction of complex multi-scale goods as peace and security.

5. Discussion: resolution, reconstruction and reconciliation, trough rebuilding communities and commons

We find that Galtung's framework provides useful insights for peace-building
agendas, including conflict resolution, and repair of the damage inflicted in the
domains of society, persons, nature, and culture. His proposal of visible and invis-
ible violence and their impacts on diverse spaces is compatible with the central
insights of the multifactorial perspective, that it further develops. Key elements of
the perspective of complexity – such as the presence of paradoxes in vicious cycles
of violence and the need of education and dialogue for peace-building are also
coherent with the systemic approach to violence and can be incorporated into it.

Structural violence in the personal and societal spaces refers in México to
deep inequality of rights, resources and opportunities and to extended conditions
of poverty. Following Wilkinson and Picket (2010) we regard inequality as a
"public bad" that is related to violence, authoritarianism and eroded social capital,
which are pervasive conditions in the country. The UNDP (2013) places México
as one of the 25 most unequal societies in the world,[22] with 56 million poor and
more than 12 million of extreme poor (CONEVAL 2014).

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[22] According with the Standardized World Income Inequality Database, based on data from 2008 to
2012, the Gini Coefficient for México has a value of 0.441, while the World's average is 0.373; 75%
of the countries of the world are less unequal than México.

Based on Amartya Sen's conception of poverty as a lack of capacity to fulfill one's own potential, (2000) -not only economic scarcity but also lack of political freedom and civil rights- we incorporated political violence in this analysis, considering it as structural violence, a driver of both direct and cultural violence and as a strong contributor to the reproduction of the whole violent order. Political violence has powerful expressions in México. It is enough to say that the country was governed uninterruptedly by a single party for more than 75 years, that at least 20% of the voting in political elections[23] is result of corrupt practices, and many municipal governments and policy bodies are controlled by criminal organizations (Encinas 2016).

Relying on Galtung's scheme, we propose that the table bellow can be a general framework for diagnosing the acts and impacts of violence in México, also as a general guide to identify those spaces where polycentric initiatives need to be taken into account and acted upon. We do not make specific reference to Galtung's category of "space of time", but it is worth mentioning the long maintenance of dysfunctional and violent political and social structures in México and the prevalence of patterns of exclusion and injustice over generations (see Table 2).

Peace-building processes need to rely on resolving the sources of violence and reparation of the impacts of violence adopted as national and local public policy. Elite capture of public and community resources is in the center of the dynamic of violence. The solution of violence and its impacts cannot take place without profound political changes, and the promotion of transparency, accountability and civil participation in local and national arenas. Peace building is unviable without addressing inequality and exclusion, conscious of their pervasive impacts in communities and society as a whole. The reversion of the impacts of violence in the spaces of nature and culture relies on the defense, good management, restoration and creation of local assets, often commons demanding creative collective action, which are threatened when abuses of the commons take place and trust is eroded.

In the developing world, at least since colonial times, many natural commons, even cultural goods have been object of disputes between local communities and colonial/national States. In contexts of weak accountability and governance, States seek to impose the interests of national and international elites -identified in official discourses with "national interests"- to the management of those commons. While elite control and appropriation of these commons frequently lead to their erosion and exhaustion, management by self-organized communities "beyond markets and states" has in many cases proved to be a viable option for sustainability and governance.[24]

Destruction of peace and security is cause and result of the deterioration of multiple public, private and common pool goods, of different natures and scales.

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[23] Federal, state and municipal levels.
[24] We do not propose community management as a panacea, but based on the wide empirical research (Agrawal et al. 2008; Tucker 2012; Merino Leticia 2016) we acknowledge that it is mostly based on local participation and better respond to local contexts.

Table 2: Analysis of the spaces of expressions and impacts of violence.

Direct violence: actions and impacts	Structural violence: actions and impacts in México	Cultural violence: actions and impacts in México
Space: society		
– Continuous material damage to infrastructure and communication means, facilities related with the provision of health, education, and information services.	– Poverty and marked unequal access to income, assets and services. – Imposition of economic projects based solely in profit making by a small elite. – State captured by elites, corruption and authoritarianism. – Damage to institutions, to the government, the law and human and civil rights.	– Violent culture. – Elite capture of mass media, damage to the press and to freedom of expression. – Racism, discrimination misogyny and homophobia. – Deterioration of social capital at personal, community and national levels. – Deterioration of the capacity of dialogue and conflict resolution. – Capacity of violence and ostentation as sources of prestige. – Private appropriation of national cultural patrimony, losses of cultural practices and traditions.
Space: persons		
– 250,000 people violently killed over the last 12 years,[a] – Unknown cases of forced disapearence, displaced, women raped, widows, orphans, Increasing teen-age pregnancies, – Increased presence of military and paramilitary.	– Large number of people suffering direct violence, exclusion, discrimination and abuse. – Large number of people without protection, opportunities and freedom.	– People discriminated and stigmatized, – Generalized lack of trust, lack of visions of future. – People with fear, mistrust, rancor and hatred.
Space/dimension: nature[b]		
– Pollution and deterioration of natural systems. – Imposition of economic projects of high socio-ecological impacts: open pit mining, fracking, large hydroelectric plants, mono-cropping commercial plantations and touristic enclaves.	– Imposition of decisions affecting human and community rights and the integrity of ecological systems. – Elite capture of government's environmental agencies, – Unequal distribution of environmental costs, risks and goods.	– Prevalence of discourses justifying the transfer of high environmental costs to disempowered groups. – Absence of long time perspectives in the use and management of natural resources. – Absence of respect for life.

[a]http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/entrada-de-opinion/articulo/alejandro hope/nacion/2016/02/23/ los-300-mil-muertos.
[b]During Calderón's presidency the forest lands affected by mining concessions in favor of -mostly-Canadian corporations increased by 30%. The vast majority of the lands are legally community property.
Sources: Adapted from Galtung (2004, 7–8): The table is based on Galtung's proposal of the expressions of violence in different spaces using as illustration violence taking place in México. Selected aspects for each dimension and type of violence were taken from large number of press articles, direct observation and victims' testimonies.

The success of public policies aimed at building peace, understood as the capacity to address conflict and search for creative collective solutions, requires clear identification – by governmental, community and civil actors- of the impacts of direct, structural and cultural violence. From this perspective a culture of peace (Adams 2015) should include: the conception of peace as a common task and as a common good, the consciousness of the relationship between structural and cultural violence; the conception of inequality and poverty as "public bads" and respect for local autonomy and decision-making capacities. Direct participation, empowerment and collective action of those affected by violence are also fundamental in this process.

Opposed to centralized and punitive security policies, where governments strongly control capacities, resources and rights, we believe that peace building demands polycentric governance schemes in which individual and collective contributions are possible. These are schemes of authority that not only enable multiple visions, but their translation in diverse practices enable participation and social creativity. These systems are also more flexible and more able to respond to complex challenges (Aligica and Tarko 2012).[25]

6. Conclusions

Over the past decade violence and insecurity in México reached intensity in the record of living generations. Government response has been largely surpassed by the capacities of increasingly powerful cartels, which have diversified their range of activities to include extortion, kidnapping and murder. By and large Mexican society is the most affected part in this process. In various cases officers of local, state or national governments have protected or even taken part in criminal activities leading in various regions to serious ruptures of the pact between society and the State.

Public policies against crime and drug-trafficking are mainly oriented by "objective-causal" prohibitionist approaches that seek to repress direct actions of violence actions, but leave aside fundamental aspects such as the reform of the judicial system as well as structural and cultural causes of violence. Security policy is based on a highly centralized scheme with authoritarian tendencies that pervade government as a whole and hinder social participation. In addition the increasing elite and governmental control of communication media imposes a biased interpretation of violence, minimizing and hiding continuous violations of human and civil rights. For more than a decade these policies have led to an uncontrolled violence and increasing number of victims, while increasing the power of the structures, and practices that sustain violence.

Different groups have responded to this crisis by means of privatizing security (fencing streets, hiring armed body guards or "selling" security through the

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[25] Networks of local governments in some regions of Europe and the United States, science and markets based on competition are examples of contemporary polycentric governance systems.

imposition of terror), generating new and often dramatic "public bads". In some of the most affected regions, community initiatives of self-defense have emerged in some cases succeeding in reestablishing conditions of local security. These initiatives have not gone beyond the local scales, and have frequently been repressed by the government or infiltrated by the cartels. Lastly up to now wide social mobilization against violence in México has occurred only sporadically, and has not developed a political agenda capable of creating a national movement of civil resistance and peace-building.

Multidimensional and systemic diagnostics emphasize the role of inequality, exclusion and poverty in violent dynamics. The perspective of complexity clarifies some of the links between individuals and society and also alerts against the risk of reproducing violent conditions, implied in the naturalization of violence and victimization. Finally Johan Galtung's proposal to relate invisible and visible violence, present in diverse spaces, provides an insightful framework for peace-building agendas.

The resolution of the dynamics of violence and the repair of the impacts of violence imply the defense, sustainability and even the creation of public and common pool resources, commons whose existence and permanence depends on collective action. The theory of institutional analysis elaborated by Elinor Ostrom provides also an important framing underlining the importance of collective action in different scales. We endorse her warning against pre-established panaceas, and the need to construct polycentric governance institutions and practices that can address the tasks of resolution and repair of the impacts of violence in different spaces and scales.

Resolution and reparation of structural violence, of the impacts of the attacks against the life, property, nature and culture, are tasks that undoubtedly demand the action of the State. Nevertheless the quality of democracy and subsidiarity of governance practices are fundamental for the success of peace building policies. Social and community participation are indispensable for the defense, restoration and re-creation of diverse common goods involved in peace building. Furthermore the reform of the State needed for the resolution of the process of violence, is fundamentally a result of social and civic movements and of a citizen accompaniment to the policies of constructing democracy and building peace.

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