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## COMMUNITY POLICE AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN SECURITY MATTERS: PROPOSAL FOR THE CREATION OF A COMMUNITY COUNCIL AND POLICE

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*José Ramón Corona-Armenta*

Autonomous University of the State of  
Hidalgo, Pachuca, Mexico

*Oscar Montaña-Arango*

Autonomous University of the State of  
Hidalgo, Pachuca, Mexico

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**Abstract:** The State is directly in charge of the security of the population, to do so, it must have the resources that allow it to provide this service, allowing citizens to live in a state of law, peace and harmony, which allows the free development of their activities. The problem begins when the State is diminished in its capacity to provide security to its citizens, due to the increase in insecurity caused by social, economic or political decisions - mainly. Part of this problem lies in the absence in the communities of a figure with decision-making power in matters of security who is endorsed by the State, who provides first-hand security, who is within reach of the population and, above all, that has the trust of the citizens. On the other hand, citizens must be partners in their own security, safeguarding their integrity and generating a climate of harmony and peace in the communities, resolving their differences when their impact is within their reach. Therefore, a proposal for a community council model is presented that is in charge of a community police force for the protection and security of its community, within a legal framework established by the existing regulations in Mexico.

**Keywords:** Community council, community police, protection and security.

## INTRODUCTION

Security is one of the axes that the State must develop, promote and control as part of the powers it has, as part of the social pact, in which the population gives up part of its rights in exchange for this higher entity providing it with this service

This is why the existence of a community police force and the participation of society in matters of security becomes an element that must be developed as part of the support and presence of the State in the formulation of actions that allow its presence among the population in a manner significant, in which

citizens are also made jointly responsible for developing their own protection and security. These are two fundamental axes that the state can promote as part of the population's well-being policy.

## DEVELOPMENT

### ANTECEDENTES

Over time, the police have marked an axis in the security of the population, so their socialization is a fundamental part of the trust of the communities, in addition to the respect and consideration that must be given to them.

Unfortunately, this approach has been lost over time, to the extent that the idea of a police force close to the population is considered out of context due to the breakdown in the link between the population and the police, due to an image weakened of the latter in which it is more associated with issues of bad practices to the detriment of citizens.

According to the World Justice Project (WJP, 2022), the country's situation is stagnant or deteriorating, the main causes of this are: the weakening of institutional counterweights, the detriment of the criminal justice system and little anti-corruption progress.

On the other hand, Institute for Economy and Peace (IEP, 2022) released the Mexico Peace Index 2022, which measures peace according to trends, analysis and estimates of the economic impact generated by national violence, uses five indicators: 1) homicide, 2) crimes committed with firearms, 3) prison without sentence, 4) crimes with violence and 5) organized crime crimes. The situation improved very slightly compared to the previous year (0.2%), however, within a period of 7 years, there was a deterioration of 17.1%. The increase in these indicators is mainly related to a greater presence of organized crime and corruption.

Corruption is an evil that afflicts society, it is not only a defect in society in Mexico, it is a global problem, however, in countries like Mexico it has reached very high levels, impacting the perception of society and distrusting the institutions that are in charge of protecting it. The police are one of the bodies that have a deplorable perception in society.

## **THEORETICAL DISCUSSION**

### **DEVELOPMENT OF THE POLICE OVER TIME**

According to the page of the Secretariat of Security of the State of Mexico (SSEMEX, 2021), in pre-Hispanic Mexico there was a neighborhood police force who were known as “Topillis” who were in charge of cleanliness, order, surveillance and protection. In colonial times, this function was left in the hands of the “Alguaciles”, who had the powers of arresting serious crimes and surveillance in the cities. There were also the “Lantern Guards” popularly known as “Serenos” in charge of patrolling the communities, who also knew the residents of their area and provided support if requested by the residents in robbery or other types of crimes. By 1826 there were “Public Guards” and later “police battalions”, in charge of public security, carriage traffic and assistance to the population. The “Rural Police” in the Porfiriato provided security to the inhabitants.

The “Urban Police” is defined as a consequence of the growth and development of cities, and by 1923 women were incorporated to guard parks and gardens, as well as support in offices and laboratories. In the middle of the last century, the police stopped walking and began using cars and motorcycles. They currently have technological tools that support them in the functions they have planned (SSEMEX, 2021).

## **THE NEIGHBORHOOD POLICE**

After the Revolution and until the middle of the last century, the neighborhood police officer was an unmistakable part of life in the city, it was an element of the police that was close to the community, traveled through it, was part of it, It was part of everyday life, it maintained constant communication with the neighbors, it generated trust and was held in esteem, it was part of the environment and enjoyed the respect of the citizens.

### **COMMUNITY POLICING IN THE UNITED STATES (NEILD, 1996).**

In the United States, the concept itself has a different focus than conventional police since the community itself in which they work has to do with determining the functions that are granted so that they can provide service to the community, through consultations and meetings with high participation based on democracy. This causes a conflict with the members of this corporation, since it implies that part of the activities are carried out collaboratively, being willing to respond to criticism and sharing authority. One of the great challenges is found in the specialization of these police forces, because generally the benefits are lower, which causes discontent and frustration. The main characteristics of this police are: crime prevention, the routine use of patrols, reiterating to the population their public service obligations, and feedback on the current community police.

Even so, community police have not been without problems, as part of their daily interaction with society, and therefore also being affected by what happens in the community. Community police are in the process of being reconditioned in accordance with new paradigms that are present in their daily actions (Greene, 2006).

## THE PROXIMITY POLICE MODEL IN MEXICO (SSYPC, 2020).

This model was developed based on extensive documentary research, the review and adoption of national and international good practices and the opinion of experts on the subject, it integrates police institutions, with current regulatory instruments and with guidelines and parameters appropriate to the requirements. national. It develops elements adaptable to the idiosyncrasies of the different localities of the country, so it is flexible in terms of the adaptation that is required in practice and in accordance with specific cultural issues of each national corner.

It is a police management strategy that seeks to combat violence and crime, as well as identify and resolve its causes, promoting rapprochement with communities under a partnership approach in search of well-being and peace through collaboration.

## CITIZENS IN SECURITY ACTIVITIES

Since the beginning of the Human Being as a member of a community, he has been involved in security activities, mainly in defense of his own, that is, being a member of the community also meant agreeing to defend it in case of attacks by people. neighbors, which was further encouraged when agriculture appeared and, therefore, encouraged a sedentary lifestyle. The specializations were given as part of the development and growth of the communities, and despite being able to have specialized security and protection bodies (police and army), the need in the event of unforeseen emergencies such as attacks or invasions, all the elements that could be considered were considered. participate, except children, women and the elderly.

A remnant of this need to prepare the population is the Military Service in Mexico, which was proposed for the training and military training of all men at the time of

turning 18, and that they would be able to be called to the defense of the country (The Military Service Law, 1940).

On the other hand, article 10 of the Constitution (CPEUM, 2017) indicates that the inhabitants of the Republic have the right to possess weapons for their legitimate defense, with the exception of those restricted to military and naval bodies or those that are considered special.

## THE SELF-DEFENSE FORCES

In recent years, and as part of the climate of insecurity and violence that occurs in various places in the country due to the presence of criminal groups that have established territories and demarcations outside the law, as well as the inability of the state to be able to provide security for the population that has been reduced to the domain of these groups, the residents have grouped together and created self-defense committees in the communities in which they live, as well as the creation of community police. The self-defense groups were created to confront the criminal groups that plague the residents of these areas, and the community police are responsible for ensuring that order prevails in the community. It is the response of the population to the ungovernability in these areas by the State. One of the community leaders indicated that the self-defense groups “are not legal, but they are legitimate” (Cerdeja Arduña, 2013). The disadvantage of these groups is that they are traceable, unlike criminal groups.

One of the greatest impacts of this situation is the people who have been forced to leave their homes due to insecurity and violence. It is estimated that in the last six years at least 117,301 have been displaced, of which 44,905 people were displaced in 2021. Most of them are associated with the violence and insecurity of criminal groups (IEP, 2022).

## CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN SECURITY MATTERS

On the one hand, the Constitution allows legitimate defense, but on the other, the limit is set by the State, based on the legitimacy acquired through democratic methods. Latin America has conceptualized security from different approaches. In recent years there has been a move towards a citizen security model, with people as the central axis of the policies generated.

This direct participation of society must be understood within a framework of physical protection and the promotion and creation of environments conducive to a culture of peace and harmonious coexistence among the inhabitants of a community. The focus is more on prevention and control of factors of insecurity and violence as opposed to coercive activities through the use of force (INSYDE, 2019).

In Mexico, the General Law of the National Public Security System (LGSNSP, 2009) indicates that public security is a function in charge of the state in the three levels of government. The eighth title of the aforementioned law indicates the form of community participation, through an effective system in which the society monitors, evaluates and supervises the system, through work with the authorities, through assistance and co-responsibility, this participation will occur through communities and civil society organizations (LGSNSP, 2009). That is to say, the work of society is passive, it depends on the actions of the State and the information it generates.

## METHOD

A qualitative documentary research was carried out with an inductive-deductive methodological approach, which will be generated through the compilation of bibliographic information on security, community councils and community police in Mexico.

Based on this information, the information was analyzed to form a diagnosis of the general situation that exists in the problem posed. From there, and using a holistic approach, a proposal was made based on the information collected and the diagnosis formulated.

## RESULTS

### PROPOSAL FOR A COMMUNITY COUNCIL SUPPORTED BY THE COMMUNITY POLICE

The integration of communities within the public security system must be carried out through a realistic approach, which truly addresses the needs of the population and is not just about political activities that end up damaging the Government-Community relationship. The central idea is that each community forms a community council that has direct decision-making capacity in the security of the community, which is supported by the community police.

The community police, although it responds to a hierarchical superior, who may be outside the community, depends directly on the community council, and is a member of the community itself, who must be in constant contact with society, supporting it in cases of crime. in which you can intervene directly.

According to the level of violence and insecurity that each community has, the following proposals are made:



**Extreme situation:** The communities, depending on the place in which they are located, and if they are within a control zone of armed criminal groups, will be able to protect themselves and receive training through State institutions, especially the Federal Government, until this guarantee the rule of law that allows the use of these security implements to stop. Both the Community Council and the Community Police must be aware of the activities that are carried out for the protection of the community, with constant communication with the elements of the government institutions assigned to support the population, their level of attention is maximum and Their level of direct intervention is maximum.

**Danger situation:** In communities where the presence of organized crime groups is important, but no training or special tools are required, the community police will be reinforced with elements that the Federal and State Governments consider convenient and necessary until the part that causes problems within is eradicated. The Community Council and the Community Police have greater intervention, but operational activities are in charge of the Federal Government. The attention of the Council and the Community Police is maximum and their level of direct intervention is medium.

**Average situation:** In communities where the presence of crime groups is low, but there is a certain level of insecurity or violence, the community police will be reinforced with elements from other civil corporations, in charge of the state government, that support it to counteract and control to individuals who cause acts of insecurity or violence. Operational activities will be carried out by the State Government, the Council and the Community Police will have a medium level of attention and minimal direct intervention.

**Base situation:** In communities with no or little presence of insecurity or violence, the community police will be in charge of the activities of their mandate. Both the Community Council and the Community Police have a minimal level of attention and direct intervention.

The above can be seen in table 1.

In all of these communities, the Community Council is aware of and intervenes in security issues and, if necessary, also participates in the direct actions of the community police, when they expressly request it. The Community Council is directly in charge of administering and managing security in the population. It must be represented by a group of people who must meet some minimum requirements of honesty, knowledge and collaboration to perform its function. They are made up of residents of the district itself.

The Community Police is responsible for addressing operational activities such as theft and violence in the community, up to a certain degree of danger, in addition to surveillance and participation in its social activities. Its function is to approach the population, from where it will obtain information that supports decision-making regarding strategies against crime and violence. Community police officers must be active members of the community they directly serve.

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| Situation     | Level of Presence of organized crime | Support Corporation | Support type                      | Level of attention of the Community Council and Community Police | Level of intervention of the Community Council and Community Police |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| Extreme       | Total control                        | Federal and State   | Protection, training and training | Maximum  | Maximum   |
| The dangerous | Important                            | Federal and State   | Protection                        | Maximum  | Half  |
| Half          | Medium or low                        | State               | Protection                        | Half   | Minimum   |
| Grassroots    | Little or none                       | State               | Protection                        | Minimum  | Minimum   |

Table 1: Level of violence and insecurity in the community

Source: own author

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## CONCLUSIONS

Every day, citizen participation becomes a way to integrate communities with security elements that are at an adequate level, and which is made up of the neighbors themselves, who are incorporated into the tasks of neighborhood surveillance and care and help in case of emergency.

The levels of participation of society must be adapted to the needs of time, place and form, which contributes to a more efficient service and, above all, adapted to the circumstances of the place.

The Community Council and the Community Police are entities formed by the residents of the community themselves, so they share the idiosyncrasy, culture and even family, friends and neighbors.

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