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## ⇒ Rescaling security in Latin America: Reading the interurban network “Citizen Safety in Towns” as an intervention into local power relations\*\*

### Urban governance and the rescaling of politics

Over the last 30 years, Latin American cities have witnessed substantial processes of political re-engineering. Since the 1980s, the return to democratic state forms, together with processes of political decentralization and neo-liberalization, have increased the importance of municipalities in the handling of urban affairs (Rodríguez/Espinoza/Herzer 1995: 236; Rojas 2008: 11; Myers/Dietz 2002). In this context, new political structures and processes have emerged that in the social sciences are discussed as “local” or “urban governance” (McCarney 1996; Brenner 2004; Heinelt 2004; Einig *et al.* 2005; Porras 2007; Schwalb/Walk 2007; Rojas *et al.* 2008). The term “governance” recognizes the empirical fact that non-state actors are increasingly involved in policy development and implementation, and that collective affairs are no longer dealt with only in traditional hierarchical or market-based forms but through heterarchical, networked coordination schemes. Typical buzzwords in this regard are “public private partnerships”, “corporate governance”, “new public management” or “good governance” (e. g. Jessop 1998, 2007; Hamedinger 2006; Risse/Lehmkuhl 2006).

These terms already indicate that governance theory starts from a deeply normative understanding of politics. It is perceived as an activity that attempts to solve collective problems, and political agents are supposed to act upon this maxim. Consequently, existing governance structures are easily read as expressing the involved actor’s will to jointly solve concrete societal problems (Mayntz 2005: 17; Mayntz 2001). Even if this is a much shortened account, such premises can be easily recognized in a wide range of governance programs and policy papers. Accordingly, critical protagonists and observers of the debate warn against the tendency to primarily investigate cases where governance

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proved to be successful and to neglect power asymmetries and dominance within governance structures and processes (Jessop 1998: 43; Brand 2004: 115; Mayntz 2005: 17f.).

Within political geography, an interesting theoretical framework has been developed for critically engaging with ongoing governance processes and for focusing on other relevant dimensions therein. Through the lens of this discipline, new governance constellations are analyzed from a perspective that is especially sensitive to their inherent spatial processes. Based on the premises of critical political economy and a conceptualization of space as social and political process (Lefebvre 1991), this strand of research asks how far new forms of governance spatially rearrange politics, economy and statehood in a context of neo-liberal globalization. In particular, the vertical displacement of political processes from one scale to another (e. g. from the national to the regional) or, more precisely, the creation of new scales for political intervention, has attracted scholarly attention (Einig *et al.* 2005: 3; Wissen/Röttger/Heeg 2008). Such relocations, according to the theoretical underpinning of this work, are never neutral but of a deeply political character. They occur because actors pursue certain interests, and they have an influence on existing societal relations of power and domination. In that sense, the analysis is interested not in the spatial transformation itself but in the political motives that cause it, as well as the social and political consequences it has (Belina 2006: 67-9; Swyngedouw 1997).

“Politics of scale”, a phrase originally coined by Neil Smith, vividly expresses the general idea that scales are socially constructed and vary in the course of history and socio-political struggles (Brenner 2001: 599). In the context of this paper, the phrase is used in a more specific manner, according to which the production of scale becomes relevant first and foremost in its (hierarchical) relation to other scales. As Neil Brenner writes: “In this plural aspect, the word ‘of’ connotes not only the production of differentiated spatial units as such, but also, more generally, their embeddedness and positionalities in relation to a multitude of smaller or larger spatial units, within a multitiered, hierarchically configured geographical scaffolding. The referent here is thus the *process of scaling*, through which multiple spatial units are established, differentiated, hierarchized and, under certain conditions, rejigged, reorganized and recalibrated in relation to one another” (Brenner 2001: 600, original italics).

Within the scale literature, rescaling processes in urban security have been a neglected issue (but see Belina 2006), although they can be observed in a variety of forms, and have made the spatiality of urban security more complex. Examples are processes of centralization and decentralization within state security apparatuses, the establishment of participatory security mechanisms at the neighbourhood level, or the creation of interurban security networks.

With this groundwork, the contribution of this paper is as follows: by analyzing urban security in Latin America from a scalar perspective, the debate on the “politics of scale” is linked with a policy field rarely envisaged by its authors. This allows, at the same time, a fresh and critical approach to a continent-wide case of urban security governance: the interurban “Network 14 Citizen Safety in Towns”. As far as I know, no analysis of this network has been published so far, although Network 14 seems to influence local security settings to a considerable extent. In the following, I will first present Network 14’s institutional setting, as well as its goals and development since its foundation in 2003, and then discuss in how far it can be read as a process of security rescaling. In a second step, to illustrate the argument further, I will break down this rather abstract

reflection into the empirical realities of Buenos Aires and show how Network 14 influences political power relations within Argentine federalism, and sets new priorities in local security. The argument rests upon a critical examination of Network 14's grey literature (brochures, circulars, etc.), and several interviews I conducted with experts in Buenos Aires.<sup>1</sup>

### **Rescaling urban security in Latin America: The interurban network "Citizen Safety in Towns"**

The interurban "Network 14 Citizen Safety in Towns"<sup>2</sup> was founded in 2003 (Red 14 n/d: 8), in the context of the Urb-AL program of the European Commission. Urb-AL is a decentralized cooperation program created in 1995 as a reaction to the growing significance of cities and city governments and with the aim of enhancing the living conditions of local populations. Its overall aim is to establish direct and durable relationships between European and Latin American municipalities through the dissemination, acquisition and application of "best practices" within the field of urban politics (Urb-AL n/d: 3; Urb-AL 2004: 15). Decentralized cooperation should strengthen local governance structures and particularly the positioning of local vis-à-vis central governments. The underlying assumption is that local governance is "closest [...] to citizens' realities and needs" and therefore predestined to deepen democracy (Urb-AL 2004: 13-14, quote p. 14; 25-27). Local governments are considered "the most proper and legitimate instances to respond to the collection of urban problems and demands" (Urb-AL 2004: 25).

After an initial four-year period, the program was prolonged for a further five years in 2000, and extended thematically, structurally and financially. Its funding increased from 14 to 50 million euros; the already existing eight thematic working fields (mobility, drugs, the environment, among others) were supplemented by six others, among them "Citizen Safety in Towns" (Urb-AL n/d: 4, 11; Urb-AL 2004: 17). Each subject counts with a thematic network, coordinated by one "local collective" that assures a steady information flow between its members, organizes annual conferences and work meetings. Alongside local political entities, networks are composed of non-state actors, such as associations, foundations, universities, enterprises, syndicates and other non-governmental organizations (Urb-AL n/d: 4). Additionally, the second phase offered network members the opportunity to establish joint projects in order to work more intensely on a certain topic. These projects can either concentrate on exchanging experience and best practices (type A, the same as in phase 1) or go further and take concrete measures based on such exchange (type B, new to phase 2). Projects of type B aim to a high degree on public visibility in the localities in question (Urb-AL n/d: 7). In 2004 the Urb-AL program involved, all in all, more than 1,000 localities and more than 100 joint projects (Urb-AL 2004: 17).

Network 14 "Citizen Safety in Towns" is based in Valparaíso, Chile. In accordance with the goals of Urb-AL, its main aim is to strengthen local governance institutions

<sup>1</sup> Field work was carried out within the research project "Public Security as Governance?" (Collaborative Research Center SFB 700, Freie Universität Berlin, 2006-2009).

<sup>2</sup> In Spanish "Red 14 Seguridad Ciudadana en la Ciudad", in English also titled "Public Safety in the City" (Red 14 2003).

engaged within the field of citizen security by exchanging experience and best practices. To improve urban security in objective and subjective terms, the network focuses on preventive measures and the cooperation of state and non-state actors (Red 14 n/d: 7). The underlying premise is that of Urb-AL: local authorities are considered to be especially close to city residents' (security) needs and therefore particularly capable of meeting them: "los gobiernos locales, quienes por su relación directa con la población y por el amplio conocimiento que tienen de sus problemáticas, son un agente idóneo para implementar políticas focalizadas en prevención y control de la violencia y la criminalidad" (Red 14 n/d : 24, cf. Red 14 2003: 10-1). The limited jurisdiction most Latin American city governments have with regard to urban security (lacking police control), is identified as a structural problem for local governments (Red 14 n/d: 24-5).

According to the statistics, Network 14 started in 2003 with 140 associated cities of which 44 were European and 96 Latin American and expanded to 189 cities (65 European and 124 Latin American) in 2005 (Red 14 n/d: 21). In the same period, the number of associated institutions increased from 18 in 2003 to 45 in 2005 (Red 14 n/d: 22). After starting up, the network organized an inaugural seminar followed by a conference in 2004 and again in 2005, bringing a great number of city representatives, academic experts and practitioners from different countries and cities into contact (Red 14 n/d: 11, 17, 27). As a result and up to 2005, nine concrete projects presented at the meetings received financial support. Each project was coordinated by one city and brought together between four and eleven municipalities (cf. Red 14 n/d: 33-37). Further channels via which the project aimed to diffuse its principles, goals and practices were a white paper of sorts, presented at the inaugural seminar in 2003 (Red 14 2003), two anthologies (Dammert 2004; Dammert/Paulsen 2005) and the network's website<sup>3</sup> where these documents are available electronically. The network has also been very active in participating at national and international seminars and conferences (Red 14 n/d: 32). Given this high level of activity, the involvement of recognized international experts in the field and the resulting degree of visibility, one can conclude that the network serves not only as a channel of communication and exchange and a channel for the dispersion of best practices between its members but also reaches an audience far beyond the Urb-AL program. As the network itself concludes: "La Red 14 cumplió así una diversidad de roles que fueron más allá del intercambio entre ciudades y la generación de proyectos, consolidándose como entidad experta en los temas de seguridad ciudadana y asumiendo un rol capacitador" (Red 14 n/d: 32).

In addition to the projects already mentioned, the network established the "Latin American Observatory on Citizen Security" in 2007. The first six cities associated with the Observatory are Barcelona (Spain), Buenos Aires (Argentina), Padua (Italy), Quito (Ecuador), Santa Tecla (El Salvador), and Valparaíso (Chile), the associated institution is FLACSO Chile. The Observatory will continue with the network's agenda, offering particular help with the consolidation of established relationships between European and Latin American cities, but will also bring together Latin American local governments to improve knowledge, exchange and policy formulation (Red 14 2006). According to the representative of the City of Buenos Aires for Network 14, Martin Nessi, the Observato-

<sup>3</sup> See <<http://www.urbalvalparaiso.cl>>.

ry further aims to generate suitable indicators on crime and security perception, in order to compare the security situations of the involved cities more precisely. In the long run, a comparative database will be created allowing for elaboration on policy recommendations for each city and also for specific regions (author interview, September 2007). Within the framework of the Observatory in 2007 and 2008, two capacity-building courses were organized at FLACSO Chile to equip local governments' technical staff with the necessary know-how and instruments to develop, implement and evaluate their own preventive security measures (Curso de Formación 2007, 2008). Several papers were published dealing with subjects such as violence and youth, police investigation, and crime prevention (Observatorio n/d).

In how far is Network 14 relevant in terms of "politics of scale"? The Urb-AL program, with its thematic networks, is a good example of how politics in general have been spatially rearranged during the last few decades and how cities have gained substantially in political significance (Brenner 2004). In particular, Network 14 is a concrete case of scalar politics. The affirmation and promotion of local governance and local authorities certainly intervenes in existing power relations between the national and the local scale. Even if "the local" as a scale is not a new invention, Urb-AL and Network 14 have contributed to its consolidation and political valorization vis-à-vis the national scale. Hitherto existing spatial (and political) responsibilities/jurisdictions have been interrogated and destabilized. In a policy field of high symbolic and political relevance, and in which jurisdictional competence has been distributed rather one-sidedly, such an intervention becomes especially relevant. Of course, previous spatializations of urban security are not replaced by such processes, nor do they lose in significance. Daily territorial police practices go on to have great effect on the security perception of city populations, especially in Latin America. And if city governments have no or only limited jurisdiction in the provision of security, their potential to effectively intervene clearly has limits. Nonetheless, Network 14 not only exemplifies the growing spatial complexities of urban security but also shows how the relocation of political topics to a new governance scale intervenes in established political power relations and sets new (preventive and participatory) priorities in an especially sensitive policy field. It has been demonstrated how actively Network 14 organized and participated in conferences and seminars, enabled new security projects in a wide range of cities, set the frame for capacity-building measures and the storage of experience, as well as for the propagation of best practices in several publication formats.

There are several reasons why it is attractive for city governments to participate in such a network. Firstly, they are interested in improving the security situation in their territories, and hope to learn from other cities with similar problems, as well as from recognized experts; in short, to increase their own capacity to develop and implement suitable security policies.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, it may be easier to achieve such new policies politically if

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<sup>4</sup> The reasons behind this interest surely differ. Governments may worry about the physical and social well-being of a city population and/or about the economic competitiveness of their city as the following statement from the governor of the Argentine city Junín, Mario Andrés Meoni, demonstrates: "La actual gestión municipal de la ciudad de Junín, que tengo el honor de conducir, tiene entre sus metas posicionar estratégicamente a nuestra ciudad, en un contexto global, con el fin de atraer turistas, inversiones y empresarios, haciendo de Junín un distrito competitivo, moderno, agradable y habitable para visitar, invertir y fundamentalmente, para vivir" (cited in Red 14 n/d: 38).

these are developed in a transnational context, backed not only by other regional and European city governments, but also by the European Commission. Moreover, if a city government can refer to security measures that have proved successful in other contexts, it will be much easier to get political support for a similar initiative. Thirdly, city governments demonstrate their will to take on responsibility for urban security, even if they have no or only limited jurisdiction in this regard. They thereby position themselves in competition with regional or national governments. The symbolic weight of a transnational, interurban network may also be politically helpful in this dimension. In the following, I am going to illustrate this whole argument further with regard to existing political rivalries in Buenos Aires.

### **Network 14's repercussions in Buenos Aires**

The introduction to this dossier, as well as Dirk Kruijt's article, already tell us that over the last few decades, a new and serious security problem has been developing in Latin America. For several reasons, the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (in the following referred to as Buenos Aires) is an interesting case within this context. Even if its security situation, in general, is not as bad as other cities of the region, Mexico City or Rio de Janeiro for instance, urban security nonetheless became, in the second half of the 1990s, a particularly political and sensitive topic. The phenomenon is usually explained with regard to three factors, even if accents differ: (1) the disastrous social and cultural consequences of the neo-liberal restructuring of economy and state which led to a dramatically high crime rate; (2) a changing and more sensitive perception of the police as a criminal and inefficient actor; (3) an alarmist public discourse as well as the symbolic appropriation and populist exploitation of the subject on the part of political actors (Ciafardini 2006; Kessler 2007; Sain 2002, 2008; Sozzo 2005). A further argument, less regarded but deserving of special attention in the context of this paper, is the political reorganization of the relationship between the Argentine Nation State and its capital through the reform of the Argentine Constitution in 1994 (Tiscornia/Eilbaum/Lekerman 2000: 40), or, to put it another way, between the national and the local scale.

In the course of this reorganization, Buenos Aires gained autonomous status in 1996. But this upgrading did not substantially change its role with regard to the provision of public security within its territory. That responsibility had always, since the federalization of the city in 1880, fallen under national jurisdiction (Maier 1996; De Luca/Jones/Tula 2002). Now, the situation has been encoded by federal law (law 24.588/1995, also known as the Cafiero law) so that, with some exceptions<sup>5</sup>, the Federal Police still holds responsibility for the provision of security in the capital. This constellation has been the source of a long-lasting conflict between national and local governments and is judged to be Argentina's "most important federal-municipal conflict" with negative effects on substantial police reform (Eaton 2008: 18; De Luca/Jones/Tula 2002; Marteau 2002: 98-100). After many years of

<sup>5</sup> The city's judicial jurisdiction was limited to the fields of vicinity, minor misdemeanours, contentious administrative matters, and local fiscal law. In 2001 the city was granted jurisdiction over offences of (civil) gun possession and carrying, as well as its provision to unauthorized persons (by law 25.752 and 597). In 2008, the city's jurisdiction was expanded further (law 26.357 and 2.257).

struggle, the election of new mayor Mauricio Macri in 2007 set the conflict effectively in motion. His government managed to abolish the decisive article 7 of the Cafiero law (law 26.888/2007) and is now legally entitled to establish its own police force. However, the decisive question of how such a force was to be funded could not be resolved consensually between the protagonists from the national, provincial and local scale. In the end, the city decided to found its own rudimentary police force (law 2.894/2008).

The long running rejection of complete jurisdictional transfer has been motivated less by security related considerations than by strong status and party interests. Different sources report that the Federal Police, as well as professional organizations of judges, refused to have their status downgraded by being transferred from the national to the local scale (De Luca/Jones/Tula 2002: 86; Eaton 2008: 18-19).<sup>6</sup> Party political considerations interfere with regard to the different power constellations in the provinces and the capital. Although the national Senate is controlled by the Peronist Party (PJ), this party has little chance of winning any elections in the capital. Therefore, the PJ already had little interest in granting Buenos Aires greater autonomy and the popular election of mayors because it feared the increasing political influence of such mayors who, in the future, could become serious opposition leaders (De Luca/Jones/Tula 2002: 83-84). Such concerns must have been even stronger with an increasingly sensitive high-profile field like public security. It was the PJ that in the national Senate brought about the adoption of the Cafiero law. In doing so, it not only protected the financial interests of the provinces (De Luca/Jones/Tula 2002: 83-84) but also limited the potential of any Buenos Aires mayor to distinguish himself or herself by introducing substantial security measures or police reforms.

To conclude, in Buenos Aires, urban security emerged as a new governance topic from the mid-1990s onwards. The transformed political status of the capital increased the political sensitivity of the topic and created a new rivalry between the national government, historically responsible for the provision of security in the capital, and the local government, aspiring to assume full jurisdiction in this regard. In this context, and as shown above, Network 14 not only uncritically propagates certain myths with regard to the power of “the local” (Tecco 2004): by affirming the relevance of the local scale for improving urban security and enhancing the institutional capabilities and symbolic weight of local authorities in this policy field, it also concretely intervenes in existing political power constellations. But the political relevance of that rescaling process increases even further if one considers, in more detail, the concrete policies propagated by the network. Preventive and participatory security governance is encouraged as being especially democratic and effective (see above), although empirical evidence points in another direction. The latter becomes clear if one takes a closer look at some of the “best practices” Network 14 has propagated with regard to Buenos Aires.

### **Missing critical evaluation of propagated “best practices”**

Network 14’s base document positively references several security projects from European and Latin American municipalities that were realized outside the URB-AL

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<sup>6</sup> This point was emphasized by interviewees from various government entities.

context before the network started in 2003. Presumably, these projects were of cooperative or contractual character and aimed at fighting social exclusion and insecurity (Red 14 2003: 27-35, 38-42). In a later publication, Network 14 presents nine preventive projects it financed as a “major success” (Red 14 n/d: 33, cf. 33-37). But if one takes a closer look and consults other sources to investigate the concrete development of the cited projects, this positive evaluation seems questionable – at least as far as those projects that were realized in Buenos Aires (before and after the foundation of Network 14) are concerned. The projects are (1) a neighbourhood initiative from 1996 known as “Plan Alerta”, (2) a “Crime and Violence Prevention Program” of the Buenos Aires City Government, and (3) a project that was developed by Network 14 members themselves called “Impact of urban design on crime prevention”. In the following, all three initiatives are examined with regard to their impact on security and for their quality in cooperative and participatory terms, criteria upon which Network 14 places great importance.

The Plan Alerta initiative received a great deal of public attention when, in 1996, residents from the prosperous Saavedra neighbourhood in the north west of Buenos Aires autonomously contacted Scotland Yard, asked for information about the British Neighbourhood Watch model and began to establish a similar scheme in a part of Saavedra (Ciafardini 2006: 90; Hinton 2006: 61). But even though the national as well as the local government used this initiative as a springboard to develop new preventive and participatory government programs (Feth 2008a: 236-237), there is no reason to cite the Plan Alerta as a kind of “best practice” in the context of preventive security models. Firstly, it is in no way clear if the Plan Alerta had any (long term) effects on crime rates or altered the perception of insecurity in Saavedra (Smulovitz 2002: 2; Hinton 2006: 62). Secondly, it seems difficult to evaluate it as successful in terms of Network 14’s inclusive, cooperative and participatory criteria. Even if a great number of different social organizations had been consulted and brought into contact with representatives from local and national government over a long period of time, in the end it proved very difficult, if not impossible, to sustainably integrate the different perceptions, interests and preferences of the residents’ groups involved, (Ciafardini 2006: 84-98). An observer from the national government speaks of a “*disenso profundo*”, as a result of which relationships between different residential groups broke down, discrimination against a poor neighbourhood within the area was reaffirmed, and relationships between the various governmental entities involved cooled (Ciafardini 2006: 95). He concludes that “*múltiples contradicciones existentes no sólo entre el Estado y la sociedad, sino dentro del mismo Estado y entre distintos sectores sociales*” made the process in Saavedra a very complicated one. It is this complexity together with a lack of “*articulación verdaderamente democrática de todos estos sectores*” where Ciafardini sees “*el nudo gordiano*” of unresolved security problems (Ciafardini 2006: 97).

The second project from Buenos Aires that Network 14 discusses is cited as a “Crime and Violence Prevention Program” (Programa de Prevención del Delito y la Violencia), within which the formation of “*consejos barriales de prevención*” was envisaged or had already been realized (Red 14 2003: 41). As no official program with that title was launched, it is unclear to which program Network 14 is referring. My assumption is that it is the “Programa de Seguridad Ciudadana” started by the City Government in 1997/1998, because the “*Consejos Barriales para Prevenir el Delito y la Violencia*” were established within this framework (Pegoraro 2002: 35-6). But Network 14 could also be



referring to the City Government's "Crime Prevention Program" (Plan de Prevención del Delito) from 2000, within which "assembleas barriales" were established. However, neither of these two initiatives has proven to be very successful, not in terms of security, nor in terms of broad, inclusive participation (for the first alternative see Pegoraro 2002: 43-46, for the second see Feth 2008a).

The third example Network 14 mentions is the one realized within the Network's realm which aimed at improving urban security via strategies of environmental design. Buenos Aires participated in this together with five other cities under the coordination of the Italian city Padua. According to its description, the project consisted of three phases: a first "learning" phase during which empirical data were collected, a second "evaluation" phase involving data analysis and mutual on-site evaluation, and a third "capacity-building and diffusion" phase during which results were to be presented at seminars and conferences (Red 14 n/d: 33). In this context, the City Government of Buenos Aires opted to redesign the local Rivadavia Park. According to the City's former Subsecretary of Security Claudio Marcial Suárez, the whole park was renewed. Monuments were restored, an informal trade fair was formalized, alleys were fixed. As far as security issues were concerned, the most important intervention consisted in the placement of a boundary fence and permanent police surveillance. But, as Suárez critically notes, the security effect of the boundary fence – the project's central preventive strategy – was unclear and in this sense did not justify the accompanying restriction of liberty. The more conventional recourse to permanent police surveillance did have a positive effect on crime rates and security perception. But this did not prevent further boundary fences from being erected throughout Buenos Aires. Today, as visitors of the city will quickly observe, every green area in the city is surrounded by a metal fence. As Suárez stated, the case of Rivadavia Park was one of the first, and the practice then became *en vogue*. Although he himself, as the then Director of the City Government's Prevention Program, disputed the security effect of boundary fences – based on his own expertise and the preferences of consulted residents – the mode of physically restricting access to the city's green areas by erecting fences was defended by the Ministry of Environment (author interview, September 2007).

Confronted with these findings, one has to critically ask what basis Network 14 has for presenting the initiatives described here as successful examples of cooperative and participatory security prevention. The network references an external evaluation "de todos los aspectos que considera la Red 14, sus proyectos, publicaciones, la utilidad y los beneficios que todo este trabajo representa para sus socios y su potencial para seguir en funcionamiento una vez finalizado el apoyo económico de la Comisión Europea, quedando en evidencia el alto grado de satisfacción y acogida que tuvieron los participantes para los distintos aspectos que involucra el trabajo en Red" (Red 14 n/d: 23). Although I have no doubt that participants were more or less satisfied with their experience of Network 14, the analysis above puts the quality of the evaluation<sup>7</sup> into serious question. I agree with the critique that governments all too often privilege repressive instead of preventive security strategies because the former guarantee stronger visibility and public resonance (Red 14 n/d: 25). But that critique does not absolve advocates of local and

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<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, no precise information is given regarding who was assigned with the external evaluation.

preventive strategies from the necessity of demonstrating the concrete security effects of the preventive mechanisms and how democratic and participatory these actually are. The mere assumption that local governance is especially legitimate and effective because it is “closest [...] to citizen’s realities and needs” (Urb-AL 2004: 14) is not enough. And figures alone (Urb-AL 2004: 15-6) tell little in this respect.

## Conclusion

In this paper, I used a theoretical framework developed within political geography to critically engage with a prominent case of urban security governance in Latin America. Applying a scale perspective, the establishment and development of “Network 14 Citizen Security in Towns” can be read as an example of urban security rescaling and an intervention in existing political power relations. The affirmation of the local scale for the alleged benefit of urban security not only destabilizes hitherto existing political responsibilities, but also sets new accents with regard to the propagation of preventive and participatory security strategies. In this regard, I limited myself to providing missing critical evaluation of some of the “best practices” propagated. Further analysis should incorporate the question of how far the network, by putting so much weight on the necessity of fighting the subjective dimension of security (perception of insecurity), contributes to a “securitization” of urban order problems. Moreover, one could interrogate the theoretical assumptions about as well as the practical effects of propagated strategies of situational crime prevention. A third aspect to consider would be the presumed democratic character of participative security mechanisms.

But to be clear: my intention is not to demonize preventive security measures at the cost of repressive ones, but to point to the necessity of engaging more critically with ongoing preventive approaches within urban security. The evidence from Buenos Aires demonstrates that important policy aims have not been met and that the city is not an exceptional case in this respect (Wood/Font 2007; Müller 2009). Nor is my concluding argument that city governments should not try to interrogate established power relations, but rather that rescaling processes in the context of urban (security) governance are in general not apolitical or neutral and therefore should be critically observed. A further case, in this regard, would be the construction of the neighborhood as an especially suitable scale for security intervention (Feth 2008a, 2008b; Müller 2009). This can be observed in many cities of the region but almost no substantial, independent research has been conducted so far (Feth/Müller 2009). A more critical gaze would be desirable here and, in this respect, the scale perspective is an attractive option. At the same time, I do not want to exaggerate the analytical merits of the scale framework. Of course it has, like every theoretical approach, its limits, and looks at social reality from a distinct perspective. But this is not the place to recite the important critique formulated in this regard (Wissen/Röttger/Heeg 2008). My aim has rather been to critically discuss ongoing processes in urban security and to link a theoretical debate, of primarily Anglo-Saxon origin, with empirical evidence from Latin America. From a space-sensitive perspective, it is clear that the scale perspective focuses on only *one* spatial dimension of the ongoing process of political reconfiguration. As Brenner convincingly argues, other spatial dynamics (in territorial, place and network specific terms) are taking place and overlap

with scalar processes (Brenner 2008). A substantial spatial analysis of recent transformations in urban security would have to integrate these dimensions in order to fully grasp and understand the ongoing processes of political and social power relocations.

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