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Abstract

The paper builds an analytical framework to study the relation between security and informality and the extent to which it contributes to producing hegemony in local politics. By emphasising a processual understanding of hegemony, the paper develops a twofold argument: (1) that structurally powerful actors with well-established links to state institutions carry out informal practices just as well as those often perceived to be at the 'margins' of the state and (2) that subaltern groups are capable of transforming their society, while also reproducing inadvertently hegemonic security practices. The analytical framework is unpacked through two Mexican cases: the CRAC-PC in Guerrero State and neighbourhood vigilantism in Oaxaca City. The CRAC-PC case shows that procedures in which hegemony is challenged are through actors resorting to state institutions (law, judiciary) coupled by paralegal institutions that enhance placemaking of rural indigenous communities. The Oaxacan case shows how communities challenge state actors through a series of practices that bring people together into networks that put into question the hegemonic organization of in/security at city level. The analytical framework helps to break with the dichotomisation between formality and informality and to understand how informality is practised in both struggles for and against hegemony.

Transformed Security Practices: Informalization in the production of hegemony and place

Since the early-2000s, debates on informality have become common across different disciplines in urban studies. Specifically, informality is discussed in terms of cities' provision of goods and services, housing and planning, and more recently of cultural practice as a means of negotiating identity and place. Debates have increasingly aimed at demystifying the dichotomy between formality and informality, which consists of the hierarchization of formality above informality in understandings of modernization, capitalism, development, regulation, austerity and neoliberalism. In overcoming this dichotomy, academics have started to treat formality-informality as a continuum, emphasizing the relationality among different actors (Roy, 2005; 2009; McFarlane and Waibel, 2012; Tonkiss, 2013; Boudreau and Davis, 2016; Acuto et al., 2019; Banks et al., 2019). In this sense, this paper differs from those debates on security which emphasize the in/formal dichotomization and prevent scholars from understanding the complexity that relationality involves (cf. Santamaría and Carey, 2017).

Simultaneously, Gramscian approaches have broadened our understanding of the drive and focus of 'subaltern politics' that materialize in the making of 'insurgent citizenship' (Holston, 2008), daily survival tactics or 'the quiet encroachment of the ordinary' (Bayat, 2010). Academics with an interest in security and urban studies have highlighted cases in which informality is integral to security provision since the mid-2000s (Arias, 2006; Jaffe, 2013; Garmany and Galdeano, 2018). However, less attention has been paid to the ways in which the relation between security and informality contributes to producing hegemony in state politics. Therefore, we are interested in the 'constructive power of informality' (Polese and Rekhviashvili, 2017) in the field of security.

The paper proposes an analytical framework for understanding the asymmetrical relationship between security and informality in producing hegemony. Through this framework we build a twofold argument. First, that structurally powerful actors with well-established links to state

institutions carry out informal practices just as well as those often perceived to be at the 'margins' of the state. Second, that subaltern groups are political actors capable of transforming their society, while also reproducing inadvertently hegemonic security practices. Based on Marx and Kellings (2019), the framework identifies three dimensions (condition, law and currency) in which informality in security takes place. It also builds on the work of Banks et al. (2019) on 'informality as a site of critical analysis'; and specifically, we propose understanding specific actors involved in informal security not just as 'accumulators' or 'survivors', but also as 'transformers'.

To build our argument, the paper first presents a discussion on a Gramscian understanding of hegemony. We then review literatures on (urban) informality and informalized security and articulate them with our processual understanding of hegemony. Through primary and secondary research on two Mexican examples of community policing, we illustrate the value of the framework's application. The conclusions discuss the advantages and limitations of the framework developed.

<H1> Hegemony

Gramsci's theory of hegemony as a constitutive element of the integral state contributes to our understanding of informality in relation to security. We borrow from this theory to unpack the processes in which societal consensus is achieved. Gramsci conceptualizes hegemony in capitalist societies as the exercise of power based on both consent and coercion. He argues that social forces are continuously involved in struggles with each other, striving to universalize dominant groups' political projects; making them 'hegemonic' (Gramsci, 1971, notebook 6, § 88). The constant striving for universalization can be observed in concrete political strategies that support dominant groups' interests in the longer-term (Hesketh, 2019).

Our processual understanding of hegemony identifies sets of strategies and protagonists who stem from a social base of multiple and diverse actors. A consensual, political project pushed by social forces can become dominant in struggles for hegemony through compromise and negotiation, in order to integrate broader sectors of society (Hesketh, 2019:4), yet hegemony is never quite complete. Thus, we are less interested in finding

whether hegemony or counter-hegemony has been achieved, than in the relational and processual aspects involved in the struggles for hegemony. In other words, we are interested in the daily attempts that unfold to achieve it or not. The asymmetrical means different actors can mobilize to universalize their strategies shape their success in striving for hegemony, as well as that of subaltern groups resisting such strategies (Davies, 2014:3220).

Coercion and consensus matter in achieving hegemony. They are part of institutionalized governance technologies and mechanisms of control. However, coercion and consent are not two mutually exclusive categories; the state will never exclusively exercise coercion or strive for consent (Hesketh, 2019:4). Instead, both are continually and simultaneously enacted in varying relationships between state institutions and different social groups (Davies, 2014:3215). As a result, specific state institutions may employ consensus-building measures intended to legitimize other state institutions' more coercive practices. In this sense, state actors create categories of what in/formal is and its degree of tolerability. In the field of security, informal coercive practices may indeed be instrumental to achieving hegemony, while not being openly discussed. Such practices are neither necessarily institutionalized nor formally sanctioned (Polese and Rekhviashvili 2017). Frequently, state institutions obliterate their own (security) informal practices, from negotiated arrangements in local governance to violent practices such as forced disappearances. Informal practices in security facilitate both consent and legitimized coercion.

The processual understanding of hegemony, recognizing the joint role of coercion and consent, allows us a more nuanced analysis of the role of informality in security. In postcolonial contexts, the production of consent is in particular tension with structural limitations of integrating larger societal groups into consensual mechanisms; partly because of the frictions of highly unequal societies and partly because of specific historical conditions of state formation (Hesketh, 2019), which have frequently employed violent coercion in colonial and postcolonial societies (Ceceña, 2008, Braga and Purdy, 2018). This is why rather than asking if hegemony is realized or not, through the successful universalization and active acceptance of political strategies and interests, we build on work that focuses on the strategies, sets of ideas or policies relevant for achieving universalized acceptance across various scales on a daily basis (Choplin and Ciavolella, 2017; Andreucci and Radhuber, 2018;

Salem, 2018). Analysing the different understandings underlying daily practices can unpack, for example, how bureaucrats break rules that guide them in sanctioning certain practices, or how local level policies, resulting from demands of subaltern groups, contradict or circumvent hegemonic understandings of national-level policy.

However, processual understandings of hegemony go beyond the state and bureaucratic domains. They also recognize that subaltern groups may become 'political actors in the transformation of their own society' (Choplin and Ciavolella 2017: 317). The security practices of subaltern groups and their informal arrangements may be more palpable, or more adequate for specific contexts than state security practices and discourses. An emphasis on everyday processes underlines the fact that hegemony is enacted not only within what we conventionally understand as state and civil society institutions, but also prominently in daily social relations outside the state domain, for example, in the ways people relate to each other on the street or at work. Yet, as hegemony is never quite complete, fissures may emerge through the daily practices of subaltern groups. The latter become a wider force in contesting dominant projects striving for hegemony.

In studying security, we also would like to add that informal practices may reproduce hegemonic practices which are embedded in already dominant imaginaries of security held by subaltern groups. In other words, consent may emerge from violence, while transforming these groups' self-perceptions (Madariaga, 2006). Coercion can indeed produce legitimacy, leading in turn to consent. Both informal struggles of subaltern groups for achieving safety and state actors' discourses on security are essential to understand hegemony.

<H1> Understanding informality (beyond the urban)

Comparison across cities has emphasized the importance of temporariness, spatiality, organization and governmentality as 'contours' that guide the making of informality (McFarlane and Waibel, 2012; Boudreau and Davis, 2016). These debates are helpful to move beyond dominant debates that centre on informal urbanism associated with planning, labour markets and their respective regulations. In particular, they help to refocus our study between informality and security across the urban-rural divide. By shifting away from

understandings of city-ness we can refocus on place, in which the use-value of land is intersected by subjectivities that have a potential to challenge the hegemonic commodification of space in both rural and urban settings (Massey, 2005). This shift is important for studying security as it is not necessarily constrained to the city.

Because informality cuts across different dimensions (economic, political, cultural), defining it is not straightforward. There tends to be more agreement in defining what informality is not. Debates point out the mistake of believing informality is what 'falls outside the state', 'breaks with understandings of the Weberian state and modern civilization' or 'hinders global capitalism'. To overcome these misrepresentations, academics recognize that informality is instead found in repeated processes and mechanisms of daily practice which are not immediately observed yet are well known by a collective. Boudreau and Davis (2016), in particular, focus not on the event, but on the process, which is what they call 'informalization'. Their argument is useful because it underpins the common characteristics frequently found in diverse debates on informality: negotiation, flexibility and ambiguity. These three characteristics are unpacked by studying processes continuously blurred with formal practice, creating as a result what authors call 'hybrid models' (Coutard and Rutherford, 2016) or 'variegated sovereignties' (Jaffe and Koster, 2019).

Through focusing on daily practice, authors also acknowledge the creativity and spontaneity to which actors resort to cope or survive throughout their daily routines (Bayat, 2010; Tonkiss, 2013; Boudreau and Davis, 2016). However, creativity is accompanied by precarity and temporariness while straddling between order and disorder and self-help and abandonment to build social capital as well as exclusion and coercion (Tonkiss, 2013). To understand these trade-offs, Boudreau and Davis' argument on relationality is helpful. It explains how informal practices should not be only seen from the point of view of one type of actor, but from the perspective of various actors with different backgrounds, who interact with one another across several spaces and temporalities.

Therefore, relationality acknowledges the decentring¹ of the state over its authority, power, distribution of justice and equity (Coutard and Rutherford, 2016; Haid and Hilbrandt, 2019; Jaffe and Koster, 2019). These aspects are negotiated through informalization which is shaped by, for example, different interpretations of the law, irregular professional practices or mimicry across and between informal and formal spheres or institutions. Relationality not only recognizes non-state actors negotiating capacity, claim-making and 'quiet encroachment', but also state actors' contribution to informalization through mechanisms of toleration, instrumentalization, abandonment and repression (Das and Poole, 2004; Boudreau and Davis, 2016).

<H1> Articulating informality, security and hegemony

Security arrangements led by the state are prime examples of relationality, and literature on informalized state security, specifically in Latin America, abounds. Debates include the blurred lines between official, visible security forces and private security actors (Auyero, 2007: 26, Arias and Goldstein, 2010:20-21;); practices employed within a 'less visible' para-institutional system that bypasses some, but involves other formal (state) institutions (Estrada and Moreno, 2008:30); or local brokers (Jaffe, 2013) who mediate such networks, as part of or external to state apparatuses.

The arguments that the state actually produces insecurity (Gledhill 2015) and frequently decentralizes the monopoly of violence (Franco Restrepo 2009:381) show that informal practices to which state actors contribute, are frequently more instrumental than dysfunctional, because they expand the state's margin of manoeuvre (Estrada and Moreno, 2008; Pearce, 2018). They complement what the state could not achieve through formally sanctioned practices (Maldonado, 2010; Kusiak, 2019). State-produced systems of informal security require complex arrangements (Goldstein 2016), long-term social networks (Arias 2006), semi-institutionalized policing partnerships (Diphorn and Colona 2017), privatized

¹ By decentring the state, we refer to the state deliberately sharing its powers with non-state actors through outsourcing, rather than the state losing its monopoly over exercising coercion.

policing arrangements (Müller 2016), and extra-legal state activities generally coupled with narratives of corruption (Anjaria, 2009; Ledeneva, 2012).

Another strand of literature focuses on citizens' self-organizing as a means to produce security for themselves, in parallel with or contradiction to state agencies (Santamaría and Carey, 2017). However, citizen groups and '*vigilantes*' may exercise excessive violence to sanction noncompliance or deviant behaviour (Schuberth, 2015; Gross, 2016). In acknowledging that vigilantism may act as a 'moral complaint' against state omissions (Goldstein, 2008) and emerge in contexts of relative deprivation and inequality (Glebbeck and Koonings, 2016), authors also warn against reproducing depictions of local justice initiatives that neglect communities' internal power relations and potential violence (Hochmüller and Müller, 2014; Núñez, 2017). This warning is important for our argument as it helps us to understand why subaltern groups reproduce hegemonic practice by normalizing violence in their daily lives. It is this normalization that renders it possible for consent to emerge from violence, while transforming the self-perceptions of social groups (Madariaga, 2006).

The previous paragraphs underline the links between informality and security. To understand what role they play for hegemony, we propose an analytical framework which builds on two approaches. First, based on Marx and Kelling (2019) we identify three dimensions in which informality takes place. These authors identify three theoretical departures on informality as: condition, law and currency. We explain each in turn by particularly focusing on state and community actors.

Informality as condition encompasses debates on planning, service provision and labour markets, which together create the materiality in which formal and informal practices interweave. State and non-state actors provide services, which commonly have centred on housing, land use, sewerage, water systems and electricity. In finding alternative forms of provision in a specific neighbourhood or community, residents also struggle to find stable sources of work or employment. In this dimension, citizens employ mechanisms to cope and survive the neglect of the state or the precarity of the markets. Simultaneously, state agencies frequently negotiate with local entrepreneurs (i.e. real estate developers) who take

advantage of informality as a condition. For instance, entrepreneurs may accumulate rentier capital through tax evasion or by avoiding inconvenient regulation. In this sense, state actors straddle formal and informal arrangements, producing relational forms of order. Informality as condition helps us understand how in our cases of informal security, Mexican communities draw on both their self-provision of security and their adaptation to the presence of (armed) state and non-state actors, which become a permanent condition of material insecurity.

Informality as law centres on legal and institutional debates which emphasize the importance of regulation established in law, policies and programs issued by state actors and followed (or not) by both state and non-state actors. This dimension also acknowledges the different interpretations of law as well as the co-existence of diverse legal systems, known as 'legal plurality' (Merry, 1988). The diversity of norms (i.e. indigenous) challenges the understandings of the Weberian state, which are premised on formal institutions, their processes, laws and regulation.

On the one hand, these debates recognize that the state tolerates informality. Residents may strive for informal arrangements, surviving and coping to solve daily needs as a result of state neglect or residents' incapacity to access formal and legal arrangements. In turn, state actors tolerate or are willing to accept self-provision of services in these informal settings, because of the state's historical neglect in fulfilling citizens' needs. Over time, many informal initiatives are subject to attempts by state institutions to regularize them and to integrate them into the structures of the market or state apparatus (Tonkiss, 2013).

On the other hand, authors (Holston, 2008; Roy, 2009; Jaffe and Koster, 2019) show that state actors contribute to informality through the use of law, i.e. when officials help elites promote conflicts and illegalities to maintain their power. In other words, state actors use law 'to legalise illegalities' (Holston, 2008), showing that state institutions frequently act beyond their own written rules. To carry out the latter, state actors capitalize on hidden negotiations and bureaucratic complexities to cope with incongruous legal frameworks and broader discourses (Lipsky, 2010; Coslovsky, 2015), which may result in the formation of 'hybrid social orders' (Dewey et al, 2015). Therefore, in this dimension we observe that state actors can

relate to subaltern and dominant groups in a two-stage process. Through a series of practices state actors move to the informal field to then return to the formal arena through the deployment of law to legalize, in some instances, informal practices and, in others, illegal activities. Under informality as law the relationships between citizens and the state are recurrent and iterative and, as Davis and Ruiz de Teresa (2013) argue, security relations in Mexico are not exempt from the ebbs and flows that cut across rejection, toleration and integration of informal practices by the state.

Informality as currency focuses on the making of place by the people; this dimension sits neither in the economic nor legal spheres, but on social organizing through the myriad points of relationality. In this sense, 'informality as currency' highlights how practices 'have been codified into a legal rule with formal status, and others have not – [both] within the same context of social organisation' (Marx and Kelling, 2019:8). Relationality acknowledges that states have gradually given up or never established a monopoly over authority, power and distribution of justice. This recognition allows us to differentiate between the political intentions and imaginations that underlie the rules and regulations that shape collective behaviour and the equally important capacity to implement such rules and regulations by all types of actors, not only the state. Under this dimension, the political power and will of different non-state actors are important (McFarlane and Waibel, 2012). Political imaginations reflected in symbolic dimensions and materialised in rituals, music, and daily customs are central to identity-building and its connection with place (Massey, 2005; Jaffe, 2019). These daily practices help to mobilize and negotiate resources; they consolidate but also resist hegemony and can be interpreted as the procedural level of the civil-society element found in the Gramscian understanding of the integral state. Identity and symbols are relevant in our Mexican cases because they allow us to incorporate ethnicity, customary practice (*usos y costumbres*) and related cosmogonies into our understanding of security in local contexts that are not classified as quintessentially urban.

The second approach taken to build our framework borrows from Banks et al. (2019) who consider informality as a 'site of critical analysis' as opposed to a category or setting. The three dimensions (condition, law and currency) are tightly interwoven with the argument of Banks et al. who stress that power relations give meaning to what in/formality is as actors

recognize that both powerful and subaltern groups carry out informal practices to either create advantages for accumulation of power and capital or as coping mechanisms to deal with disadvantages resulting from an inability to live or work under formal or official arrangements. Their argument enables us to explore specific actors and their strategies as 'accumulators' and 'survivors', as well as the extent to which these different actors have access to state institutions and the means with which they can mobilize resources to universalize their strategies to accumulate or survive, depending predominantly on their negotiating position with and vis-à-vis the state.

In bringing together Marx and Kelling's dimensions with Banks et al.'s analysis of power relations, we build a framework to understand how achieving hegemony is about deciding on a specific distinction; state and non-state actors decide between what is formal or informal and what is legal or illegal. Through practices, negotiations, and conflict, different actors define and shape these distinctions, and contest some definitions of in/formality, while other definitions receive wider acceptance. Through the case studies of Guerrero and Oaxaca, we argue that 'in/formality distinctions emerge' not only through struggles for and against hegemony, but also in the reproduction or mimicking of hegemonic practices to achieve security by both dominant and subaltern groups.

<H1> Case studies

As mentioned above, the focus of this paper moves beyond the centrality of informal urbanism; by refocusing on place there is a greater potential to challenge the hegemonic commodification of space when studying security. The two cases presented in the following sections help to unpack this point by contrasting rural Guerrero with urban Oaxaca. Our analytical framework is applied to the *Coordinadora Regional de Autoridades Comunitarias - Policía Comunitaria* (Regional Coordinator of Communitarian Authorities-Community Policing, CRAC-PC) in Guerrero State and community security initiatives in Oaxaca City. Community members and state actors are identified in each dimension (condition, law and currency) of informality. At the same time, the perspective offered by Banks et al. (2019) enables us to identify how community members and state actors carry out informal practices to either accumulate or survive power within security relations. Through our analysis we

uncover a third strategy that seeks to transform hegemonic practices (albeit partially) by community actors through their interactions with local security relations. Both cases show how survivors and accumulators use informal practice; however, the institutionalization of CRAC-PC across the three informality dimensions provides them with more leverage to build a counter-hegemonic force than what community security practices in Oaxaca City can achieve through their looser and temporal arrangements. The cases teach us about the limitations of and challenges to their transformative project, but also about the extent to which their projects can be considered a struggle against hegemony through daily in/formal practice.

Because the paper aims to present this analytical framework, we use primary and secondary data sources only to illustrate its application. Primary data are derived from two independent projects which, despite answering different research questions, are helpful in illustrating this paper's argument. Data about Guerrero were collected between April and September 2017 and include interviews from a total of 40 conducted with civil servants, business consultants, activists and human rights NGOs with knowledge of the extractive sector. Data about Oaxaca were collected during two exploratory trips between December 2017 and January 2019; 18 interviews were conducted with local officials, urban planners and dwellers from various social strata.

<H2> Guerrero

Community policing in Mexico has been an initiative that in many cases has derived from indigenous-peasant communities who have been victims of contemporary forms of state repression and drug-trafficking. An exemplar for its longevity, since 1995, is the CRAC-PC, which is only one element of a broader system of indigenous justice that seeks to be self-governing or autonomous. The CRAC-PC is an inter-communitarian institution encompassing 12 municipalities with 100,000 inhabitants (Sierra, 2015) in the regions of *La Montaña* and *Costa Chica* (MCC), Guerrero State. The self-determination of the communities under the CRAC-PC has been strengthened by international law. However, state actors have been caught circumventing different tiers of law in the implementation of policies and programs favouring mega-infrastructural and agri-business projects, and on some occasions state actors collude

with criminal actors to build an environment of fear that helps to consolidate this type of project. These regions have valuable mining resources; hence they have also been impacted by the mega-infrastructures that generally accompany the former (water dams, highways, industrial parks). The regions are relatively close to port towns that are gateways to global trade, which brings criminal organizations and drug cartels into the area.

As two of the poorest regions in the country, the MCC have been neglected from public service provision; water, school and health infrastructure did not arrive until the end of the 1960s (Dehouve, 2001: 153). By the 1970s, ways of hybridizing formal state institutions with the communities' own cultural institutions began to be observed and from the 1980s, significant ringfenced federal transfers have been allocated to municipalities for the development of basic services. In the 1990s, federal transfers were set in partnership with local communities who were called on to provide free labour to build roads, schools, clinics, etc. Over time, this hybridization reached security policy; the conjuncture of state retrenchment, privatization of rural land and changes to mining law favouring corporations prompted the creation of CRAC-PC, which emerged in reaction to the state's neglect in providing safety to its citizens against criminal groups as the latter began to collude with state forces in drug-trafficking and land grabbing activities (Gledhill, 2015: 129). These communities have experienced informality as condition, while surviving both the state's neglect of service provision and safety, and accumulators' power found in business interests. The latter have colluded with state authorities and criminal groups to promote urbanization and infrastructure. The next paragraphs show how informality under the law and currency dimensions are helpful to unpack how CRAC-PC and their communities have countered hegemonic practices.

CRAC-PC is a quintessential case of legal pluralism that combines multi-level systems of justice emanating from the communitarian, state and federal governments and international institutions (Sierra 2013; 2015). Two main international treaties -Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (1989) and Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)- are reflected in the national constitution and recognize the historical debt of national states to pre-colonial indigenous peoples. Recognition of their integrity with their territory (and natural resources) is acknowledged as well as the importance territory has in reproducing indigenous identity in cultural, social and political ways. Interestingly, the influence of international law upon the

constitution has prompted changes to state-level law but not at the national level. International law influenced the subnational tier but in overlooking national hierarchies it caused legal contradictions (Sierra, 2013). In 2011, these contradictions allowed Guerrero State to publish the 701 Law (recognizing indigenous rights), in which CRAC-PC is acknowledged as a legitimate armed force to fight violent crime, but is not recognized as such at federal level. Sierra (2015) reports that since CRAC-PC started its operations it has been able to reduce crime rates by 90%.

Legacies of state repression in Guerrero against communities in MCC regions have been reported since the 1950s and from the 1980s, some indigenous groups have become part of left-wing political parties and mobilizations which sought to democratize authoritarian-state practices. These mobilizations have stigmatized these communities as rebellious and have been causes of state-driven campaigns that install fear and perpetuate violence to maintain the state's hegemony (Bartra, 2005). Since CRAC-PC has links to these mobilizations (Ley et al., 2019), repressive practices towards its members have been experienced. For example, the local newspaper El Sur regularly reports kidnaps or unlawful detentions of CRAC-PC members by federal police (sometimes in collusion with criminal groups) who claim that members carry unauthorized firearms. This is a contradiction as 701 Law authorizes them to carry this type of weapon. Sierra argues (2015: 141) that the relationship between CRAC-PC and the Mexican state oscillates between negation and threat in order to control, subordinate and fragment the organization of the former.

This coercive strategy is accompanied by capital investment to obtain legal access to land to develop infrastructural mega-projects. In trying to understand the impact of infrastructure, a human rights NGO officer explains the government's 'informal' agrarian administrative tactic used to benefit investment for a hydroelectric dam:

It needs to be recognized that agrarian law does not stop projects because of lack of citizen consultation or demands against these megaprojects, but because of lax administrative procedures such as when formalities are avoided. For example, when a quorum is lacking in agrarian assemblies run by the National Agrarian Register. (Gr_1)

This quote shows how government rule-breaking of daily administrative procedures facilitates capital investment, which then requires of indigenous mobilizations socio-legal strategies (injunctions and lawsuits) to uncover these practices.

Despite the coercion experienced, CRAC-PC works as a paralegal force that counters the tactics of accumulators (Sierra, 2013). The CRAC-PC security responsibilities have gone beyond its capacity to maintain peace in the region since it not only deals with petty crime, but also with territorial conflict posed by mining concessions over communities' collective land, and drug-trafficking. This wide range of responsibilities not only provides security, but also reactivates collective action, reconstitutes indigenous identity and challenges accumulators. As Ley et al. (2019) argue, CRAC-PC policing is not divorced from judicial and communal practices. Political imaginations are reflected in symbolic dimensions that constitute daily life and help to transform it. Sierra's (2015) analysis of the dialectics between sanction and re-education by CRAC-PC is useful to develop this point. When a person is found guilty under the CRAC-PC system, fines and community work are ways of implementing the sanction. Community work aims to re-educate by emphasizing collective work, cooperation, commitment and respect. Re-education has been applied to government bureaucrats through 'popular trials' (where all members of the community are invited to attend). In August 2012, a lengthy session prompted the trialled officials to acknowledge their irresponsibility, legal ignorance and stigma held against community members who were unjustly imprisoned or killed by police in a previous confrontation. This example illustrates through the informality as currency dimension how CRAC-PC and its communities counter state actors' coercive practices.

Meanwhile, medium and large corporations, another type of accumulator, also negotiate with the state. However, less research exists on how agri-business, extractive and tourism industries negotiate with state and federal government levels in Guerrero. Based on other cases in Mexico, mining firms negotiate through lobbying organized by confederations of industries (Garibay, 2019); through meetings with state-level governors and federal Secretariats of Environment, Economics, Energy and Interior are primordial. Salazar and Rodríguez (2015:20) report that mining corporations in Guerrero would try to avoid spaces of collective negotiation with indigenous authorities. Instead, corporations will approach

individuals to try to reach an agreement that would otherwise be rejected if presented in indigenous community assemblies, in which most residents vote on community decisions. This was the case of the Malinaltepec community in the MCC region, who after observing the environmental and social damage caused by GoldCorp to the community of Carrizalillo, led the community assembly to reject the open-cast mine plans by a similar corporation (CentroPro, 2017).

When corporations hold meetings with the community, they tend to be ill-defined; the prior, free and informed consent that some meetings are supposed to hold in response to international law, is not fully complied with.² Shortcuts to administrative procedures have been identified as practices that many businesses follow to circumvent the requirements that administrative and legal procedures establish. It seems that, whenever possible, corporations would rather take a back seat when engaging with subaltern groups, leaving state actors as responsible for dealing with the demands that these groups may have. In this sense, when businesses perceive that their interests are challenged by subaltern groups, at times backed by the state, they are ready to resort to informal practices (i.e. shortcuts to regulation) to ensure the continuation of hegemony.

Both types of negotiations held with subaltern and dominant groups indicate that state actors alternate between formal and informal spheres of practice in non-linear ways. In the case of CRAC-PC, state actors began collaborating with this body to provide security that the state was failing to fulfil. As a response, formal recognition was given to CRAC-PC through law, but judicial officials resorted to informal repression to ensure that CRAC-PC did not obtain more authority than the state-level government was willing to give. With accumulator groups, the state also resorts to informality. The state contributes to the informality businesses resort to through overlooking the regulation followed by both bureaucrats and

² This behaviour has begun to change with regard to megaprojects in the energy sector, where environmental and social impact assessments required by new law asks developers for prior, free and informed consent to take place. A consultant developing these impact assessments commented, *"It is about change, resistance to change...with the analyses that we present to our clients about...social conflict in the country over the past six years, [clients] begin to say 'ok, then carry out a **good** [impact assessment]'"* (IGr_2, emphasis our own). Here 'good' means the formal processes established by law.

businesses. However, state actors can occasionally emphasize formality when it points out to businesses that (international) law requires them to carry out prior consultation in indigenous communities. By alternating between formality and informality hegemony is maintained by the state.

The CRAC-PC case indicates that the procedures in which hegemony is countered resort to formal state institutions (law, judiciary), coupled with place-making underlined in the currency dimension of our framework. The CRAC-PC shows how organizing security is part of their daily life and has contributed to peace (reduction of crime rates) within their territory and which has not been achieved by state actors. In its efforts to achieve peace, CRAC-PC members address social accountability (Fox, 2015), which in turn promotes democratic values that have been side-lined by official discourses (Sierra, 2013; Ley et al., 2018). These security initiatives are also considered innovative forms of justice that aim to build 'security from below' (Abello-Colak and Pearce, 2009) through the recognition of human and indigenous rights. They plug the gap left by the state and counter its direct or complicit violence with non-state armed actors (paramilitaries and organized crime). All this has contributed to overcoming state hegemonic practice.

<H2> Oaxaca City

In Oaxaca City, informality is a permanent feature, constitutive of urban development. Beyond security, many urban services function through informal logics, either regulated by actors beyond the state or state-regulated, but rarely enforced. In 2019, up to 75.2% of workers did not have formal contracts, nor health or unemployment insurance through their workplace (México ¿cómo vamos?, 2020). Others enhance their income through informal work: In 2017, 64.2% of the Oaxaca State population was working on wages below the minimum standard, as opposed to 55.9% in 2005 (CONEVAL, 2018: 35). The reduction in social housing subsidies from roughly MX\$9,900 million pesos to MX\$1,700 million pesos in 2019 has added to the growing informal housing in the city's periphery.

Austerity policies have exacerbated 'informality as condition'. Multiple state-government agencies located in Oaxaca City have recently declared the need to reduce public spending,

and municipal police claim they are chronically underfunded (Pérez, 2015; Diálogos Oaxaca, 2016; Secretaría de Administración, 2017). Such austerity programmes further affect municipal police salaries and equipment (some pay for their own uniforms). The low salaries of municipal police are often cited to explain the need for informal security in the face of local state-criminal collusions (IOx_1, IOx_4). Increasingly, informal policing initiatives have become more visible. In the historical centre, tourists and residents move relatively safely, but in the periphery, neighbourhood watch initiatives and warning systems (i.e. via messenger services) have become widespread (interviews IOx_2, IOx_1, IOx_3)).

Another effect of both police austerity and the changing dynamics of crime is middle-class vigilante initiatives. These initiatives rely on their relative social privilege to gain the state's 'supportive neglect' (Banks et al. 2019: 9), meaning that they can count on local state authorities' inaction. Such initiatives consist of posting banners across the city centre and in well-off neighbourhoods which warn 'thieves' of lynching (research notes, 2017 and 2018), with city authorities being incapable of investigating such threats. These initiatives complement rather than challenge the state's security forces at no cost, and work as a means of intermediation with state institutions, which low-income households cannot easily access.

In 1997, the Electoral Law of Oaxaca State recognized that indigenous communities could integrate their communal general assemblies, the main governance body in customary law, with municipal government and administrative institutions foreseen by the Mexican Constitution. This recognition of legal pluralism formalized some indigenous norms known as *usos y costumbres*, yet, the hybrid law is only applied in some neighbourhoods and districts, mostly on the outskirts of Oaxaca City. Communities self-identified as indigenous autonomously select municipal representatives, and importantly, the law recognizes the communal security service, which works on a rotatory and voluntary basis while representing responsibility to one's community (IOx_4).

However, other factors have prohibited such legal pluralism from unfolding fully in the city (De Marinis, 2013); this is partly explained by the extra-legal dimensions of Oaxacan politics (Durazo 2011: 167–170). State-government institutions resort to irregular anti-riot units (*grupos de choque*) mobilized by party politicians. This kind of informal security practice has

been instrumental in suppressing various waves of urban protest, particularly in 2006, but also during more recent protests in the city (Tello, 2016). Several interviewees saw this relation between state agencies and anti-riot groups as a given (IOx_1, IOx_5, IOx_6).

State-crime collusion or state inaction, when confronted with threats, show that in practice the local state allows law to be broken by survivors and accumulators alike, but the effects vary depending on the neighbourhoods and social class of city dwellers (with different resources and networks). For instance, police repeatedly target informal street vendors, arguing that vendors take up public space 'illegally' and make it 'unsafe' to navigate the city centre (El Universal, 2017). Despite this, vendors, a prime example of survivors, keep coming back to the areas that have been policed. In contrast, several interviewees point to the state's omission in targeting illegal police networks such as *Frente 14 de Junio* (F14J), which are active in peripheral neighbourhoods.

Through their lynching banners and private security, high and middle-income groups are not the only sectors capable of positioning 'themselves within the political economy of urban informality in ways that allow them to benefit from a lack of (enforcement of) formal rules' (Banks et al. 2019: 9). When criminal networks are not policed, they can turn into accumulators, while local state officials act as brokers. For example, a temporary arrangement of extorted payments from local vendors and shops (Ox_1)³ allowed the F14J to act with impunity insofar as their activities held currency for a critical number of people. The state's inaction allowed F14J to 'impose its law'. The phrase '*imponer su ley*' refers to informal rules holding currency through coercion, which can help to maintain or achieve hegemony. However, in 2017, the F14J's informal rule no longer held currency. Neighbourhood initiatives expelled the group from their communities and simultaneously blocked the entrance to the city's municipal landfill, located nearby, to pressure the municipality into action against the network. As garbage piled up in the city's streets and the situation began to affect both upper-class neighbourhoods and tourism, state security forces began to intervene.

³ Extortions made it to local news outlets, i.e. El Imparcial (2017).

Furthermore, a longer-term result was achieved that transformed daily living and place-making, but this happened through the reproduction of state-security practices that we deemed as hegemonic. Neighbours established informal community security services. They communicated via their own established signs of warning (i.e. an agreed way of sounding a horn) and erected wooden and metal barriers at each street entrance. Ultimately, these neighbourhood security initiatives changed the culture of their communities, the social effect being far more than symbolic. A resident in Manantial Neighbourhood commented:

The whole street got organized, they went out on vigilant rounds (rondines) at night. I participated, sometimes we met up with other groups, we walked and saw barricades by other neighbourhoods, at the entrance or exit...in some neighbourhoods they built fences. After 12 or 11 at night you could not enter, even if you lived in the neighbourhood. ...They would open (the gates at six in the morning). So, these fences are still there, the chains are still there, the people that put up barriers." (IOx_6).

In 2017, after the communities achieved a negotiated agreement with the municipality through the pressure on the landfill (IOx_1), police eventually detained the heads of the F14J and their families had to leave the neighbourhood. Residents witnessed a notable security improvement: "... I see that after that conflict, there was and is a moment of peace, there are no threats of burglary anymore" (IOx_6).

Strategies of survival networks in Oaxaca City seem to be less institutionalized than the CRAC-PC, but nonetheless there are collaborative practices that establish rules to transform immediate daily living. In Oaxaca, there is no single institution such as the CRAC-PC that assumes the role of countering 'accumulators', but a panorama of initiatives and practices that bring people together in networks which put into question the state's hegemonic organization of in/security.

Negotiations of survival networks with state actors seem to rely more on our framework's dimension of informality as currency - practices that have place-making effects and have not been codified by legal rule. While informality as law can be detected through *usos y costumbres*, which guide community policing in the city's peripheries, hegemonic security

practices are more severely challenged through the place-making effects of collective practices, such as Manantial and other neighbourhoods against F14J. Neighbourhoods exerted pressure on the local state by blocking the landfill, and used violence against those who they perceived (or knew) to be members of F14J. Yet, it was not only the expulsion of F14J and pressures on the state to enforce an arrest warrant against key members which amounted to shifts in the currency of daily living, but also the residents' collective practices. These neighbourhoods changed their place-making practices in terms of security (barriers, rules about who could enter, time of road closures, security rounds), and through these, they were able to question the hegemony of state in/security practices. Moreover, the knowledge about informal ties such as state-crime collusion may itself increase the agency of low-income groups by changing their strategic choices vis-à-vis the state, which is perceived as complicit. However, in achieving this transformation neighbourhood networks had to resort to state-like practices of safety provision, which prevent hegemonic practice from being fully overcome.

Middle and upper-income groups employed other practices of survival. A Human Rights Official commented that knowledge of practices of state-crime collusion 'is indispensable', for example, when dealing with an incident of robbery via informal means. When he reported his computer as stolen, police told him to speak instead to a 'broker' involved in robberies to retrieve his belongings: "The very authorities function as intermediaries. ... (they tell you) well, if you really want to get your things back, look, go to X, he will solve this for you" (IOX-1). The quote illustrates how informal ways of dealing with robbery are 'valid' even for state officials – they assume currency. These same officials only selectively enforce the formal rules, depending on the actors' resources.

The 'flexible and uneven suspension of regulation and law in the production of urban space' (Ranganathan, 2014:90) is decisive in striving for hegemony. Putting up banners that threaten lynching is not just a defence strategy by shop owners and middle-class sectors. The banners also imply public, political pressure on the municipality; they hang in the city centre and northern, relatively wealthy neighbourhoods, because policymakers and politicians see them there. Banners are a statement directed to the local state.

Simultaneously, upper-class Oaxacans increasingly present the southern part of the city as potentially dangerous and have increasingly retreated from the city centre towards the northern areas with upmarket restaurants, shopping and housing. Historically, the city centre was the epicentre of wealthy families. Today it hosts many boutique and luxury hotels. Like the Guerrero case, little information exists on how corporations and upper-class citizens negotiate security with the state. Little information is available whether the police are more present, protective or responsive in prosperous neighbourhoods. Additionally, state authorities have not investigated allegations of corruption against corporations in the construction and real estate sectors (i.e. Grupo Gurrión or Hogares Cocoa); this may mean such corporations are partly immune to sanctions or carry out hidden negotiations. Yet, the security performed via the police presence within the city centre shows that the dominant place-making reproduces imaginaries of a secure city without the lower-class groups, who live at Oaxaca's margins.

Lower and middle-upper income neighbourhood initiatives show that informal security is part and parcel of hegemonic projects. The Manantial neighbourhood illustrates that self-organizing around security has achieved more relative calm (similar to CRAC-PC) than state security. This type of initiative counters the state's complicity with criminal actors, but may still be subject to punitive policing. Unlike CRAC-PC, they have not broadened community organizing into a more general social and political counterhegemonic project.

Meanwhile, state agencies employ both legal and illegal, formal and informal practices that produce security and insecurity in very different ways across social strata and urban space. In Manantial, state authorities ended their selective non-enforcement of rules against a particular criminal group only after severe pressure from resident mobilizations. Here, the state was obliged to act according to formal rules. These mobilizations were instrumental in establishing longer-term informal security practices that changed the communities' lifestyles. Yet the same mobilizations also contributed to stabilizing hegemonic practices as self-organizing of safety provision took pressure away from state agencies' responsibilities. Ironically, the cracks and contradictions in state security policies and the shifts between consent and coercion became less visible insofar as self-organization increased. Simultaneously, state agencies resorted to and proposed informal practices when critics traced the threats or violence of the F14J back

to state officials, or when state actors and businesses negotiated state tenders for urban renewal projects.

<H1> Discussion and conclusions

While the links between informality and security are relatively clear in the Latin American literature, the links with hegemony are less straightforward. Combining the approach of Banks et al. (2019) with the three dimensions of informality suggested by Marx and Kelling (2019) we built a framework to understand how (re)emerging informal practices in the field of security are continually mobilized in struggles for and against hegemony. Through the case studies we also unpacked how both dominant (accumulators) and subaltern (survivors) groups reproduce, in some cases, inadvertently hegemonic practices.

The CRAC-PC in Guerrero, and urban initiatives in Oaxaca, illustrate different relationships striving for hegemonic and counterhegemonic security practices. While survival networks in Oaxaca City appear to be less institutionalized than the CRAC-PC, both cases provide examples of hybrid practices that establish (informal) rules. The CRAC-PC has become a body that counters 'accumulators'. In Oaxaca City, the initiatives and practices that bring people together in networks have questioned the hegemonic organization of in/security by the state.

Beyond surviving and accumulating, both cases reveal that community actors in Oaxaca and Guerrero mobilize a third strategy, which has the potential to *transform* hegemonic practices by developing hybrid modes of in/security, particularly through their place-making practices. This transformation can be illustrated through the relative peace levels achieved in both cases: the discovery of collective action in the peripheries of Oaxaca City to put pressure on the local state to help them oust the F14J; and the social accountability and re-education that CRAC-PC has developed upon criminals and state bureaucrats. In a highly adverse security context, the CRAC-PC, and to a lesser extent subaltern groups that expelled the F14J, have become 'political actors in the transformation of their own society' (Choplin and Ciavolella 2017: 317) by producing alternative options to those offered by the state and its security discourse. In this sense, they participate in struggles against hegemony, through practices that cut across

different informality dimensions in which they are immersed and are contradictorily related to the state.

The CRAC-PC is a good example that shows its longer-term struggles against the repression and neglect of the state have gradually transformed the shape of projects striving for hegemony. Their struggles have been key in building customary institutions that at times confront the state but at other times co-operate with it. In striving to achieve social accountability, the CRAC-PC has encountered costs: state intimidation, violence and death towards its members. The different types of neighbourhood organizations in Oaxaca City are more temporary and instrumental and may eventually show some traits of authoritarian citizenship, where coercive initiatives imposed by communities themselves become authoritarian. In this sense, the transformative initiative can end up reproducing the hegemonic practices of violence of state in/security (Pearce, 2018; Hesketh, 2019). Alternatively, self-organizing groups may even absorb some of the contradictions arising through coercive state security policies by unwittingly taking pressure away from the state's own responsibility in providing public safety. We conclude that the universalizing effect of these struggles may be context-specific, but following Hesketh (2019), it is the aggregate impacts of these struggles over time and space that contribute to more solid counterhegemonic projects.

The nuance of the daily practices in both cases have helped us explain how formal and informal practices by both communities and state actors are essential to understanding hegemony in security policy. Indeed, elements of self-determination from indigenous customs have played an important role for organizing community policing in counterhegemonic ways. However, it is the latter in combination with the general place-making effects of hybrid practices of power distribution across social strata that severely challenge hegemonic security practices. This claim requires further research, but the diverse practices across neighbourhoods in Oaxaca City, which in various ways (indigenous or not) questioned the hegemony of state security, are a first example.

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IGr_2 Project development consultant, September 2017

Oaxaca:

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IOx_3 Entrepreneur, December 2018

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