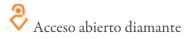# Building social fabric in Latin America

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Building social fabric in Latin America

This dossier is dedicated to social fabric, its components and related predictive/criteria variables. A definition of "social fabric" includes people, institutions, social beliefs, cultural values, a sense of community and relationships between these components (Hayden, 2011). Collective or massive violence can break social bonds and these dynamics may intensify may processes of economic impoverishment, social isolation, fear, and public health problems, among other effects. Around the world, many countries have suffered decades of civil wars, corruption, military governments and or persistent violation of main human rights. On the other hand, in Latin America, reports as Latinobarometro (2023) show a decline in support for democracy, which is associated with high levels of inequality, high discredit of political and judicial institutions and high scores of delinquency. Under these perceptions, Latin America region became vulnerable to populism and authoritarianism (Corporación Latinobarómetro, 2023).

¿How to revert these dynamics? ¿How to build solid civil societies? With social fabric as core theme and three articles we want to promote research in this field, providing tools and results about connections between social context and perceptions of social processes such as reconciliation, social representations of democracy, resilience and collective efficacy.

First article, "Social representations of democracy: a dimensional and territorial approach", presents psychometric properties of a social representations of democracy scale. This scale could be used in similar studies in Latin American countries, from a longitudinal perspective or in cross-sectional studies. Territorial and longitudinal analysis are performed and results show a two components central core: a positive values of democracy dimension (freedom, equality...) and, in the other hand, a notion of corruption impacting Colombian democracy. Also, in a regional level analysis, democracy valence is moderately associated with levels of Colombian regions criminality.

Morales, Ruiz, Chan and Vaca write the article "Citizenship culture and collective efficacy: psychometric properties and relationships with crime and demographic indicators in Mexican students". Authors share psychometric properties of two scales, one of collective efficacy and the other one on citizenship culture. Collective efficacy (CE) is a main construct regarding social fabric, since communities with higher levels of CE report lower levels of criminality, fear of crime, or public health problems (Sampson, 2003), although we know there are strong difficulties in proving cause effect relationships with psychosocial data in cross-sectional studies. In the other and, citizenship culture (CC) program of mayor Mockus in Bogotá had a important short term impact in reduction of criminality, in the early years of the 90s (Serrano Ariza, 2017). In addition to the

psychometric results, a lightly relationship between subjective perception in CE and CC with objective violence indicators from three Mexican cities is showed.

Finally, "Forgiveness, reconciliation and justice from the perspective of family members of victims in Mexico", of Reyes-Sosa, Molina-Coloma, Hernández-Bustos and Anderson, addresses core themes regarding social and legal handling of collective violence consequences. Forgiveness and reconciliation can be components of reconstruction of social fabric (Amaya et al., 2023), but results of this paper show victims' distrust in reconciliation process and a need for sentencing crime perpetrators. Other studies found a similar victim distrust to mediation processes (Ruiz et al., 2022). However, Reyes-Sosa et al. article shows participants believe forgiveness and reconciliation are necessary parts of social and civic reconstruction of Mexican society.

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