

Research Line

Violence in the Twilight Zone: informal non-state policing in  
the Global South

**The Construction of Legitimacy for the  
Ronda Urbana of Huamachuco**

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## Acknowledgements

The Violent Research and Development Project series of papers documents the preliminary results of a pilot project that was established to integrate higher education training in social science research with cross-regional comparative research on violence. The overall aims of the project, which has been generously supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), is to empower young academics in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East, so that they can contribute to international violence research, publish their findings both nationally and internationally, and ultimately develop scientifically grounded political and civil-society responses.

For that purpose, the Bielefeld University's International Center of Violence Research (ICVR) entered into cooperative agreements with five partner Universities in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East: the American University in Cairo (Egypt), the Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas in San Salvador (El Salvador), the University of Benin City (Nigeria), the University of the Punjab in Lahore (Pakistan), and the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru in Lima.

The empirical research carried out in the pilot project was structured in five research lines: "Parties, Passion, and Politics", "Justifications and Legitimacy of Police Violence", "Violent and Non-Violent Neighborhoods", "Violence in the Twilight Zone", and "Violence against Women". These topics were chosen to cover intra-societal conflict and violence by looking at aspects such as political violence, violence perpetrated by state institutions, violent events, violent and non-violent locations, violence and gender, and forms of self-defense and vigilantism.

This paper documents research that was conducted in the Research Line "Violence in the Twilight Zone: informal non-state policing in the Global South". Groups carrying out informal non-state policing such as vigilante groups or gangs take "the law into their own hands" and act in lieu of the state. They thus operate in what has been referred to as a "twilight zone": a zone in which public authority is exercised not exclusively by the state but by a variety of institutions including informal, non-state groups. For these groups to be able to exercise this kind of authority, let alone to maintain themselves for a longer period, they have to enjoy at least some degree of legitimacy with the members of the communities in which they operate. Thus, this research examines the basis of legitimacy of groups carrying out informal non-state policing in four countries of the Global South, namely Egypt, El Salvador, Nigeria, and Peru.

Bielefeld, June 2015

Rosario Figari Layús, Sebastian Huhn, Boris Wilke, Ciaran Wrons-Passmann

## Research Line

Violence in the Twilight Zone: informal non-state policing in the Global South

### **The Construction of Legitimacy for the Ronda Urbana of Huamachuco**

Sofía Isabel Vizcarra Castillo

#### **Abstract**

In this paper I explore which factors contribute to the legitimization of the Ronda Urbana of Huamachuco, a vigilante institution in a district in the highlands of La Libertad region in the North of Peru. Using qualitative methods, I show how the Ronda Urbana emerged and developed into a local security actor. I study the legitimization strategies and the factors that have created a certain level of acceptance of this institution, in a context where the state is discredited and weak. The aim of this study is to contribute to a better understanding of vigilante organizations and their legitimacy, not as an alternative or parallel institution but more as a complementary actor within complex local system of public security.

#### **Key words**

Vigilantism, Local system of public security, Construction of legitimacy, Peru

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## 1. Introduction

Citizen participation in providing security is a common feature of police reforms worldwide (Tuck, 1998). This participation, however, is not always only restricted to preventing crime. In some contexts citizens are also directly involved in crime control and repression providing public security for the population, for example through night watch patrols or vigilante groups (Dammert & Lunecke, 2004).

Citizen participation in security provision occurs in contexts where there is a demand for security either because of real or perceived threats. Since in some cases state institutions do not have the capacity to effectively respond to these threats, para-state institutions provide security in lieu of the state and thus replace it. However, these institutions do not necessarily want to take the place of the state, but instead demand that it should be more effective and present in more situations.

In the case of Huamachuco, a district in the northern department of La Libertad in Peru, this paradox became evident with the emergence of a vigilante group called the Ronda Urbana. Allegations against the state and its representatives concerning their incapacity to provide security as well as a perceived increase in insecurity have led local inhabitants to legitimize this new security actor.

However, instead of substituting for the state, the Ronda seeks to be integrated into the local system of public security. This study focuses precisely on this paradoxical situation, both from the point of view of the Ronda Urbana and from that of the population in Humachuco. The aim is to understand how the Ronda Urbana emerged, how it consolidated its presence as a security actor in the local security arena and which factors contributed to its legitimization.

The literature on citizen participation in security provision in Latin America is mainly related to the phenomenon of popular justice and popular reactions to crime (Huggins, 1991) and recent debates have centered on mob justice – something that is found in many Latin American countries. Vigilante groups on the other hand haven't attracted much attention. Against this background, the importance of this study lies, firstly, in its subject matter: how are para-state actors integrated into the local system of public security in contexts of urban transition and how do they legitimize themselves? This question is of particular interest in the case of the Ronda Urbana because most research in Peru has focused on rural patrolling organizations, and not on urban vigilantism.

Besides studying urban vigilantism however, the study also deals with the consequences of a new phenomenon that has been fuelling violence and crime in Peru: mining and illegal mining. Developing mining has led to various illegal activities that have undermined the institutional legitimacy of the Peruvian state. Though this problem has started to become

evident in recent years, it has so far barely been investigated. In Huamachuco, the conjunction of this phenomenon with problems concerning the recognition of traditional justice enriches the local debate on the subject.

The findings are structured in five main sections. The first presents the diverse forms that citizens' participation has taken in Latin America and how it has raised new concerns for public authorities. The second explains the methodology and case selection criteria for the study. The third describes the factors that led to the establishment of the Ronda Urbana in Huamachuco. The fourth examines the legitimization strategies used by the Ronda to gain public support and the fifth section assesses how public support for the Ronda is expressed as well as the various attitudes to them.

## **2. Citizen Participation in Security Provision: Informal Institutions and Legitimacy Concerns**

### **2.1 Citizen participation in security enforcement: shifting paradigms and risks involving community participation in security provision in Latin America**

At the end of the 20th century, the policing paradigm shifted from being centered on the state to a more community-based perspective (Tuck, 1998). On the one hand, this shift was a response to increasing crime rates and increased distrust in public authorities in Europe and Latin America. On the other, it was a consequence of the acknowledgement by public authorities that they did not have the capacity to ensure security by themselves. Crime was considered to be far too complex to be addressed only by state authorities. For this reason state authorities turned to citizens to improve the provision of security (Crawford, 1997). In Latin America, the state thus promoted citizens' involvement in initiatives designed to prevent crime, such as community policing and local security councils.

Even if many studies show that community participation in the provision of security – especially crime prevention – has worked in Latin America (Frühling, 2004; Dammert & Lunecke, 2004; Desmond Arias & Ungar, 2013), authors also recognize the risks inherent to community participation. Hence, according to Dammert and Lunecke (2014, p. 21) communities do not always contribute to the establishment of positive mechanisms of social control, and can even develop into authoritarian or para-state initiatives.

This other face of community participation has been explored in Latin America (Huggins, 1991), and in various countries in the region such as Bolivia (Goldstein, 2003), Mexico (Vilas, 2001), Guatemala (Sandoval Girón, 2007; Snodgrass Godoy, 2002), Ecuador (Castillo Claudett, 2000), Brazil (Benevides & Fischer Ferreira, 1991), and Peru (Onken, 2011). Even if recent debates have mainly focused on issues regarding community violence and mob justice, some authors have also focused on community vigilante organizations and their role

in policing (Rowland, 2005). In addition, recent events in Mexico, where so-called self-defense groups emerged in states such as Michoacán to protect the local population from drug cartels, have contributed to a renewed interest in vigilantism in Latin America (see e.g. Rivera, 2014).

In Peru, community participation and the debate about “people taking justice into their own hands” is not new. Already in the 1970s, a peasant organization called “Rondas Campesinas”, appeared in the rural areas of northern Peru to take action against increased cattle raiding as well as other problems rural communities were facing (Huber & Apel, 1990). During the 1980s the Rondas Campesinas became an ally of the state in the fight against terrorist movements<sup>1</sup>, leading to a proliferation of the presence of the organization throughout the country. Finally, the Peruvian state in its 1993 Constitution (Article 149) gave legal recognition to what initially was an unregulated citizens’ initiative. Since then, the activities of the Rondas Campesinas are regulated by law 27908, which allows the application of certain forms of customary law by these organizations.

Several authors have studied the Rondas Campesinas in various departments of northern Peru such as Cajamarca, Piura and Ancash (Huber & Apel, 1990; Hernandez, 1999). According to these authors, the Ronda developed due to the failure of the state to ensure security in the rural areas. In light of an increase in cattle raiding, the local population organized itself in order to provide security, establishing its own justice system with its own forms of punishment (Hernandez, 1999; Huber & Apel, 1990).

This has been possible because the Ronda Campesina is formally recognized by law. While this has allowed the Ronda Campesina to become part of the local system of security provision, the Ronda doesn’t have legal recognition and thus operates informally.

## **2.2 On the legitimacy and the legitimization of informal and parallel institutions**

In political science the state is traditionally considered to be responsible for security provision. However, a wide range of authors challenge this notion, reflecting on how other actors take on state functions related to security (for a review see Hoffman & Kirk, 2013). Even if the literature on this phenomenon has centered on fragile states, some of the ideas of this literature can be applied in contexts where states are not fragile at the national level but rather relatively weak at the local level. In these contexts, institutions inside and outside the state exercise public authority without necessarily defying the state (Lund, 2007). Rather they

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<sup>1</sup> At the end of the 1980s a terrorist movement named Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) emerged in the Peruvian Andes. The aim of the group was to start a revolution and overthrow the Peruvian government. In order to achieve this, they used extremely violent methods, which led to an internal conflict (CVR, 2001). To stop the Shining Path, peasants organized themselves in self-defense committees, taking on a leading role in the fight against terrorism (Fumerton, 2000; Isbell, 1994).

participate in a constant (re)construction of public authority (Hoffman & Kirk, 2013). Christian Lund (2007) for instance defines these institutions as parallel institutions, calling them “twilight institutions”.

However, these arrangements only work when each of the actors participating in them enjoys legitimacy in the eyes of the population. For this reason, it is crucial to understanding how these actors gain legitimacy. The traditional perspective on legitimacy is the one developed by Weber in 1978 with the three sources of legitimacy: traditional, charismatic and rational-bureaucratic (Weber, 1978). However, since Weber, a wide range of authors have reflected on the topic. A basic but useful definition of legitimacy is that “legitimacy is the beliefs and attitudes of the affected actors regarding the normative status of a rule, government, political system or governance regime” (Schmelzle, 2011, p. 7).

However, legitimacy is not a given reality for institutions or organizations. In fact, several scholars understand legitimacy more as a construction, a legitimization process with several stages. For example, Kaplan and Ruland (1991, p. 370) contend that “underlying organizational legitimacy is a process, legitimization, by which an organization seeks approval (or avoidance of sanction) from groups in society”.

Accordingly, there are a variety of factors which influence the building of legitimacy. For example, some authors say that trustworthiness – influenced by leadership, performance and competence – is decisive in legitimization (Levi, Sacks & Tyler, 2009, p. 356). In addition, the effectiveness of the institutions in accomplishing its goals plays a key role (Levi, Sacks & Tyler, 2009). Since these kinds of factors mostly depend on the beliefs and attitudes of local residents, this study employs a qualitative approach to legitimization.

### **3. Methodological Approach and Case Selection Criteria**

In order to assess local inhabitants’ perceptions of the Ronda, it is necessary to adopt an approach that makes it possible to see the world through the eyes of the local inhabitants. For this reason, I chose qualitative methods. Their main advantage is suitability for capturing the experiences, opinions and perceptions of community members and the nature of social life.

“Although qualitative methods may also relate to phenomena at the macrosocial level, their specific strength is their ability to lift the veil on microsocial processes and to make visible hitherto unknown cultural phenomena.” (Kelle, 2001 cited in Klenke, 2008, p. 158).

So, I interviewed local inhabitants and observed the Ronda in their daily activities. These interviews, alongside direct observations, made it possible to inquire about community members’ perceptions of the Ronda and its actions in the district. In order to get different points of views and contrast them, semi-structured as well as informal interviews were conducted with Ronderos, local authorities and civil servants, community leaders and

inhabitants from inside and outside the selected neighborhood. The table below provides an overview of who was interviewed.

**Table 1: Interviews conducted for the research, classified by type of actor**

Type of actor	Ronda's leaders	Inhabitants from the selected neighborhood	Inhabitants from other neighborhoods	Community leaders	Local officials	Total number of interviewees
Number of interviewees	4	10	6	4	6	30

**Source:** Elaborated by the author.

In order to conduct a targeted study that included direct observation and interviews, it was necessary to focus on a neighborhood rather than the whole district. Moreover, due to its informal character it was also easier to explore the phenomenon at the local level. The criteria for selecting a neighborhood were:

- It had to be located in one of the urban areas of the Huamachuco.
- It had a functioning Committee of Ronda Urbana that patrolled by night. This last factor was crucial because patrolling is the activity for which the Ronda is recognized and judged by the population.

Only one of the neighborhoods of Huamachuco met both selection criteria: the neighborhood of Agua de Pajaritos which is located five blocks away from the main square of Huamachuco. It is one of the oldest and most touristic neighborhoods, in which approximately 500 families live. Its inhabitants are farmers, mineworkers, public servants, householders and local entrepreneurs. Local families settled in the area almost 40 years ago.

I conducted fieldwork between December 2013 and May 2014. I interviewed the main actors and accompanied the Ronda during their main activities such as patrolling, participated in the Ronda's meetings and in fundraising activities. In addition, I had access to some of the internal records of the Ronda, which I consulted, but didn't photograph, with the Ronda's authorization. Moreover, in order to get an idea of how people in other neighborhoods perceive the Ronda, I interviewed a small number of employees of retail stores around Huamachuco's main square as well as residents from two other

neighborhoods, namely Fátima and 09 de Octubre. In both of these neighborhoods security is mainly provided by a community-policing organization called Junta Vecinal<sup>2</sup>.

#### **4. The Emergence of the Ronda Urbana of Huamachuco: a Changing Security Situation**

##### **4.1 New security concerns and unsatisfied security needs**

Huamachuco is a city in the northern highlands of Peru, located 180 km to the east of Peru's third biggest city, Trujillo, in the mountains of the department of La Libertad<sup>3</sup>. It is the capital district of the province of Sánchez Carrión, and in 2007 it had 136,000 inhabitants (INEI I. N., 2007). The district has both an urban and rural area. The urban area of Huamachuco had approximately 28,000 inhabitants in 2014 (INEI I. N., 2009), while annual population growth has been 2% on average over the last decade<sup>4</sup> (INEI I. N., 2011). Economically, the main activity has traditionally been farming. Thus, in 2007, the province of Sánchez Carrión was predominantly rural (73%), and only 42% of the inhabitants of the district of Huamachuco lived in urban areas (INEI I. N., 2007).

As in many intermediate and small cities in Peru, the development of mining around Huamachuco has brought about a new economic dynamics. Thanks to Peru's gold, silver, copper and other precious metal reserves, mining is now the main economic activity in the country. Thus, Peru's growth during the past decade has been based on exponential growth in the mining sector, which represented more than 50% of Peru's exports in 2011 (Macroconsult, 2012).

In Huamachuco, the development of the gold mining industry brought with it various commercial activities that previously did not exist in the area<sup>5</sup>. For example, currently there are at least four rural banks operating, three chains of drugstores and at least one national retail chain selling appliances. There also are at least four universities and several technical training centers specializing in the mining sector. The hotel and restaurant industry and the entertainment industry (bars and clubs) are also thriving.

Huamachuco thus became one of the engines of regional development in La Libertad. Migrants from cities such as Trujillo, Chimbote, Cajamarca, Lima as well as some rural villages of the province came to Huamachuco. Due to this migration, the city not only witnessed a process of rapid urbanization, but also developed in an unplanned manner.

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on this organization see Chapter 4.2 below.

<sup>3</sup> La Libertad is one of Peru's twenty-five departments. The country's administrative units consist of departments, provinces and districts.

<sup>4</sup> Calculation made by the author on the basis of data available from INEI.

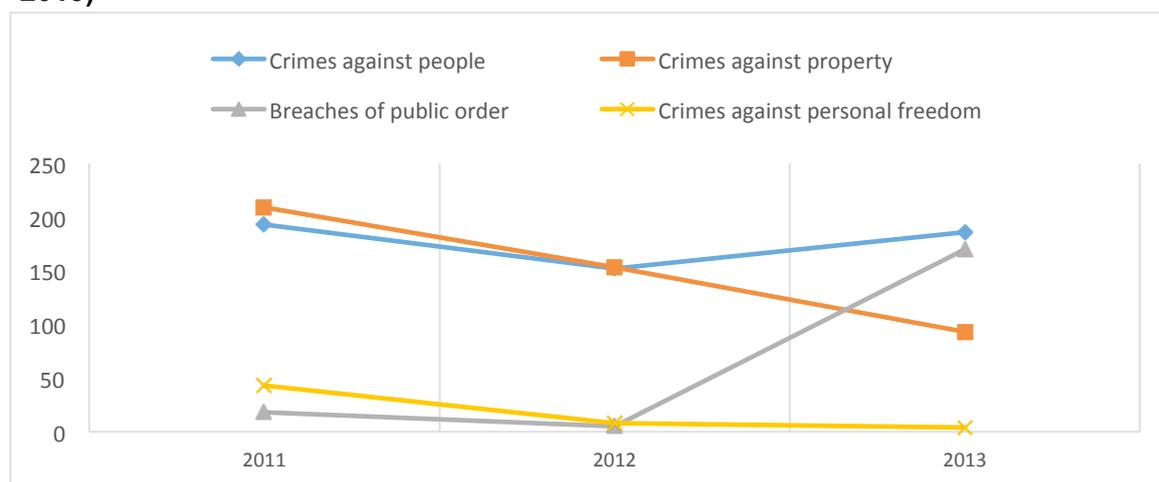
<sup>5</sup> While 40% of the inhabitants still work in agriculture, new sectors such as trade (12%), the hotel and restaurant industry, tourism industry and mining (6.4%) have grown at comparatively high rates. See (INEI, 2007).

Thus, many of the new arrivals settled on the outskirts of the city in precarious living conditions.

With all of these developments the security situation changed. According to many of the interviewees who hailed from Huamachuco, a decade ago people knew and trusted each other. After the terrorist movement Shining Path had retreated from the area, security issues revolved around cattle rustling and fights among neighbors. Now, however, new types of crime prevail.

This is confirmed by police statistics. As Figure 1 below show, crimes against people and property as well as breaches of the public order were the major criminal offenses in the district from 2011 to 2013.

**Figure 1: Evolution of main types of crime in the jurisdiction of Huamachuco (2011-2013)**



**Source:** Huamachuco police statistics for 2011, 2012 and 2013.

More important than the figures, however, is the fact that in recent years there was a drastic change in Huamachuco's citizens' perception of the security situation. Thus, many interviewees identified three types of crime as particularly problematic: crimes against property, breaches of public order and family violence.

Concerning crimes against property, interviewees thought that economic growth had made their city a better place to live. While the number of stores, businesses and financial institutions had increased and people earned more, economic growth also attracted criminals in search of new "business opportunities." Thus, with people's relative prosperity came the need among local inhabitants to protect not only their lives, but also their property. Since people owned something – according to a local inhabitant, many people deposited their money and precious minerals (e.g. gold) in their houses – they felt the need to secure their wealth from potential threats. According to local inhabitants, these threats came from

outsiders attracted by the lack of security measures in the area, as well as from new arrivals that came to work in the mining industry.

Concerning breaches of public disorder, the growth of the entertainment industry in Huamachuco resulted in the proliferation of bars, nightclubs and prostitution in the city center and commercial streets. This bothered the local population, especially the bar fights and prostitution. Finally, while family violence was not a new phenomenon, the local population perceived it to have increased and worsened with the arrival of outsiders.

Besides this heightened feeling of insecurity, interviewees found that the official authorities were not doing enough to address their security problems. While this is not surprising, given that local police are associated with inefficiency and corruption in most parts of the region<sup>6</sup>, in the case of Huamachuco even local police officers acknowledged that the police didn't have the capacity to patrol the entire district, because their jurisdiction covered not only the urban, but also the rural area. These claims were further confirmed by internal police documents<sup>7</sup>, which stated that, on average, one police officer is responsible for 700 inhabitants in the district.

Against this background it comes as no surprise that many of the city's inhabitants perceived there to be a lack of police personnel. As a community member explained:

"Here in Huamachuco, there are 30 police officers. 15 of them are on their "free day" as they call it, because they are on duty on a rolling basis. Most of the time, of these, 15, 8 or 10 have to go to external service commissions [attend to calls of inhabitants and incidents outside the urban area]. There are only four policemen left for the city, and of those three are usually busy with administrative tasks, and only one is available for patrolling and it's very difficult for him. The region needs to send more police officers here" (Interview with a resident from Agua de Pajaritos, Huamachuco, March 2014).

Even if the security situation improved with the establishment by the local government of so-called Serenazgo<sup>8</sup>, there still was a serious lack of local resources to enable proper policing of the district. For example, in the case of the Serenazgo during fieldwork I observed that there is an average of 60 agents for the whole district. Although they were equipped with cars and motorcycles, one of the agents interviewed stated that "*it's simply not enough*".

In addition to these problems of capacity, there is the issue of corruption. Many interviewees thought that the police as well as the judicial authorities were corrupt. As one community member explained:

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<sup>6</sup> See Dammert & Lunecke, 2004; Waldmann, 1996; Frühling & Cadina, 2001; Frühling, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Information accessed through a visit to the local police station in December 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Serenazgo are municipal security agents employed by local governments all over Peru. For more information on them see Lopez Noam, 2014.

*“There is a lot of corruption in the police, when they catch a thief; they always release them very quickly” (Interview with a resident from Agua de Pajaritos, Huamachuco, March 2014).*

*“The authorities: sometimes they do [respond to our complaints]; sometimes they don’t. It all depends on the money. That is why people don’t trust the police. Because they are corrupt” (Interview with a resident from Agua de Pajaritos, Huamachuco, March 2014).*

Corruption was associated with the judicial system in which financial means determine the way people are treated. There was also a perception that only rich people get justice because they can afford to bribe officers:

*“The police are corrupt like the public ministry and the judges. Those who have money can make justice. The other ones, like us, who don’t have money, we don’t get justice” (Local Neighbor from Agua de Pajaritos, Huamachuco, March 2014).*

It is against this background that local citizens organized themselves in order to counteract insecurity and create alternative mechanisms for controlling crime in their neighborhoods.

#### **4.2 Complementary protection schemes and local security provision systems: the emergence of the Ronda Urbana**

The Ronda Urbana emerged in response to a new security situation and continued mistrust of state authorities. After having faced the violence of the internal war between Shining Path and the state in the 1980s and 1990s, Huamachuco’s inhabitants began rebuilding their lives in the early 2000s. However, during the internal conflict both the state and Shining Path committed crimes against the local civilian population. After the end of the conflict the image of the police deteriorated further due in part to the disclosure of incidences of corruption and abuse of power in the province (Comisión de la Verdad y la Reconciliación, 2003).

In addition, at the time, the Rondas Campesinas grew and gained a lot of public support in the rural areas of the Andes, including in the highlands of the province of Sánchez Carrión. Numerous villages in the highlands formed Rondas, both to protect themselves against cattle raiding and later to repel attacks by Shining Path. The principle was simple: villagers were organized into groups of four or five people to patrol their neighborhoods during the night. Although the volunteers were ill equipped, in the eyes of the population this initiative proved successful. When the Ronda caught a thief or someone trying to “harm” the community, the person was punished according to customary law, often involving physical harm (Hernandez G. , 1999).

Then, in 2003 the idea of citizens patrolling the streets was adopted by the police. With the adoption of Law 27933 on “Citizens’ Security” their participation in providing public security was promoted through the creation of so-called “Juntas Vecinales” (neighborhood councils). The idea of Juntas Vecinales emerged in 1997 with the creation of the Direction of Citizens Participation within the police. It coordinated work between citizens and police officers at local police stations with the aim of preventing crime (Costa & Romero, 2010, p. 22). The involvement of citizens was conceptualized as active participation in crime prevention. Activities consisted mainly of patrolling neighborhoods in close coordination with the authorities. Moreover, citizens were expected to participate in decision-making through local security councils.

The shift toward citizen participation was critical in the case of Huamachuco, not only because the police had little support from the population, but also because of the police’s weak ties with the community put the policemen’s security at risk. As some police officers explained in interviews, the local inhabitants were not very fond of the police. There was even a time when local people were intending to burn down a police station and attacked two police officers, almost lynching them because they thought the officers were corrupt. After this episode, the police was convinced that a shift in their strategy was needed:

*“It was necessary to begin working with the population. It was not easy. When we started back in 2004 with the creation of the Juntas, many neighbors didn’t want to participate. We had to go to look for them, show them that we wanted to work with them, hand in hand. It was difficult because we also did not have many resources. But it slowly started to work” (Interview with a local police officer, Huamachuco, December 2013).*

In 2004 the first Junta Vecinal (JUVE) was created of Huamachuco. According to police officers involved in the process, at the beginning, citizens were reluctant to collaborate. It was very difficult to convince them, and not all of them agreed to collaborate. In the face of this reluctance, some neighbors decided to create their own, independent organization, the Ronda Urbana, to patrol their neighborhoods and ensure security. While, in essence, the Ronda Urbana performed the same activities as the Juntas Vecinales, the Ronda didn’t focus on crime prevention activities only, but also played a more active role in crime control and prevention<sup>9</sup>. Thus, in the beginning, the Ronda even used some of the methods used by the Rondas Campesinas in rural contexts (e.g. physical punishment and forced work). However,

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<sup>9</sup> During fieldwork, I observed that the distinction between the Ronda Urbana and Juntas Vecinales is often blurred. Local inhabitants often considered the two organizations to be the same, even if the authorities made a clear distinction. However, while both deploy force to control crime, the Ronda is watched more closely by the authorities than the Juntas Vecinales.

because in the case of the Ronda Urbana no legal framework existed that allowed them to operate and apply customary law in urban contexts, this caused legal difficulties with the official authorities on several occasions.

One consequence of the creation of the Ronda was that the district was divided into neighborhoods in which the Ronda operated and those in which JUVES operated. In practice this meant that the neighborhoods in which JUVES operated received more financial and technical assistance from the police than in those where the Ronda operated. The distinction between the Ronda and JUVES – which was politically motivated, as many of the actors involved declared – nonetheless became more and more blurred over time. This was because the activities of the Ronda and of the JUVE were very similar and the local population didn't differentiate between the two.

On the whole, the process resulted in the emergence of a vigilante institution, with different denominations according to the neighborhood (Ronda or Junta Vecinal). Both groups work closely with the police but are at the same time independent from it. They operate in a grey area, a “twilight zone”, respecting the law most of the time. As one of the local neighbors put it:

*“Each sector can organize itself into its own Junta Vecinal, which is in essence the same thing as a Ronda Urbana. What changes, is that Junta Vecinal sounds better, because Rondas are seen as savages, the ones who beat people” (Interview with an inhabitant from outside of Agua de Pajarito, Huamachuco, March 2014).*

What is particularly interesting, however, is the fact that the confusion between Ronda and JUVE led the police to establish some links with the leaders of the Ronda Urbana as well. Despite their tense relationship, authorities at some point had to collaborate with the Ronda because in 2011 the new local government recognized it with a local decree and included it in the local system of public security and in the local security plan<sup>10</sup>.

This meant that the Ronda could also benefit from material and financial resources made available by the local government. Also, they had access to the public “safety house”, the local security agents' headquarters, and were presented as contributing to security measures in the city. They also got access to assistance and training in security and legal matters such as human rights, conciliation techniques and the implementation of the new penal code. Little by little the Ronda became part of the local system of public security.

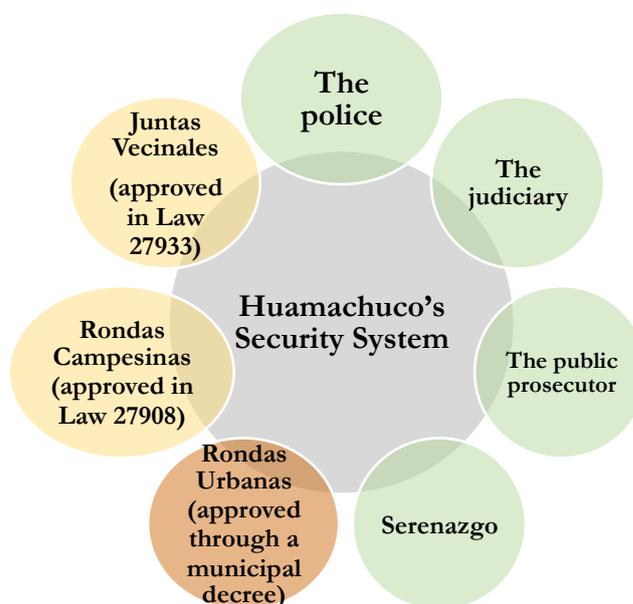
In summary, the security system now consists of three kinds of institutions: first, official institutions with a public mandate to provide security and justice (the police, judicial

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<sup>10</sup> With the election of a new local government in 2011, the Ronda was included in the local security plan. For more details, see: <http://www.munihuamachuco.gob.pe/docs/seguridad12.pdf>.

authorities, the public prosecutor, and local security agents). Second, formal citizens' institutions legally recognized by law (Rondas Campesinas and Juntas Vecinales) and, third, the Ronda Urbana, an informal institution. This configuration comes close to what Garland (2005) describes as a market for providing security, which has been modified over time, acquiring a mixed form of economy and extending the limits of formal control to non-state actors. At the local level, the contribution by local government agencies (in this case local security agents) and local institutions are more important for the citizens than those organized by the national government (Rowland, 2006; Costa & Romero, 2010). This configuration can be interpreted as a rather functional arrangement for providing public security, as the figure below shows:

**Figure 2: The Local System of Public Security of Huamachuco**



**Source:** Elaborated by the author.

Even if at first glance these institutions compete with one another (e.g. for resources and mandates), their relationship is more complex. Thus, their respective shortcomings compelled them to work together in order to get results on which they could build. Even if in some cases there have been rivalries, such as between the Ronda and the judiciary for example, both work together. Ronderos still receive training from the authorities, and work with them in cases requiring an investigation. The state authorities also pay regard to the Ronda's demands and investigate crimes reported by them. Both local inhabitants and Ronderos recognize these joint security efforts:

*"Most of the time there are joint operations that are coordinated with the police, the Rondas and Serenazgo [local security agents]. They go out on their motorcycle through*

*the neighborhoods where there is prostitution. But it's the Ronda and the police, it's a joint force" (Interview with an inhabitant from Agua de Pajaritos, Huamachuco, March 2014).*

This collaboration is also acknowledged by Ronderos. Thus, one Rondero explained:

*"We don't make a legal complaint or something like that. Our cases, we quickly hand them over to the police. We are only here to support them" (Interview with a Rondero from Agua de Pajaritos, Huamachuco, March 2014).*

As these quotes show, all partners in the system know their role – and their limits. Each one of them is aware of when, where and under which circumstances to take action. The official authorities even know when to look away when the Rondas or JUVES violate the law. As one of the Ronderos explained:

*"We have been trained to constantly coordinate with the official authorities. This means that we cannot detain someone arbitrarily, even if it has happened in a lot of cases. But when we detained some people, their families have made an official complaint and denounced us for kidnapping. We know that a person has the right to freedom of movement [...], but when we catch someone red-handed, we have to intervene and detain that person" (Interview with a Rondero from Agua de Pajaritos, Huamachuco, March 2014).*

It is within this context that the Ronda Urbana tries to garner public support.

## **5. In Search of Legitimacy: Legitimization Strategies of the Rondas Urbanas of Huamachuco**

The Ronderos pursue various strategies to acquire and maintain legitimacy. As stated earlier, legitimacy is not given, but a construction that comprises a series of stages which can be obtained by adopting different strategies.

### **5.1 Legitimization through the imperative of security and a response to fear of crime**

First, the Ronda's activities are deeply rooted in the popular belief that there is a strong need for security and protection in Huamachuco. This need requires collective action by its inhabitants. In the case of Huamachuco, perceived insecurity is a major concern for the city's long-term inhabitants. It is also an important subject of debate in local politics. According to one community member:

*“The time of terrorism is similar to the time we are living in now, because of crime. And that on a local, national and world scale” (Interview with an inhabitant from Agua de Pajaritos, Huamachuco, March 2014).*

As a matter of fact, many people in Huamachuco fear crime. Even if the situation is not comparable to that in bigger cities (see Hirtenlehner & Farrall, 2013 for an overview), people are afraid of leaving their house alone. Local inhabitants don't necessarily feel threatened in their physical integrity but they nevertheless feel the need to protect themselves and their property against burglars, especially at night. The Ronda is a reaction to this fear.

However, the Ronda's existence is justified more by fear of crime than by crime itself. Agua de Pajaritos is an example of this paradox: a quiet residential, middle-class neighborhood in which people are afraid of what they hear happens in nearby neighborhoods: *“We have to participate or no one is going to watch our house”* or *“If we don't defend ourselves, then who will?”* were phrases repeatedly used by its inhabitants. Even if they acknowledged that their neighborhood is a very *“quiet and peaceful place”* and that they *“don't have problems like other neighborhoods”*, they still felt that there was a need for an institution such as the Ronda. As an inhabitant put it:

*“When we go out from our houses we feel more secure when there is a Ronda. Ronda is a synonym for more security” (Interview with an inhabitant from Agua de Pajaritos, Huamachuco, March 2014).*

However, it is not only the need for security that leads local inhabitants to support the Ronda's activities. Their support is also based on the popular belief that it is every citizen's duty to get involved in public security. Thus, this local inhabitant claimed:

*“I think that security is made by everyone, because it's citizen's security, a question of public safety. For example, almost everyone in this neighborhood has the telephone number of the Serenazgo, because when you see a fight or something you call them” (Interview with an inhabitant from Agua de Pajaritos, Huamachuco, March 2014).*

According to this logic, *everyone* can and is supposed to contribute to public security. This, however, doesn't mean that the official authorities are superfluous. On the contrary, the Ronda accept the logic of joining forces with state authorities and sharing the work. For example, when one of the Ronderos described a typical intervention, he emphasized the

difficulties that Ronderos endure when cooperating with the official authorities, especially due to limited resources and the disposition of the authorities themselves:

*“When you capture someone, then you call [the] Serenazgo and they come with their cars to take the prisoner to the police. They do all the paperwork; they make their own enquiries and decide if the prisoner has to remain in custody or if they release him. They also continue with the legal procedure, bring the criminals before the judge. But there are not always conditions for coordination and joint work. Sometimes we do not even have credit for making a phone call. In other cases, the police don’t support you; in other cases it’s the judge who doesn’t support your case” (Interview with a Rondero from Agua de Pajaritos, Huamachuco, March 2014).*

Besides this need for security and combating the fear of crime, however, the Ronda also tries to legitimize itself through its impact on the everyday security situation of the neighborhood.

## **5.2 Legitimization through performance: effective provision of security**

Performance and effectiveness are at the heart of the Ronda’s legitimization strategy. People support the Ronda because they think they are doing a good job. As a community member of Agua de Pajaritos put it:

*“We support our Ronda because there is security. It’s better that there is a Ronda. Before the situation was critical, but now it’s all calm again” (Interview with an inhabitant from Agua de Pajaritos, March 2014, Huamachuco).*

As this quote shows, the Ronda bases its legitimacy on its role as a provider of security and the results it achieves. However, speaking of effectiveness the question arises: what do local inhabitants think of as effective? How do people assess the performance of the Ronda? How do they measure effectiveness?

In order to answer these questions one needs to keep in mind that local inhabitants don’t compare crime statistics, at least not on a daily basis. In fact, when they talk about security problems in their neighborhood and district, they usually don’t talk about figures at all. Instead, they talk about what has a direct impact on their daily lives. It is on this basis that the Ronda builds its support. First, it attends problems that are directly linked to people’s daily concerns even if it doesn’t get involved with cases related to severe crimes, such as murders. Second, they respond rapidly and are close to the people. Third, they not only sanction criminal behavior but also get some kind of compensation for the victims. Finally,

they don't charge anything for their service. This way security is available for everyone and the individual costs of protection are reduced.

It is important to emphasize the fact that the Ronda is what Skoganyou you (1989) calls an "endogenous mechanism of social control." Ronderos can quickly respond to crime because they know the area, its surroundings and the inhabitants. As a Rondero put it:

*"In the Ronda, solutions are quicker. We solve problems more quickly because we know our neighborhood and we know the perpetrators" (Interview with a Rondero from Agua de Pajaritos, Huamachuco, March 2014).*

At the same time, however, it is important to keep in mind that the Ronda mainly deals with cases in which the perpetrators are known either because they live in Huamachuco and can be identified by local inhabitants, or because the cases can easily be solved. In this regard the effectiveness of the Ronda must be seen in the context of the other security actors' way of dealing with crime.

The results of the Ronda must be seen in light of the tacit division of labor within the security system. The effectiveness of the Ronda can only be evaluated on the basis of its handling of cases of minor offenses and not on the basis of serious crime. The Ronda thus occupies a niche and Ronderos know their limits:

*"The Ronda is for patrolling and for watching our goods. I don't get involved in cases that are not under my jurisdiction. There are also cases which you know have to be investigated directly by the police or judiciary authorities" (Interview with a Rondero from Agua de Pajaritos, Huamachuco, March 2014).*

Also, since the Ronda is made up of community members, its actions correspond well to the needs and priorities of the population. According to the registration book<sup>11</sup> of the District Committee of the Ronda<sup>12</sup>, most of its interventions are related to cases of petty theft, burglaries, vehicle theft, fraud and unpaid debts. However, the Ronda has also been very active in the area of maintenance of public order and the fight against prostitution. Local newspapers and Ronderos confirm the importance of this work: "we do intervene in the touristic zone. We close bars and brothels and we protect our youth" (Interview with a Rondero from Agua de Pajaritos, Huamachuco, March 2014).

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<sup>11</sup> In the registration book all the complaints made by inhabitants to the Ronda are registered. It is similar to the records of police authorities and was consulted by the researcher in the house of the president of the Ronda in March 2014.

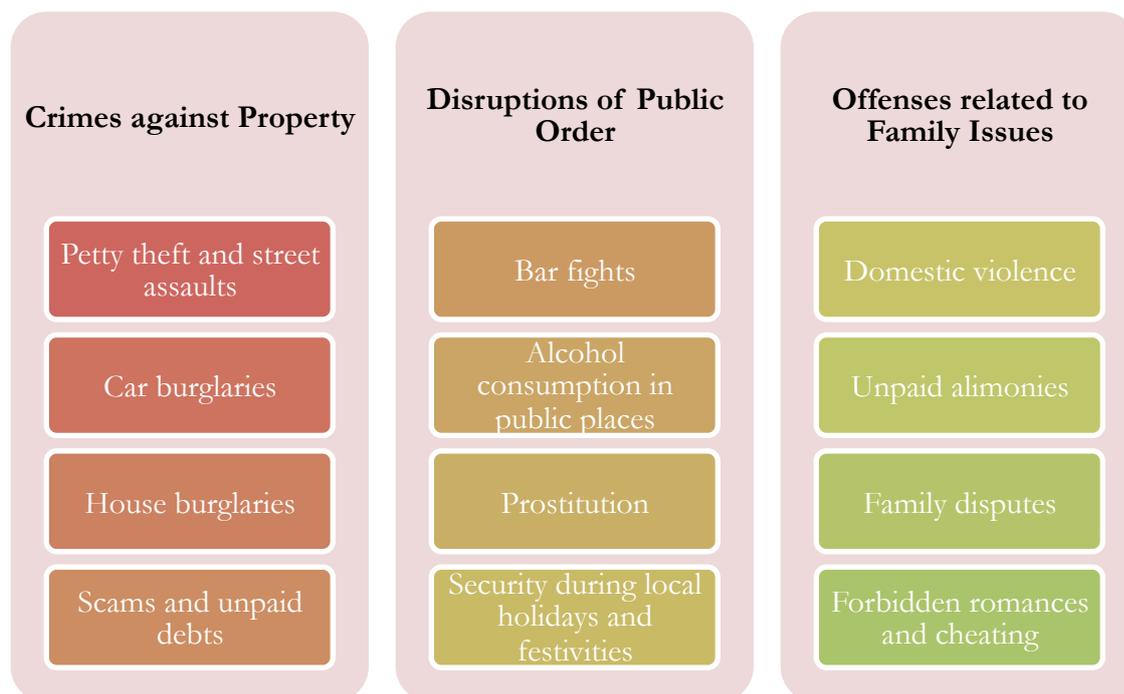
<sup>12</sup> The Ronda is organized at three jurisdictional levels: neighborhood, district and provincial. The registration book mentioned here is that of the district level committee.

Moreover, the Ronda also engages in the resolution of family problems. Since their members come from the community, people trust them and confide in them when it comes to personal problems. Thus, local inhabitants come to the Ronda to look for help with cases related to domestic violence, unpaid alimonies, family disputes and even illicit romances. For example, a young local inhabitant recalled:

*“My mother handed me over to the Ronda because she didn’t like my boyfriend. The Ronda talked to me and made me walk with them. They also punished me and flogged me. My mother told them to punish me for disobeying” (Interview with a Rondera from Agua de Pajaritos, Huamachuco, March 2014).*

The interventions of the Rondas are summarized in the figure below according to the kind of offenses the Ronda deals with.

**Figure 3: Interventions of the Ronda Urbana of Huamachuco According to Types of Offenses**



**Sources:** Elaborated by the author based on interviews with local neighbors, Ronderos and on-site consultation of the registry book of the Ronda.

In all of these types of offenses, the Ronda has an influence on how cases are dealt with. They not only sanction the criminal acts themselves but also get some form of compensation for the victims. While in cases related to property crimes this compensation is in the form of the recovery of stolen goods or money, in cases of crimes against a person or breaches of

the public order the compensation is of symbolic nature, such as making the perpetrator pay a fine. As one Rondero put it:

*“If someone steals, then what are you going to do? You have to detain him and make him return all the things, and if he doesn’t do it, then you have to make him patrol with you to punish him” (Interview with a Rondero from Agua de Pajaritos, Huamachuco, March 2014).*

The fact that victims get some form of compensation for the loss or pain inflicted upon them was also acknowledged by local inhabitants:

*“If something happens to me, I first go to the Ronda. I know they are going to get me what was stolen because they do everything until things finally reappear” (Interview with an inhabitant from Agua de Pajaritos, Huamachuco, March 2014).*

Local inhabitants thus perceived the Ronda to be more efficient in punishing perpetrators, even if this sometimes involved the use of force and disregarded due process of law. Its way of dealing with criminal offenses also has the advantage that it is less bureaucratic and time consuming. This is a key aspect in the Ronda’s quest for public support and legitimacy.

Another important aspect is the fact that the service provided by the Ronda is free of charge and hence accessible to all. One of the problems of the population is that in the judicial system the formal and informal costs for getting justice are too high for most local inhabitants. This was especially so in cases of petty theft in which thieves almost certainly would not be convicted. However, when they took these kinds of cases to the Ronda, the victims could recover their stolen goods and the criminals were punished in a very short time and free of charge. The only condition for benefiting from this service is to become a Rondero yourself and fulfil the duties of a Rondero (e.g. to patrol the streets every month).

*“Most of the time, the problems of the people are related to values under 500 or 1000 Nuevos Soles<sup>13</sup> [the worth of goods stolen is not worth more than 1000 Nuevos Soles], and for this amount there is no jail sentence<sup>14</sup>. This is the harsh truth, because usually those who are victims of scams are the poorest – those who go to the police and ask “how do you pay”, those who don’t know how to read or write and who can be easily scammed because of that” (Interview with an inhabitant from outside Agua de Pajaritos, Huamachuco, March 2014).*

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<sup>13</sup> Nuevo Soles is the Peruvian currency. 500 to 100 Nuevos Soles correspond to approximately 160 to US\$ 320.

<sup>14</sup> Under Peruvian law thefts of goods worth less than 550 Soles don’t lead to a prison sentence.

The Ronda thus functions as a protection mechanism for everyone, even the poorest inhabitants. At the same time it also is a mechanism of social control in the community.

### 5.3 Legitimization through bureaucratic rationality and procedures

Even if the Ronda Urbana is an informal institution, this doesn't mean it doesn't follow rules and procedures in its daily routines. On the contrary, the Ronda of Agua de Pajaritos is well organized with a detailed code of conduct, the rules of which are inspired by those prescribed by law for the Juntas Vecinales and the Rondas Campesinas. The adoption of explicit rules and procedures serves the Ronda, on the one hand, to organize its members' activities, and on the other hand, to protect the population from arbitrary actions on behalf of its members. Moreover, the officiality of its language and procedures makes the Ronda appear trustworthy in the eyes of the local population, which is used to legalistic notions of rule of law. Hence, the use of state-like rhetoric is a tool not just for communicating with the local population but also the state, making the Ronda a legitimize actor for both<sup>15</sup>.

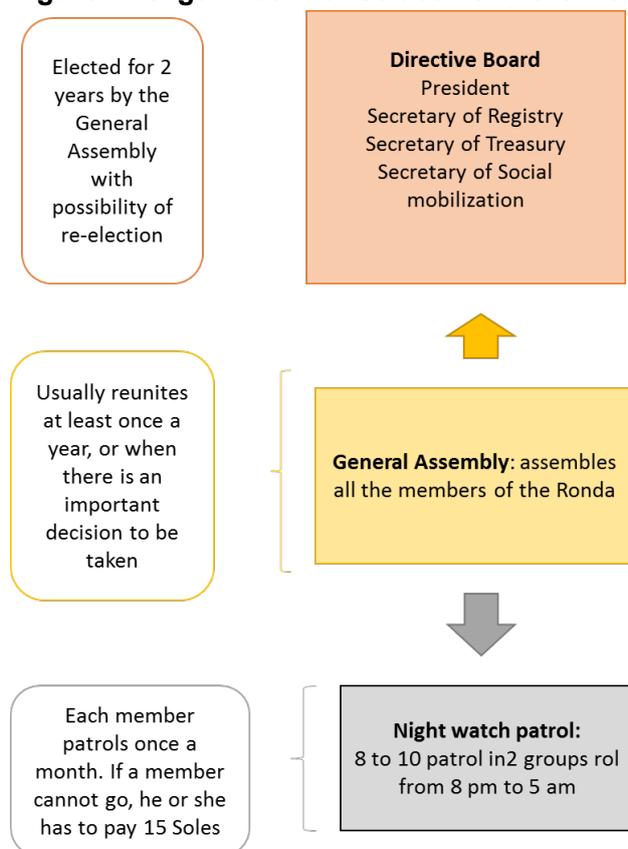
With respect to its internal functioning, the Ronda is organized on the basis of participation and representation. The General Assembly of Agua de Pajaritos' Ronda has almost 500 members, all of whom have registered voluntarily. Each member has one vote in what is called the General Assembly. As is shown in Figure 4 below, the General Assembly takes all relevant decisions on behalf of the organization, including the approval of the most important activity, the night patrol schedule, and the election of the executive organ, the so-called Executive Board.

Approving the night patrol schedule is very important because night patrols represent the main activity of the Ronda. The schedule details the duties of each member and officialises them by noting them in a document that can be consulted by each member. As one of the Ronderos explained:

*“Of course here everything is based on the schedule. Here we know how to organize ourselves. It's not like I want to patrol tonight and then I go out, or that I can go out for watch any day I want. Here, every two months each family has to send one member to patrol and the night patrol decides which route to take. In many cases, people have troubles to patrol one specific night. But if I can't go out; then I have to pay my share of 15 Nuevos Soles to pay another neighbor who goes out to patrol that night. And when there is an opportunity, I can also replace someone who cannot go out for patrolling” (Interview with a Rondero from Agua de Pajaritos, Huamachuco, March 2014).*

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<sup>15</sup> See also Goldstein, 2003 and Hoffman & Kirk, 2013.

**Figure 4: Organizational Structure of the Ronda Urbana in Huamachuco**

**Source:** Elaborated by the author.

The members of the Executive Board are elected for a period of two years and can be re-elected. The most important positions on the Board are those of the President and Vice-President. They not only represent the Ronda in meetings with the other actors of the local system of public security but also coordinate the Ronda's work with that of the other local security actors. While the Secretary of Registry is responsible for recording all decisions taken by the Ronda as well as the book of registration, the Secretary of Treasury is in charge of the administration of resources. The Secretary of Social Mobilization and Discipline in turn is responsible for communicating with the Ronderos and monitoring the night patrol schedule.

So, when inhabitants join the Ronda, they know how the organization works, and which sanctions to expect if they do not follow the organization's rules. What's more, the rules also provide for the possibility to sanction the members of the Executive Board in cases of problems or wrongdoing. The General Assembly can thus revoke its members' mandates. In the past the rules guaranteed that the institution as such didn't suffer much although there were cases of infighting among some of the former members of the Executive Board.

Another important aspect that helps the Ronda garner public support and legitimacy is the use of bureaucratic procedures imitating state procedures. These procedures, as already mentioned, not only protect the inhabitants against arbitrary actions by members of the Ronda, but also convey an image of officiality. For instance, the use of notifications, subpoena and conciliation techniques, as well as the recording of complaints in a minute book all give the impression that the Ronda is at least as transparent as the state authorities are. Furthermore, in some cases the Ronda even manages to make parties in conflict reach an understanding, which then is made official through the signing of an agreement. These agreements serve as a guarantee for the victim in case the perpetrator doesn't honor what the two parties agreed on. If this happens the victim can ask the Ronda to intervene again, but more emphatically. For example, one inhabitant explained:

*"I had a problem involving a scam over 9000 [Nuevos] Soles, so I went to the Committee [of the Ronda Urbana]. They proceeded to summon the woman who had cheated on me, but my local Ronda didn't want to subpoena her. However, the Ronda Central did. Then we sat face to face and she agreed that she was going to pay me 4000 [Nuevos Soles] in the next 3 months, and then 5000 [Nuevos Soles] more after 4 months" (Interview with an inhabitant from Agua de Pajaritos, Huamachuco, March 2014).*

However, while the fact that people can count on the Ronda to take action has benefited the organization, in some cases, as in the one referred to above, it has also proven to be a source of criticism. Thus when Ronderos, for whatever reason, don't want to apply the rules or when they aren't able to enforce them, people feel frustrated.

Nevertheless, all of the strategies described above have had a positive effect on people's attitudes to the Ronda. The next section examines their response to these legitimization strategies.

## **6. Perceived Legitimacy and Public Support for the Ronda**

Whether an institution or organization enjoys legitimacy can be evaluated on the basis of attitudes and beliefs that people have about it and its actions (Schmelze, 2011), analysis of these attitudes and beliefs indicates where an organization stands in its legitimization process. It also suggests which strategies people respond to, be it positively or negatively. In the case of the Ronda Urbana, it is necessary to look both into local inhabitants' direct as well as their indirect responses.

### **6.1 Direct citizens' participation**

One of the first things that stands out in the case of Agua de Pajaritos is that the level of direct participation is high. When walking around the ten blocks of the neighborhood, one could observe that almost every house had a sticker with a little bird on the door, indicating membership of the Ronda.

Inhabitants actively participated in night patrols and families organized themselves in order not to miss their shifts. As one of the Ronderos declared:

*“All the neighbors go out – we all go patrolling. At least one member of each family has to go out when it’s their turn. Usually, it’s women that go out, because men have to work. But everybody goes” (Interview with a Rondero from Agua de Pajaritos, Huamachuco, March 2014).*

In fact, the Executive Board only had to sanction (e.g. fine) members for not fulfilling their duties in a very few cases. The inhabitants of Agua de Pajaritos strongly identify with the Ronda and speak about it as “our Ronda.” Thus, there is a strong sense of belonging and identity created around the organization. Inhabitants not only consider the Ronda to be part of the neighborhood, they also consider their participation in the Ronda as one of the activities that make them feel they belong to the community.

Besides participating in night patrols, local inhabitants also participate in the Ronda’s fundraising activities. Thus, they run raffles, sell food and do community work. They also make direct donations to ensure that the Ronda has a minimum of resources to buy ponchos or whistles for those patrolling at night. Even if the donations don’t represent a lot of money in absolute figures, they do represent a major expense for the members, who often earn less than the minimum wage. Yet, the local inhabitants willingly engage in these activities, showing not only their support for the organization but also demonstrating how important its activities are for them.

## **6.2 Indirect citizens’ support**

Given that in the past the Ronda was accused of committing abuses, one might think that support for the Ronda would not be widespread. However, inhabitants of other neighborhoods of Huamachuco also approve of the Ronda and acknowledge their role as a provider of security:

*“Before, they beat people, but after the complaints [judicial complaints about the Ronda and judicial prosecution], they stopped. Now they have a security role” (Interview with an inhabitant from outside Agua de Pajaritos, Huamachuco, March 2014).*

However, when assessing these inhabitants' perceptions of the Ronda, one needs to take into account the fact that people make a clear distinction between Rondas Campesinas and Rondas Urbanas. Thus, excessive use of force for example is associated more with Rondas Campesinas than with Rondas Urbanas:

*“Before, Rondas Campesinas were different. When they found someone stealing, they beat them, exposed them in public places and made them return what he [the alleged criminal] had stolen or forced him to work until he had paid his debt to the community. Now, in the city, it has changed” (Interview with an inhabitant from outside Agua de Pajaritos, Huamachuco, March 2014).*

While in many of the local inhabitants' testimonies, the Rondas Campesina are seen as ignorant and cruel, the Ronda Urbanas are seen as having adapted their methods, but using less force. However, this change in methods didn't take place instantly, as Ronderos resisted it and the people demand a “strong” response to crime. This kind of response, which usually entails physical punishments, is linked to a desire for compensation and justice. In the eyes of many, proper procedures and the rule of law are a “waste of time” that impede the efficient delivery of justice and thus simply benefit the criminals. In fact, some of the most reputable Juntas Vecinales are known for physically punishing criminal suspects:

*“There are committees where they do beat strongly and they take off their shoes [as a punishment], for example in Fátima or nine de Octubre [Juntas Vecinales]. Those are strong committees. If you have a complicated case, you send it there” (Interview with an inhabitant from Agua de Pajaritos, Huamachuco, March 2014).*

As the popularity of these Juntas Vecinales shows, inhabitants aren't per se against the use of force. Rather, they support a case-to-case approach in order to “get things done”—something the Ronda can't always afford because it is under the close scrutiny of the state authorities. As a Rondero acknowledged:

*“The Ronda Campesina administers justice as it should be done, i.e. very strongly. We cannot, because the authorities are close. We have the police and the public prosecutor watching us and we know that we cannot be excessive” (Interview with a Rondero from Agua de Pajaritos, Huamachuco, March 2014).*

Besides the Ronda's inability to “administer justice strongly” because of state surveillance, there also is a new discourse on the rule of law and respect for human rights developing in

Huamachuco. Thus, parts of the population are not willing to tolerate the use of violence by the Ronda anymore.

Regardless of these critical voices, however, the Ronda enjoys a rather high degree of popular support for another reason: its trustworthiness. Interviewees repeatedly declared that they trusted the Ronda more than the official authorities when it came to their daily problems. Although this feeling needs to be seen in the context of the cases the Ronda deals with (mainly minor criminal offenses) and thus doesn't necessarily mean that people don't trust the authorities, the image of the Ronda is still very positive. It's not uncommon to hear that *"the Rondas are the ones who bring security"* or that *"Ronderos are more reliable and accessible than the police."* This feeling has also an impact on the public support that the Ronda has among Huamachuco's general populace. When the Ronda was prosecuted, people took to the streets to denounce the corruption of public authorities and to defend the Ronda. As one inhabitant put it:

*"All Huamachuco supports the Ronda, which is why – when charges were levelled against them – everyone went out and demanded the expulsion of the Public Prosecutor"*  
(Interview with an inhabitant from Agua de Pajaritos, Huamachuco, March 2014).

However, while public support is widespread, it is not universal. Thus, in some cases, the inhabitants who protested did so because they feared the Ronda's reaction. This was observed especially during interviews with inhabitants from neighborhoods where the Ronda *didn't* operate. At the same time, the population supported the Ronda and approved of their participation in a government sponsored dialogue forum on security and development in the province of Sánchez Carrión.

### **6.3 Ambiguities and criticisms**

As has already been mentioned, despite the many different manifestations of public support for the Ronda, its actions give rise to a certain number of criticisms. These center on three main aspects: first, the way they intervene, second, the conception of justice and, third, problems within the Ronda's leadership.

The first and the second aspect are interrelated. Thus, some inhabitants who recently arrived in Huamachuco don't understand why an institution other than the police has the right to enforce the law, and why they should obey them. These people become even more skeptical when the use of force and physical punishments is mentioned. This perception is shared, for example, by those employed in stores in the commercial areas of the district, who usually do not come from Huamachuco. Thus, a store clerk and local entrepreneur said:

*“When I have a problem I call the police. There’s a number you can call. I would call the police or the Serenazgo. Who else could I call? They are the authorities” (Interview with an inhabitant from outside Agua de Pajaritos, Huamachuco, March 2014).*

What these various views highlight is the fact that, with the urbanization of Huamachuco, the Ronda is confronted with other conceptions of justice and policing than those held especially by long-term inhabitants. Urbanization thus comes with what Pérez-Oriol (1996) calls new “urban tribes” with different values, rituals and ways of seeing violence.

The third criticism the Ronda face, relates to the problems they have had with their leadership. As some Ronderos explained, several of the Ronda’s leaders were accused of embezzling money and of pursuing a political agenda. This led to a weakening of the organization and the dissolution of some neighborhood committees.

As a reaction to these allegations, after the election of a new Executive Board at the district level in December 2013, the Ronda was restructured. This Board began to strengthen neighborhood committees and people responded in a favorable way to new Board members. However, even if people reacted positively to these changes, it was still too early – at the time of writing – to assess the damage this problem is that may have inflicted on the organization.

## 7. Conclusion

When one reflects on the Ronda as security actors, it is necessary to take the local system of public security in which they operate into account. There are several institutions that provide security in Huamachuco. The existence of these institutions is linked to both a lack of capacity on the side of the state and a willingness on the side of the local population to get involved in providing security.

As has also been shown in this paper, each of the institutions has a clearly defined role. Consequently, there is a division of labor between them. On the one hand, this division of labor is based on the nature of the crimes committed. When these don't involve physical violence (e.g. in cases of petty theft or family problems) and they are committed by local people, the inhabitants seek the help of a community-based organization such as the Ronda or Junta Vecinal. However, when the crime involves violence or a legal investigation is requested (e.g. in cases of murder, rape, armed robbery, etc.), inhabitants and community-based institutions (such as the Ronda) pass the matter on to the authorities.

The other criterion on which the division of labor is based is territory, especially among the community-based institutions. Thus, each institution has a specific area or territory in which it operates. While Juntas Vecinales and the Ronda patrol the town's neighborhoods, Rondas Campesinas patrol the rural areas of the district and, while each institution has its own rules, they coordinate their actions among themselves as well as with the authorities.

Since the Ronda's actions are linked to those of the other actors, it is not possible to reflect on its legitimacy without reflecting on the legitimacy of the other institutions as well. The Ronda's legitimacy is therefore a product of interactions with the population as well as between the Ronda and the other security actors.

With regard to the factors that contribute to legitimizing the Ronda, they make use of a range of strategies to gain legitimacy. One strategy consists of tapping into the discourse on citizens' security and the need for more security. This discourse makes the Ronda appear almost as a necessity.

This strategy is based on fear of crime (Skogan, 1989) and thus reveals the need to explore what fear of crime means in the context of urban transition in countries in the Global South. It is not only crime that is feared, but also social disorder, especially in public places. So the Ronda is an institution that sees its wider mission as safeguarding Huamachuco's inhabitants.

Another strategy that the Ronda uses to legitimize itself is its effectiveness. The Ronda is perceived as more effective because it responds to problems that are close to the population's security concerns. Not only do Ronderos respond rapidly; they also often arrange compensation for victims and immediately punish perpetrators. In some ways, their

results-based legitimacy is difficult to compare with that of the public authorities, because they occupy a specific niche within crime fighting in Peru. Notwithstanding this, the Ronda uses state-like language and procedures to strengthen its legitimacy.

People respond to these legitimization strategies by directly or indirectly supporting the organization. Thus, inhabitants are actively involved in the Ronda and feel at home with it. At the same time the image of the organization and its actions are also important when assessing public support for the Ronda. A positive image makes it easier to get access to resources and thus support from public authorities. It allows them to become a legitimate provider of security and thus be accepted by the other actors within the security system. However, while the image of the Ronda is very positive among long-term inhabitants of the district, those who had settled there more recently had quite some reservations about them. In addition, manifestations of public support were tempered by the participation of people who fear the Ronda more than they support them.

Nevertheless, the Ronda not only fills a void in the security system; it also fulfils an important function. As long as it pursues the same goal as the system – providing security and maintaining social order – the inhabitants, and even the authorities, are willing to give it a certain degree of room for maneuver. Yet, at the same time, there are clearly limits to its actions and these limits shift constantly. At the time of writing they concerned the excessive use of force toward what are considered to be vulnerable people (e.g. older people and those who are disabled or handicapped) or direct confrontations with state authorities. When the Ronderos exceed these limits, the system turns against them, pursuing them as criminals.

Thus, some questions arise concerning the future of the Ronda, and in general the functioning of the local system of public security. What is the role of the state when responsibility for providing security is transferred at the local level? How can local actors be controlled when the lack of capacity of the state is one of the reasons for their emergence? How can the accountability of these non-state actors be ensured? Are there perhaps other actors who could become part of the system?

Huamachuco is a city in transition, not only from the point of view of its urban development, but also from an economic and social point of view. Many of the people I have interviewed in this study thus have a unique opportunity to establish themselves as legitimate security actors.

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