

ABSTRACT

Conceptualizing the Notion of Citizen Participation in the Citizen Security Framework of Countries Facing High Levels of Crime and Violence: The Cases of Trinidad and Tobago and El Salvador

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The concept of citizen participation has grown in appeal in the context of public security. This has become evident in the Citizen Security framework, which advances active citizenship as one of its fundamental ideas and as result, the literature has seen a meteoric explosion of citizen participation discourse which reframes the citizen as a partner, co-producer and co-author of policy rather than a mere referent object, recipient and consumer of security. A number of studies have examined the notion of citizen participation in terms of its impact on public policy, state-society relations, the perception of insecurity, and crime prevention. However, this study argues that the concept remains undertheorized in the Citizen Security literature; primarily as it relates to articulating how states understand citizen participation, what role citizens play, and how citizen participation is mobilized and maintained, and as a result, seeks to answer the research question: How do States Facing High Levels of Crime and Violence Conceptualize Citizen Participation in the Citizen Security Framework? Consequently, the study makes an empirical contribution to the citizen security literature by drawing from the insights of security actors in Trinidad and Tobago and El Salvador on the assumption that how citizen participation is defined depends on who is doing the defining and the context within which participation is to occur. The conceptual framework also makes a theoretical contribution by employing key concepts in Securitization, Citizenship and Participation theories to explicate how the citizen is situated and the intrinsic role the citizen plays in public security. The findings revealed citizen participation as being understood under a framework of Responsible Citizenship in which civic responsibility is said to be eroding as a result of the state-society dynamic which situates the citizen as a recipient of policy, and where citizens are mobilized to participate through the use of negative incentives, which further erode civic responsibility.

Keywords: Ashaki Dore; Citizen Security; Responsible Citizenship; Citizen Participation; Trinidad and Tobago; El Salvador.