

Overview of Results

MARGIN project – Tackle Insecurity in Marginalized Areas

Grant Agreement no.: 653005

Funding Scheme: Coordination and Support Action

Duration of the Project: May 2015 – April 2017

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About the MARGIN project

Fear of crime and subjective perception of insecurity are among of the most significant social problems in our society. What is more, available data outline a scenario where, despite a decreasing trend in crime, people feel more insecure (De Wever, 2011).

Generally, two reasons are proposed in order to explain this mismatch between crime trends and the perception of insecurity. On the one hand, authors argue that there is a “dark figure” of crime bearing in mind that not all the crimes that take place are reported to or recorded by the police. Because of their nature, some crimes (e.g. domestic or gender-related violence) are often not reported to the police leading to unreliable official statistics. Thus, fear of crime may reflect accurate perceptions of still high and perhaps increasing crime rates. On the other hand, people's feelings of insecurity are affected by many factors that go beyond actual crime rates, including mass media, trust in public institutions, perception of social disorder, etcetera. Crime Victimization Surveys were created precisely to overcome the limitations affecting police statistics and, nowadays, they are widely accepted as important tools to understand crime problems and trends. Ever since the first examples in the 1960s, Crime Victimization Surveys provided a new instrument that, when compared with police records, could disclose the dark figure of crime and enable a more comprehensive assessment of insecurity perception. From this perspective, Crime Victimization Surveys are expected to explore and measure the presumed “true” level of crime since they enable the contrasting of official statistics on crime with self-reported survey data.

Building further on current advances in the field of fear of crime studies, the MARGIN project (2015-2017) established an international environment for knowledge exchange that enabled the identification and analysis of factors influencing public and personal perceptions of insecurity. Taking up the idea of a “smart aggregation” of crime and criminal justice data as defined by Hunt and colleagues (2010), the MARGIN project’s innovative character lied in an approach that allowed for the collection of information about crime while at the same time considering contextual, definitional and methodological differences among EU countries. We have developed a multi-method approach to studying the determinants of people’s perception of insecurity being aware that the mere reading of judicial statistics is not sufficient for an analysis of insecurity if the data aren’t integrated with information on physical, economic and socio-relational characteristics of specific areas.

The first task consisted of comparing two traditional sources used to study insecurity and we have contrasted findings from Crime Victimization Surveys with official police data across the five counties involved in the project’s activities. In addition, the partnership has designed and implemented a new survey (n = 15,428) in order to

address individual and space-based determinants of the perception of insecurity that has been poorly explored up-to-present.

It is equally important to point out that the MARGIN project focused its attention on studying insecurity in urban contexts. Several reasons justified this approach. At the broadest level, past research has demonstrated that people living in cities are more likely to be victims of crime than those in rural areas (Apraxine *et al.*, 2012; Brunton-Smith and Jackson, 2012; Dixon *et al.*, 2006). At the same time, it is widely recognized that the world is affected by increasing urbanization and, according to demographic forecasts of the United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat), by 2050, 7 out of 10 people will live in cities and towns. As such, this project was oriented toward the creation of a link between the spatial and the social dimension of insecurity.

In an attempt to provide a deeper understanding of insecurity issues and explore how perceptions of insecurity might be conceptualised from the point of view of key socio-economic (e.g. income, cultural capital, ethnic background) and socio-geographic dimensions (i.e. neighbourhood effects), the MARGIN project collected information about the unequal impact of crime and victimization among different social groups. The underlying hypothesis here was that public perceptions of insecurity could be explained by different socio-economic and socio-geographic conditions that affect subjective perception. Our project considers people's different backgrounds as an essential element that shapes not only individual feelings of insecurity, but also the various ways in which they use public spaces.

In addition to the above-mentioned quantitative data collection, the project also implemented anthropological fieldwork in 10 neighbourhoods of 5 European cities (Barcelona, Budapest, London, Milan and Paris), during which around 500 participants living in the selected neighbourhoods have been involved. Three data collection instruments have been used: in-depth interviews (n = 50), participant observation (over 6 months, 5 days per week) and focus groups (n = 10).

Over the course of the last two years, the MARGIN project provided evidence-based knowledge that allowed for a deeper understanding of the root causes of insecurity in contemporary societies. The results of the multi-method approach implemented in five EU countries show that insecurity arises as a very heterogeneous concept that needs to be considered in conjunction with a range of other aspects including personal wellbeing, social integration and the characteristics of places in which people live.

Revealing the “true” level of crime and carrying out a cross-country analysis of factors affecting people’s perception of insecurity

Since the beginning of the project the partnership identified a common interest in filling a gap present in the literature referring to the lack of research allowing for a comparative analysis between two kinds of sources that have been studied separately: police recorded crime statistics (hereinafter referred to as PRC) and figures on perception of insecurity gathered through crime victimization surveys (hereinafter referred to as CVS). Even if it has been proven that Crime Victimization Surveys and police statistics “both offer valuable and unique information about crime problems” (van Dijk *et al.*, 2007, p. 8), comparisons between these two sources are challenging due to the fact that they address similar problems in different ways. In the case of the MARGIN project such comparison was even more challenging considering that this task involved five different EU countries (Spain, France, Italy, Hungary and the UK) with highly divergent national systems of police figures and victimisation surveys.

In an attempt to reduce this complexity and offer a framework for the standardization of security-related information across the five EU countries, the partnership defined a set of categories for the harmonization of PRC and CVS data collection at the national level. More information on this process is publicly available¹. The expected result during this phase was the creation of a database, labelled *MARGIN Database for Smart Aggregation*, in order to achieve the following objectives:

1. Analysing crime trends by exploring PRC statistics;
2. Analysing victimization rates by exploring CVS data;
3. Comparing PRC and CVS in order to reveal the so-called “dark figure” of crime representing the proportionate difference between the CVS incident rate and the PRC incident rate, which is to say the amount of crimes that are not reported to the police;
4. Identifying correlations between respondents’ profiles and their perception of insecurity;
5. Carrying out a desk-based review of the questionnaires used to carry out CVS at the national level with the objective of providing some guidance for future research in the field of victimization studies.

In the case of the PRC data, the main issue was that some data were too general while others very detailed (vehicle theft versus bicycle theft, motorcycle theft, car theft, etcetera). The sources of PRC data were the databases of the police forces responsible for public safety in the five countries involved in the Consortium, with a primary focus on the local police in five cities: Barcelona, Budapest, London, Milan and Paris.

¹ <http://marginproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/MARGIN-database.pdf>

With regard to CVS data, one difficulty encountered was that each of the five surveys addressed² has specific conceptions and definitions of insecurity (for instance, feeling of safety at home or in the neighbourhood, fear of being the victim of a crime, risk assessment, worry about criminality in general, fear of walking alone at night, etcetera). Furthermore, bearing in mind that one of the proposed objectives was to analyse which respondents' characteristics may be related with higher levels of perceived insecurity, it suddenly appeared clear that the availability of variables relating to demographic, socio-economic and household characteristics of respondents was uneven across the five surveys. Availability of data on victimization was also quite unequal across the five geographic areas. Tables 1 to 3 provide an overview of data availability across the CVS analysed.

Table 1. Availability of variables relating to demographic and socio-economic characteristics of respondents in the five CVS analysed

	England/ Wales	Italy	France	Catalonia	Hungary
Sex	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Age	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Place of birth	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
Nationality	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Employment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Income	✓	X	X	✓	✓
Education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Health	✓	X	X	X	X
Ethnic features	✓	X	X	X	X

Table 2. Availability of variables relating to household characteristics of respondents in the five CVS analysed

	England/ Wales	Italy	France	Catalonia	Hungary
Number of children	✓	X	✓	X	X
Number of adults	✓	X	✓	X	X
Household size	X	X	X	✓	✓
Tenancy regime	✓	✓	X	X	✓

² The surveys analysed were: *Crime Survey for England and Wales* (UK); *Sicurezza dei cittadini* (Italy); *Cadre de vie et sécurité* (France); *Encuesta de Seguridad Pública de Cataluña* (Spain); *Victims and Opinion Research* (Hungary).

Table 3. Availability of variables relating to victimization in the five CVS analysed

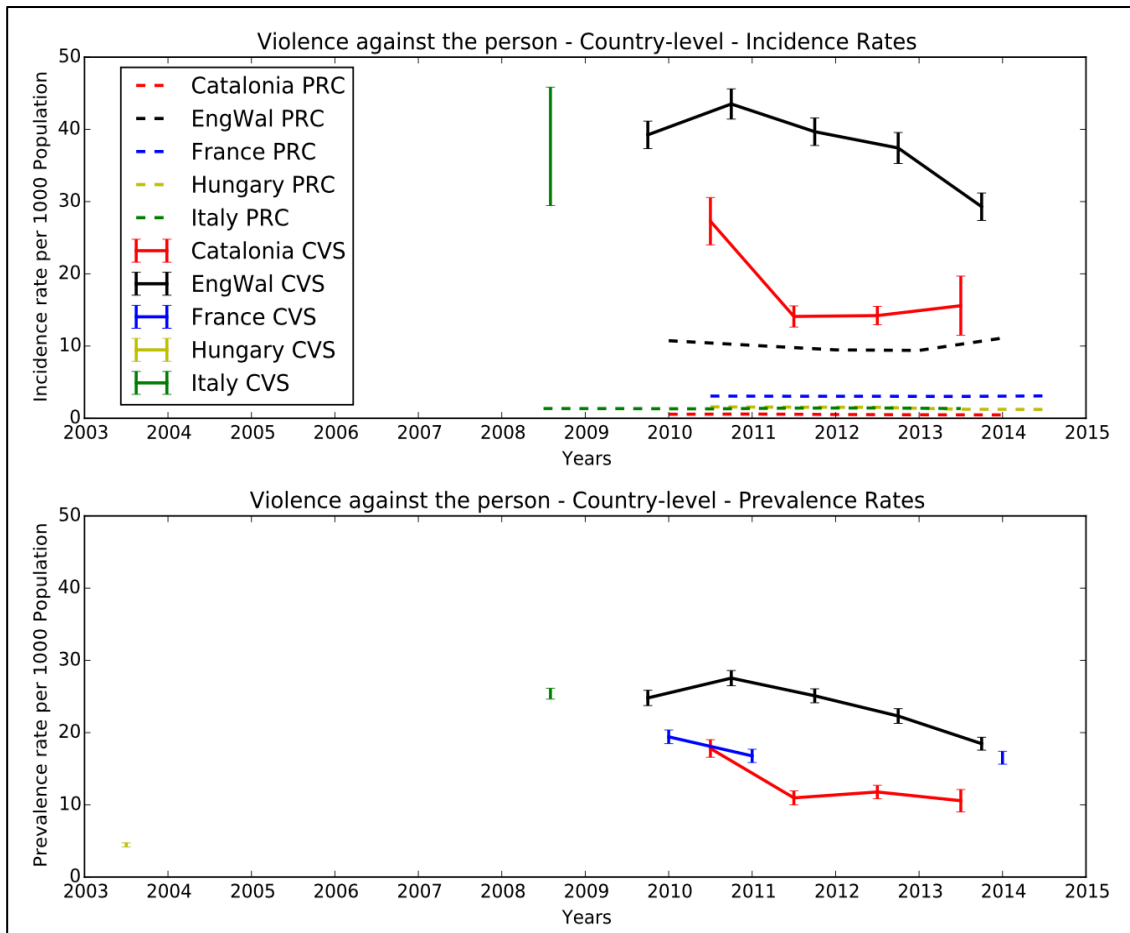
	England/ Wales	Italy	France	Catalonia	Hungary
Robbery	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Theft	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Burglary	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Threats	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
Vandalism	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Vehicle theft	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗

Given the heterogeneity of the information gathered through PRC and CVS, the approach chosen was expected to be as broad as possible, in order to counterbalance data heterogeneity and the different national traditions in assessing insecurity. Therefore, it was deemed necessary to not restrain the data collection to common CVS and PRC data, but to instead gather a wider scope of data.

Comparing levels of crime across countries is problematic due to the different definitions of crime and the way in which those definitions are recorded by police. Despite this difficulty, it was possible to analyse the amount of crime contained in the MARGIN database by considering just those crimes that are consistently defined across the study areas. We chose eight crime types where it was possible to identify consistencies in definitions and recording practices. Four of these were personal crimes and committed against individuals (violence against the person, harassment and threats, street robbery and theft from the person) and four were property crimes, more often committed against a household rather than a particular victim (burglary in a dwelling, vehicle related thefts, bicycle thefts and criminal damage). The results of our analysis show a drop in the total volume of violent crime (see Figure 1), which is consistent with the findings of a large number of studies at an international level (for example: Van Dijk *et al.*, 2005; Tseloni *et al.*, 2010). Similar trends could be depicted for property crimes over the time period for which we have data available. A detailed account of the statistical analysis performed and the results obtained are publicly available³.

³ http://marginproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Conceptual-report_MARGIN.pdf

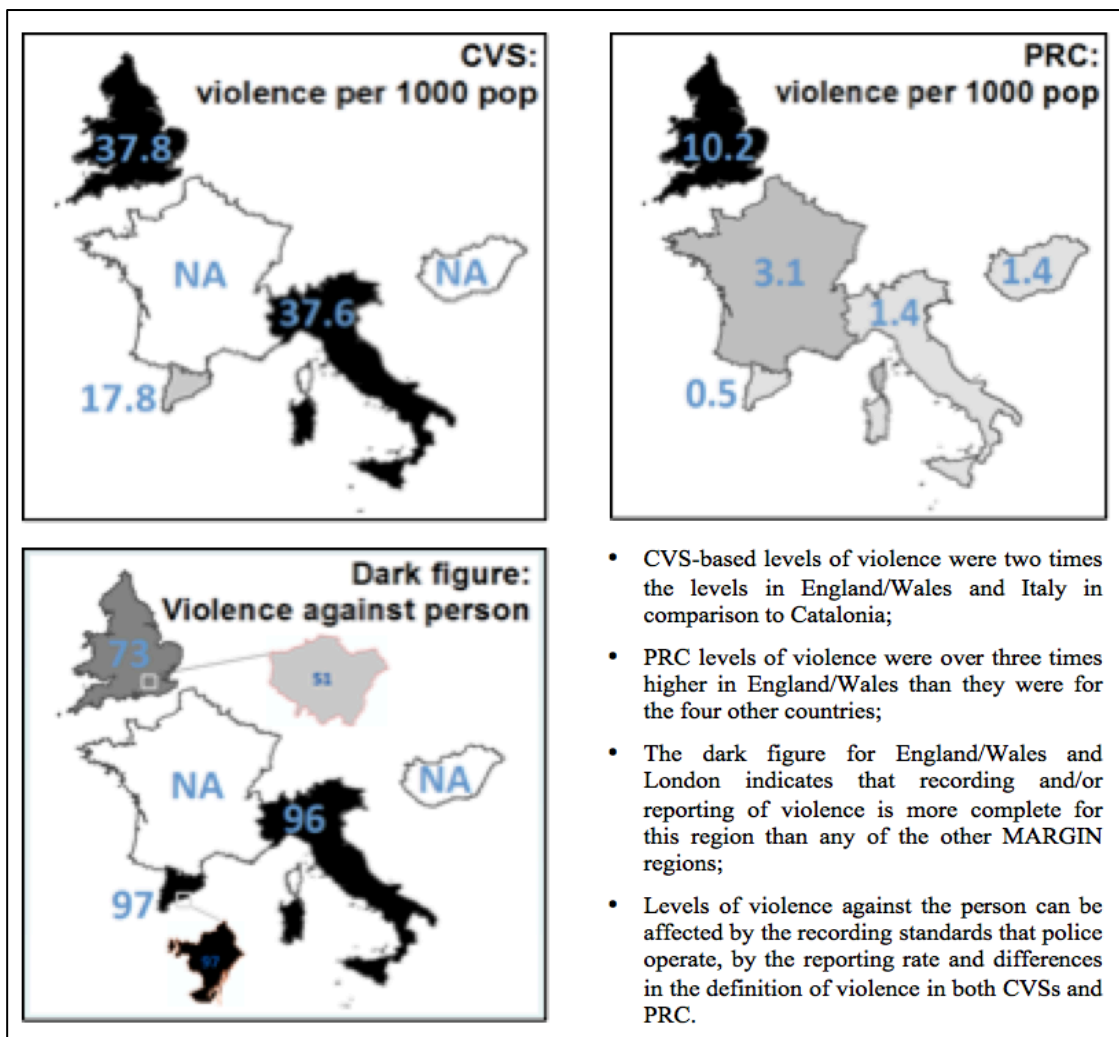
Figure 1. Incidence and prevalence rates for violence against the person



The dark figure of crime for each crime category was also calculated by subtracting the PRC incident rate from the CVS incident rate and dividing by the CVS incident rate. The dark figure of crime was, therefore, represented as the proportionate difference between the CVS incident rate and the PRC incident rate. Keeping a focus on violence against the person, Figure 2 shows the dark figure for this particular crime category. Detailed information on the other crime category addressed is publicly available⁴.

⁴ http://marginproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Cartography_MARGIN.pdf

Figure 2. Violence against the person across the areas involved in MARGIN



There are a range of questions asked of respondents in the CVS relating to feelings of safety, neighbourhood crime perceptions, fear of and worry about victimisation, and the trust in police, all of which can have an impact on an individual's perception of insecurity. We turned to a series of regression models that enabled us to test a range of demographic and socio-economic variables in terms of their association with different aspects of perceived insecurity. It was found that:

- Being female is a strong indicator of insecurity relating to feelings of safety, fear of crime, and crime perceptions;
- Younger people are less trusting in police and tend to perceive higher levels of crime, yet typically feel safer in their neighbourhood;
- Unemployed people are more likely to feel unsafe in their neighbourhood and home;
- Being a student is a consistent indicator of rating the police highly;

- Those born outside the country where the survey takes place are more likely to rate the police highly;
- Degree educated respondents tend to feel safer yet are often concerned about crime levels (though there is no evidence that this concern affects their habits);
- Single people tend to rate the police highly and have fewer concerns about crime than those living with partners;
- Living in a house or owning a house is associated with feeling safer in the neighbourhood;
- People who have spent longer in the neighbourhood are more likely to have high levels of perceived insecurity across all aspects considered;
- In the UK, poor health is a strong indicator of all forms of perceived insecurity but this variable is not measured elsewhere;
- Being a victim of crime is associated with all forms of insecurity.

Improving current survey-based measures and exploring the incidence of social causes on people's perception of insecurity

In spite of these encouraging findings, it was also evident that different indicators are associated in different ways with different aspects of perceived insecurity. The results of the desk-based review indicated that there were two types of variables whose availability would have substantially improved the insights that could have been obtained. First, there was a lack of independent variables containing information about the survey respondents, which were desirable in order to test a number of hypotheses concerning perceived insecurity. In this regard, Killias (2010) argues that the inclusion of explanatory variables that help develop an understanding of variations in terms of perceived insecurity is the only way to raise the awareness of policymakers. This approach to insecurity is the key to allowing policymakers to better cope with crime-related issues as well as to predict and influence future trends. Second, there was a lack of consistency and comprehensiveness in the range of possible measures of perceived insecurity available in the surveys.

In order to overcome these gaps, the analysis of the five surveys has been used to inform the design of a new thematic survey enabling a comprehensive assessment of the root causes of citizens' perception of insecurity. A panel of 12 international experts on the topic of insecurity assessment has been involved in an iterative design process in order to define a number of indicators enabling the assessment of insecurity among different social groups. In particular, the Delphi method has been chosen as the most appropriate technique in order to obtain a reliable consensus among the participants included in the panel of international experts.

In practical terms, the implementation of the Delphi method consists of a structured communication process by using a series of questionnaires to collect data from a panel of selected subjects. After each of them, the so-called Delphi coordinator provides an anonymous summary of the experts' positions. The feedback process encourages the panellists to reconsider their initial positions, generate additional insights and clarify the information developed within the previous round. Then, the results are used to inform the subsequent rounds. As such, over the course of multiple iterations the experts are expected to become more problem-solving oriented.

The Delphi method implemented in the framework of the MARGIN project has been structured into three rounds online plus a fourth round carried out during a face-to-face meeting, which objective was to reach agreement among the 12 experts on the final structure of a new thematic questionnaire in the field of victimization studies. The resulting questionnaire, titled *MARGIN Questionnaire on Perception of Insecurity*, is publicly available in six languages⁵. The final draft of the questionnaire consisted of a module including a set of items enabling the assessment of how demographic, socio-economic and socio-geographic variables might influence public and personal perceptions of insecurity. A further module included standardized questions on victimization and perceptions of insecurity derived from existing Crime and Victimization Surveys.

The MARGIN Questionnaire on Perception of Insecurity has been used to carry out four small-scale surveys in the cities of Barcelona, Budapest, Paris and London with a total sample of 400 respondents. Furthermore, a large-scale survey in Italy (n = 15,428) has been also implemented. Italy was chosen for this trial because this country was the one with less tradition in victimization surveys across the five countries involved in the project.

Consistent with previous research, sex and age were shown to be strong predictors of feelings of insecurity. At the same time, the results demonstrated a strong relationship between deprived social conditions, higher levels of perceived disorder and subjective insecurity. The implementation of Structural Equation Modeling to analyse the survey revealed the incidence of health and financial precariousness) and self-perceived stigmatization on people's perception of insecurity. In particular, our findings support the idea that people's concerns about the deterioration of their health and/or economic situation coupled with the perception of being looked out upon by others due to religious beliefs, sexual orientation or ethnic background may, in turn, increase people's feeling of insecurity. As such, subjective insecurity appears to be increasingly associated with social causes or, paraphrasing Bauman (1999), insecurity is nowadays

⁵ <http://marginproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/MARGIN-questionnaire-on-perception-of-insecurity.pdf>

an “umbrella sentiment people develop to disguise their high levels of social and economic insecurity” (as reported by Vieno, Roccato and Russo, 2013, p. 521).

The encouraging results emerging from the analysis of the large-scale survey in Italy support the need of improving current survey-based measures of fear of crime and the perception of insecurity. A number of possible avenues and theoretical perspectives for further research, each of which is considered an important factor in influencing feelings of insecurity, should be considered. Our guidance for future research can be summarized as follows:

1. The first recommendation would be to include more independent variables in victimization surveys in order to measure fear of crime and its correlation with sociological variables. Our results clearly endorse a multifaceted conceptualization of subjective insecurity while, at the same time, indicating that social exclusion and socially constructed anxieties influence people’s perception of insecurity;
2. Fear of crime – and, by extension, feelings of insecurity – is a dynamic phenomenon, being influenced by particular locations, times and activities (Solymosi, Bowers and Fujiyama, 2015). Future research should explore the link between times and places where victimization and feelings of insecurity are more likely to occur, and to potential policies that might help reduce this risk;
3. The role of social networks in people’s beliefs and feelings of insecurity needs to be further explored. The indirect victimization hypothesis suggests for instance that feelings of insecurity can increase when close friends and family members experience victimization. Conversely, some studies have demonstrated that social networks and informal social ties can have a positive effect on the fear of crime;
4. Cybercrime is an emerging crime type whose relationship with fear and insecurity has to date been understudied. This is an important question because it is not clear that many of our existing theories regarding fear of crime – such as vulnerability or neighbourhood effects – also hold in the context of cyber-victimization. Furthermore, very little research has been conducted on the influence of marginalized communities on the relationship between cybercrime and perceived insecurity;
5. Finally, we also need to further explore how different country contexts affect people’s assessment of their risks or their likeliness to become anxious about victimization. As demonstrated by our analysis, when people move country they are not necessarily going to experience security issues in the same way as those born there. If these variations remain after controlling for other influencing factors, then it is reasonable to assume that there are potentially cultural differences between countries in terms of what is and isn’t a concern and what is and isn’t acceptable.

Multi-method approaches to studying insecurity and the involvement of citizens in security research

The overwhelming tendency to research fear of crime and perceived insecurity using quantitative survey methods is a key deficit for this area of study, and may be resulting in a gross misrepresentation of crime fear as a major social problem. As such, the added value of the MARGIN design process lies in the belief that the analysis of the social phenomenon of insecurity has to be integrated with information on the physical, economic and socio-relational characteristics of specific areas. The anthropological fieldwork carried out in the framework of our project was based on a triangulation of qualitative techniques (see Table 4).

Table 4. MARGIN triangulation procedure

Techniques	Topics	Expected outcomes
In-depth interviews	Key informants' understandings of security issues in the neighbourhood.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify main factors affecting insecurity; 2. Select smaller areas within the neighbourhood for participant observation; 3. Gather information about potential gatekeepers in the field;
Participant observation	Relationship between people and space.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Explore lifestyles and their relation to insecurity; 5. Identify main problems in the neighbourhood; 6. Inform the design of focus groups (i.e., identify the needs and expectations of residents regarding public and personal insecurity);
Focus groups	Possible intervention with a view to reducing insecurity.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Discuss and (where possible) agree on solutions allowing for the reduction of insecurity; 8. Transfer results of the project.

Three domains were used to select a sample of neighbourhoods in which subsequent analysis and the implementation of qualitative research has been focused: (1) the incidence rate of residential burglary as the measure for the objective dimension of insecurity; (2) the educational attainment as the proxy measure for perceived insecurity; (3) the measures of socio-geographic insecurity were selected by implementing an *ad hoc* procedure in each specific city. Two neighbourhoods in each city were selected, both with high incidence rates of residential burglary but with opposite characteristics in terms of subjective and socio-geographic insecurities. Accordingly, the selected neighbourhoods were respectively an ideal-type of “affluent” (low perceived insecurity

and low socio-geographic deprivation) and “marginalized” neighbourhoods (high perceived insecurity and high socio-geographic deprivation). A detailed description of the statistical procedure used to select the sample of neighbourhood is publicly available⁶. Table 5 provides the final list of neighbourhoods where the subsequent analysis was carried out.

Table 5. Neighbourhood sample selection

City	Affluent neighbourhoods	Marginalized neighbourhoods
Barcelona	Vila Olímpica del Poblenou	Marina del Prat Vermell
Budapest	Országút	Laposdűlő
London	Primrose Hill	Harlesden and Stonebridge
Milan	Rogoredo	Gratosoglio – Ticinello
Paris	Europe	Danube – Solidarité

Citizens are a fundamental source of information and have been encouraged throughout the whole data collection to give feedback on the work undertaken by public authorities to reduce insecurity in their neighbourhoods. Since citizenship is not monolithic, great emphasis has been put on trying to gather the varying opinions that may emerge in a given urban area. This was the specific objective of the in-depth interviews aimed at collecting information on the problems that affect the selected neighbourhoods, the know-how that citizens deploy in dealing with these problems, and their assessment of public intervention. Then, when conducting the six-month participant observation (between July and December 2016), the research team contrasted the information previously gathered through the interviews by interacting with people in the real-life environments in which they live. The participant observation was particularly concerned with exploring people’s lifestyles, the consequences they have on risk perception, and how people interpret and deal with situations that are seen as threatening.

During the last phase of data collection involving focus groups, the direct involvement of citizens offered a deeper understanding of victimization in a number of selected scenarios (i.e. neighbourhoods) and, what is more, permitted a structured discussion on bottom-up practices that people need to develop in their daily life to cope with insecurity. Addressing the neighbourhood level – and where possible even smaller places – was essential in order to describe the ways that public spaces are used by different groups of people, and to understand the differences – if any – between different social groups and their perceptions of insecurity. This approach was not exclusively intended to produce knowledge for the sake of knowledge. On the contrary, we considered that targeting neighbourhoods (which are the physical spaces in which people live and where determinants of insecurity “take place”) was the only way to

⁶ <http://marginproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Taxonomy.pdf>

develop targeted policies that could generate effective, long-lasting and sustainable results to reduce the risk factors that negatively affect people's perceptions of security.

The research material produced during the fieldwork highlights the incompleteness of a strictly criminological definition of urban insecurity. The relation between objective risks (deviant actions and incivility) and the subjective worries of the citizens has become very complex and controversial. The constant and noteworthy renewal of the socio-demographic composition of the neighbourhoods, the transformation of the economy and the local businesses, the conflicts among people who have different access to public spaces, are all intertwined. They generate a diffuse sensation of lack of control over one's own daily life in the urban settings. The concept of urban safety is actually more complex than typically understood theoretically and politically. Not only does it strictly pertain to public order, law enforcement, crime control, but it also includes notions such as urban, physical and social quality, in other words, the wellbeing in the city and in social relations.

Policy implications arising from the MARGIN project

As stated at the beginning of this document, up-to-date sources in the field of criminology show that despite a decreasing trend of crime at the EU level, people are hugely concerned with crime-related issues. Even though this situation may appear paradoxical, as researchers we are well-placed to formulate some hypotheses that could help explain this trend. It was already known that insecurity is affected by several factors that go beyond actual crime rates. Several studies indicate, for instance, the impact of media on fear (Brighenti, 2012; Cashmore, 2014; García-España *et al.*, 2012; Greer, 2010) as well as the influence that non-criminal episodes such as anti-social behaviours can have on people's perceptions of crime (Sampson and Raudenbush, 2004). Another argument adduced by criminologists is that the crimes that police are aware of do not include all the crimes that effectively take place in a given society (Boivin and Cordeau, 2011; Messner, 1984; Jansson, 2007; Skogan, 1974). Some typologies of offences are clearly underreported (for example, gender and domestic violence), which may generate the "dark figure" of crime as we have shown in our analysis. As a matter of fact, studying insecurity by solely taking into account crime reported to the police actually reduces the focus to a small portion of the problem.

With that in mind, if we now look at the same problem (i.e. the mismatch between crime reality and people's perception of it) from the point of view of policymakers the perspective radically changes, as a declaration by Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel seems to suggest. During a press release on Chicago's 2013 violence reduction, he said: "We are not going to rest until *people feel the reality of these numbers*" [emphasis added].

Paraphrasing these words, what policymakers can do is to try to convince citizens that they are doing a good job in reducing crime and that crime has actually decreased. Though understandable, this attitude is still controversial for at least two reasons: firstly, in most cases policymakers do not have good or sufficient measures of crime rates, which means that they cannot declare with certainty that crime has decreased and secondly, even though crime may have eventually decreased, this does not automatically imply that people will feel safer.

As a result of the above, two conclusions stand out. The first is that researchers and policymakers “speak” different languages, which makes the communication among them difficult. The second is that, in Western societies, where crime and victimization are relatively uncommon events (compared to other parts of the world), fear of crime and the perception of insecurity become a pressing issue as urgent as crime itself. With this in mind, the effort produced in the framework of our project was oriented towards the design and implementation of policies “targeting fear” (Cordner, 2010, p. x) through an in-depth measurement and analysis of the determinants of insecurity. Identifying and analysing factors that may determine variations in terms of perceived insecurity among citizens does not simply mean gathering new knowledge but, more importantly, recognizing a number of risk factors that could be addressed by policymakers in order to tackle insecurity more effectively.

Knowledge-based initiatives to reduce insecurity, such as the MARGIN project, are supported by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) as stated in the *Roadmap to improve the quality and availability of crime statistics at the national and international levels* (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2012). The roadmap encourages, among others measures, “the promotion of a wider implementation of victimization surveys within the scope of official statistics to enhance the knowledge base on crime for the design of effective crime and criminal justice policies and better targeting of crime prevention measures” (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2012, p. 16). At the European level, the joint EC/EU Parliament Communication on *Measuring Crime in the EU* (2012) also stressed that statistics on crime and criminal justice are indispensable tools for developing evidence-based policy at EU level.

In an attempt to foster a total change of how the data and statistics about security are understood and used by policymakers, the results obtained in the framework of the MARGIN project feed into current practices for insecurity assessment and are expected to generate a direct impact on public policies. Drawing from the empirical material collected, urban security emerges as a complex matter that requires diversified actions and tools in order to address the countless number of factors involved. The most important are: the geography of the place, the urban model, the population (residents, commuters, city users, business community), the demographic changes, the cultural and religious differences, community membership and cohesion, the role of the associations,

the concrete opportunity of local policies, the situations that cause discomfort and intolerance. All these elements should be taken into consideration prior to plan and structure social policies.

In general terms, enforcing policies inspired by criminal prosecution – either for prevention or repression – and requiring the reorganization of the methods for controlling the territory cannot remove the original causes that feed and sustain citizens' insecurity. In fact they could produce two equally dangerous effects: the legitimization of the criminal justice system within a purely symbolic dimension, and the privatization of the means pledging the defence of security. Considering security merely in terms of threats emerging from a criminal milieu and consequently implementing policies accordingly, that is repressive, may have negative consequence, such as, in particular, worsening social exclusion. They favour the citizens' security by protecting the "good" citizens (i.e. the included) from the potential threats stemming from the weak segments of society (i.e. the marginalized). These kinds of policies are technocratic means *de facto* aiming at the preservation of the *status quo* of society. The demand for security is merely limited to keep criminality at bay and to privatize the protection of a collective good. By way of examples, we mention the growing business of private security, and citizens' participation to patrols, and the diffusion of neighbourhood watching. These kinds of policies, moreover, undermine rights and freedom in two ways: by limiting the access to "militarized" public spaces, and by erecting gated communities; through processes of victimization and criminalization due to the perpetuation of social exclusion within the weak segment of the population.

It is our belief that addressing these social problems is more urgent than copying with the sense of insecurity that obsesses one part of the population. Local governments should enact political, social and cultural strategies of intervention, rather than just enforcing criminal prosecution. The former meet the needs of citizens' security better than the latter. They deal with security in multidimensional and complex perspectives by acting on the objective causes and aim at empowering the weak groups, facing marginalization and more exclusion. Moreover, they should be concerned about the specificities of each local context to activate forms of social participation. The revitalization of the neighbourhoods and their social life should take place along with the re-claiming of endogenous and community-based forms of social control, the re-claiming of the public spaces.

In a nutshell

To sum up, the following recommendations emerged from the MARGIN project:

1. There is an urgent need to design, pilot and implement new tools in order to address new social problems arising from the economic crisis and restructuring and their impact on people's feeling of insecurity. Under this perspective, the participatory design process (e.g. Delphi method) carried out to design the MARGIN Questionnaire on Perception of Insecurity has proven to be particularly effective to adapt existing survey-based instruments to the specific needs of stakeholders in different social contexts;
2. Despite the fact that mainstream criminology tends to study insecurity by developing quantitative research, for instance through Crime Victimization Surveys, quantitative approaches seem to be limited since they capture only a small portion of the problem. Within the MARGIN project we have tried to overcome this limitation by applying a mixed-method approach which allowed us to investigate the social phenomenon of perceived insecurity through the combination of previously available quantitative data combined with first-hand qualitative data. Developing alternative approaches is crucial to deepen our understanding of the root causes affecting people's perceived insecurity;
3. Our results support the idea that people's perception of insecurity is increasingly linked to social causes. Accordingly, there is the need to extend the semantic scope of the concept of "(in)security" to a series of aspects pertaining to the quality of urban life, especially the social and economic dimensions. Even though the perception of insecurity is related to the occurrences of deviant and delinquent phenomena, it is actually more directly related to social exclusion, changes pertaining to urban and architectural aspects (transformation and/or decaying of structures) as well as the social morphology of the city.

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