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From Social Assistance to Control in Urban Margins: Ambivalent Police Practices in Neoliberal Chile

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O aumento da criminalidade na América Latina ocorreu em paralelo com uma mudança na política policial em territórios. Junto com os processos de militarização e repressão policial, as estratégias de coprodução foram inspiradas pelo policiamento comunitário, mas a articulação de ambos nas margens urbanas foi pouco pesquisada. Em **Da assistência social ao controle nas margens urbanas: Práticas policiais ambivalentes no Chile neoliberal**, nossa hipótese afirma a coexistência e ambivalência da assistência social e de práticas abusivas contra os pobres da cidade. Métodos qualitativos conduzidos em Santiago (Chile) mostram que a política policial envolve ambas as dimensões, fortemente enraizadas em elementos de identidade da tradição militar das forças policiais.

Palavras-chave: policiamento comunitário controle policial, margens urbanas, América Latina, polícia Carabineros

Crime increase in Latin America has occurred in parallel with a change in police policy in territories. Along with the processes of militarization and police repression, strategies of co-production have been inspired by community policing, but the articulation of both in urban margins has been understudied. Our hypothesis affirms the coexistence and ambivalence of both social assistance and abusive practices against the city's poor. Qualitative methods conducted in Santiago, Chile, show police policy involves both dimensions, which are strongly rooted in identity elements of the military tradition of the region's police forces.

Keywords: community policing, police control, urban margins, Latin America, Carabineros police

Introduction[1]

In the last few decades, Latin America has turned into the most violent region in the world (VILALTA, 2020). According to the most recent 2019 report from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) the four countries leading the world in homicide rates (each with well over 40 deaths for every 100,000 inhabitants) can be found in Latin America and the Caribbean. While contrasts in magnitude, frequency, and characterization on a regional and national level are clear, there is one consistent element: violence is concentrated in cities.

This concentration of violence is not random in urban areas, but rather it follows a pattern in certain neighbourhoods, the majority of which suffer from acute conditions of socio-territorial inequality and urban precariousness (ZUBILLAGA, LLORENS and SOUTO, 2019; MANZANO, MOHOR and JIMÉNEZ, 2020). The so-called urban margins are poor urban neighbourhoods characterized by high levels of socio-territorial vulnerability, urban

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precariousness, and high levels of criminal violence where drug trafficking, crime, and violence persist affecting the lives of their inhabitants (ARIAS, 2017; AUYERO, BOURGOIS and SHEPPER-HUGHES, 2015). In those margins the relationship between poverty and violence becomes impossible to ignore (AUYERO and BERTI, 2015).

The presence of urban marginality is a characteristic of all Latin American cities. In Chile, it was calculated in 2017 that 702,000 people who live in urban margins suffered from the hard negative effects of drug trafficking ring activity in neighbourhoods (ATISBA, 2017). The literature confirms the association between criminal violence and precarious conditions of urban quality of life, low levels of citizen participation, and high levels of social and economic vulnerability (OLAVARRÍA and ALLENDE, 2014). Shootings become one of the primary concerns of residents—given that they represent the presence of criminal organizations in the area—, which deepens the distrust between residents as does interpersonal violence (MANZANO, 2009; RUIZ, 2012; LUNEKE, 2016).

In this context, police responses in the urban margins are highly relevant. Since the early 1990s police policies in Chile have demonstrated the need for a change in security strategies in territories where the relationship between residents and police has historically been one of distrust and violence, resulting from police participation in the military dictatorship (HATHAZY, 2013). During this period, Chile was known for its rising crime and fear, which strengthened the citizens' demand for a greater police presence (DAMMERT, 2012). From this point forward, government initiatives were focused on risk management (GARLAND, 2005) as well as strategies inspired by Anglo-Saxon models of community and problem-oriented policing (BONNER, 2014). Government policies, put in place via the Ministry of the Interior and Public Security, sought to involve communities in a joint effort to the manage crime prevention, centred primarily around urban intervention in public spaces (TREBILCOCK and LUNEKE, 2019). To the *Carabineros de Chile*—uniformed national police, in charge of crime control and prevention—the conversations initiated by the democratic government regarding coproduction of security and risk management allowed them to develop new crime prevention initiatives, even in neighbourhoods where their presence was the cause of distrust and suspicion (RISØR and JACOB, 2018).

As a result, the community-police relationship changed, transforming the *Carabineros* into the most trusted institution in the country, albeit with serious deficiencies in the urban margins where many still held a suspicious attitude towards the police. Since 2014, many acts of violence and corruption have impacted the people's trust in the *Carabineros*, but nevertheless, the demand for greater police presence and further development of community-oriented activities remains. However, the impact of the *Carabineros*' human rights violations, made public in the wake of the 2019 social outbreak in Chile, significantly affected the community's perception of the *Carabineros*, demonstrated by high levels of distrust towards the institution (DAMMERT and MALONE, 2020).

Despite this, the demand for police protection persists and many in neighbouring areas continue seek involvement in the activities developed by police within these neighbourhoods.

The urban poor's ambivalent relationship towards the police in Chile is neither unique nor foreign to other contexts and Latin American cities (MÜLLER, 2012). The contact established by police with the population in the urban margins is characterized by the high participation quotas, patronage, and ideological bias (*Idem*, 2010). This ambivalent relationship interweaves with the policies that the police enforces in these territories and has been little analysed so far. This article seeks to generate empirical knowledge about this relationship in urban margins from the case of *Carabineros*.

The 'Carabineros de Chile' and their focus on community

The *Carabineros* are one of two national police forces in the country. They are characterized by having a hierarchical structure like that of a military and an institutional mission centred on maintaining public order and security. Over the last few decades, the *Carabineros* also developed multiple functions that range from criminal investigation to the regulation of private security.

Since the return of democracy, one of the institution's main objectives has been the consolidation of its relationship with the people, beginning with the development of crime prevention strategies. In the early 1990s, this effort was driven by security policies imposed by the government in the context of democratization process (HATHAZY, 2016). The police in Chile, and especially the *Carabineros,* began to look to international solutions which demonstrated greater efficacy in response to the rise in crime and, above all, the rise in fear of crime in cities. It was in that context that, "for many states, governments and police forces around the world, the citizens were no longer just individuals that must be limited to filing reports to the police when they encounter problems and complying with their decisions; the citizens were people and organizations with which the police must work with jointly, listening to their demands and also seeking and accepting their participation" (CANDINA, 2006, p. 7). Frühling (2003) highlights how this trajectory was framed by the political reform processes that took place in Latin America in response to three historical-political factors: 1) democratization process which took place during the 1980s and 1990s; 2) the sharp increase in ordinary offenses (common crimes) experienced in almost all Latin American countries; and 3) state transformations centred on limiting the size of the political apparatus, privatizing public enterprises, decentralizing functions to local and regional governments. Since then, the *Carabineros* have implemented a series of police policies aimed at crime prevention and police surveillance in territories, such as the *Plan Puertas Abiertas* (Open Door Plan) in 1996, the *Plan Cuadrante de Seguridad Preventiva* (Preventive Security Quadrant Plan) in 1998, and the *Modelo de Integración Carabineros Comunidad* (MICC) (*Carabineros* Community Integration Model) in 2012.

The *Plan Cuadrante* is the current primary operational strategy in more than half of the communes in Chile that cover more than 70% of inhabitants and is defined as "its own version of community policing and surveillance trends that are observed in other regions of the world" (CARABINEROS DE CHILE, 2018). This strategy consists of dividing the territory into quadrants based on crime data and available resources for surveillance to recreate a localized response strategy to crime. In this approach, the police recognize citizens, specifically the organized community, as a "collaborative partner in problem identification as well as in the design or implementation of solutions "(*Ibid.*). To consolidate this effort, in 2012 the *Carabineros* implemented the MICC—which is currently operating in 36 police units in Chile—whose main objective is "the timely and collaborative management of security problems affecting the population at a local level, through means of focused, preventative and social police strategies" (*Ibid.*).

The MICC operates within police units throughout territories via a team of police officers whose assignments involve daily work with residents and social organizations in the neighbourhoods of every commune. These teams are made up of eight to ten officers, who serve a 2-to-3-year rotation in the role—and are later assigned to other police units and functions. Every team is led by a high ranking and tenured official. To carry out the surveillance and prevention activities the community police officers are assigned to territorial quadrants, in which they must apply a methodology. The methodology, outlined in the *Carabineros*' work manuals and protocols, calls for: 1) the on-going diagnosis of criminal issues reported by citizens[2] and 2) the weekly entry of criminal information in a database (web platform) from which police strategies for crime prevention are established and the community teams are assigned and deployed to carry out activities. With their sights set on resolving problems associated with civil disorder and other social or environmental problems, the police oversee responses in association with local institutional agents whether public (municipalities, health services, education, justice, childhood, and others) or private (businesses, enterprises, guilds, NGOs, social foundations, among others) by using a community-based approach through working groups and/or relying on multiagency cooperative networks.

Crime prevention and community police in Latin America

The transition to democracy also gave way to a transformation in citizen security policies in Latin America and Chile is no exception. The focus of governments and the police are risk management which has become the foundation for the design of community crime prevention strategies (LAZREG, 2018). Local governments strengthened the narrative around coproduction

of security, by establishing multiple initiatives centred around the involvement of residents and communities in security matters (JONES and RODGERS, 2015).

Citizen participation is identified as a key element to solidifying the "collective efficacy" (SAMPSON, 2012) by generating a barrier of social protection against the development of criminal behaviour within the community (SOZZO, 2009). In police work the emphasis on participation is linked with the principles of the community policing model, which recommends the building of alliances with the residents and tending to the day-to-day demands and issues of the local community.

The community policing model requires a reform in the decision-making process, which involves organizational decentralization, patrolling efforts designed to facilitate the communication between the police and the public, a general commitment to focus on the problems, the ability to respond to citizens' demands and aid neighbourhoods in resolving their issues (SKOGAN, 1997). Although implementation of the model considers the local heterogenic experiences (TILLEY, 2008), a consensus exists that community policing is both a philosophy and operational strategy that allows for a joint effort between the police and community to resolve issues of crime but also involves tactical and organizational components within the territories (CORDNER, 1997). In this sense, there is also a consensus within the literature that the community-oriented policing method is based on a set of principles that guides police activities. These principles state: 1) police's primary objective is to prevent crime and public disorder; 2) the police's ability to achieve its institutional mission depends on the public approval of their actions; 3) cooperation of citizens through compliance with the law is required to ensure the people's respect of the institution; 4) public support is not achieved by complacency, but by demonstrating an absolute and impartial service to the law; and 5) use of police force is required only as necessary to comply with the law when persuasion, exhortation, and warnings are insufficient (CHALOM, 2001).

In Latin America, community policing has been a widely used model in the last two decades with multiple local variations (UNGAR and ARIAS, 2012), which were conceived by authorities to develop a more democratic approach to the police's response to crime (BONNER, 2019). These variations are observed in the experiences of the Santa Fé police and the police in Córdoba (IAZZETA, 2019; GOLDIN, 2020), the Sao Paulo state police, the Colombian National Police in Bogotá (FRÜHLING, 2012), the Fica Vico program in Belo Horizonte (ALVES and ARIAS, 2012), the Special Forces for Special Areas in Rio de Janeiro (Riccio, Ruediger, Dutt Ross and Skogan, 2013), the Chilean *Carabineros* (LABRA, 2011) and/or the Peruvian National Police (DAMMERT and CASTAÑEDA, 2019).

Evaluations of this model in the global North have produced mixed results (BULLOCK, 2013; MCCARTHY, PORTER, TOWNSLEY and ALPERT, 2020), it remains difficult to establish the actual reach and success of the model in Latin America. On one hand, some studies on the Latin

American experience have demonstrated serious attempts to change police institutions, albeit without much success (FRÜHLING, 2012), while others have shown the existence of many local variations that have distanced themselves from the principles of the Anglo-Saxon model (DIAS FELIX and HILGERS, 2020; DAMMERT and CASTAÑEDA, 2019). Many attempts to implement this approach have only focused on enhancing image of the police (FRÜHLING, 2012), and have prevented advancements toward more democratic police models in the region.

Nevertheless, community policing efforts in the region have continued and exist alongside neo-authoritative policies, which focus heavily on the war on drugs, that are applied in the poorest of neighbourhoods of many different countries.

'The war against drugs' in urban margins

In most of Latin American countries police are violent, corrupt, and inefficient (BONNER, 2014). More specifically, analyses of police actions in the margins shows how the state itself has a played a role in the violence that affect urban poor populations of many countries like Mexico (ALVARADO y SILVA, 2011), Colombia (PEARCE, 2010), Brazil (SABORIO, 2013; RICOTTA, 2017; DENYER WILLIS and MOTA, 2014), Chile (HAN, 2016), Venezuela (GABALDÓN, 2016) and Argentina (SOBERING and AUYERO, 2019). The most obvious outcomes of the of the development of punitive action by police has been incarceration rates (HATHAZY, 2016; WACQUANT, 2009).

Police repressive presence in poor neighbourhoods has turned cities into battlegrounds, characterized by tragic confrontations between police and urban youth (SABORIO, 2014; GRAHAM, 2010). While undoubtedly not exclusive to Latin America (FASSIN, 2017), these negative interactions have persisted and increased by a worrisome amount in this region (WACQUANT, 2008, 2014). By this presence, the neoliberal state is represented in margins by its force and coercive capacity, producing and deepening the spatial displacement of the poor (BRÆMER WARBURG and JENSEN, 2020). As highlighted by Pearce (2010), this type of presence creates a "perverse" state. Not only is it negligent regarding ensure access to social rights for the urban poor, but also access to security itself. For example, Frederic (2008) identifies the anti-democratic relationship that the police forms with its subjects in poor areas, jeopardizing equal rights in the margins of Buenos Aires.

This coercive and repressive side of police embeds itself with the policies of the war on drugs that have developed in the region. These policies assume that gangs and groups associated with drug trafficking act in a manner like insurgent political groups: armed and prepared with social networks in the neighbourhoods they operate in within communities. These networks are built by gaining

sympathy, buying silence, providing social support, or intimidation, thus mobilizing the economic resources that allow them to conduct their operations (KILLCULLEN, 2010). To confront the actions of these drug trafficking groups, security tasks and police actions are targeted at instilling distrust between neighbours and acquiring allies to break the organized crime links in the territories and obtain information. Through these actions, the relationships that the police forges with the communities are rooted in a model in which the notion of the internal enemy shapes the modus operandi of the forces of order (SUÁREZ DE GARAY, 2016; WACQUANT, 2008).

These analyses highlight that the police control exercised in the urban margins only intensifies the exclusion of the extended urban areas and deepens territorial inequality and socio-spatial segregation (BRÆMER WARBURG and JENSEN, 2020). As Fassin (2017) highlights with respect to the global South, policies of control and punishment have expanded within impoverished urban neighbourhoods and in underdeveloped areas therefore solidifying their status at the margins. As such, the state presence in the Brazilian "favelas," Colombian "barrios," "villas" in Argentina and Chilean "poblaciones," is accomplished through political control in parallel to insufficient urban, economic, and social policies.

The literature, in turn, recognizes that the police at the urban margins presents itself in a repressive and abusive manner while at the same time attempting to lead a communitarian effort. Both components of police work are somewhat intertwined, however analyses seeking to understand its coexistence in these territories is scarce. In dialogue with existing bodies if knowledge regarding police work in the urban margins, this article investigates the coexistence of these two components of police work and contributes to its analysis in a region seriously affected by criminal violence. This article seeks to responds to the following question: What practices are involved in these strategies and what meaning do police officers place on their work with residents? How are both methods of police work interrelated and/or mutually reinforced in the urban margins?

Our principal hypothesis states that policing in the urban margins take on a type of coexistence and ambivalence in which its communitarian component is accompanied using discretional force and the abuse against the urban poor. The shift toward citizenship participation translates into the development of social assistance practices aimed at those that the police identify as "vulnerable," which in turn hides the damage done by the same police against its subjects. This social aid allows police to sustain its presence and authority in the territories despite high levels of mistrust of the police.

To respond to these questions, we analyse the *Carabineros*, the Chilean uniformed police which for decades garnered high levels of trust among citizens and was one the most respected police institutions in Latin America (BONNER, 2013).

Methodology

This article is based on qualitative information collected from one study developed by the authors in urban margin neighbourhoods, defined as urban poor neighbourhoods characterized by high levels of socio-territorial vulnerability, urban precariousness, and high levels of criminal violence. The first stage of the study is ethnographic research conducted between 2015 and 2016, which focused on a *Carabineros* unit in the city of Santiago. This unit is in one of the three most socially and economically vulnerable communes in the country. We conducted 27 in-depth interviews with police officers from MICC, institutional actors, neighbourhood leaders, and residents involved in MICC's practices as well as visual surveys, the analysis of field notes of first-hand observations, shadowing police officers in their daily assignments, and the analysis of public document (primary sources). The second stage of the study is exploratory research developed in 2019, which involved 17 in-depth interviews with leaders of each MICC office throughout country[3], aimed at characterizing police practices targeted at the community in police units at national level.

The information collected to in both stages of the research has been analysed using a qualitative approach, in which the primary objective was to understand how police policies are articulated in the urban margins, via the narratives and practices that the police and residents mobilize in daily life. This information is complemented with quantitative and descriptive information based on the review of primary and secondary sources.

Helping the 'vulnerable': the police practices of social assistance

The implementation of the *Carabinero's* Community Integration Model (MICC) formalized a series of social practices historically used by police in the urban margins. Many of the community police teams' practices are related to social assistance work that aim to respond to community's complaint that go beyond the traditional police mandate of surveillance and protection. Those actions are related to a social assistance role at the local level.

Our ethnographic work shows that in many community meetings and gatherings, women, and female heads-of-households (mothers and grandmothers) view the police as mediators for problems related to the coexistence between neighbours and/or issues inside the home. Women viewed police as mediators for issues with their children, ranging from truancy to the problematic consumption of drugs in the neighbourhoods in which micro-trafficking has spread. When asked about her relationship with the police, one of the residents interviewed stated:

— I have issues with my oldest son who has a drug problem... I don't know what else to do, here in the commune there is nowhere to go. Every time I need help because he comes home violent, they [*the police*] come and talk to him. They always help with that.

This type of assistance provided by police to mothers or heads-of-households is important in the commune context where social services and public health support to deal with drugs and social protection are limited. In our area of research, the most recent data of 2016 showed 15% of absolute poverty rate, 50% unemployment rate among the economically active population, in addition 30% of residents were not affiliated with any social security system (ILUSTRE MUNICIPALIDAD DE CERRO NAVIA, 2016). Furthermore, the commune experienced teen pregnancy rate of 17.4%, and reported that almost 3,500 young people were neither employed nor in school. These metrics placed the commune among the top three worst urban performing areas in Chile (ICVU, 2019).

In these contexts, many efforts that MICC deploy are intended to mitigate, in part, the effects that socio-spatial segregation has on the city of Santiago (GARRETON, 2017) and the structural lack of resources that the urban poor faces in the city (HAN, 2012). The police also provide support for efforts to improve public spaces, typically organized by neighbourhood councils to address the deteriorating conditions and the presence of garbage in public spaces. The police collaborate with the community to complete clean up, reforestation and/or restoration of public infrastructure such as parks.

Image 1: Children's Park in urban margins, Santiago de Chile

Source: Authors, 2017.

On the other hand, many daily police activities involve managing social services such as helping the sick people, transporting older adults to health services or assisting retirees to collect their pension—practices which are especially important in the urban margins. In these communities, the police is also in charge of supplying basic food. One police officer interviewed stated:

> — The work that we do through MICC is our link to the people. In some cases, we help people, like older adults, that cannot move easily. We accompany them, transport them, we bring them straight to the cashier, withdraw money, and return them back their homes. We also help the crippled and sick, we bring them to the health clinic or in the case of an emergency because the ambulances do not come here. Therefore, every time that someone says, "look sergeant, we have a problem" if we can, we help them immediately.

A third area of assistance refers to activities that police officers carry out with directors of school and kindergartens in the commune, such as supervising the school attendance of children. This is especially relevant because the urban margins also experience high levels children/adolescent vulnerabilities (SCHILD, 2013). One kindergarten director interviewed describes:

> — We have gone to pick up children at their homes because they [*their families*] don't send them to school for two or three days. We go to tell the parents: "If you do not send your children to school you are violating their right to an education, you are violating that right of a child and therefore it is my obligation to report." In many families, the parents leave because they are being persecuted by micro-trafficking and they disappear, and then they turn up the next year to enrol their child and. And then they get angry and/or attack you. That is the reality of this area...

At the schools and kindergartens, community police officers are also in charge of road safety education, and they collaborate to organize celebrations by getting police bands, puppet show companies, and even theatre performed by police themselves. When discussing these activities, the police emphasize that childhood is very vulnerable in these neighbourhoods and that the children are very disadvantaged. They also note that social context is complicated, and the lack of opportunities often leads young people to resort to drugs or crime. One community police officer described this below:

> — There are a lot of drug problems, but the drug problem is a result of nothing more than a lack of opportunities for young people who live in populated cities. Here there is no work, there are no businesses, the parents must leave to work outside of the community and there are no programs in place to look after or care for the children. They stay home alone, so we work with them, arrange football games, bike races, we make courts at the police stations and host football tournaments.

These practices are not unique, and neither are they novel to these populous urban areas. Other interviews we conducted with leaders of community police teams throughout the country revealed that most of their community practices are aimed at helping groups that they identified as vulnerable. The elderly, women, and children are among the main targets of the social

assistance practices by police. In the 17 practices studied nationwide, more than half refer to some social assistance activities for these groups. Among those, the only activities aimed at other social groups were training courses in technical and craft trades such as hairdressing, goldsmithing, plumbing, and electrical work, which are primarily targeted at unemployed heads of households. Many of these trainings are carried out by the *Carabineros* themselves or in association with a local entity (municipal or private organizations). Additionally, many of the police interviewees highlighted that they themselves manage the delivery of food or clothing for the poorest residents, requesting donations from private companies and/or private donors, an activity they also do for people living in the isolated areas of the country.

However, the police officers interviewed also highlighted that this support for the vulnerable communities is part of their institutional duty. “Here there is nothing, nothing, and our duty is to help the people here and we are located where there is nothing” were the words used by a sub-official from a MICC team, alluding to the absence of public services in the commune where he works. Our interviews confirmed that these tasks are viewed as a moral duty within the overarching institutional identity. This is confirmed by Ruz (2010), who found that the idea of social assistance practices conducted by police originated from the police’s institutional laws in 1928. These laws highlighted the following tasks as functions of the institution itself: “(1) the literacy of poor children to be developed free of charge (2) the protection and formation of homes for homeless children where they shall be provided shelter, food, clothing, and primary instruction (3) provision of food, providing lunches in the stations, primarily for children who attend rural schools (4) sanitary and civic work, through lectures on hygiene to workers as well as discussions on social and civil laws” (*Ibid.*, p. 28).

The social assistance functions have maintained over time, which is highlighted in the official discourse on the social role that the institution plays in Chilean society. Institutional documents also underscore the importance of this component of police work. For example, the *Manual de Doctrina de Carabineros* (Doctrine Mannual) (CARABINEROS DE CHILE, 2017) highlights the role the *Carabineros* had in the fight to eradicate malaria in Chile in 1936 and the police’s involvement during the reconstruction period following the 1960 earthquake. In parallel, a women’s brigade was also created to expand and improve the range of services offered to children, which later resulted in the creation of the Departamento de la Policía de Menores (Juvenile Police Department), a unit that specialized in working with vulnerable youth in regard to children’s rights or juvenile offenders. This document also highlighted the following:

> Since 1928 the institution has been responsible for the development of a social labour with the most deprived groups of the population. (...) This initiative led to the creation of the 2nd Santiago Police Station for Minors, on May 17, 1962, in recognition of the fact that police stations were not always the appropriate units

> to receive youth. Later "Child and Homeland" emerged, an entity that has welcomed hundreds of children into their homes since its foundation (CARABINEROS DE CHILE, 2010, p. 47).

In this regard, Candina (2006) adds that social assistance and charity is an axis of the work of the *Carabineros* that not only aims to respond to community needs but are also activities that are embedded in police tradition.

Social assistance as element of police control

The social assistance work that the police performs in daily life aligns with their control and surveillance activities within the territories. In several interviews the police noted that the activities they perform are part of their mission but also serve to build trust, which allows them to obtain relevant information that supports their preventive work and/or criminal control.

Regarding their preventive work, the MICC places emphasis not only on problems related to violence and serious criminal activity, but also in smaller social issues (behaviour) or environmental issues (situational factors) that often serve as catalysts to more serious crimes. This approach focuses on confronting the subjective fears of the citizens and acknowledging that the community plays a fundamental role the resolution of problems within the neighbourhood. With these objectives in mind, this approach created the opportunity to diagnose problems through targeted preventive patrols, local surveys, roundtables with local institutions and neighbours, and via requests and information sent to local institutions, etc. Many of the daily activities that the community police perform have to do with managing or verifying that solutions provided by other state institutions have worked. As one police chief noted:

> — We go to see if the problem has been resolved or not, we go to see if they installed a streetlight, I don't know, to see if they installed a light, to see if they picked up the trash, let's see... We do a lot: verify whether or not the problems have been resolved. This also means prevention and deterrence in and of itself, because as soon as you see a criminal and the criminal sees you, the guy is going leave or if he is acting [*up*] and I know him I can also stop him because I still am a *Carabinero*.

This work method also includes the development of complementary activities such as police participation in local employment networks, support activities carried out by police for the environment, and a massive effort to gather social and criminal information in the commune. In addition to this, each year police teams assigned to each quadrant must conduct a working group, which brings together social organizations, institutions, and/or other applicable authorities to review the state of progress for addressing local issues. Through these activities, it is expected that the MICC can collect relevant information to conduct police work and prevent

crime. When asked about these practices, the police view themselves as a necessary part of their risk management approach and as part of the coproduction of security that has been established since the return to democracy in Latin America, more generally (JONES and RODGERS, 2015). This is evident in the words of the national head of the MICC program:

> — I believe that we were wrong for a long time, to believe that were the only experts in security and that no one could educate us. And it turns out that because of this [*community focus*] we learned that the people also have good ideas and can help us find solutions. If I go to a town, for example, and at first glance we see a drug problem and we see that everyone sells drugs, this image gets stuck in our minds. But later, when a neighbour explains to us that there are other underlying issues related to the drug problem, like, for example, there is no place to play football or do any sports activities... People don't ask us for help with the drug problem but rather to help fix up their public spaces and we help them arrange that.

The ethnographic observation of these police practices identified that the community police collect information associated with the presence of incivilities by taking surveys of landfills in public spaces, functioning light posts, presence of abandoned cars and homes, presence of stray dogs, garbage dumps and micro-dumps and rat infestations in neighbourhoods. These surveys are later passed on to municipal services and are reported as situational risk crime factors. In the urban margins, many of the complaints and requests that police receive are about problems involving nature and environmental health.

Image 2: Urban Precarious Housing in urban margins, Santiago de Chile

Source: Authors, 2017.

However, the information that residents report is not only associated with incivility in public spaces, but it also helps to improve surveillance activities in the area. One police chief

interviewed noted the usefulness of the discussions they have and activities they conduct with the community:

> — The community work is clearly based on trust, we have been able to get closer to [*the community*] and win over the trust of each of the leaders, in doing so one can be more upfront and explain their concerns. Afterward, the leaders are not afraid to tell you: "You know what corporal or sergeant, I have a drug problem in the neighbourhood" and they present the problems to you head on. And you realize that you can address many of the concerns without money, simply through the goodwill of many people and that helps build trust.

Police control is a component that is present in the stories of the interviewed police authorities and trust between police and residents is understood to be a necessary condition to residents to report crimes and in turn get better results, which go beyond surveillance and impact the intelligence operations that the *Carabineros* also carry out in these neighbourhoods. In fact, several interviewed police chiefs noted that the primary purpose of the "integration with the community" is to access relevant information. As one of the interviewees pointed out:

> — It is not only saying that you are going to do workshop, but it is also empowering my colleagues to understand that their attention to the public is essential when it comes to obtaining information and achieving positive results regarding prosecution of the crime.

Through the interviews were able to identify the flow of the information that is uncovered by the MICC team during these community activities, which later appears in the "records of police service," or logs of activities carried weekly by the police units. In this sense, the objective of this strategy, albeit sometimes unclear, is for the neighbourhood residents who participate in these activities to understand how the information reported to the police is used. One national police chief explained:

> — I think that trust is, is 80% of all of this, because trust brings with it the confidentiality of the information that may come in [*to us*], but if you don't have trust with someone you are speaking... You won't share the information.

The Chilean model echoes the points made in the literature on community policing, that claim that one of the purposes of community involvement is precisely to inform and/or complement the operations of police officers (TILLEY, 2008). The actual description of the *Carabineros* acknowledges that integration with the community it aimed at collecting useful information to prevent crime or identify problems that affect communities and find solutions based on the concepts of co-responsibility and co-participation. From this perspective, the MICC goes beyond simply resolving small-scale problems but also serves a source for relevant information for the police and a method for controlling social disorder that has been primarily concentrated in the poor urban areas of the Latin American megalopolis (CAMPESI, 2010).

Police repression and abuse in the urban margins

The police's local social assistance and monitoring practices are also accompanied by repressive practices that generate distrust and suspicion among the urban poor. Residents' suspicions of the police emerge each time they are invited to share their perspective on the problems that the neighbourhood faces, which many residents respond with caution. In the assemblies recorded in the ethnographic field work, we were able to observe the social distance of residents and leaders from the police that resulted from MICC officials asking them to trust the police and report crimes and problems. This reaction was also observed when the police hosted discussions on the "Denuncia Segura" (Secure Report) campaigns, which aim to provide anonymity to the reporter of a complaint. This is because, as revealed in our field work, in many instances' information is leaked and neighbourhood leaders are threatened by criminal groups that, in these neighbourhoods, are commonly linked to drug trafficking activities. One resident recounted her experience with the police during an interview:

> — Look at the wall. These were bullets. They came to shoot me after I filed a report. So therefore, even though the sergeant tells me that my reports are anonymous, that they are sure and can ensure me [*that it is*], I don't think I will do it again. I'm convinced that the information came from them. It was them, there was a "snitch" in the police. Never again. Never again will I file a report.

Her account coincides with multiple other accounts collected during the ethnographic field work. Residents and social leaders are aware of the connections that some police have to the drug traffickers in the neighbourhood. Another local resident shared a more explicit account of these links: "After we make a complaint with the Carabineros, the narcotraffickers come a shoot at the house, it has happened to us multiple times. It is [*the police*] themselves that leak it."

This information is confirmed by the data collected in the study on perceived violence in neighbourhoods at the urban margins from INDH in 2019 (INDH, 2019). The data demonstrated that when presented with the question: *What public official was involved in the most recent illegal activity that you know of?* 42.9% of the respondents named the police, 24% a municipal worker, and 21.1% an official within the judiciary.

While in Chile public information regarding the relationship between police and drug trafficking gangs is almost non-existent, studies of the *favelas* in Brazil or in neighbourhoods within Buenos Aires (SOBERING and AUYERO, 2019) demonstrate the embeddedness and clandestine links that exist between illegal networks and state actors and examine related police corruption, typically because of the state's increased presence in these urban areas. For Auyero and Berti this contradicts what urban literature has claimed for a long time, which refers to the

absence of the state at these urban margins. The author highlights that in the urban margins there is an ambivalent and contradictory presence of the state (AUYERO and BERTI, 2015).

However, police policies of social assistance coupled with police corruption translates to repressive practices and abuse of the use of force in the urban margins of the city. As Image 3 shows, which displays a mural in the territory where the ethnography field work was carried out, the residents of the poor neighbourhoods, especially the youth, are severely repressed by the *Carabineros* when they encounter them. Although these practices are independent to prescribed work of the officers at the MICC, adolescents and adults in many Chilean towns suffer from the *Carabineros* discretionary use of excessive force, an issue that has been captured in several different studies and confirmed in the documentation of human rights work in the country.

While information on police violence is not systematically published in a method that is conducive to the analysis of trends, indicators exist that reaffirm the existence of the abuse of force and repressive actions by police toward these segments of the population. Fuentes (2001) completed a data collection effort in the 1990s that confirmed this use of excessive force. These figures were reaffirmed decades later by The National Human Rights Institute since 2012, which denounced the intrusive surveillance carried out by police in the neighbourhoods that the police labelled as dangerous.

Image 3: "Special Police Forces" Mural in urban margins, Santiago de Chile

Source: Authors, 2017.

However, these repressive policies are not limited to the abuse of excessive force but can also be see in the discretionary control tactics and procedures conducted in public spaces.

The "*control de identidad*" (identity check) is a legal tool used by the police, which allows the police to control those legal age in public and private spaces, allowing them to search clothing and bags of these individuals. This practice enhances arbitrary selection of "random" individuals, which is often marked by prejudice, since it primarily occurs in neighbourhoods considered dangerous by the police. This was verified by the National Institute of Human Rights (INDH, 2016) in several reports, which noted that in cases where individuals had been deprived of their liberty for the sole purpose of performing an identity check, standard protocols were not followed thus producing violence, mistreatment, and has often resulted in abuse of power by police units.

For example, in a historically stigmatized neighbourhood in Santiago, residents reported that mass identity check procedures were being performed when they left their homes to work, revealing a lack of clear rules, obvious arbitrariness, and systematic abuses (INDH, 2015). According to the information collected in a survey on perceived violence in poor urban neighbourhoods (*Idem*, 2019), these issues have persisted or increased in recent years. When faced with the question "In the last 12 months, have you observed the use of identity checks in your neighbourhood?" 62% of respondents stated that this practice had persisted or increased during that period. Additionally, studies performed in a Santiago neighbourhood considered "dangerous" by authorities have also demonstrated that the identity check has been a practice that has sparked police violence (CORTÉS and GARCÍA-CAMPOS, 2014).

Those who have studied the relationship between police and youth in neighbourhoods at the urban margins in Latin America, emphasize that this has always been a relationship of conflict and violence (ZAVALETA *et al.*, 2016). And Roche (2019), who analyses European data that evaluates police, stresses that this connection has historically been accompanied by abuse, prejudice and discrimination and is always exercised against the youngest. Fassin (2019) also gives an account of this relationship, in which the link between the police and the popular urban youth has been fraught with contempt and humiliation.

Alongside the identity checks, another aspect that draws attention is the increased presence of the *Carabineros* Special Forces teams in these neighbourhoods. These Forces are often permanently installed in access areas to these neighbourhoods creating "perimeter closures [4]," aimed at making the police presence more visible in the area and controlling access to it. Information collected in the same study on the perception of violence (INDH, 2019) shows that more than 45% of the respondents stated that they see the Special Forces at least once per week in their neighbourhood.

These figures are especially high if one considers that the presence of police surveillance and protection reported by the same respondents was very low. More than 60% of the respondents in this study reported that the police always arrive late or never arrives in the case of emergencies. This information is confirmed by our interviewees, who in the ethnographic

study reported that the police is typically not present in the neighbourhoods when there are crimes or emergencies. The lack of protection and "de-policing" in these areas is denounced by residents and even community political authorities. As Desmond and Valdes (2012) analysed, many urban-popular territories suffer from repressive practices and simultaneously experience a "de-policing" and a lack of protection in terms of police surveillance.

Conclusion

The policy of *Carabineros* police in the urban margins navigates between social assistance efforts and those that involve the use of repressive force. The social assistance component of their work makes up one element of the institutions identity, alongside its military character, which is hierarchical and repressive. As we have analyzed, the practices of assistance and social solidarity in the urban margins (transporting the sick, accompanying the elderly, organizing parties for children, or hosting workshops for different trades) are deployed daily in parallel the tasks of control and repression (corruption, intrusive surveillance, abuse of the use of force, etc.). The charitable soul and the repressive soul coexist and invoke the origins of the *Carabineros,* an institution established 1927 based on a merger of military police corps with civilian municipal police forces and prosecutors.

The research also demonstrates that alongside these practices there are others that, under the guise of communitarian efforts, aim to obtain relevant information for conducting criminal investigations. The institution bets that they can learn relevant information to control crime by building bonds based in trust between the police and the residents. In the Chilean case, these efforts, which are executed through the MICC, are the ones have been primarily assigned to community police in other Latin American contexts and modeled after the Anglo-Saxon experience. In addition, the research highlights that those strategies involve elements of "infiltration", elements are even more evident in the actions that take place under the paradigm of the "war on drugs" implemented in various contexts throughout the region.

This ambivalence and coexistence have been exposed in recent studies that show that routine police work in the urban margins is based on approaches that are- in appearance- "contradictory" (HERBERT, BECKETT and STUART, 2018). Nevertheless, the results of our research and review of literature specializing in the field allows us to maintain that the ambivalence and coexistence of police policies is possible given the elements of their identity that are reflective of a military culture that prevails in police work. That is, the relationship that is established between the police and the poor perpetuates this hero self-image that the police maintain at a global scale (TERPSTRA and

SALET, 2020); as in Latin America in. For Suarez de Garay (2016) who ethnographically studies police in Guadalajara, Mexico, the figure of police authority rests on the meanings associated with and value placed on being a savior and protector of the population.

The identity of a police officer is based on this hero figure that is instilled during the police training process and informally through rituals, discussions, narratives, images, and symbols that the police itself create and disseminate daily (TERPSTRA and SALET, 2020). The "police hero" leverages a diverse set of social practices that lead to actions against the "enemy of the society" and assistance and aid efforts to the most vulnerable within a society. This figure becomes even more relevant and of higher status when working in precarious and marginal territories, as police in these areas not only protect residents from crime but also fill material and social deficiencies, which are products of the inconsistent public policies and the discontinuous presence of the neoliberal state.

However, the prosecution of crime is carried out with greater repression when it involves the urbans poor (FASSIN, 2019). This figure implies that police work takes on an essence of "spectacularity" (*Idem*, 2013) that departs from many of the routine and bureaucratic practices that police officers must perform. In the search of "spectacularity," many routine monitoring and control tasks often involve the unnecessary use of force, particularly by special forces. This is especially true when the police are tasked with finding and detaining those who violate or break laws that are defined by this culture as "their enemies" and "enemies the society."

With this, the research renders an account of how police work involves repertoires of action that are hybrid in nature and that assembled in an ambivalent manner in police work. Our findings open unexplored edges of the role of military culture in the performance of Latin American police and, more specifically, how elements of their identity, rooted in military culture, shape the relationship between police and citizens in the margins of the city.

Notas

[1] This work was supported by the Núcleo Milenio Autoridad y Asimetrías de Poder (NUMAAP), NCS17_007.

[2] The information collected is related to crime, social and physical disorder in public spaces, and risk factors associated with certain problems.

[3] Selected in the framework of a study of the Good Community Practices implemented by the Sub-secretary of Crime Prevention. In both stages the interviews could only be conducted using Informed consent that assure anonymity to the interviewees.

[4] The perimeter closure is considered control by establishing a police presence in these areas and installing police surveillance and control measures.

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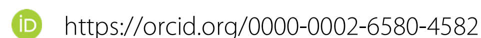
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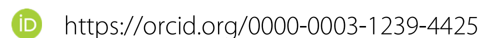
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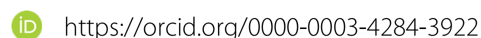
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