Participating in and deliberating about safety: understanding citizenship involvement in Chilean local public security policies.

1. Introduction.

For decades now, criminologists have discussed the possibilities and dangers of a more and strengthened democratic governance of security policies (A. Dzur et al., 2016; Green, 2008; Johnstone & Shearing, 2003; Lacey, 2008; Loader & Sparks, 2012; Loader & Walker, 2007; Wood & Dupont, 2006). In that context, deliberative and participatory democracy has been mentioned as a theory and practice that could help to face some of the political contemporary challenges related to crime, punishment and insecurity. Whereas as an alternative to "penal populism"[1] and technocratic expertise discourses (Loader & Sparks, 2017), a strategy for moderating penal policies (Loader, 2010), contribute to minimalism in penal policies together with social integration and cohesion (Loader & Sparks, 2012), bring more reflexivity that contributes to more rational penal policies (Green, 2008), counteracting current societal and economic power dynamics or for increasing citizen's responsibility and awareness on the system's outcomes (A. W. Dzur, 2012), scholars have stressed the relevance of participatory and deliberative democracy for the contemporary challenges.

However, not much research has been produced in the criminology field regarding what actually would mean to produce security policies following a deliberative or participatory framework, even less from a systemic understanding of deliberative democracy. Several scholars have commented on and criticised specific exercises of citizen involvement at different stages of the security policy process (González & Mayka, 2022; Sozzo, 2011; Trebilcock & Luneke, 2019). However, even though they provide enlightening ideas about some of the features of participatory and/or deliberative processes and their risks and possibilities for security governance, have either abstained from engaging with the up-to-date state of the deliberative and participatory theories[2] or have analysed just specific institutions of participation and deliberation, typically the criminal justice jury.

In that context, my doctoral research project aims to understand and assess the democratic governance of Chilean public security policies at the local level, from a deliberative systems approach.[3] With that purpose, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork for 5 months in the medium size city in the country, that I will call here, Entre Ríos. My research was designed as an interpretive research, which has been suggested as

[1] Loader and Sparks (2017) conceptualise penal populism as an ideology that makes at least three claims: speaks for the people as a homogeneous entity, presents the people in opposition to a depicted elite and is committed to the idea of popular sovereignty. The term is well known and of high currency within criminological scholarship. Its circulation as "populist punitiveness" is attributed to Anthony Bottoms (Bottoms, 1995).

[2] With a few exceptions, for example, the analysis of Carolyn Hendriks and Albert Dzur on Citizen's Governance Spaces (C. M. Hendriks & Dzur, 2022)

[3] The project's title is "Strengthening democratic governance of crime and security in Chile. Assessment and possibilities from a deliberative and participatory democratic perspective".

particularly useful for studying deliberative systems and governance interactions (Bevir & Rhodes, 2003; Ercan et al., 2017). I am currently starting the analysis of the data produced while still ordering and translating some of the interviews and audio notes I took during fieldwork.

This article aims to contribute to an understanding of how citizens are participating in and deliberating about the production of security policies in Entre Ríos. For that purpose, I offer here a first attempt at making sense of the data I produced during fieldwork, following a systemic understanding of deliberative democracy and how it can be applied to governance practices. I found it useful to distinguish here between actors, scales of governance (sites and temporalities) and modes of interaction. I expect that eventually, this first approximation can help me to open up further questions and insights to guide my analysis.

This article starts with a first theoretical section which outlines the relevant ideas of deliberative and participatory democracy that frame my research. Secondly, it will follow a section that briefly presents the field, "Entre Ríos"[4]. Thirdly, I will describe the interactions amounting to the governance of security in the city, distinguishing between actors, scales of governance (including sites and temporalities) and modes of interaction, including some questions and remarks that arise from a deliberative systems approach to deliberative democratic theory. Finally, I conclude by wrapping out those questions and remarks as a form of offering a pathway to continue.

2. A systemic understanding of deliberative democracy applied to policy networks.

Deliberative democracy comprises an ideal view of democracy based on the exchange of relevant considerations between equal people. In this theory, citizens give each other 'relevant considerations' regarding the political issues they face, a practice that serves as the basis for deciding what actions to take and more generally, for ordering society (Bächtiger et al., 2018).

Even though the last decades have seen a "deliberative turn", (Floridia, 2018) deliberative democracy as a political theory remains highly contested and evolving throughout the years. Whereas principles such as respect or absence of coercion are unproblematic as yardsticks for good deliberation, the initial demand of exchanging reasons was replaced by the idea of 'relevant considerations' to accommodate other forms of communication besides logical argumentation (e.g. story-telling, rhetoric)(Young, 2000). Similarly, the initial ideal of equality among those taking place in deliberation has given place to a more complex idea of inclusion and equal opportunity to affect the result of the decision.

Given the insufficient deliberative capacity of any singular forum to legitimise the decisions of an entire community, Parkinson, Mansbridge and others have advocated for a "systemic approach to a deliberative democracy"(Parkinson & Mansbridge, 2012, p. 2). According to a deliberative system theory neither all the institutions must be deliberative nor all of them perform highly on the characteristics attributed to deliberation. On the contrary, systems have epistemic, ethical and democratic functions as a whole, which

[4] I initially decided to disclose the name of the city in which I conducted fieldwork. Since now I am currently reviewing that decision, I rather offer here a pseudonym.

are of use to evaluate individual institutions and practices. To put it differently, this judgment ought to consider their contribution to the legitimacy of the entire system rather than rely only on their performance.

More recent contributions, also sympathetic to a systemic understanding of democracy, have insisted on the significance of thinking of a deliberative system also as a democratic system (Lafont, 2019; Parkinson, 2018; Warren, 2017). This is what lies at the heart of Lafont's (2019) participatory conception of deliberative democracy, normatively based on the self-government ideal. Warren (2017) breaks the ideal of self-government into three political functions: empowered inclusion, collective agenda and will formation, and collective decision-making. In this context, one could ask what type of practices are needed to address specific democratic shortcomings serving particular democratic functions, such as recognition, deliberation, voting, resisting, representing or joining (Warren, 2017). Depending on these needs, different democratic innovations might play different roles, for example, enhancing deliberation for clarifying conflict.

Here connection becomes fundamental. For Lafont (2019, p. 24), to achieve what is required by the ideal of self-government a political system needs "an ongoing feedback loop between processes of opinion- and will-formation in the public sphere and political decisions taken by the political system.". Important is to understand the ongoing feedback loop as dynamic and diachronic. Hendriks, Ercan and Boswell (2020) have stressed the need for paying further attention to connections within deliberative democratic theory, advancing a grounded approach to connections. Their grounded approach takes the empirical perspective of actors operating in the field and the practices through which they create connections and repair disconnections between citizens within the public sphere, between citizens and their political representatives and between citizens and the public policy-making process.

When understanding the policy-making process, though, the ideas of deliberative democracy have been more usually associated with the study of, and the advocacy for, the institutionalization of deliberation within the policy-making process, usually through small participatory forums (Boswell et al., 2023; Fung & Olin Wright, 2003; Warren, 2009). Even if institutions of deliberation such as mini-publics or public consultations can contribute to the functions of a deliberative system, this approach does not guide how to think about the current phenomenon of policymaking through a systemic perspective (Boswell et al., 2023). The de-centralised and pluralised features of contemporary governance, and the reduced visibility of the operation of the ongoing policy-making process, present particular challenges and opportunities for the application of a systemic understanding of deliberative democracy (C. Hendriks & Boswell, 2018). Moreover, the institutionalisation approach loses sight of the role of actors in creating and sustaining the policy-making process (C. Hendriks et al., 2020).

Dryzek (2010, Chapter 6) provided early guidance on how to analyse governance networks from a systemic framework. He suggested that there should exist a high differentiation between the public space and the empowered space when considering networks, the inclusion of varied actors in the network or interacting with it, the varied representation of discourses depending on the role of the network, the increasing relevance on rhetoric according to the level of differentiation and the essential role of meta-consensus.

Even when Dryzek (2010, Chapter 6) initially suggested analysing governance networks as entire deliberative systems, this might obscure other arenas of the deliberative systems as other decision-making arenas or informal talk in the public sphere (C. Hendriks & Boswell, 2018). In addition, Hendriks and Boswell (2018) suggest several potentialities of governance networks for deliberative systems – such as a function of agenda setting in which new ideas and solutions are created, promoted and implemented in connection with empowered spaces – as well as risks – for example, the problems of exclusion that come with highly technocratic spaces.

More recently, Boswell, Hendriks and Ercan (Boswell et al., 2023; C. Hendriks et al., 2020) have suggested a shift from "designing" – institutions or one-off forums – to "mending", when examining democratic governance. Democratic mending here denotes "the intentional, creative, everyday practices that seek to repair and renew connections in the fabric of democratic life" (C. Hendriks et al., 2020, p. 2). Therefore, the analytical perspective towards democratic governance focuses its attention on the everyday practices and activities that actors – citizens, civil society organizations, elected representatives, officials, professionals, among others – are performing to repair political disconnections. In the policy-making process, this is called the "governance disconnect": the gap between administrative policymaking and the democratic will of citizens. The empirical work analysed by the authors suggests that the repair of the governance disconnect could happen either by reaching out to the public - through opening up processes to political institutions, the media or civil society for oversight or to citizens who are service users – or by the civil society reaching in the policy process – whereas for advocating, challenging or campaigning for policy decision (C. Hendriks et al., 2020).

To wrap it up, how can we use these ideas to understand the public security processes using participatory and deliberative democratic ideas? It guides us to move beyond an analysis of the work of the state and the design or outcome of particular institutions of deliberation or participation, to also include practices and activities performed every day by actors involved with the policy-making process. Particularly relevant are those practices that are mending the governance disconnect between citizens and the decision-making process. All of these practices and government institutions should be analysed regarding their contribution to the whole governance of public security, according to the principles traditionally developed by deliberative democratic theory and the functions demanded by a system based on the self-determination principle.

In what follows, I offer an initial mapping of the data I collected during my fieldwork, to put forward a first understanding of the governance of public security in Entre Ríos and the role of citizens within it. Based on the ideas reviewed in this section, I found it useful to distinguish between actors, sites, practices and activities. But first, let me say something about Entre Ríos.

3. "Entre Rios"

"Entre Ríos" is the capital of one of the 16 Chilean regions and one of its 345 communes. The commune extension is around 200 km2 which is under the average. This research is focused on Entre Ríos City, its biggest urban area.

The city is characterised by several geographical accidents, including various natural water bodies and hills. In the north and south, it is limited by rivers, and has five lagoons. These water streams modify its urban landscape, are relevant identarian elements for those inhabiting it and provide recreational spaces. In addition, six hills divide the city into several neighbourhoods, which are places for recreation but also objects and sites for conflict sometimes.

Entre Ríos developed as an urban centre after the Spanish colonization in the 16th century. During the colony was a salient military base and political territory for the Spanish colony, given that Entre Ríos marked the frontier of Spanish colonisation and the war between Spanish colonisers and the Mapuche people – the original inhabitants of the territory. It was originally developed as a checkerboard street plan in the area that today is the city centre. In the 19th century, after losing the battle for the political design of the new Chilean state, Entre Ríos aristocracy focused on the city's development. Mainly, this included the construction of public buildings and educational centres. Up until today, Entre Ríos is recognised as a "University city" (Ciudad universitaria), that receives hundreds of students every year. On the other hand, several earthquakes during the 20th century, together with the necessity to provide housing for people living in scattered shanty towns, produced continuous waves of urbanization that have increasingly extended Entre Ríos limits throughout the years.

Approximately 238 thousand people live in Entre Ríos commune, of which 98% live in one of the urban areas, almost all of them in Entre Ríos city. The population is distributed unequally across the city. While some reside in extensive neighbourhoods, many others converge in small pieces of land sometimes even at the block level (particularly in the city centre and neighbourhoods next to the southern river).

Entre Ríos shares the sex distribution of the rest of Chilean urban areas.[5] At the same time, it has a higher percentage of the population between 20 and 29 years old and of those 65 years old or older, while a lower percentage of those between 0 and 9 years old. It is also an ageing city: it has an ageing index[6] of 97,7 compared to 65,6 for the country and 70,9 for the region. These groups are, again, unequally distributed across the city. 9% of the commune Entre Ríos declared to be part of one of the indigenous people in the country, a number, not surpassingly, even higher in the region and the country. Finally, even when Entre Ríos commune has the highest percentage of international immigrants within the region, the relation between international immigrants and nationals living in the region is one of the lowest in the country.

[5] 52% of women and 48% of males according to the National Institute of Statistics.
[6] The ageing index measures the number of people 65 years old or older for each 100 inhabitants 15 years old or younger. Entre Ríos have 97 elderly inhabitants for every 100 residents of 15 or less.

Socio-economically, both income poverty and multidimensional poverty rates in Entre Ríos commune are below the national and regional level (for 2017, 10,9% and 13,4% respectively) (Observatorio Social. Ministerio de Desarrollo Social, 2017, 2018). To understand the distribution of poverty in the commune, is best to look at the data from the Households Social Register, which elaborates a socio-economic classification of households at the Neighbourhood Unit level.[7] According to this data, the areas in which 60% or more of the households belong to the lowest socio-economic classification (the 40% with less income) are localised in three zones of the city. One in the northeastern part, in the periphery. The second is the neighbourhoods alongside the biggest and southern river. Finally, the third is near the centre in the northwestern part. This distribution partially corresponds with the distribution of formal instruction in the city.

To sum up, Entre Ríos has been historically a salient city in the country, both for educational and political reasons. Physically, is featured by several natural accidents, that modify the experience of those living nearby. Even when it shares some demographical characteristics with the rest of the country, it is an ageing city, where the percentage of young adults and elderly people stands out when compared with the rest of the country. Finally, people not only occupy dissimilar amounts of space in the city, but also there is an equal distribution of income and instruction levels, that usually overlap. All this will be relevant when thinking not only about the transferability of the conclusions of the entire study but also framing some of the questions and remarks that I include here.

4. A first view of citizens' involvement in the governance of public security in Entre Ríos.

a. Actors. Who is taking part in these interactions?

From an approach that values practice, one of the first elements on which to focus on are actors. Here I will focus primarily on those actors interacting to shape public security policies in Entre Ríos.

A first descriptive approach is the distinction between organised civil society and individual citizens. Social leaders representing civil society organisations such as neighbourhood associations or sports clubs were the main actors from civil society encountered as having a say and taking part in the policy process. In this vein, for example, the Security Territorial Roundtables (Mesas Territoriales de Seguridad) – a device of governance that I will explain later – are purposedly composed just of representatives of social organisations, primarily neighbourhood associations. That is also the case in other spaces of interaction, such as meetings organised by the Municipal Council around public security or the Council of Civil Society Organisations (CCSC).

[7] Using this data has some limitations, though. First, Chilean households do not have automatically a social register, it depends on the action of one of its members. Second, for a couple of reasons, available data is not comparable with Census data. In fact, by 2021, 95.631 households had a social register in Entre Ríos, which represents 121% of the households in 2017 according to the Census (which can be explained because during the pandemic, social benefits depend on having one). However, it is useful to have a proxy of the socio-economic distribution across the city.

Similarly, when asked who was the people to whom they interacted the most, practitioners from the municipal office, and a member from the municipal council said "I would say, I mean, well, mostly are social leaders. Mostly social leaders".[8] That opinion was shared by a professional of the Public Security Department (DSP). The professional, also explored what a social leader was for them: "Are those people that are appointed to channel the requirements of the communities so they can have a more direct connection, ultimately, with, with the public services…"[9]. From what I observed, social leaders are mainly women – an observation that was supported by interviews – and regularly elderly people. I was surprised to encounter in one meeting a young woman suggesting the construction of a library in her neighbourhood so students shouldn't have to take a late bus. This lack of diversity might immediately suggest issues of inclusion, for example in the possibilities – political and personal – to undertake the representation of a social organization of this type and/or the kind of social organizations that are valued by the local administration.

On the other hand, non-organised citizens also found their ways – sometimes more informal, others more formal - to channel their concerns and ideas to representatives and officials. Special meetings in the office with specific "neighbours", the seldom-used mechanisms of public transparency and WhatsApp interactions were used by individual citizens of the community to make themselves heard. Therefore, the distinction was also determining how elected officials and professionals interacted with citizens.

Secondly, when looking at the State actors, a first distinction must be made between municipal actors and central government officials (whether working at the regional or national level).

First, the actors working in the municipality, whereas officials or professionals. These are all civil servants under the direction and supervision of the Mayor, although his actual control seems to differ according to the topic, the leadership of the Director and how high-profile a decision was. In addition, all the municipal work is overseen – formally and informally – by members of the Municipal Council.

As dealing with public security policies, and given how this study was carried out,[10] the workers of the DSP were the most visible group. In the DSP work around 30 individuals, divided between professionals, administrative and inspectors. The department is divided into two areas, both directed and supervised by a female Director: Citizen Security and Public Security. The former is in charge of municipal inspection and surveillance. Around twenty inspectors work in shifts responding to calls from citizens while also circulating the city. The second area is composed of a group of professionals and administrative workers (mostly women). Professionals are in charge of "the work with the community" and other tasks related to the office, although in slightly different roles and levels of autonomy.

[8] Interview, member of the Municipal Council.
[9] Interview, DSP professional.
[10] A significant part of my research design involved following the Director of the Public Security Department, which was then carried out during the five months of fieldwork with various degrees of intensity and, given the way the office worked, also included following professionals working in the Director's name.

However, several other municipal public servants are involved in what is understood as a public security issue or closely related. I encountered workers from the departments of emergency, environmental issues, municipal public works, hygiene and adornment, community development, municipal revenues, as well as the offices of public street lighting, immigrants and childhood services. For example, public street lighting clerks not only are involved in defining and helping to solve conflicts around the lack or malfunctioning of public street lightning but also take part in the municipality response to criminal cases involving the public street lighting network, specifically, the robbery of copper from the electricity lines – a demanding issue during my stay. Officials from the Emergency Department are called to solve issues of higher trees, whereas because their height obstructs the surveillance cameras or because they are a safety hazard during the winter season. Municipal Revenues are involved in solving conflicts between residents and local nightclubs, due to noise, alcohol or drug consumption – illegal in Chile - or violence in the surroundings of the clubs. One particular way to deal with these issues is reviewing and cancelling their authorizations to sell alcohol or to operate, a clearance that in Chile depends on the municipal council.

Some public officials working for the central government also operate at the local level. I encountered regularly professionals from the Regional Coordination of Public Security (CRS)[11] in diverse meetings or encounters with citizens, either organised by citizens, the municipality or the CRS. They also direct and organise the Regional Council for Public Security. In practice, not always distinguishable from the previous, and given their attributions on directing the police forces, was the Regional Presidential Delegate. Finally, although than less obvious, I also came across public servants from the Housing and Urbanism Service, who organise the Public Security Roundtable for one of the neighbourhoods.

Lastly, it will be important to consider the role of the police and institutions of criminal prosecution in defining policies and the discourse around them. I observed several places and opportunities in which PDI and Carabineros - the two Chilean police bodies - were actively taking part in the definition of public security policies and influencing the discourses available to shape them (both with public officials and citizens).

Thirdly, given the governance paradigm, other private organisations might be also salient. In the city is particularly salient the role of the Universities, particularly Entre Ríos University. I attended a meeting with an academic and the Director of the office, in which they were discussing the creation of an app for female safety in public spaces. Several participants mentioned Entre Rios University as implementing security policies, advising a business union and the neighbours association in their public security projects, and participating in an urban design of the sector in which it is located.

Finally, in Entre Ríos public, the participation of companies and business representatives seems to have a prominent role in security governance. For instance, professional football clubs were designing the security

[11] An office of between 2 to 5 people, that represents the Undersecretary of Crime Prevention at the regional level and that is led by a Regional Coordinator.

protocol for a football match, while a pub business union in one of the neighbourhoods was offering a redesign of their tables in the public space to provide security for their customers and others participated in meetings of conflict resolution.

Institutionally, together with professionals from different state agencies, and representatives of social organizations, a representative of the Commerce Chamber is also part of the CCSP. This is not a surprise from the perspective of collaborative governance and the inclusion of stakeholders (Escobar, 2021). However, I observed an unequal dynamic of interaction within that council and a prioritisation of the issue of illegal street vending in the discussion, a problem that directly bears upon businesses' interests. A civil servant working for the central government stressed the relevance of this particular actor: "Like ultimately, the Casque Historic Roundtable[12], has been too linked… to the Chamber of Commerce, to the trade unions linked to tourism." A few seconds later she explained that this was mainly because "the municipality feels, that to involve new actors will unform, eh… a little the action that might be developed by the, the program" and because, according to what they have said to them, "as the crime prevention projects are situational, and have to do with specific works, at the end they feel that to the extent that other actors enter, that will be in dispute. Where should I install the public lighting, where should I install the camera, where I make the drone function".[13]

Finally, interesting is the case of the illegal street vendors, some of them organised in unions talking already with elected representatives and officials at several levels of government.[14] Some dissimilarity observed between the respect, consideration and opportunities to be heard/to reach in the municipal administration by both of these actors, suggest again, even if formally included, power imbalances between the possibilities of some social groups to impact in the production of security policies in Entre Ríos, that needs further examination.

All these people and institutions were interacting producing, implementing, modifying public security policies, and sometimes deliberating about them. After presenting them, we will turn out to examine the various sites these actors are acting from.

b. Sites and arenas of interactions.

Two distinctions seem useful to think about spaces: whether that are citizen-led or in which they are invited or claimed (C. M. Hendriks & Dzur, 2022) and the type of empowerment of the space (Dryzek, 2010) or arenas of binding decisions of the state, activities directed to prepare binding decisions, informal talk related to those binding decision and informal/formal talk about issues of common concern not intended for binding decisions of the state (Mansbridge et al., 2012, p. 9).

[12] The Casque Historic Roundtable is a collaborative space
[13] Interview, professional working in the national program "We are Commercial Neighbourhood" of the Undersecretary of Crime Prevention.
[14] Interview, council member. Interview, representative of one union of street vendors.

Firstly, the majority of these spaces in which I observed citizens or civil society organizations included were spaces created by the state, in which they were invited either due to the law or practices established by politicians, officials or professionals. Some of them were institutions of collaborative governance, such as the CCSP or the CCSC, where the definition of its participation was formal: in the case of the CCSC, their members were elected among and by the local civil society organisations representatives, and in the case of the CCSP, the citizens included were two representatives of the public security commission of the CCSC. Normatively, the CCSP is in charge of developing and approving the Public Security Municipal Plan, to advise the mayor and serve as a space of institutional collaboration at the local level. In this sense, it is legally both an arena of binding decisions and of formal talk about binding decisions. In practice, the CCSP was considered futile by one politician member of the council,[15] its dynamic was openly contested by one of the social leaders in one of its meetings because of the lack of space for social leaders' interventions,[16] and according to what I observed and reviewed from the meetings sessions were mainly focused on presenting statistics, the recent activities and accomplishments in the public security area of the municipal team and hearing social leaders' complaints.[17] The analysis of the specific form of talk that is enacted in this space, and in what sense can be described as properly deliberative (or not), will be something I will do in my study. It will be also relevant to see to what extent the CCSP is a binding decision arena (for example if has the potential to effectively change the Communal Public Security Plan) or the effectiveness of the formal talk conducted there.

Other invited spaces were the 17 Security Territorial Roundtables, already introduced. In its current form, these are spaces created by the Municipal team during the pandemic that function continuously (during office hours) and primarily as a WhatsApp group. As said, one representative of each civil society organisation of a specific territory in the commune was part of the correspondent roundtable. Even when I did not have the privilege of observing the interactions in the WhatsApp Group, I did observe several face-to-face meetings of these roundtables. In the format I observed, they usually followed the same structure – introduction and presentation by the Director or one of the professionals of DSP, one turn to talk of 2 minutes for each one of the social leaders in the meeting, and a response from several professionals or officials working in the Municipality in different departments. Among the issues discussed in these meetings included crime raise, conflicts between neighbours, the height of the trees, garbage in the streets and rat plagues. Again, the nature of the talking being performed in these spaces needs to be something included in the analysis. In addition, there is a function of agenda setting they are also performing for local governance, but it is not clear still to me the mechanism that works for that to happen: is it that the people in charge of plague control were there because of the citizens claims or the other way around? Finally, even when they are not binding decision-making spaces, they are informal spaces for talking about binding

[15] Interview, Municipal Council member, also part of the CCSP.
[16] Fieldnotes observations, Thursday 13th of April.
[17] Fieldnotes observations, Thursday 13th of April, Thursday 8th of June and Thursday 13th of July, recordings of CCSP of June and July.

decisions but also, but it will be interesting to see whether they also perform as informal spaces for talking about issues of common concern in general.

One example of a claimed space was the several meetings asked by citizens and civil society organisations happening daily. Sadly, I was only able to observe some of them, since I was actively excluded from several one-to-one meetings, though I could notice they were common practice between officials and elected representatives. One meeting I observed between professionals of the DSP and the social leaders of one organisation was aimed to prepare and organise a second meeting in which DSP professionals were going to impart a capacitation to the members of that organisation. Claimed spaces were also those daily conversations through the phone and WhatsApp in which there were negotiations between the professionals regarding specific conflicts and how to solve them. One example was clear: a social leader from Nonguén had complained that one soccer field was continuously occupied by fans of a particular football club, drinking and preventing the rest of the residents occupy it. The next day the Director made several calls back and forth between the social leader and the Director of the Planification Department to exchange information about the field, explain possibilities (to give the Neighbourhood associations the bailment of the field), and negotiate alternatives between them (when the social leader rejected the alternative proposed and suggested to have the field renovated with an official inauguration of the field for the neighbours).[18] Another claimed space involved also business union meetings.

There were some rare examples of citizen-led spaces, though they do not match completely with the conceptualization offered by Hendriks and Dzur (2022). Some were purely talkative spaces, such as the Neighbourhoods Associations Assemblies or WhatsApp Groups, meetings of housing committees, or other WhatsApp groups created to talk and share information about public security incidents. In addition to not acting in the policy process by themselves, these were not particularly creative spaces. However, they served as spaces of connection between citizens – not just social leaders – and of informal talk both about binding decisions and issues of common concern related to security, such as the upkeep and recuperation of a public park. The far minority were action-purpose sites, such as the Emergency Brigade acting in "Agüita de la Perdiz", who together with fighting fire, were advising the community in public security actions.[19]

Another aspect when thinking about spaces is the continuity between online and offline interactions. As noticed, the 17 territorial roundtables organised by the Municipality operate 24/7 online, as WhatsApp groups (actually, the professionals in the office took turns reviewing these groups during the weekends). One way of seeing this continuity is the constant referral to Roundtables WhatsApp groups during the face-to-face meetings of the same group or during meetings between officials and professionals. These referrals were made to follow up on previous requests or complaints, as a reason for actions or practices performed by the municipal team (such as a change in the route of inspectors, for example) or to justify requests from

[18] Fieldnotes observations, Friday 2nd of June.
[19] Interview, two members of the Emergency Brigade.

the municipal team to officials working for the national government. WhatsApp was also relevant for the interactions one-to-one between social leaders and officials/professionals/elected representatives.

Even when my research did not include online observations, the impact of this medium was visible in the day-to-day work of the officials I observed which was also acknowledged by several of them during our interviews. WhatsApp was also particularly important for the organisation of neighbour's associations. When speaking with them about their sites for discussions, they talked about various WhatsApp groups. In some neighbourhoods, they had several WhatsApp groups to organise passages, passages delegates and another one for the board of the neighbour's association. In another neighbourhood, they had one big WhatsApp Group, this time uncontrolled by the neighbour's association, specifically for dealing with public security problems.[20]

Even when online deliberation has been increasingly the attention of scholars working within the deliberative framework (Friess & Eilders, 2015) the possibilities and perils of WhatsApp as a specific platform of communication have not received as much attention as Facebook or Twitter/X. However, the significance of WhatsApp suggests issues of inclusivity – for sure in the access to a mobile phone, and a data plan but also the comfortability of doing politics through an online medium.

c. Practices and activities: What are they doing?

There was a lot of talk about public security-related issues during my stay in Entre Ríos. During meetings of officials, in the neighbourhood's association headquarters, informal talk around football matches, during the evenings in an amateur's football club, during the breaks of a folklore group, and the lunches in the office of the DSP. Issues of security were widely discussed, and not only in more formal spaces. However, even when deliberation can arise from various forms of communication, not all talk nor discussion is deliberation (Curato et al., 2017).

What are these actors doing when they talk about security issues? How deliberative that talk is? I do not have much space here and I have not progressed enough in my analysis to answer these questions, but these are questions I expect to explore. In that context, various forms of emotionally loaded and non-abstract communication will be included/looked for. However, also from a systemic perspective, the question will not only be whether they deliberate or not, or to what degree, but what is the relationship between their activities and practices and how they contribute to the deliberative and democratic strength of the entire system (exploring deliberative as an adjective) (Parkinson, 2018)

On the other hand, deliberation is not the only practice that could be useful to achieve the objectives of a democratic deliberative system. Other practices have also their strengths and weaknesses, such as recognising, resisting, representing, voting, joining and exiting (Warren, 2017). Which of these practices are enacted? I saw plenty of representation in Entre Ríos: both the activities of elected representatives and the

[20] Although I sent them an invitation to participate in my research through one of its members, nobody replied or contacted me.

creation and empowerment of civil society representatives. I also observed explicit forms of resistance, such as the intervention of one social leader contesting the dynamic of the CCSP. I anticipate an analysis of the data would not show much exiting, with the reduced choices available. There were instances of protesting as well, though apparently not connected to the policy-making process at the local level and only regarding specific issues more aligned with progressive publics. Again, I will interrogate my date looking for these kinds of practices as well, and asking what they bring to the quality of the deliberative and democratic system around public security policies.

Finally, there is the question of connection. In what way, do the actions and practices being enacted by different actors substantially strengthen the connection of the citizens, and the public sphere, with the decision-making process? (C. Hendriks et al., 2020)

5. Conclusion.

The design and implementation of crime and public security policies face some well-discussed challenges worldwide that take various forms according to the context. The inclusion of citizens as active participants or discussants of the design or implementation of security or crime policies is not new in the global north (Crawford, 1999) nor in the south (Sozzo, 2011), especially in crime prevention policies. However, there is still a need to look at this phenomenon using the theoretical tools offered by deliberative and participatory democracy.

My doctoral study aims to contribute to filling this gap by studying the interactions between citizens, officials, professionals and elected representatives in Entre Ríos, a medium-sized Chilean city. This paper aims to help me move forward with the analysis of the data produced during my 5-month ethnographic fieldwork there. For that purpose, I offer an initial mapping of the data, structured by the categories of actors, sites, practices and activities, that does not claim in any way to be definitive nor exhaustive.

From this first understanding, I anticipate encountering issues of practical inclusivity and power imbalances between actors. In addition, there seems to be a lot of democratic and deliberative potential in the variety of actors involved, the role that Universities could play and the apparent diversity of spaces opened for talk and action. However, those spaces seem overtly controlled by state agencies, which might limit the availability of discourses actively affecting the policy process. Finally, other practices in the system might also be contributing to the empowerment of subordinated actors – such as the ubiquitous representation or the ability to join and form associations.

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