



Revista Científica General José María Córdova

(Colombian Journal of Military and Strategic Studies)

Bogotá D.C., Colombia

ISSN 1900-6586 (print), 2500-7645 (online)

Journal homepage: <https://www.revistacientificaesmic.com>

Citizen security and community policing in Argentina: a case study in Rosario

Marco Iazzetta

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8895-3847>

marcoiazzetta@fcpolit.unr.edu.ar

Universidad Nacional de Rosario, Rosario, Argentina

To cite this article: Iazzetta, M. (2019). Citizen security and community policing in Argentina: a case study in Rosario. *Revista Científica General José María Córdova*, 17(25), 93-110. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21830/19006586.387>

Published online: 1 January 2019

The articles published by *Revista Científica General José María Córdova* are Open Access under a Creative Commons license: Attribution - Non Commercial - No Derivatives.



Submit your article to this journal:

<https://www.revistacientificaesmic.com/index.php/esmic/about/submissions>



Miles Doctus



Revista Científica General José María Córdova
(Colombian Journal of Military and Strategic Studies)
Bogotá D.C., Colombia

Volume 17, Number 25, January-March 2019, pp. 93-110
<http://dx.doi.org/10.21830/19006586.387>

Citizen security and community policing in Argentina: a case study in Rosario

Seguridad ciudadana y actividad policial comunitaria en Argentina.
Estudio de caso en Rosario

Marco Iazzetta

Universidad Nacional de Rosario, Rosario, Argentina

ABSTRACT. A process of police reform was initiated in 2013, in the Province of Santa Fe (Argentina), aimed at the sectorization of the provincial police force. To this end, three new structures were created. In this work, we analyze the design of one of these structures, the Community Police of the Province of Santa Fe. This case study, of an early experience, which took place in the city of Rosario, provides an advantaged insight into its impending fate. Thus, we maintain that, from the beginning, the Community Police of Santa Fe was conditioned by problems in its design; moreover, it was conceived as an institution subordinated to the “traditional” forms of police activity with community profiles.

KEYWORDS: Argentina; citizen security; community police; Rosario

RESUMEN. En 2013 se inició en la Provincia de Santa Fe (Argentina) un proceso de reforma policial que tuvo por objeto la sectorización de la Policía provincial. En este sentido, se crearon tres nuevas estructuras. En el presente trabajo analizamos el diseño de una de estas: la Policía Comunitaria de la Provincia de Santa Fe. Consideramos que el estudio de caso de una primera experiencia desarrollada en la ciudad de Rosario constituye una vía de entrada privilegiada para comprender el destino posterior de esta. Así, sostenemos que, desde el comienzo, la Policía Comunitaria de Santa Fe estuvo condicionada por problemas que se observan en su diseño y, además, fue concebida como una institución subordinada a las formas “tradicionales” de actividad policial con perfil comunitario.

PALABRAS CLAVE: seguridad ciudadana; Policía Comunitaria; Rosario; Argentina.

Section: SECURITY AND DEFENSE • Scientific and technological research article

Received: September 5, 2018 • Approved: December 11, 2018

CONTACT: Marco Iazzetta ✉ marcoiazzetta@fcpolit.unr.edu.ar

Introduction

Public security and, especially, police matters are not topics with which Latin American progressivism has felt comfortable. However, from the 1990s, some governments belonging to this political spectrum attempted to carry out a series of reforms on the police institutions of their countries to reduce, contain or control the repressive and corrupt imprint that characterized them and, thus, encourage citizen participation in matters of public security (Saín, 2010).

To this end, in 2013, in the Province of Santa Fe (Argentina), a process of police reform was initiated during the government of the Civic and Social Progressive Front (FPCyS in Spanish)¹. The effort was motivated by several causes, among them, an increase in number of crimes against property, an exponential growth in the homicide rate, and an increase in the criminal activity of complex criminal gangs, as well as the blatancy of the active participation of police officers in criminal organizations and the management of illegal economies, and the arrest of the Santa Fe Police Chief. This police reform was characterized by a sectorization process of the Santa Fe Police through the creation of three structures: The Investigative Police (PDI), the Tactical Action Police (PAT), and the Community Police (PC).² In this article, we will focus only on the analysis of the latter.

Created in January of 2014, the Community Police had two “pilot tests.” The first was done in the Barranquitas neighborhood of the city of Santa Fe; the second, in the Las Flores neighborhood of the city of Rosario. As we will see in the development of the research, the objective was to create a differentiated police force that would yield positive results, based on a strategy of monitoring and accountability with the citizens, to present these results to the heads of the regional police and propose a community profile for all of the Police in the Province of Santa Fe.

Since then, the Community Police has undergone different stages. Currently, it is sustained in a limited and subverted fashion in comparison with the goals that were set at the time of its formulation. Its gradual dismantling is noticeable in some smaller towns of the province based on the relocation of its agents to other areas of the Santa Fe Police and the closing of the Community Police Houses—a physical structure that they owned—. In the major cities, however, this police device would, instead, be experiencing a process of “refunctionalization” (Asumió el director Pereyra, 2018; Por las críticas de los vecinos,

1 The FPCyS is a center-left political alliance that emerged in Argentina in 2006. It is integrated by the Socialist Party, the Southern Free Movement, the Progressive Democratic Party, the Civic Coalition ARI Santa Fe, a sector of the Radical Civic Union (UCR), and a sector of the Generation for a National Meeting (GEN). This alliance governs in the Province of Santa Fe since 2007, after the election of Hermes Binner as governor, the first socialist to hold a position at this level in the history of Argentina. He was succeeded by Antonio Bonfatti (2011-2015) and the current Governor Miguel Lifschitz.

2 It must be noted that another police structure was created in 2012: The Road Safety Police (PSV).

2018). In the case of Rosario, for example, although the same number of agents was maintained, they were no longer assigned stably in a neighborhood to carry out their police tasks on a daily basis. Currently, they are concentrated in the same building and from there, they are sent “where necessary” to fulfill tasks of police proximity (Por las críticas de los vecinos, 2018).

For this work, we will limit ourselves to analyzing the way in which the Community Police was designed for the Las Flores neighborhood (Rosario), for one of the “pilot tests” that were implemented. Firstly, we will characterize, from a theoretical perspective, the police with a community profile in general, to later give an account of the emergency context of the public policy in question.

Finally, regarding the methodology used, we relied, on the one hand, on the information obtained from interviews with political and police officials,³ on the other, on the analysis of regulations, criminal statistics and various official documents that address the subject in question.

Theoretical framework

Community policing is one of the most implemented police reform strategies around the world to respond to abuses of power, lack of effectiveness, low public trust, and misgivings about the legitimacy of the police (Crawford, 1997).

There is an extensive bibliography on this subject from different disciplines, perspectives, and approaches. To begin, we can mention works that analyze the implementation and evaluation of community policing programs through case studies: Beato (2004), Campoy-Torrente, Chelini and Soto-Urpina (2016), Chinchilla (2004), De Mesquita Neto (2004), Dellasoppa (2002), Eijkman (2007), Labra Díaz (2011), Llorente (2004), Pontoon (2009), Skogan and Hartnett (1997), and Tudela-Poblete (2012).

A second group focuses on the approach to the comparison of different experiences of community policing: Arias and Ungar (2013), Bergman and Flom (2012), Frühling (2003, 2004), Frühling and Candinas (2004), and Wisler and Onwudiwe (2009).

Finally, we mention other studies that, although they refer to different cases and present results of empirical research, have a predominantly theoretical or historical focus: Dammert (2001), Fielding (2002, 2005), Kappeler and Gaines (2009), Macdonald (2002), Newburn and Reiner (2012), and Peak (2013). Among these works, we underscore Brodeur’s book (2011), which devotes a section to examine the community police and the problem-solving police, within the framework of the reform process of the Anglo-

3 Between February and March of 2018 a series of structured interviews was conducted with officials who were involved in the process of formulation and implementation of the Community Police of Santa Fe.

Saxon police initiated after the Second World War. In this same sense, Greene (2006) reviews the emergence of the two police action models mentioned above and analyzes the historical development of other approaches, for which it takes into account the assumptions that are implicit in each one.

Meanwhile, Cordner (2014) sought to define community policing and determine the causes of its popularity at the end of the 20th century, the difficulties of its implementation, the evidence of its effectiveness, and its future possibilities. The works of Sozzo (2000, 2008) provide us a more general vision of the different tactics of crime prevention and, pertaining to our object of study, community tactics, as he describes its diverse theoretical positions, intervention techniques, and the common criticisms it is subject to.

As Dammert (2012) points out, an adequate approach to crime prevention at the community level allows 1) identifying situational prevention strategies for crime and violence to reduce the possibilities of criminal activity and 2) developing prevention actions through a social approach that points to the causes of crime and violence. Similarly, several stages can shape the community-level approach and include 1) community and organizational participation for the success and development of strategic partnerships; 2) an evaluation to identify the main problems of violence and crime in the community; 3) the development of a prevention strategy for the community; 4) the management and implementation of the strategy; 5) the establishment of coordination mechanisms with civil society organizations; and 6) the monitoring and evaluation of the strategy.

Community policing stands out among the different intervention techniques because of its community orientation in the prevention of crime and for its implementation in diverse national contexts in Latin America. However, this is not a contemporary development; instead, it is the rediscovery of the principles of police action that were enunciated in the Anglo-Saxon world from 1830 to 1930. The ideas of proaction, prevention, and association between the police and the public go back to the principles of the British police, as declared by Sir Robert Peel. As for the emphasis on the maintenance of order, which implies conceiving the policeman as a generalist rather than an expert or a specialized worker. Brodeur (2011) finds its origins in the United States, in the theories that they were enunciated before the works of the Wickersham Commission, in the year 1931.

There is also disagreement on the elements that characterize this type of police. As Fielding (2005) points out, the term community policing is a chameleon concept; it serves to refer to a process in which the control of crime is shared with the public, as well as a means to promote communication with the public—for example, consultation meetings—. However, in a more general sense, it refers to an iconic style of control, in which the police approach the public and understand their concerns through the regular daily contact they

maintain and act according to the wishes of the community. In this sense, it is considered that community policing programs stand out because of a series of central characteristics, such as preventive control in very small geographic areas, the establishment of close relations between the community and the police, the intervention of the community in preventive policing work, and the participation of the police in the study of the conditions and circumstances that favor conflicts and crime at the local level (Brodeur, 2011; Dammert, 2007; Frühling, 2005; Reiner, 2012; Sozzo, 2000, 2008).

As indicated by Saín (2010), the community policing model requires not only new police strategies but also a new institutional approach and a new organic-functional structure. Regarding the organizational aspect, it implies a profound change in terms of operational decentralization, the delegation of responsibilities for planning and tactical guidance, and the development of new ways of evaluating police performance. Operationally, the extension of the traditional police mandate (based on the work of prevention and criminal conspiracy, as well as in the maintenance of public order) is required to resolve community issues that directly or indirectly affect the local security situation. It also requires the development of new forms of police intervention, focused on a more proactive than reactive approach, which emphasizes the causes over the consequences of violence and crime. It also requires a specialized selection of police personnel, as well as their training as a public servant and social manager. Finally, the establishment of mechanisms of cooperation, coordination, and joint interventions with the local government, local state agencies or national government should be taken into account, as well as the incorporation and intervention of police actions in local social development policies and the obligation to render accounts of police work to local political authorities and the community (Saín, 2010).

On the other hand, as Fielding (2005) and Sozzo (2000, 2008) suggest, the construction of community policing rests on a fictitious conception of community. Behind this device lies the theoretical assumption that a community constitutes a group of people who share not only a geographical location but also interests or identities. However, as the last author alluded to, a community is not synonymous with consensus. In urban areas, with an unremitting mixture of genres, ethnic groups, cultures, age groups, and classes, among others, this harmonious image becomes mythical.

Discussion

Emergence of the Community Police of Santa Fe and reform process in security

As discussed in the introduction, an exponential increase in crime and homicides and the participation of police officers in criminal organizations (Tognolli case), as well as the

increased activity of criminal gangs (the case of *Los Monos*) characterized the implementation of the community police.

Concerning the increase in the rate of crimes against property, in 2007, the province had 2004 crimes per 100 thousand inhabitants⁴, a number that rose to 2206 in 2014.⁵ In 2011, the homicide rate in the province increased to 9 per 100 thousand inhabitants, 10.2 in 2012, 13.1 in 2013, and 13.6 in 2014.⁶ However, to have a broader picture, we have to look at the homicide rate in the two most populous cities, Santa Fe and Rosario. In 2011, in Santa Fe, the rate reached 16.7 per 100 thousand inhabitants, 21.7 in 2012, 24.3 in 2013, and 32.8 in 2014.⁷ A similar evolution can be observed in Rosario, which reached a rate of 14.5 per 100 thousand inhabitants in 2011, 16.2 in 2012, 23 in 2013, and 21.1 in 2014.⁸ It should be noted that for the period 2011-2014 it is estimated that the homicide rate at the national level was 7.6 per 100 thousand inhabitants; thus, the rates at the provincial level far exceeded the national average.⁹

Secondly, it is worth mentioning an occurrence that drove to an unprecedented political crisis in the government of the Civic and Social Progressive Front (FPCyS), the arrest of Hugo Tognoli, chief of police of the Province of Santa Fe, in March 2013. The federal justice finally sentenced him, in 2015, to six years in prison for complicity and connivance with drug trafficking.¹⁰

Lastly, the analyzed period was characterized by an upsurge in the actions of the narco-criminal gangs, especially in the city of Rosario, which in large part explains the increase in the homicide rate during those years. The paradigmatic case would be that of the band *Los Monos*, an organization that set up a millionaire business based on the production and sale of cheap cocaine, adapted to the popular market.¹¹ The importance of this band is that they devised a business model characterized by the dissemination of more than 200 bunkers to sell the drug and protect themselves from their competitors

4 Retrieved from <https://www.santafe.gov.ar/index.php/web/content/view/full/26561> (10/27/2018). It should be noted that this year is used as a reference because, from then until 2016, criminal statistics were not published at the national level.

5 Information obtained from <https://estadisticascriminales.minseg.gob.ar/#> (10/27/2018).

6 2017 Report on Homicides of the Public Ministry of the Province of Santa Fe <https://bit.ly/2qAXW5i> (10/27/2018).

7 Report on Homicides of the Department La Capital and City of Santa Fe (2014) of the Public Ministry of the Province of Santa Fe: <https://bit.ly/2PNH1uw> (10/27/2018)

8 Report on Homicides of the Department of Rosario and the City of Rosario (2014) of the Public Ministry of the Province of Santa Fe: <https://bit.ly/2AW5gyg> (10/27/2018).

9 Information from the official site of Criminal Statistics of the Argentine Republic of the Ministry of Security of the Nation: <https://estadisticascriminales.minseg.gob.ar/#> (10/27/2018).

10 From: Fue declarado culpable por encubrimiento agravado del vendedor de drogas de la zona costera santafesina Daniel "Tuerto" Mendoza y por coacciones a la dirigente de la ONG Madres Solidarias, Norma Castaños, denunciante de dicha situación: <https://www.lacapital.com.ar/policiales/por-que-condenaron-prision-hugo-tognoli-ex-jefe-policia-la-provincia-n484111.html>.

11 For more information on the Los Monos organization, see De los Santos and Lascano (2017).

with those armored constructions that were in sight of everyone, including the police. The extreme violence that they spread through Rosario –especially after the death of their leader, Claudio Cantero, alias El Pájaro (May 26, 2013)– was always used to maintain the drug trafficking business.¹²

Faced with this situation, the government of Santa Fe developed a series of measures to change the image of the management of Governor Antonio Bonfatti and, especially, that of the provincial police. In November 2012, the management of the Civic and Social Progressive Front (FPCyS) promoted the Democratic Security Plan, structured from ten “actions or objectives” in security policies: 1) the creation of a new police force based on the segmentation of its functions and through regionalization; 2) the implementation of community security experiences; 3) the exponential increase in police equipment, infrastructure, and technology; 4) the transformation of curricula and police training; 5) the implementation of centers and an Integrated Complaint System (911); 6) the management of complex crimes; 7) the creation of a sports safety area; 8) the creation of the Road Safety Agency; 9) the professionalization of prison staff; and 10) the creation of the Provincial Security Council (González, 2014).

In December of 2012, with the enactment of Law 13297 and Decree 3973/2012 –which promulgates the previous regulations with amendments– the “emergency in matters of public security” is declared throughout the provincial territory for the term of eighteen months, “with the primary purpose of achieving and guaranteeing the integral protection of people’s lives and property.” The regulation empowers the executive power to readjust the resources and dispose of everything necessary to restructure and organize the provincial police into smaller territorial units, create a Unified Tactical Body and a provincial General Directorate of Investigations, establish district security officers, promote citizen participation in the selection of authorities, increase the interference of local governments, and take all of the necessary administrative measures so that the areas of personnel, logistics, and management of administrative proceedings are directly dependent on the Ministry of Security. It also establishes the increase in the number of positions of the permanent personnel plant of the Police of the Province of Santa Fe of the Ministry of Security to four thousand persons.¹³

Law 13408 of 2014, modifies Article 2, clause C of the previously mentioned regulations and stipulates that *applicants who have completed the first year of the police career program may be incorporated as personnel of the Police of the Province of Santa Fe*, thus, entering in the rank of non-commissioned officer of the Police. Previously, Law 12333 of 2004,

12 More information at <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/2124046-los-monos-la-banda-que-construyo-su-negocio-narco-con-la-muerte>.

13 Digital version of Law 13297 and Decree 3973/2012 available at <https://bit.ly/2B1EJ2D> (10/27/2018).

created by the Institute of Public Security (ISEP in Spanish) established that to apply for admission to the police force, applicants had to complete a career program as a security assistant, which has a minimum duration of two years. In other words, Law 13408 the training period of the aspirants entering the security corps was shortened; *in only one year they would be able to realize "preventive functions in police stations and public places."*¹⁴

Within this normative framework, a process of reform in the matter of security begins. In the first place, a process of regionalization and decentralization of the Santa Fe Police is promoted, starting with the creation of five regional general directorates:

- Region 1. Reconquista node
- Region 2. Rafaela node
- Region 3. Santa Fe node
- Region 4. Rosario node
- Region 5. Venado Tuerto node

All of the nodes functioned under the administrative and functional dependency of the Secretariat of Public Security, managed and commanded by the Police Headquarters of the Province of Santa Fe. The objective of this reform was "to decompress the central administration, favoring more agile resolutions and greater proximity with the citizenship."¹⁵ In this sense, it was sought to create five police headquarters, with head offices in the city seat of the corresponding node in each region, with five territorial directors of the Ministry of Security (political heads of the Police).¹⁶

Besides this process of regionalization and decentralization, another of *fragmentation* or *sectorization* of the Santa Fe Police can be observed in the creation of four police structures: The Road Safety Police (PSV), the Investigation Police (PDI), the Tactical Action Police (PAT), and the Community Police. It should be noted that the management and operational coordination of each of these were exercised by four different general directions and four directions of regional representation in each of the nodes.¹⁷

In such a way, the civil and strategic administration of the Santa Fe Police was enforced, from the subordination of the institution to the public safety directives formulated by the governmental authorities.

14 Law 13297 and Decree 3973/2012.

15 Decree 4732/2014. See digital version at <https://bit.ly/2OFdhv3> (10/27/2018).

16 The latter were appointed, but, ultimately, the vision of police leadership prevailed and the leadership was not decentralized into five regional chiefs.

17 This situation, ultimately did not prevail and was modified with decrees 2001/2016 and 2002/2016.

Design of the Community Police of Santa Fe

The creation of a police force with a community profile was not an initiative of the Provincial Police; it was the result of Raul Lamberto's procurement in the Ministry of Security of Santa Fe. The objective was to create a differentiated police force that, through a monitoring and accountability strategy with citizens, that could eventually yield positive results in the form of a surveillance profile, which could later be extended to all the provincial police. However, there is no regulatory framework regulating the provincial Community Police and establishing its objectives, functions, and organizational structure; it was created through a ministerial resolution whose text does not detail this information. Decree 2710/2013 of creation of the Provincial Proximity Police Office, establishes that the Community Police, "to optimize the quality of the public service that public safety represents, has the objective of approaching

the neighbor, the families, integrating into a social nucleus in which it acquires respect and trust to strengthen its social ties with the community it serves, restoring the relationship of trust, confidence, and cordiality that should exist between citizens and the members of society that have been educated, trained, and taught in the work of caring for them and protecting social peace.

Official documents state that the community police is characterized by 1) having a territorial scope of action limited to a given territory; 2) establishing close links with citizens, through the understanding of their environment and their problems; 3) developing preventive and proactive police activity; 4) establishing alliances with local authorities for the adequate development of crime prevention and violence activities, as well as the community services assumed; 5) having functional autonomy within the legally assigned functions and the framework of the strategies and plans defined jointly with the community in which it operates; 6) having public accountability for their actions (Dirección Provincial de Policía de Proximidad, 2014).

From the interviews carried out with the different officials, it is clear that the community agent should have a leadership role and act as mediator and representative of the State. The agent should thoroughly understand the social fabric, as well as other public departments to cooperate in the fulfillment of the unmet community demands concerning public services, and aspects like neighborhood lighting, weeding, and others. The objective was for citizens to return to the public space to increase social control and reduce crime.

In the neighborhood of Rosario, where the first community experience would be implemented, Governor Antonio Bonfatti decided that it would be in Las Flores. From the interviewees' perspective, the choice of the neighborhood had a symbolic meaning; it demonstrated the provincial state's decision to recover the territory in which the criminal

band, Los Monos, acted as a “para-State,” providing services and protection to the population of the neighborhood.

Regarding the distribution of human resources, it was established that 40 community policemen would be assigned to the mentioned territory (28 cadets graduated from the ISEP in August 2013 and 12 police officers with no more than 5 years of experience), one for each “micro-district” (every 400 meters), who would have to carry out patrolling in a straight line for six (6) hours a day.

To this end, a pre-selection was made among the graduated cadets. During the months prior to the implementation of the first experience, a course was offered at the ISEP through an “Intensive Course in Community Policing Skills” with a duration of 30 hours. In addition, an intensive mediation workshop was held on “community facilitators for the resolution of conflicts,” with a duration of 60 hours. The workshop’s faculty was integrated by professional mediators of the Provincial Directorate of Dejudicialization of the Solution of the Interpersonal Conflicts of the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights (Dirección Provincial de Policía de Proximidad, 2014). Concerning, the election of police officers who had just completed their training courses, one of the interviewees pointed out that this was intended to allow them to enter the new device with the least possible introspection of the police culture so that they could internalize the new community profile.

Upon arriving at the neighborhood, the community agents would have to introduce themselves to each neighbor of the assigned “micro-neighborhood” (*microbarrio*) give them their card, which would include their email and official cell phone, and explain what their functions would be in terms of security. On the other hand, one of the official documents states that

it would be valuable if the community police officer, through a non-suggestive circular dialogue, could access information about the resident, including social, economic, and cultural characteristics, and ascertaining his personal opinion about the neighborhood’s security. This information will allow the community police, among other things, to make an accurate diagnosis about their objective. (Dirección Provincial de Policía de Proximidad, 2014)

It was also stated, on that occasion, that the community police officers should deliver brochures on the program to the neighbors and a manual of self-protection practices. They should take advantage of “this occasion to make them aware of their new role as facilitators of consensus relations of preventive situations of violence and crime” (Dirección Provincial de Policía de Proximidad, 2014). In this sense, they would have to make recommendations to the inhabitants on situational crime controls and the adoption of measures to reduce the criminal opportunities.

It was also considered important that the community police meet with other actors, entities or institutions (schools, neighborhoods, clubs, health centers, local authorities, churches, and businesses) to build a “strategic alliance with the community of their intervention” (Dirección Provincial de Policía de Proximidad, 2014).

The agents would be distinguished from the other members of the Santa Fe Police by orange-colored epaulets and would carry their regulatory weapon when carrying out their daily activities. Likewise, the decentralization of the taking of complaints was raised as a fundamental issue, for which the community police officers would carry in their tactical belt a fanny pack with standardized forms of complaints and manifestations. However, the complaints would have to be formalized at the police station. The community police would have to follow up on them to advise the citizen of their progress.

Additionally, the creation of a physical structure called the Community Police House (CPC) was promoted, where it was forbidden to lodge detainees or carry out briefs. These spaces were architecturally and conceptually designed as meeting points for residents and community agents. Here, the head of the police center and administrative, technical support would carry out their work. The first would have as functions to audit the patrolling of the agents, control the quality of the police service, and establish and impart general lines of community action in its center, all the while, observing the “microscale” defined by each community police officer in conjunction with the neighbors. The objective was the establishment of a bottom-up public policy, unlike the traditional structure in which the political officer sets the agenda for the population.

The primary responsibility of the administrative, technical support was to maintain permanent communication, via radio, with the community agents performing their patrol work, as well as receiving requests and responding to any type of requirement formulated in person at the CPC by the neighbors, and refer the cases to be presented to the pertinent offices or organizations. However, if neighbors approached the CPC to issue complaints, this officer would be unable to accept them; instead, the officer would refer them to the nearest police station or contact the community police agent assigned to the area to process them.

The community police officers’ performance was evaluated by presenting, within the first two months of each year, a management report to the Collective Working Group, giving an account of the activities carried out and the results obtained in the previous year, listing the resources used and the obstacles and issues faced and the measures taken to overcome them. The report should also include suggestions and define the guidelines for action to improve the agent’s performance in the following year. It was projected that the management report would be presented at an annual public hearing in the respective

“micro-neighborhood” and it would be available to any neighbor. Moreover, once a year, the community police should conduct a survey of each neighbor on the level of satisfaction of the expectations generated around the public community police service in the “micro-neighborhood.”

Problematization of the design of the Community Police of Santa Fe

Our attention is drawn, first of all, to the absence of a regulation that regulates the operation and defines the organizational structure of the Community Police of Santa Fe. Unlike the Police of Investigations (PDI) and the Police of Tactical Action (PAT) that were created through two extensive and detailed decrees, the Community Police was established through a ministerial resolution, lacking in details on the frame and function of each area, as well as the agent selection criteria, modality of work, and other necessary information.

Based on information obtained in one of the interviews, the creation of a functional structure was repeatedly tested, but these projects never prospered. Therefore, its structure continued to function *de facto*, with a structure made up of a director; two sub-directors, one for the north-center and another for the south area; a legal counsel division in charge of operations, logistics, information analysis, and protocol; a police chief; and a deputy chief for each of the five regions (which included the Community Police Houses, also formed by a chief, a deputy chief, a service chief, a guard chief, foot and motorized officers, and some transcribers).

The absence of a table of professional categories, the non-definition of the community police's functions, and missions is not a minor issue. From an administrative point of view, the staff members lose their right to move ahead in their careers because they do not know how to ascend; this gives rise to the use of any type of discretion when assigning the available positions. Similarly, because each area's functions are not legally defined, the staff's duties can be modified continuously. This could imply, for example, that police activity can change radically from day to day without any type of impediment. Regulations protect institutions and allow them to prosper over time.

Some of the issues pertaining to the functioning of the community police are highlighted below. The first one concerns the tendering of complaints. Although the community agent was allowed to receive the complaint, its formalization could only take place in the neighborhood police station and not in the Community Police House. An official interviewed justified this issue by pointing out that, from management, they wanted to avoid competition between the different police bodies or overlap activities. They knew that the traditional police would be resentful towards the community police because of the process they wanted to impose. The idea was to limit the community agent to recor-

ding the “incident,” encouraging the neighbor to offer his testimony to attain first-hand information concerning the criminal situation in the territory. The police station would later summon the issuing citizen to expand on the incident and initiate the investigation and the prosecutor’s intervention. We consider this procedure inimical, as the population was well aware that neighborhood police stations were suspected of collusion with the drug gangs.

Similarly, in cases of complex crime or high violence, the Community Police had to resort to the traditional police or the National Gendarmerie because they lacked the tools and training to deal with this type of problem. As we noted earlier, the Community Police was considered a manager, referring citizens to different public agencies to try to resolve their unmet. In this sense, if encountered with a situation of violence, they were compelled to request the intervention of the federal force or the police station.

Regarding this last issue, a “schizophrenic” logic by the provincial state is observed, when two diametrically opposed logics are set to intervene in the same territory. The first, community policing –which promotes citizen participation– is a form of preventive police activity that emphasizes the role of the police as a mediator in resolving community conflicts; the second, traditional control, which, as Saín (2010) points out, is characterized by the full occupation of the territory by a large number of officers carrying out surveillance and control duties through reactive interventions that seek the “saturation” of the police presence in the public ways.

From this last logic, the community is nothing more than a secondary and passive actor or a mere scenario in whose center the *dialectic of war* develops which, within the framework of this military vision of security, has served to justify and legitimize all forms of violent police activity.

The design process of the community police was marked by a high degree of improvisation. For instance, the selection of the Las Flores neighborhood to conduct the pilot tests was justified by the Civic and Social Progressive Front (FPCyS) because it wanted to demonstrate that the provincial state was not absent but actively involved in the problem of insecurity in a territory socked by the actions of the Los Monos group, despite the fact that, as we pointed out earlier, community officers are not prepared to handle cases of complex crimes. In this regard, Tudela Poblete (2008) points out that there is evidence that prevention programs will most likely be successful and work better in communities that need them the least, that is, in the most empowered and organized. Indeed, evidence shows that in communities with severe problems, the efforts and difficulties for the implementation of innovative strategies are greater and more complex and, typically, success is dubious (Sherman et al., 1998, p. 7). In brief, the selection of the places where the execution of these programs is commenced cannot be capricious.

Naturally, the selection should obey to objective and established criteria, according to duly designed variables, such as socioeconomic criteria, crime levels, which should be the most critical. The selected districts should represent high, medium, and low-income sectors, in addition to having high, medium, and low levels of crime, making it possible to obtain the results of the proximity police program in districts with diverse social and criminal situations. These results should also be compared with control areas with similar characteristics but without such a program (Frühling, 2003).

Lastly, we consider that those in charge of designing the community police were unfamiliar with the social policies that the municipality was developing in the city of Rosario. Some of the roles assigned to the agents overlapped with programs that were already being implemented by the local government, for example, concerning the instruction in trades for unemployed neighborhood youth or regarding issues of gender violence, which local government, conjointly with civil society organizations, had already been addressing.

Conclusion

Changes in organizational structures, procedural means, institutional routines, and their symbolic foundations require diversified, flexible, gradual, and persistent interventions over time to gradually produce new institutional practices (Saín, 2010).

In this sense, we concur with Arias and Ungar (2013) who affirm that a successful police reform requires political commitment. Innovative policies only advance when governments provide the resources and incentives for other agencies to collaborate and coordinate with the police. Similarly, there must be police cooperation. To achieve reform, the support of the medium and low-level bureaucracy of the police officers is essential because their resistance to change can interfere with the development and implementation of the programs. Finally, society must be included; the knowledge of citizens is the best source for designing preventive policies.

According to Greene (2006), for the police to adopt the community profile, it is required that this be an organizational philosophy integrated into the institution comprehensively and not only as a new project or a temporary specialization. In addition, given the natural resistance that can be expected against programs of this kind, a clear definition of each police member's purpose and role is essential. The objectives of the program should be complemented with a vision, redefining, if necessary, the elements of its mission and describing the new police values (Frühling, 2003).

Although the government of the Civic and Social Progressive Front (FPCyS) proposal was to strengthen relations between the community and the police and increase the

intervention of the former in preventive policing and security matters, it encountered resistance within the police force of Santa Fe.

The police leadership of Santa Fe was reluctant to incorporate a form of police activity with a community profile. It based its position on what González, Montero, and Sozzo (2009) called a “language of deficit.” In other words, they believed that the security problems of the province were the result of a lack of equipment, personnel, legal powers, salary increase or decent working conditions, among other causes.

The excessive increase in the rate of homicides at the provincial level, a phenomenon that coincided with the 2015 gubernatorial election, possibly occasioned the coexistence of conflicting strategies during Bonfatti’s management, as well as the suspension (or direct archiving) of actions that were part of the initial security program. This is evident, for example, in the coexistence, in the same territory, of diametrically opposed police activity logic, as happened in the case studied in the Las Flores neighborhood. As Gonzalez (2014) points out, political actors need to resolve the dilemma created by the need to develop actions in the field of crime control and, simultaneously, legitimize their position in terms of votes. The implementation of a community policing demands time (and resources) for agents to actively engage with the community, develop partnerships, and carry out creative problem solving (Cordner, 2014). “And, as is well known, in politics, time is a scarce resource and the effects of policies do not always coincide with electoral results.”

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank the organizers and participants of the Defense, Public Policy and Democracy conference of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) for their contributions to the development of this article.

Disclaimer

The author declares that there is no potential conflict of interest related to the article.

Funding

The author does not declare a source of funding for the development of this article.

About the author

Marco Iazzetta is a Ph.D. in Political Science from Universidad Nacional de Rosario (Argentina) and Philosophy from the Université Paris 8, France. He is a professor and researcher at the Faculty of Political Science and RRII, Universidad Nacional de Rosario.

Research topics: public safety, violence, and police studies. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6636-8006>, contacto: luciano.anzelini@unq.edu.ar

References

- Arias, E. D., & Ungar, M. (2013). La vigilancia comunitaria y la crisis de seguridad ciudadana en Latinoamérica. *Estudios Socio-Jurídicos*, 15(1), 19-52.
- Asumió el director Pereyra como nuevo jefe de la Policía capitalina. (2018, abril 28). *Uno*. Recuperado de https://www.unosantafe.com.ar/policiales/asumio-el-director-pereyra-como-nuevo-jefe-de-la-policia-capitalina-04282018_SJdp7sO3PQ.
- Beato, C. (2004). Reinventar la policía: la experiencia de Belo Horizonte. En H. Frühling (Ed.), *Calles más seguras. Estudios de policía comunitaria en América Latina* (pp. 139-175). Washington: Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo.
- Bergman, M., & Flom, H. (2012). Determinantes de la confianza en la policía: una comparación entre Argentina y México. *Perfiles Latinoamericanos*, 40, 97-122.
- Brodeur, J. P. (2011). *Las caras de la policía*. Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libro.
- Campoy-Torrente, P., Chelini, A. A., & Soto-Urpina, C. (2016). Evaluación de la policía de proximidad en la ciudad de Santa Fe. *Urvio, Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios de Seguridad*, 19, 70-89.
- Chinchilla, L. (2004). El caso del municipio de Villa Nueva, Guatemala. En H. Frühling (Ed.), *Calles más seguras. Estudios de policía comunitaria en América Latina*. Washington: Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo.
- Cordner, G. (2014). Community policing. M. D. Reisig & R. J. Kane. In *The Oxford handbook of police and policing*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Crawford, A. (1997). *The local governance of crime: Appeals to community and partnerships*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Dammert, L. (2001). Participación comunitaria en la prevención del delito en América Latina ¿De qué participación hablamos? En H. Frühling & A. Candina (Eds.), *Policía, sociedad y Estado. Modernización y reforma policial en América del Sur*. Santiago de Chile: Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo.
- Dammert, L. (2007). *Perspectivas y dilemas de la seguridad ciudadana en América Latina*. Ecuador, Quito: Flasco.
- Dammert, L. (2012). *Seguridad ciudadana y cohesión social en América Latina*. Recuperado de http://www.academia.edu/2398553/Seguridad_Ciudadana_y_Cohesi%C3%B3n_Social_en_Am%C3%A9rica_Latina.
- De los Santos, G. & Lascano, H. (2017). *Los Monos. Historia de la familia narco que transformó a Rosario en un infierno*. Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires: Sudamericana.
- De Mesquita Neto, P. (2004). La policía comunitaria en Sao Paulo: problemas de implementación y consolidación. En H. Frühling (Ed.), *Calles más seguras. Estudios de policía comunitaria en América Latina*. Washington: Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo.
- Dellasoppa, E. (2002). Estrategias e racionalidade na polícia civil do Estado de Rio de Janeiro. En R. Briceño León (Comp.), *Violencia, sociedad y justicia en América Latina*. Buenos Aires: Clacso.
- Dirección Provincial de Policía de Proximidad. (2014). *Programa Policía de Proximidad*. Santa Fe: Ministerio de Seguridad de la Provincia de Santa Fe.
- Eijkman, Q. (2007). *El largo camino de la policía comunitaria: las estrategias de derechos humanos para la policía de Costa Rica*. Costa Rica: Flasco.
- Fielding, N. G. (2002). Theorizing community policing. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 42(1), 147-163.

- Fielding, N. G. (2005). Concepts and theory in community policing. *The Howard Journal*, 44(5), 460-472.
- Frühling, H. (2003). *Policía comunitaria y reforma policial en América Latina ¿Cuál es el impacto?* Santiago de Chile: Centro de Estudios en Seguridad Ciudadana.
- Frühling, H. (2004). La policía comunitaria en América Latina: un análisis basado en cuatro estudios de caso. En H. Frühling (Ed.), *Calles más seguras. Estudios de policía comunitaria en América Latina*. Washington: Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo.
- Frühling, H., & Candinas, A. (2004). Participación ciudadana y reformas a la policía en América del Sur. Santiago de Chile: CED.
- Frühling, H. (2005). La reforma de la policía y el proceso de democratización. En H. Frühling, J. S. Tulchin & H. A. Holding (Eds.), *Crimen y violencia en América Latina*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- González, G. (2014). Progresismo y políticas de seguridad. Tensiones y contradicciones. El caso de la Provincia de Santa Fe (2007-2013). *Cuestiones de Sociología*, 10.
- González, G., Montero, A., & Sozzo, M. (2009). ¿Reformar la policía? Representaciones y opiniones de los policías en la Provincia de Santa Fe. En M. Lila, L. Caimari, L. Bohoslavsky & C. Schettini (Eds.), *La policía en perspectiva histórica: Argentina y Brasil (del siglo XIX a la actualidad)*. Argentina: Universidad Nacional de General San Martín, Centro de Estudios Latinoamericanos, CABA.
- Greene, J. R. (2006). La policía de proximidad en Estados Unidos: cambio en la naturaleza, estructura y funciones de la policía. En R. Barberet & J. Barquín (Eds.), *Justicia penal en el siglo XXI*, New York y Granada: National Institute of Justice.
- Kappeler, V. E., & Gaines, L. (2009). *Community policing. A contemporary perspective*. Newark: LexisNexis/Anderson Publishing.
- Labra Díaz, C. (2011). El modelo de policía comunitaria: el caso chileno. *Revista Chilena de Derecho y Ciencia Política*, 3(1), 49-61.
- Llorente, M. V. (2004). La experiencia de Bogotá: contexto y balance. En H. Frühling (Ed.), *Calles más seguras. Estudios de policía comunitaria en América Latina*. Washington: Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo.
- Macdonald, J. (2002). The effectiveness of community policing in reducing urban violence. In Author (Ed.), *Crime and delinquency* (pp. 592-618). New York: Sage Publications.
- Newburn, T., & Reiner, R. (2012). Policing and the police. In M. Maguire, R. Morgan & Reiner, R. (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of criminology* (pp. 808-837). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Peak, K. J. (Ed.). (2013). *Encyclopedia of community policing and problem solving*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Pontón, D. (2009). *Policía comunitaria y cambio institucional en el Ecuador*. Quito: Flacso.
- Por las críticas de los vecinos, sacan a la calle a la Policía Comunitaria. (2018, mayo 23). *La Capital*. Recuperado de <https://www.lacapital.com.ar/la-ciudad/por-las-criticas-los-vecinos-sacan-la-calle-la-policia-comunitaria-n1611267.html>.
- Reiner, R. (2012). *La política de la policía*. Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros.
- Sáin, M. (2010). *La reforma policial en América Latina. Una mirada crítica desde el progresismo*. Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros.
- Sáin, M. (2015). *La regulación del narcotráfico en la provincia de Buenos Aires*. Recuperado de <http://www.pensamientopenal.com.ar/doctrina/43083-regulacion-del-narcotrafico-provincia-buenos-aires>.
- Sherman, L., Denise, C., Gottfredson, D. L., MacKenzie, J. E., Reuter, P., & Bushway, S. (1998). *Preventing crime: What works, what doesn't, what's promising*. Recuperado de <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/171676.pdf>.
- Skogan, W. G., & Hartnett, S. M. (1997). *Community Policing, Chicago Style*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Sozzo, M. (2000). Seguridad urbana y tácticas de prevención del delito. *Cuadernos de Jurisprudencia y Doctrina Penal*, 6(10), 17-82.
- Sozzo, M. (2008). *Inseguridad, prevención y policía*. Ecuador, Quito: Flacso.
- Tudela Poblete, P. (2008). Paradigmas policiales orientados a la comunidad en América Latina: entre realismo mágico y gestión de conocimiento. *Estudios Policiales*, 3, 11-34.
- Tudela Poblete, P. (2012). La evaluación del desempeño de la policía: explorando relaciones entre opinión pública y labor policial en Chile. *Revista Criminalidad*, 54(1), 379-404.
- Wisler, D., & Onwudiwe, I. D. (2009). Rethinking police and society: Community policing in comparison. En Autores (Eds.), *Community policing. International patterns and comparative perspectives*. Boca Ratón: CRC Press.