

Is it possible to establish trusting relationships between citizens and the police? Case study in two neighborhoods of Mexico City

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In Mexico, distrust of the police has been widely documented. The survey of the University of the Valley of Mexico (UVM) and the Institute for Security and Democracy (INSYDE) (2017) reveals that the word "police", in 35 percent of cases, is associated with corruption, 13 percent to insecurity and 20 percent to distrust, fear, inefficiency, and arrogance. According to Consulta Mitoksky (2018), on a scale of 0 to 10, the police obtained 5.5, placing it at the top 6 of the institutions with less trust in the country. Distrust of the police is deeply embedded in Mexican society. Since its origins, the police have been characterized more as an instrument of control, repression, and discrimination than an organization that guarantees law enforcement. (Rolfhes, 1983; Piccato, 2010; Buffinton, 2000). The sources of mistrust are wide and diverse. Some academic works have documented the excesses in the use of public force (Silva, 2007, Alvarado y Silva 2011; Ruiz y Azaola, 2014). Others have identified their collusion with organized crime (Astorga, 2009; Davis 2006, Sabet, 2012, Alvarado, 2012). While another part of the literature has highlighted extortion and the payment of bribes as common practices (Arteaga, Médina y López 1998; Naval 2006; Azaola, 2006; Suárez de Garay 2009; Sabet, 2012) All these actions have devalued the image of the police before citizens.

But, as Sabet (2012) identifies, citizens are not only victims but also a co-producers of distrust. Some academic works emphasize the distrust of the police towards the public. (Arteaga, Medina y López, 1998). From the police perspective, the public is arrogant and unable to respect the rules. The police rationalize their acts of corruption both as a result of their low salary as well citizens seeking to evade the law (Arellano, 2017). For policemen, a regular citizen is perceived as a potential source of problems. Any complaint can trigger the judicial system against them. One of his biggest fears is to end up in jail along with the criminals they helped to capture (Azaola, 2006).

In sum, relations between the police and the population have been characterized as deeply distrustful. In this context, is it possible to establish relations of trust between citizens and the police?

Theoretically, this question is linked to two questions: how trust is created? and how can trust be developed? This research aims to analyze citizen-police relations and question if distrust articulates all their exchanges and interactions.

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Specifically, the analysis focuses on the sectoral police, the most important police force in terms of numbers and resources in Mexico City. This paper is a first attempt to organize the findings of qualitative research. The study is based on a series of in-depth interviews between the inhabitants and the police located in two central neighborhoods of the capital. The information is complemented with observations made to citizen participation structures and data obtained in a WhatsApp discussion group.

The argument is divided into three sections. In the first, a brief review of the international and national literature is made. The second section presents the organizational framework in which the police of Mexico City, one of the largest and most complex in the world, operates. In this section also is presented the field observation as well as the methodological principles. Finally, the third section presents the first results.

According to the information obtained, the relations between the police and the citizenry are not always hostile. The observations indicate that the relations between these two actors are developed in a continuum from situations of extreme distrust to mechanisms of cooperation and mutual support.

1. Brief literature review of trust in the police

In social theory, the concept of trust is relatively recent. In the first studies, developed in the 1950s and 1960s, interest in individual characteristics linked to trust predominated. Specifically, the literature focuses on individuals and the reasons that lead them to trust strangers to deal with issues as relevant as health, nutrition, safety and education. As defined by Baier (1986), trust implies accepting the intervention of third parties in order to take care, without damaging, what we value and appreciate. That implies the acceptance of a certain degree of uncertainty. According to Boudon *et al.* (2005, 41) "Confidence is a key element of any exchange where the agent puts himself in a position of vulnerability vis-à-vis other [potentially] opportunistic or incompetent agent." Since the 1980s, there has been a double transformation in the literature. On the one hand, there is a significant growth in the number of works that use trust as the central axis of analysis, while on the other hand, the development of studies that take it up from a more collective focus is also observed. Among the most outstanding works we can cite the contributions of Katz (1984) who analyzes the relationships of trust between patients and doctors, as well as the investigation of Tyler (1989) who studies the influence of trust in the judicial process. The 1990s would see the light several of the most influential works. In the sociological theory, the contributions of Coleman (1990) and the importance of trust in the processes of cooperation and the construction of social capital stand out. For its part, from the economy Fukuyama (1996) identifies trust as the foundation of economic prosperity.

In a parallel register, Putman (1993) associates the possibility of trusting to strangers with the performance of governments and the prosperity of societies.

Police and Trust

The first studies on the police were developed in the United States, amid the effervescence of the pro-civil rights movements of the 1960s (Skolnick, 1966; Bittner, 1966; Reiss, 1971). During this period dominates the interest in police culture, highlighting its negative traits such as the excessive use of force, suspicion as a way of relationship with citizenship and conflicting relationships with the hierarchy. These features permeate all the police, concluding that more than a logic of service that prevails is a logic of distrust in relations both inside and outside the police. Another stream of studies, which could be called pluralistic, criticizes the excessive concentration in negative attributes. This school recognizes differences in police practice that varies according to groups, functions, experiences, styles and values (Wilson, 1969). The police do not always maintain an oppressive position. Sometimes they carry out functions of maintenance of norms of civility, others privilege the satisfaction of the demands of the citizenship. The culture and behavior of the police officers vary depending on size of the group, work division, leadership style and means used to evaluate performance, hierarchical position, experience and training, and relational and trustworthy skills policemen are able to build with their community. Another alternative way of conceiving literature is if an institutional or organizational vision is adopted (Staubli, 2017). The first is a global perspective, linked to trust towards government agencies. It is related to citizen opinion surveys on the performance of governments without necessarily involving a relationship or even direct experience. The organizational vision, on the other hand, is interested in attitudes derived from direct experience. This perspective takes up several topics such as interest in the quality of service, legitimacy and citizen satisfaction. To address the problem of trust in the police, this author proposes to link both traditions, arguing that people connect the global trust that is held about the institutions and the specific actions or behaviors of their agents.

The path of distrust of Mexican police

Distrust of the police has been an element with a long historical trajectory in Mexican society, although its study has not been undertaken until recently. The studies carried

out by historians indicate that the police were born more as an instrument of control, repression, discrimination and exclusion, than as an organization that guarantees law enforcement (Piccato, 2010; Buffinton, 2000). During the Porfirian regimen, the police sought to preserve public order, but it was also an instrument of political repression and social reform (Rolfes, 1983; Piccato, 2010). The police fought antisocial behavior such as stealing or public drunkenness but also repressed the political enemies of the regime (Rolfes, 1983). In addition, through its surveillance activities, tried to inculcate "good habits" to the popular classes (Piccato, 2010). From that time and until now, relations between citizens and the police were antagonistic and highly distrustful. On the one hand, the popular classes, which for the ideology of the time represented "the dangerous classes", developed a skeptical opinion of authority. They were the common victims of police brutality, largely because criminals and urban poor were amalgamated in the imaginary of the political regime in a single entity (Piccato, 2010, Buffinton, 2000).

During the twentieth century literature distinguishes five key moments in the construction of the police institution. The first took place in 1918 when the Constitution was reformed to separate the "watch" function from the "pursue" function, by separating the preventive police from the judicial police. This functional division, to the current date, fragmented the legal process, increasing the probabilities of corrupt practices (Davis, 2006).

The second significant structural change was the suppression of the municipal regime in Mexico City in 1928. The municipal governments had been during the years after the armed conflict of 1910 the scene of disputes between different political factions that used local police for their causes. With this reform, the inhabitants of Mexico City could not elect their authorities and at the same time the dependence of the police on the political elite increased (Davis, 2006).

The third moment is associated with the urban growth that was accompanied by the growth of functions of the police as well as new action spaces, clienteles and forms of struggle against opponents of the regime and criminals (Alvarado, 2012). During this period, corrupt practices of the police were permanent although, thanks to the control of the regime over the media, their "worst manifestations" were not of public domain (Martínez de Murguía, 1998).

The fourth key moment would come in the 1980s, with the formation of the internal group in the police, known as the "Brotherhood" (Alvarado, 2012). This informal group had characteristics similar to a mafia group. Among his practices, extortion is documented under top-down mechanics, where the chief of police is at the top and the

troop at the base. In this system, that reminds the practices of the Porfirian police, the police troops suffer systematic abuses. Their bosses extort them by charging them for everything: weapons, uniforms, patrols, fuel, permits, vacations and promotions (Zepeda, 1994, cited by Davis, 2006; González, 1983).

The fifth moment would come in 1997, the year in which the citizens of the capital were able to elect their governors once again after seven decades of not being able to do so. The political change took place in a context of unusual insecurity, whose climax would be 1994 (Davis, 2006). The fight against crime, the main priority of the city governments from 1997 to 2012, consolidated the position of the police as the first bureaucracy in terms of the number of elements and budget allocated in the government of the City (Azaola, 2006).

Those years witnessed numerous administrative reforms within the police. The reforms were directed towards three main axes: modernization, training and control. In the first category stands out the installation of video cameras throughout the city. In terms of training, an emphasis was placed on improving the academic profile of the police officers through the police training centers and the foundation of the police academy. Finally, control systems were reformed, with the creation of the internal affairs office and the renewal of the honor and justice commission.

Nonetheless, these changes in the formal structure barely touched the police culture. Corruption is widespread. The police act with extreme caution: they avoid recordings, leave witnesses, sign documents. Predominates a culture of distrust. The interest groups have flourished in its midst. According to journalistic records, in 2016, at least 8 interest groups or brotherhoods were identified in the City police.

In their relationship with the public, the police manifest discomfort. They feel unprotected and "without guarantees" in their daily work. One of their biggest fears is to end up in jail along with the criminals they captured. Some miss the times of the authoritarian regime where, although they were not respected, at least they were feared (Azaola, 2006).

In sum, literature on Mexican police has concentrated on the negative traces of police culture and behavior. Both historical studies and contemporary academic work account for the deep roots of distrust of the police. Two of the pillars of this situation are the corrupt practices of the police officers and the antagonistic relations between police and citizens. Later it will be verified that relations between these two actors are broader and more complex than is supposed at first.

2. Mexico City 's police organization: research field and methodological principles

Police-citizens relations occur in a specific institutional framework. Functionally, Mexico City Police is divided into two bodies. First, preventive police attached to the Secretariat of Public Safety, this body is responsible for safeguarding public order, preventing crime, assist in investigations and make arrests in case of crime. Second, judicial police attached to the Attorney General's Office dedicated to the tasks of investigating, citing, searching, notifying, arresting and making available to the Public Prosecutor's Office the persons indicated by the latter. The number of elements dedicated to public order is infinitely greater than those that perform research tasks. While the preventive police work force is around 76 700 elements, the investigation police consists of only 3 200 police officers (INEGI, 2017) The surveillance function is priority.

Due to its size, the police in Mexico City are not only the largest in the country but also stand out at the international level, comparable only to New York, Rio de Janeiro or Sao Paulo departments of police (Alvarado,). It alone represents 47% of the total strength of the state police and 20% of the total police at the national level (federal, state and municipal). (INEGI, 2017).

Specifically, the preventive police are divided into five groups:

1. Sectoral police is responsible for public safety in specific sections of the City. This body, which represents just under half of the total police force, divides the territory into 5 zones, 15 regions, 72 sectors and 847 quadrants.
2. Metropolitan police is made up of specialized groups: transport police, women, cavalry, tourism, rescue and emergencies, which, as its name indicates, acts throughout the territory of the City and is
3. Traffic police is responsible for the surveillance of the main roads (3500 elements, divided into 6 regions).
4. Special forces are a high degree of specialization groups: motorcyclists, helicopters, task force, the riparian police, alpha group (drug fight).
5. Internal affairs is in charge of monitoring and evaluating the performance of their police colleagues.

As noted in the introduction, the investigation focuses on the sectoral police.

For practical purposes, this research was carried out in Santa María la Ribera and Cuauhtémoc, two neighborhoods located in the center, region 1 and 2, sectors Buenavista and Ángel-Zona Rosa. Each neighborhood is divided into 6 quadrants. The quadrant is the basic unit of vigilance chosen by the current city government. Each quadrant is assigned a certain number of police officers, vehicles and communication equipment. The surveillance is carried out in three shifts of 8 hours, which ensures the surveillance 24 hours, 365 days a year. In each shift has a quadrant leader. Among the formal objectives sought by this territorial rationalization are to limit the level of responsibility, evaluate performance, identify areas of risk, reduce the response time and approach police with citizens.

The two selected neighborhoods offer the possibility of observing varied and even contrasting situations.

Cuauhtémoc is part of the Reforma-Centro tourism corridor. It is a neighborhood with a large number of floating populations. During the daytime its streets are filled by clerks who work in corporations, government offices or representations of foreign governments settled in the area. At night, the streets are empties and activity is only seen in the zone near Reforma where nightclubs and restaurants are located. Parallel to the formal world there are another made up of itinerant merchants, shoeshine boys, street vendors, beggars and sex workers. The profile of the resident is of upper middle class, conformed by merchants, small businessmen, independent professionals and members of the high bureaucracy. Traditionally it has been an especially well-monitored area. In its streets it is common to observe patrols, motorcycle, policemen on bicycles and on foot. Additionally, condominiums commonly have private security. However, residents say that the neighborhood is a hunting ground for numerous gangs dedicated to home robbery and auto parts. Although the authorities deny the presence of organized crime, some inhabitants claim that the restaurants and bars drug trafficking is done and several houses in the area are used as brothels.

Santa María la Ribera is a traditional neighborhood of Mexico City. "La Santa María" was one of the first subdivisions created in the City in the nineteenth century. In the rich architectural variety of its buildings: Arabesque, Baroque and Porfirian the boom and decay that this district has experienced throughout its history is summarized. During the first decades of the twentieth century it was the residence of several artists and

intellectuals. Around the 1940s, the profile of its inhabitants changed because several of its middle-class residents preferred to move to new fashion neighborhoods. The space left was occupied by migrants from the countryside who settled in several of abandoned multi-storied mansions converted into “vecindades” (cheap tenements with individual rooms rented to families). At the beginning of 2000 and largely as a result of real estate speculation, a new process of gentrification has been observed. Faced with rising housing costs, several artists, professionals and some foreigners have begun to return. With its arrival, the cultural and gastronomic offer of the neighborhood has begun to increase, adding to the numerous shops and businesses present in this urban space for many years. The predominant profile of the resident is of lower middle class. In the 1990s, Santa María experienced very high levels of insecurity. In popular slang it was recognized as “Santa María la Ratera”(Mary the thief). Nowadays, although the incidence of crime has declined, the inhabitants have learned to live in constant alert. The police, although present, are less visible than in the Cuauhtémoc. Theft of passers-by and drug dealing are the most common crimes.

In the study conducted in these two urban spaces, the analysis of direct relations between the police and citizens was privileged. To carry out the work, several qualitative research techniques were mobilized, such as the direct observation of formal structures of citizen participation, in-depth interviews of citizens and policemen, as well as the analysis of the interactions between residents and policemen developed in a discussion group of WhatsApp.

With these instruments our objective is to elucidate from different angles, to what extent the interactions between police and citizens continue (or not) being antagonistic and of extreme distrust.

3. Partial results: two citizen participation management models

The results that are presented include, on the one hand, the observation of three meetings of citizen security cabinets in the Buenavista sector, which includes Santa María la Ribera neighborhood. The meetings are weekly and itinerant, that is, each week is held in a different quadrant to encourage the participation of all sector residents. This type of meetings is driven by the city government

On the other hand, this rapport also includes the analysis of the interactions in a WhatsApp discussion group. This group, formed in 2016, is an initiative bottom up. It was born in a meeting between the secretary of public security and a group of citizens

of Cuauhtémoc neighborhood. In that occasion, citizens proposed the creation of a discussion chat that made possible the direct communication with the police stations installed in the environs. So far it does not have a widespread application.

The security cabinets: the institutionalized relationship

Mexico City's government has encouraged, since 1997, the formation of citizen participation committees to include their opinion in different fields of public action. In the current administration, the structure of citizen participation is called citizen security cabinets.

The meetings are open to the general public. In these assemblies participate representatives of sectoral police, judicial police, public prosecutor and city government. Its objective is to bring all the key actors of the justice enforcement process (prevention, investigation, and punishment) to the citizens. The meetings are divided into three parts. It begins with the presentation of government actors. The case of the sectoral police is special. In addition to the commander in charge of the sector, the police officers of the quadrants are also present, that is, the police officers with whom the citizenship would directly relate. Then a summary of the matters discussed in the last session is offered. For example, on one occasion the subject was the traffic problems generated by customers of a gas station, while in another was the panic buttons and security cameras that are in operation in the quadrant.

In the third part, the intervention of the attending public is allowed. In general, attendees talk about different topics. They do not focus their participation in security problems. They take advantage of the presence of the City authorities to make requests for urban services such as cleaning, public water, lighting, drainage, electrification, street paving, and even tree pruning. Communication and interaction with the police are scarce. In the meetings observed, there were only a couple of requests addressed to the police. In both cases, the neighbors asked to increase police surveillance in the streets where their home is located, especially during the night, since the street lighting was not working and feared to be victims of assaults on the return of their work activities. The previous reflects that interaction between citizen and police is scanty. The citizen issues his request that is taken directly by the head of the sector. He makes its annotations on a sheet of paper that turns immediately to those responsible for quadrants. It should be added that the body language of the chief of the sector reflects little emotional involvement. Rarely he looks at the audience or even other members of the government delegation. He spends most of his time checking his cell phone. In

contrast, the attitude of the police of the quadrant is more open. They offer anyone who asks for their cell phone number to contact them directly in case of an emergency. They also take advantage of the meeting to publicize the new application launched by the current administration: "My Police", which complements the 911 number to report or request help in case of emergencies. This publicity action has, however, a minimal impact, since it only concerns the public present at the meetings, which on the occasions observed did not exceed twenty people. This small volume of interactions contrasts with the experience of the WhatsApp discussion group described below.

The WhatsApp security group: a bottom-up initiative

The idea of forming a WhatsApp discussion group whose axis was security was taken from the example of La Condesa², the first neighborhood to operate a chat of this type. The management of the group is the responsibility of the neighbors, although it is supervised by the authorities: since its foundation, the commanders are included in the discussion group, exercising panoptic supervision over the actions of their subordinates.

The group has been very successful. The news of its existence has been rapidly spreading among the neighbors. To date, there are three discussion groups: two groups linked to the neighborhood committee and another one that was organized in parallel to the formal structures of citizen participation. In general, community interaction through social networks has been well received. In addition to security, groups specialized on pets (little legs group), urban services, businesses, and general topics were put into operation.

One of the central characteristics of the discussion group has been the strict attachment to the theme of its creation: security. For this, the group gave itself strict operating rules. Thus, from the beginning, it was established that the chat aimed to ensure an immediate response to emergencies (accidents, theft, fire, collapse, explosion, gas leakage, kidnapping, injuries, and deaths). To do this, it was requested that the messages specify the problem, providing the street and number, as well as the photograph of the event. It was also requested that the language used to address the police and other neighbors be kind and courteous. On the other hand, advertising, political and religious propaganda, messages of hatred, racism or any kind of discrimination, jokes, chains, gossip, gifs, memes, audios, and emoticons were prohibited. Finally, it was established

² Mexico's city most bohemian, hipster neighborhood.

that anyone who did not comply with these rules of coexistence would be expelled from the chat. These rules have been strictly applied. There has been no tolerance for anyone. Several neighbors have been eliminated from the group immediately after having transgressed some of the norms of coexistence established for the functioning of the group.

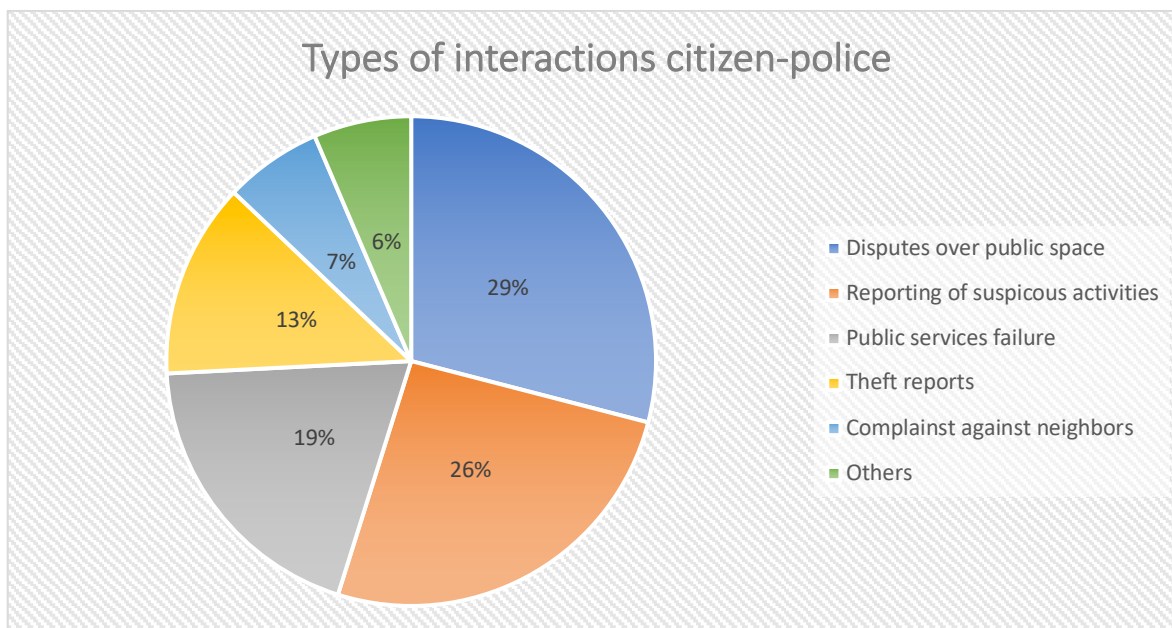
To carry out the analysis, only those events in which there was citizen-police interaction, that is, where there was a report and a response by the police officers, were taken into consideration. The observation period was from October 24, 2018, to January 30, 2019. On average each day there was at least one interaction, varying the number of events from one to three every day.

Despite the rules and the supervision of the group administrator, the variety of topics dealt with goes far beyond the criminal event. The citizens request the support of the policemen the same to complain about the street vendors, the people in street situation, noisy neighbors, that to report car accidents, people fainting, lost pets, suspicious loitering, leakage of water and gas. In summary, there is a wide variety of issues in police citizenship interactions.

Figure 1 summarizes the results of this observation work. As can be seen, the main problem that mobilizes police-citizen relations has to do with public space disputes. The streets and sidewalks of the city witness a constant battle. The neighbors are very active in defending what they consider their right. They do not hesitate to go with the police to use them in their disputes against "people who come from outside" and looking to do business with parking spaces on public roads, establish new street food businesses or invade sidewalks and access of parking of the inhabitants. It is a permanent and endless dispute because it barely prevents a new food business from being installed, soon a new one is being installed on another street. The neighbors, more than the police, have become the main vigilantes, "to prevent that neighborhood becomes a permanent market."

The second most reported aspect is people who walk down the street and are reported as "suspects". A wide range of possibilities falls into this situation. For instance, people reported for working after hours, people being drunk, people who live in street situations or individuals who "contrast with the urban landscape." These types of reports illustrate the class judgments present in Mexican society, in whose culture, the association between poor and criminal remains, that is, what Piccato has called the criminalization of the popular classes. In these situations, the police officers verbalize and verify the legitimacy of the reported passers-by, even if this means a violation of the individual freedom of movement guarantees in the Constitution. In general, these

reports are false alarms without consequences. The policemen verbalize or at most, in the case of people who drink on public roads, presented the transgressors before the civic judge. In these cases, exchanges of opinions were also observed among the neighbors. For example, when someone points out: "indigent in the street scandalizing" there have been responses that indicate that the politically correct way to refer to this social category is: "person in a street situation". These situations are shortcomings, although they are still significant.



Complaints about urban services: cleaning, parks and gardens, street lighting, drinking water, and paving occupy the third position of the reasons that lead citizens to interact with local police. Although public services are formally outside the activities under the responsibility of the police, the neighbors make the darkness of the streets, the proliferation of noxious fauna or the risks of potholes as security problems happen. In these cases, the police only act as a bridge between the citizenship and the specialized administrative services of each area. A particular case is when there are faults in public lighting and carry out additional rounds in the dark hours in the streets or affected areas.

The complaints about theft occupy the fourth site of police-citizen interactions (13% of total events). In general, these are robberies that were committed during the night (theft of cables or auto parts) or accusations against fraudsters, people who seek to extort money from the public. Only in a minority of cases were robberies reported in progress. For instance, the attempted robbery of a bicycle that was avoided thanks to

the rapid intervention of the police. This example illustrates the dissuasive nature of the proximity police. The thief fled without being able to be apprehended, but the theft was avoided. The rapid response of the police was very celebrated by the residents.

The fifth place of incidence are the complaints against other neighbors, generally due to excessive noise of parties and social gatherings. The response of the police in this regard is more erratic. They can ignore this type of request, pointing out that they will be channeled to the social attorney's office, the body in charge of settling neighborhood disputes or attending the home and asking the attendees to reduce the volume. In these cases, the police can only recommend not to force, so the complainants feel frustrated in this type of situation.

Finally, exceptional events such as gas leak reports, moving maneuver notices or excessive noise complaints from patrols are reported. The neighbors, in general, avoid criticism against the police. If there are negative comments, these are manifested in other discussion groups. For example, in the general affairs group, traffic police officers have been openly identified for acts of corruption. These denunciations did not have repercussions against the officers involved, largely due to ignorance of the institutional ways to channel citizen complaints. Despite these acts of corruption, the public perception of police action is mainly positive. Among the qualifiers used by the interviewees in their relationship with the police: "speed and kindness" are the words more used.

First discussion items

The Mexican police organization is very complex. It produces order and disorder. Opinion polls, as well as a good part of the literature, indicate that relations between citizens and the police are deeply distrustful. Opinion polls have the advantage of making legible complex social problems. Although, on the other hand, they have the weakness of questioning citizens about issues in which they did not necessarily have direct experience.

The strategy adopted in this research prioritizes direct experience. It has the virtue of addressing issues ignored by the surveys, although due to the small number of observations it is not possible to make generalizations. The debate should not focus on generalization or depth, between statistical validity or the complexity of the social, but

on what each research strategy contributes to a better understanding of the phenomena studied.

In our case, the observations made qualify literature regarding the relations of distrust prevailing between the police and citizens. As the data show, in their relations with citizens, the police do not necessarily establish an oppressive attitude. The range of police-citizen relations goes from situations involving acts of corruption to events of collaboration and mutual support.

The prevention of crime, the formal objective of the police does not structure police-citizen relations. These occur in a particular institutional context. Urban, social and economic characteristics affect them. It is not a coincidence that the dispute over public space or proximity services occupy the first places of the issues dealt with by the police and citizens.

Building trust relationships is a gardening job. It takes time, constancy and favorable conditions so that some results can be perceived. In the two reviewed experiences it is observed that the possibility of positive-sum interactions increases when the origin of the interaction devices are built from the bottom up, in an organic way. A public policy suggestion would be to bet more on locally constructed interaction mechanisms. Rather than trying to impose a standard structure of participation, which fails to attract the attention of citizens or facilitate interactions, the authorities should promote logics of participation built by the community itself.

Concerning the possibilities of improving citizen-police relations, and therefore, increasing trust in the exchanges between both actors, one of the lessons of the analysis is that sending and receiving instant messages is a lubricant that facilitates interactions. Among the characteristics of this mode of interaction it is worth highlighting three aspects:

1. It deals with open exchanges, visible to a large number of actors, but at the same time allows some anonymity. The latter helps to overcome certain barriers of social class, gender, a sexual preference that could hinder citizen-police relations.
2. Another element that helps the fluidity of relationships is the possibility of bonding without the need to enter, at least initially, in a face-to-face relationship. The first contact occurs at the discussion site. It is a direct but virtual relationship. The emotional cost and the time invested are minimal. Both the police and the citizen interact directly, only if the issue of the problem is

evaluated by both as of sufficient relevance. A research track, to be developed in the future, would be to find out to what extent this type of relationship derives on formal complaints and in a deeper involvement of citizens in the process of the application of justice.

3. Although it is an open relationship. It is far from being a relationship without rules or controls. The success of this interaction mechanism is explained by the rules of coexistence and the zeal with which these were applied by the discussion group administrator. On the other hand, the application of soft controls (panoptic) applied by the hierarchy ensured the involvement and permanent participation of the police.

Finally, another analysis to be explored is the effects (positive as well as negative) of the surveillance carried out by the residents in the police activity and the consolidation (or not) of a new type of police-citizen relationship.

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