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POLICY METAPHORS AND DEEP LOCAL DEMOCRACY: THE CASE OF THE CHILEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD RECOVERY PROGRAMME

METÁFORAS EN POLÍTICAS PÚBLICAS Y DEMOCRACIA LOCAL PROFUNDA: EL CASO DEL PROGRAMA DE RECUPERACIÓN DE BARRIOS EN CHILE

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ABSTRACT

The Neighbourhood Recovery Programme is the first government urban regeneration programme implemented in Chilean underprivileged urban areas using deliberative processes. Through interviews with key policy makers and the revision of government documents, this article explores the cognitive metaphors by which this programme frames its local construction of sociability. In so doing, this research examines the programme's potential to build a deep conception of local democracy. The article contributes to debates discussing the effect of the Chilean state in enhancing or curtailing civil society empowerment in politically excluded areas. It argues that this programme's metaphors serve efficient policy implementation. However, they also reproduce top-down dynamics of institutional imposition that undermine accountability and have already been described by ethnographers in underprivileged neighbourhoods.

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RESUMEN

El Programa de Recuperación de Barrios es el primer programa gubernamental de regeneración urbana en sectores populares chilenos de métodos deliberativos. Con entrevistas a decisores de política pública y revisión de documentos, este artículo explora las metáforas cognitivas con que este programa enmarca su fomento de sociabilidad. Esta investigación examina el potencial del programa para construir democracia profunda. Así, contribuye a debates que discuten el impacto del estado en favorecer o mermar el empoderamiento de la sociedad civil en sectores excluidos. Argumenta que las metáforas del programa apuntan a la implementación eficiente de políticas públicas. Sin embargo, ellas también reproducen dinámicas de imposición institucional que dañan la rendición de cuentas y ya descritas anteriormente por etnógrafos de sectores populares.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *democracia profunda, sociedad civil, exclusión política, Programa de Recuperación de Barrios, Chile.*

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper looks at whether the conceptions underlying the Chilean Neighbourhood Recovery Programme's (NRP) design and implementation advance a deep idea of local democracy. A deep understanding of democracy entails bringing democracy to all levels of deliberative public processes. Usually applied to cases of local deliberative governance, frameworks of deep democracy build social innovation and politicisation. Consequently, deepening democracy seeks expanding citizenship across different scales and contexts.

The Chilean case is highly particular in Latin America. Compared to other Latin American democracies-in which the democratic potential of deliberative programmes has already been assessed-the Chilean underprivileged urban areas suffer from a strong, qualitatively unique institutional manipulation. Grassroots organisations are often in conflict with the state-subjected to repression or co-optation. Conversely, civil society organisations in poblaciones (Chilean underprivileged neighbourhoods) tend to subsidise the job of the state. State agencies tend to impose goals as well as definitions of citizenship and participation on local organisations curtailing their ability to demand accountability. Scholars have even called población

organisations 'creatures of the state' to highlight their lack of autonomy. In 2006 a new, seemingly progressive regeneration programme by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (MINVU) began its implementation. Unique among Chilean policies, the programme used deliberative methods to improve services and infrastructure in impoverished and neglected poblaciones. In order to support and validate its deliberative process, the programme sought to develop sociability at the local level-i.e. increasing participation of neighbours, leadership, as well as neighbourhood identity and belonging. Initially called 'Quiero Mi Barrio' (I Love My Neighbourhood), the Neighbourhood Recovery Programme (NRP) was designed after highly transformative governance processes in Spain and Brazil. The NRP's claims of citizen empowerment, local identity production, re-appropriation of public spaces, and citizenship construction promised to challenge traditional conceptions of state-civil society interactions in popular Chile. In this article, I seek to evaluate the reality of those assumptions by examining the NRP's potential to deepen democracy.

Studying the cognitive metaphors whereby MINVU policy makers design and coordinate that programme, this research contradicts those claims. This article argues that the NRP's conception of sociability reproduces the same top-down logics of institutional imposition that other researchers have described in the interaction between the Chilean state and popular civil society organisations. This research is based on interviews conducted with key MINVU officials and the analysis of the programme's documents. Its analysis shows that the programme frames sociability using two complementary metaphors: 1) sociability as asset, and 2) neighbourhoods as containers of sociability. These metaphors restrict democracy by strictly focusing on the contribution of social interactions to policy efficiency.

The paper begins by explaining political exclusion and civil society deactivation in Chilean underprivileged neighbourhoods. It also defines cognitive metaphors and deep democracy stressing their benefits in the analysis of local governance processes. Secondly, the article addresses its methodological decisions and describes its case study, the NRP. Thirdly, a thorough examination of the programme's metaphors on sociability is provided explaining the consequences of its assumptions for a deep conception of democracy. The paper concludes by advising strategically incorporating the concept of informal governance in the study of Chilean policy design.

2. EXCLUDING THE URBAN POOR

Latin American states and local civil society organisations have historically built a conflicted relationship. While state promotion of participation can be quite successful in some cases, it many times fails in fostering adequate vertical accountability (Goldfrank, 2011).

Scholars have deemed urban underprivileged transitional and post-transitional Chilean civil society as a peculiar case in Latin America. Often, Latin American political institutions strategize in order to pacify or deactivate contentious popular movements. Petras and Veltmeyer (2006) argue that Latin American states negotiate with, repress, manipulate, weaken, and co-opt grassroots organisations to pacify or deactivate them. This is especially so in favelas, villas, poblaciones, and other underprivileged areas. This often includes incorporating movements in policy-making processes to weaken their contentious potential. In all of these cases, state institutions play a role that is differentiated from civil society organisations. Nevertheless, the particularity of Chilean popular civil society has been described as its recurrent indistinction from the state. Research shows that popular Chilean grassroots organisations tend to function as an extension of the state, which largely diminishes their capacity to make political institutions accountable (Koppelman, 2016; Roberts, 1998). Underprivileged urban areas have a strong tradition of contentious collective action. Through urban land take overs, occupying state buildings, marches, and other actions, what became known as *movimiento de pobladores* (underprivileged residents movement) challenged authorities demanding their right to housing since the 1920s through the 1980s (Garcés, 2002). In its protests resisting the dictatorship during the 1980s, this movement became particularly salient (Espinoza, 1993).

Since Chile's return to electoral democracy in 1989, however, *población* organisations developed by subsidising state functions at the grassroots level, researchers suggest². A group of scholars have supported these claims through rigorous ethnographic work, which focuses specifically on the impact that institutions have over popular organisations at the grassroots level. Paley (2001, p. 6) convincingly explains how transitional popular civil society organisations became 'agents in their own governance'. Organisations, she suggests, develop initiatives that, instead of challenging state policies, assist government agencies. Through her fieldwork, Paley

2. Although this claim applies to most Chilean urban underprivileged areas, there are several exceptions. For more details on exceptional cases see the work of Lock (2005), Escoffier (2015), and Pérez (2017).

(2001, 2004) argues that state agencies manipulate local organisations. In meetings and other interactions she observed how government officials demanded movements' support by equating contentious collective action with the intention of destabilising the newly established democratic regime in the early 1990s. In consequence, challenging the state after Chile's democratic transition became a synonym of supporting the recently overturned dictatorship.

More recent research has compellingly confirmed these findings by providing other nuanced and complementary explanations on the blurred boundary between state agencies and popular organisations. Greaves (2005), for example, argues that the Chilean urban municipal decentralisation produced by the dictatorial regime in the 1980s atomises and particularises local organisations at the municipal level. These conditions allow municipality officials to produce what he calls a 'grammar of citizenship'. In other words, 'teaching' institutionally validated definitions of 'responsible citizenship' and participation, local government agents control and manipulate grassroots organisations (Greaves, 2004, 2005). Consequently, a smoothly crafted logic of top-down imposition prevails in the relationship between state and civil society in poblaciones undermining vertical accountability. In fact, as Koppelman (2016, p. 6) suggests, 'local organizations in poor and working-class neighbourhoods are themselves refashioned into an "outer trench" against claims on the state and challenges to the legitimacy of the neoliberal project'. This paper intends to complement this strand of research by focusing on the other side of this dynamic. It investigates how state officials managing the implementation of a popular regeneration programme in the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development frame the idea of 'sociability'. In doing so, it seeks to examine the conceptions that sustain these political dynamics at the top positions of Chilean government.

This task requires beginning with a broader look at the interactions between civil society and political institutions in 21st Century Chile. Since the early 2000s, Chile has seen the resurgence of its citizens' public engagement. Arguably, Chilean citizenship has changed and expanded in the past decade. Increasing numbers of demonstrations, movements, and initiatives have shown people's growing disposition to effect social change by questioning locally entrenched systems of inequality (UNDP, 2015). With its peaks in 2006 and 2011, the Student Movement, for example, proved to be highly effective in redefining local frames of collective action and in shaping public policies (Donoso, 2016). This wave of politicisation moves along with people's strong disenchantment with political institutions and with movements' increasing disconnection from political parties (Somma & Bargsted, 2015).

Underprivileged citizens in segregated neighbourhoods, nevertheless, cannot fully distance themselves from political institutions. They heavily depend on those institutions to access medical treatments, educational benefits, food, cash transfers, subsidies, and security. Población organisations require neighbourhood community buildings and funding for coordinating local initiatives, both provided in different forms by the state. With Putnam's 'Making Democracy Work' in 1993, the notion of social capital moved to the forefront of development programmes implemented by international and national agencies (Frank, 2003). Planning to build and strengthen social ties became a requirement for urban renewal and local development plans. States currently see re-building a school, refurbishing a square, or providing subsidies in poor neighbourhoods as insufficient efforts, unless they are coordinated with local community organisations. Policies such as the Neighbourhood Law in Barcelona, the Socially Interactive City Programme in Germany, and the Housing Self-management and Popular Habitat programme in Caracas have sought to strengthen citizens' decision making at the local level. Scholars, as well as many policy makers, conceive these initiatives as opportunities to deepen deliberative democracy through participatory governance (Fung & Olin Wright, 2003; Goldfrank, 2011). They are seen as instances of potentially highly fruitful democratic synergy between citizens and state institutions. Deliberative democracy calls for the engagement of citizens as reasonable equals in processes of deliberation regarding their community. It is meant to collectively shape people's ideas and preferences to promote authentic social cooperation. Accordingly, these policies are deemed as occasions in which communities become more politically engaged by learning new democratic values (Baiocchi, 2003; Harriss, Stokke, & Törnquist, 2005).

By focusing on how MINVU policy makers designing and implementing the NRP frame their interventions and strategies, this paper looks at whether this programme functions under the adequate conceptions to deepen local democracy. In order to achieve such a goal, the NRP would need to overcome the challenges that local civil society organisations face when dealing with political institutions in Chilean poblaciones. As described above, tackling these challenges necessarily requires acknowledging the highly symbiotic relationship between local organisations and the state in those underprivileged areas. Ultimately, the paper seeks to explore whether the NRP fosters or curtails the expansion of Chilean citizenship that has unfolded since the mid 2000s. To this end, the paper examines the cognitive metaphors by which the NRP-through its officials and institutional documents-frames its strategies to enhance sociability in poblaciones.

3. METAPHOR CONSTRUCTION AND DEEPENING DEMOCRACY

Research shows that the way in which policy makers and politicians metaphorically speak of public policies defines the strategies by which they will seek to implement those policies (Plumm, Borhart, & Weatherly, 2012; Sims Bartel, 2015; Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011, 2013). Thibodeau and Boroditsky's research (2011, p. 9) suggests that 'metaphors exert an influence over people's reasoning by instantiating frame-consistent knowledge structures, and inviting structurally-consistent inferences'.

Often, when metaphors change, policy strategies also change. These shifts can even be dramatic for the population. Ronald Regan, for example, declared a war on drugs in the 1980s. This led to harsher and longer sentences for drug-related crimes, multiplying the US incarceration rate four times since then. Under the same metaphor, president Duterte's policy to defeat drug consumption and traffic in the Philippines has killed more than 7,000 people in no more than 8 months. This is because different metaphors bring to mind different knowledge structures, thus implying specific analogical inferences. Metaphors recall conceptual analogies. According to Gentner & Wolff (1997) we use metaphors to organize information in abstract domains, generating a relational structure between abstract cognitive elements. Cognitive mechanisms import a particular metaphor from a more concrete field to the abstract domain as an analogy. We organise the relation of elements in line with the metaphor's structure. This occurs through a cognitive mechanism that imports a metaphor from a more concrete field to the abstract domain as an analogy. We incorporate a dove that extends its wings in the sky, for example, as an analogy of freedom. We, hence, organise the structural relation of elements in line with the metaphor's structure. This allows us to create representations of complex types of knowledge, connecting the abstract and the concrete in a single metaphor. Consequently, we are able to think of highly abstract ideas, such as mind, market or society, using concrete concepts (Murphy 1996). According to our example, we would then draw a white dove to communicate freedom. It is a cognitive strategy that 'allows us to refer to it [an abstract concept], quantify it, identify a particular aspect of it ... and perhaps even believe that we understand it' (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 26).

Metaphors, hence, help us manage abstract concepts and make them operational in our communication with others. Metaphors allow us creating common agreements on how we understand concepts and what consequences they have. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) even argue that,

because metaphors organise cultural collective abstract meanings, they are at the base of how we build our identities and value-systems.

Building on Fung and Olin Wright's (2003) work, this paper identifies three basic principles by which participatory governance deepens democracy. This analytical disaggregation will be of use to assess the NRP's metaphors on sociability.

1) Grassroots autonomy and oversight. Policy makers should conceive policy implementation as a way of advancing toward civil society's self-determination. The autonomy of grassroots organisations deepens people's sense of protagonism as builders of their own community. Part of this process involves engaging in holding political representatives accountable. In other words, only autonomous civil society organisations are able to challenge political institutions, policies or legislation (Balderacchi, 2017).

2) Deliberative solution generation. Participants engage in deliberation to reach group choices by facing conflicts, listening to each other's positions, providing persuasive arguments and conceding some of their interests. While it is true that actors cooperate in cases in which they seek to solve specific, concrete issues, Fung and Olin Wright (2003) warn about the importance of actors also engaging in broader conflicts (e.g. unequal land access or redistributive policies).

3) Civil society's engagement in decision-making processes. Governance deepening democracy necessarily seeks to empower grassroots organisations, in order to increasingly incorporate them in defining the policies that will shape their community. Roberts (1998) argues that this process usually grows in direct connection with demands that, although formulated at the local level or in specific fields of action, exceed that scale seeking larger political and social impact.

4. THE NEIGHBOURHOOD RECOVERY PROGRAMME

During the 1990s the newly appointed democratic government implemented a set of measures aiming to tackle poverty and a large housing deficit, as well as improving public infrastructure. Much of its policies sought to have impact at the local level. The government expanded the social housing subsidy system and created a network of programmes aiming to provide access to housing as well as improving urban connectivity and public spaces for

urban communities-e.g. including the Neighbourhood Improvement Programme (by the Ministry of Interior), the Progressive Housing Programme, the Community Infrastructure Programme, Participatory Pavements, and the Parks and Urban Roads Programme (Arriagada, Sepúlveda, Cartier, & Gutiérrez, 2004). Between 1998 and 2004 the *Programa Chile Barrio* (Chile Neighbourhood Programme) also worked at the local level and sought to battle extreme poverty through a comprehensive plan. It provided families with basic services (electricity, water, and sewage), social housing, and community infrastructure, as well as promoting people's school completion, their engagement in collective entrepreneurship initiatives and their attendance to government skills training courses (Saborido, 2005). While several of these programmes sought to involve people's opinions as well as improving their social capital, none of them were understood as innovative governance processes. These programmes contributed to strongly reduce poverty³, built an average of 90,000 houses per year, and boosted economic growth (Arriagada et al., 2004). However, despite its efforts, the government neglected urban living conditions for the poorest-the quality of housing was very poor, the programme's funding systems promoted people's indebtedness and benefitted large companies, and located underprivileged families in the urban peripheries increasing people's vulnerability (Rivera, 2012).

In 2006, in her inaugural address, President Bachelet announced the creation of the Neighbourhood Recovery Programme-also called *Quiero Mi Barrio* (I Love My Neighbourhood). Different scholars and policy makers had then diagnosed the Chilean social housing situation as critical. Although the government's highly effective housing subsidy was close to eradicating informal settlements, its poorly planned housing construction had ghettoised Chilean cities with little concern for people's social living environment. Critics emphasised the emergence of social illnesses as a result of this policy's strong urban land liberalisation, lack of planning, low-quality construction, and high segregation (Bustos, 2006; Sugranyes & Rodríguez, 2005; Tironi, 2003). Bachelet's government reacted to this issue with a large-scale budget plan to implement the NRP in the 200 most vulnerable neighbourhoods across the country.

The programme intervenes defined urban areas (between 500 and 5,000 households⁴) understood as neighbourhoods, which comprise a relatively

3. According to The World Bank (2011) the Poverty headcount ratio at \$1.90 a day plummeted in Chile between 1990 and 2010, from 7.92% of the population to 0.92%. Similarly, the standard poverty rate decreased to a fifth from 1990 to 2013 (Larrañaga & Rodríguez, 2015).

4. The size and population of areas defined as neighbourhoods by the NRP are highly variable. A report from 2008 states that, among the 200 neighbourhoods selected by the programme in 2006, 68% comprise 500 households or less, 28% have between 500 to 1,500 households, 3% have between 1,500 to 3,000 households, and only 1% of the neighbourhoods exceed 3,000 households (MINVU, 2008, p. 6).

differentiated community⁵. Its angle is twofold: first, it physically improves the neighbourhood by refurbishing current urban infrastructure (i.e. lighting, squares, recreational facilities, streets, sewage, among others)⁶. Second, the programme seeks to create and strengthen local associational life. Thus, it is the first large intervention programme by the MINVU seeking to enhance sociability development. Although the budget for each intervention is defined in advance, it varies heavily depending on the case. Deemed only as ‘vulnerable’-because their weaknesses lay either on their neglected infrastructure or on their poor social ties-some neighbourhoods require more limited interventions. In these cases, the government’s spending can vary from USD 0.8 to 1.5 million. Interventions in neighbourhoods with more systemic issues, understood as ‘critical’⁷, have involved investments of up to USD 8 to 10 million.

The top government officials designing, coordinating, and implementing the NRP belong to the Neighbourhood Development Executive Secretariat, which locates them among the high ranks within the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. This Secretariat depends on the ministry’s Deputy Secretariat of Housing and Urban Development, which directly provides the Minister’s office with technical, strategic support. Below this structure, the Research Division Office supports that team providing statistics, studies, and reports for the NRP. The implementation reaches the grassroots through the Ministry’s Regional Secretariats (SEREMI). Located in every region of the country, SEREMI offices use a NRP implementation team of neighbourhood executives (professionals either from the ministry, the local government, or from a hired private company) that directly approach the communities in previously selected neighbourhoods.

Executives are meant to mediate and facilitate three phases: 1) Signing a ‘neighbourhood contract’ in which local dwellers agree on a plan for renovating and improving their neighbourhood infrastructure. This phase usually involves a technical diagnostic study carried out by the ministry, as well as creating a Neighbourhood Development Council (NDC). The NDC is a new local organisation that summons neighbourhood leaders to agree on a physical and social development plan. The NDC works as a deliberati-

5. Neighbourhood boundaries tend to be locally defined by residents. Neighbourhood names usually result from past designations of the land (from their rural time), names of local families, or relevant events community for the local.

Although, not always successfully, the NRP has made efforts to follow those locally defined boundaries.

6. Since 2015 the NRP also included building social housing.

7. The NRP eventually saw as stigmatising framing neighbourhoods as ‘critical’. Consequently, policy makers sought to use other, alternative wording.

ve governance body that occasionally connects with local institutions (e.g. the local police station) to engage them in solving specific neighbourhood issues. In some cases, the contract may include working with residents to boost their local sense of belonging. This strategy generally involves reconstructing the neighbourhood's history to improve residents' cohesiveness and sense of identity. Additionally, this plan ought to meet the budget requirements imposed by the ministry. 2) Implementing the project formulated in the neighbourhood contract. 3) End and assess the MRP implementation. This phase involves a closure event, as well as preparing a comprehensive report and an evaluation on the work carried out by the NRP in the neighbourhood.

Between 2006 and 2010 Bachelet's administration gave special salience to the NRP and allocated considerable funding for its implementation. A team with strong academic credentials was appointed at the Ministry for Housing and Urban Development for the programme's design, planning and coordination. Under the name 'Quiero Mi Barrio', the programme became widely known among underprivileged urban residents.

President Piñera's administration took office in 2010 and replaced the key political agents in the MINVU appointing Rodrigo Pérez as its Minister. Although the NRP had become a popular policy by the previous, opposing government, Pérez instructed its sustainability.

5. METHODS

This research focused on the group of 6 top officials in the MINVU whose work directly impacts the design, coordination, and implementation of the NRP, and one former official who had been part of the programme's design but did not work in the ministry any more during this fieldwork. In June and July 2011, I conducted a semi-structured interview with each one of them (40 minutes to 1 hour). Interviewees accepted to participate in writing and/or verbally. They agreed on remaining anonymous, so that their words could express the programme's narratives but not be traced back to them personally. Additionally, I revised a set of 11 documents prepared by this team that defined the NRP's goals and strategies. Interviewees held masters and doctoral degrees from highly regarded institutions-i.e. MIT, ETSAB School Barcelona, Harvard University, University of Chile, and Pontifical Catholic University of Chile. A seventh interview with a former ministry official who had been highly involved in the programme's design was included. This interviewee provided key information on the concep-

tual origins and initial intentions of the programme. Data collection-through interviews and documents-paid attention to ministry officials' general vision of the programme, as well as to how they framed its strategies to enhance sociability development.

TABLE 1
DETAILS OF INTERVIEWS IN THE URBAN DEVELOPMENT
DIVISION AT THE CHILEAN MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND URBAN
DEVELOPMENT

INTERVIEWEE	FUNCTION	DEDICATION TO NRP
Head of the Ministry's Research Division	Oversees research at the Ministry. Designs and plans the NRP's major research strategies.	Partial
Head of the Neighbourhood Development Executive Secretariat.	Oversees programmes within the Secretariat. Strategically defines the NRP's planning and implementation.	Partial
Chief of Research in the Neighbourhood Development Executive Secretariat.	Provides research support to the NRP.	Partial
NRP Director, in the Neighbourhood Development Executive Secretariat.	Coordinates the implementation of the NRP in the Ministry.	Full time
NRP General Manager, in the Neighbourhood Development Executive Secretariat.	Manages financial and legal issues for the NRP.	Full time
Researcher at the Ministry's Research Division	In charge of supporting the NRP designing and implementing research.	Full time
Former ministry official in the Neighbourhood Development Executive Secretariat.	Participated in the NRP's initial design.	None

The documents revised were either 1) fully or partially prepared by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development's team in charge of designing and implementing the NRP, or 2) prepared by MINVU officials in 2002 and 2006, and influential in the NRP design⁸.

8. These reports from 2002 and 2006 were included here because, despite not referring to the NRP, interviewees pointed to them as influential in the programme's early development.

- MINVU, *Quiero Mi Barrio* (2015).
- MINVU, *II Foro Internacional de Recuperación de Barrios* (2010).
- MINVU, *Recuperación de 200 Barrios: Hacia la Construcción de Tipologías* (2010).
- MINVU, *Programa de Recuperación de Barrios: Lecciones Aprendidas y Buenas Prácticas* (2010).
- MINVU, *Déficit Urbano-Habitacional. Una Mirada Integral a la Calidad de Vida y el Hábitat Residencial en Chile* (2009).
- MINVU, *Manual de Recuperación de Historia del Barrio* (2009).
- SEREMI Metropolitana de Vivienda y Urbanismo, & Observatorio Social UAH, *Recuperando Barrios de Santiago* (2008).
- MINVU & CEPAL, *Primer Foro Iberoamericano de Experiencias de Recuperación de Barrios* (2008).
- MINVU, *Informe Descriptivo del Programa Quiero Mi Barrio* (2008).
- MINVU, *Grupos Vulnerables, Déficit Habitacional y Espacio Público* (2006).
- MINVU, *Satisfacción Residencial en la Vivienda Básica SERVIU: La Perspectiva del Capital Social* (2002).

I coded and analysed the collected data using NVivo. I conducted a thematic analysis, which entails repeatedly reading the data to identify patterns as emergent themes that become the categories of analysis (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 1999). From a qualitative research standpoint, this paper does not seek probabilistic approach in selecting its case study (Liebersson, 1991). In other words, it does not seek to be representative. Instead, it analyses only one case study looking at the social dynamics underlying the NRP policy makers' narratives. In line with the logics of the extended case method (Burawoy, 1998), the paper examines how this particular case informs on the broader role that social policies can have in fostering or curtailing citizenship expansion in the Chilean context.

6. NARRATIVES ON PUBLIC DISENGAGEMENT

Ministry officials recognise and adhere to academic narratives that explain popular political disengagement as a result of neoliberal policies. As I show here, they do not, however, take into account those academic studies explaining how political institutions have deactivated popular organisations on the ground in post-transitional Chile.

Although the group of interviewees functioned as a team, they were relatively diverse in their education and functions. This shaped the way in which they spoke of the NRP. Their skills, experience, and education

oscillated between finance and economics on the one hand, and urban studies and sociology on the other. Those interviewees devoted to feeding the NRP with research stressed statistics, budgets, financial trends, and predictions. Their conception of the programme is strongly mediated by their emphasis on objective results and adequate methodologies. On the other hand, the staff involved in administering the programme highlighted their management experience and often expressed their ideas in aesthetic, geometrical ways. They alluded, for example, to 'polygons'-to speak of sections of the city-or to 'social weft' (trama social)-referring to social networks.

Despite these differences, when team members explain the social necessity for implementing the NRP, they reference a particular strand of academic literature. In their account, the NRP responds to the popular public disengagement and low quality housing that resulted from 30 years of housing policies strictly focused on covering poor people's urgent need for accommodation. Echoing the programme's documents, an interviewee explained that before the NRP 'the Ministry had only a quantitative look on social housing... it was all about building as many houses as possible'. Highly neoliberal urban policies, created by the dictatorship (1973-1990) and reproduced by transitional democratic governments, disintegrated highly cohesive and politicised popular urban communities, interviewees argued. In line with publications such as those of Sugranyes and Rodríguez (2005) and Tironi (2003), MINVU officials suggested that these policies displaced people within the city disconnecting them from their original urban habitats-informal settlements, mostly. They argued that the Chilean urban subsidy system placed families in small, low-quality houses, which were located in large and homogeneous peripheral ghettos. One interviewee, for example, explained how these displacements disconnected people from community engagement by telling me: 'people got to those neighbourhoods feeling suspicious about their neighbours... they basically arrived there angry'. Another MINVU official echoed the rest of the interviewees by speaking of how private life has prevailed over public involvement in working class neighbourhoods. She said 'the private colonised their lives, the communitarian type of life doesn't exist anymore in those places'. Interviewees suggest that the anomy, insecurity, and violence of public spaces in ghettos has deepened people's disposition to enclose their interactions at the private level.

The documents prepared by the NRP also reproduce these academic arguments and support the team's diagnosis. For example, a document defining the protocols for the programme's promotion of local identity insists on the same diagnosis. It explains that neighbourhoods intervened by the NRP

have 'high degrees of disintegration, as well as urban and social damage, in which the power of associations, the credibility, and collective effort have decreased' (MINVU, 2009b, p. 10). Similarly, in a report defining a typology of neighbourhoods for the programme, the head of the Ministry's Urban Division reproduces Tironi's (2003) argument (MINVU, 2010b). He describes the background in which the programme emerged by alluding to the 'new poverty' in Chilean cities. This new ghetto poverty involves a novel challenge for social policies because, although those people 'have a roof and land tenure', their poverty emerges as 'the darkest side of social exclusion'. In this context, the NRP's task is to produce inclusion by regenerating not only neighbourhoods' infrastructure, but also their sociability and public incorporation (MINVU, 2010b, p. 3).

Interviewees and documents frame this social diagnosis of popular public disengagement in disconnection with the role of the state in specific grassroots interactions. An interviewee, exceptionally, provided one isolated critical comment indicating that the state usually fails to follow through consultation processes with local communities. 'This builds distrust', she argued.

However, neither interviewees nor the programme's documents speak of the largely documented dynamics that this paper describes above, by which the state and civil society organisations have persistently discouraged initiatives of social change and citizenship expansion in poblaciones.

7. METAPHORS OF SOCIABILITY

This analysis shows that interviewees and programme documents build a contradictory conception of sociability. On the one hand, the programme uses concepts with a strong potential of expanding people's citizenship in underprivileged urban areas. On the other hand, an analysis of the NRP's metaphors shows that its operationalisation of sociability restricts democracy by almost purely focusing on the efficiency of public policy.

By alluding to a multi-scalar approach and to conceptions of citizen empowerment and radical urbanism, the NRP shows a seeming disposition to deepen democracy in underprivileged urban areas. Repeatedly, documents insist on the NRP's intention to use a multi-scalar approach by connecting different scales and actors, thus showing its plan to go beyond the neighbourhood boundaries to seek resources and build impact at the local level. One of them, for example, calls for a 'multidimensional approach to the

neighbourhoods', which involves 'recognising the different problems and opportunities emerging from different scales (family, close environment, neighbourhood, borough, city)' (SEREMI Metropolitana de Vivienda y Urbanismo & Observatorio Social UAH, 2008, p. 7). Another document seems to allude to the programme's multi-scalar approach describing its principle of 'interconnectedness', defined as the 'effort of articulation that seeks to satisfy the community's demands as well as development projects before the efficient and effective intervention of instruments' (MINVU, 2008, p. 5). MINVU officials supported this emphasis in a multi-scalar approach explaining that combining different scales is required for the programme to implement sustainable, efficient interventions. By using this multi-scalar outlook in its implementation, officials argued, the programme would be more effective in combatting the isolation by which urban inequalities have segregated and impoverished these neighbourhoods. Arguably, if such an inter-scalar outlook was implemented with the aim to strengthening democracy, it would have deep consequences for población local organisations. As argued above, expanding popular civil society's networks beyond neighbourhood boundaries is a crucial step for organisations to build more encompassing political claims that seek broader impact.

Additionally, through a set of different concepts and ideas the NRP frames its interventions as socially and politically transformative. In some of its statements and positions the programme seems to promote a radical participatory urban planning approach. Since its beginnings, the programme sought to promote what MINVU officials call 'citizenship urbanism'. Interviewees formed in the fields of sociology and urban studies stressed this concept more emphatically. MINVU officials explained that, rooted in Salvador Giner's scholarly work, the term citizenship urbanism involves an evolution from the traditional conception of the city as a functional arrangement of spaces and settlements serving industrial society. Instead, this new citizenship urbanism emerges from people's collective empowerment to define and construct their city. Against top-down policy implementation, Giner (1993, p. 19) emphasises that the state should foster the 'decentralized (acéfala) and plural construction of political reality' incorporating all interest groups. Echoing other ministry officials, one interviewee explained that 'citizenship urbanism is a social construction of physical space that belongs to citizens and is built by citizens', and another said 'it's about putting people's empowerment first, for them [neighbours] to organise and construct their neighbourhoods'. Similarly, one of the programme's reports describes this as 'a change of focus' and 'a new type of urbanism', which is meant to be 'local, inclusive, participatory and just' and constitutes citizens' 'opportunity to build more just cities and put our human condition at

the centre of people's agenda' (MINVU, 2010a, p. 22).

Although relatively marginal in the programme's documents, these claims touch upon a scholarly tradition that goes far beyond Giner's Catalan school on the sociology of citizenship. Inspired in the widely influential contributions of Henry Lefebvre and Hannah Arendt, these assertions show a radical and deeply democratic approach to urban communities. In order to authentically advance those ideals, the programme would understand people's engagement in local assemblies as an opportunity to advance democracy. In other words, it would promote not only the involvement of community members in decisions regarding their neighbourhoods, but it would also strengthen popular civil society by fostering their ability to demand institutional accountability, question policies, build new networks, and implement innovative initiatives.

Nevertheless, an analysis of the metaphors by which the NRP conceives sociability in its principles and strategies of implementation, contradicts these radical, democratic ideals. In fact, the programme's metaphors restrict democracy by focusing only on the efficiency of public policy to connect sociability and territory. Two metaphors organise the programme's assumptions on sociability. First, sociability is understood as an asset. According to this metaphor, enhancing sociability and public engagement provides exogenous benefits for public policy. Second, the programme conceives territory as a container of the social. Put more concretely, the NRP understands the neighbourhoods that it intervenes as spaces capable of containing-holding, gaining, or losing-social interactions, interpersonal trust, collective initiatives, as well as other social phenomena.

Assets should be understood as cash, services or items that directly or indirectly contribute to future revenues or benefits. The idea that social interactions function as an asset is rooted in theories of social capital. In fact, although the programme did not operate with this concept in its early stages, several interviewees recognised basing many of their current assertions on it. Since its origins, social capital has been conceived as a tool to improve people's well-being (Hanifan, 1916). Although with different approaches, main social capital theorists-Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam-have defined the concept as a set of lasting, accumulable social relations and networks by which agents gain access to other benefits. Putnam's (1994) claim, that social capital also improves institutional efficiency, has been particularly inspiring to public policy developers. Similarly, research on neighbourhood developing has highlighted the potential of social capital promotion for boosting efficient social cohesion and public policy implementation (Forrest, 2009; Forrest & Kearns, 2001; Kearns & Parkinson, 2001).

Accordingly, the programme openly conceptualises the sociability it seeks to foster as an asset. An early ministry report that inspired much of the NRP's early design, for example, explains the social and infrastructural challenges in Chilean underprivileged neighbourhoods to be intervened in terms of asset deficits (MINVU, 2006). It defines assets as 'existing resources available to homes, people, or communities, whose mobilisation provides access to mobility and well-being, or protects people from the risks of exclusion and the barriers of progress'(MINVU, 2006, p. 14). Assets include 'human capital, physical capital, and social capital, whose absence or poor quality creates vulnerability' (MINVU, 2006, p. 14). Later, another NRP document defining neighbourhood typologies frames neighbourhood assets as 'social organisations, respected socially beneficial leaders... micro-entrepreneurship, and others' (MINVU, 2010b, p. 25). Similarly, explaining a case study of regeneration, a report from the Regional Ministry Office and the Alberto Hurtado University states that 'the historical trajectory of neighbourhood social participation constitutes a highly relevant social asset' (SEREMI Metropolitana de Vivienda y Urbanismo & Observatorio Social UAH, 2008, p. 38). Other documents from the programme confirm this metaphor by also explicitly equating sociability and assets (e.g. MINVU, 2009a, p. 80, 2010, p. 184). Ministry officials used this same metaphor. One of them echoed others by defining social interactions as assets. 'Neighbourhood assets', he said, are 'social networks as well as local leaders'. Another interviewee equated assets and social interactions when s/he explained their potential to maximise the NRP intervention's future benefits. Investing in sociability is like obtaining 'machines that make machines', she/he said. Consequently, the informant specified, strengthening social interactions makes the programme's intervention 'more productive'.

Through this idea of asset, ministry officials bring the abstraction and complexity of social relations to the concrete level of services, goods, cash, or other items. Consequently, this metaphor allows the programme to set side by side, at the same level of abstraction, sociability-i.e. interpersonal trust, local identity, cohesion, leaders, security, number and density of associations, and others-and elements of infrastructure or service provision-e.g. garbage bins, lighting, maintenance of squares, land availability, neighbourhood football pitches, etc.-all of which are understood to be potentially subjected to the programme's intervention in underprivileged neighbourhoods. One of the interviewees, for example, explained that the NRP should take into account 'not only infrastructure, but also identity assets and organizational assets'. Similarly, one of the programme's documents is particularly explicit in equating those elements. It suggests that neighbourhood resources should be understood as 'social organizations, respected socially positive leaders, the existence of facilities, the stock of available

land, the quality of work force, [among others]’ (MINVU, 2010, p. 25).

Framing sociability as a neighbourhood asset simplifies thought processes and communication within the team of ministry officials. The NRP conceives neighbourhood sociability as one more issue of potential investment. As one interviewee argued, this metaphorical reduction not only makes social interactions fit in budget plans, but it also functions as part the team’s common language. She/he explained that, reducing sociability to an asset allows ministry officials to ‘share a language with the same underlying strategies’ overcoming their disciplinary differences as well as their divergent working experiences. Arguably, this common language makes it easier to communicate and mentally represent the translation between economic and social capital.

A second metaphor developed by the NRP is that of the neighbourhood as a container of sociability. Although it is not fully explicit in the NRP’s narratives, this metaphor underlies the programme’s assumptions defining the territorial boundaries in which sociability develops. Interviews and documents reveal that ministry officials understand the neighbourhood as a specific space capable of accumulating and activating the assets that the programme seeks to invest on. For example, one interviewee stressed that ‘some neighbourhoods hold more organisations, more leaders and networks’. Referring to the neighbourhood’s capacity to strategically contain assets (e.g. sociability), one of them also told me ‘we place our chips in the neighbourhoods’, and another one said ‘it is easier for people to come to agreements at that [neighbourhood] level, so we must put our investment in them [neighbourhoods]’. In fact, in order to measure each neighbourhood’s regenerating potential, NRP officials wrote a report operationalising sociability as something absolutely confined to the neighbourhood scale. According to that report, sociability combines ‘neighbours’ perceptions on their neighbourhood’s image, the levels of existing neighbourhood association, the neighbourhood organisational perception, participation and neighbourhood social relations, and the analysis of variables of social vulnerability such as socio-demographic and economic variables’-all of which, according to this report, do not escape neighbourhood boundaries (MINVU, 2010, p. 13).

MINVU officials conceive the neighbourhood as a highly strategic scale to maximise policy outcomes. They understand the neighbourhood as a particularly efficient scale to invest on social interventions because, on the one hand, it provides people with the required proximity to activate social networks and develop public engagement. One official, for example, told me: ‘investing in neighbourhoods makes sense, it’s a level in which you can really promote participation and see changes’. Another one explained that

‘the neighbourhood allows you to break a little bit the difficulties imposed by not knowing the other personally’ and she/he added ‘you can have more equality, complicity and mutual respect within the neighbourhood’. On the other hand, they perceive the neighbourhood to be a scale at which state intervention can more clearly impact local population and infrastructure. ‘[At the neighbourhood level] citizens can truly interact with the state’, one official told me to explain how the local scale allows state agencies to more effectively connect with local organisations. Similarly, another one echoed other interviewees by saying that ‘working at the neighbourhood level lets you see the changes that the programme makes right away’. Programme documents and interviews combine this emphasis on the strategic quality of the neighbourhood scale with neglecting other, external sources of sociability. In fact, allusions to social interactions, organisations, collective identity, leadership, and other manifestations of sociability beyond neighbourhood boundaries, are largely absent from programme documents, as well as from ministry officials’ narratives.

Organisations, networks and leadership within the neighbourhood are prior assets that predict success for the programme. If social capital is poor in a neighbourhood to be intervened, the programme plans a set of meetings, events and outcomes to boost the community’s sense of identity. The programme frames this identity as specifically confined to the neighbourhood. Its documents clearly specify that, in order to enhance people’s sense of neighbourhood belonging and cohesiveness, the programme should rebuild their neighbourhood’s history (MINVU, 2009b). This is, again, a way of circumscribing all sociability within the boundaries of the neighbourhood.

The NRP’s position within the ministry demonstrates that policy makers and politicians have used this metaphor since the programme’s inception. By depending directly from the Ministry’s Deputy Secretary, the Neighbourhood Development Executive Secretariat-which oversees the NRP-combines large responsibility with relatively high rigidity in its actions. This Secretariat is in charge of implementing programmes in neighbourhoods, villages, secluded settlements or condos, and informal settlements. Thus, its action frame is restricted to specific settlements within clear boundaries. Administratively, the NRP is bound to limit its mind set and actions to the neighbourhoods defined as its fields of intervention. Had the programme been created as part of the Ministry’s Urban Development Division-a department within the MINVU that conceives urban development more broadly-its field of action would be more flexibly defined and could more easily include areas beyond the neighbourhood limits.

Exceptionally, a couple of interviewees recognised and critically assessed this metaphor. They suggest that the programme ‘should not work only within the neighbourhood polygon, not all neighbourhood issues belong to that specific area’. By planning to design ‘priority zones’ that include larger portions of the city surrounding the selected neighbourhoods, these MINVU officials aimed to equip the NRP’s intervention with broader, external tools to address local issues. Through these ‘priority zones’ the programme could provide the neighbourhood community with solutions that exceed that scale of action. The NRP could, for example, request intervening public transportation routes to improve the neighbourhood’s connectivity. While critical and innovative, this solution did not alter the metaphorical logic by which state intervention conceives a specific territory as the container of sociability.

7. RESTRICTING DEMOCRACY

Ultimately, the NRP seeks to advance democracy by promoting a type of governance based on deliberation and social inclusion. The programme’s metaphors revised above-sociability as an asset and the neighbourhood as a container of sociability-define the function and boundaries whereby the NRP frames its promotion of local social organisation. In approaching citizen participation through a strategic and pragmatic lens, the NRP metaphors provide the conditions to build cooperative solutions to concrete issues at the local level. Collective decision making among local dwellers-involving meetings, conflicts, and negotiations-is part of the sociability asset production process that the NRP hopes to activate in each neighbourhood. In a context of highly unequal access to the city, the NRP’s urban regeneration is a way of incorporating historically excluded population in the urban and social fabric.

However, this framing of governance as inclusive, efficient, strategic and problem solving is not enough to deepen democracy. Thought through the metaphors explained above, sociability serves public policy in a linear manner. The programme points out that, by enhancing sociability, investment on social policy implementation becomes more efficient. Accordingly, MINVU officials conceive sociability ‘healthy’ and ‘responsible’ only when it feeds the programme’s specific purposes. In fact, during interviews they highlighted that the NRP’s task is to ‘educate people’ in order to build more ‘responsible participation’. Responsible participation, interviews unveiled, involves three principles. First, responsible citizens develop as public agents. For the programme, participation only results from residents’ social engagement in their neighbourhood. Public engagement develops with other residents in the proximity and identity provided by neighbourhood

life, the programme suggests. Conversely, private life is framed as disconnected from others, as a disinterest from collective endeavours. The public realm for ministry officials is 'going outside of their houses to be with others', in other words, it means residents spending time outside of their houses, spending time with other neighbours in squares and other neighbourhood spaces. One of the NRP's reports, for example, frames the programme's goal as helping residents 'recovering a sense of what is public, living together as a community and helping [them] identify with their neighbourhood' (MINVU, 2010, p. 47). Similarly, a ministry official explained that public engagement means 'participating in your surroundings, in your neighbourhood, in the neighbourhood committee and its causes'. Scholars such as Arendt and Mouffe have warned us of the perils involved in taking the private-public dichotomy too seriously. They argue that conceiving the private and public realms as opposite generally involves depoliticising social interactions. Private experiences-such as the family or friends-not only have a powerful impact on people's political socialisation, but they also provide opportunities for people to reshape their public incorporation (Brennan, 2017; Mouffe, 1992).

Neglecting the private as a space in which social interactions may also have political relevance means acting by denying that other, informal types of sociability-which escape the sight of government bureaucrats-may have a strong influence in people's local construction of belonging and political engagement. Referring to the impact of television in black identity construction and rap music in the US, Shapiro (1997) has argued that despite seemingly enclosed in the private sphere, the use of new technologies tend to open opportunities of social innovation that fruitfully connect the private and the public. Accordingly, by emphasising public neighbourhood sociability, MINVU officials fail to recognise alternative, highly prolific forms of social engagement. In interviews, some of them, for example, highlighted what they saw as the irrelevance of the Internet and digital social networks to promote local sociability. 'The Internet is everywhere today, but it is rather impersonal; participation in neighbourhoods is truly more personal', one of them said to express the sterility of those technologies for the programme's aim. My own experience using Facebook and Whatsapp as well as other social network platforms as tools to connect with local youth organisations during my fieldwork in underprivileged Chilean neighbourhoods, contradicts these claims by MINVU officials. Ministry officials also recognised the programme's difficulty to connect with and involve the youth. However, the NRP's strict metaphorical assumptions can hardly attract individuals that seek to innovate and whose identity development often requires merging the private and the public.

Second, responsible citizens know how to ‘understand the state’. This means engaging in local collaborative endeavours in partnership with state institutions. Hence, local residents are not meant to only participate in deliberative local governance processes, but they are expected to gain an insight into the institutional challenges of participatory governability in order to ‘learn to empathise with the state’. In other words, in their interaction with state officials, residents involved in the NRP’s deliberative procedures should learn how to face in a constructive manner the frustrations of the process resulting from institutional limitations-i.e. administrative difficulties, bureaucratic restrictions, limited funding, timing rigidities, and others. This idea of responsible participation, therefore, contradicts the construction of an empowered, autonomous civil society, which is capable of challenging institutions to make political representatives accountable.

Third, responsible citizens look after their neighbourhood-especially those areas refurbished by the NRP. The programme’s deliberative process seeks to enhance residents’ attachment with their neighbourhood. It presupposes that by becoming active agents in the programme’s local decision-making process, residents will strengthen their sense of neighbourhood belonging and will acquire a feeling of ownership toward the implemented infrastructure improvements. In the words of one interviewee: ‘for me citizen responsibility means that when neighbours participate in generating the project, then they say “I said that this [improvement] was the most necessary, so I will look after it and if my grandchild wants to damage it I will tell him not to do it”’. In this framework citizens are responsible for supporting the sustainability of public policy implementation. Consequently, this conception escapes others in which citizens organise to exercise the power required to decide on the policies to be implemented, acting locally but exceeding the local context.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Accounts on social demobilisation in post-dictatorial Chile have explained the deactivation of civil society from two angles. While some scholars have studied how public policy implementation has politically excluded civil society, others have examined the micro dynamics by which the interaction between the state and local organisations results in the deactivation of collective initiatives. By looking at how top policy makers conceive sociability promotion, this paper contributes with a novel perspective to these academic accounts on Chilean collective action and democracy construction.

The paper examines the metaphors by which officials designing and coordinating the NRP frame sociability in the programme's urban interventions. Seeking to tackle inequality and urban exclusion, the NRP explicitly plans developing local deliberative processes to enhance sociability in many of Chile's most marginalised and neglected neighbourhoods. The article argued that, despite its commitment with building a more inclusive city, the NRP is not designed and implemented under conceptions of governance that advance a deepening of local democracy. Policy makers' conception of sociability as purely instrumental for policy efficiency curtails the programme's potential of community empowerment capacity building, this research suggests.

The careful revision of government documents and a set of interviews with key government officials revealed that two metaphors organised the NRP's assumptions regarding sociability. The first metaphor conceives sociability as an asset and the second one conceives neighbourhoods as containers of the social. By merely serving the efficiency of public policy, the notion of sociability resulting from these two metaphors combined restricts democracy. Consequently, this analysis shows, NRP's metaphors neglect citizen empowerment.

By thinking of sociability as an asset, policy makers equate social interactions with other sorts of infrastructural equipment, goods or services. Reducing sociability to one more investment item simplifies internal communication as well as budget decisions. Moreover, conceptualising social interventions as asset-enhancing provides policy makers with the confidence of invariably investing in profitable, efficient community capital. Similarly, framing neighbourhoods as containers of sociability responds to ministry officials' need to enhance policy efficiency. In fact, they conceive the neighbourhood as the ideally strategic space for building and strengthening local social ties in today's highly disintegrated society. This paper provides evidence showing that the organisational position of the NRP within the MINVU is not only based on these metaphors, but it also makes changing these assumptions in order to broaden the programme's definition of sociability highly challenging.

Governance seeking to deepen democracy fulfils three goals: it strengthens grassroots organisations by promoting their autonomy and oversight capacities, it achieves practical local solutions through processes of horizontal deliberation, and it fosters civil society's engagement in decision-making processes with broader consequences for democracy. Arguably, the NRP's metaphors support deliberative processes of local democracy. By approaching neighbourhood participation with a strategic and pragmatic pers-

pective, the NRP metaphors build the conditions to collectively generate solutions for concrete local issues. However, in line with Greaves (2004), evidence suggests that these metaphors support a restrictive notion of democracy, by which government officials intend to impose top-down definitions of democracy and responsible participation on local población organisations. Ultimately, metaphor analysis suggests, the idea of sociability constructed by the NRP only serves policy implementation in a linear manner. Sociability here is not a tool for citizen empowerment, for strengthening social accountability, or for building impact beyond neighbourhood boundaries. Civil society is understood as an extension of public policies, not as what authors such as Edwards (2011) and Oxhorn (2003) have characterised as the autonomous and diverse political body driving social change in healthy democracies.

This study has had important limitations. Interviews were carefully and strategically selected to reach key government officials. However, interviews should be more numerous and reach lower sections of the MINVU to explain how these metaphors operate in the NRP's implementation on the ground. Additionally, comparative research should, on the one hand, shed light on the metaphorical challenges of other policies and programmes; on the other hand, it should use successful cases to build lessons on the democratic fertility of the assumptions underlying policy design and implementation.

Future research should seek to determine which conceptions of sociability promote a type of governance that deepens democracy. Arguably, studies concerned with governance deepening democracy should strategize on how sociability can empower local communities. To this end, it is firstly crucial to incorporate ideas of informality to the governance equation in state programme implementation. Consequently, future research should examine the potential of informal governance strategies for strengthening democracy at the local level.

Complementing formal varieties of governance, informal governance operates through unwritten rules and informal, horizontal networks. Informal governance works by creating 'semi-official arenas', which are open to all actors that can either be affected by a certain policy or that may contribute with resources in the decision making-process. Participation, under the informal governance framework, is not predefined and cannot be publicly enforced. Informal governance bodies can arise spontaneously, as initiatives coordinated by interest groups, or they can be institutionally initiated and sponsored. Although informal governance has its pitfalls and disad-

vantages, evidence suggests that its adequate application is key to formulating innovative political strategies and policy programmes (Ayres, 2017; Christiansen & Piattoni, 2003). The strong potential of informal governance in processes of deep democracy lays in it conceiving sociability as partially escaping formal deliberative processes or policy implementation. In other words, in order to deepen democracy, scholarly research as well as policy making should incorporate this informal aspect to its conception of sociability. Arguably, research advancing those goals would result in participatory policies that are more oriented to providing the conditions and resources for emergent grassroots initiatives, instead of seeking to impose top-down definitions of citizenship and democracy in order to secure policy efficiency.

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