





Sociogenesis of evangelical devices for the “rehabilitation” of drug users in Argentina

Sociogénesis de los dispositivos evangélicos de “rehabilitación” de usuarios de drogas en Argentina

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ABSTRACT In order to reconstruct the origin and development of neo-Pentecostal devices for the treatment of addictions in the City of Buenos Aires, Argentina, the article analytically puts into historical context the “therapeutic spiritualization” of addictive behavior undertaken by evangelical agents since the 1970s and explores the way in which the State and religious groups converge in the Recover Inclusion Program. Based on qualitative methodology and a sociological approach and carried out in 2015 and 2016, the study includes fourteen interviews with teachers, leaders and former users of the program, twelve interviews with state officials, participant observation in training courses and a corpus made up of documents related to both institutions. The emergent processes of political and religious institutionalization were analyzed according to three dimensions: a) charisma and its opposite, bureaucracy, b) the dynamic role of the second lines of leadership and c) the networked organization structures. It is concluded that points of convergence and analogies exist in the dynamics of evangelical and public institutionalization in addiction treatment.

KEY WORDS Religion; Addictive Behaviors; Treatments; Argentina.

RESUMEN Para reconstruir el origen y desarrollo de los dispositivos neopentecostales dirigidos al tratamiento de adicciones en la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, Argentina, el artículo periodiza analíticamente los impulsos de “espiritualización terapéutica” de la conducta adictiva que emprenden los agentes evangélicos a partir de la década de 1970 y explora el modo en que el Estado y los grupos religiosos convergen en el Programa Recuperar Inclusión. Desde una metodología cualitativa y un enfoque sociológico entre 2015 y 2016, se realizaron catorce entrevistas a profesores, dirigentes y ex usuarios del programa, doce entrevistas a responsables estatales, observación participante en los cursos de formación y se conformó un corpus de documentos relativo a ambas instituciones. Los procesos emergentes de institucionalización política y religiosa se analizaron de acuerdo a tres dimensiones: a) el carisma y su par opuesto, la burocracia, b) al rol dinamizador de las segundas líneas y c) las estructuras de organización en red. Se concluye que existen encuentros y analogías entre las dinámicas de institucionalización evangélica y pública en el tratamiento de las adicciones.

PALABRAS CLAVES Religión; Conductas Adictivas; Tratamientos; Argentina.

INTRODUCTION

From the 1990s to the present, the religious images of the Neo-Pentecostalism were the players of a double movement projection, both strategic and spontaneous in Argentinian society. On the one hand, and following a high visibility criterion, the Evangelical groups managed to establish themselves in the public space,^(1,2,3) increased the internal scale and complexity of their organizations, geographically and symbolically accessed the areas with the highest income,⁽⁴⁾ worked with a different level of success in the training of leaders with influence in politics^(5,6) and the media, reinforced a specific cultural industry supported by new technologies,^(7,8,9,10) created organizations to provide assistance to the most disadvantaged sectors and consolidated a circuit of events and activities oriented, in particular, towards the construction of a Christian youth type.^(11,12) Finally, they moved forward – on a trial and error process, making use of disorganized biographies without following a pre-established plan but with a clear orientation – to an increasing institutionalization of their presence in society. In this way, the Evangelical groups reinforce the current nature of its belief style.

On the other hand, during those years, Evangelical actions were aimed at less visible and less dazzling areas of social life. The two most important actions were the prison outreach ministries, that is, the construction of a space of their own, built from within, particularly, in the Correctional System of Buenos Aires,^(13,14,15,16) and in the juvenile institutions.^(17,18) Another Evangelical action was to work on issues regarding drug abuse, in other words, the development of a method and a specialized network to address the treatment of addiction from a spiritual perspective.^(19,20,21,22,23,24) The penitentiary environment and the drug abuse context were two underground areas of religious projection in Argentina. In both areas, dynamic circuits were progressively defined but they proved to be fragile in the process of implementing intervention models on abandoned areas of society.

Partly recovering this ignored aspect of the Evangelical practices, the aim of this article is to explore the Neo-Pentecostal therapeutics focused on the addiction treatment in the City of Buenos Aires. The religious and state dimensions of such phenomenon must be analytically differentiated in order to understand these initiatives.

In this context, we will study, in institutional terms, the territory of religious interventions related to drug abuse and its peculiar relation with the State. Specifically, we have reconstructed: a) the processes of therapeutical spiritualization of the addictive behavior made by Evangelical agents since the 70's, which were towered with the founding of the National Christian Network for Rehabilitation, Training and Prevention of Drug Addictions (Life Program) [*Red Nacional Cristiana de Rehabilitación, Capacitación y Prevención de Adicciones (Programa Vida)*] in 2004 and the creation of the Social-Therapy Spiritual Operator in Drug Addictions course (OSTE) [*Curso de Operador Socio-Terapéutico Espiritual en Adicciones*] in 2007; and b) the "Recover Inclusion Program" [*Programa Recuperar Inclusión*] jointly coordinated by the Ministry of Planning and Public Works and the Secretary of Integral Policies on Drugs of Argentina (SEDRONAR) [*Secretaría de Políticas Integrales sobre Drogas de la Nación Argentina*]. The connection between Evangelical and state-run networks shows similar processes that will be investigated – taking into account the role that charisma and bureaucracy play – the dynamism of second lines regarding leadership and the networking concept in the operation of organizations.

The terms "second lines" or "mid-level leaders" – that we will use frequently throughout this article – refer to a generic and dynamic position and, in a sense, a non-specific authority that is characterized by the active participation in the internal life and structural decisions of organizations, without access to the most selected leadership areas. The deliberate amplitude of the terms above will allow one to define analogies between, for example, the leader of a ministry

within a megachurch and a top officer in public administration. Besides, it is important to recognize the dynamism and the agonistic nature of these positions as professional figures who, in the construction process of their own careers, initiate emerging forms of institutionalization that drive and tighten them up with the background structures.

Background information

Evangelical projects oriented towards the treatment of drug users provide a theme that has been scarcely explored by social sciences. If we take the local academic production, we come across with the pioneering works by Daniel Míguez.^(17,19) Daniel Míguez comparatively researches state-run and Pentecostal programs of rehabilitation for young addicts and criminals. In his research work, the author reports the highest levels of efficiency in youth reincorporation into society – and, therefore, lower levels of criminal recidivism or addictive relapse – shown in the confessional programs, focused on the cognitive style, social interactions and ritual contexts which are typical of the Pentecostalism as a fruitful instance for identity redefinition. In a further study, Míguez⁽²⁰⁾ analyzes the narratives of youth conversion which are part of the Pentecostal programs of addiction rehabilitation, highlighting the heterogeneity in meaning that the relationship between religious life and drug abuse shows, according to the social and cultural position of the subject.

For its part, within the medical anthropology field, the research work carried out by Castilla and Lorenzo can be mentioned. This work explores the care and rehabilitation practices of cocaine base paste users and its relationship with Pentecostalism. In this work it is pointed out that, within the context of extreme vulnerability in which the lives of the cocaine base paste users run, the contact with the Gospel is the focal point in the "rescue" logics, understood as a set of wisdom principles, practices, operations and arguments that regulate or stop drug abuse based on a social bond. In the same way as

Míguez's studies show, researchers highlight that the "Gospel-based rescue" enables the subjective restructuring – through biographical resignification in the light of the religious worldview – and opens social reintegration channels by means of Evangelical networks, such as the re-establishment of family and neighbor bonds, the access to employment, housing, and education. Likewise, researchers warn that Evangelical treatments reaffirm informal rescue logics by showing the gap between users and the health system and also the search for alternative treatments in place of those proposed by health care units.

It should be noted that, to this inchoate path of local studies on Pentecostal initiatives of prevention and drug abuse treatment, the recent works by Jones and Cunial⁽²³⁾ and Güelman⁽²⁴⁾ are added. The first one addresses the dynamics between religious players and state-run initiatives related to public policies on drugs, and the second one introduces a description of the Evangelical and Catholic therapeutic communities associated with transnational care networks.

At an international level, an interesting academic production is observed around religion and drug abuse issues, which is summarized in several bibliographical revisions^(25,26,27) in which the existence of a wide variety of quantitative analysis is emphasized. This analysis associates religion with less drug abuse or with improved rates of addiction recovery. It is also possible to recognize a consensus in the way in which religiosity and spirituality are protective factors in the presence of drug abuse, both in youths and adults, in different cultural contexts. Moreover, such revisions show a lack of qualitative research that examines the understanding of the above mentioned quantitative correlations and the religious/spiritual treatments.

It is worth mentioning the importance of the research conducted in Europe on drug use and spirituality. Some of the most outstanding are: a) the work carried out by Cantón Delgado⁽²⁸⁾ who addresses the treatment initiatives of "drug addicts" in the Gypsy Pentecostalism context; b) the book

by Comas Arnau⁽²⁹⁾ about residential centers of addictions recovery of Pentecostal nature; and c) the recent study made by Apud and Romani⁽³⁰⁾ who reconstruct networks and therapeutic-spiritual uses of *ayahuasca* in Cataluña.

In Latin America, for its part, an emerging path of social studies on addictions and religion has been developed. Specifically, we register some works: a) the Castrillón⁽³¹⁾ comparative work on secular-therapies and theo-therapies for drug addicts in Colombia; b) the production of the interdisciplinary group of the College of the Northern Border [*Colegio de la Frontera Norte*] (Universidad Autónoma de Baja California) who work the therapeutic-religious offers of Evangelical rehabilitation centers for drug addicts in Tijuana;^(32,33,34) and c) research work on religion and drug abuse issues developed in Brazil.^(35,36,37,38)

In view of this situation in the local, regional and international academic literature, the current research is proposed to understand the Evangelical devices focused on the treatment of drug users in the Greater Buenos Aires (GBA). We seek to contribute to a deeper understanding of aspects of the object which are well-known already and to incorporate new reading keys regarding the action of charisma, mid-level leaderships and the network structure that governs the organizations involved.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This article is a result of the Multi-Annual Research Project (PIP) [*Proyecto de Investigación Plurianual*] 112-201501-00375 (in process) funded and evaluated, both ethically and academically, by the National Scientific and Technical Research Council (CONICET) [*Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas*] whose general aim is to reconstruct the social forms of the objects and the therapeutic programs focused on the treatment of drug users from the Evangelical organizations of the Greater

Buenos Aires. The purpose of this research is to contribute to the social studies on health and religion^(39,40,41,42,43,44,45,46,47,48,49,50) and on religion and addictions^(31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,51,52) developed at a regional level in the past few decades.

Within the analytical framework of the sociology of religion and from a qualitative approach, we performed an intensive on-the-ground work between 2015-2016, taking the National Evangelical Network for Rehabilitation, Training and Prevention of Drug Addictions (Life Program) [*Red Nacional Evangélica de Rehabilitación, Capacitación y Prevención de Adicciones*] and "Recover Inclusion Program" as the main observation benchmarks.

Specifically, within the "Life Program," a participant observation of the training course of Social-Therapy Spiritual Operator in Drug Addictions Course (OSTE) that is delivered on a regular basis since 2007 was performed. A weekly course of three-hour lessons each was delivered at four Evangelical churches located at the northern and north-western area in the Greater Buenos Aires. All ethnographic records were compiled in field diaries.

The time shared at the OSTE courses and the exchanges made with the "Life Program" leaders enabled in depth interviews to be conducted on fourteen professors, leaders and ex-drug users of "Life Program." The interviewees, selected on the basis of social contiguity, enabled access to documents of the Network and their personal records which consisted of a large volume of empirical material (photographs, regulations, brochure and literature).

Within the "Recover Inclusion Program," for its part, during 2016, documents related to the state-run policy were gathered and twelve open, extensive and recurrent interviews were conducted with state agents who were involved and selected following the process of snowball samplings. The interviews were conducted at the "Life Program" offices and Studies and Labour Research Center [*Centro de Estudios e Investigaciones Laborales*] and at the National Scientific and technical

Research Council (CEIL-CONICET). All of them were recorded and then transcribed.

Concurrently, with the aim to historically reconstruct the study object, a gathering of notes on drug abuse was performed. These notes were published by the Christian newspaper *"El Puente,"* between 1985-2010.

In addition, it should be noted that in each field work instance, the informed consent was obtained from all individuals involved in the research and anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed.

The systematization and processing of the data collected involved the design of a mixed approach strategy through the software for qualitative analysis Atlas.Ti, the network analysis UCINET 6 and NetDraw. This combined strategy of analysis enabled: a) the historical reconstruction of the "Life Program," b) the registration of the different connections and interactions of the "Life Program" with state-political agents during the presidencies of Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández and c) a buildup of senses regarding the Evangelical therapeutic and devices of drug users care.

RESULTS

"Therapeutic spiritualization" of addictive behavior: the transformations in the Evangelical devices for rehabilitation

Sociogenesis of Evangelical devices in health identifies three initiatives of "therapeutic spiritualization" of addictive behavior. The first one began in 1973 with the creation of the "Andrés Group" in the locality of Villa Adelina (northern area in the Greater Buenos Aires) under Pastor Carlos Novelli's initiative. The second initiative began in the 1980s and it involved the emergence of a group of local projects involving outreach and assistance to "drug addicts" (broadcasting ministries, musicals, self-help groups). The term "ministry" in the Evangelical world refers to para-ecclesiastical organizations or departments within churches that are focused on a specific area

of service. As shown later, these experiences were not part of an institutional strategy designed by churches, but they were initiated by sectors within the growing Pentecostal congregations. Finally, the third initiative arises in the 1990s, as a result of the transnationalization of Evangelical ministries of "the rehabilitation of drug addicts" from Europe and the US.

In the following subsections, each initiative will be analyzed by showing its logics of emergence and institutionalization in which three main aspects are distinguished: a) the charisma of people involved in the projects and the progressive bureaucratization/standardization of ministries, b) the dynamism of Evangelical mid-level or peripheral leaders in the formation and sustaining of these initiatives, and c) the networking logic that the projects adopted by linking transversally not only with churches but also with the civil society and the State.

The experience of Pastor Novelli

Carlos Novelli's experience interweaves with the dynamics adopted by "the drug issue" during 1960 and 1970 whose focus was the middle class youth circles linked to the rock culture and artistic-intellectual vanguards.^(53,54) Novelli was, precisely, a young man that belonged to these social circles. He was both a user and a dealer from the northern area of the Greater Buenos Aires. In 1972, during one of his trips to the US to supply himself with cocaine, which he would later sell to his friends and acquaintances, Novelli had an "encounter with God" and completely stopped both using and selling drugs.^(55,56) Although it is not known exactly which therapeutic experience he had been in touch with, it can be inferred that it was some Evangelical group influenced by the anti-professional and anti-institutional movement inspired by Alcoholics Anonymous, which, in those days, promoted rehabilitation strategies for drug addicts with a hierarchic mark based on self-management and self-help (for example the Daytop and Synanon programs).^(56,57)

When he came back in 1973, Novelli founded the “Andres Group” in the backyard of his house in Villa Adelina. There, he started to offer support to his ex customers/friends who were addicts. These sporadic meetings consisted of reading the Bible and exchanging experiences in order to maintain abstinence.

Novelli’s project was independent at first, and, in 1976, he could merge with the *Iglesia Evangelica Bautista* in La Lucila. First, he went there just as a worshipper and later, Novelli was authorized to move his self-help groups to the church. According to our records, this was the only stable relation Novelli had with the Evangelical community. What is more, although he is referred to as a “pastor,” he has never been in charge of a church or attended a Bible Seminar. He was only appointed as a “worker” by the *Iglesia Evangelica Bautista* in La Lucila, so that he could hold his meetings with ex addicts and share the Gospel with them.

Around 1982, Novelli opened the Christian Center for Addiction Rehabilitation “Andrés Program” in the town Diego Gaynor, which became the first therapeutic residential community in Argentina. The mechanism of “drug rehabilitation center” or “Life Community”^(57,58) consisted of maintaining voluntary abstinence together as a community under strong religious beliefs. They were financially supported by the residents’ families, donations from other religious organizations and also, by the production of hand-crafted articles and craft foods.

During the 1980s, Novelli’s projects began to gain visibility while relating to other religious and similar secular initiatives that emerged from the civil society such as “Return Journey Foundation” or “Life Together Foundation” and with key referents in Community Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis such as Wilbur Grimson.⁽⁵⁶⁾ The relations he developed due to his condition of “pioneer,” his personality broadly referred to as charismatic and his social background (associated to middle and high classes) made “Pastor Novelli” a central figure in the new non-governmental therapeutical scene in the field of addictions.

This status led him to found The Federation of Non-governmental Organizations of Argentina for the Prevention and Treatment of Drug Abuse (FONGA) [*Federación de Organizaciones no Gubernamentales de la Argentina para la Prevención y el Tratamiento del Abuso de Drogas*] in 1986, and in 1987 he traveled as the president of the institution to the annual meeting of the International Narcotics Control Board⁽⁵⁶⁾ [*Junta Internacional de Estupefacientes*] of the United Nations.

The inclusion in the international networks closely connected him to the US Embassy and to the *Progetto Uomo* of Italy. His bonds with the former lead – for the first time in the country – to the production of editorial material on addiction prevention for schools. Specifically, in 1988 and 1989, “Andres Program” published the collection “Children and drugs,” made up of the translations into Spanish of the book “Marijuana Alert” and of the book saga “The real story of Mary Jane” by the American journalist Peggy Mann, awarded as the “most significant writer of the nation in the field of drug abuse prevention” by the Congress of her country.⁽⁵⁹⁾ On the other hand, the connection with *Progetto Uomo* (method of rehabilitation of drug addicts created in 1979 by a Catholic priest named Mario Picchi) set in motion the first training for socio-therapy operators in the country sponsored by the United Nations. These trainings were decisive for the dissemination of the Italian method in Argentina as well as for the professionalization of the referents of the pioneering “Life Communities.”^(56,57,58)

The structuring of the non-governmental therapeutical setting shows the progressive institutionalization and professionalization of the secular groups that were focused on the treatment of “drug addicts” coming from civil society. This process culminates in 1989 with the creation of SEDRONAR and the incorporation of many of these initiatives at a state level. Finally, in 1994, after Novelli’s death, FONGA was headed by Wilbur Gimson and “Andrés Program” started a process of de-Christianization but still kept the spiritual perspective in its treatments. Because of this, activities related to yoga and meditation

in coordination with Ravi Shankar's organization "Art of Living Foundation" are currently being developed.

Local and transnational Pentecostal projects

The second Evangelical wave of "therapeutic spiritualization" of addictive behavior started with the return of democracy and overlapped with the processes of renovation, pentecostalization and cultural openness that were being displayed in the Evangelical context. This reshaping urgently required new charismatic leaders with their own style, innovative outreach strategies, new theological emphasis and flexible institutional structures. This big collection of transformations is accompanied by a large number of converts joining the congregations, growing from 2.6% in 1960 to 9% of the Argentine population at the end of the 1990's, maintaining these figures up to the present.^(1,4,11)

During this period of growth, a myriad of local outreach projects and religious-therapeutic assistance for young drug users emerged. These myriads offered not only cultural projects such as broadcasting programs, rock bands and festivals, but also alternative treatments such as self-help groups or rehabilitation centers.

Within the drug addict-oriented Evangelical initiatives, the ministry "God bless you" stands out. Prompted by a young "ex rocker and ex addict" converted to the Gospel, in the mid 1980s, he decided to preach in the discos of the western area in the Greater Buenos Aires. His ministry created a broadcasting program and organized several festivals called "Rock and Faith."⁽⁶⁰⁾ This famous association between drugs and rock also inspired the formation of numerous music bands that wanted to "rescue" young drug users through faith. These groups were included in the secular rock underground scene. Among the most dynamic groups of the network, a ministry called "Boanerges" started in 1988 and was linked to the heavy metal culture. Moreover, we need to mention "Tommy and Jesus band," which in its lyrics, for example, would inquire drug addicts like this:

No more pot, no more coke, no more "base paste," no more evil. I just want to follow Jesus, for He will bring a new life for me [...] I do not want to convince you just with words, I want you to look at me and tell me what you see. I have been locked in the drugs world, but the Lord saved me, he rescued me (Extract from the song "No more evil" [Basta de mal])

Together with these Art and Gospel outreach activities, other Pentecostal initiatives orientated to "drug addicts" treatment with mutual support groups and/or "Life Community" methods had been developed. One of the pioneers was the "Ark of Noah Drug Addicts Rehabilitation Centre" [Centro de Rehabilitación para Drogadictos Arca de Noé], which was created during 1982 in a marginal neighborhood in the district of Escobar, at the initiative of the new ministry "Waves of Love and Peace," founded by Pastor Héctor Giménez. As Spadafora points out,⁽⁶¹⁾ the relationship between Giménez and the "recovery" of "addicts" comes from his own personal story, a past of addiction, crime and poverty.

This feature, however, is not exclusive of Giménez. It is also a common characteristic among most of the Pentecostal ministries that were created during 1980 and 1990, which were mostly driven by people with limited resources that were ex-addicts, and, some of them, Evangelical converts with a criminal past as well. The social background of the people involved in the projects therefore shows that these religious-therapeutical projects overlapped in a social context that was different from the social context of "Andrés Program," which was – as previously mentioned – middle class orientated. Clearly, these rehabilitation initiatives were echoed among impoverished and marginal sectors at the same time that "drug abuse issues" and Pentecostalism were gaining territory there.^(19,20,21,62,63,64)

Pastor Giménez's experience is also different in that the usual Pentecostal ministries for addiction were not being prompted by "pastors" but by mid-level leaders or by

peripheral congregations. This characteristic shows the autonomous and self-managing character of the projects and it also shows the tensions that were being created among church pastors themselves.

Pastors have never liked their churches to be full of drug-addicts [...] In the church they would give us a very small room to meet, we were like a ghetto within another ghetto [...] Pastors knew nothing about drugs and that's why they could not understand our ministry. (Interview with A, ex leader and member of the founding group of "Life Program")

These statements appear once and again in the interviews, even Boanerges band members would manifest so to the religious journalists in 1998:

We do what Jesus would do. We are with those to whom the church cannot reach. We do not show favoritism. Jesus would hang out with people who had a bad reputation. I think that we need to change the church structures so that they can receive people like this.⁽⁶⁵⁾

Clearly, those initiatives were not part of a project institutionally designed by Evangelical churches to approach addiction. On the contrary, they were independent projects initiated by mid-level church leaders or by numerous congregations in general. From a sociology of figurations point of view,⁽⁶⁶⁾ it can be mentioned that this is the chaining of aspirations and actions that were dispersed at first, but as they belong to analogous relation frameworks, they result in a common process. This ongoing process is the one that retroactively incorporates an idea of planning, management and leading, which did not exist at the beginning.

Pentecostal ministries for the rehabilitation of addicts at a transnational level began to settle down in the country in parallel to these independent initiatives. Among the most renowned ministries, "Remar," "Challenge to life" and "Youth Challenge" can be

mentioned. The first two came from Spain and started at the beginning of 1980 as a consequence of the independent missionary initiatives from the US.⁽²⁹⁾ After strengthening in different parts of Spain, they started an internationalization process that reached the Argentine scenario in 1992. For its part, Youth Challenge is a ministry born in the US, created in 1958 by preacher David Wilkerson. This ministry arrived in Argentina at the beginning of 1990 together with the Pentecostal group "Assemblies of God's Union."

These transnational ministries involve a third "therapeutic specialization" initiative for addictive behavior because its arrival involved the introduction of residential Pentecostal and therapeutic communities that, in relation to these independent ambulatory projects described above, set a therapeutic Pentecostal scene of addicts rehabilitation devices with a strong presence in sectors with social vulnerability.

Life Program and OSTE Course

The Pentecostal therapeutic scene of drug addicts' recovery, which is powered by the independent and transnational projects, will gradually be interconnected and, over the 1990s, it will transversally mark the Evangelical churches, acting in consulting, training and referrals.

The accumulated experience and the connections made among ministries promoted the creation of two professionalization and institutionalization instances of such places: the creation of the National Evangelical Network for Rehabilitation, Training and Prevention of Drug Addictions "Life Program," founded in 2003 and the initiation of the "Social-Therapy Spiritual Operator in Drug Addictions Course" (OSTE), in 2007.

"Life Program" results from the action of four ministries: "Viviré," "Josué Program," "Bernabé" and "Evangelical Formation in Mental Health" (FESAM) [*Formación Evangélica en Salud Mental*]. The first one was focused on the church training to create self-help groups and was managed by a converted ex-drug addict who had served as the

main leader for ten years in the hospitalization units from "Youth Challenge." Due to his expertise and relationships, he had a main role within the Pentecostal therapeutic addiction scene. "Josué Program" is a rehabilitation day center and is related to the "Catedral de la Fe" megachurch in Parque Chacabuco. It was founded in 1995 by a drug addict recovered in "Youth Challenge," and is the only semi-ambulatory Christian unit. As for "Bernabé" and FESAM ministries, both were related to the "Iglesia de la Puerta Abierta" in Villa Devoto. "Bernabé" was a group of primary care specialized in addiction, which held meetings in that church since 1992 led by a converted ex-drug addict. Finally, FESAM is an Evangelical Civil Association focused on mental health assistance and training; its director at that moment was an Evangelical consultant psychiatrist, member of the "Iglesia de la Puerta Abierta" congregation. The following is established in "Life Program" founding document:

Many large and small groups in different congregations have been separately developing this task for many years. According to statistics, the recovery rate of these groups is much higher than the recovery rate of secular and official institutions. Because Jesus can! We think it is time to capitalize experiences. We want to show the same power as when Elias lit the fire pit. Not for the purpose of boasting but in thinking of those oppressed by drugs.

These four founding ministries engaged in interconnecting the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires projects, and in its beginnings, nineteen ministries working on the recovery of addicts joined. These ministries currently count with 150 entities throughout the country.

"Life Program" groups the majority of the Evangelical devices specialized in addiction in Argentina into its three modalities: supporting groups, day hospital and residential therapeutic communities. In practical terms, it works similarly to SEDRONAR, but within

an Evangelical framework. In other words, it works as a "referral agent" which receives cases from churches or the civil society and, after a number of interviews with psychologists and social-therapy Christian operators, it decides which kind of treatment the person may require and, according to the geographic location, the person is contacted from the local department for further follow-up.

Another core function of "Life Program" is to "train" churches to deal with issues related to addiction and, for that purpose, during these years the objective has been to systematize the experience of the independent projects, and thus the accumulated expertise was summarized in the so-called "Social-Therapy Spiritual Operator in Drug Addictions Course" (OSTE).

Fifty courses have been delivered countrywide, which trained around 1,500 operators since it was founded in 2007. Students must pay a reasonable monthly fee to take the course, which has a total of ten subjects, and students can choose between two modalities: crash course or regular. The different topics include: addiction prevention, basic notions of psychology and psychiatry, general concepts of chemistry and pharmacology, the role of the operator and group dynamics, theology and spiritual techniques applied to addiction treatment.

OSTE teaching staff is made up of the "Life Program" management group, mainly formed by the founders of "Life Program" or people connected to them – all of them with a vast practical and professional expertise in this field – among which are psychologists, psychiatrists, social-therapy operators, social workers and teachers.

"Life Program" and OSTE Course constitute a level of institutionalization, professionalization and homogenization of the Evangelical "treatments" for the recovery of addicts in Argentina. However, such movements do not mean a process of "de-Christianization" or "secularization" of the therapy proposals, but, on the contrary, a stabilization of the work of discursive and practical synthesis has been observed, and it has been developed by Evangelical ministries with

the help of religious and socio-sanitary approaches of the addictive behavior.

The State and its Interpretation

“The Program means everything”: customary, transversal and transcendent policies

As discussed above, the different initiatives of “therapeutic spiritualization” of addictive patterns have been supported by an emergent model of institutionalization, which shows the following three dominant features:

- a. The charismatic element in the initiators, the extraordinary construction of the qualities, visions and capabilities of people who carry out their own projects. This construction is symbolically facilitated and strengthened by the Evangelical belief system, particularly those which are successful in new areas of religious intervention;
- b. The initiators’ position within current organizations. It is not the Senior Pastor but minor leaders – sociologically speaking, understood as mid and second level leaders – the ones who revitalize institutions, following the logic of the schism, innovation and the possibility of an specialization in the realities churches have not yet discussed;
- c. The networking structure adopted by the Programs when proposing a transversal connection with different social players not only coming from the Evangelical world, but also from the State at any level. The networks are concentrated in areas with a high movement of people, resources, and knowledge – known as the hard core – and in peripheral areas crossed by the pace and dynamism of the vulnerable groups.

In sum, faced with the question of socio-genesis of Evangelical institutions specialized in addiction, it is essential to consider the charismatic construction of the founders, their subordinate position within the original structure and the networking structure their programs will adopt.

Now, what happens when these networking organizations come into contact with the State and long or short-term connections are created? We propose resuming the analysis of the already mentioned features – charisma, second lines of leadership and the networking structures – in order to explore the origin of the first state-run policy that adapted religious knowledge and elements to the state intervention on drug abuse issues: the “Recover Inclusion Program,” launched at the end of 2014.

We can start reconsidering two definitions made by one of the main informants and the founder of that program – a former civil servant of the former Ministry of Planning and Public Works – while he was doing the field work. Being well versed in the functioning of the State apparatus and in the design and management of specific policies of territorial approach, he emphasized in the first definition he made the key role that programs play within a State. He affirmed that “*the Program means everything*,” within the public administration. The program, which is below the strategic plan the government develops for its ministries, but above the effective efforts made in the territory, represents a proposal for intervention on the society’s specific issues based on an integral approach. It includes a political base, supported by a regulatory framework, preliminary and complementary actions, general and specific objectives, management, funding and a scheme for the distribution of responsibilities, roles and tasks among all of the agents involved. The State functions, thinks and works, in many ways, through the programs conducted by the ministries. This theoretical-practical dimension of the State is fundamental for introducing innovations in the way a thematic unit is approached and developed, as in the case of drug abuse and the incorporation of a methodology close to Evangelical and Catholic treatment techniques.

The second definition introduced by the informant was a native characterization of the different types of state-run policies that governments deploy; there is a distinction between the “customary,” “transversal”

and “transcendent” schemes of government. Each of them involves different logics of the State’s relation to the society and its intervention areas.

In the “customary” scheme, the policies are highly centralized – their design, funding, execution and control – in large institutions that concentrate all public activities on specific issues and specific populations. This model for State action finds one of its exemplary expressions, but not the only one, in the first Peronist administration from 1946 to 1955.

On the contrary, according to the informant, the “transversal” policies outline a challenge related to an efficient and flexible connection among different ministries which should jointly coordinate their activities when participating in the same state-run policy. It is an intrastate connection, but also the different levels of government are involved, that is to say, provincial and local governments. The policy is aimed to decentralize the public areas in order to intervene in a networked structure.

Finally, the third model is the “transcendent” scheme in which the State intends to implement policies through civil society organizations which deal with knowledge, work techniques and territory attachment in specific topics. In this case, the policy:

...goes beyond the scope of the State, it is not that I only attend to you, but I also want to perform different tasks through you, so that you can take over afterwards; thus, you come out of the centralism of the State, you go beyond that line, that limit between the State and society, in order to get into a synergy within the society. (Interview made to L, former civil servant of the former Ministry of Planning and Public Works)

In a word, in these transcendent actions, state-run policies include in their design the necessity of boosting certain social players that work outside the government structure. The “transcendent model” is a native expression, religiously informed, which uses the interviewee to refer to what is known as

“governance” or “relational governance” in the public administration area. This is, the strategic conception of the State management based on the incorporation of civil society actions in the development and implementation of state-run policies. In this case, the specificity of the idea of “significance” refers to a modified spiritualization of the governance through the increasing relevance of the religious devices – both Catholic and Evangelical – in the addiction treatment.

The last two models are compatible with each other. A policy may include transversal and transcendent principles in the approach of a specific issue. The relevance of the Program – as a State mechanism of thought-action – and the state-run policy innovations highly contributed to the development of a new way to approach drug abuse issues. This change consists in the incorporation of the religious groups’ expertise and methodology to public devices which are focused on the treatment and prevention of addictions.

Recover Inclusion Program: political and religious analogies of public function

In line with churches, the state processes of institutionalization compromise the elements related to the forms of charisma – and its opposite, the bureaucracy – the dynamism of second lines and the networking concept in organizations. “Recover Inclusion Program” is an example of how the three dimensions of analysis are connected. This Program may be briefly introduced as an integral plan in the approach to drug abuse issues by creating Therapeutic Educational Home (CET) [*Casas Educativas Terapéuticas*], Local Prevention Addiction Center (CePLA) [*Centros Preventivos Locales de las Adicciones*] and giving subsidies to civil society organizations that deal with this topic.

The *first dimension*, which is related to the logic of charisma and bureaucracy, describes a central aspect of the Program. This Program is first prepared by its regulatory, financial and strategic complexity by civil servants that join the political and bureaucratic imagination in a detailed plan of action, which is a work document. The preliminary

tasks of public administration precede the massive launch of the Program in charge of the main figure of the former president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and the extraordinary circumstances that surround her political *performance*. The announcement is made within the framework of a mass event in which loud noises, the basis, myths and symbols of the political party that she presides (Front for Victory) are renewed and staged. In contrast with Evangelical institutions such as “Life Program” – in which the charisma of the initiators is developed in the practice itself, that is to say, in the effective exercise of their tasks, prior to the minimal bureaucracy of their activities – in this case, the State plans even the smallest detail of the plan of action to follow and then attaches and reinforces the charismatic initiative of their maximum leaders.

The *second dimension* leads us to consider the key position that second lines and mid-level leaders have in the revitalization of institutions. “Recover Inclusion Program” was originally planned and performed in each of its development stages by a top officer, closest to the minister of Planning and Public Works. His interests, biographic concerns, internal networks and professional challenges in public administration promote the collective preparation of an integrated approach program of health focused on drug abuse issues.

In turn, this Plan of Action depends on the correct political timing to be launched as instructed by institutions involved (Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Health and SEDRONAR) with the Presidency of the Nation as the leader. In this sense, it is important to highlight that in 2013 a Catholic priest was appointed, who is the founder of Valdocco foundation, specialized in the treatment of addictions and ahead of a public institution: SEDRONAR. The appointment of a priest who has work experience in this matter complies, in part, with a change of perspective that is introduced by Act No. 26657 Mental Health [*Salud Mental*] (passed in 2010 and regulated in 2013) and Act No. 26934 Integral Plan for the Approach of Drug Abuse

Issues (Plan IACOP) [*Plan Integral para el Abordaje de los Consumos Problemáticos*] of 2014. Both acts contribute to redefine the regulatory framework and approaching methods in health under the human rights paradigm. The secretary held the position until 2015. His management matches the launching and application of the “Recover Inclusion Program” and the incorporation of the religious point of view in making state-run policies directed to the treatment and prevention of addictions.

The active role of this second line officer should also be highlighted as it transversally makes one of the main State ministries more dynamic. During this process, this officer introduces unexpected connections and innovations with Evangelical organizations adopting, as shown later, a work method from them, but translating this method into the language and the forms used in state-run policies. The innovations are in part linked to his faith experiences that raise awareness of certain topics and treatment models, and to a political context that enables this understanding. It is important to emphasize, once again, a certain analogy with the Evangelical processes of institutionalization: leaders, rather than pastors, and second lines, rather than first lines in political matters, are those that introduce emerging changes in the organizational structures.

The *third dimension* of analysis that should be highlighted consists of the networking structure that the “Recover Inclusion Program” introduces. The networking design governed by the state-run policy appears in two complementary levels, in which the “transversal” and “transcendent” concepts of the State with regard to the society are connected among themselves. On the one hand, the Program involves joint activities of different ministries in therapeutic homes and prevention centers. These activities imply a coordination work among different ministries of the State: the Ministry of Planning makes the investment in infrastructure, provides technological tools and constitutes the so-called *vitalizer* teams, which will be explained later. SEDRONAR identifies

vulnerable areas, determines job profiles and work methods of interdisciplinary teams, manages local approach of professionals, oversees their performance, grants basic resources of operation and provides subsidies to organizations of the civil society that work in drug abuse issues. Finally, the Ministry of Health is responsible for recruitment in therapeutic care and the management of hospital appointments in general hospitals for those patients who need admission. Furthermore, there are other ministries such as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Social Development that participate in these tasks to a lesser extent through courses, training, and professional advice.

On the other hand, the Program develops not only an intra-state policy, but also a networking work structure with non-governmental organizations that approach prevention and treatment of addiction. Thus, according to the classification system of the informant, "transversal" policies become "transcendent" because the State adopts a protective role or, at least, it promotes the organizations that effectively work in the territory. This was, for instance, the case of "Life Program" as it is a paradigmatic player of Evangelical work on drug abuse issues. The interpretative framework of "Recover Inclusion Program" granted a certain level of acknowledgement, and, therefore, of public legitimacy to the action of religious groups, including Neo-Pentecostalism as a key role. Both subsidies and funding were granted for the construction of therapeutic homes in areas surrounding churches, such as Catedral de la Fe in Parque Chacabuco. Thus, the networking model of state-run programs is connected with Evangelical networks, which causes an overlap between two logics of attachment in the territory that, until then, would lack any political framing that may institutionalize this relationship. For the government, this model encouraged social players in their daily tasks. These players perform an effective activity in public health problems and also have, at least in theory, an impact on the popular sector. The state recognition of postponed groups is an indirect

way of making politics and demonstrating commitment in elections. For the Evangelical world, the Program represented the possibility of establishing an enduring relationship with the State, after moving from an instrumental or mere strategic stage with different ministries to a more stable and notable period of reinforcement within public institutions and of conflict with Catholic hegemony in established areas of social life.

In the analogies shown between the relations among state and religious networks, "Recover Inclusion Program" tends to introduce in its work methods specific elements of the spiritual treatment strategies that Catholics and Evangelicals develop (in particular, the treatment method that Valdocco Foundation applies in Catholicism and that "Josué Program" applies in the Evangelical world). On the one hand, the ambulatory model about admission to the hospital is prioritized. Therapeutic Educational Homes (CET) and Local Prevention Addiction Center (CEPLA) were created as meeting points, known as "homes ready to receive drug addicts," for an integral approach to addiction from a perspective that includes sports, games, education, vocational training, therapeutic care and family setting in a person's recovery. On the other hand, the integral understanding in the treatment of drug abuse issues includes in its areas of competence not only the social, mental and physical development of addicts, but also the spiritual development that is in charge of a new figure called "vitalizer." The aim of vitalization is to promote positive values of religious nature by accompanying both the persons and the professional teams. Workshops, courses, artistic events and meetings that provide support and training are some of the activities that this new social player of the State displays in the territory. The fieldwork enabled us to recognize the coordinated actions of Catholic Ecclesiastical movements – such as the Word of Faith Movement – in the design and performance of the tasks of the vitalizer, and important persons of the Evangelical world, specifically young leaders of the Baptist and Pentecostal environment. Thus, the perception of the

vitalizer, from an abstract point of view, includes the specific action of Christian groups that transfer the religious perspective to the state models of intervention in addiction.

In summary, the sociogenesis of processes of connection between public and Evangelical networks enables certain analogies to be recognized with regard to the ways of institutionalization that revitalize both the political and the religious world. In the circumstantial overlapping between both realities, Evangelicals become players whereby the State performs health policies in drug abuse issues, capitalizing its local scope, method and experience. Furthermore, governmental structures introduce – not without tensions and resistance – the spiritual viewpoint in the development of state-run policies, that is to say, in the programs and plans of action that allow the State to determine priorities and act on them.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it is important to take again the main argument of this article, which is related to the overlapping of the two emerging dynamics of institutionalization. One of them is originated in the so-called “therapeutic spiritualization” of Evangelical churches, whose high-rank organization is “Life Program” and training courses of OSTE and the other dynamic strategically arises from the State through “Recover Inclusion Program.” As shown throughout this article, both processes recognize similar characteristics with regard to: a) alternative functions of charisma and bureaucracy in making strategic plans; b) centrality of secondary leaderships; c) networking structure of its institutions based on functional connection among interdependent units of work.

For two years (2014 and 2015) the State and churches found a common ground regarding an attention plan of addiction, in which state-run policies managed to promote devices already available in the Evangelical world. “Recover Inclusion Program” represents a macro-network of public nature

which is capable of establishing stable connections to mid-networks of religious groups different to Catholicism. The change in this policy consists, mainly, in the legitimate and leading nature that adopted the Evangelical model of treatment, thus abandoning the informal circuits of public life in order to appear as outstanding, officially recognized referents in the drug addiction approach.

The sociogenesis of the Evangelical devices for the rehabilitation of drug users allows us to recognize an aspect, which has hardly been explored, of this religious group and its relation with public discussions in health. The issue of drug addiction enables an intervention strategy on segments of youth which does not target church population or a diffuse sector of society, but it is aimed at a specific and invisible sector of youth, which because of drug abuse, occupy transitory entrance positions among different reference groups. For example, they face unstable cycles of closeness and distance with their immediate relatives, school, workplace, juvenile institutions, various friend groups, cultural activities that involve a lot of socialization – football and music are the most frequent – moreover, with environments that may influence drug use, crime or confinement, that sometimes happen to be opposed and other times happen to coincide with the contexts cited above.

In this scenery of intermittent references, the Evangelical church is usually one more environment that may provide comfort as well as it may imply exclusion or denial of addiction and its treatment. Thus, the training in drug addiction is carried out by specific ministries that sometimes are isolated and coexist with feelings of acceptance and mistrust or lack of interest coming from diverse sectors of the Evangelical community. The expertise in the Evangelical context requires the development of a set of methods and knowledge that re-elaborate contents of biomedicine, psychoanalysis and even self-help under the interpretative framework of the religious standpoint.

In sociological terms, it can be assumed that their strategy aims to reverse situations

of liminality which place drug consumers among several spaces of support transitions and spaces of reference. For that purpose, it offers a strong attachment in a territory of beliefs, identifications, sociabilities and intensive circulation from which it redefines the general principles of order and relationship

with the world. This full, strict and cohesive sense of belonging with the Evangelical trusting networks⁽⁶⁷⁾ contrasts with the liminal condition that places the subject "among groups." It is this logic, the logic of intervention, that the State copies, improves and replicates at its own speed and on its own terms.

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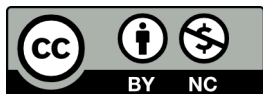
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