

# Migrant women, daily mobility and urban borders in an Argentinean city

## Mujeres migrantes, movilidades cotidianas y fronteras urbanas en una ciudad de Argentina

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### Abstract

This article focuses on the daily mobilities of Bolivian and Peruvian women residing in the city of Córdoba, Argentina, who migrated during 1990-2010 to the country. It analyzes the way in which urban borders determine and condition the spatial practices of female migrant population in the destination contexts. From the theoretical contributions of intersectionality and based on a qualitative methodology that combines participant observation, in-depth interviews and mobile methodologies with adult migrant women during 2009-2019, this study suggests that the spatial practices of these women merge restrictions on mobility marked by the existence of urban borders and, at the same time, legitimated circulations through the city under certain conditions. The main argument recognizes that these borders are updated based on a “know how to move” of migrant women that influence the ways of inhabiting the city.

Keywords: migration, intersectionality, daily mobilities, urban borders, Argentina.

### Resumen

Este artículo reconstruye movilidades cotidianas de mujeres bolivianas y peruanas que residen en Córdoba, Argentina, y que migraron durante el periodo 1990-2010 al país. Para ello, analiza el modo en que las fronteras presentes en el interior de los espacios urbanos determinan y condicionan las prácticas espaciales de las poblaciones migrantes en los contextos de destino. Desde los aportes teóricos de la interseccionalidad y a partir de una metodología cualitativa que combina observación participante, entrevistas en profundidad y recorridos comentados con mujeres migrantes adultas durante 2009-2019, se parte de la premisa de que las prácticas espaciales de estas mujeres mixturán restricciones a la movilidad marcadas por la existencia de fronteras urbanas y,

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al mismo tiempo, circulaciones legitimadas bajo determinadas condiciones. La argumentación principal sostiene que estas fronteras se van reactualizando con base en un “saber moverse” de las mujeres migrantes que actúa en los modos de habitar la ciudad.

Palabras clave: migraciones, interseccionalidad, movilidades cotidianas, fronteras urbanas, Argentina.

## Introduction

This article aims to reflect on the daily mobility of Bolivian and Peruvian women residing in Córdoba, Argentina, who migrated from 1990-2010 to the country. To this end, it examines the often-imperceptible borders within urban spaces that determine and condition the spatial practices of migrant populations in destination contexts.

The experiences of migrants in crossing state borders occupy a prominent place in the field of migration studies (Alvites Baiadera, 2019; Aquino et al., 2013; Baggio, 2010; Mezzadra & Neilson, 2016; Velasco, 2016, among many other studies). As Mera and Matossian (2021, p. 125) point out, “within the complex universe that constitutes human mobility”, the codification of “certain displacements in terms of ‘migration’ is a social construction that is based on the crossing of [a] political border—between or within nation-states—to establish a new place of residence”. Nevertheless, these are not the only borders that migrants encounter. Those who manage to remain in the societies of destination coexist with the presence of urban borders that act on their spatial practices, excluding them from some areas—or only legitimizing their presence under certain roles—and circumscribing them to others where living conditions are precarious.

The main argument of this article is that urban frontiers are being updated—diluted or strengthened—based on migrant women’s “knowing how to move” that acts on the ways of inhabiting the city. These borders are built from the intersection of inequalities to express the “urban conflict from its gender, sexuality or race dimensions, and not only in terms of class” (Pérez Sanz & Gregorio Gil, 2020, p. 4). The urban space, therefore, is not homogeneous, undifferentiated, and continuous: neither the residences of the inhabitants nor the infrastructure and services are evenly distributed (Caggiano & Segura, 2014, p. 31). In the face of this recognition, it becomes indispensable to contemplate “the diversity of actors, organizations, needs and times that build urban life” (Soto Villagrán, 2016, p. 40).

In this framework, it is necessary to reinstate the multiple scales and meanings of the category “border”: state borders and borders that are constituted in the everyday spatial practices of the subjects; borders as limits, but also as spaces of interaction. Borders are a barrier that excludes and separates, and simultaneously a possibility concerning the formation of certain “migrant circuits.” Thus, the border, as Benedetti (2023, p. 136) proposes, “constitutes a social experience that is expressed in multiple temporal and spatial factors”. The premise is that the spatial practices of Bolivian and Peruvian women in the city of Córdoba combine restrictions to mobility marked by the “internalized” borders of the place they inhabit and, at the same time, circulation and transits legitimized under certain conditions. These internalized borders arise in urban contexts and aim to maintain a “cautious distance” from certain populations

(Baggio, 2010, p. 58). Within the set of spatial practices, it is of interest to reconstruct the daily mobility of migrant women in urban contexts concerning paid work and unpaid care tasks. In these pages, everyday mobility is understood as that which enables individuals to access the city, its territories, the opportunities it offers, and social ties (Avellaneda & Lazo, 2011, p. 49). Likewise, the experiences of daily mobility refer to the quality of urban life, both in terms of access to different spaces in the city and how this mobility is managed (Jirón, 2007, p. 174). This set of issues, linked to movement and mobility, has historically been at the heart of reflection on urban life (Lulle & Di Virgilio, 2021, p. 4) and migration.

Based on these considerations, the article is organized into three sections. The first section describes the theoretical and methodological tools used in this study. The other two reconstruct the specific features of daily mobility regarding paid work and caregiving tasks. It should be noted that they are presented separately for analytical purposes only since in practice they constantly overlap and have a decisive impact on the lives of migrant women and their families.

### Urban borders, daily mobility and intersectionality: conceptual framework and methodological tools

The focus on the daily mobility of migrant women in urban contexts and on the borders that condition and shape this mobility makes it possible to reflect on the multiple forms of circulation and the dynamics of the place they inhabit. As Caggiano and Segura (2014, p. 30) indicate, “the urban territory is the resulting scenario of the sedimentation of constrictions, boundaries and prescriptions and, as such, it conditions the actors”. Nevertheless, it does not condition all stakeholders in the same way. As Pérez Sanz and Gregorio Gil state, the exercise of the right to the city cannot be understood

independently of the positions of gender, sexuality, race or social class of those who live in the city, since they shape their daily relations with the environment and with the rest of its inhabitants and through their negotiations *for* and *in* the urban space. (Pérez Sanz & Gregorio Gil, 2020, p. 14)

It is a space shaped by class, racial, gender and generational boundaries, which “produce considerable differences in how people map the city, identify places and learn to move, use and be in them” (Segura, 2022, p. 390). Hence the importance of repositioning the contributions of intersectionality to understand the multiple contours that the right to the city adopts.

This perspective originates in the black feminist movements in the United States beginning in the 1960s and 1970s. The pioneering work of Crenshaw (1991) and Collins (1993) emphasized the importance of the dimensions of gender and race in explaining the existence of multiple inequalities and the forms of oppression and subordination faced by black women in that country. Intersectionality, which sets out to contest the notion of a political position tied to a singular form of identity (Anthias, 2006), takes up central issues of contemporary feminist thought, such as the recognition of the effects that different social classifications have on women’s experiences

(Davis, 2008). In the field of migration studies, this perspective has gained visibility over the last decade in the analysis of the multiple inequalities affecting migrant women (see Garcés-Estrada et al., 2022; González Torralbo et al., 2019; Magliano, 2015; Pinto Baleisan & Cisternas Collao, 2020; Reyes Muñoz & Reyes Muñoz, 2021).

Less explored is the inclusion of intersectionality in research that addresses the daily mobility of different social groups in urban contexts. One of the most important contributions of this conceptual framework in mobility studies is that it increases the visibility of the diverse practices and daily displacements according to gender, class, generation and race. Conversely, these studies show that these movements tend to be polygonal in the case of women, as they conduct multiple trajectories to meet family reproductive needs—unlike the movements of men, which tend to be pendular (from home to work and from work to home)—(Salazar, 2021, p. 132; see also Margarit et al., 2022).

For the development of this article, a long-term qualitative field study (2009-2019) based mainly on in-depth interviews and participant observation with adult Bolivian and Peruvian migrant women who migrated to the city of Córdoba from the 1990s onwards was reviewed.<sup>1</sup> At the end of the 20th century, migration from these origins acquired greater visibility and dynamism in the framework of the socio-economic and political crises affecting these countries and the existence in Argentina of an exchange rate regime that equated the local peso to the U. S. dollar, which was “attractive” to migrants as it enabled them to save in dollars and send remittances (Ceriani et al., 2009). Although convertibility with the U. S. dollar was eliminated at the beginning of the 21st century, regional migrations have remained dynamic ever since. In the case of Córdoba, the second most populated province in the country located in the central zone, Bolivians and Peruvians make up almost 49% of the total number of international migrants (Registro Nacional de Personas [Renaper], 2023). Overall, it is a young population: 57.65% of males and 62.05% of females are between 20 and 49 years old (Renaper, 2023).<sup>2</sup>

At different times during the fieldwork, 40 interviews were conducted with migrant women from these origins, and 60 participant observation records were collected. For the selection of the interviewees, those of Bolivian and Peruvian origin of economically active age and with a history of remunerated employment at the destination were considered. Most of the migrant women interviewed were engaged in domestic work and, to a lesser extent, in textile work, street vending, and informal commerce in the neighborhoods where they lived, located on the city's outskirts. Mobility to the urban margins materialized, in most cases, after having lived in other areas, generally more central, in a process of social production of habitat based on the appropriation of space (Di Virgilio & Rodríguez, 2013; Magliano & Perissinotti, 2020; Magliano et al.,

<sup>1</sup> The names of the individuals mentioned in this article have been changed to preserve their anonymity.

<sup>2</sup> At the national level, Córdoba is the third largest destination of migrants in the country after the province of Buenos Aires and the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires. In addition to Peru (24.62%) and Bolivia (23.73%), other important origins of the migrant population in Córdoba are Venezuela (9.17%) and Paraguay (7.25%) (Renaper, 2023).

2014; Perissinotti, 2021; Reusa, 2022) and specific patterns of residential integration (Gómez & Sánchez Soria, 2017; Molinatti & Pelaez, 2017).<sup>3</sup> The interviews took place in the neighborhoods and the houses they lived in, and all that occurred during the fieldwork was recorded.

Likewise, these methodological strategies were accompanied by “commented tours”, a technique that consisted of sharing with migrant women some of their daily activities in the city, such as buying products to sell in local neighborhood stores, participating in social mobilization or conducting a procedure or complaint at government offices. This methodology, “on the move”, has the potential for the researcher to be guided by their interlocutor in their daily urban journeys (Arias, 2017, p. 95). The original intention of this methodological option was to recognize all those activities that women put into practice to sustain family life in the destination context.

As anticipated, the construction of this empirical material was not focused on gathering information on the daily mobility of migrant women and the meanings of urban borders. When revisiting this material from the perspective of urban studies, these questions emerged recurrently in the testimonies of the interlocutors. The city burst into their lives with all its organizing power: as a possibility and also as an unbridgeable barrier, as a longing and at the same time as an uncomfortable and restricted place. The different urban borders were present, conditioning their life experiences and daily mobility. It is that the border, as Smith (2012, p. 54) proposes, “takes different forms in different places; it adapts to place insofar as it creates place”. In the case of the migrant population, as discussed in the article, this adaptation functions as both a restriction and a protection.

A gesture of adaptation is also expressed in the “social hypercorrection” (Sayad, 2010, p. 395) that characterizes much of the daily mobility and transits of migrant populations. This adaptation implies recognizing, following Sayad’s argument, that

aware of the suspicion that weighs on him [or her] and from which they cannot escape, confronted with it throughout their immigrant life and in all areas of their existence, it is up to him [or her] to continually dispel it, to prevent and dissuade by dint of repeated demonstrations of their good faith and goodwill. (Sayad, 2010, p. 395)

From this recognition, the women encountered during the study had learned to move within the city so that their presence does not arouse “suspicion” (or arouses as little suspicion as possible). This idea of “knowing how to move” condenses different particularities of the mobility reconstructed below.

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<sup>3</sup> From a quantitative approach, Molinatti and Pelaez (2017) show that migrant populations from Bolivia and Peru face residential segregation processes and occupy specific areas in the geographic space of the city of Córdoba. They also indicate that the right to adequate housing has been severely compromised for these migrants.

## Work and daily mobility: circulations based on employment working careers

Work is one of the main motivations behind migrant women's daily mobility. In the case of the Bolivian and Peruvian women encountered during the research, these women were mainly engaged in paid domestic work, especially in the form of retirement for a single employer. This work is one of the occupations that involve a large percentage of women from South American countries in Argentina, especially those who come from Bolivia, Paraguay and Peru, supplying "a demand for employment generated basically by the informal sector" (Bruno & Maguid, 2017, p. 10). As indicated in previous research (Magliano et al., 2013), national origin, together with gender and class, becomes a conditioning factor in the employment working careers of South American migrant women in Argentina in general and in the city of Córdoba in particular, with domestic work being an expression of this history. According to sociodemographic studies, construction for males (37%) and paid domestic work for females (40%) constituted in 2016 the two main labor market participation sectors for migrant populations, more than doubling the proportion of natives of each sex in those branches (Bruno & Maguid, 2017, p. 14).

In addition to labor informality, the precarious working conditions are fed by the time and distances involved in commuting to the workplace. Generally, it takes them a long time to get to their workplaces because they have to travel long distances by public transportation, as these are located in areas of the city far from the neighborhoods where most of the migrant population resides. Córdoba's public transportation system includes buses, trolleybuses, cabs and *remises* (*private taxi companies*). Due to the costs involved in mobility and the distances they travel, many people in low-income sectors, including migrant populations, use *colectivos* and, to a lesser extent, trolleybuses to get around the city.<sup>4</sup> Some migrant families have a motorcycle to get around, but its use is generally restricted to men and their work schedules. Women in these sectors, as documented by Dmuchowsky and Velázquez (2018, p. 136), are particular users of public transport because of their role in social reproduction, more unfavorable economic conditions than those of men for their participation in the labor market, as well as more restricted access to private vehicles.

I work in the Cerro de las Rosas area in a family house. I work until past noon, but to get there, I have to take two buses because the one that goes from here [Los Artesanos, the neighborhood where she lives, located on the eastern outskirts of the city] does not go to Urca;<sup>5</sup> it takes two to go and two to come back, I have about three hours of travel time per day. (Marta, Peruvian migrant, December 4, 2012)

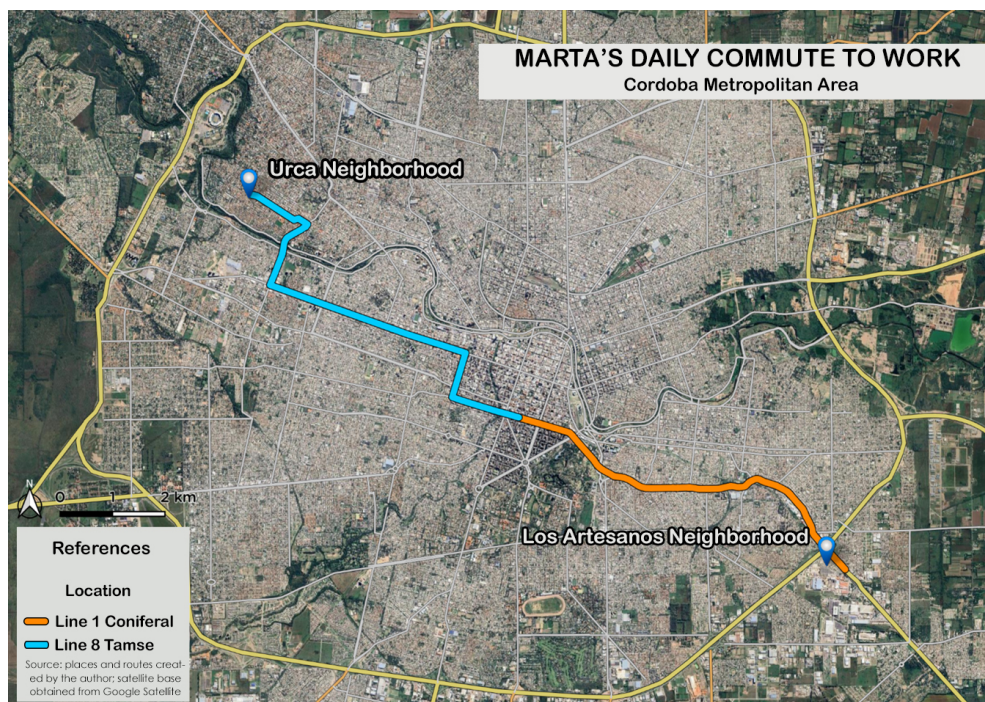
<sup>4</sup> The companies that supply the service are Ersa, Coniferal and Tamse.

<sup>5</sup> Urca is a residential neighborhood located in the northwestern part of the city and inhabited mainly by upper middle-class families.



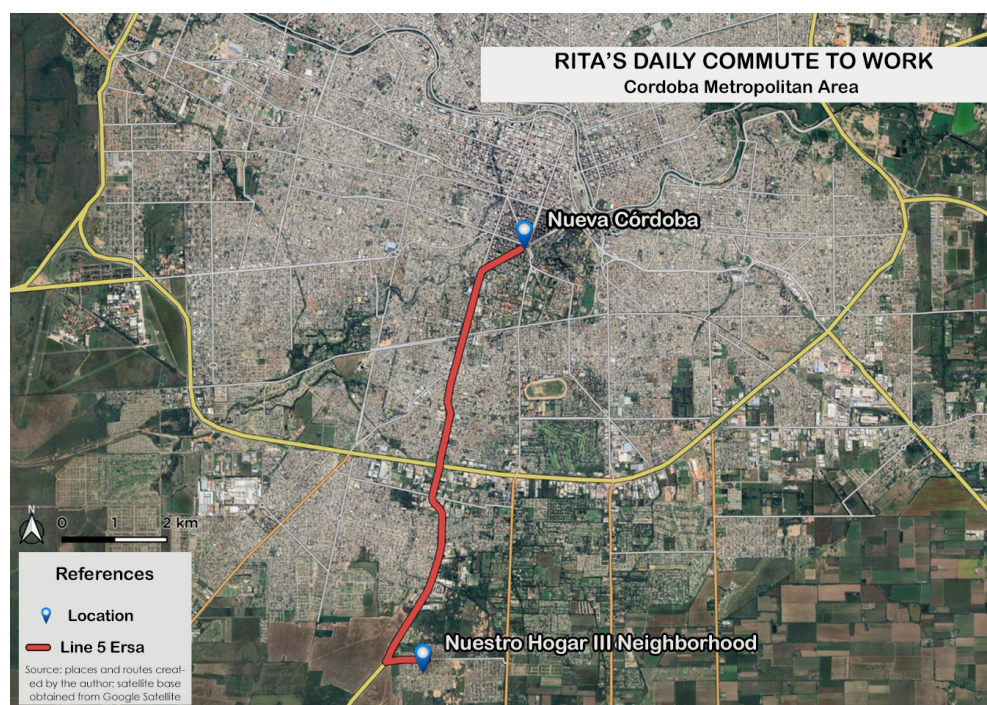
Marta's workday begins when she leaves her neighborhood and arrives at the bus stop at 5 200 Sabattini Avenue (Figure 1). In other words, it is a day that involves working hours and all the time spent to get there. This time spent to fill the working day is made up of the long distances to be covered, which includes two different buses on each route, as shown in Figure 1, as well as the deficiencies of public passenger transportation in Córdoba, which are reflected in the restricted combination options, the high cost of the tickets and the low frequency of the lines.

**Figure 1. Marta's commute to her workplace**



Unlike Marta, who has to take two buses to get to work, Rita, a Bolivian migrant who arrived in Córdoba with her family in the 1990s and by 2009 was engaged in paid domestic work in an apartment located in the neighborhood of Nueva Córdoba, said at the time of the interview that she took “only one bus to get to work” (Rita, Bolivian migrant, September 5, 2009).<sup>6</sup> Although the round trip, including waiting at stops, can take up to two hours, the fact of having to take only one means of public transportation to get to work, as shown in Figure 2, is seen by Rita as an advantage.

<sup>6</sup> Nueva Córdoba is a neighborhood located in the south-central area of the city, next to Ciudad Universitaria. This is an area inhabited by university students and traditional upper-middle class sectors and is distinguished by its economic, cultural and recreational dynamism. It is also one of the most sought-after neighborhoods in the city of Córdoba.

**Figure 2. Rita's commute to her workplace**

Beyond the daily distances that Marta and Rita travel to get to their jobs, a dimension must be considered: Bolivian and Peruvian women access and move through these neighborhoods only because they are domestic workers and only during working hours. Within this framework, it is possible to refer to “legitimized urban circuits for work”:<sup>7</sup> in certain spaces of the city, outside of work—the private homes of families—the presence of these women is perceived from the perspective of strangeness and “suspicion”, to quote Sayad (2010) again. Accordingly, it is no coincidence that Rita pointed out that although her workplace was close to the Patio Olmos shopping center, she rarely went there because she felt “the odd one out” and was even “looked down on”.<sup>8</sup> “I finish work [after noon] and, if I have to buy something, I go to the center, and if not, I go to the bus stop to return to my house” (Rita, Bolivian migrant, September 5, 2009). Zenklusen reaches similar conclusions for the case of young migrants of Peruvian origin residing in the city of Córdoba, who tend to avoid certain “times and places perceived as ‘forbidden’ or ‘alien’ for certain sectors of the population” (Zenklusen, 2019, p. 224; see also Zenklusen, 2022).

<sup>7</sup> Special thanks for this suggestion to one of the reviewers of this article.

<sup>8</sup> Patio Olmos is a shopping mall of leading local brands located in the downtown area of the city, more precisely at the intersection of three very important streets for Córdoba: Vélez Sarsfield, San Juan Boulevard and Hipólito Irigoyen.



These “legitimized urban circuits for work” take on a different importance in cases where housing is located in private and secure neighborhoods.<sup>9</sup> Entering these neighborhoods represents the crossing of a physical and symbolic border for women workers, where the mandate of hypercorrection to which Sayad alludes becomes indispensable, especially the need to go as unnoticed as possible during the workday particularly because the dynamics of entry and circulation in these neighborhoods have functioned as an excuse to enable and legitimize forms of social discrimination against those considered “outsiders” to these spaces.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, the intersectional inequalities present in the urban space translate into borders that hinder and restrict the daily mobility of migrant women. These frontiers become visible if the voices and experiences of those who, in more or less subtle ways, suffer from them are considered. This premise recalls—once again—Sayad’s (2010, p. 400) approach, when he suggests that migrants are often said to “hug the walls” in order to go unnoticed, opting for “the greatest possible discretion or, in other words, for the least possible visibility”. In a way, “knowing how to move” in the city expresses a learning process acquired over time that distinguishes friendly and hostile places, legitimized and insecure circuits. Thus, migrant “non-presence” in certain spaces—or presence conditioned to certain roles, such as work—can also be conceived as a way of “reassuring the other” who is “often the condition of their security” (Sayad, 2010, p. 399).

Based on this recognition, spaces for migrants are built for socialization and recreation that function as a shield of protection against the discrimination they face. The Isla de los Patos in the central neighborhood of Alberdi, on the banks of the Suquía River,<sup>11</sup> and the Plaza 12 de Octubre in the Villa El Libertador neighborhood, located in the southern part of the city, are examples of spaces configured by migrant populations in Córdoba as “safe”. The Isla de los Patos for the Peruvian community and the Villa El Libertador square for the Bolivian community have been transformed over the years not only into places of reference for migrants but also for the sustainability of life in the destination context. These are meeting places, and since both function as fairs of products that are linked to the countries of origin, they provide economic subsistence, especially for the migrant women who are responsible for most of the stalls.

The presence of “Bolivianness” in the plaza of Villa El Libertador on weekends and the days of celebration of the Virgin of Urkupiña (Giorgis, 2000; see also Maggi, 2022) and of “Peruvianness” in Isla de los Patos on Sundays, acts on the subjectivity of

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<sup>9</sup> In the 1990s, Argentina experienced the expansion of “private housing developments”. This phenomenon, Svampa (2001) points out, became a milestone in the dynamics of privatization that strongly marked the country in that decade in a context of deepening social inequalities.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Tizziani and Gorban (2018) for an analysis of the collective action of a group of domestic workers in the gated community of Nordelta in the province of Buenos Aires where their precarious working conditions and the discrimination to which they are usually subjected can be made visible.

<sup>11</sup> As described by Miranda Pérez (2018, p. 25), the Isla de los Patos is an outdoor fair of food and other products that is set up every Sunday within the grounds of the Island. See also Pilatti (2021) for more information on the functioning of this fair.

migrant populations within the framework of the feedback of information networks about those places considered “safe”. “The only thing I knew about Córdoba was that I had to ask for Villa El Libertador. That is what they told me when I left Sucre. From the Terminal I went straight to the square”, commented Analía, a Bolivian migrant who arrived in the city alone in the 1990s (Analía, Bolivian migrant, September 22, 2009), illustrating the symbolic importance of spaces of and for migrants at destination.

Although the material and symbolic construction of these spaces can be read in terms of urban segregation, it is here that the migrant interlocutors could relax the mandate of the “social hypercorrection” that affects them.<sup>12</sup> This relaxation, nevertheless, is more of an exception than a rule. Most of the time, they encounter specific difficulties related to their subordinate position in the urban context, expressed not only in their employment mobility but also in their care and family organization.

### Care mobility

As those principally responsible for the sustainability of family life, migrant women were in charge of all care-related issues: health, education, feeding the family, conducting procedures related to migratory documentation and participating in collective spaces that channel demands to improve family and neighborhood living conditions. This leading role of women in caregiving tasks defines concrete forms of mobility. This mobility is conceived as caring in that caring for others encompasses practices toward the cared-for person and a whole set of tasks required to ensure the well-being of that other (Magliano et al., 2018).

The focus on care mobility enables a reflection on the intersectional specificities of the spatial practices and daily circulation of migrant women in the city. In agreement with Salazar’s (2021, p. 141) research findings, which highlight that women with paid jobs mark the route from home to work and incorporate at least one path of reproductive labor, the migrant women in this study conducted different forms of daily mobility related to caregiving. They accompanied their children to school every day, and they went to public hospitals when someone in the family needed them; they were in charge of shopping to guarantee family meals, dealt with paperwork at government agencies and, in some cases, they demanded access to rights through active participation in social movements.

In this way, this care mobility has two marked destinations: on the one hand, the “center” of the city, as the migrant women themselves refer to the area where the main public hospitals, different stores accessible to the migrant population and the main state agencies are located. On the other hand, the places located near the neighborhoods,

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<sup>12</sup> In addition to these spaces for the socialization of the migrant population in Córdoba, during the fieldwork conducted, the organization of dances for “Peruvians” was recorded, attended by people of Peruvian origin and the children of Peruvian migrants. These environments are celebrated by migrant populations of this national origin as “safe” and “friendly”.

in the very periphery, are where central issues of daily life are managed, such as the education of the family's children. In the case of the first destination, they mainly use the bus to get there; in the case of the second, they usually walk.

Generally, it is possible to establish that care mobility is one more expression of the inequalities within families manifested in the inequitable distribution of unpaid care tasks. The fact that women are responsible for these tasks impacts the organization of their daily lives, daily mobility, time management and autonomy. As noticed in a previous study, migrant women spend much time "moving" around the cities: in addition to mobility itself, they wait at stops and stations for the arrival of public transport to take them to their jobs and to the different state agencies with which they have to interact (Mallimaci Barral & Magliano, 2020). In this sense, an attentive look at daily mobility demonstrates that their multiple productive and reproductive responsibilities, as reconstructed below, derive from certain circulations and transits through the city due to the plethora of caregiving tasks.

### *What the family organization "moves"*

The family organization of care is a structuring factor in migrant women's mobility throughout their daily lives. Apart from certain paid jobs, such as domestic work and street vending, which are carried out far from the places where they live, the Bolivian and Peruvian women encountered during this research spent most of their days in the neighborhoods they lived in, located in the outskirts of Córdoba, and many of them even worked in those same places.

Data from a census survey in one of the neighborhoods where fieldwork was conducted in 2019 show that the percentage of women whose place of work is within the neighborhood is 34.7 %, exceeding that of men (8.7 %). This proportion is because women engage in more remunerated activities within the neighborhood space, such as community work (14.2 %) and textile work (8.9 %). That same survey also indicated that women's main labor market participation is paid domestic work (37.3 %) conducted outside the neighborhood (Magliano et al., 2019). Within this framework, care mobility generally originates in the neighborhood space.

During the fieldwork, numerous cases were recorded of women coming and going daily to different parts of the city to perform the care tasks that fell to them. When they can, they try to combine one mobility with another (for example, taking advantage of work mobility to do some shopping or carrying out an official procedure with some other activity to be carried out in the "center"); nonetheless, this mobility often overlaps due to its unpredictability. In cases where a member of the family needs medical attention, women must rearrange their day to accommodate that situation. Something similar occurs with the conduct of immigration procedures. The fieldwork results indicate that women managed the links established with state agencies for themselves and their families (Mallimaci Barral & Magliano, 2020). In this role, they adjust their daily activities to the times and bureaucracy of the State. Thus, they must often ask for a day's work, which is not easy for the occupations they usually have

access to, generally taking place informally, without any rights, and with high levels of instability. In addition, these are activities that, most of the time, generate an income depending on whether they are performed, so taking a day off directly impacts subsistence (and may even jeopardize the continuity of employment).

The case of Lorena illustrates a situation that should be better known. She is a Peruvian migrant with three children who, in October 2014, owned a small kiosk in her house in a suburb of Córdoba.<sup>13</sup> Her partner, also Peruvian, was a construction worker. She bought the merchandise to stock her (informal) business in the North Market area of the city, where she went once or twice a week. In one of the visits to her home in October 2014, she related the weekly vicissitudes concerning a health problem of her daughter, Inés, who was 7 years old at the time. Lorena accompanied Inés daily to a public school close to the neighborhood (Escuela 9 de Julio) that was within walking distance. The pedestrian exit from the community crosses the railroad tracks and an avenue without signage. A health problem of Inés had led to changes in her daily schedule during the last weeks, with recurrent visits to the Misericordia Hospital located in the Güemes neighborhood in the city's downtown area. It was Lorena who was in charge of taking Inés to and from the hospital, as well as complying with all the recommendations the doctor gave her to solve her health problem (which started with facial paralysis). While going back and forth to the "center" to buy merchandise or go to the doctor, Patricia (Lorena's oldest daughter) was in charge of the business in the neighborhood. Figure 3 precisely illustrates the multiple mobility practices that Lorena must manage as the ultimate caretaker of her family. Likewise, their case reveals that these practices involve "other household members, close relatives, or support networks that are inherently linked to individual mobility" (Jirón et al., 2022, p. 204).

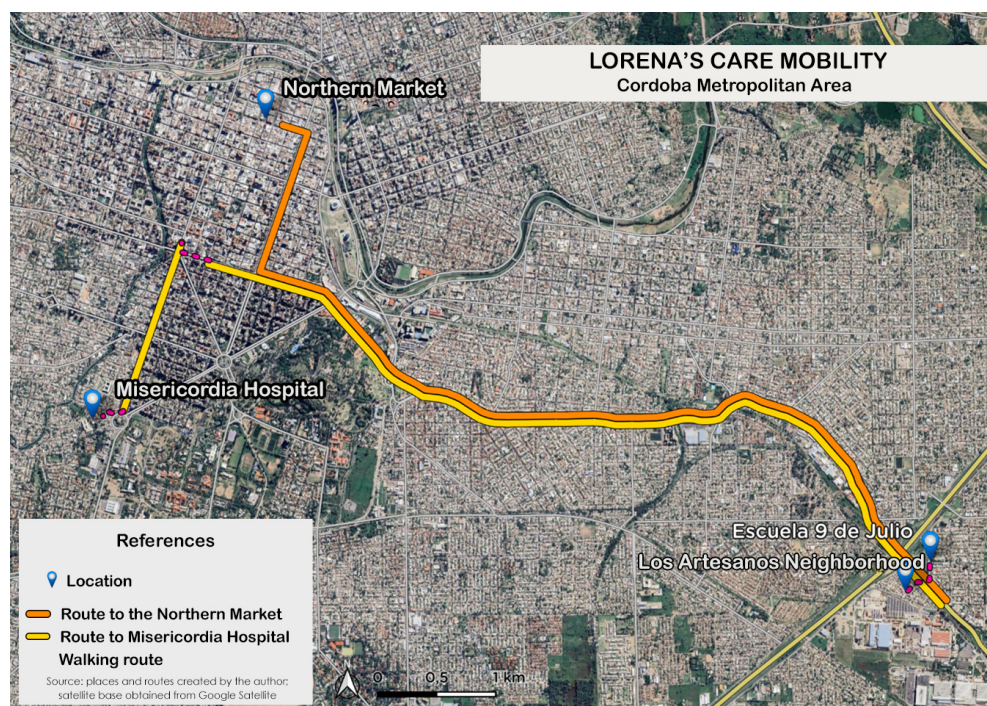
The overlapping of work and care obligations that materialize in the mobility of migrant women is also exposed in the case of Mariana, a Peruvian migrant who arrived in Córdoba in 2008. Since her arrival, she has worked in two occupations: domestic work and textile work. In 2012, she got pregnant. Alone, undocumented, and without a partner and family networks, subsistence became a titanic task. The first encounter with her occurred when she tried to regularize her immigration status, and her baby was only a few months old. Several mornings during April 2013, Mariana approached different state agencies to gather the required documentation to access the documents. At that time, she worked in a textile workshop as a seamstress, which also served as her home in a rented room for her and her son. One of her main concerns during her journey to regularize her status was that she had to miss work. The long working hours involved in textile work, generally carried out on a piecework basis, make it difficult to reconcile work with any other task (this explains why people often abandon paperwork, health checks and education to support their work).

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<sup>13</sup> It is important to frame these reflections in a specific time frame. One of the issues that emerged from fieldwork sustained over time is a certain intermittency in the labor trajectories of migrant women in the destination contexts. Lorena has also worked as a domestic worker, seamstress and community worker in Córdoba.



Figure 3. Lorena's commute to perform her care activities



The heterogeneity of migrant women's daily mobility, as shown by the examples of Lorena and Mariana, has significant unpredictability associated with care responsibilities (which in their routine expression are also contingent). Although this mobility is conditioned by the forms adopted by gender and class inequalities shared by women from popular sectors as a whole, in the particular case of migrant women, it has an impact not only on the organization and management of their daily lives but also on the ways of remaining in the destination context and on the meanings of the migration project. This idea implies recognizing the limitations they often encounter in expanding work opportunities and accessing "employment careers" (Mallimaci Barral, 2018) that open up options for upward social mobility and progress for them and their families. Based on these limitations, it is interesting to introduce another expression of care that translates into concrete forms of mobility, this time of a collective nature, aimed at demanding better living conditions.

### *Social protest as care mobility*

Many migrant women of Bolivian and Peruvian origin, as part of the popular sectors inhabiting the urban peripheries of Argentina, are actively involved in organized social movements linked mainly to the popular economy (see Perissinotti, 2020, 2022). The participation of these women in different organizations grouped in the Union of Workers of the Popular Economy (UTEP, by its acronym from Spanish: Unión de

Trabajadores de la Economía Popular), as recorded in depth by Perissinotti in her research, is an unavoidable fact.

Although this text will not dwell on the specificities of migrant women's participation in these organizations nor on their operating and reproductive procedures, it is interesting to note the relevance this has for their daily mobility in the framework of care responsibilities. Especially because, as part of social organizations, migrant women break into the urban public space to demand access to rights. It is a presence (which sometimes also includes their young children) that is materialized in an area outside the collective framework provided by social movements and is usually forbidden and silenced for any claim. This participation, as stated by Perissinotti (2020), is not necessarily explained by their migrant status; moreover, national origin does not appear as a relevant or visible form of social classification. On the contrary, it is class membership and the gender dimension, considering that there is a strong feminization of social protest (Alfie, 2022) as a corollary of the feminization of poverty, that determine and sustain political militancy in social organizations and the mobility that derives from this militancy.

Participation in the demonstrations involves prior preparation that begins in their neighborhoods. It is not a spontaneous act. Rather, it is organized beforehand. In general, they meet at the house of one of the neighbors, which serves as a meeting point, either to wait for the bus that the organizations often provide or to move together to the public transportation stop to reach the destination of the gathering. This action implies recognizing that the protests begin in the neighborhoods themselves, long before they become visible in the "center" of the city.

From the city's margins, in material and symbolic terms, migrant women—as women belonging to the popular sectors—demolish in the gesture of marching, even if only momentarily, some of the frontiers constantly reproduced in urban contexts. Their participation in mobilizations organized by social movements is mainly justified by the need to improve their material conditions of existence and to guarantee their own and their families' well-being. This collective mobility from participation in social organizations cannot be considered apart from the unequally distributed care responsibilities that these women assume daily to ensure more dignified life sustainability.

### *The periphery as a barrier*

Within the types of mobility related to care, there remains one last dimension to be considered in this section, which shows the risks faced by populations residing in the city's peripheries in their daily transits and circulations.

As described throughout these pages, the existence of urban borders as an expression of the reproduction of intersectional inequalities impacts the mobility of migrant women. These women learn to move through the city by recognizing the materialization of those borders that limit and restrict their transit and circulation. These borders

coexist with others closer to the migrant populations, nourished by the particular forms that life on the margins takes. Unlike the former, which sets the pace and conditions of mobility within cities, the latter tends to “enclose” these populations within the limits of their neighborhoods.

This wall was erected as a response to the insecurity in these spaces and the circuits they pass through daily. Insecurity refers not only to the violence and arbitrariness that security forces tend to deploy, especially when they circulate in certain sectors of the city and when the practices and discourses of criminalization of migrants intensify, but also to the risks they run because they live in the periphery, where the State maintains an “economized” presence (De Marinis, 2011).

Mobility becomes crucial to access rights: to work, to education, to health, to recreation, to regularization of immigration status, and to the city. Nevertheless, living in urban peripheries is yet another limitation to these rights. Traveling to work, buying goods in the “downtown” area, conducting errands, accompanying children to school, or going to a health center entails certain risks for women.

The idea of the periphery as a barrier repeatedly emerged during the fieldwork. One example was when Lorena said that Patricia, her oldest daughter born in Peru, wanted to finish elementary school. Because of her age, 16 years old in 2012, she was supposed to do so in a night school. “She wants to study”, Lorena repeated, “she is just one year away from finishing elementary school, and she is good with computers. I bought her a computer”. In the same record, she added that at first, she accompanied her, but then she had bought her “a bicycle for her to go to school, but since it is at night and outside the neighborhood, she was attacked under the bridge, so she didn’t go anymore” (Lorena, Peruvian migrant, November 13, 2012). Indeed, as Segovia and Rico (2017, p. 56) point out, there is an additional threat for women: “that which impacts their bodies, which has a sexual content and transcends to their fears”. Experience shows, the authors continue, that insecurity and violence penalize “disadvantaged sectors even more, preventing them from appropriating public spaces or transforming their already segregated neighborhoods into areas of high vulnerability” (Segovia & Rico, 2017, p. 57). The risks faced every day in their daily mobility by those who live on the margins of the city were also exposed with the death of a young Peruvian woman run over by a train in August 2022 when she was returning from the neighborhood clinic with her four-month-old child. In this neighborhood—the same one where Lorena and Marta live—the railroad tracks function as a mandatory crosswalk for people entering and leaving, although there are no signs or infrastructure to guarantee safe crossing.

Closer or further away from the neighborhoods inhabited by migrant populations in general and migrant women in particular, the strength of urban borders reveals the complex web of inequalities that condition—in many cases irreversibly—their daily life experiences.

## Closing remarks: the vitality of borders

The daily mobility of migrant women tests the thickness and rhythm of urban borders. Indeed, in this article, the centrality of these borders, which are always intersectional (gender, class, race, generation, national origin), and their effects on the mobility and transits of migrant women as an expression of the persistence and reproduction of spatially situated social inequalities, was reiterated.

Migrant populations in general, and migrant women in particular, make restricted use of urban space due to the multiple inequalities that affect them: they do not have “safe” access to certain places—even those in which they usually reside—and they are only able to produce and appropriate certain sectors of the city. In the rest of the sectors, their presence is only legitimized—and limited—based on certain roles.

In this framework, migrant women, in a learning process—summarized in the category “knowing how to move”—that begins with the very recognition of the place of destination, deploy different strategies to move and transit through the city, not only to circumvent urban borders but also to have them affect them as little as possible. Thus, their spatial practices, visible in their daily mobility, result from a combination of hyper-correction mandates aimed at dispelling doubts (or as many doubts as possible) about their presence at their destination and hyper-visualization in legitimized spaces and circuits. This fact is an inescapable aspect of mobility and migrations: the vitality of borders beyond geopolitical ones as a key component of migrant daily life.

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