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Articles

Woman traders and cross-border circuits: articulations between care and mobility on the borders of Peru, Bolivia and Chile

Mujeres comerciantes y circuitos transfronterizos: articulaciones entre cuidado y movilidades en las fronteras de Perú, Bolivia y Chile

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Abstract

Cross-border trade is predominantly conducted by women, and involves the movement and articulation of extensive networks for the circulation (formal or not) of products. Engaging with the perspectives of mobility and gender in border studies, this article examines the configuration of cross-border circuits of women traders. The article demonstrates how commercial activities and caregiving are intertwined in these circuits and discusses this overlap through four socio-spatial arrangements: home, places of sale, border crossing and supply locations. The research is based in two Peruvian cities with border conditions—Tacna (bordering Chile) and Puno (bordering Bolivia)—and involved 62 semi-structured interviews with women engaged in various commercial activities in 2022-2023, primarily second-hand clothing and groceries. These activities are part of a global chain of merchandise circulation that closely links the three countries (Bolivia, Chile, and Peru).

Keywords: borders, trade, gender, care, circuits.

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Resumen

El comercio transfronterizo es una actividad realizada mayoritariamente por mujeres, e involucra desplazamientos y articulaciones de amplias redes para la circulación (formal o no) de productos. Desde el diálogo con las perspectivas de movilidad y género en los estudios fronterizos, este artículo analiza la configuración de circuitos transfronterizos de mujeres comerciantes. El artículo

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demuestra cómo se articulan las actividades comerciales y el cuidado en estos circuitos, y se discute esta relación a partir de cuatro arreglos socioespaciales: hogar, lugares de venta, cruce de frontera y lugar de abastecimiento. La investigación partió desde dos ciudades peruanas con condiciones fronterizas —Tacna (frontera con Chile) y Puno (frontera con Bolivia)—, se realizaron 62 entrevistas semiestructuradas a mujeres vinculadas con distintas actividades de comercio entre 2022-2023, principalmente de ropa de segundo uso y abarrotes, lo que forma parte de una cadena global de circulación de mercaderías que vincula estrechamente los tres países (Bolivia, Chile y Perú).

Palabras clave: fronteras, comercio, género, cuidado, circuitos.

Introduction

When Adriana[1] turned 18 and became an adult, she accompanied her mother for the first time to cross the border between Tacna (Peru) and Arica (Chile) to buy second-hand clothing. Before that, she did not have her father's signed permission.

> The paperwork scared me a bit because I had never crossed. I was a little scared, but when we got there, we said, "Wow, that's nice". I assumed we would go for a walk [laughs], [but] we were there for trade. We got to the warehouses where they sell the merchandise. My mom bought some merchandise, and I said, "Well, let's finish, and then we'll go for a walk". But my mom knew we weren't going to finish quickly. We started to choose. She pulled out two packs of pajamas and told me, "You're going to find new ones, torn ones, or worse. Then, you're going to choose, you're going to split". So, pick, pick, pick. You have to pile, fold, sort. And I said, "We can't finish", and my mom said, "Yes, daughter, we won't be able to" [laughs; they carefully choose what they are going to take to Tacna].
>
> It isn't convenient to bring what we can't sell because we're going to waste time, effort and money. Well, I think we have to bring it, if only to sell it [anywhere]. But my mom says, "You won't make a penny. So, we're only going to take what we're going to sell, what people will buy". I said, "Ok, that's how it's going to be", and we left for the [bus] terminal. We had to give a commission to the ladies who offered, "I'll take your clothes". My mother has her acquaintances, five commission agents she distributes the clothes to. There is no 100% guarantee because it's contraband; it isn't legal. The challenge was to get across the border because if the border [agents] discover you and say, "Let's see, come here", right? Then you've lost time, effort, and capital. (Adriana, Tacna)

Adriana was next to her mother as she told this story. "I just learned what that process was like, she continues, and I said, 'Well, no wonder my mom gets back so tired', because I got back dead".

[1] All personal names in this paper are pseudonyms, and quotations have been modified to improve general comprehension, trying not to affect the narrative and meaning given by the interviewees.

Adriana's story exemplifies the strategies, mobility and knowledge of cross-border women traders. Contemporary studies underline the importance of understanding the social production of borders through everyday practices.

This paper contributes to the study of borders by analyzing how informal cross-border commercial practices configure an interdependence between economic activities and caregiving systems. Moreover, the methodological approach is based on the analysis of cases in two border areas in Peru, which form a tri-national space of circulation and mobility between Chile, Bolivia and Peru. The study is based on fieldwork and 62 semi-structured interviews with women traders in Puno and Tacna involved in selling second-hand clothing.

This paper inquiries into the literature on informal cross-border trade practices carried out by women (Granda & Soriano Miras, 2023; Guizardi et al., 2021; Schuster, 2022; Solís Pérez et al., 2022), on gender perspectives (Gonzálvez Torralbo et al., 2021; Stefoni et al., 2021), and on mobility (Garcés H. et al., 2016; Jiménez Cala & Barbosa Gonçalves, 2023; Tapia Ladino, 2023). It acknowledges the heterogeneity of these practices and working conditions and focuses on second-hand clothing traders (Jiménez Palacios, 2019; Muñoz et al., 2022; Sandoval Hernández, 2019).

The circulation of used clothing in the three countries is diverse, and smuggling accounted for 93% of the 8 000 tons of second-hand clothing entering Bolivia from Chile (Maclean, 2014). These circuits form a popular economy (Cielo et al., 2023; The Urban Popular Economy Collective et al., 2022).

It examined how the traders' cross-border circuits combine mobility and trade practices relationally, interdependently with the caregiving systems extended to them, their households, and the networks that sustain their activities. Four specific socio-spatial arrangements are highlighted where the interrelation between commercial circuits and caregiving systems is evidenced: the household, the points of sale, the border crossing and the purchase of merchandise. The proposed approach shows the complexity of these interactions between caregiving systems, mobility and economic activities.

This paper is organized as follows: first, the specialized literature is reviewed, and five premises are established to support the analysis. Next, the study area and methodology are described. The findings show how trade practices and caregiving are intertwined in cross-border circuits, referencing the four arrangements identified. Finally, the conclusions are presented.

Caregiving, trade and mobility

This study explores the practices of women traders in cross-border contexts from approaches of mobility, gender and borders. Mobility is more than physical movement and also involves the meanings with which such movements are encoded, the experience of practices in these movements and the potential for undertaking them (Creswell & Priya Uteng, 2008, p. 2) are interdependent with gender and caregiving systems (Jirón & Gómez, 2018).

This paper attempts to understand the multiple circuits of border trade beyond an origin-destination approach, to problematize the multi-situated and spatialized nature of caregiving, and to analyze the supports, strategies and knowledge as constitutive elements of cross-border circulatory territories.

The starting point is to question the perspectives of temporary migration from mobility approaches (Jiménez Palacios et al., 2024) and to use mobility to understand the production of unequal border spaces (Tapia Ladino, 2023). Urban mobility, business and trade circuit, and "legal and illegal" goods converge in cross-border circuits along with localized and mobile components (Garcés H. et al., 2016). It is crucial to consider spatial dimensions to analyze borders (Peña, 2023), understood as multiscale spaces (Laine, 2016), with "multiple rules and experiences" (Amilhat Szary & Giraut, 2015, p. 3), which shape regimes and power structures.

Caregiving systems are fundamental practices in the configuration of borders and mobility. As Jirón Martínez et al. (2022) point out, caregiving is a relational activity that sustains life and has a specific spatial and temporal aspect that is reconfigured in contexts of mobility. Caregiving is a system with multiple dimensions: family, public sector, markets and non-profit sector (Razavi, 2007). Moreover, they combine multiple scales from the household to transnational support networks.

Caregiving goes beyond the household and not only has to do with time, dedication or activities related to children or the elderly; it also has to do with personal and collective caregiving, among others. The traders develop specific strategies to maintain caregiving when they are on the move. They establish arrangements that work in multiple spaces and timeframes.

More than a simple extension of domestic work, cross-border caregiving comprises the daily life-sustaining practices (feeding, raising and caring for dependents) and the collective strategies they develop to make their commercial activity possible (Gonzálvez & Torralbo, 2013). These include mutual caregiving among traders, establishing support networks for border crossing and the collective organization of time to reconcile family and commercial responsibilities.

The interdependence between caregiving and trade is manifested in multiple dimensions: in decisions about routes and schedules, in the choice of sales locations, in border-crossing strategies and in the organization of domestic work. Rather than reconciling two separate spheres, traders configure circuits in which trade practices and caregiving are deeply intertwined.

This analytical study is based on understanding caregiving as relational practices constitutive of cross-border circuits, not as activities separate from or secondary to trade practices. This perspective makes it possible to identify five premises.

First, there is a feminization of the "informal" trade on the borders of Peru, Bolivia and Chile (Jiménez Palacios et al., 2019). In Latin America, the gender gap in the labor market generates greater female participation in precarious, unpaid jobs with an overload of caregiving activities (Vaca-Trigo, 2019). Women face secondary segregation in access to labor niches, which combines informal employment, exploitation and low capacity for concentration of resources (Pérez Sáinz, 2019). Trade is a survival (Wrigley-Asante, 2013) and accumulation strategy, but it is marked by symbolic violence and stigmatization (Muzvidziwa, 2015). The feminization of trade cannot be understood without considering how caregiving responsibilities shape the labor options of those who seek activities that enable income generation to be combined with sustaining family life.

Second, overcoming static views of border trade by recognizing the opportunities provided by "informal economies" (Schuster, 2022, p. 170). Cross-border trade provides income and economic independence but involves vulnerabilities, discrimination and physical and mental efforts (Guizardi et al., 2021). The flexibility of cross-border

trade allows women to develop caregiving strategies that would be impossible in formal jobs, even if this implies greater labor precariousness. The trade shapes the border and combines illegality, legitimacy and security (Galemba, 2017). Various studies demonstrate these conditions: "paseras" (people who cross a border with food and groceries to sell them in a neighboring country) on the triple border of Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil; "fayucas" (type of product or merchandise that is traded illegally because it was smuggled into a country) between El Paso and Juárez (Gauthier, 2017); "bagayos" (bundle or package containing stolen or smuggled goods on a small scale) on the Brazil-Uruguay border (Dorfman, 2007); "mesiteras" (people who sell products from a stall on the Street) in street stalls on the Paraguayan side of the triple border (Guizardi et al., 2021); "comisionistas" (people who cross the border transporting someone else's goods in exchange for a monetary commission) on the Peru-Chile border (Jiménez Palacios et al., 2019); and small-scale forms of smuggling in Peru-Chile known as "contrabando hormiga" (Berganza & Cerna, 2011).

Third, border areas reproduce systems of gender domination (Guizardi et al., 2024; Stefoni et al., 2023), which is expressed in how their migration rights, jobs and family contexts are undermined (Magalhães, 2021). This inequality is externalized in working conditions and in the excess of caregiving responsibilities they must assume. Perspectives on mobility facilitate the study of the interdependence between trade, border and gender and reconceptualize space, home and family in cross-border contexts (Gonzálvez Torralbo et al., 2021; Granda & Soriano Miras, 2023).

Fourth, it is necessary to go beyond exclusively legalistic perspectives and focus on the practices and meanings given. Dorfman investigates how, on the border of Brazil and Uruguay, border communities interpret smuggling as "opportunities within a practical sense" (Dorfman, 2007, p. 83). It is similar to the analysis of the border as an itinerary and experience in the triple border of Argentina, Paraguay and Brazil (Renoldi, 2013). This perspective that goes beyond the legalistic is especially relevant to understanding how women combine caregiving practices and trade. A key study is that of Solís Pérez et al. (2022) on the practices of cross-border women traders on the borders of Mexico with the United States and Guatemala. The authors highlight the "know-how" (practical knowledge), meaning and materiality of trade practices.

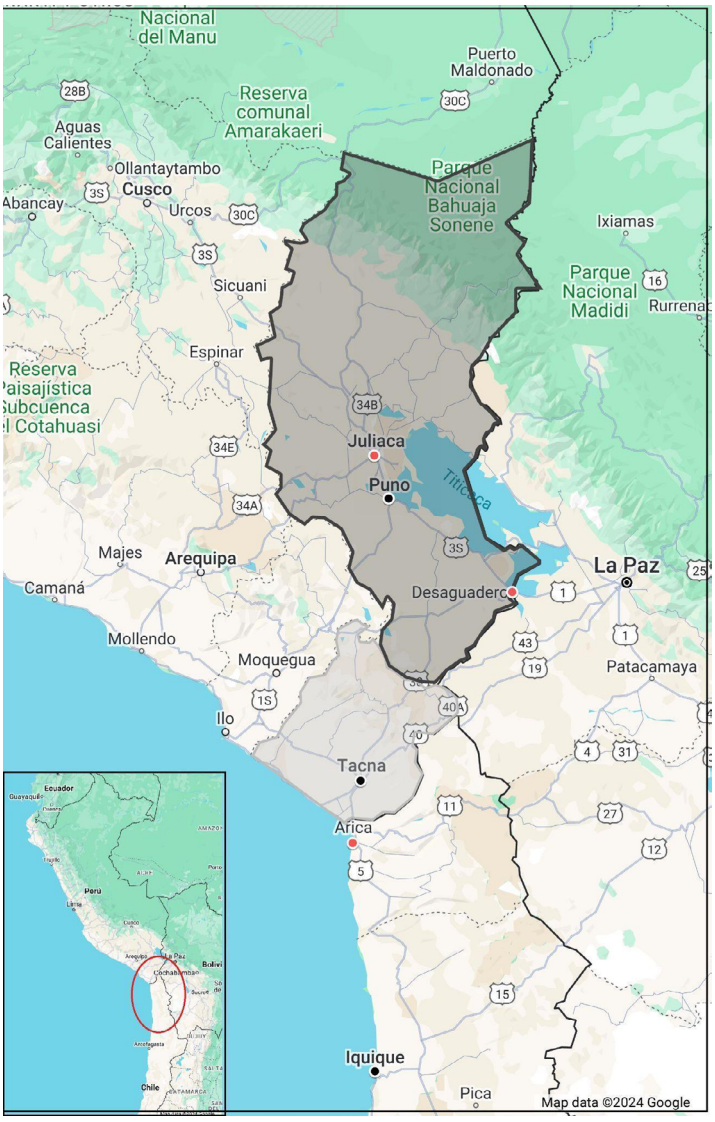
Fifth, trade differences depend on the type of "informal" or "illegal" goods. Second-hand clothing, as merchandise, is a global phenomenon (Sandoval Hernández, 2019) with local, historical and cultural conditioning (Tassi et al., 2012). Jiménez Palacios (2019) analyzed Tacna's second-hand clothing and footwear markets and highlighted how they configure complex labor and organizational structures. The specific characteristics of each type of merchandise determine trade practices and how caregiving is organized. For example, selling second-hand clothing requires specific selection and organization times that women combine with caregiving responsibilities.

This study seeks to expand knowledge about these cross-border practices in three dimensions. First, cross-border circuits of traders are multiscale and mobile, are part of systems of inequality (gender, labor market and border regimes), and reflect conditions of social disadvantage but also reflect innovation and agency. Second, circuits combine caregiving and commercial activities in multiple and complex ways. That is, circuits are part of caregiving systems. Third, circuits are studied based on differentiating (analytically) four types of socio-spatial arrangements: household, sale of products, border crossing, and place of supply (purchase of merchandise).

Tacna and Puno in the cross-border space

Borders in Peru vary in terms of trade, porosity in the flow of people or goods, security controls and land use (Dammert Guardia et al., 2017). This paper analyzes traders from two different borders who are part of the same multiscale border system. Tacna and Puno, in the southern macro-region, are key areas in the tri-national cross-border space Peru-Chile-Bolivia (Dilla Alfonso & Chávez, 2023), with a circulation of products, productive and reproductive mobility (Tapia Ladino, 2023), and a specific historical spatiality (Valdebenito Tamborino, 2017).

Figure 1. Cross-border space between Puno and Tacna (Peru)



Note: Area in gray: Department of Tacna; area in black: Department of Puno
Source: created by the authors, Google MyMaps program

The 169-kilometer Peru-Chile border comprises the Tacna department and the Arica and Parinacota region (Figure 1). Before the pandemic, six million people crossed it every year (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, 2017). It is the busiest border of both countries, with flows of goods and mobility of people for multiple reasons (Jiménez Palacios, 2019; Tapia Ladino et al., 2017; Tapia Ladino, 2023). The flows reflect asymmetries and complementarities. Chile is the largest labor destination (Guizardi et al., 2019; Roque Gutiérrez & Tapia Ladino, 2021), whereas Tacna (Peru) attracts mobility for tourism and medical services.

There is only one official border crossing with two checkpoints: the Santa Rosa Border Complex (Tacna, Peru) and the Chacalluta Border Complex (Arica, Chile). For Peru, smuggling through this border represents 19% nationally (Sociedad Nacional de Industria, 2023; Superintendencia Nacional de Administración Tributaria, 2022). Since 2017, an integrated control has been installed between the two complexes to streamline the flow of people. Security and control on this border are understood in the context of the history of war between the two countries at the end of the 19th century and tensions throughout the 20th and 21st centuries (García Pinzón, 2015; Tapia Ladino & Quinteros Rojas, 2023).

The 1 047 km Peru-Bolivia border has three main checkpoints, 16 surveillance posts and a Binational Border Assistance Center (in Spanish, *Centro Binacional de Atención Fronteriza*) in Puno. In the Puno region, a complex network of land, air and lake interconnections facilitates the exchange of goods and people. It accounts for 39.7%[2] of the total smuggling entering Peruvian territory (Superintendencia Nacional de Administración Tributaria, 2022). Geography and cultural relations contribute to this interaction. Many of the population share an ethnic affiliation and common migration patterns (Damonte Valencia, 2011).

Interconnection routes have been strengthened over time, allowing the shipment of goods. Lake Titicaca, the roads connecting the free zones of Chilean origin, the Juliaca International Airport and the Coronel FAP Carlos Ciriani Santa Rosa International Airport are key points in these exchanges. Of great importance are price differentials (Dilla Alfonso, 2018) and the smuggling of products of Chilean (foreign-brand clothing, cars and manufactured goods), Bolivian (rice, oil and fuel[3]), Argentine (rice) and Brazilian origin.

Smuggling is socio-spatially integrated and takes various forms (Arraya Pareja, 2022; Ødegaard, 2016; Puma-Llanqui et al., 2024). The "contrabando hormiga" form (smaller scale) is vital for small traders. Bolivian checkpoints have ranges of schedules, and along with the existence of checkpoints, crossing by annex routes, such as crossing in boats through Desaguadero or "ghost roads" as unidentified routes, is common. The checkpoints are places of confrontation between traders and public officials.

With their state demarcations and regulations, these borders are zones of intense economic, social and cultural interaction. They are circulatory territories that offer opportunities and constraints, reflect asymmetries and complementarities and comprise socio-spatial arrangements designed by traders.

[2] Pre-pandemic entry levels have not yet been matched.

[3] Since 2010, Bolivian fuel has been subsidized nationally, which contributes to its illegal importation into Peru (Puno).

Methodology

Information collection included primary, secondary and institutional sources (censuses, institutional documents). Sixty-two semi-structured interviews were conducted with women traders in Puno and Tacna in two fieldwork periods (2022 and 2023), with 27 and 35 interviews, respectively (see Table 1). Some interviews included mothers and daughters from the same family. The work was based on shared and cross-cutting aspects of both border areas without assuming identical border regimes and practices. A comparative analysis is beyond the scope of this study.

The interviewees were selected because they work in fairs or small stalls with products that cross borders. The interviews lasted an average of 90 minutes, included a presentation of the project, informed consent and focused on life histories, work, caregiving and mobility. Family arrangements, support networks and daily strategies influencing their decisions and mobility were explored. The information was systematized with a coding matrix and content, and a location analysis of their circuits was carried out.

One challenge was the reluctance to share sensitive information—income/investments, non-formal travel routes and contacts—so it was necessary to build trust during fieldwork progressively. The long working hours made requesting and conducting interviews complex, so they were scheduled during off-hours or adapted to buying and selling routines. Since mothers and daughters were working together, it was decided to interview the mothers first and then the daughters.

The sociodemographic characteristics of the interviewees are important for the analysis. Most are over 40 years old, suggesting that they are at a stage in the family cycle where the demands of caregiving have decreased as their children are adults. Unlike younger traders, this allows them greater flexibility to develop their trade activities.

Another noteworthy element is the educational level: several interviewees have a university education, complete or incomplete, which calls into question a view of informal trade associating it with an activity carried out by people with little schooling and highlights the fact that this study does not address the case of more extreme situations of economic precariousness in the world of formal and informal trade. They opt for trade because of its flexibility in coordinating income and caregiving responsibilities in contexts of limited opportunities in the formal labor market.

Households, in several cases including more than four members, have extensive family networks that support commercial activities and caregiving practices.

Trade and caregiving circuits

The circuits of women traders are part of a multi-fold mobility that shapes cross-border circulatory territories (Tapia Ladino, 2023; Tapia Ladino et al., 2017). The border is recreated on a daily basis, acting as a "dialectic of opportunity" that combines domination and limited opportunities (Guizardi et al., 2020; Stefoni et al., 2023).

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of the interviewees

	Pseudonym	Age	Lives in	Origin	Educational level	Children (age)	Household members #
1	Isabel	44	Tacna	Puno	Junior high-school	3 daughters (22, 20, 3)	6
2	Valeria	20	Tacna	Tacna	Incomplete university degree	0	6
3	Natalia	46	Tacna	Tacna	Junior high-school	2 daughters (23, 20)	3
4	Sofía	23	Tacna	Tacna	Complete technical degree	0	3
5	Laura	44	Tacna	Ilave	Junior high-school	2 daughters (20, 17) 1 son (8)	5
6	Daniela	20	Tacna	Tacna	Incomplete university degree	0	5
7	Mónica	42	Tacna	Juli	Junior high-school	1 daughter (23) and 1 son (10)	4
8	Andrea	23	Tacna	Tacna	Incomplete university degree	0	4
9	Julia	58	Tacna	Ilave	None	4 children (3 daughters: 32, 28, 27); 1 (unspecified)	6
10	Patricia	47	Tacna	Tacna	Incomplete technical degree	2 sons (25, 11) and 1 daughter (unspecified)	6
11	Clara	52	Tacna	Chucuito	Junior high-school	1 son (29) and 2 daughters (26, 20)	5
12	Cecilia	44	Tacna	Lima	Junior high-school	2 sons (25, 11) and 1 daughter (22)	4
13	Alicia	46	Tacna	Tacna	Junior high-school	1 daughter (unspecified, teenager) and 1 son (deceased)	3
14	Marta	75	Tacna	Cuchuito	Incomplete elementary school	7 (no more details)	3
15	Ana	58	Tacna	Puno	None	1 son (29) and 2 daughters (26, 20)	4
16	Teresa	47	Tacna	Chucuito	Junior high-school	1 daughter (27)	2
17	Carla	39	Tacna	Chucuito	Technical degree	1 son (6)	2
18	Irene	42	Tacna	Chucuito	Junior high-school	2 daughters (12, 4)	4
19	Silvia	59	Tacna	Puno	Elementary school	4 daughters (38, 28, 25, 14)	6
20	Elena	38	Tacna	Tacna	Undergraduate degree	1 daughter (11)	6
21	Celina	48	Tacna	Chucuito	Junior high-school	1 daughter (28)	2
22	Adriana	27	Tacna	Chucuito	Incomplete technical degree	0	2
23	Paola	41	Tacna	Chucuito	Junior high-school	2 daughters (16, 10)	4
24	Lorena	16	Tacna	Chucuito	Incomplete junior high school	0	4
25	Susana	50	Tacna	Chucuito	Junior high-school	1 daughter (24) and 2 sons (18, 10)	5
26	Olivia	24	Tacna	Chile	Incomplete technical degree	0	5
27	Verónica	48	Tacna	Puno	Junior high-school	1 son (24) and 2 daughters (19, 13)	6
28	Melina	13	Tacna	Tacna	Incomplete junior high school	0	6
29	Inés	52	Tacna	Puno	Elementary school	2 daughters (oldest unspecified, 22)	4
30	Victoria	22	Tacna	Tacna	Incomplete university degree	0	4
31	Emilia	62	Tacna	Puno	Junior high-school	1 son (30) and 3 daughters (24, 22, 20)	9
32	Esther	25	Tacna	Puno	Incomplete technical degree	0	9

33	Sonia	58	Tacna	Chucuito	Junior high-school	6 children (one daughter is 28)	4
34	Catalina	28	Tacna	Tacna	Incomplete technical degree	1 son (6)	4
35	Roxana	55	Tacna	Tacna	Junior high-school	1 son (>30, unspecified) and 1 daughter (>30, unspecified)	3
36	Carmen	44	Yunguyo	Yunguyo	Incomplete junior high school	2 daughters (24, 21) and 2 sons (27, 13)	4
37	Gabriela	21	Yunguyo	Yunguyo	Undergraduate degree in progress	0	4
38	Manuela	54	Juliaca	Yunguyo	Junior high-school	1 son (28)	2
39	Lourdes	62	Juliaca	Yunguyo	Technical degree	1 daughter (44) and 3 sons (45, 43, 24)	2
40	Raquel	44	Puno	Yunguyo	Elementary school	3 daughters (20, 13, 6)	5
41	Josefina	38	Puno	Puno	Undergraduate degree	1 son (20)	5
42	Luisa	25	Juliaca	Puno	Undergraduate degree	0	5
43	Pilar	55	Juliaca	Puno	Elementary school	3 daughters (35, 25, 18)	5
44	Rosa	35	Puno	Ilave	Undergraduate degree	0	3
45	Clara	53	Puno	Ilave	Junior high-school	1 daughter (28)	3
46	Mónica	20	Ilo	Juli	Incomplete technical degree	0	1
47	Valentina	49	Yunguyo	Juli	Junior high-school	5 daughters (31, 29, 20, 12, 8) and 2 sons (18, 15)	4
48	Amalia	53	Juli	Juli	Technical degree	2 daughters (24, 22) and 1 son (34)	3
49	Aída	80	Juli	Juli	Incomplete elementary school	2 daughters (unspecified)	2
50	Alba	52	Juli	Juli	Undergraduate degree	2 sons (31, 29)	5
51	Eva	48	Juli	Juli	Technical degree	2 sons (3, 14) and 2 daughters (15, 24)	5
52	Milagros	81	Juli	Juli	Unspecified	10 children (unspecified)	3
53	Ángeles	47	Juli	Juli	Elementary school	3 sons (32, 28, 24) and 1 daughter (27)	3
54	Violeta	27	Juli	Juli	Incomplete university degree	1 son (10)	5
55	Sara	74	Juli	Juli	Incomplete elementary school	3 sons (53, 45, 38) and 2 daughters (43, 39)	4
56	Diana	44	Juli	Juli	Undergraduate degree	1 son (3) and 2 daughters (12, 19)	4
57	Elisa	30	Juli	Juli	Technical degree	1 son (3)	11
58	Regina	62	Juli	Juli	Undergraduate degree	2 daughters (23, 28) and 1 son (22)	3
59	Fabiola	34	Juli	Tacna	Incomplete technical degree	1 son (3)	4
60	Belén	47	Juli	Juli	Technical degree	3 daughters (unspecified)	3
61	Estela	45	Juli	Juli	Technical degree	2 sons (13, 6) and 1 daughter (23)	4
62	Gloria	23	Puno	Juli	Incomplete university degree	0	1

Source: created by the authors

Circuits include transit, fairs, capacities and strategies for crossing borders that depend on institutional conditions, border regimes, support networks and types of goods (Garcés & Vilches Ogalde, 2023; Jiménez Palacios et al., 2019). Circuits combine mobility, places and processes of production and reproduction; they also combine structural, contextual and institutional conditions of informal trade, borders and caregiving systems (Guizardi et al., 2021).

The findings are divided into four socio-spatial arrangements: household, point of sale of products, border crossing and place of supply. Each arrangement differentially combines trade and caregiving practices. This division allows a detailed analysis without losing sight of their interdependencies as a circuit to address caregiving systems in their spatiality and temporality (Jirón Martínez et al., 2022) and show the interdependence between popular economic practices and caregiving (Babb, 2019; Jiménez Cala & Barbosa Gonçalves, 2023), without denying the marked inequalities (Stefoni et al., 2023).

Household: constant demands to reconcile

The household is "traversed by the intersection of multiple axes of difference and power" (Magalhães, 2021, p. 11), and cross-border circuits are part of caregiving systems (Gonzálvez Torralbo, 2013; Guizardi et al., 2021). It is important to rethink and problematize the categories home and private in the framework of relations of interdependence of commercial activities, global systems of product circulation and cross-border mobility (Schuster, 2022).

Gender roles in the household and in trade involve negotiation practices and tensions. The interviewees continually problematize the fulfillment of gender mandates and caregiving responsibilities. For many of them, households are affected by violence and inequalities in the distribution of caregiving responsibilities.

Generating income implies tensions in the mandates and roles of gender and caregiving in the home. Valentina, from Puno (49 years old), narrates: "I have a lot of work, and I bring in money just like [my husband]. Am I going to take care of you? I have to cook, wash, care for my children, go to the meeting, I'm going to do everything! I said to him, 'What are you a man for?'" Or Clara, also in Puno (53 years old): "Oh, it was very difficult! I suffered a lot, I cried a lot [...] I had to make lunch, clean, take care of the clients, I had to rush. I didn't have a single break".

The traders develop specific caregiving strategies: food preparation in advance, reorganization of family schedules and coordination with other household members, for example. Family support networks are critical, although not all of them are available. For example, traders resort to "catering services" strategies or delegating breakfast and lunch preparation to family members to handle these daily tasks more efficiently. This is what Pilar said: "Here we just eat lunch, we don't cook, it's more practical. Cooking is tedious, we come back tired [from the fairs]". Janet, also from Puno, said:

> She [my mother] helped me, "Let's see," she said, "I'll finish lunch, or I'll make lunch today, you just go" [...] Yes, she helped me with some tasks, I'm not going to lie to you. But I'm not going to force her either, she's my mother, she's not my employee.

Trade is an alternative way of generating income and implies combining mandates and responsibilities. Celina, a trader originally from Puno, living in Tacna, explains that when faced with the possibilities of precarious jobs in services or as a domestic worker, she prefers trade: "Why? Because if you go to work in a house [as a domestic worker], your daughter will be abandoned. But if you go into trade, your daughter will be closer. She deserves that".

Children spend much time with their mothers on fairs and trips. The business hours are long and exhausting, and they have to undertake varied functions. For example, the traders can be found from early morning until late afternoon on weekdays when they sell, but purchasing merchandise involves moving around at least a whole day.

Elena says about her mother, a trader: "It was quite a sacrifice. My mom, when she went to sell, she would abandon me. If you ask any child of a trader, 'Has your mother been with you?' they will say no". Josefina points out how, since she was a child, she has helped out in the family business since it served as a caregiving space: "We never had that childhood of going to play, going to have fun. It was all about helping my parents, especially my mother, in the business". The narratives reinforce these ideas:

> We always carry our baby on our backs; we don't need a maid. Here we're used to washing clothes at two o'clock in the morning, then we make breakfast or leave lunch ready. (Regina, Juli)

> I would get my children up, go out to sell from 3 a.m. [...] I would get home at 10 p.m., make dinner, get everything ready, do laundry. I would spend the night washing clothes [...] I always tried to get things done. A woman can divide her time. I didn't rest because being at home was like another job: cooking, cleaning, and I had my father who was a burden on me; he was like an extra child. (Verónica, Tacna)

Trade influences a large part of the household's decisions. For Adriana (Tacna): "I know about the business because I have lived with it, I have grown up with it, I have studied with it, I have gotten clothed, everything through the business". Some interviewees learned the business with their mothers at fairs, such as Natalia, Verónica and Inés in Tacna. Inés' story synthesizes long-lasting processes and intergenerational transmission as she tells of the multiple supports (time, contacts, money, place of sale) and knowledge (know-how) her mother transmitted to her.

> I won't be able to, I said. My mom said, "Come with me". We went to Arica [Chile]. "Here, I have 10 dollars". What are we going to do? [I asked her] "I'll lend you this", she said, "we're going to buy something, and we're going to make it grow". My mom is like that. She bought ties by the pound. Since I didn't have a stand, she put them on her stand, and they sold fast. Within a week she had multiplied by 5 or 7 what she invested. "Now you're going to pay me back what I lent you", she told me and continued, "now make it grow". But I still didn't know how to. "Let's order a pack [a bundle of clothes] for you". Since I was short [on money], she lent it to me, we sold it and from there I also gave it back to her, and I had a little bit left. But she always left me enough for the market, for cooking. She would say to me, "If you have anything left over, keep it and buy something you need".

Commercial activities are opportunities, but they are limited and viewed with some caution by the interviewees when discussing the possibility of their daughters pursuing the same path. When Emilia (62 years old, originally from Desaguadero and a resident of Tacna) was asked if she would like her daughters to also engage in trade:

> No. You have to get up early, go out [to the streets], set up stalls. Perhaps one day, they'll have a husband. Maybe their husband doesn't like to care for their children, and they want me to do that. Then, in the business, you have to be up early, at four o'clock in the morning. [...] The business is not easy, but you do earn money. But I wouldn't want them to do it. (Emilia, Tacna)

Similarly, Rosa remembers her mother's words when she was evaluating whether to continue with a professional degree:

> I wanted to go to work, get some money and then return the following year and apply again. But my mom wouldn't let me because she said, "You're going to get used to the money. You'll stay there just like your uncles [...] like me in the business, and that's it. And everything will be lost".

Household and caregiving practices are configured and negotiated along with the demarcations that commercial circuits and routines demand. This allows households to generate income, used, for example, to finance their children's educational projects. Regardless of the amount of the income (whether it is just an extra income or allows for forms of capitalization), constant tension and negotiation with gender mandates and caregiving roles were found.

Caregiving practices are not only confined to the household; on the contrary, they reflect the negotiations necessary to sustain the public sphere of trade in commodities. This continuous interaction between trade and caregiving shows how trade, more than a simple economic activity, is interdependent with the social organization of caregiving, where women constantly negotiate and adapt their practices to sustain both spheres.

Sales and caregiving activities

The sale of products is heterogeneous, and the traders adopt different strategies during the week, as well as during their own life history. To simplify the results, the main selling contexts are mobile fairs, permanent markets, gallery stalls and street vending (see Figure 2 and Figure 3). Without denying their specific features analyzed, for example, in studies on fairs on the Bolivia-Brazil (Hernández Hernández & Loureiro Ferreira, 2017), Bolivia-Peru (Jiménez Cala & Barbosa Gonçalves, 2023), Tacna-Peru (Jiménez Palacios, 2019) and Bolivia-Chile (Muñoz Valenzuela, 2020) borders, three central features of the combination of the sale of products with caregiving practices stand out: knowing how to sell, the extension of home care practices and the networks among traders.

"Knowing how to sell" is the knowledge acquired to generate profits and establish links mobilized and practiced in the relational capacity of traders. Selling requires building complex networks—both momentary and long-lasting—between traders and

buyers. And, in some cases, with *caseras* (regular customers)[4], who have been studied extensively in the region (Babb, 2019; Jiménez Cala & Barbosa Gonçalves, 2023) as part of the extension of caregiving, relational, affection and trust systems in the market and among women. On the role of sales skills, Celina states:

> It is not the clothes but how you deal with customers. If you are sitting quietly, the first thing they look at is your face and how you serve. You have to be friendly: "Yes, *casera*, we have some models for you". But if you say, "There are no models for you", they don't return, you scare them. It's a good thing for me that the other ladies don't deal well with the *caseras* [laughs].

Celina's sales perspective contrasted sharply with the customer service offered at the more crowded fairs in Tacna visited during the fieldwork. The traders did not generally acknowledge the buyer's presence at their stall; some were even resting. Susana (Tacna) exemplifies this other perspective: "I don't like to offer. They ask me, I answer them, I don't offer anything. But when they ask me 'What do you have, *casera*?', I say, 'This.' Because that way, they also feel that I don't harass them, because there are people back there who harass you".

Knowing how to sell means establishing relations. This does not exclude the establishment of competitive relations. The relationship between a buyer and a non-recurring saleswoman is not the same as in situations where special attention is required, as in the case of *caseras* (regular customers). It is essential to have the ability to make sales. Each saleswoman has her own bonding style in conversations that ensure sales and, in other cases, a bond that gives decision space to the clients. The following annotation from fieldwork in Puno reflects this coexistence:

> At the sales stands, they were friendly with the customers. When, for example, they didn't have a product, they would tell them, "But come back on a certain day, and I'll have it", or when customers weren't sure, they would say, "Go ahead, take it for less" and they would lower the price. When they were asked if it was a good or bad product, as regards the quality, they would answer the customers, "When have I ever brought something bad?" I noticed this more in the stall traders (store type), but in the fairs, there is also price competition. (Field Diary, June 14, 2023)

Selling is an extension of caregiving systems and practices. It is important to highlight the traders' motivation to engage in these activities. Two motivations stand out. On the one hand, Celina decided two decades ago to work in business because she managed her own work schedule, which allowed her to devote herself to caring for her daughter. On the other hand, Susana began selling clothes at the fair because of her daughter's personal interest, and Violeta says that the business serves as an additional source of income.

The women traders started selling at fairs for different reasons: the need for a job that would provide them with a "flexible", though not easy, schedule that would allow them to take care of their household chores; and the need for a job that would provide economic self-sufficiency for them and their households. Partners do not tend to participate regularly, except on certain occasions (such as job loss). For most of the women

[4] References to *caseras* are made in two senses: to refer to the purchasing *caseras*, for example, those who supply merchandise; and to refer to the sales *caseras*, who are the traders' customers.

interviewed, it is an individual project led by the female head of the household, whose income is intended to support the family.

Figure 2. Feria Cenepa (place of sale in Tacna)

Photos: María Fernanda Barrios, 2023

Figure 3. Juli Fair (place of sale in Puno)

Photo: Aroma Calderón, 2023

The vending spaces reflect environments where caregiving responsibilities and economic activities are intertwined, thus constituting dense networks of support, solidarity and conflict. These places are recognized for their dynamism and high demand for

care, so the traders turn to their support networks, such as their mothers, to delegate child caregiving temporarily.

> My mother has also helped me; she has supported me a lot. I used to leave her with [...] Yeah, my little one, when he was two or three years old, I used to leave him because I couldn't take the baby since I was selling and you can't be selling and taking care of the baby at the same time if the baby is walking or crawling. So, I told her, "Mom, today you're not going to sell, you're not going out to sell anymore, help me with the baby", like that. That's how she also helped me. (Manuela, Puno)

Nevertheless, this strategy is not always feasible, and many mothers cite the emotional burden and the desire to be present in their children's development. Thus, on several occasions, they choose to take their children with them despite the difficulties that this entails. This is what Celina recalls about when she entered the trade some time ago, accompanied by her daughter, with the help of a friend who was a trader and who spent time with her son at the business after school:

> From here, I carried [my daughter] at four o'clock in the morning. I started as a street trader. When you are a street trader, it is hard work. [My daughter slept] in a little cardboard box. I always remember my friend told me, "Well, come here to this place, you set the place for her". Then, I would arrive at three o'clock in the morning and make her sleep. While I was getting ready at five o'clock, she would get up, I would give her breakfast, and at half past seven, I would take her to school. (Celina, Tacna)

> My mom would bring him here to the stall. I spent more time with my son here at the stall. My mom would bring him here in the morning since I was at school. I would see him here at one o'clock. All afternoon I was with my son. (Josefina, Puno)

Likewise, the fundamental local social and political spaces for the fulfillment of commercial activities, which are often found in situations of legal ambiguity, are the associations:

> [Associates] come from [various places]. Now everything is association, you can't easily go to a place. If it's a partnership place, they take you out; they don't let you stay. The associations have a certain space for their associates. Only they can sit there. Annual rate per meter to the Municipality, we pay per site [...] Each association has a board of directors. We have a merchant card. We have savings from which we take out loans and make the money work. We set a fee for a certain activity, and if there is some left over, we put it aside. We have meetings, and we collect money for tardiness and absenteeism. That collection goes into loans [...] at 2%, 3%, or 5%. (Diana, Puno)

Associations operate as a support network but also to ensure the performance of their functions. These organizations are in charge of establishing and coordinating, for example, fees that traders pay to participate and secure their place at fairs. These fees are managed through these traders' organizations, which facilitates the management of their activity at markets and fairs.

> It is illegal. Yes, at the border, they have the duty to take [the merchandise], but here inside, they don't take it. They always took it from us. And here, in the federation, we stopped all that. We have talked with the colonel about everything. When we are here, I am also on the board of directors. (Emilia, Tacna)

Challenging border-crossing experiences

Crossing the border and moving goods involves possibilities, needs and risks. Crossing requires taking care of oneself but also taking care of support networks. In the narratives, crossing implies confronting national security forces, territorial limits and extensive journeys to and within those limits. Crossing has multiple forms, from taking responsibility directly to paying people specializing in small- and medium-scale mobility. These forms, which are not mutually exclusive, comprise strategies and learning and are differentiated by the routes used and vary considerably along the two borders.

Crossing the border with merchandise is a practical form of know-how. "I didn't know how to travel or bring merchandise; I had to learn many things", says Patricia from Tacna. Inés, 52 years old, also from Tacna, tells how it was the first time she crossed the border with merchandise:

> I went by myself. I didn't know how to bring merchandise; I got on the bus, I came with my backpacks. People say you have to distribute [the merchandise], don't they? I didn't know. I loaded my backpack, put it in the car, and got off at the checkpoint. A lady shouted at me, "How can you not know, don't you even think?" I had very little, two little bags. "You should get off", she told me. I went up, the customs officer was there, "You have to give me 20 dollars", she told me. "I don't have 20 dollars", I said, I only had five dollars. I sorted it out there.

For new traders, such as Norma (Tacna), or established traders, such as Patricia (Tacna), it is important to establish relationships with other traders to learn how to cross the border. The support networks of the commercial activity also operate as forms of caregiving. In addition, crossing requires learning, which is transmitted between generations. Silvia, 59 years old, has four daughters. What goods does she sell? she is asked.

> I [trade] all kinds of things. I bring children's clothes, whatever there is. [Since the 1990s, she has been going to Arica once a week. In the beginning, she traveled with her daughter]. I always came with my eldest daughter; she carried the dish towels. I would tell her: "You're not going to stop; go straight ahead without looking at the customs officers". At that time, she was three years old, and she would stop in the middle of the walkway, "Mommy, I passed! He didn't take me away". They were laughing their heads off. We would pass like that with all the dish towels in our backpacks. (Silvia, Tacna)

Elena, her daughter, remembers: "She would say to me: walk straight ahead without looking back or talking to anyone".

When moving goods, there is the possibility of losing them, receiving fines or even deportation. Moreover, there are health problems, especially physical ones, when

transporting the merchandise. "The risk is that they take it from us, losing our capital, losing our money", says Verónica (Tacna), as well as the rest of the interviewees.

The crossing involves dealing with public officials and police officers and facing institutional and verbal discrimination (Pastor Seperak & Chávez Vargas, 2022). For the interviewees, officials act discretionally and negotiate. But the relationship is also tinged with multiple forms of violence: "The Bolivian police sometimes [call us] 'these *perruchos* [a pejorative term]!'" (Rosa, Puno). "'You Peruvians are thieves', they say. 'We are not thieves here', I can tell them, but I have already argued with one of them, 'We are not thieves; I have been robbed in La Paz', I told him" (Valentina, Puno). These situations involve negotiating with officials, as Valentina points out:

> Those fireworks, I've managed to have a whole box taken away [laughs] with the police [...] I know how to pass in front and let them take the fireworks away from me. I know how to stand face to face with customs and the police [and tell them]: "Look at me, I'm not a drug trafficker, I'm not a thief that you should take my goods from me. I have educated my children. Were you or were you not born of a woman? And that woman has educated you, and now you are a good man. Put yourself in my shoes" [laughs]. I know how to shout, and I know how to get them off my case.

The movement of merchandise is usually camouflaged by the traders with the help of people who accompany them. Silvia, for example, uses the inside of her purse and the company of her daughter. Another strategy is the distribution of merchandise and the use of the service of *paseros* on the border with Bolivia or *comisionistas* in Chile. Opting for this service depends on factors such as available capital, contacts, regularity of purchases, previous experiences and type of merchandise. Also, experiences of having their goods seized led them to opt for the *comisionista* service.

> I brought branded articles in my little bag, and they took the 10 dozen out of it. As I don't bring everything, I send it over the plain. I bring it in my wallet, I come and go that way, it's safer. They [commission agents] bring things and they will know how to pay. What will they do? I don't know. The things they bring. (Silvia, Tacna)

Opting for a *comisionista* or *pasera* or carrying the goods oneself are not mutually exclusive. This is how Verónica describes how she passed the merchandise: "Paying a commission. Sometimes I used to strap a few on myself, but I'm nervous: I declare myself to the customs officer [laughs]". The relationship with *comisionistas* and *paseras* is built over time, and these relations involve co-presence or are situations where everything is organized through social network messages. "In the terminal, there are several; they offer their services to carry goods", says Verónica, stressing that "unfortunately, you have to learn to have faith, to take risks. You lose, you lose. But thank God I haven't lost much".

Borders comprise multiple routes, levels of porosity, control and repertoires. This marks a difference between the two borders. On the border between Peru and Chile, the border security posts in Tacna and Arica have a greater capacity for inspection and control than the roads connecting Peru and Bolivia. Despite this, on the Tacna-Arica border the routes on highways and paved roads coexist with smuggling routes through the desert.

On the border with Bolivia, there are alternative and non-formal routes, or the possibility of crossing the border by official routes, but without being stopped (see Figure 4). Although the most transited area by the traders is Desaguadero, they also identify other regular or irregular crossing points used mainly by large traders, who require roads for the passage of trucks and with different levels of surveillance and control. The following quotes describe these conditions.

> I have only crossed by boat twice. They don't check you by boat, you can carry merchandise, cell phones, all those things. On the other hand, on the pedestrian walkway, the police take them away from you. (Eva, Puno)

Figure 4. Pedestrian and boat crossings on the Bolivia-Peru border

Source: Aroma Calderón

> From that side [road from Huancané-Tilali to Bolivia] [your merchandise] comes in, whether safely or not. Once you load all the merchandise in the car—because from that side there are big trucks—then, in this car there are all kinds of products, from groceries to televisions, everything. About six people give orders there. They bring you lots of stuff! Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose. That's smuggling [...] That's what the big traders do. (Josefina, Puno)

> Oh, miss, I wish there was another pandemic [laughter]. We scored big in the pandemic. The crafty person lives off the fool, and the fool lives off his work. I have gone to Bolivia and even entered on foot [...] I know everything well, the

> ghost roads, as they say. I know where to go, where there is a check, where there is none. I know all the places [...] that's why I'm a traveling saleswoman. A traveling saleswoman knows every hole in the road. (Regina, Puno)

Buying merchandise: calculations, networks and resources

Buying merchandise "on the other side of the border" is a combination of accessing financial capital, the know-how to make contacts in the places of purchase and the knowledge acquired over time. These practices place the traders in a wide network of roles in economic exchanges and in reorganizing caregiving systems. The supply routines of the traders require planning, as reported by two interviewees:

> I would leave for Desaguadero at 6 [a.m.] at the latest and returned also at 6 [p.m.]. I couldn't leave my children. I had to get there at least to give them dinner and help them with their homework. And in the morning, I had to give them breakfast. At 4:30, we were already preparing everything. (Diana, Puno)

> For example, I used to prepare breakfast, I rarely left lunch prepared, and I had to get up at one o'clock in the morning to be able to do it, and I would leave at 2:30 to be at the terminal because they sold only to the first 10 people there. So, it was very tiring, you had to get up early. Besides, the time in Chile is two hours ahead, which also complicates everything. (Alicia, Tacna)

Women traders balance caregiving responsibilities with merchandise sourcing. This includes, for example, ensuring the safety of their children while supervising necessary purchases. A case in point is that of Gloria (Puno), who describes how her mother relied on the *caseras* or *abastecedoras* (provisioners) as part of her strategies for managing these demands:

> Generally, we did not carry the bags together. It was difficult. So, I would go with my little backpack; my mother would go with her backpack and her bags. So, my mom would say, "*Casera*, I'll leave you my bag", and she would leave it, and when she returned, we would pick it up [saying], "Now, *casera*, I'll take my bag". When my mom had to go somewhere, and I got too tired to walk, my mom would leave me with those ladies.

In addition, the supply trips involve housework in the early morning before crossing the border and at night when returning to their country. Nonetheless, they indicate that they have support in caregiving for their children. Alicia mentions her partner's role in caregiving in her household: "In this regard, my children's father is the one who was in charge of taking them there, bringing them back, and buying them lunch when I didn't leave a meal cooked". Carla points to the support of close family members:

> I drop him off early in Ciudad Nueva [a Tacna district], or sometimes I leave after dropping off my little son, who starts school at 8 in the morning and is out at 12:30. I tell my brother or my sister-in-law, "Pick him up at noon because I'm going to Arica". They pick him up and feed him, and when I return at 3 or 4 o'clock, I go to their house and pick him up. (Carla, Tacna)

Similarly to the relationship they establish with clients, the traders adopt the role of *caseras*, which in turn involves establishing contact networks and ongoing relations over time. As Ángeles (Puno) comments: "Those who are traders already have their *caseras*, and they just come to pick up. 'This quantity, get it ready for me', we say to the *caseras* we've known for a long time".

Verónica (Tacna) highlights the role of communications in these practices: "Now everything is done by WhatsApp, or by phone, I call 'What do you have, *casero*?', 'Oh, I have this', 'I'm going to send one of my friends with the money', and then they send it". Building these relations takes time and is usually linked to their own experiences and contacts from family or friendship networks. Josefina (Puno) says: "Since my mother traveled, I have met her *caseras*. They are very approachable, but they respond differently when you fail with something [...] They treat you very differently".

When buying merchandise from the "other side", the traders use a money management system that includes the previously described elements and shows their relationship. All the women interviewed said they pay for the merchandise with the income earned from other jobs or from selling at the fairs. These economic strategies are part of broad processes, where not only financial aspects are at stake but also cultural, social and support networks (Villarreal & Niño, 2016).

In this respect, many interviewees on both borders work according to the concept of "double capital". "For the business, double capital is required", points out Ángeles (Puno):

> For example, you bring some product, you leave it with your *casera* and the *casera* doesn't have money on hand. It's not cash on delivery, and she says, "Leave it with me", and you have to go with the other capital. On the second round, you return and get paid [...] It's not cash on delivery to do business.

The above example shows how this business works with the "double capital" method, which basically consists of having two parallel capitals used to purchase merchandise. The traders may not always have the money to purchase their merchandise, either because of, as in the previous example, networks of familiarity with their buyers that allow for later payment, the risks of confiscation, or any unforeseen event when moving the merchandise.

Sonia (Tacna) says: "We work with double capital. [...] We don't pay any taxes, people come to look for us, or the police take everything away from us, so what do you start over with? You have another capital".

In these relations and support networks for purchasing merchandise, in both cases—especially on the Peru-Bolivia border—the positioning of women is important in the first place, but also the positioning of the Aymara language. This is how they describe it:

> They speak Aymara. It has been easy for me to adapt. [...] They even joke in Aymara. Even when they come from Desaguadero, as they are exclusively women traders they speak Aymara. What have you bought, how many dozens [...] In other words, they see everything in Aymara. (Violeta, Puno)

> Yes, [Aymara] helps me. We talk to each other, we joke with each other sometimes in Aymara [...] When we talk like this, in Spanish, "Oh, what a snob!" that's what they say because she doesn't want to speak Aymara. How much is that, those things, lower the price for me. (Ángeles, Puno)

It might be assumed that it is not very common to work with banks or loans because of the informal nature of the traders' work. Nonetheless, it is very easy to acquire financing from savings banks, and this was witnessed, for example, in the market when motorized units from Caja Arequipa were observed collecting data from traders to provide loans. But this does not determine a single means of financing, as in the case of Alicia (Tacna), who points out that most of the traders work with savings banks, and the case of Silvia (Tacna), who explains the process of obtaining loans from savings banks and other banks.

> Sometimes the merchandise arrives, and you don't have the cash to pay the commission, and they need 20 packs, that's 2 000 Peruvian soles. And with the moneylenders, it happened to me being desperate during the pandemic at 20% [interest]. I went to Iquique, bringing wallets. Iquique was cheaper, but now things have changed. How can I tell you how it has changed? In Arica, I buy a pack at 300 dollars, but in Iquique I bought it at 150 dollars. I brought five packs, and I saved 500 dollars. With 500 dollars, I will bring more packs, and that's why I would go there. Sometimes, there are offers. I bring offers because there are new things too. And that's where I got a 20% interest rate loan. I still regret it and wonder why I took that loan. Just in the pandemic I closed that business, and I stayed with that lender. Look how many years. He made me pay everything for three years. (Silvia, Tacna)

Shopping for goods does not only require economic resources. It is a process that involves sustaining strenuous routines and social relationships through knowledge and strategies for the best ways to manage and project these social, cultural and economic capitals.

Conclusions

Consistently with recent studies (Jiménez Cala & Barbosa Gonçalves, 2023; Stefoni et al., 2023), this paper shows that the cross-border circuits of women traders integrate caregiving. Caregiving is not an additional activity they must reconcile with their work; it is a constitutive part of how these circuits are organized and operate. The present analysis shows how caregiving practices are intertwined with mobility and form an interdependence (Jirón & Gómez, 2018) that defines travel strategies, trade networks, decisions about routes and times, and forms of cooperation.

The results highlight the fact that the work of women traders on the Peru-Chile and Peru-Bolivia borders forms multiscale circuits that integrate networks and actors in a complex interaction between trade practices and caregiving systems. These circuits, analyzed from four socio-spatial arrangements (household, sale, border crossing, purchase of merchandise), overlap in terms of strategies and knowledge. Nonetheless, the conditions for combining caregiving systems and trade activities vary, configuring extended caregiving systems for themselves, the household and broader networks.

Specialized and mobile caregiving systems not only account for the extension of caregiving tasks in the home but also reflect the caregiving conditions of the traders themselves, their roles and their links as sellers or buyers during crossings or purchase of merchandise.

The methodology used has been useful, although it is necessary to refine the methodology of field accompaniment to explore how caregiving practices are combined with trade practices, taking as a reference the dimensions of the State, the market and other agents.

The borders analyzed are part of a tri-national space of circulation of people and goods, symbolic and identification criteria, a complex historicity and exchange networks that establish a popular economy. This study seeks to identify similar conditions. This does not mean there are no undeniable differences, which often configure differentiated border regimes.

Based on what has been presented in this article, a comparative analysis should also be advanced, which can complement and further investigate the contextual and institutional conditions of cross-border circuits of caregiving and trade, both on these borders and in other cases (Klopp et al., 2022; Solís Pérez et al., 2022; Wrigley-Asante, 2013).

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