

Université de Montréal

**‘Are We Now Equal?’ Recent Experiences and Perceptions
of South American Migrants in Argentina under
MERCOSUR**

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Cette thèse intitulée :
**‘Are We Now Equal?’ Recent Experiences and Perceptions of South American Migrants
in Argentina under MERCOSUR**

présentée par
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Résumé

De manière générale, ma thèse examine les mécanismes des processus sociaux, économiques et politiques ayant contribué, souvent de manière contradictoire, à la (re)définition des critères d'adhésion au sein de la nation et de l'Etat. Elle le fait par le dialogue au sein de deux grands corps de littérature intimement liés, la citoyenneté et le transnationalisme, qui se sont penchés sur les questions d'appartenance, d'exclusion, de mobilité et d'accès aux droits chez les migrants transnationaux tout en soulignant la capacité accrue de l'Etat à réguler à la fois les déplacements de personnes et l'accès des migrants aux droits. Cette thèse remet en question trois principes qui influencent la recherche et les programmes d'action publique ayant trait au transnationalisme et à la citoyenneté des migrants, et remet en cause les approches analytiques hégémoniques et méthodologiques qui les sous-tendent.

L'étude a été menée à deux niveaux distincts d'analyse empirique et analytique. D'une part, nous examinons les « technologies de la citoyenneté » (Ong 2003, Fujiwara 2008) qui ont été développées par le gouvernement pour transformer l'Argentine en une nation latino-américaine diverse et inclusive pendant la dernière décennie, en nous intéressant particulièrement à la création, par le Kirchnerisme, d'une « nouvelle légalité » pour les Paraguayens, les Boliviens et les Péruviens résidant dans le pays. D'autre part, nous analysons la « dimension horizontale des processus de citoyenneté » (Neveu 2005, Pickus and Skerry 2007, Gagné and Neveu 2009) chez ces migrants dans des aires urbaines, périphériques et rurales du *partido* de La Plata. Plus spécifiquement, nous examinons dans quelle mesure les conditions socioéconomiques des migrants ont changé suite à leur nouveau statut légal (en tant que ressortissants du MERCOSUR en Argentine, dont les droits sont égaux à ceux des citoyens) et aux politiques de « citoyenneté inclusive » déployées par le gouvernement.

Cette thèse se penche particulièrement sur les fondations et l'incarnation (« embodiment ») des droits en examinant comment le nouveau statut légal des migrants se manifeste au quotidien en fonction de a) où ils vivent et travaillent, et b) leur statut social perçu par les autres migrants et non-migrants. D'une part, nous examinons les aires urbaines, périphériques et rurales de La Plata en tant que « zones de souveraineté graduée » (Ong 1999),

où des régimes de gouvernementalité locaux spécifiques se sont développés en lien avec l'installation de groupes ethniques souvent distincts, et dont les droits et devoirs diffèrent de ceux d'autres zones. D'autre part, nous étudions la façon dont le statut social est produit à travers les interactions sociales quotidiennes en transposant des distinctions construites socialement telles que race, classe, genre et origine nationale, en systèmes d'exclusion formels (Gregory 2007). Notre analyse ethnographique de ce que nous appelons les « expériences de légalité » des migrants démontre que leur égalité formelle vis-à-vis des Argentins, loin d'être simplement donnée comme un nouveau statut légal uniformément garanti pour tous, est à la fois inégalement vécue par les divers migrants, et différemment respectée dans les zones géographiques dirigées par divers régimes de gouvernementalité (Foucault 1978).

Mots-clés : anthropologie, anthropologie socio-culturelle, ethnographie, transnationalité, migration, intégration régionale, citoyenneté, État, MERCOSUR, Argentine

Abstract

Broadly speaking, my thesis examines the workings of grounded social, economic and political processes that have contributed, often in a conflicting manner, to the (re)definition of membership criteria in both the nation and the state. It does so in dialogue with two broad, interrelated bodies of literature, citizenship and transnationalism, which have examined issues of belonging, exclusion, mobility and access to rights among transnational migrants, while highlighting the renewed capacity of the state to regulate both people's movements and migrants' actual access to public entitlements. My dissertation challenges three sets of claims shaping research and policy agendas on migrant transnationalism and citizenship, and questions the hegemonic analytical and methodological approaches underlying them.

My research has been carried out at two distinctive analytical and empirical levels. On the one hand, I examine the “technologies of citizenship” (Ong 2003, Fujiwara 2008) deployed by the government to transform Argentina into a diverse, inclusive and Latin American nation over the past decade, paying particular attention to Kirchnerismo's creation of a “new legality” for the Paraguayans, Bolivians and Peruvians in the country. On the other hand, I analyze the “horizontal dimensions of citizenship processes” (Neveu 2005, Pickus and Skerry 2007, Gagné and Neveu 2009) among these migrants in urban, peripheral and rural areas of the *partido* of La Plata. Namely, I study the extent to which migrants' socio-economic circumstances have changed in tandem with their new legal status (as nationals of the MERCOSUR in Argentina with rights equal to those of its citizens) and the “inclusive citizenship” policies deployed by the government.

My dissertation pays particular attention to the grounding and embodiment of rights by examining how migrants' new legal status translates into everyday life depending on a) where they live and work, and b) their perceived social status by other migrants and non-migrants. On the one hand, I look at urban, peripheral and rural areas of La Plata as zones of graduated sovereignty (Ong 1999) where particular governmentality regimes have emerged in tandem with the settlement of often ethnically marked groupings, whose entitlements and obligations differ from those in other zones. On the other hand, I examine how social status is produced through everyday social interaction by transposing socially constructed distinctions, such as

race, class, gender and national origin, into formal systems of exclusion (Gregory 2007). My ethnographic analysis of what I shall call *limitrofes*' experiences of legality demonstrates that their formal equality vis-à-vis Argentinians, far from being merely given as a new legal status evenly guaranteed to all, is both unequally experienced by diverse migrants and differently enforced in geographic areas governed by distinctive governmentality regimes (Foucault 1978).

Keywords : anthropology, socio-cultural anthropology, ethnography, transnationality, migration, regional integration, citizenship, state, MERCOSUR, Argentina.

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Glossary

Abuela/o: literally grandmother/grandfather; this term is often employed by caregivers to refer to their elderly patients in an affectionate way

Almacén: neighbourhood grocery store

Almacenero: the owner/person who runs an *almacén*

Barrio: neighbourhood

(la) Cana: the police

Chino: term used in La Plata to refer to either the mini-markets of Chinese migrants or their owners.

Colimba: military service in Argentina

Comisaría: police station

Comisario: police officer

Confianza: trust

DNI (Document Nacional de Identidad): Argentina's national identification document

Empleada doméstica: domestic female worker

Feria: fruit and vegetable street market

Limítrofes: term used to globally refer to Bolivians, Paraguayans and Peruvians in Argentina, which during the 1990s had scornful connotations.

Mano dura: tough sanctions or measures

Obra: construction site

Paisanos: depending on the context, this term is used by migrants to refer to either compatriots or people with aboriginal ancestry and/or rural origin.

Patrón/a : male/female employer

Patrullero: police car

Pensión: the cheapest form of accommodation available in the city, and one which does not enforce the restrictive rental rules in place since the 1990s in Argentina. In a *pensión*, tenants rent a room while sharing the rest of the facilities.

Pibes chorros: young (mostly minor), poor Argentinean men who engage in criminal activity, allegedly under the influence of heavy drugs and alcohol

Platenses: inhabitants of La Plata

Porteños: inhabitants of Buenos Aires city

Precaria (certificado de residencia precaria): a certificate that migrants can easily obtain when they initiate the procedures to get Argentinean residency and which permits them to work legally.

Remís: a type of taxi service that tends to be less expensive than a cab.

Señora: respectful term used by domestic workers to refer to their female employer

Trabajo cama adentro: live-in employment; it most often refers to domestic workers.

Trabajo en blanco: registered employment

Trabajo en negro: under-the-table employment

Verdulería: fruit and vegetable store

Verdulero/a: male or female person who runs a *verdulería*

Villero: term used to disparagingly refer to poor, stigmatized Argentines, who allegedly live in *villas miseria* (slums)

*To Haize, who very soon will be among us,
changing our lives in unexpected ways.*

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CHAPTER I: Introduction

My dissertation examines the experiences of migrants from neighbouring nations in Argentina, namely, Bolivians, Peruvians and Paraguayans commonly referred to as *limitrofes*, whose legal status dramatically changed in this country over the past decade¹. Framed by regional and global processes, the particular political history of Argentina led to the adoption of a new migration law in December 2003 (Jelin 2006), which guarantees the economic, social, political and cultural rights of migrants while giving preferential treatment to nationals of the MERCOSUR—a regional integration initiative created in South America in 1991. The new entitlements granted to migrants in general, and the government-sponsored favourable views of the *limitrofes* in particular, are in sharp contrast with the national security perspective permeating legislation in Argentina since its last dictatorship (1976-1983) (Novick 2008) and the criminalization of these groups by the government in office during the 1990s (Recalde 2006-a).

The presidencies of Kirchner (2003-2007) and Fernández (2007-2011, 2011-2015), or *Kirchnerismo* as I shall call the government in office during the 2000s, not only granted these migrants rights equal to those of Argentinians, but also sought to alter their negative portrayal in the nation's social imaginary. These measures were integral to Kirchnerismo's larger political project that involved transforming Argentina into a diverse, inclusive and Latin American nation anchored in its South American past and committed to regional integration. Kirchnerismo's broad political agenda is representative of the shifting geopolitics in South America during the 2000s, which have been driven by a strong political turn towards a populist left. Questioning the subcontinent's historical dependence on foreign powers and the previous two decades of ravaging neoliberalism, governments have engaged in the Latin-Americanization of their respective nations and the strengthening of regional integration. These endeavours have been perceived as the only viable remedy for their common social, economic and political problems.

In dialogue with recent scholarship on migrant transnationalism and citizenship, my dissertation examines *limitrofes'* experiences of their new formal equality vis-à-vis

Argentines during the first decade of the 2000s. This analysis is particularly relevant since their criminalization during the 1990s and their denial of rights during former dictatorships were justified, or to better put it, constructed upon their lack of papers or irregular migratory situation. So, what has happened over the past decade since migrants were granted rights equal to those of Argentines? Has their actual access to a wide range of public entitlements and state protections changed? If so, how? Previous fieldwork I conducted in the city of La Plata, Argentina in the late 1990s showed that migrants found it almost impossible to obtain their Argentinean document (DNI), an issue that became their main concern, as was the case in other parts of the country as well. Increasingly since 2005, however, Kirchnerismo has deployed a series of strategies to facilitate and speed up the documentation of MERCOSUR nationals in Argentina, the vast majority of whom are *limitrofes*. Now that access to the DNI seems to have become less problematic, has the value attributed to this document by migrants changed? If so, how?

My dissertation pays particular attention to the grounding and embodiment of rights by examining how migrants' new legal status translates into everyday life depending on a) where they live and work, and b) their perceived social status by other migrants and non-migrants. On the one hand, I look at urban, peripheral and rural areas of La Plata district as zones of graduated sovereignty (Ong 1999) where particular governmentality regimes have emerged in tandem with the settlement of often ethnically marked groupings, whose entitlements and obligations differ from those in other zones. On the other hand, I examine how social status is produced through everyday social interaction by transposing socially constructed distinctions, such as race, class, gender and national origin, into formal systems of exclusion (Gregory 2007). My ethnographic analysis of what I shall call *limitrofes*' experiences of legality demonstrates that their formal equality vis-à-vis Argentines, far from being merely given as a new legal status evenly guaranteed to all, is both unequally experienced by diverse migrants and differently enforced in geographic areas governed by distinctive governmentality regimes (Foucault 1978).

In the first part of this introduction, I present some background information that will be crucial to understanding the policies implemented by Kirchnerismo in the context of shifting South American geopolitics (chapter III) and how they have framed migrants' experiences in

Argentina over the past decade (chapters IV, V, VI and VII). I start by presenting the initial evolution of MERCOSUR and the attendant emergence of intra-regional migrations as an issue to be regulated by the bloc. These processes contributed to the creation of a system of stratified rights (Morris 2002), closely associated with the monitoring and control of migrants, which became most apparent in Argentina in the late 1990s, when *limitrofes* were criminalized by the government. I then move to delineate the evolution of Peruvian, Bolivian and Paraguayan migrations to this country while tracing their historical belittlement by Argentinians, and the elaboration of a devalued status for these migrants in the nation's social imaginary. In the second part of this introduction, I characterize my doctoral research's fieldwork site, methodology and participants. I finish by presenting an overview of the chapters.

CONTEXTUALIZING THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The Emergence of a System of Stratified Civic Rights in the MERCOSUR

The *Mercado Común del Sur* (Common Market of the South) is an initiative of regional integration that began in 1991 with the goal of creating a free-trade area in the *Cono Sur* (Southern Cone). Its founding members or *estados miembro* are Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay and, soon after, Chile (1995) and Bolivia (1996) were incorporated as *estados asociados* (associated states)². During its initial years, MERCOSUR broadened its scope to encompass the regulation of diverse social, economic and political issues, and the management of migrations soon acquired particular relevance, becoming the focus of agitated debates and disputes over power (Recalde 2005).

In its beginnings, MERCOSUR proponents envisioned it as the panacea for the region. Wider economic liberalization would contribute to the strengthening of democracy, whereas regional development and the shrinking of the state would facilitate the protection of human rights (Min. del Interior et al 1999). A decade later, however, the MERCOSUR's promised results were not that rosy. While the consolidation of the economic bloc helped to counterbalance the external vulnerability of its members and improved their participation in the international market, the expansion of intra-regional trade increased the dependence of the so-called "small" members (Uruguay and Paraguay) on the "big" ones (Argentina and Brazil).

Moreover, even if MERCOSUR promoted the strengthening of democratic and more egalitarian regimes, political, economic and social asymmetries continued to pervade the region (Recalde 2004). Thus, despite public enunciations promising economic development with social justice, the social aspects of the integration did not receive much attention, being merely dealt with precariously and in a reactive manner (Recalde 2005).

The initial development of MERCOSUR also brought about the generation of opposing discourses on the role that political borders should play in the newly created region. Representing the interests of different influential social actors, these discourses materialized in conflicting strategies aiming to progressively eliminate and reinforce national borders. For the fervent promoters of intra-regional trade, national borders were bothersome internal frontiers that challenged the economic development of the bloc. These advocates considered that MERCOSUR had to create a fortress capable of protecting regional trade fostering the flow of goods and capital through the strengthening of its external frontiers. With this goal in mind, politicians and economic elites argued that a shared socio-cultural space or regional culture had developed in South America due to the “natural tendency” of MERCOSUR states to come together. In order to give a material counterpart to such discourse, monuments and bridges were built and financial support was given to projects, programs and partnerships that engaged bloc members (Recalde 2004). As if national differences and conflictive relationships had never existed between South American states, this claim of historical brotherhood was employed to justify the consolidation of a united region without internal divisions (see, for example, Recondo ed. 1998 and Clementi ed. 1996). Moreover, in order to pursue this goal and with the determination to overcome all obstacles in the way, a set of institutional bodies was soon established to design and implement legislation loosening national restrictions. It was then that the movement of people in the bloc began to be perceived as an issue that had to be regulated. Responding to the needs of a growing market demanding mobile workers, negotiations started to delineate a regional migratory policy seeking to free labour from national constraints (Recalde 2005)—as has happened in other regional integration initiatives such as NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), ODECA (Organization of Central American States) and the Pacto Andino (Andean Pact) (see Sassen 1998).

In contrast to the solid development of institutions regulating the economic side of MERCOSUR, the management of the migratory phenomenon was done in a fragmented and ad hoc manner by a series of relatively isolated bodies. The migratory issue was passed around among several commissions and working groups that only dealt with it reactively, with no coordinating entity and no legislation that would enable bloc members to operate in a supra-national manner (Recalde 2005). In this institutional and legislative context, a narrow and distorted understanding of the migratory phenomenon prevailed. Intra-regional migrations were associated with poverty, marginality and crime, and were portrayed as threats to both national order and identity by politicians, union leaders and economic elites—as has happened more recently in the United States and Europe (see Guild and van Selm eds. 2005, Glick Schiller and Faist eds. 2010). The media played a central role in the re-creation and dissemination of discourse linking intra-regional migrations to risk in South America, which powerfully shaped public opinion (Martini 1999). In turn, these misconceptions materialized in immigration policies that were focused on the surveillance and control of borders at the national level while developing surveillance technologies for frontier crossing points, exchanging migratory information and coordinating administrative procedures at the regional level (Recalde 2005).

The contrasting conceptualizations of national borders and the strategies deployed to enforce them in the MERCOSUR generated a series of conflicting dynamics—such as the promotion of the frontier-free market vs. the bounded welfare state and the reinforcement of frontier controls vs. the need of intra-regional mobile workers—that negatively impacted migrants. In particular, the fragmented and often contradictory regulations that were supposed to manage intra-regional migrations in the bloc created a gamut of migratory statuses as a result of granting different rights depending on the type of entry into the state (Recalde 2006-b). The degrees of membership so created correspond closely to the system of civic stratification studied by Morris (2002) in Europe, whereby differential rights and protection are granted by the state to diverse entry categories, producing a system of stratified rights, closely associated with monitoring and control. This phenomenon became most apparent in Argentina in the late 1990s, when some intra-regional migrants were blamed for the economic, political and social crisis that the country was going through.

The Criminalization of Limítrofes in Argentina in the late 1990s

The decade of the 1990s was marked by a dramatic deterioration of the quality of life in Argentina. While unemployment rates and poverty levels escalated, the population lived in a state of constant anxiety that was only reinforced by the increasing insecurity and political instability that permeated the nation. The harsh neoliberal policies deployed during the two successive mandates of President Carlos Saúl Menem (1989-1999) were central to the development of this crisis. Claiming that the Argentinean economy was in a state of emergency and that the Welfare State had collapsed, the government implemented drastic administrative, institutional and economic reforms in order to eliminate inflation, stabilize the national currency (Argentinean peso) and pay the country's foreign debt. Arguing that the market would spontaneously and naturally harmonize society (Novick 2000), the state initiated a vertiginous process of privatizations, whereby a wide range of public services and industries were sold, transferred to the private sector through concessions or literally given away—such was the case of communication, media and transportation services along with the production and distribution of energy. In addition, callous policies of employment re-structuring (*flexibilización laboral*) and budgetary adjustment (*ajuste presupuestario*) were enforced while the state strove to attract foreign capital and liberalize commercial and financial transactions. The implementation of this model brought about the so-called *vaciamiento del estado*³ and a marked deterioration of the public school and health care systems⁴, which left pauperized Argentinians without access to any public safety nets (Minujin ed. 1996, Lo Vuolo and Barbeito 1998)⁵. At the same time, workers in various fields were being constantly laid off without payment of mandatory compensation, thanks to labour legislation reforms allowing employers to fire employees with only one month's notice⁶. The dramatic effects of this decade's policies contributed to the creation of a climate of despair and resentment that was exploited by supporters of Menem's government to blame foreign forces and actors for the devastating consequences of the neoliberal model in place (Recalde 2006-a).

The 1990s also witnessed the emergence of discourse that criminalized migrants from neighbouring nations in Argentina. Detailed descriptions of the criminal, promiscuous and contagious migrant who went to Argentina to steal jobs from local workers in need while illegally occupying houses and overloading the public health care and education systems were

promoted by some politicians and union leaders, who used the monopolized and privatized news market (supporting the government) to disseminate such discourse (Oteiza and Aruj 2000, Courtis and Santillán 1999, Martini 1999, Aritz Recalde 2005). Embedded in arguments that blamed the victim—the Other, the foreign, the different, the poor migrant—for the problems that the country was going through, these xenophobic accusations fuelled denigrating attitudes towards Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans in the nation (Grimson 1997, Szulik and Valiente 1998, Casaravilla 1999, Neufeld and Thisted eds.1999, Margulis and Urresti eds. 1999, Oteiza and Aruj 2000). Oteiza and Aruj (2000) note that the non-immigrant population echoed official discourse promoting such discrimination, thus identifying the worker from a neighbouring nation as the cause of their very difficult situation. Likewise, Szulik and Valiente (1998) argue that the 1990s crisis generated an environment that was conducive to the consideration of South American immigration to Argentina as a conflict of interests. Regrettably, even if Argentinean scholars denounced the falsity of these accusations (Torrado 1994; Montoya and Perticará 1995; Maguid 1995, 1997, 2001; Oteiza and Aruj 2000) ⁷, the media prevailed, shaping public opinion and fuelling prejudiced views of migrants from neighbouring nations in Argentina.

During the nineties, state-promoted discourse incited stigmatizing and often unjustified attitudes towards these migrants by both drawing on and reinforcing what I have described (Recalde 2006-a) as the undervalued place of the *límitrofes* in Argentina's social imaginary. By this, I mean the construction of nationals from neighbouring countries as inferior due to their *mestizo* or aboriginal ancestry, which has been crucial to the invention and subsequent re-creation of the Argentinean national identity as the “superior and white” country in South America. The promotion of racial supremacy has demanded the construction and constant reinforcement of racist hierarchies and labels. Over time, these were naturalized and came to permeate the historical constitution of class relations and the processes of social construction of meaning in the nation. Providing the rationale for the stigmatizing views of *límitrofes* and their mistreatment, this racist logic came to constitute the *matrix for the production of subjectivity* (Margulis and Urresti 1999) in Argentina—that is, a repertoire of elements with which to identify the boundaries of nationality, its style, and its distinctive markers and symbolic frontiers.

Menem's government also implemented a series of episodic and contradictory migratory regulations throughout the 1990s that, in an effort to manage the "migratory problem", transformed Peruvians, Paraguayans and Bolivians into *ilegales* or illegal aliens (Orlog and Vives 1999, Pacceca 1997). By presidential decrees, the state welcomed these migrants one day and expelled them the next, while increasing the authority of the executive in the design and implementation of migratory legislation, something that clearly overrode the powers of the legislature and the judiciary (Recalde 2006-a). This created great confusion among public officials who were in charge of implementing shifting norms; not having the knowledge or the training to do so, they typically used their personal interpretation when dealing with migrants (CELS 2002, 2003). Migrants, for their part, felt puzzled about the abrupt changes in Argentina's migratory legislation, and expressed an increased feeling of vulnerability vis-à-vis a supposedly democratic system, whose public institutions and citizens treated them as *ilegales* (Casaravilla 1999, Margulis and Urresti eds. 1999, Neufeld and Thisted eds. 1999, Recalde 2006-a).

Although these shifting regulations did not legally nor practically prevent Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans from entering Argentina, they did make it nearly impossible for most to become legal residents. Indeed, the legislative and administrative mechanisms in place did not seek to interrupt the irregular movement of people across the border, but rather to regulate it while maintaining a clear distinction between sending and receiving nations—a phenomenon Kearney (2004) has also documented in the United States. Whereas in the past, South American citizens only needed their national identification to cross borders and reside temporarily in a neighbouring nation, during the 1990s, this situation drastically changed in Argentina. The state granted different types of tourist visas to nationals of neighbouring nations depending on how they entered the territory: they obtained 3 months if they did so by air (airport), but only 15 days if they did so by land (border) (CELS 2002, 2003; Recalde 2006-a). This arbitrary practice—unjustly classifying people according to their economic means—created a gamut of migratory statuses and attendant degrees of membership in the body politic that correspond to Morris's (2002) system of civic stratification. Once in Argentina, migrants were required to have a work contract right after their tourist visa expired, which was not feasible for most. In fact, following the required administrative procedures was

perceived by many as an obscure, complicated and very expensive process that included learning how to overcome both official and off the record regulations (Casaravilla 1999, Grimson 2002, Recalde 2006-a). In this way, the Argentinean state generated illegality through practices that granted itself discretionary control, and by so doing, reinforced the stigmatizing public image of the *limitrofe ilegal*.

Labelling migrants illegal went far beyond confirming that they did not have the proper documentation. Making good use of the ingrained stereotypes belittling nationals from neighbouring countries in Argentina, these labelling processes created transgressors. Divesting migrants of their multifaceted identities and situating them in a delinquent world, Paraguayans, Bolivians and Peruvians were depicted as criminals prone to committing a series of legal offenses. The figure of the *inmigrante ilegal* dehumanized the individual and transformed him/her into a social problem that caused concern and demanded action. Juliano (1987) argues that there exists a close, although not apparent, correspondence between institutional pragmatism, social imagery and the implementation of restrictive measures, from which practices that enclose the Other within precise boundaries—the terrain of illegality and criminality in our case—are derived. In the Argentina of the 1990s, cultural and “racial” differences were frequently employed to legitimize these boundaries, as a means to justify the devaluation and mistreatment of migrants from neighbouring nations.

Migrants in La Plata were affected by the government-sponsored criminalization in two important ways. First, their access to public services and resources was significantly constrained, unconstitutionally justified by migrants’ so-called illegal status. In this context, Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans became the target of prejudiced attitudes, abusive treatment and exploitation. While the police and other state bureaucrats abused their authority, taking bribes from and humiliating migrants, most employers (often compatriots) economically exploited their vulnerability, paying them meagre salaries and not providing them with safe working conditions. Moreover, informal, daily social interaction with ordinary citizens was often permeated by denigrating attitudes and mockery, which contributed to the further marginalization of these migrants. Even if they were not all affected to the same degree, many were submerged into increasingly pauperized living conditions, inhabiting the

city's new peripheries, which lacked most public services, and working in the precarious sectors of the unregulated economy.

Second, the social figure of the *límitrofe ilegal* powerfully articulated the creation of new cleavages within these three *colectividades* or migrant communities⁸. Many of the Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans in La Plata deployed discursive and residential strategies to differentiate themselves from those being criminalized in the media and, as a result, new distinctions were created among them, especially within each of the three nationally defined migrant communities. Lacking the DNI, having recently arrived in the city (in the late 90s as opposed to the 70s and 80s) or searching for work in the precarious sectors of the economy all became obvious signs of migrants' "criminality" in the eyes of those Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans who echoed state-promoted discourse. Many of these migrants earnestly held onto the opposition between a legal "us" (documented, honest) versus an illegal (undocumented, criminal) "them", as if by highlighting these issues, they could create a protective shield from the attitudes of Platenses (inhabitants of La Plata). Migrants themselves re-created interrelated oppositions such as metropolitan vs. rural, educated vs. uneducated, *mestizo* vs. *indígena*, and migration by choice vs. migration by need. Moreover, migrants and non-migrants alike often assumed a causal connection between recently arrived *límitrofes*' poverty and low levels of education with their alleged tendency to resort to criminal activities, despite the fact that most were not involved in such crime⁹.

Biased scholarship and the Immigration from Neighbouring Nations to Argentina

Argentina has historically been marked by international migrations and, up to the early 20th century, those that originated both in European and neighbouring countries prevailed. Nevertheless, scholars have only recently properly documented the early presence and distinctive contributions made by migrants from neighbouring nations (Benencia 2004, Recalde 2006-a, Pacecca and Curtis 2008, Texidó 2008, Cerruti 2009). This migration has been contemporaneous with internal migration in Argentina, buffering its economic and demographic effects (Recalde 2006-a) while enriching the country's ethno-cultural landscape (Pacecca and Curtis 2008). Argentinean scholars' reluctance to acknowledge these contributions is likely based on an ingrained misconception about the exclusive European

ancestry of Argentina, which has its roots in the 19th century's nation-building project of the country's elites. As I have demonstrated elsewhere (Recalde 2006-a), since its independence from Spain in 1810, successive ruling classes promoted European immigration, believing that it could be manipulated in order to develop the country. Seeking to justify their own superiority in the continent, Argentinean elites endorsed the idea that Argentina was the white and European nation in South America, the more and more over the second half of the 19th century. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, they used the disciplinary institutions of the state (compulsory vote, military conscription and public education) to integrate large numbers of (mostly) European immigrants and their Argentinean-born children into their version of Argentinean nationhood. Since then, Argentinians have been socialized into the myth of their own "white superiority", which has relied on the belittling of people considered "dark" due to their (perceived) mestizo or aboriginal ancestry. As a result, not only nationals of neighbouring countries but also Argentinians who are not Porteños (from the city of Buenos Aires) have been mistreated and considered inferior. This has served to sustain the historical, even if disputed, supremacy of Porteño elites. This myth has powerfully shaped this nation's social imaginary, informing Argentinians' views of and attitudes towards those who are stereotyped as be *negros* or *cabecitas negras* (I shall return to this issue in chapters IV, V, VI and VII). The use of these tainted lenses by scholars has led many to deny the historical depth of immigration from neighbouring nations to Argentina, claiming that it only began when the European one came to an end (Recalde 2006-a).

The Increasing Primacy of Migrations from Neighbouring Countries to Argentina

In fact, migration from neighbouring nations to Argentina preceded the creation of the state, since populations in the region historically circulated, crossing what would become national borders, in order to develop commercial activities (Texidó 2008). In contrast, European immigration only became perceptible in the country in the mid-19th century, when governmental efforts to attract these migrants were finally successful—after decades of failed attempts (Recalde 2006-a). Moreover, transoceanic and regional migrations have fluctuated in very different ways over time. While the absolute and relative numbers of Europeans moving to Argentina have changed drastically over the centuries, those of migrants from neighbouring nations have remained constant. According to Argentina's National Censuses, European

immigrants represented 9% of the total population in 1869 (168,970 people), 22.3 % in 1895 (890,946 people) and reached their peak in 1914 with 2,184,469 people (representing 27.3% of the country's population), after which their absolute and relative numbers continuously declined (Pacecca and Courtis 2008)¹⁰. During the period of mass immigration (1881-1914), when Argentina received the largest numbers of immigrants (4.2 million) in its history, most of these were Europeans attracted by the country's international role as an exporter of agricultural products and raw materials. As in previous decades, Italians (2,000,000) and Spaniards (1,400,000) overwhelmingly prevailed over other groups, being only timidly followed by French (170,000) and Russians (160,000) (Devoto 2004)¹¹. Thus, it is undeniable that transoceanic migrants, and in particular certain European groups, radically modified the economic, social, political and demographic characteristics of Argentina during that period (Pacecca and Courtis 2008).

Migrants from neighbouring nations, for their part, have historically represented between 2% (in 1947) and 2.9% (in 1985) of Argentina's total population, even recently, when they formed the country's most active and constant (im)migration current (Benencia 2004, Pacecca and Courtis 2008, Texidó 2008, Cerruti 2009). This has been the result of two interconnected processes: a) the historical decrease in the relative proportion of migrants over Argentina's total population, and b) the marked decline in European immigration coupled with the sustained dynamism of that from neighbouring nations. Argentina's population has grown significantly in absolute numbers from 1869 (1,737,076 people) to 2001 (36,260,130 people) whereas the relative proportion of its migrant population has drastically decreased. Immigrants represented 12.1% of the total population in 1869, 25.4% in 1895, and reached their historical peak of 29.9% in 1914, after which their weight gradually declined to 4.2% in 2001 (Pacecca and Courtis 2008). The 2010 National Census signals a small reversal of this tendency, showing that 1,805,957 migrants represented 4.5% of Argentina's total population (40,117,096 people) that year (INDEC 2012).

In terms of the composition of the migrant population in Argentina, almost 68% was of Latin American origin in 2001 and, out of this total, 88% came from neighbouring nations (Pacecca and Courtis 2008, Texidó 2008), representing 2.5% of the country's total population (Cerruti 2009). Moreover, in contrast to the progressive aging and mortality of former

transatlantic immigrant cohorts, the stock of nationals from neighbouring nations has progressively increased, constituting 60.3% of Argentina's migrant population in 2001 (Cerruti 2009). The 2010 Census confirmed this trend, showing that Paraguayans represented 30.5% of Argentina's foreign-born population that year, Bolivians 19.1%, Chileans 10% and Peruvians 8.7%. These four groups constituted 68.9% of the total migrant population in 2010. From 2001 to 2010, Paraguayans increased their numbers by 69.4% (reaching 550,713 people), Bolivians did so by 47.9% (becoming 345,272) and Peruvians by 78.5% (reaching 157,514). Chileans, however, decreased their numbers by 10% to 191,147 people. The remainder of Argentina's migrant population in 2010 included Europeans (16.6%), nationals from other countries in the Americas (12.6%), Asians (1.7%), as well as Africans, Australians and New Zealanders (0.2%) (INDEC 2012).

Like most migrants in Argentina, those from neighbouring nations have increasingly chosen Buenos Aires city and province as their favoured destinations. According to the 2001 Census, 15% of Paraguayans lived in the country's capital while 65% of them lived in Buenos Aires province. The figures for Bolivians (22% vs. 38%) and Peruvians (44% vs. 38%) show a similar geographical concentration (Cerruti 2009). The 2010 Census confirmed this trend, indicating that 41.1% of migrants in the country lived in the Gran Buenos Aires (I shall clarify the meaning of this term shortly) and 21.1% of them in the federal capital. The distribution of migrants from neighbouring countries in these destinations was the following in 2010: 60.8% and 14.6% among Paraguayans, 33.1% and 22.2% among Bolivians, and 33.5% and 38.4% among Peruvians (INDEC 2012).

As has happened in other Latin American countries, the migration of these three groups to Argentina has increasingly feminized over the past decades. In 2001, almost 60% of Peruvians and Paraguayans in the country were women (59.4% and 57.6% respectively). The numbers of Bolivian women have increased in a sustained manner as well, but still remained weaker than those of men that year, representing 49.7% of their national total (Cerruti 2009). These groups have also continued to be concentrated in the 25 to 49 year old age bracket, which indicates their readiness to work and the centrality of economic motivations for their migration to Argentina (see Cerruti 2009, Texidó 2008, Pacecca and Curtis 2008, and Recalde 2006-a for historical reviews of these migrations to Argentina). The *Encuesta*

Complementaria de Migraciones 2002-2003 confirmed this historical trend by showing that the search for better or alternative work prospects was the main motivation to migrate among Peruvian, Paraguayan and Bolivian men and women in Argentina (Cerrutti 2009). The 2010 Census signals the persistence of both trends: a) the feminization of these migrations—55% of Peruvians, 55.6% of Paraguayans and 50.3% of Bolivians were women; and b) their productive age—86.6% of Peruvian men and 89% of women, almost 78% and 80% of Paraguayans respectively, and more than 80% of Bolivians were aged 15 to 65 (my calculations using data from INDEC 2012, Cuadro P6).

The economic participation of these migrants in Argentina has followed ethnic and gendered lines, and has evolved along with their increasingly urban destinations (see Recalde 2006-a). According to the 2001 Census, Paraguayan and Bolivian men were concentrated in the construction, manufacturing, commerce and repairing services sectors (63% and 59% of them respectively), even if an additional 23% of Bolivian men worked in agriculture. Bolivian men have had the lowest levels of education and training of all the *límitrofes*. Peruvian men, in contrast, have had the highest levels of education (even higher than the Argentinian median), yet, paradoxically, they have showed the highest rates of unqualified employment (Cerrutti 2009). Migrant women, on the other hand, have progressively increased their participation in the labour market, but have remained concentrated in a few “feminine” occupations. In 2001, most Peruvian (70%) and Paraguayan (60%) women worked in *servicio doméstico* (domestic work) in private houses. As was the case of their male counterparts, the unqualified jobs held by Peruvian women are at odds with their high levels of formal education. Bolivian women, for their part, have been incorporated into a wider range of economic niches: retail trade (23%), manufacturing, mostly clothes-making (14%), and farming, mainly fruit and horticultural production (13%). Despite the gendered occupational differences among these migrants, most of them, men and women alike, have worked under very precarious labour conditions. The circumstances of women have been even more disadvantageous than those of their male counterparts (Cerrutti 2009), and this continues to be the case in La Plata, as my 2010 fieldwork shows.

Other Recent Migrant Groups and the Emigration of Argentinians

Over the past five decades, Argentina has not only received a number of other national groups but, as I show further on, has also generated a significant and continuous emigration of its own citizens. In the 1960s, small groups of Asian immigrants, mostly South Koreans and Chinese (initially from Taiwan and later on from continental China) began to arrive and settle in Buenos Aires. According to the 2001 Census, these groups totalled almost 16,000 people¹². Most Koreans arrived in Argentina during the 1980s as a result of an economic agreement between the two governments, and settled in Buenos Aires city. Over the years, many experienced upward social mobility thanks to the consolidation of family strategies allowing migrants to participate in independent occupational niches such as the garment industry, commerce and imports. Yet, by the late 2000s, many had returned to Korea, notably the youth. Systematic migration from China began in the 1980s as well, reaching its peak in the 1990s, although it did not benefit from government support. Most of these migrants have settled in the Gran Buenos Aires and have worked in commerce (as owners of small and medium-size supermarkets), gastronomy, imports and pharmaceuticals (Pacecca and Courtis 2008). The Asian immigration to La Plata has become quite salient over the past decades and has affected *limitrofes* in two important ways. On the one hand, by contributing to changing the city's ethnic hierarchies, it has repositioned Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans closer to Platenses from idiosyncratic, cultural and historical points of view. On the other hand, it has negatively affected Bolivian women in particular, who have been increasingly hired in Chinese-owned mini-markets under very exploitative and precarious labour conditions (I examine these issues in chapter IV).

In the 1990s, migrants from Central and Eastern Europe also arrived in Argentina, attracted by a preferential regime granting them temporary residence through facilitated procedures¹³. The country has also received a small number of asylum seekers from Latin America (mostly from Peru, Cuba and Colombia) since the 1970s, and more recently, others from Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia. During the period 1973-1975, in the context of Latin American dictatorships, 11,300 people were recognized as refugees: 84% were Chileans, 11% Uruguayans, 2.2% Bolivians and 1.3% Brazilians. Since the creation of the CEPARE (*Comité de Elegibilidad para los Refugiados*) in 1985, 9,792 petitions were made, yet only one third of

them were accepted. According to official statistics, 3,000 refugees lived in Argentina, mostly in the GBA, by the early 2000s (Pacecca and Courtis 2008)¹⁴. It remains to be seen the extent to which the increasing presence of African migrants in the GBA (Maffia and Zubrzycki in press) will modify the nation's social imaginary in general, and the standing of *límitrofes* in it in particular.

Argentina has more recently combined its capacity to attract continental and extra-continental migrations with becoming a source country for emigrants. Since the mid-1960s, Argentinians with university degrees and/or holding qualified jobs in the public and private sectors have been leaving the country, fleeing political persecution. During the sanguinary military dictatorship of the 1970s, increasing numbers sought asylum elsewhere in the Americas (Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, Mexico and the USA) and Europe. After the return to democracy in 1983, the emigration of the urban middle classes continued, this time for economic and social reasons. During the 1990s, these groups left mainly to escape escalating social exclusion and inequality¹⁵. Since 2004 (after the country's economic, social and political crisis), Argentinians have emigrated mostly to Spain, Italy, the United States, Canada and Australia, seeking upward social mobility (Texidó 2008, Pacecca and Courtis 2008). It is estimated that about 507,000 Argentinians live abroad (CEPAL 2007 cited in Pacecca and Courtis 2008, p.12). Kirchnerismo has been very active in developing strategies targeting citizens living abroad in an effort to a) repatriate scientists; b) seek collaboration between professionals in Argentina and other countries; and c) increase the participation of emigrants in the country's democratic processes (see Appendix C for more on Argentinians living abroad).

FIELD SITE, METHODOLOGY AND PARTICIPANTS

Situating the Partido de La Plata

My dissertation draws on the fieldwork research that I conducted in the *partido de La Plata*, Buenos Aires Province, from December 2009 to July 2010. According to the 2010 National Census, 38.95% of Argentina's population—that is, 15,625,084 people—is concentrated in this province, which has a total land area of 304,907 km²¹⁶. Administratively, the province is

divided between the *Gran Buenos Aires* or GBA and the interior. The GBA is composed of 24 *partidos*, with a total land area of 3,680 km²; they are collectively referred to as the *conurbano bonaerense* and have a population of 9,916,715 inhabitants that accounts for 63.46% of the provincial total. The interior has 5,708,369 inhabitants distributed across 110 *partidos* over 303,891 km². The GBA surrounds the *Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires* or Buenos Aires city, the federal capital, which has the highest population density in the country: 14,450.8 people per km²—compared to 2,694.8 and 18.8 people per km² in the GBA and interior respectively. In other words, Buenos Aires' 2,890,151 inhabitants live within 200 km² (INDEC 2012, Cuadro P3; see the Appendix for maps and tables). The GBA and Buenos Aires city have historically constituted the two most important urban destinations for migrants in Argentina (INDEC 2012). Many of the Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans who participated in my research had lived in the GBA and worked in Buenos Aires before moving to La Plata, while a few were still commuting daily to work in these destinations.

The *partido* of La Plata is often considered part of the GBA due to geographical proximity and for demographic reasons, even if, from an administrative point of view, it belongs to the *interior* of Buenos Aires province. The *partido* has a land area of 942.23 km² and comprises its *casco urbano* or capital, La Plata city, and 17 *centros comunales* or localities with urban, peripheral and rural characteristics (see Fig. 4). According to the 2010 Census, the *partido* has 654,324 inhabitants (DPEPBA 2011) and one third of them live in its capital (Lódola and Brigo 2011). Situated 56 km south of Buenos Aires city, La Plata is also the capital of Buenos province. Since its foundation in 1882, the city has played a strategic role in national and provincial politics, becoming one of Argentina's most important scientific, artistic and intellectual hubs. La Plata is home to the Universidad Nacional de La Plata (UNLP)—one of the most important national universities in the country and the third in terms of the number of students (90,000 in 2001)—, the Universidad Tecnológica Argentina (UTA) and Universidad Católica Argentina (UCALP). The vast and prestigious educational services of the city have turned La Plata into a vibrant academic centre that attracts large numbers of national and international students, who in 2002 constituted 20% of La Plata's total population, a trend that has continued (Lódola and Brigo 2011). The city's educational role has combined with its politico-administrative functions to shape the *partido*'s commercial

activities and its real estate market. Moreover, La Plata city has come to house most professional and financial services and public institutions (85%, 83% and 77% of them respectively are located in the city; p. 45).

The *partido*'s productive sectors are important not only to the local economy but also to the provincial one. Along with the neighbouring *partidos* of Berazategui and Florencio Varela, La Plata is part of the GBA's green belt (*cinturón verde del GBA*), one of the most important productive zones of fruit and vegetables in the country. La Plata has the largest number of horticultural sites in the province and is the principal producer, even at the national level, of several garden vegetables such as tomatoes, lettuce and peppers, which allows the *partido* to satisfy the demand generated by its population, specialized shops and active gastronomy industry (Lódola and Brigo 2011). Its production of flowers (such as carnations, chrysanthemums, freesia and roses) and interior plants (such as ferns, pothos and rubber plants) accounts for 63% and 10% of the provincial totals (p.26). The *partido*'s manufacturing industry is highly diversified—including the production of food and beverages, communication equipment, chemical and mineral products, print supplies and construction materials (p.4)—and the construction sector has continued to grow over the past decade (p.28). Bolivian, Paraguayan and Peruvian migrants have become integral to the labour force sustaining the main productive activities in the *partido*. Most of those who participated in my research were either working or had worked in flower and horticultural production and construction. Finally, the production of services represents more than three quarters of La Plata's gross product; those of major relevance are communal and real estate as well as the commerce of goods (Lódola and Brigo 2011). Bolivians have come to prevail in the commercialization of fruit and vegetables in the *partido*, as I shall examine in chapter IV.

Project's Methodology

Building on my previous fieldwork research on South American migrants in La Plata city¹⁷, in 2010, I expanded the geographical area of my project to include other urban (City Bell, Gonnet, Tolosa, Villa Elisa), peripheral (Los Hornos, Villa Elvira, San Lorenzo) and rural (Angel Etcheverry, Lisandro Olmos) localities of the *partido*. In these different settings, I conducted 55 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with Peruvian, Bolivian and Paraguayan

migrants, the majority of whom had arrived in the *partido* between the late 1990s and early 2000s¹⁸. Interviews were between 1.5 and 4 hours long and were done at migrants' workplaces, houses and public settings such as parks, shopping areas and diverse commemorative events. Interviews permitted me to collect information on migrants' socio-economic backgrounds, the reasons leading them to migrate, the household strategies they deploy to access a wide range of migration-related resources through transnational networks of compatriots and relatives, and their labour and social trajectories in Argentina. Interviews focused on understanding two interrelated issues: a) if, and if so how, migrants' lives had changed over the past two decades along with their new legal status in the country; and b) if, and if so how, the importance of having Argentinean papers during the 1990s had changed, since it had become possible to obtain them more easily over the second half of the 2000s. In other words, to what extent had legal (formal) equality affected migrants' actual access to entitlements, their informal social interaction with (other) migrant and non-migrant residents and their appreciation of official papers? I contextualized my fieldwork in La Plata by carrying out another fifteen interviews with migrants who worked in Buenos Aires city and lived in either this city or in disadvantaged peripheries of the GBA.

I use the term periphery to emphasize the disadvantageous circumstances and marginality of peripheral localities or zones, which are administratively attached to a larger urban center. As Wacquant (2008) shows, since the mid-1980s, throughout Europe but specially in France, this term has been increasingly used to denote lower-class districts of the urban periphery harbouring high densities of deteriorating public housing considered prime breeding grounds for the 'urban ills' of the age, which combines economic deprivation, ecological degradation, social dislocations, postcolonial immigration and youth delinquency (p.4). The specific ethnic, social, and economic characteristics of La Plata and GBA peripheries, which I examine in chapter V, only partially fit into Wacquant's classificatory scheme, however. In his comparative sociology of advanced marginality, he distinguishes between the American hyperghetto (in singular) and the French banlieues (in plural). Wacquant describes the former as an ethnically and socially homogeneous universe characterized by low organizational density, weak penetration by the state and extreme levels of physical and social insecurity. In contrast, the French banlieues are typified as having

fundamentally heterogeneous populations according to ethnoracial provenance and only secondarily to class position, whose isolation is mitigated by the strong presence of public institutions catering to social needs (p.5). As we shall see, the Argentinean peripheries, where Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans live, combine elements of both analytical types.

In interviews and informal conversations with migrants, I paid particular attention to the gendering of concerns, experiences and household roles, including the transnational care of diverse relatives (this gender lens permeates my analysis in all ethnographic chapters). I also conducted participant observation at migrants' workplaces, public parks, shopping areas, money transfer agencies, public institutions (those granting official documentation and providing social, health care and educational services), and Buenos Aires international airport's migration office, as well as at events and celebrations organized by or related to these migrants in the *partido*. In combination with the data collected through interviews and informal conversation, participant observation allowed me to more fully capture everyday social interaction among migrants and between migrants and non-migrants while gauging migrants' actual access to entitlements. I looked closely at the relationship between migrants and state officials in order to understand the different governmentality regimes in place in urban, peripheral and rural areas of the *partido* (issues that I examine in chapters IV, V and VI respectively).

Conversing with groups of migrants showed me the extent to which their narratives changed depending on the social status, gender, age and ethnicity of those present and the type of relationship existent among them (chapter IV). This is the case because in any particular situation, those who are present negotiate cultural practices and the meanings drawn from them. In other words, social configurations are dependent on who participates in such negotiations or is brought to significance by the people present (Turner 2000). It goes without saying that my own presence influenced what migrants said and how they did so at different moments. As Aaron Turner (2000) argues, the anthropologist cannot be present in a social field without participating and becoming a significant author of events, practices and political configurations, thereby affecting what happens and the significance it has for the constructions that emerge for participants (p.53).

My informal conversations with non-migrants—60 *Platenses* (inhabitants of La Plata) and 20 *Porteños* (inhabitants of Buenos Aires city)—sought to evaluate if, and if so, how, their perceptions of *limítrofes* and other migrant groups (Asians and Africans among them) had changed since the 1990s in tandem with: a) the solid economic presence of Chinese migrants in the city; and b) almost a decade of pro-MERCOSUR and inclusive citizenship policies deployed by Kirchnerismo. I examine these issues in chapters IV, V, VI and VII. In order to characterize the local implications of Argentina's new migration law in La Plata, I interviewed the two municipal officers at the *Dirección General de Colectividades y Migraciones*, which is in charge of implementing documentation programs and information campaigns in the *partido* in accordance with the new legislation. I present the views of migrants held by these public officials in chapter VI.

I complemented and contextualized the qualitative data collected through my ethnographic fieldwork with the analysis of a) statistical data, media and government discourse, b) Kirchnerismo' public policy, and c) scientific literature on migrations to Argentina and regional integration in South America (chapter III). Fieldwork was conducted in Spanish, which was also the language of the different sources I consulted. All translations are mine. In the analysis of fieldwork data and preparation of the dissertation, I have used pseudonyms in order to protect the confidentiality of research participants. Before asking for consent, I explained to each participant the purpose and goals of my project, and informed them that they could withdraw without explanation at any time.

Brief Characterization of Research Participants

According to the 2010 Census, 43,397 migrants lived in the *Partido* of La Plata, and the vast majority of them were from Paraguay (14,268), Bolivia (10,212) and Peru (6,458). In line with national trends, Peruvian and Paraguayan migrations to the *partido* have increasingly feminized. In 2010, (3,517) Peruvian women represented 54.4% of their national group while their (7,658) Paraguayan counterparts accounted for 53.67% of theirs. Bolivian women (4,877), in contrast, did not surpass men (5,335) in numbers, accounting for 47.75% of their national group in the *partido* (INDEC 2012, Cuadro P6-D). As is the case on the national level, these three migrant groups are concentrated in the productive age bracket (15-65 years

old), their readiness to actively participate in the labour market, that is, the centrality of economic motivations for their migration (INDEC 2012, Cuadro P6-D).

Most of the Peruvians, Paraguayans and Bolivians who participated in my research arrived in the *partido* de La Plata between the late 1990s and early 2000s. Even if some of them had previously lived in different localities of the GBA while working in Buenos Aires city, most had moved within the *partido* instead. Residential (geographical) mobility in La Plata was often coupled with occupational mobility and developed in three main directions: a) from rural to urban areas: mostly among Bolivians who left horticultural and/or floricultural production behind in order to work in the commerce of fruit and vegetables and/or construction in the city (chapter IV); b) from urban to peripheral areas: among the three migrant groups, it represented the opportunity to take possession of abandoned private property by either inhabiting some sort of housing or building their own (chapter V); and c) from urban and peripheral areas to rural settings (chapter VI). This last occurred less often than the other two types of mobility and it was mainly among Bolivians who sought to go back to quieter rural life. Some of the Bolivians I interviewed had spent their childhood and/or youth in Argentina's Northern provinces while working in seasonal, intensive agriculture with their parents. A few of them had been born in these provinces and had both nationalities; yet, they considered themselves as strictly Bolivian. This was also the case among some Paraguayans, whose mother or father was Argentinean, and who had been born and raised in Argentina. Most of these people, who described themselves as Bolivians and Paraguayans of Argentinean origin, had moved to the GBA and La Plata district in their young adulthood.

In the vast majority of cases, migrant participants came from very poor families who had long struggled to survive. Even among those whose circumstances had not been so dire in the home country, their economic situation deteriorated over time and was accompanied by increasing social exclusion. Migrant men and women from rural areas had practiced intensive, family agriculture often combined with some form of small scale farming, with their production destined for both subsistence and commercialization purposes. In Argentina, they had to learn anew the specific techniques required to practice horticulture since they notably differed from the ones they knew from home; the same applied to pesticides and crops. The occupations of those coming from urban areas were more diversified in the country of origin.

Some men practiced trades they had inherited from their fathers, such as construction, carpentry, shoe-making and upholstery while others worked as truck drivers or street service providers, ranging from repairing to selling objects. A few men had commercialized agricultural products such as rice, as part of a family business, or taught at rural primary schools. Women, for their part, depending on their age and civil status, had studied, taken care of their households (including domestic chores, children and husbands), sold goods on the streets (such as toys) and/or in private houses (such as watches, perfumes and lingerie) and produced some of their merchandise at home (such as stuffed toys, household decorative items and souvenirs). Some (Peruvian and Paraguayan) women had also held administrative positions, as secretaries of a family business, private company or public institution, while others had done data entry or cashier jobs.

Most migrant participants were in their late 20s and 30s and had already formed a family before migrating. They usually had from two to five children, most of them born before migrating. Many migrants had children from previous relationships who almost always lived with their biological mother (in the home country or in Argentina), even if fathers tended to contribute to their support. As a result, composite families (with children from one or both members of the couple's previous relationships) were very common among those I interviewed. Except for some Paraguayan women, who had Argentinean or Peruvian partners, usually after having children with a previous partner of the same nationality, migrants were quite endogamous. Yet, as I indicated previously, some of those who considered themselves and were identified by others as migrants were in fact Argentinean-born children of one or both migrant parent/s. The migratory or citizenship status of most families was also mixed (Dreby 2012, Kubal 2012), with some members who already had Argentinean citizenship, others with or waiting for their residency and others who had not even applied to get their papers.

Most migrants had relatives or close friends in other countries, mostly in Spain, and to a lesser extent in Chile, Brazil and Venezuela. Indeed, Spain had become an attractive destination for many Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans in Argentina, who believed that after obtaining their Argentinean citizenship their entry into Europe would be eased. Migrants often cited the higher standard of living of Spain vis-à-vis that of Argentina as its main

advantage. Yet, they were also well aware of Spain's heavy drawbacks, namely, its tough immigration regulations and the high price of airplane tickets, which together tended to deter migrants from going to Spain directly from their home country. I examine these issues in chapter V.

Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans began to arrive in the *partido* de La Plata during the late 1960s and 1970s, yet the consolidation of their ethnicized labour niches developed during the 1980s and 1990s (Recalde 2006-a). As in the GBA and Buenos Aires, these migrants have predominantly worked in the precarious, unregulated sectors of the economy, a situation that began to change during the 2000s with Kirchnerismo's immigration and labour policies (chapters IV, V and VI).

OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS

In the next chapter (II), I do a concise literature review of the scholarship on transnationalism and citizenship, which makes apparent its narrow geopolitical focus on liberal democracies and the hegemonic standing of a handful of disciplines when it comes to setting its "global" research agendas. In addition, after introducing the analytical tools used to examine my fieldwork, media and government discourse data, I present the main research contributions of my dissertation. Namely, it a) challenges three sets of claims that have shaped research and policy agendas on migrant transnationalism and citizenship, b) questions the hegemonic analytical and methodological approaches underlying them, and c) contributes to the decentering of this scholarship' hegemonic geopolitics by illustrating the increasing centrality of "South-South" migrations and the extent to which a "Southern country" such as Argentina can be at the same time an immigration and emigration state that plays diverse roles in the mobility trajectory of migrants.

In chapter III, I examine how Kirchnerismo set out to transform Argentina into an inclusive, diverse and Latin American nation during the first decade of the 2000s, and how this has impacted migrants from neighbouring nations in the country. Its commitment to respecting human rights and deepening regional integration were both key in passing a new migration law granting MERCOSUR nationals rights equal to those of Argentinians. In

addition, the implementation of inclusive policies, seeking to universalize access to public services and goods, have been very advantageous to migrants, who are entitled to them despite their migratory status. At the same time, the state has granted migrants equal protection against discrimination, exploitation and unfair treatment. Moreover, Kirchnerismo's strategies to reshape the nation's social imagery, so as to make Argentina Latin American and diverse, has created an atmosphere conducive to perceiving these historically despised migrants in a more favorable light.

In the following four chapters (IV to VII), I draw on my ethnographic fieldwork in order to examine the extent to which this new legal and social environment has affected the experiences and circumstances of Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans in different areas of the *partido* of La Plata. Chapters IV, V and VI are divided in two main sections each, where I introduce a case study, the socio-economic trajectory of a migrant household, as the departure point from which to elaborate several core issues characteristic of urban, peripheral and rural areas of the *partido* respectively. In the first part of chapter IV, I use the urban labour trajectory of a Bolivian couple to show: a) the degree to which migrants' labour niches in La Plata city are both gendered and ethnicized, b) the uneven impact of Kirchnerismo's regularization campaigns on diverse migrants, and c) how the solid presence of economically successful Chinese migrants has led to the overall, more favourable repositioning of Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans in the city's ethnic hierarchy. In the chapter's second part, I analyze how the narratives of migrant men differ from those of women. My analysis of the experiences of a Peruvian couple exemplifies the increasing feminization of South American migrations to the country (Cerrutti 2009, Pacecca and Courtis 2008, Texidó 2008) and their role in the transnationalization of social care (Parreñas 2001, 2008; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994, 2001; Maher 2004; Herrera Mosquera 2008; Ehrenreich and Hoschschild 2002). Peruvian and Paraguayan women in La Plata undergo a dramatic decrease in social status in tandem with the low-ranking, isolating jobs they perform in the city. Nevertheless, they interpret their initial solitude and sacrifices as leading to a process of personal growth and learning that results in increased personal autonomy and financial independence.

In chapter V, I focus on the experiences of Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans who live in the peripheries of the *partido* of La Plata while working in a number of its urban

localities and those of the GBA. In the chapter's first part, I examine the labour and residential trajectory of a Paraguayan family, which sheds light on how busy migrant parents incur high costs when leaving their children behind, paradoxically, in order to secure the financial well-being of their families. Long periods of separation often result in children feeling emotional detachment towards parents or falling into severe depression. This case also shows the peculiar challenges faced by families living in areas governed by the state's neglect and the actual high price they pay for the free accommodation these peripheral areas offer. Even if these localities are characterized by similarly poor and dangerous living conditions, each has its own particular social dynamics, which becomes most apparent in the relationships established among migrants, and between them and the most disadvantaged social categories in the GBA. In the second part of this chapter, I examine the case of a Peruvian family, who lived in a periphery of the GBA before moving to another one in the *partido* of La Plata. The positive changes associated with migration represent a costly trade-off for many women, who tend to fall physically and psychologically sick or have to neglect their own children after bringing them to Argentina. The labour trajectory of the husband shows how a male, unregulated labour niche, that of *trapito* or *cuida coche*, has consolidated itself as "Peruvian territory" during the first decade of the 2000s. His numerous encounters with the police illustrate this institution's racial profiling of the most disadvantaged social groups in the GBA, migrants and non-migrants alike.

In chapter VI, I examine the circumstances of Bolivians, the majority of whom are from Tarija province, who have settled in *Las Quintas*, a rural area of the *partido* of La Plata made up of three adjacent localities: Lisandro Olmos, Angel Etcheverry and Abasto, where small-scale horticulture is widely practiced. Overall, this chapter documents the phenomenon dubbed the *Boliviarization of Argentinean horticulture* (Benencia 1997, 2003, 2006, 2008). In the chapter's first section, I look at the geographical and labour mobility of "Bolivians of Argentinean origin", as the children of Bolivian temporary farm workers in Argentina tend to refer to themselves. I examine the effects of horticulturists' isolation on the commercialization of their products and the safety of their families, while making apparent the limitations imposed by horticulture's high time demands on their capacity to complete diverse bureaucratic procedures and visit family. Horticulturalists' critical views of the government and its policies along with their detailed knowledge of a range of bureaucratic procedures

contrasts with the denigrating views of these migrants held by some municipal officials. In the chapter's second section, I analyze the experiences of another Tarijeño family who settles in Olmos. The husband's initial labour trajectory shows that the hiring *en negro* of recently arrived, undocumented migrants is common in urban areas neighbouring Las Quintas, and seemingly easier to implement than in La Plata city. This case illustrates rural migrants' commitment to the educational success of their children and the mixed status of their families (Dreby 2012), whose different members are situated along a continuum of citizenship statuses, ranging from not having even started procedures to obtain residency to already having Argentinean citizenship. My analysis of the unfair commercialization of Bolivian horticulturists' products takes me to La Plata's Central Fruit and Vegetable Market, where the monopolization of this industry is most manifest and reflects the *partido*'s ethnic hierarchies. This section also examines some of the policies of the Bolivian state reaching its citizens in Argentina and demonstrates that, in contrast with Peruvians and Paraguayans, Bolivians tend to keep in touch with the political reality of their country of origin.

In chapter VII, I examine migrants' views and uses of the hegemonic ethnic hierarchy in force in the *partido* of La Plata over the past decade. Even if migrants agree on the devalued status of Bolivians in Argentina, some criticize it, along with Argentinians' denigrating attitudes and exploitative treatment of these migrants. The cases I examine make apparent migrants' problematic operationalization of such a hierarchy in everyday social interaction, which tends to contrast with their theoretical mastery of its racial logic. Finally, in chapter VIII, I return to the thesis core questions and research contributions in order to advance some conclusions.

CHAPTER II: Literature Review, Thesis Theoretical Framework and Research Contributions

My thesis is in dialogue with two broad, interrelated bodies of literature, those on citizenship and transnationalism, which have examined issues of belonging, exclusion, mobility and access to rights among transnational migrants, while highlighting the renewed capacity of the state to regulate both people's movements (across its borders and within its territory) and migrants' actual access to public entitlements. My doctoral research draws from and seeks to contribute to the development of empirically grounded, theoretical debates that question three sets of claims that have shaped research and policy agendas over the past two decades: a) the alleged undeniable diminishing role of the state under current processes of intensified globalization and global interconnection; b) the exclusive juridico-legal meanings of contemporary citizenship in the context of the "globalization of the law" (Jacobson and Ruffer 2004), and, in particular, the coercive power of international human rights law; and c) the overly economic rationality attributed to contemporary transnational migrations in the present era of increasing trans-border money transfers. The formulation of these claims has often been supported by the use of problematic analytical and methodological approaches. Some of this research has not relied on empirical evidence to formulate its propositions, which have been deducted from ideal types or mathematical models instead (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002, Ratha and Shaw 2007, Tsuda 2007, Glick Schiller 2010). In addition, gender-blind perspectives have tended to obscure not only the design and implementation of research and policy on a wide range of migration-related issues, but also the interpretation of their results (Sassen 1998, Morris 2002, Ehrenreich and Russell Hochschild 2002, Maher 2004). Moreover, homogenizing grids of Euro-American values and beliefs have often acted as the guiding (moral) principles or "universals" against which these research and policy results have been evaluated (Ong 1999, Amselle 2002, Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004). Recent scholarship on citizenship and transnationalism has questioned these approaches and challenged the above-mentioned claims. The contributions made by anthropologists have been particularly relevant for my dissertation.

In this chapter, I begin by delineating the core theoretical perspectives that have contributed to the consolidation of these three claims. This departure exercise will not only make apparent the extent to which disciplinary lenses have shaped successive “dominant paradigms” (Glick Schiller 2004) in this scholarship, but also serve as a genealogy of the core contributions made by anthropology, which I subsequently present. This being done, I will introduce the analytical tools used to examine my fieldwork, media and government discourse data along with the main research contributions of my dissertation.

The Diminishing Role of the State under Current Processes of Intensified Globalization

The work of globalization and postnational scholars has been fundamental to the development and consolidation of the first claim, even when the postnational approach sought to overcome the main drawbacks of the globalization thesis. Largely stemming from economic sociology and sociology of international relations and geography, advocates of the *globalization thesis* have claimed that the entire regulatory framework of the state with respect to business and labour has been shaken by globalization in tandem with the emergence of new global, decentralized centres of production, power and wealth (Sassen 1991, 1996, 1998, 2004-a, 2004-b). According to this view, national migration policies have become obsolete since transnational corporations and communities (Massey 1987, Portes 1997) along with human rights regimes (if not individual migrants) are the prime agents of globalization (Sassen 1996, 1998, 2004-a, 2004-b). This scholarship has evoked strong criticism across disciplinary boundaries, however. Some political scientists and sociologists have considered the globalization thesis’ factoring out of politics and the state from international relations as its main shortcoming (Hollifield 1998-1999, 2000; Baubock 2003; Brubaker 2005) while others have signalled that no convincing evidence exists for the decline of the state’s sovereignty in matters of immigration control, be this in its formal rule-making authority or its empirical capacity to implement rules (Joppke 2006). Employing a neo-institutional perspective, some have claimed that globalization theorists’ arguments heralding the decline of the nation-state have neglected either the actual administrative mechanisms and domestic political processes or the limitations of rights in determining migration outcomes. In the view of some political scientists, the liberal state has extended and reinvented its control while changing its

gatekeepers, leading to the development of an increasing density of relationships that centre on the official apparatus of the state (Lahav 2006).

Anthropologists, for their part, have also raised a number of concerns. Some have shown the extent to which globalization scholars' technological determinism resulted from a combination of their excessive emphasis on the power of technology and the postmodern insistence that the past was stable and the present fluid (Ong 1999, Amselle 2002). Others have remarked on globalization theorists' tendency to see transnational processes as a phenomenon linked to the current moment of capitalism, which neglects that the current period has been marked by both a paradigm change and a restructuring of processes of capital accumulation (Basch et al. 1994). Some have criticized globalists' inclination to treat the developments associated with globalization (technological innovation, the internationalization of production and finance, migration, global media and so on) as a package of traits that are everywhere inciting a similar logic and processes of transformation, thus neglecting important differences in the ways in which global processes are brought to bear and materialized within specific historical and political contexts of nation-states (Gregory 2004). More specifically, it has been argued that the "anthropology of globalization" gives a false answer to a badly posed question that implicitly reproduces the failings of the acculturation or colonial situation concepts (Amselle 2002).

The *postnational* approach to the study of transnational migrations was initially developed by a number of sociologists interested in the evolution of rights granted to immigrants and foreigners in Europe (Soyosal 1994, Jacobson 1996, Baubock 1994, 2003). Inspired by the developments in international human rights law and seeking to bring politics and law back into the analysis of international migrations, these scholars have claimed that we have entered a "post-national era" characterized by "universal personhood" (Soyosal 1994), the expansion of rights across borders (Jacobson 1996) and a certain "transnational citizenship" (Baubock 1994). Postnational scholars often argue that the globalization of the economy has created a new kind of postnational membership. According to Soyosal and Jacobson, the rise of a postnational regime for human rights, even if still grounded in the logic of the nation-state, has allowed migrants to attain a legal status that surpasses citizenship, whereas for Baubock, a new transnational/political citizenship is inevitable. Under these

circumstances, states only play a marginal role in the governance of contemporary international migrations, whose defining feature is (the individual's) agency (Jacobson and Ruffler 2004). Some critics of the postnational approach have emphasized that this scholarship ignores the extent to which state policies shape the choices that migrants make (Hollifield 2000, Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004). Others have signalled that postnational theorists wrongly see the nation-state as essentially outmoded and incapable of keeping pace with changes in the world economy (Hollifield 1998-1999). Moreover, some have argued that the international human rights regime is not so strong as to make states fear and tremble, since it lacks implementation and enforcement powers (Joppke 2006).

As their critics and advocates make apparent, and despite their differences, postnationalists rejoin globalists by equally dismissing the current legitimacy and capacity of the state to regulate transnational migrations and migrants' actual access to rights. Moreover, both sets of scholars tend to agree on the primacy of international human rights law and the idiom of human rights, which they believe has become the common language of globalization (Jacobson 1998-1999, 2004; Sassen 1998, 2004).

The Exclusive Juridico-Legal Meanings Attributed to Contemporary Citizenship

As I have noted, the work of some globalist and postnational scholars has been particularly influential in spearheading research on transnational migrants' rights in new directions while shaping attendant debates on citizenship, (trans-, post-) nationalism and the state. Yet, these analyses have focused almost exclusively on liberal democracies, that is, English-speaking settler societies and Western Europe or the so-called Euro-Atlantic arena. In this section, I introduce some further propositions advanced by two scholars, Sassen and Jacobson, whose work has been quite influential in consolidating the second claim.

Sociologist David Jacobson (1996, 1998-1999; Jacobson and Ruffler 2004) claims that the nation-state is being disaggregated and that its political, communal and territorial components, once thought so intertwined, are being unbundled. Diasporas and transnational identities are increasingly common, whereas new regional, international and transnational political entities have had disparate effects on the state. The latter have enhanced its bureaucratic role while constraining more than ever before who can and can't be admitted into

the state (Jacobson 1998-1999). The “globalization of the law”—a growing density of both domestic and international law—has become apparent in the increasing importance of the individual as the object of law and in the visible presence of tribunals, arbitration mechanisms and other legal entities that deliberate independently of the state, allowing non-state actors to arrive at agreements autonomously (Jacobson and Ruffler 2004). These developments are part of a social and political framework of immense coercive power that mediates between diverse spaces using the logic of contractual law, which is anchored in certain moral assumptions on the dignity and privileging of the individual and private property (Jacobson 1998-1999). Under these circumstances, international human rights law and the idiom of human rights are becoming the common language of globalization (understood as the web of global activities that parallel and transcend states) whereas the state has turned into a mediating mechanism (rather than a primordial source) of international norms (Jacobson 1998-1999, Jacobson and Ruffler 2004).

Similarly, Saskia Sassen (1996, 1998, 2004-b), also a sociologist, has argued for the constraining role of human rights law on the state’s policy making authority and for its undermining of key notions about immigration control. For Sassen (1998) a “de facto regime”, centred in international agreements and conventions as well as in various rights gained by immigrants, has conditioned the state’s role in controlling immigration. In addition, the extension of rights, which has taken place mostly through the judiciary, has confronted states with a number of internal constraints (namely, courts have emerged as central institutions for a whole series of changes) while the numbers and kinds of political actors involved in immigration policy debates and policy making are far greater than before. These developments have contributed not only to the reduction of the autonomy of the state in immigration policy making, but also to the displacement of its governance functions to non-state entities. For Sassen (1996, 1998, 2004-b), the international human rights regime has undermined the exclusive authority of the state over its nationals, contributing to the transformation of the interstate system and the international legal order. Human rights codes have strengthened concepts of personhood, pushing states to increasingly take account of persons qua persons (rather than qua citizens), which has transformed the individual into an object of law and a site

for rights. As a result, the state has become accountable to all its residents on the basis of international human rights law (Sassen 1998).

This burgeoning scholarship has challenged traditional notions of the nation-state and the global interstate system. Much of it has shown how globalization—understood as a package of transnational flows of people, production, investment, information, ideas and authority—has changed the nature of citizenship, by putting some of these flows out of the reach of the state while creating new levels of membership and rights claims (Ong 1999, 2004-b; Sassen 2004-b). This literature has also critically examined the interaction of two traditions of rights: citizenship and human rights (Shafir 2004, Lipschutz 2004) while showing how globalization has created a “citizenship gap” (Brysk 2002) that puts non-citizens and “second class citizens” at risk (Brysk and Shafir 2004). Despite its invaluable contributions, however, this scholarship has also led to the reification of legalistic notions of citizenship. By focusing on the granting of (albeit important) new legal entitlements to a range of disadvantaged groups, much of this literature has neglected people’s actual access to and experiences of their new rights, that is, their *exercise* of citizenship. The experience of formal membership in the body politic varies substantially depending on the relative positioning of a group in the national moral order, which establishes the degrees of deserving and undeserving citizenship according to a wide range of non-legal factors, including racial classificatory systems (Ong 2004-a, 2004-b). Moreover, groups’ actual access to legal entitlements is often permeated by conflictive negotiation and changes over time and across socio-economic and political contexts (Gagné et Neveu 2009).

The Overly Economic Rationality Ascribed to Contemporary Transnational Migrations

The past fifteen years have witnessed an increasing interest in the connections between migration and development among scholars, international financial institutions and policy makers. Following the unleashing of neo-liberal market forces and the dramatic growth in economic and social disparities in many places of the world, powerful financial and global governance institutions have highlighted the positive agency of migrants, portraying them as vital agents of international development (Glick Schiller and Faist 2010, de Haas 2010). While development scholars have interpreted transnational ties as “inevitably” producing win-win

situations—that is, migration benefiting both sending and receiving states (Delgado Wise and Marquez Covarrubias 2010)—migration scholarship in the United States and Europe has often depicted migrants as a potential destabilizing force as bearers of political, cultural or religious difference (Faist 2010, Guild and van Selm eds. 2005, Glick Schiller 2010). This paradoxical reading of international migration has been only reinforced by the resurgence of the politics of fear, which has increasingly equated human mobility and the flights from war, destruction, disaster or economic collapse with terrorism (Isolato 2010, Bigo 2005, Guild 2005). Critics of this paradigm have highlighted that this contradictory and simultaneous portrayal of migrants as heroic agents of development and threats to the peace and security of nation-states is inherent in the “migration-development mantra”, whose agenda is firmly set by the countries in the North or West and leaves the principles that underpin neo-liberal globalization intact (Glick Schiller and Faist 2010, Delgado Wise and Marquez Covarrubias 2010).

Much of this public, policy and academic debate has focused on the “unparalleled” financial centrality of transnational remittances in the current era (cf World Bank 2006, Hujo and Piper 2010, Ratha and Shaw 2007), which has neglected the fact that the increase in remittances to developing countries has been coupled with a sustained decline in official aid flows (de Haas 2010). Moreover, often using a neo-classical lens, these debates have portrayed migrants as rational decision-makers, who move across borders in order to maximize their personal utility via higher income (Glick Schiller and Faist 2010, de Haas 2010, Hujo and Piper 2010, Delgado Wise and Marquez Covarrubias 2010) even if differences in income between origin and destination countries do not capture how income may affect incentives for all migrants (Ratha and Shaw 2007). The economic bias underpinning much of this current scholarship and public debate has not passed unquestioned, however. Scholars from social policy and geography have argued that the recent euphoria over the economic development impact of migrations in general and remittances in particular has neglected an array of social and political themes, such as the well-being, equality and security of migrants; these scholars claim, instead, that migration is more than a strategy to mobilize or diversify income (Hujo and Piper 2010, Hujo and Piper eds. 2010). Literature from economics, development studies and anthropology has argued that the assumptions and paradigms underlying the study of the asymmetrical but mutual transfers of resources that accompany migration are deeply flawed

and continue to reflect the interests of the Global North, the most powerful states and the globe-spanning institutions that serve their interests (Glick Schiller and Faist eds. 2010). Some of these scholars have proposed to employ a “global perspective on imperial power” or a “global power perspective on migration”, in order to pay attention to the contemporary neo-liberal moment and the human costs of neo-liberal restructuring while tracing its various trajectories and the resistance it engenders (Glick Schiller 2010).

Anthropologists working on migration, remittances and household strategies have also challenged the overly economic rationality attributed to current transnational migrations and the restrictive pecuniary meaning given to remittances. Some have proposed to examine “remittance practices” as the outcomes of cultural traditions and social practices, which are rooted in the strengths and weaknesses that drive individual migrants and their sending households and communities (Cohen 2011). Remittance practices are considered as one of the many transnational flows that link movers and non-movers and sending and receiving communities through complex social and cultural ties (Brettell 2003, Paerregaard 2008, Trager 2005). This scholarship has highlighted that mobility is not always a response to economic need or a quest for economic prosperity, but can also reflect other insecurities, such as ethnic conflicts, natural disasters and other events that put migrants’ personal safety in danger (Merla and Baldassar 2010, Cohen 2011). Moreover, remittances have to be understood for their benefits and costs, and as being not only important for the role they play in sending households, but also to the movers who send resources, whose social status is thereby enhanced (Cohen 2011).

Anthropologists have also criticized the economistic bias of approaches reducing money to a neutral and impersonal means of economic exchange, supposedly adapted to the rationality of the contemporary market world, while questioning pessimistic predictions on the replacement of rich social exchanges by interested calculation (Zelizer 2006). Anthropologists have studied how remittance practices are experienced and perceived by the different social actors involved in the recreation of transnational social fields, showing that this phenomenon involves a double dynamic: the monetarization of social life, and the domestication or socialization of events that had been initially considered as strictly economic (Tran and Pantaleon 2010). Recently, sociologists and anthropologists have also examined the

relationship between economic and emotional considerations in the context of familial transnational relations, highlighting that migrants continue to be part of kinship obligation networks and that they spend a lot of time, energy and resources in order to compensate for their physical absence (Merla and Baldassar 2010, Baldassar 2010, Merla 2010).

ANTHROPOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The study of migrations as transnational processes in which migrants construct and maintain social, political and economic relationships across borders was permeated in its beginnings by the use of the term “transnational community”, mostly in the work of sociologists (Portes 1997; Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt 1999; Portes and DeWind 2007) and some anthropologists (Charles 1992, Georges 1990, Kearney and Nagengast 1989). Other anthropologists, however, opted for the term “transnational circuit” or “transnational social field” (Rouse 1991; Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc Szanton 1992), building on the critique of community studies and the concepts of social network and field developed by Manchester School scholars (Glick Schiller 2004). Anthropologists have criticized both the excessive use of the term transnational community—claiming that often very little empirical evidence of “community” is presented in the literature that uses the concept (Hage 2005)—and the almost exclusive reliance on the ethnic group as the unit of analysis when studying migrants’ incorporation and transnational connections, arguing instead for non-ethnic approaches to the analysis of migrant settlement (Glick Schiller 2008, Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2011).

Anthropological contributions to the study of migrant transnationalism have been rooted in the critique of three interrelated problematic issues. First, they have rejected the organic, territorially embedded view of culture popularized by British functionalist and structural-functionalist anthropology, which portrayed cultures and societies as bounded and ahistorical entities divorced from larger social, political and economic processes (Ong 1999, Amselle 2002, Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002, Glick Schiller 2004). Second, anthropologists have criticized the intellectual orientation dubbed “methodological nationalism” (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002; Glick Schiller 2004, 2010) or the “container theory of society” (Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc 1992; Glick Schiller 2004, 2010, Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004), which, in its different forms, assumes that national borders

are the natural unit of study, while equating society with the nation-state and conflating national interests with the purpose of social science. Third, anthropologists have also noted the revival of assimilationist theory in the United States and the new integrationism in Europe at the beginning of the 21st century, which have permeated public debate, scholarly analysis and policy making on transnational migration, contributing to approaches that depict the nation and its migrants as fundamentally and essentially distinct both socially and culturally (Glick Schiller 2004, 2010).

The second wave of scholarship on transnationalism has brought together the study of transnational migration and transnational cultural processes, and has been enriched by ethnographical contributions in three important ways (Glick Schiller 2004). First, the critique of the concept of transnational community and the growing interest in the study of transnational social fields has shown that social or cultural capital shared within kin or broader ethnic networks does not always constitute a community of interest able to generate access to economic capital. Likewise, ethnic or national identifiers are not descriptors of persons who necessarily share either a community of interest or connection. Moreover, familial networks that stretch across borders are marked by gendered differences in power and internal rankings of status and class, thus theorization of the transnational intersections between specific kin, local and national institutions is necessary (p. 462). Second, the increased effort to study forms of simultaneous incorporation of migrants and their descendants in diverse localities (countries) has challenged strongly held ideas about the incorporation of these groups while defying established notions of society (p. 463). Third, the study of transnational migrations has made apparent the continuing viability of states whose legal systems limit movements across borders and extend or restrict legal rights. *Trans-border citizens* are people who live their lives across the borders of two or more nation-states, participating in the daily life and political practices and debates of these various states, whereas *social citizens* are those who have legal residence but not citizenship, being granted access to a range of public services yet exercising a restricted political role. While the former contribute to the development of political processes and ideologies of different states, the latter face legal restrictions, lack legal protections and have limited access to protection when they seek to flee persecution or environmental degradation (p. 464).

Anthropological approaches and insights have substantially enriched current discussions on the changing experience of citizenship. For almost two decades now, scholars have been interested in the analysis of the paradoxical dynamics that connect citizenship (as a mechanism for allocating rights and claims through political membership in the nation-state) and globalization (as a package of transnational flows of people, production, investment, information, ideas and authority). These interconnected processes have diffused the traditional sense of citizenship, leading scholars to move beyond its study as a set of legal entitlements that a person either has or does not have to considerations of membership that encompass a range of subjects which includes non-citizens (Ong 2004a, 2006). Anthropological analyses have been central to broadening the scope of these debates through their study of the symbolic and social meanings of citizenship. The pioneering work of Renato Rosaldo (1994, 1997) paid attention to the ways in which every day behaviour and thinking define the norms of belonging that operate as informal modes of inclusion and exclusion. Rosaldo shows that formal legal citizenship does not erase the enduring exclusions of the colour lines that often deny full citizenship to Latinos and other “persons of colour”. He has used the term *cultural citizenship* to refer to the right to be different (in terms of race, ethnicity or native language) with respect to the norms of the dominant national community, without compromising one’s right to belong, in the sense of participating in the nation-state’s democratic processes (1994).

Anthropological research has also shown that the spaces of citizenship formation have changed radically, from the national territory to transnational spaces and globalizing cities. Increased migrations across national borders have ruptured old categories that assumed a homology between nation-states, populations and cultures. The study of transnationalism has opened up the question of how citizenship may be constructed from abroad by expatriates seeking to remake their homeland (Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc 1993). Some anthropologists have claimed that diasporic communities relocated in new differentiated and mobile spaces renegotiate their positions in the context of post-national orders (Appadurai 1996) while others have noted the emergence of strategies combining the security of citizenship in a new country with business opportunities in the homeland (Ong 1999). Moreover, a convergence of anthropological and political perspectives has shaped current discussions on citizenship, highlighting the political significance of cultural difference in

liberal democracies (Ong 1996) and a rethinking of the spatialities that go into the making of citizenship (Ong 2004a).

Some anthropological approaches have conceptualized citizenship as a series of everyday processes of being made and self-making in various domains of administration, welfare, church and working life, and examined it as a social process of mediated production of values concerning freedom, autonomy and security (Ong 1996, 2003). Looking at citizenship practices and representations, anthropological perspectives have highlighted their horizontal dimensions (Neveu 2005) and examined how citizenship processes are constituted within and, at the same time, are constitutive of relationships between individuals, between and within groups, during mobilization and participation, between representations and imaginaries as well as in their interaction with institutions (Gagné and Neveu 2009). Francophone anthropologists have highlighted the distinctive meanings denoted by the terms citizenship and *citoyenneté* along with the problem that this raises for comparative analysis (Neveu 2009, Gagné and Neveu 2009).

Transnational Social Fields, Zones of Graduated Sovereignty and Latitudes of Citizenship

The work of Glick Schiller and Ong has been of particular influence in shaping research agendas in the anthropological study of migrant transnationalism and citizenship on both sides of the (Northern) Atlantic. At a time when other scholars in the United States (anthropologists M. Kearney and R. Rouse, and the sociologist P. Levitt), Canada (the sociologist L. Goldring) and France (the sociologist M. Morokvaisic) were also conducting ethnographic studies of transnational migration, Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton Blanc (1992) coined the terms “transnationalism” and “transmigrants”. They used the former to refer to a new paradigm for migration studies that allows researchers to explore simultaneous embeddedness, and the latter to speak of the persons who live their lives across borders (Glick Schiller 2004, pp. 448-449). In order to advance research and theory on transnationalism, Glick Schiller has considered it crucial to differentiate between transnational processes of communication and *transnational social fields*. She has used the latter concept to examine observable social relationships and transactions composed of networks of interpersonal connections that stretch across borders. They are people-to-people relationships through which information, resources, goods, services

and ideas are exchanged, and where multiple actors, with very different kinds and locations of power, interact to create and sustain such relationships. These fields include individuals who have never themselves crossed borders but who are linked through social relations to people in distant and perhaps disparate locations (Glick Schiller 2004, 2010). The concept of transnational social fields highlights the ways in which transmigrants become part of the fabric of daily life in both their home and other states. By joining the workforce, contributing to neighbourhood organizations and entering into politics, they participate in diverse localities at the same time, a phenomenon that has been labelled *simultaneity* (Glick Schiller 2004; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004).

Glick Schiller (2004) has also distinguished between social practice and identity politics when developing transnational theory. She has employed the term *transnational ways of being* to include various quotidian acts through which people live their lives across borders, that is, in transnational social fields. These are transmigrants in terms of their life ways. In order to examine how these activities are represented, understood and translated into identity politics, Glick Schiller has used the term *transnational ways of belonging*. This is the realm of cultural representation, ideology and identity through which people reach out to distant lands or persons through memory, nostalgia and imagination whether or not they live in transnational social fields. While not rooted in social networks, transnational belonging denotes processes (rather than fixed categories) and is an emotional connection to persons who are elsewhere (a specific locality such as a village, a region, a specific religious formation, a social movement) or who are geographically dispersed but bound together within a notion of shared history and destiny (458-459). Glick Schiller's continuous critique of methodological nationalism and her insistence on the non-ethnic study of migrants' incorporation (see previously in this section) have also been substantial contributions to scholarship on transnationalism. Her more recent interest in examining the relationship between migrants *and* cities is part of a collective effort to move towards a comparative perspective that builds on two themes: a) multiple pathways of migrant incorporation and transnational connection, and the scalar positioning of cities, and b) migrants as scale makers (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009, Glick Schiller and Çağlar eds. 2011, Glick Schiller 2011).

Aihwa Ong's work (1996, 1999, 2004a, 2004b, 2006) has also been influential in shaping research agendas on the study of migrant transnationalism while advancing anthropological approaches and insights to the study of citizenship. Ong (1999) argues that the models that have analytically defined "the global" as political and economic and "the local" as cultural do not quite capture the horizontal and relational nature of the contemporary economic, social and cultural processes that stream across spaces, nor do they express their embeddedness in differently configured regimes of power. For this reason, Ong has introduced the notion of *transnationality* that, besides suggesting new relations between nation-states and capital, also alludes to the transversal, transactional, transnational and transgressive aspects of contemporary behaviour and imagination that are incited, enabled and regulated by the changing logics of states and capitalism (p.4). Ong differentiates between transnationality—or the condition of cultural interconnectedness and mobility across space that has been intensified under late capitalism—and *transnationalism*, which she uses to refer to the cultural specificities of global processes (p.4). Employing the latter term, Ong relates transnational strategies to systems of governmentality—in the broad sense of techniques and codes for directing human behaviour that both condition and manage the movements of population and capital—while tracing the multiplicity of the uses and conceptions of "culture", understood as a contingent scheme of meaning tied to power dynamics (p.4). Culture-making involves not only a process of "othering" by dominant players but also processes of cultural self-theorizing and re-envisioning in relation to fluid power dynamics, whether at the level of interpersonal relations or at the level of national politics and geopolitical posturing (p.243). Claiming that transnational processes are situated cultural practices, Ong (1999) proposes to embed the theory of practice within (not outside or against) political-economic forces, relating political economy to human agency in order to study the reciprocal construction of practice, gender, ethnicity, race, class and nation *in* processes of capital accumulation (p.5, also Ong 2003). Since different regimes of power and truth (state, family, economic enterprises) shape and direct border crossing and transnational relations, Ong claims that shifting patterns of travel and realignments between state and capital need to be understood according to the logics of culture and regional hegemony (1999, p.6).

For Ong, globalization (understood in the narrow sense of corporate strategies) has induced the emergence of *zones of graduated sovereignty* (1999, 2006) whereas individuals and governments have developed a *flexible citizenship* (1999). The former notion refers to zones that vary in terms of the mix of disciplinary and civilizing regimes and often contain ethnically marked groupings, which in practice are subjected to regimes of rights and obligations that are different from those in other zones. The presence of these zones makes apparent that, even if the state maintains control over its territory, it is also willing to let corporate entities set the terms for constituting and regulating some domains (1999, p.217). Flexible citizenship, on the other hand, denotes the assemblage of transnational practices for gaining access to different global sites (for business advantages, real estate deals, enrolment in top universities, or security for the family) as well as the versatile mobilization of business, legal and social assets that facilitates a high degree of mobility (Ong 2004b, p.47). For Ong, the cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel and displacement have induced subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions, and in their quests to accumulate capital and social prestige in the global arena, they have both emphasized and been regulated by practices favouring flexibility, mobility and repositioning in relation to markets, governments and cultural regimes (1999, p.6). Under these circumstances, *systems of variegated citizenship* have emerged, in which populations subjected to different regimes of value enjoy different kinds of rights, discipline, caring and security (Ong 1999, 2006).

Globalization has also intensified the connections between external and internal lines of differentiation, leading to a transvaluation or transborder restructuring of social capital and norms of labour that Ong (2004b, 2004b) has dubbed *latitudes of citizenship*. Transversal processes distribute disparate forms of citizenship in sites linked by the capital-accumulating logic that spans different spheres of worth across the world. In addition, since “latitude points” are transnational sites, they deviate from standard norms governing citizenship within nation-spaces while having the scope and flexibility to combine disparate forms of rights, privileges and labour conditions. Such “ensembles of unequally lateralized citizenship status” are shaped by processes at once transborder and yet highly specific in constituting particular positions of subjectivation. At the same time, an ever-shifting landscape shaped by the flows of markets, technologies and populations has crystallized *mutations in citizenship* (Ong 2006), which go

beyond the idea of citizenship as either a protected status in a nation-state or a condition opposed to that of statelessness. On the one hand, the elements of citizenship are becoming not only disarticulated from each other but also re-articulated with universalizing criteria of neoliberalism and human rights. Such “global assemblages” define zones of political entitlements and claims. On the other hand, these spaces of assemblage become the site for political mobilization by diverse groups in motion, whose particular constellations shape specific problems and resolutions to questions of contemporary living, further disarticulating and deterritorializing aspects of citizenship.

Transnationalism in Question

Despite its multiple contributions, the transnational approach has not been without criticism. Sociologists Roger Waldinger and David Fitzgerald (2004) have claimed that what immigration scholars describe as transnationalism is usually its opposite: highly particularistic attachments antithetical to those by-products of globalization denoted by the concept of “transnational civil society” and its related manifestations (p. 1182). They argue that states and the politics conducted within their borders fundamentally shape the options for migrant and ethnic transnational social action. State controls operate at internal and external levels, seeking to regulate membership in the national collectivity and movement across territorial borders respectively. The variability in the degree to which these internal and external boundaries are institutionalized and the means and intensity by which states police them condition the ability of migrants living “here” to act in ways that yield leverage “there” (p.1178; see as well Torpey 1998, Kearney 2004, Walters 2006). In addition, civil society actors in both host and destination countries raise questions regarding the allegiance and political bona fide of persons whose social identities are framed by the connections to two states, so the terms of national belonging are very often conflictive, and variations in political culture ensure that they differ from one nation-state to another (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004, p.1184; see as well Faist, Gerdes and Rieple 2007, Freeman 2007). Moreover, the use, form and mobilization of the connections linking here and there are contingent to multiple political constraints, since the relationship between states affects the scope for multiple versus exclusive national loyalties, and the security/solidarity nexus waxes and wanes with the degree of interstate tension (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004, p. 1185). For Waldinger and Fitzgerald, transnationalism

should be examined as the collision of the social organizations of migration and its state-spanning results, with reactive efforts by state and civil society actors to produce state-society alignment (p. 1186).

Social and political theorist Rainer Baubock (2003) criticizes the “globalist and strong transnationalist perspective” which claims that globalization is undermining the salience of national sovereignty and citizenship while creating deterritorialized and postnational communities as an alternative to territorially bounded national polities (Glick Schiller et al 1992, Basch et al 1994, Soyosal 1994). Baubock argues that transnational politics depend on national politics because political activities of migrants are strongly oriented towards both sending and receiving states, whereas states are actively involved in shaping the emergent transnational social fields through attempts to exercise political control or as providers of entitlements. For Baubock, transnational political activities transcend “politics as usual” (p.701) since political transnationalism does not circumscribe itself to politics across borders, but also includes changes in the institutions of the polity and its conceptions of membership in both origin and receiving countries. Moreover, transnational practices and structures need not involve the state as an agent, or the nation as an imagined political community, because political transnationalism affects the very definition of the entity whose borders are crossed. For Baubock, *transnational politics* proliferate across multiple levels and involve not only individuals and political organizations but also government agencies (p.708).

Anthropologists have also contributed to the critique of some important assumptions held by transnationalism advocates, notably on the magnitude of international migrations and the significance of crossing international borders. Jonathan Friedman (2002) has pointed out that, due to its focus on movement, this approach seems to have overlooked that less than two percent of the world’s population is on the move internationally. In other words, the discourse on the “primacy of movement in the world” has assumed, without any research to support it, that the whole world is on the move (p.33). Ghassan Hage (2005), for his part, has questioned the significance of movements across borders in shaping people’s lives, arguing that it is not some objective experience that defines international migration regardless of *who* is crossing borders and *how*. To sense that one’s movement is significant, it has to involve a sense of being uprooted from things that one is familiar with and a sense of being out place. Yet, one

should be careful not to assume that when crossing international borders, the change from one national culture to another is the most significant aspect of the move (p.470). In order to capture these “significant movements”, Hage uses the term “existential mobility”. For him, people engage in the type of physical mobility that defines them as migrants because they feel that another space is a better launching pad for their existential selves. In other words, people move physically to feel that they are existentially on the move again, or at least, moving better (p.470).

GEOPOLITICS AND HEGEMONIC SCHOLARSHIP

Even if brief and selective, as any such exercise may be, my literature review makes apparent two interrelated and problematic issues about the scholarship on migrant transnationalism and citizenship: its narrow geopolitical focus on liberal democracies, and the hegemonic standing of a handful of disciplines when it comes to setting “global” research agendas. The vast majority of the studies in this burgeoning scholarship have concentrated on the liberal democracies of the so-called Euro-Atlantic arena. Some anthropologists have challenged this geopolitics by conducting ethnographic research on transnational migration and citizenship outside these favoured destinations, such as Ong (1999, 2003) in China and the Southeast Asian tiger economies, Salazar Parreñas (2005, 2008) in the Philippines, Constable (2007) in Hong Kong, Gregory (2007) in the Dominican Republic, Goldade (2008) in Costa Rica and Gardner (2010) in Bahrain. Nevertheless, much more needs to be done in order to give proper room—actual acknowledgment and active incorporation (see Latour 1987)—to the work being done by scholars in other parts of the world. Being familiar with the scientific literature produced in South America, it is striking to me the extent to which the scholarship on migrant transnationalism and citizenship from the “Global North” neglects the prolific work of scholars from the “Global South”, even if the opposite is not the case (see for example Novick ed 2008 and 2010; Maffia 2010; Pizarro ed. 2011; Grimson and Jelin eds.2006).

The second problematic issue refers to the hegemonic role played by a handful of disciplines such as political science, economics, geography, demography and sociology in setting “global” research and policy agendas on migrant transnationalism and citizenship. Disciplinary lenses have been particularly important in dictating methodological and analytical

approaches, which in many cases have led to the formulation of conclusions without empirical grounding (such as in the formulation of ideal types or mathematical models) or to the use of gender-blind perspectives. Even if shifting, the hegemonic standing of these disciplines is still present, a legacy of the crucial role they played in the consolidation of the nation-state (see on this issue Glick Schiller 2010 and Recalde 2008). The hegemonic standing of these policy-oriented, sometimes even at-the-service-of-the-state, disciplines has combined with the privileged access of scholars and institutions from the Global North to a wide range of resources to create a double bias. This has resulted in the geographical, methodological, analytical and sometimes ideological narrow focus of the scholarship produced in the Global North, and its predominant neglect of the rich scientific developments occurring outside its geopolitics. Anthropology has made valuable contributions to the decentring of this scholarship, which still remains precarious. My thesis engages in this same effort through an empirically grounded analysis of the recent “experiences of citizenship” of South American migrants in Argentina, which draws on local and regional scholarship.

DISSERTATION ANALYTICAL TOOLS

Broadly speaking, my thesis examines the workings of grounded social, economic and political processes that have contributed, often in a conflictive manner, to the (re)definition of membership criteria in both the nation and the state. As I have outlined in the previous chapter, my analysis is done at two distinctive analytical and empirical levels. On the one hand, I examine the “technologies of citizenship” (Ong 2003, Fujiwara 2008) deployed by the state to transform Argentina into a diverse, inclusive and Latin American nation over the past decade, including the creation of a “new legality” for the Paraguayans, Bolivians and Peruvians in the country. On the other hand, I analyze the “horizontal dimensions of citizenship processes” (Neveu 2005, Pickus and Skerry 2007, Gagné and Neveu 2009) among Peruvians, Paraguayans and Bolivians in urban, peripheral and rural areas of the *partido* of La Plata. Namely, I look at how their social, economic and political circumstances have changed in tandem with their new legal status (as nationals of the MERCOSUR in Argentina with rights equal to those of its citizens) and the “inclusive citizenship” policies deployed by the government. In what follows, I elaborate on the key analytical tools that I have used to interpret data from my fieldwork and to analyze media and government discourse.

My examination of Kirchnerismo's strategies to shape the Argentinean nation during the first decade of the 2000s has benefited from the work of political scientist Sheila Croucher (1998) on the construction of national boundaries in post-apartheid South Africa. Recognizing the fluidity of the national form—captured in the question *when, why and how* is a nation? instead of *what* is a nation?—Croucher highlights that discourse is constitutive of nations and national identities. Following Doty (1996), Croucher (1998) claims that the boundaries of the nation-state, which are constantly constructed and reconstructed, are not merely territorial, but are a function of the state's discursive authority. In light of the internally unstable and contingent nature of identity, the boundaries and meaning of the nation and the national identity become fixed, if only temporarily, through discourse (p.642). In any given discourse, certain sites or focal points will play a particularly important, or privileged, role in fixing or assigning meaning, and in the case of national identity, immigration constitutes one such concrete site *in, about and through which* the form and content of national identity gets shaped (p.643). Moreover, it is not just official immigration policy that constructs the contours of the nation, but the politics, rhetoric and discourse surrounding immigration that play an equally important role. Thus, even if statecraft is crucial in constructing national identity, a multitude of practices also contributes to it, including an array of cultural and symbolic resources and the ways in which they are drawn upon, used and interpreted by government officials, politicians, community leaders and media (Croucher 1997). In the next chapter, I show how Kirchnerismo deployed a series of complementary strategies to shape Argentina into a diverse, inclusive and Latin American nation. Even if the remaking of this country's national identity was not strictly organized around the migratory issue, securing a wide range of rights to migrants in general (according to international conventions) and granting MERCOSUR nationals equal rights to Argentinians in particular (according to the country's new migration law), were core to Kirchnerismo's political project. By focusing on fortifying the "sameness" between "us" (Argentinians) and "them" (South American migrants), migration politics and policy became an important discursive site for defining the nation and delineating the boundaries of the national community during the first decade of the 2000s.

While membership in a state is decided legislatively or constitutionally through citizenship policies, whose exclusionary aspect looms large (Shafir 2004, Howard 2006,

Morris 2002), membership in the nation is not necessarily coterminous with legal entitlements, and typically entails a much more complicated configuration of “us” and “them” (Gregory 2004, 2007). Nationhood is an inherently exclusive concept, and national identity, like other forms of identity, is defined and maintained in opposition or contradiction to some other group, category of classification that, at best, becomes temporary outsider or, at worst, deeply despised enemy (Croucher 1998, Barth 1969). In the ethnographic chapters of my thesis, I examine the displacement of this “space of otherness” in the Argentinean social imaginary from the *límitrofes* during the 1990s to both the so-called *chinos* (Asian migrants) and *pibes chorros* (disadvantaged and marginalized Argentinean youth) during the first decade of the 2000s. The extent to which the nation is a social and political construct that takes place on a variety of fronts, and that migration can provide the content of and vehicle for that construction (Croucher 1998) becomes evident in my analysis of the complementary domestic and foreign policies, attendant discourse and events deployed by Kirchnerismo to pursue its political project. These multiple strategies connected core political goals shared by governments in the region—the fight against poverty, inequality and environmental degradation through regional integration—with Kirchnerismo’s national agenda—developing an inclusive citizenship and defending human rights—which served to reinforce the remaking of the Argentinean nation as diverse, inclusive and Latin American.

To examine Kirchnerismo’s invention of the Argentinean past, present and future as Latin American, the work of anthropologist James Clifford (2000) on identity politics has proved valuable. Clifford argues that modern national projects, where identity politics are prevalent, can never be finished or whole since, to differing degrees, they are unstable, complicated and undermined by other identifications. National and transnational orders are domains of continual struggle and negotiation, formation and breakup, where identity politics is at best grasped with ethnographic complexity as a series of contradictory and multivalent processes of historical transformation (p.96). Cultural politics is not secondary to more “material” political/economic agencies, since cultural discourse situates groups, providing them with roots, with narrative connections between past and present traditions, and with distinctive social habits and bodies. Moreover, the remembering and forgetting, gathering and excluding of cultural elements, crucial to the maintenance of an identity, is materially

constrained, politically limited and inventive (p.97). In other words, to imagine a coherent future, people selectively mobilize past resources, so the “articulations of tradition” are generative components of peoplehood, ways of belonging to some discrete social time and place in an interconnected world (p.97). The inventive, contradictory and multivalent character of the articulations of tradition is apparent in Kirchnerismo’s efforts to shape the Argentinean nation through the revision of its past (as Latin American), the renewal of its membership criteria (as inclusive and diverse) and the projection of a new future (as an autonomous nation engaged in regional integration and global geopolitics and commerce).

Even if my intention is not to examine relations of domination and resistance, James Scott’s (1990) emphasis on uncovering the contradictions, tensions and immanent possibilities of power should be kept in mind when reading my thesis. Anthropologist and political scientist, Scott distinguishes between public and hidden transcripts when studying hegemonic relations between “dominant” or “powerful” and “powerless” or “subordinate” groups, and highlights the dialectic of disguise and surveillance that pervades such relations. The *public transcript* refers to the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate, where “public” denotes the action that is openly avowed to the other party in the power relationship and “transcript” a complete record of that which is said, including nonspeech acts (p.2). The *hidden transcript*, on the other hand, refers to discourse that takes place “offstage”, beyond direct observation by certain others, so it is specific to a given social site and to a particular set of actors (p.14). The implementation of diverse strategies by Kirchnerismo in seeking to shape the Argentinean nation, which I examine in the next chapter, should be interpreted as performances integral to its public transcript. Its monumental deployment of resources during the celebrations of the Bicentenary of the Nation, what I also analyze in the next chapter, constituted a crucial occasion to celebrate and dramatize its rule by making a spectacle of itself in a manner largely of its own choosing (Scott 1990, p.58).

In examining Kirchnerismo’s efforts to restore the primacy of the nation-state as an encompassing space of belonging and governance, which had been given away during the 1990s in tandem with decentralization and privatization policies, Ferguson and Gupta’s (2002) notion of *vertical encompassment* is useful. This notion refers to the claims that naturalize the authority of the state over “the local” by merging three analytically distinct ideas—superior

spatial scope; supremacy in a hierarchy of power; and superior generality of interest, knowledge and moral purpose—into a single figure: the “up there” state that encompasses the local and exists on a “higher level”. As I will show in the next chapter, Kirchnerismo has used a range of everyday technologies to spatialize the federal state, seeking to make verticality and encompassment widely shared features of social life.

My analysis of fieldwork data has significantly benefited from anthropological approaches to the study of citizenship. In his research on the contested politics of globalization in the Dominican Republic, Steven Gregory (2004, 2007) argues that global capital needs the political apparatus of the nation-state and its ideologies of belonging to reproduce itself. Gregory underscores the significance of the state as a complex “political field” (Poulantzas 1978) upon which the conditions of possibility for globalization are secured through the structuring and disciplining of labour markets, and more broadly, through the constitution and governance of subjects. Drawing on Tilly’s (1995) notion of citizenship as a continuing series of transactions between persons and agents of a given state in which each has enforceable rights and obligations, Gregory argues that citizenship constitutes a critical and contested field of power relations and practices where struggles over access to employment, political participation and other rights and goods are conducted between state authorities and the heterogeneous populations under their control (2007, p.39). Through these contested practices of citizenship and their enabling discourses, regulations and documents, differences tied to race, class, gender and national origin are embodied and articulated into a complex system of exclusions that is the social foundation of the division of labour (2004, pp.290-291). Moreover, social status is a defining characteristic of citizenship that is produced through everyday interactions which transpose socially constructed distinctions into formal systems of exclusions (2007, p.40). The extent to which citizenship is far from a mere legal identity will become apparent in the ethnographic chapters of this thesis, where I examine migrants’ experiences of their new legal entitlements in the context of a shifting ethnic landscape affecting the rankings attributed to different migrant groups within the hegemonic hierarchy of value of the *partido* of La Plata.

In reading the prejudiced views of migrants held by the municipal officers of La Plata and their often unsuccessful attempts to “integrate” migrants into society, Ong’s (2003) work

on citizenship in the new America has proved valuable. Ong looks at citizenship as the cumulative effect of a multiplicity of bureaucratic figures who are concerned with the practicalities of democracy, daily figuring out ways to produce subjects who can be induced, nudged and empowered to become self-sufficient and goal-oriented citizens (p. 17). In the US, the “human techniques” that allocate, classify, formalize and normalize seek to govern through freedom; that is, to adjust citizen-subjects to key values of autonomy and self-definition. Social policies and practices beyond the state suggest, define and direct adherence to democratic, racial and market norms of belonging (p. 15; see also Lipschutz 2004). In chapters IV, V and VI, I examine how migrants in the *partido* of La Plata challenge the disciplining strategies (citizenship techniques) deployed by the municipality. The extent to which this was the case, especially among those living in rural areas, becomes most apparent in the derogatory remarks of municipal agents, which are permeated by frustration and disappointment.

My analysis of how migrants’ daily social interaction, in general, and their access to entitlements, in particular, differed among urban, peripheral and rural areas of the *partido* benefits from Ong’s (1999) notions of *zones of graduated sovereignty* and *systems of variegated citizenship* (see previously). Wacquant’s (2008) comparative study of advanced marginality was also useful for framing my analysis of the specific challenges faced by migrants living in the peripheries of the *partido* (and the Gran Buenos Aires). Wacquant defines *advanced marginality* as the novel regime of socio-spatial relegation and exclusionary closure that has crystallized in the post-Fordist city as a result of the uneven development of the capitalist economies and the recoiling of welfare states, according to how these two forces bear upon the segments of the working class and the ethnoracial categories dwelling in the nether regions of social and physical space (pp.2-3). Wacquant argues that state structures and policies play a decisive role in the differential stitching together of inequalities of class, place and origin (whether ethnoracial or ethnonational) on both sides of the Atlantic. Through its multifaceted action, the national state shapes not only the markets for housing, employment and educational credentials, but also the distribution of basic goods and services, and through this mediation governs the conversion of the social space into appropriated physical space (p.6). Wacquant considers it useful to distinguish between the *social condition* characteristic of a zone of relegation and the *conditionings* it entails, that is, between its position in a

hierarchized structure of places measured by their material and symbolic value and the function it performs for the metropolitan system (p.11; see also Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2011, Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2011). Wacquant also specifies the *degree and form of state penetration* in neighbourhoods of relegation as well as the changing and often contradictory relations that their inhabitants maintain with different public officials and agencies, schools and hospitals, housing and social welfare, firefighting and transportation, the courts and the police (p.11). In the peripheral areas of the *partido* of La Plata, the state's governance by neglect and absence was crucial in shaping migrants' precarious or nonexistent access to public entitlements and security. Moreover, the relationships established among migrant and non-migrant neighbours in these "forgotten areas" and between *límitrofes* and diverse state representatives varied greatly between areas of the *partido*, issues that I examine in the ethnographic chapters (from IV to VII).

RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS

My dissertation challenges three sets of claims that have shaped research and policy agendas on migrant transnationalism and citizenship, and questions the hegemonic analytical and methodological approaches underlying them. First, my dissertation shows that, even if in dialogue with regional bodies and international conventions, the state continues to play a hegemonic role when it comes to managing people's movements across its borders and within its territory (Glick Schiller 2004, 2010; Ong 1999, 2003, 2004-a). This becomes most apparent in South America, where states have independently decided if and how to implement adopted international conventions on the protection of human rights as well as regional agreements seeking the free mobility and equal treatment of nationals of the newly created blocs (Recalde 2006-b, 2008-a). Argentina has led these developments in South America, as I will show in the next chapter. Moreover, migration politics and policies have both been crucial to the current nationhood-(re)making projects of particular states in processes of regional integration, an issue that I illustrate with my analysis of Kirchnerismo's strategies to anchor Argentina's past, present and future in the economic, social and political developments that are particular to South America.

Second, my dissertation questions legalistic approaches to citizenship by showing that formal legal entitlements are translated into quite different “experiences of rights” depending on: a) the “value and deservedness” or social status attributed to diversely defined groups based on their standing in local shifting ethnic hierarchies of value (Ong 2004-a, 2004-b); b) the geopolitics of place and the attendant regimes of governmentality that have evolved in diverse settings along with the settlement of diverse ethnic and social class groups, which change over time and across space (Ong 1999, 2006; Wacquant 2008); and c) migrants’ embodied (gender, age, phenotype, etc.) and acquired (social class, ethnicity, etc.) characteristics (Gregory 2004, 2007; Morris 2002) and their access to networks of trust spanning across multiple countries, which are permeated by uneven distributions of power along lines of gender, age and status (Glick Schiller 2004, Cohen 2011).

Third, my dissertation demonstrates that transnational migrations do not exclusively respond to economically calculated reasoning, but that are rather guided by complex decision-making processes integral to household strategies (Merla and Baldassar 2010, Merla 2010, Baldassar 2010, Cohen 2011, Brettell 2003, Paerregaard 2008, Trager 2005). Decisions to migrate are always gendered and are related to the positioning of different individuals in their household’s reproductive cycle. Moreover, they often result from negotiations taking place within extended kinship networks that are framed in turn by local, sub-national and national shifting economic, political and social circumstances affecting the contrasting prospects available at home and “somewhere else”. Once more, “better prospects” are not merely defined in economic terms, but rather, in varying combinations of (social and environmental) safety, civil and political freedoms, gender role expectations, access to a variety of public entitlements (notably education and health care) and upper social mobility opportunities. Therefore, my thesis contributes an ethnographically grounded analysis of migrant transnationalism and citizenship that questions gender-blind assumptions and challenges the universalist generalizations that often lack empirical bases.

My dissertation also contributes to the decentering of the hegemonic geopolitics that have shaped research and policy agendas in the scholarship on migrant transnationalism and citizenship. This literature’s predominant focus on the Euro-Atlantic arena has brought about two particularly problematic issues, which are challenged by my doctoral research. First, this

scholarship has considered English-speaking settler societies and Western Europe as the destinations “par excellence” of transnational migrants, while assuming that an almost exclusive South-North dynamic propels these migrations. This assumption has not only permeated current literature on the “transnationalization or privatization of social reproduction” (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001, Parreñas 2001, Ehrenreich and Russell Hochschild 2002, Russell Hochschild 2002, Maher 2004, Herrera Mosquera 2008, Arat-Koç and Giles 1996) supporting the “social organization of care” (Glenn 2010), but has also guided research on the political economy of migrations from “poor” to “rich” countries more generally (Sassen 1998). My study of South American migrations to Argentina problematizes this twofold claim by illustrating the increasing centrality of intra-regional or so-called “South-South” migrations in different parts of the world (see Ratha and Shaw 2007, Hujo and Piper eds. 2010, Goldade 2008, Gardner 2010). My dissertation also shows the extent to which a “Southern country” such as Argentina can be at the same time an immigration and emigration state that plays diverse roles in the mobility trajectory of migrants, ranging from the desired “final” destination to a transitional one permitting migrants to get the papers or the necessary capital to move on to the next one.

Second, dominant paradigms (Glick Schiller 2004) in the scholarship on migrant transnationalism and citizenship, produced in the “Global North”, have often neglected the prolific work of scholars from the “Global South”, which has led to the use of diverse combinations of Euro-American value systems as “universals” when designing research (and policy) despite the diversity of both the groups concerned and their geographical locations. My dissertation draws on local and regional scholarship and is based on extended fieldwork in Argentina, undertaken in a serious attempt to further question my own disciplinary and scholarly geopolitical assumptions. In this regard, the thinking about the conditions under which ethnographic knowledge is produced has considerably broadened in recent years (Fabian 2001) and the “reflexive turn” in social sciences has led to the consideration of researchers as significant participants in the intersubjective constitution of the phenomena they study (Turner 2000). Nevertheless, “ethnographic truths” remain inherently partial and made possible by powerful “lies” of exclusion and rhetoric since power and history work through them, in ways their authors cannot fully control (Clifford 1986).

CHAPTER III: Creating Legality for the *Limítrofes* While Constructing a “New” Argentina

The creation of “legality” for the Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans in Argentina during the first decade of the 2000s was not a goal in itself for the government in office—as had been their criminalization over the course of the 1990s— but rather fit into its broader political project. The presidencies of Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández, or Kirchnerismo as I shall refer to them together ¹⁹, set out to re-create Argentina, which they considered a pressing task necessary for reversing the harmful effects of the previous decade’s neoliberal policies. In this chapter, I show how the fulfillment of this undertaking involved the profound reorganization of state institutions and their ways of working, along with the reinvention of Argentina as an inclusive, diverse and Latin American nation. Kirchnerismo envisioned two central audiences or spheres of action when pursuing its project: the nation and the region (and by extension the world at large). The national audience was engaged through public policy promoting the inclusiveness and diversity of its citizenry, whereas regional dialogue was fostered by the deployment of a foreign policy that strove to deepen Latin American integration. As I shall demonstrate throughout the present chapter, these spheres of action and the public strategies to effect them are only analytically distinct, since in practice they overlapped. Kirchnerismo faced three central challenges: a) it had to counter hegemonic discourses portraying the dynamics of Buenos Aires as the reality of the whole country; b) it had to confront deeply entrenched foundational myths about the exclusive European ancestry and character of the nation; and c) it had to fight against the “Americanization” of Argentinean culture as had been promoted by Menem’s government during the 1990s.

The analysis of the dramatic social, economic and political changes introduced by Kirchnerismo during the 2000s is fundamental for understanding the circumstances and experiences of migrants from neighbouring nations in Argentina over the course of the decade. To start with, its commitment to respecting human rights and deepening regional integration were both key in passing a new migration law granting MERCOSUR nationals rights equal to those of Argentinians. In addition, the implementation of “inclusive” policies that sought to universalize access to public services and goods were very advantageous to migrants, who

were entitled to them despite their migration status. At the same time, the state granted migrants equal protection against discrimination, exploitation and unfair treatment. Moreover, Kirchnerismo's strategies to reshape the nation's social imagery, so as to make Argentina Latin American and diverse, created an atmosphere conducive to perceiving these historically despised migrants in a more favourable light.

Even if presented as an urgent reaction to the previous decade's callous neoliberalism, the reinvention of the Argentinean nation and the reconstruction of its social, economic and political fabric over the 2000s was an endeavour that touched upon thorny conflicts dating back to the country's independence in the 19th century. In developing such a project, presidents Kirchner and Fernández drew upon the political achievements and historical claims of Peronismo in particular, and on earlier attempts to unify Latin America more generally. Before taking up the analysis of the re-creation of Argentina, let me first briefly outline the main traits of historical Peronismo and introduce the former political leaders who established the precedent for current regional integration initiatives in South America. This short detour will serve to delineate the political genealogy of Kirchnerismo's project and to trace its core ideological foundations, both of which will be crucial in order to understand its public and foreign policies during the 2000s.

KIRCHNERISMO'S POLITICAL-IDEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

The *movimiento peronista* or *peronismo histórico* was a social, economic and political movement organized around the figure of Juan Domingo Perón, an Argentinean general and politician who held two presidential mandates (1946-1955 and 1973-1974). A controversial political figure, Perón has been seen either as an extremely popular, democratic leader by those who think of *Peronismo* as an "identity" linked to his public policies and persona, or as an authoritarian figure by those who claim that his regime personified the "tyranny of the majority" (Moniz Bandeira 2004; see also Appendix C). Perón questioned the liberal policies of the *década infame* or the "infamous decade" (1930-1943) that had led to the country's economic underdevelopment, social inequality and corruption, and sought to put an end to both the electoral fraud that had hitherto prevailed and the huge profits being extracted from the country by foreign capital (Aritz Recalde 2010-e). With this goal in mind, Perón

consolidated the alliance between the *movimiento sindical* (union movement) and the Army, two of the most powerful social actors in Argentina at that time, in order to establish a regime that would guarantee full employment while promoting the industrial development of the country (Moniz Bandeira 2004). Perón contributed to the development and consolidation of large, powerful sectorial industrial unions, which have come to characterize the country's labour market and political landscape (Cruces and Gasparini 2010), and created the *Secretaría de Trabajo y Previsión Social* (Work and Social Security Secretariat) in order to protect workers and small producers' interests (Aritz Recalde 2010-e).

The popular and nationalist character of Perón's regime (exalted by the extraordinary influence of his second wife Evita) shaped Argentina's domestic and foreign policies in the context of the Cold War. Defying international pressure to participate in the bipolar confrontation between the United States (US) and the Soviet Union, Perón proposed a *tercera posición* or "third position" for Argentina. This doctrine, later on renamed *Justicialismo*, was opposed to both capitalism and communism, considering that the abuses of the former had led to the emergence of the latter, and translated into a diversified foreign policy by establishing relations with socialist countries while keeping ties with Europe and, albeit conflictive, also with the US (Moniz Bandeira 2004). As a result, Argentina was not aligned with either superpower and sought to consolidate an economic and political community in South America. With this goal in mind, Perón pursued the "ABC Treaty" (between Argentina, Brazil and Chile) that was to be an economic, political and military bloc that could counterbalance the "Pan-Americanism" and "good neighbour" policies of US President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Perón also sought to advance Justicialismo in Latin America by a) placing union delegates in all Argentinean embassies (beginning in 1946), b) creating the Latin American Central Union (ATLAS: *Agrupación de los Trabajadores Latinoamericanos Sindicalistas*) and c) promoting his regime over the *Servicio Internacional Radiofónico Argentino* (Aritz Recalde 2010-g; Moniz Bandeira 2004). These different measures set an important precedent for future developments in South America in general and for Argentina in particular. While the ABC Treaty and the ATLAS were both fundamental for later initiatives of regional integration such as MERCOSUR, UNASUR and TeleSur, Perón's diversified and Latin Americanist foreign policy became a guiding principle for Kirchnerismo (as I shall show in a later section).

During Perón's first term as president, public policy was formulated in *Planes Quinquenales* (five-year plans) that pursued three core goals: 1) gaining economic independence, largely through the industrialization and diversification of the country's production; 2) achieving political sovereignty by implementing independent, Latin Americanist and tercerist policies; and 3) consolidating social justice through both the social, educational and cultural emancipation of workers and national entrepreneurs, and the creation of decent living conditions (*condiciones de vida digna*) for all inhabitants of the country (see Appendix C for details). The implementation of Peron's five-year plans led to the industrialization of Argentina and the elimination of unemployment while putting a halt to the frequent economic crises resulting from international fluctuations in the prices of the country's agro-exports. Industrial economic growth and stability were accompanied by a redistribution of wealth "with a national perspective", which showed a substantial tendency towards higher equality during the first two presidencies of Perón and remained relatively stable during the 1960s (Gerchunoff and Llach 2003, Alvaredo 2008). This redistribution of the country's resources permitted the financing of universal access to public health care (with the state as the producer of drugs) and educational services (from kindergarten to undergraduate university studies), the development of national science and workers' "right to leisure" (*derecho al esparcimiento*), which led to a substantial improvement in the population's standard of living (Aritz Recalde 2010-g; Moniz Bandeira 2004). As will become apparent throughout the chapter, the achievements of Peronismo histórico not only laid the political-ideological foundations of Kirchnerismo but also provided the requisite institutional-legal basis from which to re-create the state and reinvent the nation.

Kirchnerismo's referencing of 19th century attempts at Latin American unification has also been central to the effective deployment of its project. Crucial to the reinvention of Argentina as a Latin American nation has been the re-writing of its history so as to root it in the political developments of the region. This strategy has faced fierce resistance because a) it challenges the hegemony of discourses claiming the "European ancestry" of the nation that successive ruling classes have crafted and imposed as being "inherent" to Argentina (see chapter I), and b) it is at odds with the 1990s government-endorsed promotion of the "Americanization" of the nation (which I shall examine in a later section). Kirchnerismo

countered this opposition by institutionalizing the political trajectories of several historical leaders whose role had been crucial in the liberation of the continent from European rule during the 19th century; namely, Francisco Morazán, José de San Martín and Simón Bolívar (which I show in a later section). These leaders were key to the independence of numerous countries on the continent and fought to create the *Patria Grande* or “enlarged homeland” in Latin America, that is, a regional political union offering a shared space of belonging for its peoples (see Appendix C for more details). The unification projects that these leaders envisioned and pursued during the 19th century have been seen as the precedent for the 21st century regional integration efforts (Aritz Recalde 2010-a,b,c,f; Novick 2010).

Honduran General and politician Francisco Morazán (1792–1842) was central to the strategies aimed at consolidating “the union of nations” in Central America, which he labelled *República Federal de Centro América*. As its ruler, he enacted liberal reforms, including freedom of the press, speech and religion, and limited the power of the Church by making marriage secular and by abolishing government-assisted tithing. The Argentinean General and politician José de San Martín (1778-1850) is primarily known for the liberation of Argentina, Peru and Chile as well as for promoting a very strong sense of “continental belonging” in the region, given that he conceived the American continent as one nation (Aritz Recalde 2010-d). Venezuelan military and political leader Simón Bolívar (1783-1830) participated in the foundation of the first union of independent nations in Latin America called the *Gran Colombia*. Bolívar was the president of this union from 1819 to 1830, which included the territories of present-day Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador and Panama. During his lifetime, Bolívar led Bolivia, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela to independence, and helped lay the foundations for democratic ideology in much of Hispanic America. Due to their liberation and integrationist projects, Morazán, San Martín and Bolívar are considered to be not only national heroes and the *próceres* or *patriotas latinoamericanos* (“fathers” of the continent’s independence), but also as visionaries who conceived a different type of nationhood and polity for Latin America. Today, their projects continue to powerfully resonate in the region, notably among those who see in the *Patria Grande* a historical, cultural, economic and social terrain that must be politically articulated (Jauretche 1958, Recalde 2010-c)²⁰.

These political leaders considered the continent's independence from European rule as being inseparable from Latin American unification and, a century later, Perón was to agree with them—seeing the United States as the main threat to the continent's sovereign development and the emancipation of its peoples, however. Indeed, Perón drew on San Martín's legacy and emphasized four of his postulates: a) the liberation of America requires popular emancipation; b) national freedom (*liberación nacional*) implies the development of an interventionist and industrialist state; c) national liberation needs an educator state, that is, a state that promotes science and culture at public institutions; and d) imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism ought to be fought in all their forms (Aritz Recalde 2010-c)²¹. During the 2000s, Kirchnerismo was to take up once again these so-called *legados sanmartineanos*, making them public policy. In the remaining sections of this chapter, I examine the strategies deployed by the government to re-invent Argentina. In the making of an inclusive nation, Kirchnerismo drew on the developments of Peronismo histórico while invoking the achievements of the continent's heroes when seeking to Latin Americanize it. Integral to the fulfilment of these intertwined strategies was the creation of a “new legality” for the Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans in the country. These migrants' new legal and social status not only improved their access to a number of services, goods and protections granted by the state, but also had an impact on social interaction between them and non-migrant residents of the *partido* of La Plata.

GRASPING KIRCHNERISMO

Kirchnerismo is the name given to a school of political thought (*corriente política partidaria*) with a Peronist background that first emerged in 2003 in Argentina, centred around the figures of presidents Néstor Kirchner (2003-2007) and Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner (2007-2011, 2011-2015), who were a couple until the death of Kirchner in October 2010. As university students in the 1970s, they were militants in the *Juventud Peronista* (Peronist Youth, part of the Peronist Left) and later joined the *Partido Justicialista* (PJ), where they developed their political careers²². Interestingly, even if *los Kirchners*, as the couple is called, have been identified with the PJ Peronista, their supporters do not coincide with the traditional definition of Peronismo and many Peronists in fact oppose them²³. Indeed, the heterogeneous composition of Kirchnerismo's members and supporters and its frequently shifting alliances

have prompted observers to see this school of political thought as a “complex puzzle still searching for some of its pieces” (Schurman 2006)²⁴. In this context, the letter “K” has come to be identified with Kirchnerismo and the *kirchneristas* (for example, the *radicals K*), whereas those who oppose them, as much within as outside Peronismo, have come to call themselves *anti-kirchneristas* or members of *anti-kirchnerismo*.

Kirchnerismo has been defined by a number of political-ideological postulates that became public policy (terrain of governmental action) during the presidencies of Kirchner and Fernandez. To start with, Kirchnerismo has been devoted to the defense of human rights; in particular, to the prosecution of those who committed human rights violations during the “Dirty War” or *Proceso de Reorganización Nacional* (1976-1983) and were later on granted immunity from prosecution by the governments of Raúl Alfonsín (1983-1989) and Carlos S. Menem (1989-1999)²⁵. Kirchnerismo has also strongly rejected neoliberalism and its associated policies, forcibly opposing the multilateral and bilateral free trade agreements pursued by the United States²⁶. To this extent, the Ks have engaged in an economic policy of *desarrollismo* (industrialist development) that solidly supports the MERCOSUR. Kirchnerismo has sought to rebuild a national capitalism that, through the valorization of Argentinean production, could re-create the conditions necessary for upward social mobility. In this regard, a model based on a “virtuous cycle”—predicated on the notion that improving competitiveness and reducing costs would fuel economic growth—was implemented. This model was to produce higher levels of economic activity, higher governmental revenues and budget surpluses, thus permitting higher levels of public investment and better infrastructure, all in a context of equal access to education, health care and decent housing²⁷. Moreover, Kirchnerismo has worked to strengthen Argentina’s relationships with the non-neoliberal countries of Latin America, notably Venezuela, Ecuador, Cuba and Bolivia, while striving to establish a “South American economic axis” with Brazil²⁸.

In 2010, polls indicated that N. Kirchner would win the presidential elections of 2011 despite the 2008 crisis, the strike of the *ruralistas* (agro-producers), and the 2009 near-electoral defeat (the government won by only 2 points, while losing popular support compared to 2007) (Aritz Recalde, January 2010, personal communication). Kirchner died of a heart

attack on October 27, 2010, leaving a nation in sorrow and uncertainty. During my fieldwork, I witnessed to what extent his death mobilized diverse social groups across the lines of political allegiance and socio-economic class, who spontaneously gathered in public places to express their condolences and sorrow. Formal tribute was paid by a number of foreign presidents, UNASUR and the United Nations. In December 2011, C. Fernández won the presidential election with more than 54% of the vote, which made her the first woman to be elected president in Argentina. Not only did she obtain the largest number of votes since the return to democracy in Argentina in 1983, but her victory over the candidate ranked second, Hermes Binner from the *Frente Amplio Progresista*, who obtained 16.8% of the vote, constitutes an unprecedented advantage in the country's electoral history.

In what follows, I present the core strategies deployed by the Kirchners to reinvent Argentina as a diverse and inclusive nation, and pay particular attention to the measures that most affected Bolivians, Peruvians and Paraguayans in the country during the first decade of the 2000s²⁹. These migrants' enhanced access to a number of social, economic and political rights resulted from public policies that sought to re-incorporate into the system, that is, into productive and meaningful social interaction, a wide range of social groups that had been expelled from it over the previous decade. To counteract the social, economic and political exclusion generated by the 1990s' neoliberal model, the Kirchners fostered inclusion by providing universal access to public goods and services as well as by ensuring equal treatment by the state. Under these circumstances, migrants, along with a number of other disadvantaged groups, became entitled to a wide range of rights as a result of being inhabitants of the nation, whatever their residency status³⁰.

ARGENTINA BECOMES MORE INCLUSIVE AND DIVERSE

An Inclusive Federalism Attentive to the Particular Needs of Provinces and Localities

For the Kirchners, redressing the injuries inflicted on the nation demanded not only dramatic changes in public policy and state priorities but also a reinvention of the nation itself, which was to become *inclusive*, *diverse* and *Latin American*. Fighting against the centralism that had historically silenced the particularities of the country's provinces, the government fostered a broader and more all-encompassing notion of "we and all" (*nosotros y todos*). In this regard, a

new National Ministry of Education was to engineer a *national space* able to integrate the developments of provinces and serve as a surface for inscribing an “Us”. The teacher was conceived as an agent of transmission and re-creation of culture, whereas the school was thought to be a crucial social institution in the binding of what was broken and fragmented, by building bridges between past and future and by incorporating the diverse provincial and local knowledge that had been accumulated throughout the country’s history³¹. In addition, in order to overcome the educational, social and economic differences between provinces, a multitude of ministries and secretariats were given the task of adapting national programs to regional and local realities³². By basing national planning on the distinctive needs of provinces, the government strove to redress the asymmetric distribution of the country’s poverty, which had become structural and increasingly heterogeneous over the previous three decades. The interplay of two sets of processes contributed to the consolidation of poverty. Argentina’s historical centralism had continued to concentrate public resources and opportunities in the nation’s metropolises, mostly in the GBA³³, whereas the 1990s’ decentralization policies (*políticas de descentralización*) had led to an almost complete retreat of the state from its former managerial and financial responsibilities at the municipal and provincial levels, thus, accentuating historical disparities in the allocation of national resources (Lo Vuolo 1998).

Three national programs illustrate Kirchnerismo’s efforts to redress the historically unequal distribution of public resources in Argentina through the implementation of an *inclusive federalism* attentive to the particular needs of provinces and localities. The National Plan of Local Development and Social Economy *Manos a la Obra* (“Let’s get down to work”) was created to generate employment and social development among the *sectores sociales con menos recursos* (social groups with the least resources in society). Combining subsidies, credits and training, this plan sought to improve the competitiveness and commercialization of social undertakings at the local and regional levels. Considering employment as the best mechanism of social integration, the government endorsed “integral projects” that responded to the needs of particular communities. Many of the Bolivians who participated in my research, and who were living in the *partido* of La Plata’s rural area called Las Quintas, benefited from this program, mostly in the form of technical assistance from an agronomist. Another program that responded to the “particularities and customs” of the country’s regions

was the national food security plan known as *El Hambre Más Urgente* (“the most urgent hunger”), which sought to secure people’s access to a sufficient and adequate diet that was respectful of local traditions. A number of social actors—including municipal and provincial governments, schools, health community centres/*centros de salud*, NGOs and citizens—worked together under the coordination of the national government to support public and community efforts. Many of the migrant families whose members I interviewed, who were living in urban areas of the *partido* of La Plata and struggling to make ends meet, benefited from a wide range of goods and services delivered by this plan. This was particularly the case for single parent families (mostly led by women), and for low-income families with young children and pregnant women. Finally, the national plan known as *Familias* (Families) set out to promote the integration and development of families in vulnerable situations, that is, living under precarious conditions, and whose heads lacked employment, by helping to strengthen family bonds and citizenship rights while creating an “identity sphere” at the community level. Its subsidies served to improve families’ living conditions and to develop their productive capacities³⁴. Many of the migrant families living in urban areas of the *partido* who participated in my study benefited from this plan, receiving various subsidies, increased access to health care and support for sports activities geared toward children and youth. These three national plans were cornerstones of Kirchnerismo’s efforts to consolidate a diverse and inclusive Argentina, and, along with its *Política de Recuperación de Derechos Sociales* (Recovery of Social Rights Policy), notably improved migrants’ socio-economic circumstances over the 2000s.

Restoring the Levelling Role to Public Education and Health Care

The Recovery of Social Rights Policy included a vast and varied range of initiatives in all areas of public reach and targeted not only those groups traditionally considered the most vulnerable, but also a new highly diversified range of people, whose circumstances had dramatically deteriorated during the 1990s. From the point of view of this policy, the vulnerable were: children (notably those not attending school, working and/or living under highly precarious conditions); women (especially those who were poor and pregnant and/or heads of single parent families); the elderly (who as a social group were increasingly impoverished and lacked access to public safety nets); the unemployed or precariously

employed and their families (who often lived under extremely marginal conditions and worked in the exploitative and unsafe informal sector); people with disabilities; homosexuals and aboriginal peoples³⁵. As beneficiaries of this policy, these social groups were able to access a large number of tax-free subsidies, universal pensions and different forms of credit (see Appendix C for more information). Ultimately, these measures were predicated on two central goals: a) to restore the universal character of public education and health care, and b) to restore the dignifying and inclusive role of regulated employment. In what follows, I present the initiatives deployed under the Recovery of Social Rights Policy that most impacted Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans in Argentina during the first decade of the 2000s.

The government's commitment to guaranteeing the "integral protection" of children and adolescents (embodied in the new law 26.061³⁶) was apparent in the strategies implemented by the new National Secretariat of Childhood, Adolescence and Family. Among the most significant was the *Asignación Universal por Hijo para Protección Social* (Decree 1602), which consists of a monthly, non-taxable allowance paid to one of the parents, tutors or consanguineous relatives (to the third degree) for each minor in their care, who is under 18 years of age, or regardless of age in the case of a person with disabilities (*discapacitado*), as long as the person whom they are in charge of is not employed, emancipated or receiving other allowances stipulated by Law 24.714 (*Ley de Asignaciones Familiares/Law of Family allowances/stipends*). Also concerned with the healthy development of children were the National Program of Infantile Development known as *Primeros Años*, the School Health Program *Salud Escolar* and the national vaccination campaigns. In order to secure the full participation of vulnerable children and adolescents in the education system, the National Program of Inclusive Education was implemented³⁷ and secondary school was improved and made compulsory. Along with these initiatives, substantial funds were allocated to financing educational infrastructure and equipment, teachers' salaries and training, literacy campaigns, school materials and scholarships³⁸. The varied measures deployed by the new *Secretaría Nacional de Niñez, Adolescencia y Familia* substantially improved the circumstances of children and youth who, along with their families, were living under very precarious conditions in the 2000s. These included impoverished migrant families; indeed, those who

participated in my research (predominantly living in urban and peripheral areas) benefited enormously from these complementary measures.

The government worked to consolidate a *Sistema Nacional de Salud* (National System of Health Care) that would guarantee equal (universal) access for the whole population. Engaging provincial and municipal governments as well as private and community social actors, this health care network focused on prevention and primary health care (*atención primaria*). Central to this new system were public hospitals, counterbalancing the highly segmented access to sanitary conditions, and the *Centros Integradores Comunitarios*, serving as central service points for various public services in the areas of social policy, health care and economic development. In addition, a new National Policy of Prescribed Drugs (through the *REMEDIAR* Program) was established to give out free generic prescription drugs to those who could not afford them³⁹. Together, these measures sought to restore the historic levelling role to public health care, which, along with public education, had previously balanced out inequalities between social classes in Argentina.

As a result of the diverse initiatives implemented under the umbrella of the Recovery of Social Rights Policy, the circumstances of many deeply impoverished people, non-migrants and migrants alike, improved markedly⁴⁰. For the Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans living in the *partido* of La Plata, these measures were particularly important for at least two reasons. First, many of them could not even afford the health care and education services that were considered public in their countries of origin. Migrants often mentioned that Argentina's universal (free) access to public school and health care were the two most important things that the country had given their families, allowing them to fulfill their dreams of greater upward social mobility. In Peru, Bolivia and Paraguay, educational achievement is highly regarded and is often associated with greater upward social mobility. Yet, for most of those who decide to migrate to Argentina, its cost in their countries of origin is such that it remains out of reach. The same applies to health care for poor families, who cannot even afford a minor medical intervention without compromising their financial stability. Second, these initiatives countered the unconstitutional practices endorsed by the government during the 1990s, which forced health care workers and education practitioners to denounce

undocumented migrants and prevent their gaining access to these universal public services (Recalde 2006-a).

“El Trabajo Esclavo Mata”: Reducing Informal and Precarious Employment

In the area of employment, the government deployed a very active campaign of regularization in order to improve work quality while reducing informal labour⁴¹. Considering remunerated, regulated work to be a crucial mechanism of social inclusion that could facilitate wealth distribution and economic growth, the government introduced the *Ley de Ordenamiento Laboral* (Law 25.877) in 2004. This law not only made it compulsory for employers to register their workers but also expanded the state’s oversight mechanisms to ensure its full enactment⁴². Under this new law, the *Plan de Regularización del Trabajo* (Employment Regularization Plan) guided the inspection of companies, and particularly of those with between five and fifty employees, where the highest number of unregistered workers were to be found. In addition, the *Reglamentación de Presunciones Laborales* of 2010⁴³ equipped the AFIP (Federal Administration of Public Revenues) with the *Método de Interpretación de la Realidad Económica*, which allowed the government to estimate the contributions that employers should have paid in cases where workers were either not or under-registered. The new law also established clear procedures on how and when employers should fulfill their obligations (in terms of registering workers and making contributions) while putting in place rigorous sanctions for those who did not provide the necessary documentation or who hindered workers’ regularization⁴⁴.

This approach to managing informality represented a drastic shift from the 1990s, when the government had punished workers for the precarious situations in which they were being forced to work rather than focusing on abusive employers. When employees were “caught working under the table” (in the language of Menem’s government), they often became prey to a number of further injustices such as having to pay unaffordable fines and automatically losing their jobs. When those working precariously were undocumented migrants from neighbouring nations, they could also be incarcerated and even deported (Recalde 2006-a). Submerging migrants in precarious employment by making it almost impossible for them to obtain their papers had been crucial to Menem’s government in two

important ways. First, it provided a scapegoat (the “cheating”, “illegal” migrant) that could be blamed for the crisis resulting from the government’s neoliberal policies. Second, it permitted the government and its supporters to economically and politically exploit migrants’ vulnerability (Recalde 2006-a). In this regard, Kirchnerismo moved away from the previous decade’s “blame the victim” approach. Rather, it penalized those who in fact created and reproduced informality—the employers who avoided making mandatory contributions—and also enforced safety regulations.

Interestingly enough, this set of regularization strategies was particularly effective in the construction and textile sectors⁴⁵. These were labour niches in the Gran Buenos Aires (GBA) where informality had proliferated during the 1990s and that were almost exclusively peopled by migrants. While the construction sector had come to be identified during the 1990s with Paraguayans, Bolivians and Peruvians in the GBA, the textile industry had been considered Asian territory since the 1980s, only occasionally hiring migrants from neighbouring nations as cheap labour during the early 1990s. In 2010, construction work was still seen as “belonging” to Bolivians, Paraguayans and Peruvians while textile production had increasingly opened up to them as employees and self-employed workers, even if the industry was still predominantly controlled by Asian groups.

The regularization campaign implemented by the government during the 2000s was in fact a response to a dramatic incident resulting from the pernicious combination of often undocumented migration and precarious employment. On March 30, 2006, six Bolivians, four of them children, were killed in Buenos Aires by the explosion of a kitchen gas cylinder that set fire to a textile shop where they worked and lived⁴⁶. This terrible incident brought to light two sets of interrelated issues: a) the precarious living conditions and exploitative working circumstances of some undocumented migrants and their families (Acosta et al 2007, Pacecca and Courtis 2006)⁴⁷, and b) a regrettable lack of regulations both at the border and in the national capital that made it possible to exploit undocumented migrants at clandestine textile shops and construction sites (Pacecca and Courtis 2006, Acosta et al 2007)⁴⁸. The magnitude of the case triggered crossed accusations among national officials and those of Buenos Aires, the Bolivian Consulate, textile shop owners and the big clothing brands that buy the

production of these shops. The political juncture also contributed to the government's prompt reaction to this tragedy, since Argentina wanted to keep Bolivia as its energy partner, and the former Buenos Aires mayor had had to resign the previous year due to the death of almost 200 people resulting from a nightclub catching fire. Under these circumstances, the national government authorized Buenos Aires city to inspect private residences where many of the textile shops were located, control the hygiene and safety of workplaces, and launch an awareness campaign to encourage the submission of complaints under the slogan *el trabajo esclavo mata* ("slavery work kills"). As a result of 1,655 operations being conducted, 502 shops were closed down, which provoked protests among Bolivians, who sought to defend their employment (Pacecca and Curtis 2006). In response to these issues, the federal government deployed an intensive regularization campaign and launched a documentation program for migrants. Kirchnerismo's emphasis on enforcing regulated work and documenting migrants has been also interpreted as an efficient strategy for increasing public revenues by securing tax contributions from registered employees, who become new taxpayers, and from employers (I will return to this issue when I examine the new Migration Law in a later section).

In the context of its regularization campaign, Kirchnerismo also put in place a *régimen de empleo* for domestic workers in 2005⁴⁹ that for the first time sought to regulate this occupation⁵⁰. In Argentina, domestic labour or *empleo doméstico* has been mainly done by internal and international migrant women, who, working behind closed doors, have often been subjected to abusive and exploitative working conditions. In the GBA, Paraguayan and Peruvian women gradually replaced internal migrants in the course of the late 1980s and, by the 2010s, they were seen as monopolizing this labour niche⁵¹. The situation of domestic workers had worsened over the 1990s, when the government's *laissez-faire* economic model along with the criminalization of migrants from neighbouring nations permitted a number of rights violations to be committed against these migrant women (Recalde 2006-a). To redress the situation, their new labour regime granted these workers a number of rights, including paid vacations, maternity and sickness leaves, severance pay, and an eight hour workday with extra pay when working overtime and holidays. This regime sought to make domestic workers' legal status equivalent to that of other workers in the country, who were already protected by

labour legislation and collective agreements. According to the Ministry of Labour, almost 1,000,000 people worked in the domestic sector in Argentina in 2010 and 90% of them were not properly registered. By August of that year, 400,000 of these workers had registered themselves in the AFIP ⁵². In line with Kirchnerismo's commitment to youth protection, the new regime limits the number of hours that can be worked by adolescents (to a maximum of 6 hours per day or 36 hours per week among those aged 16 to 18 years old), and increases the minimum age of employment from 14 to 16 years of age⁵³. My fieldwork in La Plata and Buenos Aires showed that this new regime is perceived by employers and employees alike as an important first step toward redressing the historical abuses endured by women working in this sector. Many of the Peruvian and Paraguayan women I interviewed who were domestic workers in La Plata were already benefiting from the new regime's labour rights, with, for instance, pension and health care contributions now being made by employers and employees.

Finally, Kirchnerismo's efforts to "*rescatar el campo*" also benefited migrants from neighbouring nations in the *partido* of La Plata. During the 1990s, agricultural production had been deregulated, "set free to play by the rules of the market", as it was often put. While having devastating effects on small and medium-sized producers, this gave enormous benefits to a few big landowners, who were allowed to produce, commercialize and export at will and by their own rules. To reverse this situation, Kirchnerismo sought to revitalize and democratize agricultural production by supporting small and medium-sized producers. They were provided with financial assistance, including small subsidies to help with buying seeds or to improve infrastructure, and technical assistance from agronomists ⁵⁴. Many horticulturalist Bolivian families in Las Quintas (a rural area of the *partido* of La Plata) were able to get technical assistance from an agronomist paid for by the government.

Results of Kirchnerismo's Policies and the Impact of the International Financial Crisis

In this section, I have shown how Kirchnerismo endeavoured to shape Argentina into an inclusive and diverse nation during the 2000s by embracing the distinctiveness of provinces and their inhabitants, as well as by seeking to reduce the increasingly heterogeneous distribution of poverty in the country. Kirchnerismo sought, among other things, to counter hegemonic discourses that portrayed Buenos Aires as representing the reality of Argentina as a

whole and to reduce the conflicts that this distortion had created. To these ends, Kirchnerismo pursued three sets of interconnected strategies: (a) giving visibility and voice to social actors historically forgotten by the state and consequently erased from the nation's memory; (b) restoring social, economic and political rights to those groups whose members' lives had been made increasingly precarious over the previous decades; and (c) striving to re-incorporate into society, that is, into dignifying, productive and meaningful social interaction, a variety of social actors who had been excluded from the system over the course of the 1990s. These strategies significantly benefited Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans in the country.

As a result of Kirchnerismo's policies, Argentina experienced unusually high economic growth between 2003 and 2008 (its average annual rate during this period was 8%), a notable decrease in unemployment rates (from over 20% to 8%) and a steady drop in poverty and inequality indicators (in 2006, the Gini coefficient had dropped to 1999-2001 levels) (Cruces and Gasparini 2010)⁵⁵. According to official statistics, registered employment increased (by more than 15% among the inspected companies and by 10% among the workers overseen during inspections), whereas the country's tendency towards increasing rates of unregistered unemployment was reversed (dropping from 49% in late 2003 to 36.3% in late 2008)⁵⁶. Under these circumstances, the implementation of new taxes and the cessation of Argentina's international debt payments led to a fiscal surplus that helped to stabilize the economy. This period came to an end in 2007/2008, however, as a result of the international financial crisis of 2007/2008 (Cruces and Gasparini 2010).

At the same time, the social tensions and political instability of 2001-2002 were brought to heel by two core measures: a) an innovative program of monetary transfers benefiting the poor, which translated into an expanded social protection network reaching 20% of the country's households, and b) the strengthening of labour institutions thanks to Kirchnerismo's support of enhanced negotiating powers for unions (Cruces and Gasparini 2010). These measures, along with those included under the umbrella of the Recovery of Social Rights Policy, illustrate the extent to which Kirchnerismo drew on the developments of Peronismo histórico to formulate its public policy. Perón's notion of *justicia social* (social justice)—central to his doctrine and from which its name, Justicialismo, is derived (see also

Appendix C)—is paralleled by Kirchnerismo’s view of *cuidanía inclusiva* (inclusive citizenship). The latter is based on two main postulates: a) a citizen is such only if he or she can effectively exercise his or her rights, and b) full citizenship (*ciudadanía plena*) does not exist without the essentials for a “reasonably healthy and active life”⁵⁷. In both cases, the terms social justice and inclusive citizenship articulate core notions of social inclusion, equality and fairness, and imply a strong federal state that guarantees a) quality employment, which is conceived as a central mechanism of social inclusion that dignifies and empowers a person, and b) universal access to a wide range of public services, which are conceptualized as the right of all inhabitants in the country. The regimes built upon these notions and the utopian societies that their leaders envisioned are in sharp contrast with former exclusionist models, both the oligarchic (before Peronismo) and neoliberal (during the 1990s).

In February 2009, however, the percentage of the population having a negative image of President Fernández increased from 39% to 41% (while the percentage of those with a positive image remained stable at 29%) in the context of the international economic recession, claims for transparency in the government’s criticized management of the INDEC (*Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos*; Noriega 2010), increasing insecurity in the country’s metropolises, the questioning of some influential public officers, charges of embezzlement against the Kirchners and their involvement in the practice of open-cast mining (Svampa and Antonelli 2009). Political opponents to Kirchnerismo have also argued that despite Fernández’s electoral victory of 2011, including the regained control over both chambers of Congress, her second presidential mandate has proved harder than the first one.

In what follows, I examine a core initiative implemented by Kirchnerismo that exemplifies a space of governmentality where the strategies to make Argentina inclusive and diverse also contribute to reinforcing its Latin American allegiances.

BRIDGING DIVERSITIES: KIRCHNERISMO INVESTS THE MEDIA WITH A NEW MORALITY

The promulgation of a new law regulating the media in 2009 was integral to Kirchnerismo’s goal of forging a diverse and inclusive Argentina oriented toward Latin American integration. Known as the *Nueva Ley de Medios* (New Law of Media), Law 26.522⁵⁸ has been considered

crucial in the promotion of cultural and informational democracy (Aritz Recalde 2009-b). By regulating the media and developing mechanisms to decentralize and strengthen competition in this sector, the law has helped to universalize access and lower the price of new information technologies⁵⁹. Core to these reforms has been the new character and role Kirchnerismo attributes to the media, which has become a social activity of public interest (*de interés público*). By investing the media services with a new morality, the government equipped itself with a powerful tool to aid in furthering the socio-cultural development of the Argentinean population⁶⁰ while strengthening Latin American integration. Kirchnerismo drew on the developments of Peronismo histórico in order to design this new law; namely, on its sanctioning of the first *Ley de Medios* (Law 14.241/53) in 1953, and the creation of *TELAM* (the Argentinean National News Agency) in 1945 and *Canal 7* (the public TV Channel) in 1951 (Aritz Recalde, 2009-b).

The regulation of the media services was aimed at redressing the negative consequences of the so-called “free press” encouraged during the 1990s. The privatization and deregulation policies implemented by Menem’s government had led to greater monopolization and commercialization of the country’s media services, which were at the time considered to be a lucrative activity belonging to the private sector. As a result, the media had become a highly profitable business for a select few, who reproduced the neoliberal market logic of segmented access according to income (Aritz Recalde 2011-a, Novick 2008)⁶¹. Under these circumstances, only some influential economic actors and the commercial press were given the freedom to express themselves. Kirchnerismo’s new media law seeks to remedy this situation in three important ways. First, it creates an autonomous and decentralized entity—*Autoridad Federal de Servicios de Comunicación Audiovisual*—to implement, interpret and ensure compliance with the new law⁶². Second, it sets a maximum number of licenses per license holder and type of media, and regulates the duration of licenses in order to prevent the formation of monopolies and oligopolies⁶³. Third, it is aimed at preventing the “foreignization” of the nation’s media in terms of ownership and content⁶⁴.

Kirchnerismo’s goal of forging a diverse and inclusive Argentina oriented toward Latin American integration becomes most apparent in this law’s regulation of the production

and dissemination of media content. The new law establishes that a minimum of 60% of television content has to be national, while cable services must include at least one channel from MERCOSUR and other Latin American countries. A minimum of 50% of broadcasts by private radio stations must be produced in-house (including local news) while 30% of the music played must be of national origin—an exception being so-called “thematic” or “foreign communities” programming, namely, that produced by migrants and their descendants, most of whom come from MERCOSUR countries. In addition, the new law reserves 33% of regular radio broadcasts for NGOs, authorizes aboriginal peoples to broadcast radio and TV programs, and guarantees equal opportunity access to people with sensorial disabilities (by making it compulsory to include closed captioning, sign language and audio-description on TV and cable broadcasts). More generally, the law grants universal access to sporting events and the premieres of national films on television⁶⁵, and commits the government to a) supporting the production of quality children’s educational and cultural content for radio and television⁶⁶, and b) disseminating scientific and artistic knowledge through these mediums⁶⁷.

Moving away from the neoliberal model of the 1990s, this law invests the media with a new morality by turning communication and information services into a powerful tool for the “common good” of the nation. In this regard, the law’s close regulation of media ownership and content has been central to Kirchnerismo’s goal of universalizing access to recreational and quality programming through new technologies while preventing foreign domination (in terms of access and content). This law gives visibility and rights to a number of social actors whose voices had been historically silenced, including aboriginal peoples, migrant communities, the elderly, people with disabilities, and, more generally, Argentinians who are not from Buenos Aires. By granting these groups new entitlements, Kirchnerismo’s inclusive federalism, which permeates the programming of public television and radio⁶⁸, reinforces the same diversity that was being created through the implementation of other public policies (see previous section).

The new law has also allowed the government to powerfully connect the nation’s diversity to that of the wider Latin American region. The inclusion of Latin American broadcasts as part of regular television, cable and radio programming brings home the ethno-

cultural, socio-economic and political diversity of the wider region while portraying it in a positive light—which is in contrast with the contemptuous attitude towards other Latin American countries endorsed under Menem’s Americanization model. In addition, by granting migrant communities, most of whom are from neighbouring nations, the right to produce media, Kirchnerismo has fulfilled two purposes. It has connected the multifaceted realities of migrants’ countries of origin to their contributions to Argentina while institutionalizing its commitment to regional integration and the respect for migrant rights.

The recognition of intra-regional migrants’ present and past contributions to the development of Argentina has also been pursued by other means. While schools were to teach regional and global histories that focused on Latin America (instead of on Europe or the United States as had been the case before)⁶⁹, Kirchnerismo has given these migrants renewed visibility in public discourse and events (I return to this issue in a later section of this chapter). The preferential treatment given to MERCOSUR nationals is most apparent in Argentina’s new migration law of December 2003, which grants them rights equal to those of Argentinians. In what follows, I examine the strategies deployed by Kirchnerismo to construct a positive visibility for the Peruvians, Paraguayans and Bolivians in the country; namely, its articulation of a new “legality” for them after a decade of criminalization. Central to this endeavour has been Kirchnerismo’s commitment to “Latin Americanize” Argentina and to further regional integration. Through a combination of foreign and domestic policies, the government has confronted ingrained national myths claiming the exclusive European ancestry and character of the Argentinian nation. To accomplish this, Kirchnerismo entered into dialogue with the region.

DEEPENING REGIONAL INTEGRATION

The reinvention of Argentina during the first decade of the 2000s was a political project that did not limit itself to making the nation inclusive and diverse, but that also involved reshaping the country’s presence and agency abroad. In this regard, the synergy created between the strategies deployed by Kirchnerismo in the domestic sphere and the alliances it developed regionally and internationally has been of fundamental importance. This required a reshaping of Argentina’s national identity and founding myths while consolidating a multifaceted,

dynamic and democratic state on the international scene. As Peronismo histórico had done before, Kirchnerismo developed a highly diversified foreign policy supported by intensive presidential diplomacy. Its multilateralism has sought to preserve Argentina's autonomous decision-making capacity while deepening regional integration and strengthening relationships with other regions considered vital to the production of national goods and services. Kirchnerismo has also diversified its bilateral strategies, increasing Argentina's presence in Asia, opening up new markets in Africa and consolidating traditional markets in Europe and North America. Argentinean embassies have played a crucial role in the development of a national and integrated policy by promoting the country's foreign trade and tourism abroad (as had been done under Peronismo). Kirchnerismo's efforts to strengthen Argentina's image as a peace-keeper on the international scene have been apparent in the country's active participation in the United Nations' peace and relief missions⁷⁰.

Argentina's new history would integrate each province's particular development while exposing the prevailing unequal distribution of resources and opportunities. Reshaping the nation's official past was fundamental in creating a new present as well as in formulating a different future. Kirchner and Fernández set out to transform a "European" nation into a "Latin American" one via three types of measures. First, they sought to strengthen MERCOSUR while working to consolidate other strategic alliances in the region such as UNASUR (*Unión de Naciones Sudamericanas*) and TeleSur. Second, the government capitalized on the celebrations surrounding Argentina's bicentennial in 2010 by institutionalizing the nation's renewed (Latin American) origins and by giving its diverse and inclusive character powerful performative impetus (issues that I examine in the next section). Third, Kirchnerismo passed a new migration law in December 2003 that grants nationals of the MERCOSUR rights equal to those enjoyed by Argentinians (which I examine in a later section of this chapter). In this section, I analyze the first of these strategies.

During the first decade of the 2000s, the government presented Latin American integration as an integral part of Argentina's foreign policy, with the MERCOSUR as a crucial vehicle for the former⁷¹. In this context, Argentina has actively participated in the elaboration of measures for managing intra-regional migration, which have led to the emergence of a new

political agenda in the region (Domenech 2007). Brazilian presidents Lula Ignacio Da Silva and Dilma Rousseff have also played a crucial role in steering regional integration in a new direction, as I will show shortly. This has meant consolidating a more multifaceted MERCOSUR by furthering its political, social and institutional aspects while strengthening other strategic alliances in Latin America.

By the early 2000s, MERCOSUR's unfulfilled promises and the renewed asymmetries that its initial development brought about were evident (see chapter I) and became the rationale for a renewed integration within a context of shifting regional politics. MERCOSUR's second phase has sought to invest integration with a human face while enhancing its economic aspects. The bloc has advanced human rights, strengthened democratic institutions and fought against poverty in the region⁷². Protecting the environment, promoting sustainable development and consolidating equitable socio-economic growth⁷³ have been also viewed as integral to MERCOSUR's goals. During this period, the bloc expanded its membership by incorporating Peru (2003), Colombia and Ecuador (2005) as associated states, while Venezuela has been in the process of becoming its fifth member state since 2006 (see Appendix C). Known as MERCOSUR *ampliado*, the enlarged bloc has tried to consolidate integration's institutional and juridical aspects, which has led to talk of MERCOSUR's new institutional stage⁷⁴.

This evolution did not take place in a vacuum but rather was representative of two sorts of shifts taking place in the region's geopolitics. On the one hand, there has been a turn away from the 1990s' neoliberalism and its disastrous consequences: namely, the economic, political and cultural dependency imposed by foreign aid through harsh privatization and structural budgetary adjustment policies that were widely implemented in Latin America (Black 2002). On the other hand, there has also been a shift toward alternative futures and different ways of conceiving nationhood and statehood. Strengthened democratic regimes have envisaged more equitable societies, with less poverty and crime and healthier living conditions, while protecting human rights and fostering sustainable development (Novick 2010). Kirchnerismo's project of "Latin Americanizing" Argentina has been part of this challenging yet creative juncture in Latin America. This period has been diversely interpreted

as a turn to the left in South American politics (Lazo-Civinades 2005), as a transnationalization of Latin America through regional integration (Armony 2011) or even as an instance of opening the door to a new phase of re-establishing national foundations in the region, leading toward democratic consolidation (Novick 2011)⁷⁵. Thus, although not unique in its efforts to make Argentina diverse, inclusive and Latin American, Kirchnerismo's contribution to the advancement of regional integration has nonetheless been crucial. This has become apparent in two particular ways.

First, Kirchnerismo, along with its Brazilian counterpart the *Partido dos Trabalhadores*—under the presidencies of Luis Ignacio Lula Da Silva (2003-2010) and that of his successor Dilma Rousseff (since January 2011)—have played a decisive role in moving MERCOSUR away from its neoliberal, mercantile origins. Specifically, Kirchnerismo's commitment to defending human rights, coupled with the Brazilian Workers' Party's concern with social justice and workers' rights, have been vital to envisioning an alternative integration. These two political forces (leading two of the most powerful economies in the region) have been extremely influential in setting the terms of negotiations within the MERCOSUR as well as for implementing agreements signed by the bloc (Serna 2001, Moniz Bandeira 2004, Aritz Recalde 2004, 2006-b, 2010-a, MERCOSUR's official website). The alliance between Argentina and Brazil in this period, which has managed to overcome the historical rivalry between these countries (Moniz Bandeira 2004), has led to developing strong interdependence based on joint actions and coordinated efforts to strengthen the MERCOSUR (Aritz Recalde 2010-a)⁷⁶. Without a doubt, regional integration's second phase has been marked by the leadership of Kirchnerismo and its Brazilian counterpart.

Second, Kirchnerismo has been a vital political force in advancing other strategic alliances in Latin America, namely, by helping reshape UNASUR's role in the region and by strongly supporting TeleSur. UNASUR (*Unión de Naciones Sudamericanas*) was created in December 2004 under the name *Comunidad Suramericana de Naciones (CSN)*, and in April 2007 adopted its new name⁷⁷. UNASUR includes twelve states: Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Suriname and Venezuela. While the CSN was largely concerned with political, economic and technological integration⁷⁸,

UNASUR's priorities have centered on fostering the integral well-being of the region's populations and protecting its democratic regimes. As stipulated by its Founding Treaty of May 2008, UNASUR's core objective is to constitute a space for cultural, social, economic and political integration among peoples in the region by giving priority to political dialogue, social policy, education, energy, infrastructure, funding and the environment. UNASUR seeks to eliminate socio-economic inequality, achieve social inclusion, encourage greater levels of participation by citizens, strengthen democracy and reduce asymmetries among states in the region, while reinforcing the sovereignty and independence of its member states⁷⁹.

UNASUR has proven crucial in the defense of democratic regimes in the region—indeed, it helped defeat the 2008 attempt to destabilize the government of Evo Morales in Bolivia as well as the 2010 coup d'état in Ecuador. In both cases, UNASUR's actions showed that integration could create a privileged consensual space for protecting democratic governments in the region (Novick 2010; and Aritz Recalde 2010-a). The leading role played by Kirchnerismo in consolidating UNASUR was publicly recognized by its member states when Néstor Kirchner was unanimously elected General Secretary in May 2010. Kirchner himself was widely seen as a fervent believer in the unity of Latin American peoples and as someone who fought to bring about profound changes in both Argentina and the wider region. Indeed, UNASUR described his death in October 2010 as “depriving Latin America of a key leader in the construction of a region without exclusion”⁸⁰. Throughout his time with UNASUR, Kirchner took an active part in many initiatives with important implications for Latin America, such as helping facilitate the rapprochement between Colombia and Venezuela, defending democracy—particularly in the face of the attempted coup d'état in Ecuador—and pushing for the implementation of the *Cláusula Democrática para América del Sur*. Since his death, Kirchnerismo's role in UNASUR has been assumed by his widow, current Argentinean president, Cristina Fernández.

Kirchnerismo has also played an important role in supporting *TeleSUR: La Nueva Televisora del Sur*, whose slogan is *Nuestro Norte es el Sur* (“Our North is the South”⁸¹). TeleSUR is a Latin American communications-multimedia organization that aims to foster union between the peoples of the South, and that considers itself to be a space and a voice for

the construction of a new communications order. Created in 2005 as a non-profit, public organization by the Venezuelan Broadcasting Corporation (*Corporación Venezolana de Radiodifusión*), TeleSUR has been sponsored by seven Latin American states (Argentina, Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Uruguay and Venezuela). The promotion of an integrationist vision of peoples (*visión integradora de los pueblos*) through a certain work ethos (commitment, excellence, group work, social vocation, social transformation, creativity and ethics) has permitted TeleSUR to counterbalance the big international news chains, including CNN, Univisión, BBC, TVE and Deutsche Welle. The “informative and formative” content in its programming, which is transmitted via open signal and satellite to Latin America, the Antilles, the United States, Europe, North Africa and Syria, has generated strong reactions among some US politicians⁸². Kirchnerismo’s support of TeleSUR has been apparent since its creation through Argentina’s financial sponsorship⁸³ and contribution of content to its programming (through *Visión 7 Internacional*, a weekly show produced in Argentina by the public TV network). Argentina also dedicates a large section of its News Agency TELAM to the promotion of peer agencies in Brazil, Venezuela, Guatemala, Mexico, Ecuador, Paraguay, Bolivia and Cuba as well as of TeleSUR⁸⁴.

Kirchnerismo’s efforts to further regional integration have strategically underlined the Latin American roots of the nation and the reinforced allegiances of the state. Its active role in a) “humanizing” MERCOSUR, b) strengthening UNASUR’s capacity to protect democracies in the region, and c) supporting TeleSUR’s freedom of the press and pluralist agenda has demonstrated Argentina’s commitment to its “Latin American-ness”. In what follows, I examine two other powerful strategies that Kirchnerismo deployed in pursuing its broad political project: the 2010 celebrations of the bicentenary and the adoption of a new migration law in December 2003. The former sought to usher the nation’s Latin American past into the present, while the latter was aimed at maintaining the state’s commitment to defending human rights.

FROM INDEPENDENCE TO REGIONAL INTEGRATION: THE BICENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

Known as the *Celebraciones del Bicentenario de la Patria*, a wide range of events took place over the course of the year 2010 to commemorate Argentina’s 200 years of independence.

Celebrations began early on in all provinces, and while they were also held abroad, the core events took place in Buenos Aires at the *Paseo del Bicentenario* from May 21 to May 25, 2010⁸⁵. The *Paseo* was conceived as a federal open-air space to commemorate the 200 years of the *Revolución de Mayo*⁸⁶ together with the provinces and invited countries. A significant part of the *9 de Julio* Avenue was taken up with six Thematic Staging Posts (Science and Technology, Youth and Education, Environment, Culture, Human Rights, and Work and Production) organized by various ministries and NGOs. These posts hosted talks and debates that reflected Kirchnerismo's policy priorities. The government's inclusive federalism was showcased in twenty-two Provincial Stands (portraying the provinces' "distinctive identities")⁸⁷ and in the *Paseo de los Sabores* (a culinary fair offering traditional regional dishes), which included migrant groups and organizations representing the most disadvantaged social groups in the country. Five Country Pavillions presented artistic shows put on by participating countries, most of which were Latin American⁸⁸. Other displays, including six Thematic Doors and four large stages, featured elements of Argentinean history and culture⁸⁹.

The wide range of artistic, historical and educational activities held at the *Paseo*, which were supported by a monumental deployment of infrastructure, gave high visibility to the government's message of inclusive federalism and imbued it with powerful performative force⁹⁰. Musical and dance performances (ranging from rock and folklore to classical and *avant garde*)⁹¹, audiovisual shows that utilized new technologies in their analysis of so-called *broad historical national themes*⁹², the live broadcast of an extremely popular soccer game on huge outdoor screens⁹³, and a sports car race down *9 de Julio* Avenue⁹⁴ all contributed to creating a powerful atmosphere, with emotional momentum that touched even those who watched the celebrations from home⁹⁵. The commemorations gave recognition to the daily work done by the government, in particular when certain large-scale performances showed the concrete results of its programs, plans and projects. These achievements were also portrayed in stands and presented in speech as the collaborative efforts of a number of new public institutions created by Kirchnerismo. Overall, the events of the bicentenary sought to reflect a federal, pluralistic and participative nation with its gaze fixed on Latin America.

The government granted preferential spaces at the *Paseo* to the provinces, aboriginal peoples, migrant communities and the most disadvantaged social categories (the beneficiaries

of the main national social programs I have described in a previous section), which confirmed its commitment to the inclusive and diverse character of Argentina. These groups were not only given stands to showcase their “specificities”, but also mentioned prominently during commemorations (by highlighting public efforts to foster their “integration”) and included in huge parades, where a multitude of artistic expressions were featured⁹⁶. These official demonstrations of “plurality” and “participation” were given a federalist framing that linked together the diverse members of the nation from historical to recent times.

The government also took advantage of the celebrations to emphasize its commitment to the “Latin Americanness” of Argentina. Appreciation was expressed for the contributions made by the so-called *colectividades latinoamericanas* (Latin American migrant groups) in the country by including them in the *Desfile de la Integración* and the *Paseo Gastronómico*, events that for the government signalled “the fraternal union between peoples and the integration of Argentina to Latin America and the world”⁹⁷. Referring to her Latin American peers, President C. Fernández remarked: “We know that our *camino* [path] is the same path of San Martín, Bolívar, Artigas and Martí”⁹⁸, a comment that clearly sought to align Argentina’s efforts with those of other heroes of Latin America. At a presidential speech broadcast on National TV and Radio (*Cadena Nacional*) on May 25, 2010 Fernández stated that she was glad to celebrate the Bicentenary of Argentinean Independence with other influential Latin American leaders, and signalled the importance of “Latin American unity”⁹⁹. Eight Latin American presidents participated in the celebrations (Brazilian Lula Da Silva, Paraguayan Fernando Lugo, Venezuelan Hugo Chávez, Ecuadorian Rafael Correa, Uruguayan José Mujica, Bolivian Evo Morales, Chilean Sebastián Piñera and overthrown Honduran Manuel Zelaya) along with nineteen representatives of other countries¹⁰⁰.

In addition to offering performative public (national) space to the *colectividades* and reinforcing regional diplomatic bonds, Fernández’s government pursued a third strategy that was also core to its goal of “Latin Americanizing” Argentina. Namely, the President launched the *Salón de los Patriotas Latinoamericanos* (Gallery of Latin American Patriots) on May 25, 2010 in the company of other political leaders from the region who were participating in the celebrations of the Bicentenary. The gallery is located on the first floor of the *Casa Rosada*¹⁰¹

and has thirty-eight portraits of major Latin American political and social figures on permanent display, which narrate the history of the continent¹⁰². The government described the opening of the gallery as “a gesture that ratifies Argentina’s commitment to the advancement of Latin American integration”¹⁰³. Coupled with the negotiations that took place at related events¹⁰⁴, the launching of this gallery helped institutionalize the re-writing of the nation’s official past while reinforcing the renewed alliances that the state had more recently built with other governments in the region.

Fernández’s government has implemented a number of other strategies with the goal of making the Bicentenary of 2010 a core component of Argentina’s official history, in particular vis-à-vis the Centenary of 1910¹⁰⁵. One was *la Casa del Bicentenario* (the House of the Bicentenary) created by the *Secretaría de la Cultura de la Presidencia de la Nación* in Buenos Aires. *La Casa* is devoted to reflecting upon the political, social and cultural transformations that took place in Argentina over the two hundred year period through exhibits, debates, seminars, cinema, music, dance and theatre. Its goal is to examine the themes that run through Argentinean history, the so-called “broad historical themes”, which are not different from the “new national space of belonging for all” that other ministries were seeking to build (see previous section on Kirchnerismo’s strategies to make the nation more inclusive and diverse). *La Casa* also highlights the diversity of the nation and encourages Argentinians to rethink their identity so as to discuss the “type of nation that they envision for the future”¹⁰⁶. Another strategy was the *Web Mural Bicentenario* (Mural Web of the Bicentenary), an interactive pedagogical tool that makes it possible to navigate through the country’s history, which was created by *Canal Encuentro* (the first TV Channel of the Ministry of Education)¹⁰⁷, *Educ.ar* (the educational portal of the Argentinean State)¹⁰⁸ and the *Casa del Bicentenario*. The Mural’s website has a video library on the period from 1810 to 2010, offers an iconographical coverage of historical events and provides a wide range of other resources for teachers. Moreover, two other interactive tools about the bicentenary¹⁰⁹ along with various new Internet sites allowed people to follow the celebrations, vote for who they thought were the new Argentinean icons and relive the events¹¹⁰.

This varied set of educational resources has been key to Kirchnerismo’s strategies aimed at Latin Americanizing the nation. By narrating the (updated) official history through

the use of new technologies, the government has a powerful tool able to reach a wide range of audiences—including younger generations of students, teachers, activists, practitioners and citizens in general—who use Internet-based social communication tools as part of their daily virtual interaction. Crucial to this have been new educational policies leading to the adoption of new technologies by schools, public libraries and other community organizations along with the new media law's emphasis on democratizing content through the use of such technologies. These new resources for communicating official content have become a crucial pedagogical tool of Kirchnerismo, effectively complementing the more traditional strategies being deployed to accomplish its political project.

The celebrations of the Bicentennial represented an important opportunity for Kirchnerismo because they permitted the government to stage its efforts to forge a pluralist, inclusive and federalist nation while publicly ratifying its strengthened alliances in the region. The year-long commemorations were also key to institutionalizing Argentina's Latin Americanness both domestically and abroad. The planning of these celebrations gave the government the opportunity to deploy different strategies for reinforcing both the new official version of Argentina's national identity and the state's role in Latin America. The use of new technologies in the transfer of educational content, along with the variety of performative representations offered at the Paseo, were powerful tools for pursuing this goal. In the end, these different measures made it possible for the government to materialize its project of re-writing Argentina's history and re-shaping its present by anchoring both more firmly to the region. As we will see in the next section, the adoption of a new migration law worked towards achieving the same goal: strengthening Argentina's sense of Latin American belonging while deepening regional integration.

LA NUEVA LEY DE MIGRACIONES: MAKING REGIONAL INTEGRATION A NATIONAL PRIORITY

As discussed earlier, Kirchnerismo has considered developing South American integration to be indispensable, largely because it has seen Argentina's goals of reducing inequalities and fighting hunger and poverty as regional priorities shared by its partner countries. Kirchnerismo has argued that the twin goals of integration-development and democracy-human rights

protect and reinforce one another, and make it easier to fight against a wide range of inequalities¹¹¹. In line with this view, Kirchnerismo introduced a new migration law.

Product of the long work of a wide range of social actors (Asa and Ceriani Cernadas 2004)¹¹², the *Ley de Migraciones 25.871* was approved by the National Congress (with the consensus of all political parties) in December 2003 and was adopted in January 2004; however, it was only enacted in May 2010¹¹³. Unlike other issues, the defense of migrants' rights in Argentina did not emerge solely in response to an international juncture, but is rooted in the country's political experience (Jelin 2006)¹¹⁴. The adoption of this new law has been interpreted as an historic achievement for Argentina (Novik 2010, Ceriani Cernadas and Asa 2005, Domenech 2007) since it puts an end to the abuses and unconstitutional practices carried out under the previous migration law of 1981. Reflecting the national security logic of the last Argentinean dictatorship (1976-1983), the *Ley 22.439: Ley General de Migraciones y de Fomento de la Inmigración*, known as *Ley Videla*, violated a wide range of human rights. Contrary to what is established in the National Constitution, it did not allow "irregular" migrants to access primary education and forced personnel of schools, hospitals and other public and private institutions to denounce them. In addition, arbitrary detentions and expulsions were regularly conducted by the *Dirección Nacional de Migraciones* (DNM) and the auxiliary migration police (Gendarmerie, Aeronautic Police and Naval Prefecture) without any intervention by the judiciary (Kweitel 2001, Ceriani Cernadas and Asa 2002, Cernadas 2003). The pernicious effects of this law became the most prominent during Menem's government, notably from 1995-1999, when migration policy was the most restrictive since the return to democracy (Marmora 2004, Novick 2008). In contrast, Law 25.871 seeks to formulate a new national demographic policy that strengthens the country's socio-cultural fabric while promoting migrants' socio-economic integration (Novik 2010, Nejamkis and Rivero Sierra 2010).

Under the new law, migration is seen as an essential human right and the state is obliged to guarantee it (art.4)¹¹⁵. The law grants a wide range of other rights to migrants regardless of their migration status (even in situations of "irregularity"), including education (art.7), health care (art. 8), equal rights for nationals and foreigners (art. 6), "due process" in the case of detention and expulsion (arts. 61 and 70), free legal assistance and the services of an

interpreter (art. 86), participation in decisions regarding public life and the administration of local communities (art. 11) and family reunification (art.10) (Giustiniani ed. 2004; Asa and Ceriani Cernadas 2004, 2005; Ceriani Cernadas and Asa 2005; Acosta et all 2007; Novick 2010). Moreover, Law 25.871 focuses on regularizing undocumented migrants (art. 17) (Asa and Ceriani Cernadas 2005)¹¹⁶, an about-face from the Ley Videla's creation of "irregularity" by its emphasis on policing undocumented migrants and establishing burdensome bureaucratic procedures.

This new norm also marks the first time in the history of Argentinean migration legislation that a regional (Latin American) integration process has been cited (art. 28) and offers special recognition to nationals of the MERCOSUR ampliado (art.23- 1)¹¹⁷. Although the law continues to establish residency according to traditional criteria such as work, study and family ties, through its "nationality criteria" (art. 23-1), it authorizes citizens of the bloc to remain in Argentina for a period of up to two years, which can be extended with multiple entries and exits (Asa and Ceriani Cernadas 2004). The core principles of this migration law confirm Kirchnerismo's commitment to defending human rights and deepening regional integration. Nevertheless, the very long delay in its enactment along with the problems inherent in its initial implementation have raised serious questions about the degree to which official discourse and legislation have been coherent with the public strategies deployed on the ground to carry out the new law¹¹⁸.

Under the aegis of the new law, the *Dirección Nacional de Migraciones* (DNM) created the *Programa Nacional de Normalización Documentaria Migratoria* (Decree 836/2004) in 2004. This program was oriented towards regularizing the status of foreigners while setting out new policies conducive to their integration. Even though preferential treatment was given to MERCOSUR migrants, an amnesty was also granted to non-MERCOSUR nationals who were in Argentina on June 30, 2004. The *Plan de Regularización Migratoria* (Decree 1169/2004) not only gave these migrants six months to obtain a temporary residence permit, which was valid for up to two years and could later be made permanent, but also suspended their expulsion (Novick 2010, Ceriani Cernadas and Asa 2005)¹¹⁹. Then in June 2005, as a result of the tragic killing of six Bolivians at a textile shop in Buenos Aires (see previous section on this), the DNM passed another ruling regularizing the situation of

nationals of the MERCOSUR ampliado (by Decree 578/2005). Known as *Patria Grande (PG)*, this program entitled intra-regional migrants to obtain their temporary residence (for up to two years) through accelerated procedures, after which they could become permanent residents if they had found “licit” means of making a living (Acosta et al 2007, Domenech 2008 and Novik 2010)¹²⁰. The program, which ran from April 2006 to April 2009, was initially launched in Buenos Aires city and province and was later extended to other provinces. From the beginning, PG was accompanied by a strong awareness campaign that highlighted the link between migration (residency) status and official labour regularization campaigns (Pacecca and Courtis 2006). This program has been favourably viewed as the most important measure deployed by the government to guarantee the “right to identity” of the migrant population (Acosta et al 2007), as a step forward despite the obstacles that it faced over its implementation (Novick 2010), and as the most important politico-administrative instrument regulating immigration from MERCOSUR countries to Argentina (Nejamkis and Rivero Sierra 2010).

PG’s implementation was divided into two stages. The first consisted of initiating procedures to obtain Argentinean residency, through which migrants obtained a *certificado de residencia precaria*, often simply called “*la precaria*” by migrants. Core to the success of PG’s first stage was that migrants could present any available piece of identification at a number of designated places, including collaborating institutions and adherent municipalities, in order to get their precaria. With this certificate in hand, migrants were entitled to legally work right away in Argentina by initiating the procedures to obtain either the CUIL (*Clave Única de Identificación Laboral*) or the CUIT (*Clave única de Identificación Tributaria*), which indicate that a worker is registered to make the mandatory contributions to retirement and pension plans. In addition, the precaria was valid until migrants could fill in their application for residency. These facilitated bureaucratic procedures, and the extended time permitted to undertake them allowed migrants to reside and work legally in Argentina, something that had been impossible during the 1990s. The operational, infrastructural and logistical deficiencies that permeated this decentralization have been not minor, however. The personnel at the collaborating agencies, most of whom were volunteers, were not trained, did not have the resources to properly do their work (Pacecca and Courtis 2006), and tended to be

overworked (Nejamkis and Rivero Sierra 2010). The second stage of the program involved presenting the remaining documentation, including criminal records and certified birth certificates, and fulfilling several other requirements, which partially changed throughout the implementation of the program (Nejamkis and Rivero Sierra 2010).

The implementation of PG and the nationality criteria of the new migration law led to the regularization of 680,834 migrants, who were nationals of the MERCOSUR ampliado, between 2006 and 2009. These migrants obtained their precaria, temporary or permanent residency in Argentina. Out of the 423,712 migrants who did so through PG, most were Paraguayans (248,086 people), being followed by Bolivians (105,017) and Peruvians (47,464). At the same time, 257,123 other migrants benefited from the implementation of the “nationality criteria”. In this case, Bolivians constituted the largest group (97,790), being closely followed by Paraguayans (55,519) and Peruvians (53,625) (Novick 2010)¹²¹. These figures and the political discourse that accompanied them, along with the strategies deployed by Kirchnerismo to document migrants, have come under scholarly scrutiny (as I show shortly). Paradoxically, however, researchers have rarely questioned the legalistic approach underlying these debates, which assumes that documentation guarantees “full integration”—a term that in and of itself is polysemic and problematic. Two exceptions to this are Nejamkis and Rivero Sierra (2010) and Domenech (2007)¹²².

Acosta et al (2007) argue that, even if PG’s first stage was rolled out without major problems, the implementation of its second phase was quite problematic and permeated by uncertainty. Likewise, Nejamkis and Rivero Sierra (2010) note that there was often no information available on where and how complement the procedures, and claim that PG’s most significant problem was the lack of coordination between the DNM and the RENAPER (*Registro Nacional de las Personas*). Prior to obtaining their DNI, migrants had to get their residency at the DNM. It was only then that the RENAPER produced their DNIs. Nevertheless, even if according to PG the DNM did not require migrants to provide a birth certificate, the RENAPER did so before handing out a DNI. As a result, many migrants could obtain their residency but not their DNIs¹²³. Others have argued that the mechanisms allowing migrants to be exempted from paying the mandatory processing fees, which continued to be onerous for most, were not known while the notion of “licit” means of making a living was not

defined, thus leaving ample room for discretionary interpretation by bureaucrats (Nejamkis and Rivero Sierra 2010; Asa and Ceriani Cernadas 2004, 2005; Ceriani Cernadas and Asa 2005; Acosta et al 2007).

PG's precarious implementation (in its second stage) along with the delayed enactment of the new migration law (from 2004 to 2010) prevented intra-regional migrants from exercising most of the rights granted to them (Asa and Ceriani Cernadas 2004, 2005; Ceriani Cernadas and Asa 2005; Acosta et al 2007; Domenech 2008). In particular, their rights to health care, education, social security, rehabilitation and work were violated due to erroneous interpretations of the new law's scope (Acosta et al 2007, Ceriani Cernadas and Asa 2005)¹²⁴. These incidents were often legitimated by the persistence of discriminatory, xenophobic and racist discourse and the practices promoted by certain media and government officials (Acosta et al 2007); they were also reinforced by the bureaucratic obstacles that made it very difficult for migrants to obtain their DNI (Caggiano 2008). Under these circumstances, the absence of training programs and information campaigns only aggravated the vulnerability of migrants, since confused and misinformed public officers at the border and in national territory tended to continue applying the previous unconstitutional migration law (Acosta et al 2007, Pacecca and Courtis 2006).

Some scholars have been more positive in their evaluation of PG¹²⁵ by pointing out that, unlike the short-run life of previous amnesties granted by democratic governments in Argentina since 1949, this program permanently regularizes migrants and has to be understood as public policy (Novick 2010, Nejamkis and Rivero Sierra 2010). These scholars have also emphasized that it is the first time that the government, together with different entities (municipal, civil society and religious groups, migrant associations and unions), has collectively designed and implemented a strategy for these sorts of procedures¹²⁶. Moreover, they have claimed that MERCOSUR has generated profound changes at various levels of the Argentinean state apparatus, which have increased the importance of regional integration in shaping new policies, whereas the "ideological climate" of the new migration law has brought to the fore the notion of a more egalitarian society in which the potential of youth and the contributions of migrants are valued (Novick 2010, Nejamkis and Rivero Sierra 2010)¹²⁷. Thus, the positive views of PG have discerned Kirchnerismo's progress in the area of migration by

noting: (a) the program's permanent character vis-à-vis earlier, reactive amnesties; (b) the unprecedented collaboration underpinning its design and implementation; and (c) the transformative force of the current historical moment in Latin America as its backdrop.

Scholars examining Kirchnerismo's discourse on international migration have claimed that, compared to that of previous decades, the new direction that is in evidence in the 2000s is very significant. Domenech (2007), for example, argues that the greatest proof of a rupture with the past is the introduction of a human rights perspective (and the concomitant abandonment of the national security doctrine promoted under the previous migration law) along with the incorporation of the notion of communitarian (MERCOSUR) citizenship. Paradoxically, however, even though Kirchnerismo's discourse and policy are both based on articulating human rights, communitarian citizenship and cultural pluralism, its practices are instead directed at regularizing migrants' administrative situation (Domenech 2007). This has been interpreted as evidence of the "cost/benefit view" of migration inherent in the human rights perspective (van Selm 2005, Guild 2005), which underlies the contradictions arising from the attempt to reconcile international legislation with the interests of the state (Morris 2002). Moreover, while the Argentinean state's emphasis on labour regulation and migrants' documentation are at least partly motivated by the potential tax revenues generated by registered migrants (Nejamkis and Rivero Sierra 2010, Domenech 2007), documentation campaigns also respond to security concerns arising from integration (Domenech 2007)¹²⁸. In light of this, Domenech (2008-a, -b) argues that, beyond the official rhetoric of inclusion, which has not reformulated the relationship between migration and development, *a new ideology of assimilation* has been put in place by the state. In other words, although state policies and discourse on international migration and cultural diversity have been substantially reconfigured in Argentina (most notably vis-à-vis the 1990s), in practice, there has been little or no change in the socio-economic conditions of migrants and in the measures deployed to substantiate the pluralist discourse adopted by the state. However, the results of my fieldwork show that the circumstances of Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans in the *partido* of La Plata have improved, if unevenly, during the first decade of the 2000s.

BEYOND THE NEW MIGRATION LAW

Throughout this chapter, I have examined the multiple and complementary strategies deployed by Kirchnerismo to transform Argentina into a diverse, inclusive Latin American nation¹²⁹. The accomplishment of such a political project has involved creating new institutions for the state, changing their goals and practices, and investing their strategies with a very strong, inclusive federalism. The renewed presence of the federal government at the provincial and local levels, along with its adjustment-to-local-needs approach to public policy design, have been crucial for Kirchnerismo. Allowing the state to recapture the terrain that it had abandoned during the 1990s (due to decentralization, privatization and other neoliberal policies), this strengthened federalism has also been fundamental to the deployment of measures aimed at creating a more encompassing national space. The inclusive approach of Kirchnerismo has sought to embrace the historically neglected diversity of provinces and their peoples, while integrating into the system other socially marginal categories whose voices had been equally silenced. Addressing the realities of these populations has been part of the government's effort to counter the unequal distribution of public resources and services. At the same time, entitling marginal categories to specific rights on the basis of their particularities has helped reinforce the inclusive national diversity being promoted by the government. Under these circumstances, most of the strategies deployed by Kirchnerismo were seen as an urgent response to the devastating effects of the neoliberalism of the 1990s. Redressing the "injuries committed to the nation" was considered by the government to be a pressing task that was made all the more apparent by the country's increasingly heterogeneous poverty.

As we have seen, however, Kirchnerismo's political project has deeper roots, and is representative of a particular historical moment in the region. At this particular geo-political juncture, Kirchnerismo capitalized on the 2010 celebrations of the Bicentenary of Argentina's Independence to strengthen regional alliances and to institutionalize the nation's renewed official past. Kirchnerismo's active participation in the furthering of regional integration together with its adoption of a new migration law formalized its allegiances to the region while demonstrating Argentina's Latin Americanness. Integrationist policy and discourse were anchored in the nation's renewed vision of its ancestry and, in particular, in the restored place of the founding fathers of the *Patria Grande* in its history.

Although it is still early to properly evaluate these developments and their consequences for the region, some important changes are already apparent in Argentina. Among the most prominent is the country's new migration law, which considers this phenomenon to be a human right with the state as its guarantor, and which privileges MERCOSUR *ampliado* nationals. Despite the well-founded criticism of *Patria Grande*'s implementation and the law's long-delayed enactment, intra-regional migrants have been granted substantial social, political, economic and cultural rights in Argentina, which had too often been violated in the recent past. Accessing these rights is, of course, a different story, and requires a number of other changes going beyond new legal entitlements. In this regard, the inclusive public policies implemented by *Kirchnerismo* and the official discourse surrounding them have been important. Respecting what is established in the National Constitution, they have promoted universal access to a range of social, economic and political rights, without discriminating on the basis of legal status. As a result, migrants (even those whose migration status is "irregular") have been able to access a multitude of public services, goods and non-taxable subsidies and allowances as have other disadvantaged, non-migrant groups in Argentina.

In light of the dramatic change in the legal status of intra-regional migrants introduced by the new migration law along with the universal accessibility to a wide range of basic rights fostered by *Kirchnerismo*'s inclusive public policies, the following four chapters examine the experiences of Bolivians, Paraguayans and Peruvians in the *partido* of La Plata during the first decade of the 2000s. As will become apparent, these migrants' experiences differ not so much because of their particular (legal) status, but rather due to where they reside and work in the *partido* and their gender.

CHAPTER IV: Experiencing Legality in Urban Settings

In this Chapter, I examine a wide range of urban issues that framed the experiences of Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans living and/or working in La Plata city during the 2000s. The cases I present show the extent to which personal and family decisions regarding migration are at the same time representative and transgressive of well-established ethnic patterns that have shaped migrants' residence and work choices in the *partido*. In the first part of the chapter, I analyze the case of a Bolivian couple who initially moved to a rural area, but soon after decided to settle in the city. Their urban labour trajectories illustrate three important issues: a) the degree to which migrants' labour niches in La Plata are both gendered and ethnicized, b) the uneven impact of Kirchnerismo's regularization campaigns on diverse migrants, and c) how the solid presence of economically successful Chinese migrants has led to the overall more favourable repositioning of Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans in the city's ethnic hierarchy of value.

In the second part of the chapter, I analyze how the narratives of migrant men differ from those of women. While men's accounts focus on personal work performance, those of women bring to the forefront familial and other social ties by highlighting the costly implications of migration for all parties involved. My analysis of the experiences of a Peruvian couple, who has lived and worked in La Plata city since they moved to Argentina, examines this issue as well the increasing feminization of South American migrations to the country (Cerrutti 2009, Pacecca and Curtis 2008, Texidó 2008) and their role in the transnationalization of social care (Parreñas 2001, 2008; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994, 2001; Maher 2004; Herrera Mosquera 2008; Ehrenreich and Hoschschild 2002). Peruvian and Paraguayan women in La Plata have undergone a dramatic decrease in social status in tandem with the low-ranking, isolating jobs they perform in the city. Nevertheless, they interpret their initial solitude and sacrifices as leading to a process of personal growth and learning that results in increased personal autonomy and financial independence.

TARIJEÑOS IN THE CITY

Encountering 'Different' Bolivians in La Plata

Sandro and Edelina are from Tarija, a Bolivian city only 3 hours from the Argentinian border, and they lived together for several months before migrating to Argentina. Both come from poor families that struggled to make ends meet in a country ravaged by the utmost unjust distribution of wealth. Since early childhood, Sandro and Edelina played crucial roles in the social and economic reproduction of their respective households: Sandro worked his family's fields (they mostly cultivated fruit trees while keeping a few farm animals) and Edelina performed a wide range of domestic chores. In terms of their elementary schooling, Sandro proudly recalls only missing classes during intensive labour periods, whereas Edelina dropped out of school because she was never very interested in it. By the early 1990s, Edelina managed to establish her own clothing store in Tarija and regularly travelled to the country's largest cities such as Cochabamba, Santa Cruz and La Paz, where she bought garments produced in local factories. Edelina's revenues were essential for the subsistence of her family. Sandro, for his part, continued to participate in his family's agricultural activities and, along with some of his brothers, managed the property's production. Since meeting Edelina, Sandro had begun to accompany her on her business trips.

Despite being used to very hard work, Sandro and Edelina witnessed further deterioration of their living conditions during the 1990s. Sandro's family was unable to buy new seeds, food, and other basic necessities, while Edelina's sales stagnated because cheap "American" clothes (that is, garments being cheaply produced in a number of Asian destinations and exported to Bolivia by US companies) had become a common import in Bolivia. Under these circumstances, Sandro learned from a distant relative in La Plata that, in four days of work in Argentina, one could make the equivalent of a month's salary in Bolivia. Not only was the pay in unregulated sectors of the economy good, such as in construction where a worker could make between 20\$ to 25\$ pesos a day, but the exchange rate in place (1peso=1US\$) was particularly favourable for Bolivians, whose economy was pegged to the American dollar. Sandro left for La Plata in 1999.

Sandro's migration was made possible by the financial support of his father and Edelina's brother, who lent him the money to pay for the services of a company that regularly takes Bolivians to Argentina. This "bus" company's job was to assure that Bolivians made it across the border by arranging for their papers (often producing tourist visas and sometimes faked documents) and dealing (mostly through bribes) with customs agents and other officials at the border. According to Sandro, these travel services were the only affordable means available to poor Bolivians such as himself seeking to go to Argentina during the late 1990s:

"Either you had a lot of money or knew many [important] people...Because Argentina was doing very well then [referring to the parity between the Argentinean and American currencies], so the government was making it very difficult for foreigners to enter [the country]."

"Helping" undocumented migrants to make it across tight borders became a highly profitable business during the 1990s (Recalde 2006-a) that laid the foundations for the emergence of a complex industry that capitalized on the circulation of information, goods and money in South America during the 2000s. As has been well documented in North America (Crépeau and Nakache 2006, Massey 2007, Kearney 2004) and Europe (Morris 2002), the tougher migration controls become (at the border and in the nation's territory), the more profitable this licit and illicit industry, and the higher the financial, safety and emotional costs for migrants. By the late 2000s, the most lucrative services in this industry were those related to sending and receiving money (remittances), communication (internet, phone calls and attendant technologies) and transportation (of people and a wide range of goods).

Upon his arrival in La Plata, Sandro promptly began to work in construction for a compatriot, even if he did not yet have the papers to do so (he only had a three-month tourist visa), nor any experience in the field. Shortly after, he was hired by an Argentinean architect with a large number of projects, who took Sandro to various construction sites in distant localities of Buenos Aires province. While working for the architect, Sandro travelled extensively, was treated very well and offered much better pay than he received from his former employer. Yet, Sandro was still hired *en negro* or "under the table", so he did not have access to mandatory benefits, safe work conditions and other kinds of state and union protection guaranteed to those with regulated employment. These disadvantages led Sandro to opt for another construction job several years later, this time in the formal economy:

“I really liked the architect, but I left the job because I began to work in a [construction]agency thanks to one of Edelina’s cousins, who already worked there...They paid me much better and since I already had my papers [DNI], I had many more benefits.”

Sandro’s initial labour trajectory in La Plata illustrates that of other Bolivian, Paraguayan and Peruvian men in the city (and the GBA) who could promptly start to work upon their arrival in the country without having papers, yet only in the informal sectors of the economy, mostly in construction. During the 1990s, migrants worked under very precarious and exploitative conditions, but their circumstances noticeably improved in the following decade as a result of Kirchnerismo’s active regularization campaigns (I come back to this issue later on in the chapter).

A year passed before Edelina joined Sandro in La Plata. In the meantime, she had to close down her store and could not find a job; at the same time, life was getting increasingly expensive in Bolivia, as she explained:

“One was not making even enough [money] to eat...And his [Sandro’s] father was insisting that I should come because he was by himself...I was spending a lot of money on phone calls...And we were leaving Bolivia in order to save money...So I came to see Argentina.”

Expressions such as “going to see” Argentina, to “check it out” and to “give it a try” were very common among the migrants I interviewed, which emphasizes their initial idea of returning home soon after a short-term stay in Argentina that would permit them to save enough money to start a family-run business or build their own house back home.

Soon after Edelina arrived, following the advice of *paisanos* or compatriots, the couple moved to Los Porteños, a rural area in the *partido* that was well known for the cultivation of flowers by Portuguese and Japanese migrants since the late 1970s. By the time Sandro and Edelina started working there, the owners of this business had diversified while its labour force had increasingly homogenized. Chinese and Italians had joined the Portuguese as employers (the Japanese apparently having faded away) whereas Bolivians had come to replace the family members as the main labour force¹³⁰. In the early 2000s, workers were offered precarious accommodation (often sheds situated beside the fields, lacking washrooms or toilets) and miserable pay, but were expected to work from dawn to nightfall (in winter using lanterns in order to extend work hours). Sandro and Edelina lived and worked under these circumstances for about six months until Edelina began to get very sick due to the high humidity levels in the

area, which they describe as a mud patch. Additionally, Edelina was not learning the trade, which they considered very problematic. Like most of those I interviewed, Sandro and Edelina explain that as migrants they were supposed to learn their new trades on the job. This time following the advice of friends, who assured they would see a marked improvement in their work prospects, Sandro and Edelina decided to go back to La Plata city. The urban milieu promised much higher financial compensation and “cleaner” work conditions¹³¹.

Nevertheless, La Plata proved very challenging for them in a number of ways. To begin with, finding employment took them much longer than they had expected and their lack of a well-developed social network in the city only complicated the matter. As they explained:

“There are many Bolivians in La Plata and it seems like the Argentinean people think that we all know each other well, but no...We don’t know where they come from...The paisanos from our place are in Las Quintas [a rural area of the partido dedicated to horticultural production], but here, in the city, people mostly come from Cochabamba and La Paz...And a Tarijeño is very different from a Cochabambino.”

Making use of work ethic, public self (re)presentation and household care criteria, Sandro and Edelina discursively signalled the *ethnic boundaries* (Barth 1969, 1998)¹³² that, associating locality (geographical origin) to group values and attitudes, regulate migrants’ belonging and access to “Bolivian”¹³³ social networks in the *partido*. In different circumstances, Sandro and Edelina highlighted that while Tarijeños are hard-working people, Cochabambinos exclusively think of work in order to buy themselves expensive 4x4 pick-ups and build big houses that are “empty”, “untidy” and “dirty” despite their impressive appearance. These material acquisitions are used by Cochabambinos to “show off”, as Sandro said: “If you go to the Central Fruit and Vegetable Market of La Plata, you’ll see that people [Bolivians] buying there are *different*...When we go to Las Quintas, we know the people.” To this, Edelina added:

“People from the north do not care about how they live, they do not care about anything but work, they love working!...They always have good pick-up trucks, good houses, because they work day and night...They do not care about being dirty, about the clothes they wear... We, yes, we work but we like to dress well, we’re cleaner, much cleaner.”

Though the core ethnic distinctions advanced by Sandro and Edelina are pre-migration, their re-elaboration in La Plata signals, among other things, the economic success of Cochabambinos in the *partido* over the 1990s. They not only managed to replace Argentinians

in the production and commercialization of fruits and vegetables (Benencia 1997-a, 2003, 2006, 2008), but also started to invest in real estate in the late 2000s. Their conspicuous accumulation of wealth, however, was not accompanied by a concomitant rise up the city's social ladder, which can be explained by Platenses' perceived mismatch between migrants' economic capital and its embodiment, that is, the low social status attributed to Cochabambinos' racial identity (see chapter VI). As Ong (1999) has shown, the reproduction of social power for newcomers is never guaranteed or certain, especially when they embody signs such as skin colour, foreign accent and cultural taste that may count as symbolic deficits in the host society (p.91). As I will examine in further examples (in particular in chapter VII), the perception of Bolivians as being at the bottom of the *partido*'s ethnic hierarchy was shared by migrants and Platenses alike.

Structuring social interaction between allegedly conspicuously different Bolivians, the ethnic distinctions just described (made through self-ascription and ascription by others) did not favour Sandro and Edelina's search for employment in the city. Informal social interaction with compatriots served rather to reinforce the socio-economic and cultural cleavages existent among them.

The Ethnicization of Bolivian Women's Exploitation in La Plata: Ferias and Chinos

Despite the difficulties encountered, Sandro eventually managed to get back his construction job with the Argentinean architect while Edelina found herself part-time work cleaning the house of a Platense *Señora* (female employer). Even if Edelina enjoyed this job and appreciated her employer's "nice treatment", as she put it, she had to quit soon after being hired to pursue full-time employment. As was also the case of Sandro, most of the migrants I interviewed mentioned liking jobs *because* their employers were "nice" or "good" to them, which seems to indicate that, despite their new legal entitlements, being treated fairly according to Argentinean legal and social standards was still rare in the labour niches migrants occupied.

With the help of a Bolivian woman, Edelina began to work in a *feria* (a fruit and vegetable street market) run by a Cochabambina. With regret, Edelina talked about how this female employer exploited and humiliated her:

“It was horrible to work in the feria...She made me lift large, heavy boxes that hurt my hands and I had to do it even in the rain while she watched, seated in the [delivery] truck, keeping herself dry...She treated me very badly simply because I was the most recently arrived and the youngest [Edelina was in her early 20s] ...She was so arrogant that she would not even let me laugh...I cried a lot those days, it was really nasty to work there, I suffered a lot.”

Edelina worked from 04:00 to 15:00 for about 50-75\$ pesos per day, a salary that was miserable by Argentinean standards but that represented a substantial amount of money in Bolivia, which she envisaged sending in the form of remittances. Edelina was forced to work in the sun and with almost no rest. Once, a large piece of iron fell on her head and she had to keep working without even seeing a doctor. As a result of the heavy work she performed during those years, Edelina developed tendonitis in both hands, which limits the movements that she can perform and the weight she can lift.

The exploitative, abusive, and unsafe working conditions to which Edelina was subjected in the *feria* were not different from those of other recently arrived Bolivian girls in La Plata over the 2000s. Edelina witnessed how her own status in the *feria* improved over the years as a result of two interconnected processes. On the one hand, she acquired seniority not only by mastering the tasks required of her but also through successful self-discipline (Foucault 1978, Ong 2003) in line with the unspoken norms of the workplace, namely, not talking, laughing or asking for or about anything, doing the job well without being told to do so, and knowing if and when to take breaks. On the other hand, the progressive arrival of new girls repositioned higher in the *feria*'s social hierarchy those with seniority, whereas the novices, starting at its bottom, became the target of exploitative and abusive treatment by the older, well-established (often Cochabambina) women who ran the *ferias*. Under these circumstances, being new to the *feria* implied three things for these Bolivian girls: a) *being young and new on the job*: having to learn the job and its work ethics through a silent pedagogy involving learning by imitation and leading to the disciplining of bodies that “remember” and “understand” (Samudra 2008). Being young was crucial in this process since it powerfully subordinated girls to the abusive authority of an older female employer, b) *being new to the city and its norms*: having recently arrived in La Plata and not knowing its social conventions and legal regulations, and c) *being new to Argentina but in old ways (like in the 1990s)*: lacking their residence papers and not knowing that they could easily initiate the bureaucratic

procedures to get them according to the new migration law (I come back to this issue later on). This ignorance was often manipulated by unscrupulous employers, who threatened girls with deportation if they voiced even minor complaints or thought of quitting the job— an abusive strategy that echoes those implemented during the 1990s.

The interplay of these three issues was crucial in reshaping the *ferias* over the 2000s into increasingly feminized, ethnicized and precarious workplaces at a moment when the government was deploying an aggressive regularization campaign (see previous chapter). In La Plata, these fruit and vegetable street markets are mostly run by Cochabambinas, who exclusively hire new Bolivian girls. My participant observation and interviews with migrants and Platenses showed that no men worked in the *ferias*. When I asked Edelina if Argentinean or other migrant women were also hired, she laughed as if I had asked the most ridiculous question, after which she remarked: “No, only our people [are hired]...How on earth would Argentinians be hired!...She [Edelina’s former employer] did not hire Argentinians...Not at all!”. Edelina’s astonishment and laughter illustrates an ingrained notion shared by migrants and Platenses alike: only new Bolivian girls are docile enough to put up with the silent pedagogy imposed by Cochabambinas in the *ferias*. Formerly, these markets were managed and owned by Argentinians, men and women, who, in the 1990s, were unable to compete with the low prices of large, foreign supermarket chains such as Wal-Mart and Carrefour, and, as a result, were gradually forced out of the market. By the late 2000s, Cochabambinas turned the *ferias Bolivianas*, as these street markets came to be called in La Plata, into one of the few urban labour niches that were still able to evade official regulations and systematic inspections through the recruitment, discipline and hiding of new Bolivian girls.

Edelina’s next job at a grocery store owned by a Chinese migrant exemplifies another labour niche that has been hiring more and more young Bolivian women. Moreover, the consolidation of this labour niche has crystallized a number of important changes in the social and economic fabric of the city. As was the case of the *ferias*, the *almacenes de barrio* (neighbourhood grocery stores owned by Argentinians, mostly men) succumbed to the unbeatable prices of giant supermarket chains in the 1990s. This time, however, the economic space left by the *almacenero* was occupied by Chinese migrants, who launched grocery stores

or mini-markets in La Plata city. Chinese migrants had been settling in La Plata since the 1980s, yet, it was during the 2000s that their regional and federal governments in China began to partially cover the cost of their migration to and initial settlement in the city, which included the prompt production of travel documents¹³⁴. At the same time, these migrants' alleged "culture of hard work" (their stores are open year-round) along with the active role played by their own local Chamber of Commerce¹³⁵ permitted small, family-run stores to expand into profitable enterprises, often chains of mini-markets. By the late 2000s, the *Chinos*, as both these businesses and their owners are called, reached the *partido*'s peripheries, altering the symbolic and material exchanges taking place in La Plata's neighbourhood grocery stores. The *alamacenes* had functioned through relations of *confianza* (trust) based on affective closeness and geographical proximity that had developed over long periods of time. The *almacenero*'s clients were neighbours, whom he knew very well and with whom he interacted on a daily basis, so practices such as *fiar* (informal credit) were common. The consolidation of Chinese stores, however, introduced a process of distancing between clients and owners that was twofold. While owners (and their several employees) established a more impersonal treatment of clients, Platenses perceived a "cultural distance" between themselves and Chinese migrants.

Edelina began to work in one of these mini-markets thanks to the help and encouragement of Cecilia, a friend who was already employed at a Chinese mini-market. Initially, Edelina was reluctant to join her friend because she did not have her residency papers, which were mandatory for applying for jobs in the formal economy. Moreover, her seniority in the *feria* had been rewarded with salary increases, "good" treatment and trust. By then, Edelina was no longer under surveillance and was in charge of training new girls, who continuously arrived in tandem with the departure of those with seniority. Nevertheless, she eventually got the courage to visit her friend's workplace saying that Cecilia needed to be replaced in order to go to the hospital (this was a common strategy among female migrants seeking to introduce compatriots to a new employer). Though annoyed and a bit suspicious, the *Chino* let Edelina do the job, and to her surprise, offered her employment without having papers, after seeing how skillful she was at organizing fruits and vegetables. While in the *feria* it was very difficult to arrange products because they had to look pretty, Edelina explains, in Chinese mini-markets, it was easy.

During the eight years that Edelina worked for this employer, at seven of his stores, she witnessed how he hid unregistered or under-registered (as if they were part-time instead of full-time) employees, mostly young Bolivian women with or without papers, when official inspections were conducted. Managing to promptly get out of the store without being seen tended to be a complicated and risky matter, involving going through back patios or jumping over high walls in order to reach the street. In addition, Edelina came to see how profitable she was for her employer, whose good treatment and flexibility (Edelina's annual trips to Bolivia lasted more than a month) was not disinterested:

"I got there and I knew everything, I was the most experienced among the girls...The Chino liked me a lot because I could make lettuce last for a week while the other girls did not care, they did not clean...They were Argentinean...He even brought vegetables that he could not sell at other stores, and I cleaned and sold them."

Thanks to eye-opening comments from friends, Edelina also realized that the *Chino* was in fact exploiting her, even if this job constituted a substantial improvement vis-à-vis that of the *feria*. Edelina worked at the Chinese mini-markets of this employer from Monday to Friday, 08:00-14:00 and 16:30-20:00, for 400\$ pesos per month, whereas by the time she left the *feria* she was earning 250\$ pesos a month. This employer's exploitation also became apparent in his reluctance to hire Edelina *en blanco*, so as to avoid making mandatory contributions to pension, retirement and health care plans, even after she obtained her DNI through facilitated procedures upon the birth of her Argentinean daughter.

Edelina and Sandro's sacrifices permitted them to open their small *verdulería* (fruit and vegetable store) in a quiet neighbourhood of La Plata city in December 2008. Edelina ran the store while Sandro was in charge of supplying it with fresh products, which he bought at the *Mercado Central* (Central Fruit and Vegetable Market of La Plata), from 4:00 to 9:00, three times a week (I come back to this issue in chapter VI). Sandro also ran the deliveries of the store, on foot or by bicycle, while holding a number of part-time jobs in construction and painting. Costly and complicated rental regulations forced Sandro and Edelina to use the small business' premises as their home. Over the 2000s, it became extremely difficult to rent an apartment either for residential or commercial purposes in the GBA because the tenant, regardless of his/her salary, had to find a guarantor who owned some sort of property, which became the guarantee that the tenant would pay the rent. In addition, rent prices were very high

in the city, even more so in central neighbourhoods, such as the one where Edelina and Sandro lived. Under these circumstances, the couple divided their small apartment in two, using a piece of thick cardboard, a few suitcases and some of the wooden boxes employed to carry and display merchandise. One part is used as the store's premises and the other as their home. The section destined to be their house has a small bed (where the three family members sleep), a stove, a fridge and two stools, which does not leave much room to move around. The table is improvised using a wooden box that also served other purposes. In this same "room", washed clothes are hung to dry, the cooking is done, and food is eaten. Toys pile up everywhere, taking up most of the very little space available. Outside their precarious home, on the sidewalk where some of the store's products are displayed, I met Edelina, Sandro and their four-year old daughter for the first time in early March 2010.

Some Core Issues that Sandro and Edelina's Case Illuminates

Sandro and Edelina's migrant trajectories in La Plata illustrate the residential and occupational patterns historically developed by ethnically different Bolivians in the *partido*. Tarijeños (southern Bolivians) have predominantly settled in rural areas, where they have practiced family horticulture, and more recently, flower production as hired labour. Northern Bolivians (Cochabambinos), in contrast, have mostly commercialized fresh fruits and vegetables, which continues to be a predominantly urban activity (see chapter VI). Vis-à-vis this *ethnicized* and *territorialized* division of Bolivian labour, Sandro and Edelina's launching of a *verdulería* in La Plata city constitutes a clear transgression. Cochabambinos' disapproval of these Tarijeños was overtly manifested in a series of public settings (grocery stores, parks, money transfer bureaus, travel agencies and state institutions), where the couple was reminded that they had crossed the line, both territorially and symbolically. Yet, it is mostly in two other social settings where the socio-economic and ethnic cleavages separating these "different" Bolivians becomes most apparent; i.e., at the Central Fruit and Vegetable Market of La Plata, where *verduleros*, *Chinos* and other grocery store owners buy their fresh produce, and at the meetings of a cooperative building a "Bolivian neighbourhood" in the rural locality of Lisandro Olmos, a project that was funded by Bolivian President Evo Morales (see chapter VI).

Edelina's urban work trajectory, in particular, shows the strong *ethnicization* and *feminization* of *verdulerías* and *ferias* in La Plata, which in 2010 were almost exclusively run by Cochabambina women. Whereas the latter seem to be strictly feminine economic spaces, men can be found in the former. In most cases, they are the spouse of the woman running the store, who occasionally replaces his partner; yet, in a few *verdulerías* I visited, both members of the couple were routinely serving clients¹³⁶. Edelina's urban labour trajectory also highlights the relocation of Bolivian women's exploitation in La Plata, which, by the late 2000s, was predominantly in the hands of Cochabambina women (heads of the *ferias*) and Chinese men (owners of neighbourhood mini-markets). New Bolivian women in the city often transit through these exploitative sites, in the same order, as if moving along and in turn away from them was part of a necessary urban rite of passage—something that migrants are seldom aware of before arriving (an issue that I examine in the next chapter).

Edelina and Sandro's work trajectories also illustrate the extent to which Kirchnerismo's regularization campaigns have unevenly affected migrant women and men in La Plata. While benefiting a large proportion of migrant men, public efforts to fight precarious employment have been particularly disadvantageous for most Bolivian women. As in other parts of the GBA, Peruvian, Bolivian and Paraguayan men in La Plata have predominantly worked in the construction sector and, by the late 2000s, they constituted its main labour force (see chapter I). My 2010 fieldwork among migrant workers and Argentinean employers in a number of sites in the GBA showed that official inspections and attendant sanctions importantly decreased the occurrence of former practices, which reproduced the precarious working conditions and exploitative hiring so widespread in this sector during the 1990s. Most often, employers considered it too risky and eventually too costly to hire workers *en negro* and without providing safe working conditions, which prompted them to respect new mandatory regulations.

Migrant women working in urban areas of the *partido* did not experience such a generalized improvement in their labour conditions and rights. This resulted, at least in part, from the interplay between a) their somewhat more diversified participation in the local labour market and b) regularization campaigns' focus on a handful of economic sectors. Most Peruvian and Paraguayan women have continued to work in a range of "care" and "domestic"

urban jobs (from cleaning and housekeeping to raising children and taking care of the elderly in a variety of family, corporate and governmental settings) whereas Bolivian women are concentrated in what has become “their” economic niche: the commercialization of fruits and vegetables. Kirchnerismo’s fight against informal employment has had disparate effects on the labour rights of these different migrant women. The initial regulation of the domestic sector (see previous chapter) contributed to the increasing hiring *en blanco* of most of the Peruvian and Paraguayan women I interviewed doing such jobs (see the following section and chapter V) whereas the labour conditions of Bolivian ones were hampered in two important ways. First, systematic municipal inspections fostered new evasion strategies among the *Chinos*, who found skilful ways to hide their non- or under-registered employees (generally documented and undocumented young Bolivian women) both physically (during the inspections) and “in the books” (when filing their business tax reports)¹³⁷. Second, the *ferias Bolivianas*, which fell outside Kirchnerismo’s regulation targets, could safely exploit the “newness” of their female, often young, employees without much trouble.

The government’s fight against informal and precarious employment yielded unexpected results among migrant women in La Plata, which highlights the dissonance between official strategies and migrants’ labour circumstances. The campaign’s focus on two economic sectors (construction and textile), albeit its incipient interest in domestic work, led to the deployment of blanket strategies that did not correspond to the gendering and ethnicization of some labour niches occupied by migrants in La Plata. Bolivian women were particularly disadvantaged.

Insecurity’s Disciplinary Effects: The Pibes Chorros and the Crime Industry

The first decade of the 2000s witnessed the emergence and consolidation of discourse on the so-called “2000s insecurity” in Argentina, which powerfully impacted the perceptions and behaviour of migrants and non-migrants in the GBA and Buenos Aires province in particular. In urban settings of La Plata, the alleged escalating rates of urban youth crime led many Bolivian men to replace full-time jobs with a number of part-time occupations in order to accompany their wives at their *verdulerías*. Sandro’s explanation of his and Edelina’s situation illustrates the constraining and shifting circumstances of urban Bolivians with *verdulerías*:

“After working for some time at the construction agency, I went back to work with the architect, and continued to do so until we opened this store...Well, nowadays it’s not possible, I want to work somewhere else but with the insecurity, it is impossible...You make the effort to work very hard until 01:00, but there is so much robbery and since they are minors, they get out of jail right away...We work the whole day and another one comes and robs you of the little profit you’ve made, so, for this reason, the two of us are here.”

Even if Sandro and Edelina have been spared for the time being—maybe due to the precautions they took¹³⁸—, they were well aware of the robberies taking place in other fruit and vegetable stores in La Plata. Paradigmatic of this *oleada de delincuencia* (wave of crime) was for them the case of a *verdulera* friend, who had been robbed by an armed youth from her own neighbourhood. Pointing a gun at the woman, the boy insisted that he wanted the money, not to hurt her, and the woman ended up giving him 100 pesos, after which he fired two shots in the air and ran off.

The fear of being robbed by the so-called *pibes chorros*—young, poor Argentinean men (mostly minors) allegedly under the influence of drugs—was not exclusive to Bolivian *verduleros* in La Plata. Instead, it became the “reality” of migrant and non-migrant residents of urban Argentina over the 2000s, notably in the GBA and Buenos Aires province. As a result of the 1990s’ neoliberal policies, pauperization rates dramatically increased in the country (Capdevielle 2009) and, by the early 2000s, they increasingly affected poor urban youth, who continued to be marginalized (Devincenzi 2006)¹³⁹. In this context, many of them resorted to criminal activities in order to survive at the margins of society or in response to the social violence exercised upon them. Nevertheless, the extent to which the social figure of the *pibe chorro* became emblematic of the prevailing feeling of insecurity during the 2000s is indicative of a number of other processes at work. Namely, the alarming situation of these youth was capitalized on by the sensationalist media (often against Kirchnerismo) to create a pervasive climate of insecurity, which in turn became the alleged “frightening reality” of urban dwellers as well as the *raison d’être* of a profitable *industria de la delincuencia y de la inseguridad* (crime and insecurity industry). Examining this sort of issue, anthropological research on contemporary youth has revealed the construction of their criminality in many parts of the world (Schneider and Schneider 2008).

Criminal acts were not only distorted, turning minor offences or common crime into violent spectacle, but were also multiplied by some media and political discourse that constantly referred to the same case even long after it had occurred. According to Capdevielle (2009), the roots of this “culture of insecurity” can be traced back to the 1990s, when the type of crime that increased (still at rates lower than those of the 1980s) was committed against property, not against people. Moreover, the proliferation of discourse highlighting the cruelty of crime and the need to abolish it nourished the perception of insecurity. This situation contributed to the growth of companies providing alarm systems as well as insurance and surveillance services, which in turn had to keep insecurity high in order to assure their profits (Devincenzi 2012). Under these circumstances, Buenos Aires province became a fertile terrain for the multi-million dollar (in)security business, where the marriage of poverty and crime was not an arbitrary journalistic act (*Centro Cultural de la Cooperación Floreal Gorini* 2012).

The insecurity, as it was called, of the 2000s was clearly situated both geographically (mostly in the GBA and Buenos Aires province) and socially (the increasingly marginalized urban poor youth). The powerful social figure of the *pibe chorro* personified two facets of the same social drama. On the one hand, he was considered the exemplary member of the most disadvantaged social groups, formerly called *negros*, *cabecitas negras*, *villeros* or *cabezas* (I come back to this labelling and its underlying racial classificatory logic in chapter VII). As in the past, a negative morality and attendant behaviours were attributed to these groups (Frigerio 2006) while the social violence exercised to produce their exclusion was made invisible (Capdevielle 2009). On the other hand, the *pibe chorro* also embodied the fear of being assaulted at any time while capturing the feeling of insecurity that closely associated uncertainty, criminality and a well-delimited (racialized) social group¹⁴⁰.

The *pibe chorro* also came to replace the *limitrofe ilegal* as the prevalent stigmatized social figure catalyzing the social, economic and political tensions of the decade at least in the GBA and Buenos Aires province. This shift was widely embraced by the Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans I interviewed in La Plata in 2010, who echoed the prejudiced views being endorsed by sensationalist media and political discourse (see chapter VII)—as they had done during the 1990s when the government criminalized the most recently arrived *limitrofes*

(Recalde 2006-a). This appropriation brought about an important shift in urban migrants' social representations. The *pibe chorro*, with all the connotations that the term embodied, came to replace the police as figure of danger, as was also the case in the *partido*'s peripheries (see next chapter), but not in its rural areas, where this state institution continued to represent an abusive, fearful force for migrants (see chapter VI). During the 1990s, police agents personified migrants' frightening reality in La Plata (and the GBA), and were associated with the same omnipresent danger and insecurity inherent in the social figure of the *pibe chorro* (Recalde 2006-a).

The insecurity and fear that this social figure embodied had powerful disciplinary effects on people's use of public and private space. Indeed, as Etcheverría (2008) argues, subjects' social representations of their insecurity, even if lacking an "objective" counterpart in reality, are core (meaningful) to their way of perceiving the world. Moreover, my fieldwork showed that collectively "imagined" (as in media and political discourse, and in different groups' social representations) and individually experienced (embodied) insecurity informed each other in La Plata. The fear of being attacked generated a range of quotidian practices among migrant and non-migrant urban dwellers, who considered that the more precautions they took, the better protected against violent crimes they would be. Migrants with businesses in La Plata (such as Bolivian *verduleros*, Chinese owners of mini-markets or a Peruvian with a shoe repair shop) deployed a number of preventative strategies to avoid expected robberies. Keeping an eye on "suspicious-looking" individuals approaching their shops, working in couples, keeping shops' entrance doors locked at all times, installing mirrors for owners to see who was approaching their stores before opening the door, and carefully checking the streets before leaving their shops were some important strategies routinely performed by the migrants I interviewed (as well as by Platenses who owned shops). Migrants and non-migrants in La Plata also deployed similar strategies to remain alert when using public transportation, walking to places, completing official procedures (at government institutions) or financial transactions (at banks, money sending or real estate agencies), doing their shopping and even when relaxing in public parks. By 2010, these preventative measures had been naturalized by La Plata's residents, who did not view their actions as responding to any specific danger. This contrasted with the generalized unease and high tension felt in the city in the late 1990s¹⁴¹.

What could be interpreted as similar responses in public places by La Plata's residents to a collective experience of insecurity translated into highly segmented (unequal) access to the goods and services provided by the security industry in private spaces. Sophisticated alarm systems in personal vehicles and houses, the continuous presence of private security personnel and video surveillance in residential and corporate buildings, access to private educational, health care, financial and recreational institutions equipped with security services as well as living and working in areas considered safe were unevenly distributed in La Plata as these goods and services remained very expensive. Indeed, the security industry strictly served people according to their income¹⁴². As a result, the vast majority of migrants I interviewed in La Plata along with other disadvantaged and pauperized social groups—the *pibes chorros* among them—lived “insecure” lives by virtue of inhabiting places, holding occupations and accessing goods and services that were not situated under the protective aura of the security industry.

The Repositioning of Bolivians, Peruvians and Paraguayans in La Plata's Ethnic Hierarchy

During the first decade of the 2000s, important shifts developed in La Plata's hegemonic ethnic hierarchy, which led to the more favourable positioning of Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans. While it is to be seen to what extent Kirchnerismo's pro-MERCOSUR and integrationist efforts have played a role in such improvement, it is clear that the solid economic presence of Chinese migrants in urban and peripheral areas of the *partido* has been crucial to the positive re-evaluation of *limitrofes'* social status. In this regard, Edelina's interpretation of her former employer (the *Chino*)'s exploitative practices not only represents that of other Bolivians, Peruvians and Paraguayans in urban milieus, but also echoes the widespread discomfort felt by Platenses vis-à-vis Chinese migrants.

Even if some of the Peruvians, Paraguayans and Bolivians I interviewed considered Chinese migrants to be hard-working people, most resented their evasion strategies and exploitative working conditions, considering that both hampered the economic well-being of employees—very often their own relatives, friends or compatriots. While *limitrofes* tended to discreetly raise their dislike of Chinese employers in particular, Platenses openly expressed their generalized contempt for *all* Chinese regardless of their regional/ethnic origin and

occupation in La Plata. Platenses explained their feelings about these migrants as resulting from a series of (observed) behaviours and (assumed) values, which, even if initially attributed to mini-market owners and their Chinese employees, were later on extended to *the* Chinese in general as if they constituted a homogeneous group.

Platenses' most common remarks about these migrants can be organized into four categories: a) *the Chinos turn off their refrigerators at night in order to save on electricity costs, thus damaging the quality of the products being sold in their mini-markets*. Platenses view this as a clear sign of these migrants' avarice, which they consider integral to a certain "Chinese business ethic" that is indifferent to clients' health or neighbours' well-being; b) *the products sold at the Chinos have often expired and their owners refuse to exchange them, pretending not to understand clients' complaints due to a language barrier*. Platenses often emphasize the "low" morality of this "unscrupulous" practice by highlighting that the *Chinos* even sold a variety of baby products whose expiration date was long past; c) *the mini-market owners and their Chinese employees always speak in their language so as to trick or defraud clients*. Platenses perceive this practice not only as rude and dishonest behaviour, but also as an indication that these migrants are unwilling to "integrate" into the hispanophone host society; and d) *the Chinos "enslave" their employees by imposing highly exploitative labour conditions (in terms of time and remuneration) and abusive treatment on them*. Platenses disapprove of this labour regime, often claiming that the business owners were attempting to sneak the "mass exploitation" regularly imposed upon workers in China into La Plata. By assigning a negative morality to these behaviours, Platenses created a certain "Chineseness", which they perceived as clashing with Argentina's democratic and liberal standards. The comment of a Platense woman in her early 30s accurately captures the contempt felt for Chinese migrants in La Plata:

"These Chinos [referring to the owners of a mini-market two blocks from her home] are very rude, dirty and they only think of money, and if they can, they charge you more [than what they should]... They do not respect the native [Argentiniens] and seek to rip you off."

By attributing negative connotations to the behaviours and values considered "Chinese", Platenses introduced a *distancing* and *devaluating* process that not only affected their own rapport with these migrants, but also altered the city's ethnic value hierarchy, against which migrant groups in general are measured (Recalde 2006-a). This reformulation has led to

a substantial improvement in the overall social standing of Bolivians, Peruvians and Paraguayans in La Plata. *Limitrofes* have been repositioned *higher* in the city's ethnic value hierarchy due to their relative (more positive) status vis-à-vis that of the at-the-moment-most-despised Chinese, who, by virtue of their standing at the bottom of the scale, have pushed *limitrofes* up. The more positive assessment of Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans by Platenses became most apparent when the latter came together with Chinese migrants in their discourse or physical surroundings. While comparisons favourable to *limitrofes* are often made by Platenses (using the negative remarks about the *Chinos* that I have mentioned), embodied (bodily) reactions are also very frequent, sometimes replacing discourse. Tension, frustration, disapproval, disgust, and scorn are among the emotions most commonly communicated by Platenses by means of body language, facial expressions and changes in intonation when referring to Chinese migrants.

As I will show later on, even if relations with Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans were not idyllic, when viewed in the context of (and in relation to) their discontent with the Chinese in the city, Platenses' opinions and feelings about *limitrofes* were generally rather positive. Moreover, several decades of Peruvian, Paraguayan and Bolivian immigration to the city led many Platenses to naturalize these migrants' presence—considering it “normal” that *verduleras* were Bolivian, that the *empleadas domésticas* were Peruvian or Paraguayan and that migrant men from these three countries were the *partido*'s construction workers. Some even argued that these migrants were crucial to a well-functioning society; nevertheless, many disagreed, especially when migrants stepped out—and moved up—from what Platenses considered migrants' well-delimited labour niches (Recalde 2006-a) to perform higher status jobs.

Limitrofes were also repositioned *closer* to Platenses in the course of the 2000s because they were Latin American and not Asian. Informed by the changes taking place in the city's ethnic hierarchy (related to the solid presence of Chinese migrants), this shift resulted from Platenses' revision of their own ethnic kinship; that is, of their own ethnic loyalties and ancestry, which were increasingly anchored in South America (as a result, at least in part, of Kirchnerismo's policies fostering the diversity, inclusiveness and Latin-Americanness of the nation for nearly a decade)¹⁴³. This rapprochement between Platenses and *limitrofes* was

expressed in two important ways. First, in politicians' and militants' discourse but also (albeit less so) in ordinary conversations among Platenses, who stated that, as South Americans, *limitrofes* and Argentinians shared not only a common history but also a present commitment to deepen regional integration. This was the official discourse of the *Dirección de Colectividades y Migraciones* of La Plata's Municipality, which was in charge of implementing the new migration law in the *partido*, and of *Kirchneristas* at the national, provincial and local levels. Militants advocating a wide range of causes also advanced this argument, believing that the social, economic and political problems of South American peoples could only be solved through regional efforts. Second, in everyday social interaction, when confronted in discourse or physical proximity with migrants, Platenses often expressed the idea that neither *limitrofes* nor Argentinians were Asian or Chinese. This negative statement indirectly signalled that Platenses spared *limitrofes* the "foreignization" process, involving distancing and devaluation, that was being exercised upon Chinese migrants.

The overall repositioning of Bolivians, Peruvians and Paraguayans in La Plata's ethnic value hierarchy occurred on two levels. On the one hand, their "moving up" improved their social standing *within* the larger group of migrants. In this regard, it remains to be seen to what extent the increasing, more recent arrival of African migrants to La Plata (Maffia and Zubrzycki in press) will affect the city's ethnic hierarchies¹⁴⁴. On the other hand, Bolivians, Peruvians and Paraguayans "moving closer" to Platenses implied a horizontal movement taking place in a different social space and informed by another classificatory logic: the political arena of citizenship¹⁴⁵. In this respect, Platenses' reinvention of their ethnic kinship as *latinoamericanos* (or even as *Mercosureños*) might be viewed as the initial step in the future reconfiguration of (albeit still unequal) exchanges with *limitrofes*. It also remains to be seen to what extent the progressive consolidation and implementation of the MERCOSUR citizenship, as stipulated by the bloc in its December 2010 plan of action¹⁴⁶, will impact the status of MERCOSUR nationals in Argentina and their actual access to a wide range of rights.

THE GENDERING OF ACCOUNTS, CONCERNS AND HOUSEHOLD ROLES

The *taller de calzado* (shoe repair shop) run by César—"a Peruvian from the north" as he likes to describe himself—is an interesting social space, regularly assembling compatriots from

diverse walks of life. Despite his busy work schedule, César always welcomes visitors with a warm smile, and, upon offering them a chair, he engages in joyful conversation while returning to work. Over the years, the shop's animated and easygoing atmosphere—a combination of César's jokes, the loud noise of his sewing machine at work, and the salsa music he continuously plays—have turned this workplace into a haven for recently arrived Peruvians in La Plata as well as for those going through rough times. Indeed, the shop has come to constitute a crossroads where Peruvians “could feel at home even if being abroad”¹⁴⁷, as both its regular and less frequent visitors comment. For those hanging out at the *taller*, the feeling of being at home while at César's results from sharing moments with compatriots—as in Fabian's (2001) notion of “time passed together”—, which, going beyond chatting, involves the bodily presence (Jackson 1996, Turner 2000) of others whom one knows and can trust¹⁴⁸. Migrants often referred to the comforting feeling they experienced at the *taller* by using the notion of *confianza*, or the type of trust that develops from knowing someone quite well.

Through extensive “hanging out” (Ngo 2010) at César's shop, I had the opportunity to meet many Peruvian men and women who shared their migration experiences with me both individually and in groups. This form of participant observation allowed me to gauge the extent to which the presence or absence of others (relatives, acquaintances, friends or complete strangers) of varying gender, age, and socio-economic status affected what migrants chose to tell me at any given time. In particular, both differences in age and socio-economic status and the type of relationship between those present at the shop significantly affected what migrants told me and how. When a certain rivalry prevailed between men, they tended to magnify the successful aspects (economic or professional) of their stories. In contrast, when friendship, companionship or even empathy were more important, men often joked about each other's difficult times in La Plata. Women's presence in the shop did not seem to alter men's narratives, mostly because the former sat at some comfortable distance from men and spoke with some privacy among themselves. Yet, the presence of other female compatriots did influence what women told me. This was the case for Yolanda, César's wife, for example. In a one-on-one interview, she had only briefly mentioned working as an assistant at an aquatic centre for children, where her job consisted of cleaning the building and helping children get dressed. In fact, it was only when a good friend of hers was telling me about the

marginalization she had endured at her jobs cleaning and caring for the elderly that Yolanda spoke about Platenses' racism, which she had experienced in the form of her female employers' differential treatment and lack of consideration when working at the aquatic centre. In order to illustrate the gendering of migration-related concerns and the extent to which the narratives of men and women tend to differ, I start by presenting the initial accounts provided by César and Yolanda about their family's migration to La Plata.

César's Version of his Family's Migration to La Plata

The first time I met César, he playfully told me that he had ended up in La Plata in December 1997 after accepting a friend's invitation to "go and see" the city. César clearly remembered his arrival in Buenos Aires airport and that he had liked La Plata's atmosphere right away. As was the case of most migrants, César made it to Argentina thanks to his family's financial support, who lent him the so-called *bolsa de viaje*—a large amount of money (between US\$500 to US\$1,000) then requested by the Argentinean government to grant nationals of neighbouring countries a discretionary 30-day tourist visa. This arbitrarily high fee automatically transformed migrants into debtors, an issue that César noted. He also remembered how difficult it was to obtain the residence papers due to complex and lengthy procedures and exorbitant processing fees at that time, and how much migrants feared the police. Police officers regularly conducted raids to catch undocumented migrants from neighbouring nations who, after paying for bribes and being mistreated, tended to be quickly deported. As most migrants I interviewed, César had deployed "invisibilizing" strategies in order to stay in La Plata, such as avoiding downtown as much as possible, refraining from using public services and not filing complaints when exploited or abused. Those who could afford it also paid for fake marriages with *villeros* (poor and stigmatized Argentinians)¹⁴⁹ in order to get their papers. This costly transaction (around 2,000\$ Argentinean pesos) did not always work out, however, since marriage certificates were mailed to the Argentinean "spouse", who often disappeared after completing this commercial transaction. As a result, migrants ended up without their papers, further indebted and in serious trouble in their relationships. Under these risky and costly circumstances, César decided to apply for his papers in 1999.

Finding work in his trade was very challenging for César because his occupation did not fit into the well-delimited ethnic labour niches of La Plata. César was initially trained as a *tapicero* (upholsterer) and later on as a *zapatero* (cobbler). By the 1990s, he had his own cobbler business in Chiclayo and also did a number of upholstery jobs for a local hospital. Upon his arrival in La Plata, however, César's attempts to work in his field were unsuccessful, since he continuously encountered Platenses' reluctance to hire him or even tell him where to start. As a result, he ended up working in the construction and painting sectors of the informal economy, as did most migrant men. Like others before and after him, César learned to do this work on the job; over the years, he managed to become independent, choosing his own projects and dealing directly with clients.

Initially, compatriots also offered César work as a *trapito*, which he rejected. The job of a *trapito* consisted of watching over cars parked on the street, occasionally washing them and securing parking spots during peak hours in the busiest parts of the city. The commercial transaction regulating this occupation was "informal" in two ways: it was based on an oral, often spontaneous agreement between the client and the *trapito*, and it was paid in cash (untaxed). This labour niche emerged in the late 1990s in tandem with the growing number of media reports of the increasing insecurity, and was progressively consolidated during the 2000s as a result of La Plata's growing parking problem (which resulted from an increased number of vehicles and the lack of adequate responses to it by the local government). Initially, Argentinean men were likely to do this job, yet by the late 2000s, this labour niche became Peruvian territory (I present the experience of a Peruvian man working as *trapito* in the next chapter).

Eventually, it was a *trapito* who informed César of an advertisement seeking help in a shoe repair shop in La Plata, a job that César was able to obtain. Working for this "Paraguayan or Uruguayan", as César vaguely described his employer, was crucial for him and signalled a turning point in his "migrant career" in the city. With his employer's support, César gradually learned how the upholstery and shoe-making industries worked in the GBA. Further, upon the death of this elderly employer years later, César managed to buy his shop's machinery, thanks to the widow's offer to him to pay for it with work. Having both the necessary knowledge and the tools in hand, César opened his own shoe repair shop in his home in the early 2000s.

At the time we met, César lived with his wife Yolanda and their two young sons in a small and precarious apartment in a quiet neighbourhood of La Plata. César's family had taken possession of the (private) premises without paying for them (I examine the issue of occupying "abandoned" private property in the next chapter). The apartment was one of many connected through a long corridor leading to a common front door which opened onto the sidewalk¹⁵⁰. The shop was doing well and, little by little, César's clientele expanded; nonetheless he considered that the apartment's "hidden" location was not propitious for the business to prosper: the *taller* needed increased visibility. As a result, César began to search for new commercial premises, and it took him years of unsuccessful tries and vanishing hopes before he managed to overcome the prohibitive rental rules in place (see previous section). Fortunately, by the time César found his shop's new premises, not far from his home, an elderly client graciously offered to act as his rental guarantor. The lease was signed and the *taller* was finally launched "in the light" in late 2009.

What I have just presented are excerpts of César's initial account of his experiences in La Plata, which he told me in a one-on-one interview. This brief selection illustrates his focus on personal, career-related achievements, which barely includes any family or social relationship information. César rarely talked about the emotional and financial difficulties integral to the migration experience, such as those associated with leaving family members behind or struggling to make ends meet while having to repay debts and send money to relatives back home. Only in passing did César mention the costly trade-off involved in establishing his own shop: "Look, I have what I have, but it has been costly [*pero me costó*]...All the years I have been here...And I gave up so many things". César did not elaborate and it was Yolanda, while giving him a hand at the shop on another day, who explained to me what he meant.

As was the case for most Peruvians and Paraguayans I interviewed, men's narratives focused on their personal work performance, either avoiding or minimizing emotional considerations and financial hardships. Those of women, in contrast, brought to the forefront familial and other social ties by highlighting migration's costly implications for themselves and those left behind. In what follows, I present some excerpts of an interview with Yolanda in

order to show the extent to which her account of the family's migration to La Plata differs from that of César, who, being in the same room, did not object to what Yolanda was saying. Yolanda's version was also confirmed by César during group conversations with compatriots at the *taller* and in one-on-one chats with me.

Migrant Women's Suffering and Transnational Family Care

Like César, Yolanda is from Chiclayo and lived in her parents' house until her early twenties when she found a data entry job in Lima, Peru's capital. Later on, she became the secretary of her brother's business and greatly enjoyed her work. Yet, after a car accident, Yolanda returned to Chiclayo to rest and her mother, worrying that she might get hurt again, asked Yolanda to stay in town. She did as she was told. Soon after, Yolanda began to date César, who lived only a couple of blocks from her parents' home, and they were married in due time. By the mid-1990s, the couple's economic situation worsened substantially because Yolanda could not find work in Chiclayo (where they asked for experience that she did not have) and César's clientele continued to shrink due to increasing competition (the region was full of upholsterers and cobblers). It was under these circumstances that Yolanda learned that a cousin, whom she had never met was about to leave for Argentina. Accompanied by her mother, Yolanda visited her distant relative and the arrangements were made for their subsequent departure. Yolanda knew that the opportunity was worth a try, especially then, because of the *uno a uno* (parity between the Argentinean peso and the American dollar), which allowed migrants to save enough money to "buy things" in Peru, as they put it. As other migrants from neighbouring nations were doing, Yolanda left to "see" La Plata in early 1997, *a probar* (to test) if she could stay there, planning on getting settled and having César and their four year-old son join her.

Right from the start of the interview, Yolanda emphasized how much she suffered upon her arrival in La Plata because she did not know anyone and her cousin had gone to work *cama adentro* (as a live-in caregiver) for an elderly couple. Yolanda did not have any way to contact her, nor did she have the means to buy herself a bus ticket to go anywhere. As planned, Yolanda went to live with four other young Peruvian women in an apartment rented by an aunt of Yolanda's cousin. These compatriots were to find her a job as well. The same day Yolanda arrived, she went to a money-transfer agency where she sent home the 500US\$ lent by her

family for her *bolsa de viaje*. It was borrowed money, she insisted, so it could not be touched. Unfortunately, Yolanda's concern with fulfilling her family's expectations (returning the money as promised confirmed the trust invested upon Yolanda by her family) made her overlook her compatriots' "basic value orientations" (Barth 1969), that is, the standards of morality and excellence by which performance is judged (p.14). Yolanda's wrong assumption held costly implications for her.

To Yolanda's disappointment, her roommates treated her as "someone they did not know". Even though they were aware that Yolanda did not have any money left and that she would only receive her pay at the end of the month, they still asked her to pay the rent promptly. Likewise, despite knowing that Yolanda was going to bed on an empty stomach, they never shared any food with her. Further, when she asked them for some money to pay for the bus tickets to go to work, even offering her gold wedding ring as proof of her sincerity, her roommates rejected her request. Reflecting upon these initial hardships, Yolanda tended to emphasize her personal strength in the face of emotional and financial adversity while being far from home, and contextualized these memories within a religious interpretation of the events:

"I suffered but there must be a reason for it...And I excelled so they [César and their child] could come and be with me because by myself, oh no!...Every day, when I was on the street, I looked at children with their father, mother, it was very painful."

Like other migrant women who lead their family's move to Argentina, Yolanda deployed a number of caring strategies that were oriented towards preventing her own suffering from affecting those who remained at home. For example, when César wanted to join Yolanda sooner than planned, she emphasized the lack of space in the apartment, without mentioning that she did not have money to buy food or pay for the bus. Yolanda did not share with César that some of them slept on the floor, either. Instead, she tended to stress that she needed some time to "get settled" and that they had to be patient. In reality, Yolanda knew that her family would not have a place to live in La Plata at that time. Explaining why she had spared César her daily struggles was a way for Yolanda to demonstrate her autonomy and leadership when it came to making important decisions for her family: "If I had told César [about her initial suffering], he would have come right away and I was only getting started, I needed more time...Anyway, he could have not solved anything then." On the phone with

César, Yolanda always reassured him that she was doing fine and promptly shifted the conversation towards their four-year-old, since she was anxious to hear how he was doing. When talking to her child, Yolanda sought to comfort him by mentioning the things that she would buy for him thanks to her work in La Plata, a strategy that often worked.

Yolanda left their son, who had previously spent most of his time with her, under the tutelage of her own mother, who also looked after other grandchildren. Yolanda believed that it had been the right decision because César was working at the time and could barely take care of the child. In addition, by playing with his cousins, he would be somewhat distracted and would think less of her. Yolanda's reasoning is representative of that of most Peruvian and Paraguayan women I interviewed in La Plata, who also left their children in the hands of a female relative in order to lead their family's migration to Argentina. Coming from patriarchal societies where a "traditional" division of labour prevailed, many of these women had stayed home after marriage in order to take care of their homes, children and husbands, even if they had previously held commercial occupations, such as street vendors or store owners, or administrative positions. Under these circumstances, their migration to La Plata, where they mostly found work as *empleadas domésticas*, caregivers of the elderly and cleaners at public institutions and private enterprises, brought about important challenges for them. They found the dramatic decrease in their social status, given their low-ranking, isolating jobs, particularly difficult. This was exacerbated by the painful absence of their young children and other female relatives with whom they spent a large part of their days back home.

Women's Personal Strength, Determination and Increased Autonomy in La Plata

Talking about her jobs in La Plata, Yolanda remarked that, in sharp contrast with the difficulties she had experienced with her roommates, she had never suffered with the *abuelas* (grandmothers), as she warmly called the elderly women she had worked for. Yolanda's first job was with a seventy-year-old woman who was *buenísima* to her. This employer not only treated Yolanda fairly and always paid her on time (including bonuses that Yolanda did not expect), but also gave her food to take home (aware that her roommates did not share any with her). When César arrived months later, this *Señora* also hired him to do maintenance jobs at her home, paying him well even when César had not set a price. During Yolanda's first two

years with this *abuela*, she worked from 08:00 to 14:00, cleaning her home and running some errands, and, when her health deteriorated, Yolanda began to keep her company at night.

Reflecting upon her initial months in La Plata, Yolanda remarked that her prayers had not been in vain. The situation in her apartment did not change and Yolanda was feeling “too uncomfortable”, so, in despair, she asked God for help: “When I came to La Plata, I only had one job, so I said ‘*ai Diosito*’ [please God] help me get another job to be able to leave this apartment...I was feeling really bad then.” And in less than two months, she was working three shifts, or as she put it, full-time. Yolanda’s second job in La Plata consisted of cleaning the house and looking after the four children of her employer’s son. Yolanda found this job soon after her first and was able to arrange to work afternoons at the son’s house and mornings at his mother’s (both jobs would come to an end years later, when the *abuela*, who paid for Yolanda’s services, died). Yolanda’s third job, which she found a month after her second, involved looking after another *abuela* at night. This employer’s daughter hired Yolanda to make sure that her mother was all right and to notify her otherwise (the daughter lived a couple of blocks away from her mother and could be easily reached if needed). Luckily for Yolanda, this night job permitted her to leave the apartment for good, since she began to sleep at this *abuela*’s house while spending her days at the other two jobs. Moreover, when this employer learned that Yolanda was being charged by her former roommates for leaving her suitcase at the apartment (as if she lived there), the *abuela* allowed Yolanda to leave it at her place instead. The *abuelas*, Yolanda remarked, had always been kind to her, yet their daughters had changed over the years, becoming less interested in their mothers’ well-being: “They are not as they were before”, Yolanda said when talking about daughters not spending enough time with their mothers and being less attentive to their needs.

Yolanda’s initial months of sacrifice and solitude in La Plata not only permitted her to send for her family afterwards, but also changed how she viewed the traditional division of gender roles in the household. Being alone in a city where she did not know anyone and struggling to make ends meet while fulfilling the emotional and financial needs of relatives back home proved very challenging for her. Yet, by overcoming these hardships, she came to realize her personal strength and determination when it came to securing her family’s well-being transnationally. As other Peruvian and Paraguayan women I interviewed also mentioned,

the initial adversity they faced taught them important lessons about autonomous decision-making and economic independence, issues that were foreign to women back home where wives were often fully dependent on their husbands. Yolanda proudly told me that during her initial months in La Plata, she managed to save enough money to rent her family a room in a *pensión* close to where she worked. *Pensiones* were very convenient for recently arrived migrants living in urban areas of the GBA since they were the cheapest form of accommodation available in the city, and did not enforce the restrictive rental rules in place. In *pensiones*, tenants rented a room while sharing the rest of the facilities, and were not asked for either a deposit or a rental guarantor. The drawbacks were also significant, however, since *pensiones* tended to be located in disadvantaged areas, their infrastructure was often in a precarious state and landlords tended to turn a deaf ear to tenants' complaints. Talking about how she managed to rent the room for her family and equip it with the basic things that they would need while covering most of the cost of their plane tickets, Yolanda says with satisfaction:

“César had to sell all the cobbler machinery because he could not bring anything here...So, I told him ‘I’ll let you a month before I finish repaying what I owe, so you can sell your things and see how much you get, and if it’s not enough for the tickets, I will help you’.”

In the meantime, Yolanda also prepared the official letter authorizing their child to travel with César (and without her) to Argentina and warned her husband that life in Argentina was not like in Peru. As their arrival date approached, the more Yolanda emphasized in their phone conversations:

“I’m not going to come home from work to cook for you, take care of you and run to the next job...You’ll have to learn how to cook for yourself and for our son because I eat at work and will only have three hours in the afternoon to spend with you both.”

In Peru, Yolanda stressed, women were expected to take care of all domestic work, including child-raising and caring for their husbands and elders, while men did not know how to do any of that.

Eight months after Yolanda had left Chiclayo, her family arrived in La Plata and it was only then that César learned about the emotional and financial hardships that Yolanda had gone through. As was the case of most migrant women leading their family's move, Yolanda gradually changed her work schedule in order to respond to her family's needs. Making up for

lost time was crucial for Yolanda and caring for their child was her priority. Yolanda's work change did not take place right away, however, because César was jobless for some time. In fact, Yolanda continued working three shifts for several months in order to make enough money to buy things, an issue that Yolanda convincingly presented to César as follows: "The kid needs a TV and if I quit two jobs, keeping only one, we won't be able...César, I have to do it for a while." Eventually, César was hired on a few construction and painting jobs, which allowed Yolanda to stop working nights by sending a replacement, a good friend of hers whom she could really trust (*de mucha confianza*). This also allowed the family to live under the same roof in the *pensión*. By then, Yolanda had found several cleaning day jobs through the *abuelas* she had previously worked for. Most often, after the death of an elderly employer, the deceased's girlfriends or daughters asked Yolanda to work for them or for their relatives. César's contribution to the raising of their children at that time made Yolanda's life easier, even if she still did the cooking and cleaning of their apartment. In fact, until he managed to earn a somewhat higher and stable income, César was home looking after their son and second baby while Yolanda was busy at work.

Things changed once more for Yolanda when César launched his shop in its new commercial premises. She became once again fully in charge of their household's social reproduction and, as a result, substantially reduced her workload. Furthermore, César insisted that Yolanda should "help" him at the *taller* during peak work periods¹⁵¹ while remaining at home the rest of the time instead of finding remunerated employment outside their household. This sort of demand was common among the Peruvian and Paraguayan men I interviewed who, after becoming established economically, want their wives to fully devote themselves to their families. Men often justify this demand by stating that that their spouses already made a lot of sacrifices for them (and for other relatives back home) by leading their family's migration to Argentina, and thus they deserve to rest. Even if this claim is often sincere, men's demands in this respect work to restore the traditional division of household labour and the attendant relations of emotional and financial dependency that it entailed back home. Men's remarks on this subject also signal the extent to which only remunerated labour is considered real "work" and of high value. In contrast, the jobs performed without financial retribution tend to be

interpreted as “help”, and are often naturalized as inherent to women and of lesser value, along with other domestic chores supporting the social and material reproduction of the household.

The Transnationalization of Social Reproduction: Its Consequences for Migrant Women and Their Families

Yolanda’s account in itself and vis-à-vis that of César is instructive in a number of important ways. To start with, it illustrates the increasing feminization of Peruvian and Paraguayan migrations to Argentina (Cerruti 2009, Pacceca and Courtis 2008, Texidó 2008) and the attendant transnationalization of social reproduction (Herrera Mosquera 2008, Arat-Koç and Giles 1996, Maher 2004). This twofold phenomenon constitutes an important shift from Peruvians and Paraguayans’ former mobility patterns, which has brought about important implications for migrant women and their families. As the heads of their family’s subsequent migration to Argentina, Peruvian and Paraguayan women in La Plata continue to play (albeit transnationally) key caregiving roles back home while incorporating new responsibilities, such as securing the financial well-being of those left behind. Without exception, the women I interviewed spent large amounts of energy and time comforting spouses and children over the phone and by Internet, and giving instructions to various (mostly female) relatives who are left in charge of their domestic responsibilities. As has been raised by the literature, the trade-off between emotional and economic considerations is inherent to transnational family relations (Russell Hochschild 2002, Merla and Baldassar 2010). Migrant women fulfill new pressing financial obligations such as paying back the loans that made their trip possible and sending money back home for various purposes (including buying food, clothes and toys for children and spouses, paying for medicines and bills, and supporting elderly or unemployed relatives).

The transnationalization of migrant women’s domestic roles along with their incorporation of new financial responsibilities has led to the renegotiation of familial obligations and the renewal of households’ reproduction strategies. Leaving their children or elders in the hands of a female relative is very costly for migrant women, from both emotional and financial points of view. Depending on who the assigned caregiver is (most often their own mother or mother-in-law, but sometimes a sister, sister-in-law or aunt), migrant women fear the possibility of differential treatment, neglect or mistreatment of their dependents, despite their

own fulfillment of financial obligations towards the assigned caregivers. Women's departure results in the transfer of their domestic (including care) duties to other women back home, whereas men, who most often do not partake in these responsibilities, become another dependent to be taken care of. By depicting motherhood as "natural", a patriarchal ideology of mothering locks women into biological reproduction, and denies them identities and selfhood outside mothering (Glenn 1994), even when they have acquired new financial obligations towards their families. In this way, mothering as women's responsibility is left unchanged and men continue to avoid the "second shift" (Ehrenreich and Russell Hochschild 2002).

Yolanda's account also shows the extent to which the initial emotional and financial hardships endured by Peruvian and Paraguayan women in La Plata contribute to changing their views of the traditional division of gendered household roles. Most migrant women mention facing discrimination and marginalization (especially at work and, to a lesser extent, in public institutions) in solitude upon their arrival in the city. While they explain the former by Platenses' prejudiced views, lack of empathy and unsympathetic attitudes, women see their initial solitude as arising from their lack of access to *social networks of trust (confianza)*. As they often put it, their initial suffering is caused by not knowing anyone in the city, even if retrospectively, they also provide a religious interpretation of the painful events, mostly by saying that "there was a reason for it". By overcoming their initial struggles, however, women experience an important personal transformation, which they describe as a process of learning and growth.

Women often mention being grateful to Argentina because the country gave them the opportunity to stand up for themselves while showing them that gender roles can differ from those they considered "normal" until their arrival. Fighting for their rights in La Plata in order to secure the well-being of those left behind shows women their own strength, determination and autonomy. In addition, women in La Plata make financial and other critical decisions for their families that override their husbands' or parents' preferences, which would be impossible in their countries of origin, where these relatives are invested with the authority to make important decisions for married or single women respectively. When talking about this issue, some women express frustration while others view their former emotional and financial dependency on husbands and parents as being a question of love and respect. Moreover, by

living and working in La Plata, Peruvian and Paraguayan women learn that their Argentinean counterparts are engaged in remunerated employment outside their homes as much as men are, which often results in both sexes sharing domestic chores. Migrant women use this knowledge to question their traditional views of gendered household roles, something they rarely did before. Interviewees consider making money extremely rewarding and particularly empowering when it comes to supporting their families. Nevertheless, women's new ambition for making money can become very costly, in particular, when enduring abusive and exploitative circumstances threatens their physical and psychological health, or when working day and night leads women to neglect their own young children, who end up "raising themselves" in La Plata (issues that I examine in the next chapter).

Yolanda's account also demonstrates that domestic work, crucial to the social and material reproduction of households, continues to be almost exclusively done and regulated by women. All the Peruvian and Paraguayan women I interviewed delegated their own domestic responsibilities (requiring their physical presence) to female relatives back home in order to take up some of those of their Argentinean counterparts. By cleaning the houses of Platenses and caring for their children and elders, migrant women "free" their Argentinean counterparts from domestic obligations, which allows the latter to engage in remunerated and highly regarded employment outside their homes. Yet, this transfer of devalued and poorly paid domestic obligations often deprives migrant women of their own right to family life (an issue that I examine in the next chapter).

On the other side of the work relationship, these migrants' employers are almost exclusively women. Daughters of elderly parents, sisters of mothers going through difficult times and supportive grandmothers or aunts of busy young people are the ones managing the domestic work of migrant women either in their own homes or in those of relatives. Platense women are the ones who hire, recommend to others, pay and fire Peruvian and Paraguayan women all while overseeing their performance and imposing "labour and family regimes" (Ong 1999) on them, that is, systems of power/knowledge that define and regulate subjects and normalize their attitudes and behaviour¹⁵². As Glenn's (2010) work demonstrates, the exploitation of women's care labour and the denial of equitable benefits and entitlements takes place through *multifarious forms of coercion*, ranging from personal moral persuasion to the

force of impersonal legal doctrines, from internalized feelings of obligation to external constraints of the labour market. Moreover, since status categories such as race and gender continue to shape both market and kin relations, women are charged with a “triple status duty to care” on the basis of kinship, gender and race/class (p.7).

Both in Argentina and in migrants’ home countries, female networks support the transfer of domestic work from more privileged to less privileged women, a relocation process that in itself contributes to the increasing devaluation of these chores and the reduced status of those who perform them. This happens in both migrants’ countries of origin and in Argentina. In the home country, the female relatives charged with caring for the dependents left behind by migrants increasingly consider their domestic roles to be less rewarding (or as having lesser value) than those of the women who left to perform paid work. Making money abroad translates into prestige at home, since the often unknown sacrifices made by migrants contribute towards sustaining or improving the material and social circumstances of those left behind. In Argentina, domestic labour has long been considered an occupation of lower value and this conception has tainted the social status of those who have performed it. Historically, the housework done by internal migrant women and men (and by aboriginal and black people before them) supported the standard of living of the country’s upper classes (Recalde 2006-a, Frigerio 2006). During Peronismo, the state’s promotion of women’s active economic participation was supported by a public network of daycare facilities and schools, which, combined with the private hiring of domestic employees, permitted middle class women, in particular, to work in more “desirable” (professional) occupations.

Over the decades, this transfer of domestic obligations increased along with the accentuation of the lower status attributed to this kind of work in the context of a deteriorating national economy and the replacement of internal workers by international migrant women. The intersection between these processes and the historical contempt felt for neighbouring nations in Argentina has resulted in an even lower status being associated with the work of social reproduction that is performed by Peruvian and Paraguayan women in the country. Moreover, the value of the labour of raising a child, in particular, always low relative to the value attributed to other kinds of labour, has sunk even lower under the impact of globalization. When formerly unpaid work became the paid work of child-care workers, its low

market value revealed the low value of care work generally and further lowered it (Hochschild 2002).

Gendered Views of Kirchnerismo's Policies

In addition to the general issues regarding gender roles that emerge from Yolanda's and César's accounts, which represent the views of other Paraguayans and Peruvians in the *partido's* urban areas, others come to light when migrants talk about the government's public policies. Migrant men tend to emphasize the negative consequences of the inclusive citizenship policies implemented by Kirchnerismo, despite the fact that some of them were receiving technical training subsidized by these same policies. Several of the Peruvian men I interviewed had completed or were enrolled in evening or night classes at almost no cost while keeping their day jobs in construction. Most often, their training was in repairing high tech equipment, including high definition TVs, video game consoles and computers. Since this work was in great demand, migrants envisioned opening their own repair shops, which would eventually allow them to quit the construction jobs they had never liked. Others, such as some Paraguayan men living in Buenos Aires city, had completed or were planning to enrol in subsidized refrigeration courses to fix a wide range of equipment, a skill that also seemed to be in high demand. Another example is Lucas, a Peruvian man in his fifties, who was hired to care for a Platense architect in his late eighties after finishing his nurse assistantship training at one of La Plata's public institutions. All the migrant families living in urban areas of the *partido* (and the GBA) who participated in my research received low-income-household subsidies financed through Kirchnerismo's inclusive public policies.

Migrant men often claim that the wide range of measures implemented by the government was creating a *cultura de vagos* or "culture of idlers" that fosters crime, mostly among the *villeros* and *pibes chorros*. César's comments on this issue are representative of those of others:

"I've been looking for an assistant or an apprentice [for his shop], but I do not find anyone...What happens is this plan being given by the President: the benefits for kids [Asignación Universal por Hijo] and all that...There are people who have 5, 7 children for this [reason], they receive 150\$ pesos, plus 30\$ as savings, for each child, and they don't work; besides, they receive the canasta [amount of money covering the basic consumption of a household], they are given everything!, so, why would they work if the state supports them?"

Talking about Kirchnerismo's inclusive policies, Peruvian and Paraguayan men, as well as some Bolivian ones, often remark that these measures constitute a regrettable waste of public resources, especially when combined with politicians' corruption and bribery. Rodrigo, a Peruvian man in his late thirties told me, for example:

"Sometimes, government leaders come to where I live to tell me: 'So, are you registered in the plan to earn some money?', and when I said no, they insisted that I should do it, by adding: 'You can pretend to be seeking employment and just go back home...But, we get 50\$ [pesos] and you keep the remaining 100\$."

Other migrant men also mention being invited by political leaders to participate in public partisan events. As Felipe, a Paraguayan man, puts it: "I have friends who tell me: 'Come, we're paying 80\$ pesos for people to accompany us to the capital [Buenos Aires]'...They are looking for support for I don't know what political event". Urban Bolivian men, in particular, tend to express their desire for "laws to be implemented" in a less overt manner, and often demand sanctions against criminal youth in particular. As Sandro once said:

"From my point of view and reasoning, I say that [Argentina] lacks laws as well as the implementation of such laws, I have a lot of friends who are verduleros and they are constantly robbed...And there should be a sentence for minors, you see."

In the eyes of migrant men in La Plata, Kirchnerismo's inclusive policies, coupled with politicians' corruption, has fostered a *holgazanería* (shiftlessness) among the poorest, marginalized Argentinians: the *villeros*. Several migrant men remarked with indignation:

"They have been so accustomed to live at the expense of the state that they even ask for a raise, they go on strike!...They don't do anything, those people wait for 'things to fall from the sky' for them, they do not need to work...This is the only country where this happens!"

Migrants often claim that this bad habit, induced by politicians' desire to get votes and steal money, is the cause of Argentina's delinquency since (poor) parents use the money given by the government to send their children to school for cigarettes and alcohol instead. As a result, the *villeros'* children have no education or ambition and resort to criminal activities, becoming the *pibes chorros* well known to migrants and non-migrants alike. Migrant men often propose *mano dura* (tough actions) as the solution to this "pernicious" situation, believing that by reintroducing compulsory military service, giving more freedom to the police and adopting harsher sanctions against criminal youth "things would improve". These are the punitive, even draconian political measures well known by migrants in their home countries,

which have normally been used by influential people inside and outside the state to silence any opposition to the status quo¹⁵³. When thinking within these parameters, migrant men contrast their own “culture of hard work” to that of the *villeros’ holgazanería* by signalling that they have always worked and never lived at the expense of the state.

Peruvian and Paraguayan women living or working in the *partido*’s urban areas, on the other hand, rarely speak about Kirchnerismo’s policies in the way that men do. Women often highlight the “great things” that their families have received from Argentina, envisioning them as new opportunities. Access to free public education for their children and health care for the whole family are considered invaluable resources by women, which, along with a range of non-taxable public subsidies, have continued to secure their children’s educational and economic prospects. Women also appreciate the “great care at no cost” that they have received when delivering their babies in public institutions. Most of those who bore children in the home country speak about the restrictive fees imposed by health care institutions, public and private alike, which are often not even well equipped to deal with difficult pregnancies or premature babies. Under these circumstances, most poor women have their babies at home with the help of a female relative, whereas those who manage to do so at a medical institution end up badly indebted, sometimes even losing their homes¹⁵⁴.

Some of the women I interviewed also spoke about their relatives’ recovery from serious illnesses thanks to public medical institutions in Argentina. Andrea’s husband, a Peruvian man in his late thirties, underwent surgery for a stomach tumour that was badly affecting his health. All the exams, diagnosis, surgery, recovery treatment and the subsequent medical and nursing follow-up were done free of charge at public hospitals. One of Ana’s sisters, an undocumented Paraguayan woman in her early thirties, was also treated at public medical institutions for a serious liver problem, which eventually would require a transplant. Likewise, Richard’s sister, a Paraguayan woman in her early thirties, was treated for uterine cancer with all expenses, from diagnosis to post-surgery treatment and follow-up, paid for by the state. Even if some men occasionally mention these sorts of health-related concerns, women are the ones who speak about them at length and mention how grateful they are that

their relatives were in Argentina. If they had been home, women say, these relatives would have quite probably died.

Women often acknowledge how much things have changed in Argentina since the 1990s, when the government made it very difficult for migrants from neighbouring nations to access public services and obtain their documentation. Despite arriving in the 1990s or 2000s, the vast majority of the migrant women I interviewed in the city promptly obtained their DNIs (*Document Nacional de Identidad*) by having an Argentinean-born child, thanks to Kirchnerismo's campaign of fast documentation. The *Centros de Documentación Rápida* (Fast Documentation Centres) were key to this measure¹⁵⁵. Moreover, women mention learning to see what they have in a different light, meaning that their experiences in Argentina taught them to be thankful for things that they took for granted back home, such as friendship and family.

Even if migrant men also consider Argentina a “generous country”, their accounts focus on how their own careers and financial circumstances improved. Women's accounts, in contrast, draw attention to the more comprehensive improvement of their families' well-being. Indeed, women tend to situate their personal growth and learning in La Plata within the larger social networks to which they belong, and vis-à-vis the contributions they make towards the nurturing of such extended kinship networks, whose members are spread over a number of countries. Thus, while men see their work stability and related financial progress as the key to improving their family's material well-being back home and in Argentina, women perceive the more comprehensive well-being of their kinship networks as guaranteeing their family's social, emotional and material reproduction as well as their own personal growth.

CHAPTER V: Experiencing Legality in the Peripheries

In this chapter, I shall focus on the experiences of Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans who lived in the peripheries of the *partido* of La Plata over the past decade while working in a number of its urban localities and those of the GBA. In the chapter's first part, I examine the work and residential trajectory of a Paraguayan family. Busy migrant parents incur high costs when leaving their children behind, paradoxically, in order to secure the financial well-being of their families. Long periods of separation often result in children feeling emotional detachment from parents or falling into severe depression. This family's frequent trips between Argentina and Paraguay illustrate the "circularity" of current migrations worldwide (Levit and Glick Schiller 2007, Portes and DeWind 2007, Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2008), a consequence of the changing economic, social and political circumstances in the region, in combination with decisions regarding work and family (Merla and Baldassar 2010). This case also shows the peculiar challenges faced by families living in areas neglected by the state and the high price they pay for the free accommodation these peripheries offer. By drawing on examples of migrants who have lived in peripheral areas of the *partido* and the GBA, I show that even if these localities are characterized by similarly precarious and dangerous living conditions, each has its own particular social dynamics. This becomes most apparent in the relationships established among migrants from different nationally defined groups, and between them and the most disadvantaged social groups in the GBA (an issue also examined by Wacquant 2008).

In the second part of this chapter, I introduce the case of a Peruvian family who lived in a periphery of the GBA before moving to another one within the *partido* of La Plata. This example shows the extent to which the envisioning of the migration project and its implementation are both gendered processes, issues that I began to analyze in the previous chapter. The personal growth, increased autonomy and economic independence experienced by migrant women represent a costly trade-off, however, since many of them fall physically and psychologically ill or have to neglect their own children after bringing them to Argentina. The labour trajectory of the husband shows how a male, informal labour niche, that of *trapito* or *cuida coche*, gradually emerged in La Plata during the 1990s and consolidated itself as

“Peruvian territory” in the following decade. The numerous experiences of this Peruvian man with the police show this institution’s racial profiling of the most disadvantaged social groups in the GBA, migrants and non-migrants alike.

THE ACTUAL COST OF FREE ACCOMMODATION

Working Without Papers in the Early 2000s

I met Aníbal and Nancy at their home in Villa Elvira, a disadvantaged area in the peripheries of the *partido de La Plata*, where they kindly offered to be interviewed on a Tuesday night (both worked long hours almost every day). Finding their home proved quite challenging and somewhat scary since their neighbourhood has no street signs, lights or even actual streets, paved or otherwise delimited. At 20:00 and after a rainy day, the area was a muddy, pitted and completely dark place, in which it was almost impossible to drive or see anything. If I made it to their neighbourhood, it was thanks to the guidance and support of my uncle, who accompanied me and insisted that we should keep trying, despite getting lost and receiving no answer to my phone calls. As we were about to give up, Aníbal appeared, seemingly out of nowhere, smiling in the dark with a flashlight in hand. He had not received my calls because cell phone reception is poor in the neighbourhood and, realizing I might have been trying to call him, he decided to come out and see if we had made it. Once again, without Aníbal’s guidance, we would have never found their home: not only was the area truly a *boca de lobos* (pitch black), but their house does not have a number nor is there any identifiable landmark close by that could have helped us to locate it.

Aníbal is from the south of Paraguay (Humaitá) and Nancy from the north (San Pedro de Ycuamanditú), but they met halfway in Asunción, the country’s capital¹⁵⁶. The opportunity for them to migrate to Argentina arose in 2001 when one of Aníbal’s sisters, who lived in Buenos Aires, found a job for Nancy. Unlike most of the Paraguayans (and Peruvians) I interviewed, the couple left together with their young son for Villa Elva, a disadvantaged locality in the peripheries of the *partido* of La Plata. Upon their arrival, they stayed at Nancy’s aunt’s house, where arrangements were made to share the premises between both families. As planned, Nancy began to work *cama adentro en negro* right away for a family in Buenos Aires

and commuted long hours every Sunday in order to briefly see her husband and child. Aníbal, unable to find work, stayed at home looking after their son.

Before migrating, Nancy lived in the *campo* (rural area), where she attended school in the morning and worked with her mother on their *chacra* (small farm) in the afternoon. Nancy had never done housework before, this being reserved for her mother. As was often the case among migrant women in their first job in Argentina, Nancy went to allegedly replace her sister-in-law and then kept the job. This strategy worked well for both the newcomer in urgent need of work and her relative wanting to quit that job. It was only when Nancy began to work for the family in Buenos Aires that she learned of the exploitative schedule awaiting her (from 06:00 to 03:00), an issue that she did not object to then, as she explains: “I had left my mom’s home and I had never worked like that before, so I believed that ‘work’ was that...Later, I came here and everything changed”. To my surprise, Nancy was not angry at her sister-in-law for not warning her about the type of work that awaited her with the *judíos* (Jews), as she calls her employers, which signals that they were Jewish. She simply believed that things were done differently in Argentina or, as Aníbal put it: “Things differ from rural areas to the city”. This lack of sharing exploitative work experiences, never mind how to overcome them, was quite common among the migrant women I interviewed, many of whom, like Nancy, were not warned about what awaited them. This *no dicho* (that which remains unspoken) among recently arrived young women along with their lack of urban domestic experience contributes to the reproduction of a certain “newness” among them, which is seen as their “docile” character by abusive employers seeking “exploitable” domestic workers.

After several months on the job, Nancy travelled with her employers to Punta del Este, a popular seaside destination in neighbouring Uruguay, where the work became even more demanding, as she explains:

“There, we never stopped working! We scrubbed the floors like slaves with polishing sponges, on our hands and knees, and they were always checking on us...I was pregnant with my second child, but the Señora didn’t know...Because she would have fired me and how would I have fed my first child?”

The knowledge that Aníbal was still unemployed also contributed to Nancy’s willingness to put up with her employer’s exploitative treatment and abusive demands, even

dressing up “like a clown” as Nancy describes the dress code imposed by her employer—in a long, loose dress along with pants and shoes that she considered horrible. Nancy’s ability to *aguantar* (endure) came to an end, however, when she had to be hospitalized on their return from Uruguay:

“At that time, it was very difficult for foreigners to work in Argentina because we didn’t have the DNI...And we had to aguantar... Yet, I could not do it anymore because my feet were too swollen, my belly was about to explode...I was then in my 7th month of pregnancy.”

Once in Buenos Aires and feeling very sick, Nancy had to make up excuses in order to leave her employers’ house because she had “no actual reason” to go home (supposedly having hidden her pregnancy under her large dress). It was also difficult for Nancy to get her last pay since the *Señora* had refused to pay her since their departure for Punta del Este (which I believe was part of her strategy to retain Nancy’s services until the last minute without acknowledging her right to a maternity leave or her pressing need to rest)¹⁵⁷. As other migrant women also remarked, exploitative employers often consider their *empleadas domésticas*’ sick or maternity leaves as unacceptable expressions of their lack of productivity, and thus, good reason to fire them. Under these circumstances, one of the job’s most advantageous aspects, i.e., that it is “under the table” and no attention given the worker’s irregular status, ends up working against migrant women, who find themselves with no legal protection against employers’ exploitation and arbitrary decisions.

Luckily for the family, by the time Nancy gave birth at the public hospital where she was hospitalized, Aníbal had found work in the construction sector through one of his in-laws. Even if meagre, Aníbal’s salary, along with Nancy’s last payment, permitted the new mother to stay home with their two children. At the time, Aníbal did not have his residency papers and used his brother-in-law’s DNI to work:

“If someone from the ministry [of work] came, I had to hide...I could only stay if I knew the document number by heart, so I had it written everywhere on the walls, just in case I forgot it!”

Most compatriots in the *obra* (construction site), however, were not as lucky as Aníbal and had to resort to riskier evasion strategies. Some climbed into highly placed cement water tanks, where they hid during inspections, as Aníbal explains:

“The tanks are huge! So they [undocumented compatriots] got inside and we covered them, we put the lid on...And they had to be inside until the inspection finished as to avoid being caught and fired.”

This type of dangerous hiding strategy was quite common among the Peruvians, Paraguayans and Bolivians I interviewed working without papers in the construction sector during the 1990s and in the early 2000s. Yet, over the course of the last decade, it has become almost impossible to find employment without papers in this industry because employers consider it too risky to hire workers *en negro*, as the result of Kirchnerismo’s regularization campaigns. Since the early 2000s migrants have needed at least a *precaria* (see chapter III).

Another option available to undocumented migrants in the early 2000s was buying *documentos truchos* (fake DNIs), which, even if risky, often allowed migrants to work locally. Aníbal’s view of this alternative echoes that of other migrant men I interviewed in different parts of the GBA:

“When we got here, they offered me one [fake DNI] for 200\$ pesos, but it was only useful to work here in La Plata, and you could not use it to buy anything or to travel, you would end up in jail! [if you did so]. Some [people] even say that they’ll come up with it [the fake DNI] but they take all your money and disappear!”

Under these circumstances, recently arrived migrant men have tended to find their first job with compatriots who are *contratistas* (small contractors) since they are the only ones who would turn a blind eye to their lack of papers. These jobs are poorly paid and lack union protection, however, so men seek to move on to regulated employment as soon as they can, especially from the mid-2000s on. This shift towards “legality” among migrants has been facilitated by the prompt production of their *precarias* by the government, an issue that was mentioned by many of those I interviewed. This certificate, easy to obtain, has permitted migrants to work legally (almost) immediately upon their arrival. Getting residence papers, which many see as truly making their lives easier, remains long and problematic, however.

Shortly after Aníbal found work, Nancy’s aunt, who had been sharing her house with them in Villa Alba, asked him if he could help to finish a house she was building in Paraguay. Unable to refuse her request and seeing it as an opportunity to visit family back home, Nancy, Aníbal and their two children left for Asunción in 2002, only to find that no one was there¹⁵⁸.

Having spent all their money on bus tickets, the family was obliged to move in with Nancy's mother. Under these circumstances, Aníbal began to work in soy production for a Brazilian company and Nancy went back to doing farm work with her mother. Two years passed before an opportunity arose for Aníbal to return to work in Argentina: this time, a brother-in-law found him a job. Aníbal left in early 2004 for Villa Alba, and, in less than two weeks, he was employed at a construction site. In the beginning, he was only assigned small jobs, which did not pay enough to rent a room at a *pensión*, so he had to live at his brother-in-law's house, where cohabitation was difficult. Later on, Aníbal was hired to build a house in Gonnet (an urban locality of the *partido* less than ten minutes from La Plata city) and he eventually moved into improvised housing provided by the contractor on the work site. This is a common practice among construction workers that permits them to save time and money by avoiding the long commute between home and work during the last phases of projects. Aníbal worked at this site for a year, which allowed him to learn the trade while earning his employers' *confianza*. He recounts with pride that by the time this project was finished, he had found several other part-time jobs and started to work independently. Indeed, when I met him, Aníbal already had his "chain of recommendations", as he referred to his multiple clients. Depending on the size of the project, he has worked either by himself (since he can do most construction-related jobs) or with the help of a small Paraguayan crew. Aníbal even found a job for Nancy at the house he had built in Gonnet.

Emotional Costs of Family Separation

This time, in order to join Aníbal, Nancy had to leave their three children behind (a third one was born while they were back in Paraguay). As the couple emphasized, since they had nothing left, they had no option but to work, work, and work. Nancy's mother offered to help by looking after her grandchildren so as to enable Nancy to join her husband in Argentina (or, as Nancy put it, so as to "give her the courage" to do so). Nancy left for Villa Alba in 2005 and, this time, found a job she genuinely liked. She describes her new *patrona* (female employer) as a "really good person", who is almost never at home, which permits Nancy to clean without being bothered. When talking about this *Señora*, Aníbal and Nancy emphasize that she has given them a lot of presents: "What we have here comes from my job...She sends clothes, shoes for the children...We do not need to buy those things" Nancy says, while Aníbal

remarks: “Thank God, the people we know are *buenísimos*, we can’t complain...And all the things that she gave us [as presents]...We haven’t bought almost anything!”

This second time in Argentina, Nancy was lucky not only with this new employer but also with others, thanks to positive referrals. By the time I met Nancy in 2010, she had six different part-time jobs in various localities of the *partido*. Because she works by the hour, and given the poor public transportation to and from Villa Elvira, Nancy arrives home quite late, between 20:30 and 21:00. Since Aníbal also works long hours, the couple had decided to “invite” one of Nancy’s sisters to live with them, mainly to take care of the children, whom they had brought to Argentina in 2007. Paying for the ticket and subsistence for a younger female relative in exchange for looking after the household’s children is a common strategy among busy migrants, one that eventually permits the newcomer to find remunerated employment elsewhere. Aníbal and Nancy’s workload has not decreased over the years and they barely see each other, as Aníbal remarks:

“Sometimes I even arrive later [after 21:00], in order to speed things up at work, and she [Nancy] also gets back at night...I even work weekends but she does not, for the kids, because we want them to play soccer and all that.”

Even if the couple is quite satisfied with their move to Argentina, a country where they have enjoyed a number of rights they could not even dream of in Paraguay, both are aware of the costly implications of having been apart from their children.

Aníbal and Nancy spoke at length about how poor people die at home because they cannot even afford public health care services while others mentioned spending their life savings (put aside in the hopes of buying a home) in order to pay for minor surgery at a public hospital. In fact, Nancy almost joined the unfortunate destiny of the majority in Paraguay when, on the verge of giving birth prematurely to their first baby in Asunción, the couple spent four hours in a taxi looking for a hospital with an incubator. By the time they found a private clinic that would receive them, Nancy was already unconscious, and the clinic charged them for medicine and post-partum supplies that they never used¹⁵⁹. In Argentina, in contrast, Nancy’s second baby was born in a public hospital where mother and newborn were very well cared for at no charge.

Like most of those I interviewed, Anibal and Nancy also value the public subsidies that they have received for their Argentinean daughter as well as the opportunity to study for free that has been made available to their three children. None of those things exist back home. Getting their documents (DNIs) through accelerated procedures after the birth of their Argentinean child has made their lives easier, since it has permitted them to access a wide range of public entitlements while working *en blanco*¹⁶⁰. Moreover, Nancy and Anibal have rarely lacked jobs in Argentina, whereas employment continues to be very scarce, poorly paid and almost exclusively for men in Paraguay, which barely permits poor families to survive. In this regard, not only are women happy about the autonomy they gain through work in Argentina, but men are also satisfied and consider their spouses' financial contribution very helpful. Nevertheless, the downside of migrant families' better financial situation is the emotional detachment often felt by children towards their parents after long periods of separation.

In this regard, Nancy has been paying the higher price and she speaks with resignation about the extent to which their two younger children do not consider her their mother. When Nancy left Paraguay to join Anibal in 2005, their eldest son was over 4 years of age, their daughter was 3 and the youngest not even two years old. It was in 2007 that Nancy and Anibal brought them to Villa Elvira. Speaking about their daughter, Nancy says:

“She’s not used to me, she’s really into my mom, when I go out, she never asks: ‘Where is mommy going?’, she only says: ‘Bye’...She got used to it...She’s tough. Even when I was packing my bag [to leave for Argentina], I was crying, but she was not, she was happy, but I was not...I’ve had to aguantar.”

Another time, their children were cold at night and cried a lot because they were not used to the Argentinean winter. At that point, their daughter scolded Nancy: “Take me back home, why did you bring me here? Why did you take me away from my mom? You’re not my mother!”. Nancy finds her daughter’s complaints, directed exclusively towards her, extremely painful, yet, she adds with resignation: “It hurts me a lot [what she tells me] but I have to accept it, I have to listen to what she tells me”.

Their youngest son’s adjustment problems manifested somewhat differently. Instead of reacting with anger and frustration at his parents’ decision to take him to Argentina, he fell into

a severe depression, which Nancy referred to as “grandmother’s sentimental problems” and Aníbal, as “nostalgia problems”. As they explain, the child shut himself up in his room and did not want to play with anyone. He did not complain about his situation, nor did he want to talk to his grandmother over the phone; he remained silent and cried often. Things only became worse during a trip to Paraguay in 2008; the child did not want to return to Argentina and demanded that his parents send him his clothes instead. Upon the family’s return to Villa Elvira, Nancy and Aníbal decided to send their then five-year-old son to see a psychologist while paying for private transportation to take him to school, expenditures that were very costly in relation to their meagre incomes. After a year of treatment, the child greatly improved, but the parents still considered it wise to skip their annual trip back home in 2009. Luckily, their daughter was gradually coming to terms with the idea of living in Argentina, whereas their eldest son had not gone through such a rough time, as Aníbal remarks: “He wants to come back [to Argentina] each time and says ‘I have a future there’”.

State Governance by Absence and Neglect: Neighbours’ Responses in Villa Elvira

Like many other migrants I interviewed who have family in countries other than Argentina, Nancy and Aníbal emphasize that there are not many places where people can settle themselves on someone else’s private property without paying for it. The explanation provided by Ricardo, a Peruvian man who lives with his family in the Altos de San Lorenzo (a peripheral locality of the *partido*, situated half way between La Plata city and Villa Elvira), illustrates the views of others on this issue:

“What happens is that there [in Santiago de Chile, where one of his brothers lives] if you rent a room, it has to be for 3 or 4 people because it’s extremely expensive. There is not like here where you can go and ‘invade’ a lot or get into an abandoned house and occupy it.”

Even if this squatter practice was not new in the GBA, during the 2000s it became widespread in the peripheral and semi-rural areas of the *partido* of La Plata. To a much lesser extent, it also happened in its urban areas, as exemplified by César’s case (see previous chapter). Taking possession of abandoned property is actually endorsed by Argentinean civil law through the institution of *usucapión* or *posesión veinteañal*, which promotes and protects the productive use of property, and establishes that a person who productively takes possession

of some abandoned land or buildings can claim ownership after twenty years. It is with this hope that most people take possession of abandoned property.

When I did my fieldwork in 2010, members of the most disadvantaged social groups, such as the so-called *villeros*, commonly moved into abandoned lots in semi-rural areas of the *partido*, where they installed a *casilla* (a poor, improvised structure) as their new place of residence. Likewise, an increasing number of individuals in the upper middle (professional) social classes actively took possession of unproductive and often spacious lots in the same areas. In that case, fencing the parcels of land tended to precede the construction of some sort of housing or the transformation of the wasteland into nicely landscaped backyards. These developments were often closely guarded against possible intruders by a hired watchman, who either moved into the lot/s or visited it/them frequently until their eventual occupation took place. The distinctive strategies deployed by these social groups reflect their respective access to symbolic and financial resources. While the *villeros* have focused on entering the abandoned property and sustaining their occupation (so as to resist being forced out), the upper middle classes have secured their possession by surrounding it (so as to prevent intruders from accessing it)¹⁶¹. Under these circumstances, when disputes over occupied property arise (even between successive occupiers), they are commonly solved through informal transactions involving financial compensation given to the owner or the occupier/s. This strategy seeks to avoid going through legal processes, which remain too lengthy and expensive¹⁶².

In the peripheries of the *partido* such as in Villa Elvira, Villa Elva or Altos de San Lorenzo, however, life turns out to be much more complicated for those who inhabit abandoned properties. This is the case mainly because these areas have been forsaken by the state, which has removed itself almost completely from its service-providing obligations and as guarantor of public security. Villa Elvira, for example, where Aníbal, Nancy and their three children live, is an area that does not have running water, a sewage system, electricity or even paved streets or sidewalks. The *barrio* (neighbourhood), as its inhabitants warmly refer to the area, is composed of a large number of lots of diverse sizes, which are not demarcated, thus giving the impression of a continuous space where a series of precarious houses are scattered. As in other peripheries, residents tend to improvise their homes using the materials they can

come up with, while others organize into cooperative endeavours in order to build themselves houses made of cement, as many migrants proudly remarked¹⁶³. Occasionally, houses are found in their initial stages of construction, which people tend to adapt to their family needs, as Aníbal did:

“I expanded this part [the living room where we were] and the back part for the children and my mother, but since I was not making much money, I did it little by little...In a demolition job I had, they gave me everything, so I could bring it here and it’s a large house...I also did the septic tank...I have a patio in the back and I want to build more in the rear part of the lot, yet I do not want to spend a lot of money if we do not know what’s going to happen in the future.”

Aníbal’s final remark reflects the uncertainty felt by several migrants I interviewed who live in the peripheries of the *partido* about the actual possession of the lots they occupy, which contrasts with the more assertive opinions of those who occupy abandoned property in either new or in-the-making urban areas. This situation was the result of social groups’ differential access to crucial resources along with their particular experiences with state officials. Access to vital information such as the list of abandoned lots and the rules of *usucapión*, political and administrative connections to influence and/or speed up the treatment of cases, and financial resources to pay lawyers, bribes or economic compensations were unevenly distributed among those occupying abandoned property in the *partido*. Like other migrants, Aníbal speaks with resignation about the almost complete retraction of the state from Villa Elvira along with public servants’ neglect to inform neighbours about their *usucapión* rights:

“We were checking with a state accountant who came to speak about those issues but he disappeared!...It seems that this lot [facing his own] has a tax debt of many years...A [state] agrimensor [surveyor] has to come to give the person [occupier] the lot; the same happens with that lot [one placed a bit further from his], we’re inquiring about it and it seems that it has a huge debt that the municipality doesn’t want to take charge of, but all that came to nothing.”

In response to the reluctance of service providers, including public agencies and concessions given to private companies, to furnish Villa Elvira with running water and electricity, neighbours have resorted to precarious solutions that not only threaten families’ safety but also generate conflict within the *barrio*. Neighbours find themselves waiting for unfulfilled promises and confused by contradictory responses given by diverse service providers’ agents, as Aníbal explains:

“We’re all in the same situation, the ‘electricity person’ came, so we bought the required pillar and I built it, but the person disappeared. Tractors were to come because the water pipes were really badly done, but in the end, we know nothing about it.”

In the end, neighbours wound up being all *enganchados* or *colgados* (precariously connected to the electric grid without paying for it) in order to have electricity because the privatized serviced provider (EDELAP) told them to do so, which Aníbal regrets:

“We went to EDELAP and requested the service in order to pay taxes because it’s for our future, we don’t want to be enganchados. Yet, they gave us the order to do so...Someone does it, another follows and it all becomes a nido de cables [tangle of wire]...It’s dangerous but people do not care about cables hanging close to the floor as long as they have electricity.”

Residents have resorted to a similarly poor solution in order to have running water, so this vital resource is often unavailable to some as its consumption augments among others. Aníbal and Nancy have opted to remain silent in order to avoid conflict with neighbours, while buying bottled water for their youngest child, as Aníbal explains: “If you complain, you get into fights with everyone, so what can we do?” Equally problematic was a former attempt to pave one of the *barrio*’s main streets. Most neighbours opposed the project by claiming that they would not have water until the work was finished, thus nothing was done. The muddy and pitted streets of Villa Elvira also made apparent a contentious situation arising from an Argentinean family’s privileged access to resources and political connections. For example, the woman’s job at the municipality has permitted her family to buy a vehicle while her connections “facilitated” (gave for free) the labour and materials to improve the entry of their house. When talking about this issue, Aníbal notes:

“She doesn’t care about the rest [of the neighbours], she has never shared anything with us...We paid out of our pockets to buy the escombros [debris] and we spread it on the street...They come and go by car and throw water on the street, which makes a big pozo [pothole], and she only adds dirt to fix her entry...We do not have a car, yet we paid out of our pockets.”

With frustration, Nancy explains that the mess created by this family was affecting their children, who have to cover their shoes with plastic garbage bags when it rains in order to avoid getting dirty and muddy. Aníbal’s family walks almost twenty minutes every day in order to reach the only bus stop serving Villa Elvira, where two bus lines pass irregularly, often arriving at the stop already full, Aníbal notes: “They never come on time, and if you’re a bit late, for example at 07:30, you’ll never get on them!”

The few examples I have presented here illustrate how the scarcity of resources in Villa Elvira combined with the neglect of service providers has resulted in many neighbours' attitudes of *sálvese quien pueda* (every man for himself) in a context where poor and contentious solutions to the most basic necessities prevail. Under similar circumstances, however, alternative, cooperative solutions have been found to comparable problems by neighbours (an issue that I examine in a later section).

Migrants' experiences of this sort of state *governmentality by absence and neglect* in Villa Elvira during the 2000s have been informed by previous, mostly urban, personal encounters with public servants as well as by their groups' collective memories. In various circumstances, the Argentinean state has made itself present to migrants as an authoritative entity that imposes often arbitrary regulations and inefficient bureaucratic procedures, such as when they a) complete diverse administrative and legal procedures at municipal, provincial and federal public institutions; b) come in and out the country (at the border or in the airport); c) hide from state inspectors enforcing regularization campaigns (in construction sites and Chinese mini-markets for example); and d) meet the police on the street, albeit to a lesser extent since the mid-2000s—except for the *partido*'s rural areas, where this institution has continued to represent a frightening force for migrants (see next chapter). Without a doubt, migrants' encounters with different state officers in their home countries constituted the foundations of their more general representation of the state as an authoritative force, upon which their views of the Argentinean state have been built. Migrants also draw on the collective memories of their ethnic groups in La Plata, which consist for the most part of stories of urban suffering, exploitation, police abuse and arbitrary deportation during the 1990s that are only ephemerally lightened up by recollections of the profitable *uno a uno* exchange rate implemented over the majority of that decade. Migrants access these memories and weave their own experiences into them through their daily social interaction with relatives, friends, acquaintances and other compatriots.

By combining past and present personal experiences with those of others, migrants articulate their (changing) views of the Argentinean state, which shape the strategies that they

develop to interact with its different public servants. In peripheral areas of the *partido* such as Villa Elvira, these views have combined with migrants' limited access to crucial material and symbolic resources to secure their *usucapión* rights during the 2000s, which has in turn translated into migrants' attitude of waiting and remaining silent along with their generalized feeling of uncertainty and puzzlement about the state as guarantor of entitlements and public security. This situation is of course neither fixed nor identical to those of other areas of the *partido*, since governmentality regimes change over time and across space along with the social actors (re)producing them.

Living Side by Side with Sex and Drug Trades

In their vast majority, the residents of Villa Elvira are Paraguayans, although a handful of Argentinians and some people presumed to be Peruvians¹⁶⁴ also live there. Although many migrants envisage future ownership of the lots they occupy, the main drive behind their decision to move into the *barrio* has been less ambitious, at least initially. For most, the free accommodation available in Villa Elvira has constituted their only option, as it permits families with meagre salaries to make ends meet while supporting relatives back home and repaying their migration-related debts. Combined with hard work and sacrifices, some migrants have managed to build their own, albeit basic homes in Villa Elvira. Many have also invited relatives to join them. In neighbouring peripheral localities of the *partido*, other migrants have launched businesses in their countries of origin (such as in rice commercialization) in partnership with relatives who stayed back home. Some of those with prospects of returning (whether concrete or imagined) have built homes in their native localities whereas others have bought apartments in larger cities, where they plan to launch stores catering to the needs of busy urban dwellers. These achievements have been earned through much effort, often demanding costly compromises from migrants.

Nevertheless, there are residents of Villa Elvira who live differently and whose nightly, clandestine activities perturb the social reproduction of households whose members work and study during the day in important ways. It was when Nancy and Aníbal spoke about the loud music being regularly played at night in the neighbourhood that the reality of living side by side with people engaged in drug and sex trades came out. During the interview, I joked about

the high volume of the music that we could hear from their house, even after closing the doors and windows. It was a Tuesday at 21:30 when Nancy explained with indignation:

“It’s like that all day and night, they do not work...And I would like to know how they actually make a living! We work all day long and sometimes we can’t buy anything, but they buy tons of things!”

Aníbal added in astonishment that they were young people, probably in their mid-twenties and early thirties, who have computers and a huge stereo system. This handful of young adults begins to play music early in the afternoon, increasing its volume as the day progresses. By the time night falls, the noise of pickup trucks, motorbikes and other vehicles’ engines adds to this disturbing atmosphere, which only subsides just before sunrise, when families in Villa Elvira are about to wake up to get ready for work and school. In addition, fights are not infrequent and often result in shouting and injuries. In order to protect their children from this perturbing environment, Aníbal built their room in the rear part of their lot, as Nancy explains:

“Before, they [children] cried a lot and complained...Sometimes, he [their youngest child] grabbed his pillow, covered his head, and said: ‘For god’s sake!, aren’t they going to ever stop?!’”

The clandestine activities performed in the *barrio* not only shared their timing and clientele, but also enhanced each other’s profits, as the growing material acquisitions of these young people in Villa Elvira made apparent. Ironically, while residents do not benefit from these financial gains, they are still forced to share their most pernicious side effects, such as witnessing or even experiencing the violence that accompanies drug and sex transactions, being unable to sleep at night due to the noisy and abusive climate that is generated, and finding their surroundings polluted by a range of party leftovers when they leave their houses early in the morning. Nancy and Aníbal spoke in a somewhat indirect manner about these issues, revealing that they were quite aware of what was going on even if they referred to these illicit transactions and their consequences in a discreet, almost polite manner¹⁶⁵.

As in other peripheries of the GBA, the fearful atmosphere created by a minority of residents was progressively naturalized by the majority in Villa Elvira, who, despite considering their dangerous milieu familiar, still deployed a range of preventative and preservation strategies around their home. Aníbal and Nancy, for example, almost exclusively

see people either inside their home or outside Villa Elvira, minimizing as much as possible their family's use of nearby open spaces. Others spoke at length about the importance of avoiding certain parts of Villa Elvira at specific times of day, highlighting their knowledge of the barrio's geographies of delinquency, that is, where and when diverse illicit activities are being performed and by whom. Central for all residents is to avoid being lured in by these illicit trades and their perpetrators. In this regard, special attention is paid to protecting children by instructing them about the dangers involved in the drug and sex trades and how to stay away from them¹⁶⁶. Adults are equally concerned, since they struggle to avoid responding to violent reactions and other incitements to fight, accepting invitations to party or even getting involved in the businesses.

To lighten up the conversation, Anibal noted how things had improved in Villa Elvira during the course of the past year. Those involved in the drug and sex trade have become a bit calmer (less noisy), especially vis-à-vis the events that they previously organized around a pool table, whose notoriety used to attract large numbers of people:

“Before it was a real disaster!, people came from so many different places, and one has to be careful because we do not know all those people, we know each other [neighbours]...They stopped that because they had lots of trouble with another neighbour, they bothered him so much that [in the end] they all went outside and fought.”

Anibal and Nancy were also relieved that their former belligerent neighbours, a Paraguayan couple who had serious domestic violence problems, had moved out. This couple's nights started with drinking and playing very loud music (they placed their stereo system in a window, which was only a couple of metres from Nancy and Anibal's home), which would only stop at 05:00. Eventually, this noisy atmosphere evolved into the man coming out and crying for help while his spouse attempted to kill him. These fights had left profound marks on this young man's body, whose face was disfigured. Talking about this couple, Anibal says:

“They started hitting each other and I had to come out at dawn to talk to them...The woman broke bottles on him, stabbed him...And he came to us begging for help...I went out for the kids because they cried and screamed.”

Luckily, a quiet Paraguayan family had replaced this troublesome couple.

Sharing the Neighbourhood with Villeros and Pibes Chorros

Los pibes del barrio, as Nancy refers to the criminal youth in the neighbourhood, have also calmed down, even if she is still concerned that they do too many drugs. Aníbal, for his part, signals that they have become harmless in Villa Elvira: “Criminal youth were *dando vueltas* [‘walking around’] before but they have calmed down, and they don’t do anything in the barrio”. This is a common remark among Peruvians, Paraguayans and Bolivians living in disadvantaged peripheries of the GBA, side by side with *villeros*, who indicate that the *pibes chorros* tend to leave their neighbours alone once they get to know them, which often implies neighbours showing some sort of “respect” or recognition to them. This coincides with the accounts of anthropologists working in “crime-ridden” neighbourhoods in other parts of the world (Schneider and Schneider 2008).

Like the vast majority of migrant men I interviewed, Aníbal explains that these Argentinean youth are lost because they have given into the vice of drugs and alcohol, often as a result of “bad” (meaning too soft) parenting: “There are parents who empower their children too much and don’t stop them when they are little, so by the time they get older, who is going to do so?” For him, the only possible solution to this problem is *mano dura*: the government should re-introduce the compulsory military service.

In contrast with what tends to be assumed by most migrants, however, in many disadvantaged areas of the GBA, the *pibes chorros* are also migrants. Soledad, a Paraguayan woman in her late thirties who lives with her family in Dock Sud, Avellaneda (a disadvantaged locality of the GBA), explains:

“In our street for example, there are Peruvians and Bolivians who sell drugs, they get together and sometimes they shoot or stab each other, but they’re well known now, they do not bother you...When we just moved in, yes, they asked for cigarettes and money, and if you didn’t give them, they ‘marked’ you...They are pibes and adult men...But after they get to know you, they leave you alone...Yet, if they don’t know you, fuiste! [you’re history!], they rob you of everything!”

Laughing, Soledad adds that her husband once left their car parked at a garage located ten blocks from their house for about six months, at which point the *pibes del barrio* set it on fire. In a more serious tone, she also speaks about their plan to move to a new *barrio*, where

the government is building houses for unemployed or underemployed people with children who do not have health care. According to this *plan de vivienda*, those who meet the criteria are to be given their homes at no cost, according to their place on long waiting lists¹⁶⁷. Soledad's family has visited the area where the new *barrio* is being built (located about ten blocks from where they live) several times in order to assure their eventual safe arrival. While following the evolution of the project, Soledad's family has sought to get to know those who already live there, a combination of Peruvians, Bolivians, Paraguayans and Argentinians. Soledad's husband hopes to get a house as far as possible from a nearby *villa* (shantytown), for their children's safety, while Soledad cautiously remarks that her family will eventually have to get to know their future neighbours really well. Even if she knows that their move is still uncertain, and projected to happen in the long term whenever their turn comes to obtain a home, Soledad is well aware that the sort of preventative strategies they have been deploying are necessary. Having lived in disadvantaged areas of the GBA's peripheries since 2003 has taught her the lesson quite well.

In other cases, however, the *villeros del barrio* do not treat neighbours well, often breaking into their houses when families are not there. As a result, neighbours tend to develop "solidarity networks" in order to watch over one another's property and call the police if necessary. This has happened in a periphery of the *partido* of La Plata called Los Hornos, where Julián lives with his family in a neighbourhood mostly populated by Paraguayans, Bolivians, and provincial Argentinians. Julián is a Bolivian in his forties from Tarija, who initially moved to Argentina as a young boy to practice seasonal agricultural work along his parents. Many years later, he moved to the GBA (see next chapter, where I elaborate on his labour trajectory). His Argentinean-born wife is the daughter of southern Bolivians like him, who have lived in a *villa* of Quilmes (a locality of the GBA) until its increasing insecurity levels led them to move to Los Hornos. By the time I met Julián, he was managing construction projects, after years of experience in the industry. While the Argentinean engineers, architects and lawyers, with whom he has worked, always treated Julián with respect, the *villeros del barrio* have often mistreated him. Julián contrasts the attitudes of "people with education", as he calls the former, with those of the *villeros*, whom he considers as *la peor porquería* (the worst scum):

“Yes, those are the ones who discriminate [us] the most, they tell us ‘bolita’ [derogatory term to refer to Bolivians]...Those from the villa, from the barrio; I have never had problems [with them] because I always listen, I do not respond, I do not pay attention to what they say; I do my thing, despite what they have to say.”

Like other migrants who can afford it, Julián sends his children to private school in order to spare them the unpleasant discriminatory attitudes of the *villeritos del barrio*. Under these circumstances, the private-public divide is perceived by migrants and non-migrants alike as a protective barrier able to keep out the most pernicious social actors, as Julián explains:

“My daughters told me that in public institutions there is discrimination...They tell them ‘bolita’ and I don’t know what else...Because there are more villeritos, los del barrio [in public institutions] who believe that they’re ‘big’, ‘the’ Argentinians, and it’s quite the opposite.”

Julián’s house was broken into on two occasions when no one was there; luckily, the couple was at work and their three children at school. In both instances, the burglars did not steal much; only small things were taken, not even a TV. As a precaution, Julián’s family does not keep money at home. Julián is sure that criminal youth from the neighbourhood were involved in these robberies because they know when no one is home, which worries him. He finds some relief in the solidarity among neighbours, who take care of one another.

Like other migrant women (mostly Bolivian), Julián’s wife sews clothing for a popular clothing store targeting teenagers in La Plata, as her mother did before her. Like other reputable businesses in the garment industry in the GBA, this company hides the exploitative contractual relations imposed upon their employees, who are precariously hired and poorly paid. Workers most often work either at their own homes or in clandestine textile workshops, where conditions are inappropriate or insalubrious and unsafe respectively (Pacecca and Courtis 2006; CELS 2007). Julián’s wife initially worked at her mother’s, but when the latter retired, she bought her machinery, and started to work from home. Julián was relieved by his wife’s change of workplace, believing that it would prevent future robberies.

Migrants Living in Pensiones in Disadvantaged Peripheries

The vulnerability of migrants living in dangerous peripheries increases when they inhabit *pensiones*—unlike the positive urban experiences of others, such as Peruvian César, who lived

in this type of basic housing with his young son upon their arrival in La Plata city¹⁶⁸. The experiences of Richard illustrate the former. He is a quite feminine¹⁶⁹ Paraguayan man in his mid-twenties, who in 2006 moved to Berisso city, located in the *Gran La Plata Aglomerado Urbano*. Back home in San Lorenzo, Richard worked in “local politics” for an engineer at the municipality and for the owner of a renowned river resort. His work consisted of gathering people for political meetings and events in exchange for an eventual job with the municipality, a promise that was never fulfilled. Most of the time, Richard was out of work and so had to find a number of odd jobs in order to survive, such as cleaning houses and tending gardens. Disappointed by his work situation, Richard considered going to Spain when a former schoolmate living there “invited” him (that is, offered to pay for his ticket). However, not having the financial means to get the visa, put his papers in order or deal with any eventuality that might arise, Richard refused the offer: “I was afraid because people told me that if you go [to Spain] and do not have a contract, they send you back and you lose all your money”. He knew many *paisanos* (compatriots) who went to Spain, after selling all their possessions, and came back broke, even losing their homes, which they had used as the repayment guarantee of the loans they obtained to finance their trips from banks and other moneylenders. Under these circumstances, Richard decided to play it safe by accepting his sister’s invitation, who by then had spent five years with her Argentinean husband in a “neighbourhood of migrants” in Berisso, as Richard says: “They’re all foreigners [who live in that neighbourhood], Peruvians, *bolitas*, Paraguayans, but no Argentinians”. Richard’s sister gradually managed to bring her four Paraguayan children (from another man) to Berisso, and they have adapted well and were attending primary and secondary school.

Upon his arrival, Richard worked for his brother-in-law, who has a small crew doing construction-related jobs. Yet, he soon realized the extent to which he was being exploited:

“He [brother-in-law] told the Señora [the client] that he was paying us each [his crew] 70\$ pesos per day, but he only gave me 50\$ and since I lived at their home, he took 15\$ for the food...So I earned 35\$...I could never become independent because I could not even buy myself a pair of running shoes that cost \$100.”

In addition, Richard could not accept how violent and abusive his brother-in-law was towards his sister, and so as to avoid interfering in the couple’s problems, he moved out of their home. Finding employment elsewhere without papers (he did not have a *precaria*) proved

to be very challenging for Richard, who, in the end, could only find a job with the retired *Señora* he had met when working for his brother-in-law in City Bell. Through this employer, he got some referrals to do domestic and maintenance jobs at the houses of her close relatives, yet these were random, permitting him to earn very little and only occasionally. Richard's meagre financial means only allowed him to rent a room in a *pensión* in the outskirts of the *partido* of La Plata, where other tenants did not like him, as he explains:

“There were a lot of Paraguayans, bolitas and Peruvians as well, and they could not stand me... One day, I went to work and they broke the glass in the door trying to get into my room, so I had to find myself another place.”

Following his employer's advice, Richard then moved to another *pensión* in a supposedly quieter neighbourhood in Berisso. Even if he feels better there, Richard still regrets that the area is inhabited by migrants, mostly Peruvians, as he remarks: “What can I do? I do not have the means to pay for ‘*algo que valga la pena*’ [something that is worth it]”. As a result of working *en negro* and this, sporadically, Richard cannot afford to rent an apartment, where they also ask for a deposit and a guarantor, or even a *pensión* room in a “better” area, which for him means without migrants. One of Richard's brothers had problems with Peruvians in the past. He had lived in Berisso for several years, but decided to sell his house and return home after some Peruvian neighbours threatened to set his home on fire and kill his daughter. According to Richard, Peruvians were like that, “terrible”; they never warn you if they do not like you. This frightening description of Peruvians living in disadvantaged peripheries resembles that of Soledad, from Paraguay, in the GBA. (See previous section).

Richard also notes that there is a lot of discrimination against migrants in Argentina and that rivalry exists between Paraguayans and Argentinians:

“There are people that bother you a lot, you simply walk by and they annoy you too much, they're Argentinians... There are even some that fear you because you're Paraguayan or who exclude you when they learn that you are Paraguayan.”

Based on his own experiences and those of his relatives with Argentinians and migrants alike, Richard decided to avoid dealing with anyone (*no tengo trato con ninguno*), except for the few Argentinean *Señoras* he has worked for. He does not talk to anyone, even at the *pensión*, and only goes to work and occasionally to his sister's.

Richard has returned home every year since his first trip to Argentina in 2006 and when he can afford it, he travels every eight months, staying in Paraguay for several months each time. His visits home are done in the cheapest way possible by taking a bus that takes 24 hours and costs 300\$ pesos each way. Crossing the border has not been problematic for him regardless of his irregular stays in Argentina. Like other undocumented migrants, every time he returns home, Richard pays a penalty of about 50-100\$ pesos for having overstayed the three-month tourist visa granted to him¹⁷⁰. Living on a miserable salary, Richard cannot afford to pay for the procedures involved in getting his Argentinean papers, yet he hopes to one day be able to get his DNI in order to study journalism at the Universidad Nacional de La Plata.

Despite his social isolation, his precarious subsistence and the insecurity of the area where he lives, Richard is grateful to Argentina because he has managed to work. In contrast, he has no job or benefits in Paraguay, where people “are not used to paying” and work is scarce: “There is not much life at home...Here instead I’ve had work and the money I earn is at least useful there, even if it isn’t the case here.” Richard’s remarks illustrate those of other poor migrants from neighbouring nations in Argentina, whose meagre salaries, precarious jobs and poor living conditions in La Plata represent an improvement vis-à-vis their circumstances back home. This is mainly the case because, through much material and economic sacrifice, migrants are able to remit some money to support relatives in their countries of origin. More generally, Richard’s precarious circumstances and his frequent mobility between Argentina and Paraguay also illustrate South-South migration dynamics in other parts of the world. It is estimated that almost eighty percent of the migration in the “Global South” takes place between countries with contiguous borders, and most appears to occur between those with relatively small differences in income (Ratha and Shaw 2007). In South America, Argentina is considered as a middle-income country, along with Chile and Venezuela, which continue to attract substantial numbers of migrants from nearby low-income countries (p.17). Whereas large income differences encourage migration over greater distances, proximity even if associated with small increases in income can have substantial welfare implications for the poor (p.2).

PURSUING THE MIGRANT DREAM: BETWEEN SUPERACIÓN AND NECESIDAD

Ana and Leo, like Yolanda and César, are Peruvians from Chiclayo, in the country's north-west. Like other *costeños* (people from the coastal region) who moved to the *partido* of La Plata in the late 1990s/early 2000s, these couples cherished the same dream or *ilusión*, as they put it: to improve their increasingly deteriorating socio-economic circumstances by working in Argentina temporarily¹⁷¹. All four had relatives, close friends or acquaintances who, before them, fulfilled their dreams in this “generous” country, which offered them plenty of employment and a profitable monetary exchange rate. Indeed, the success stories of close and distant compatriots were crucial in these couples' imagining—in Anderson's (1991) creative sense—of their own migration projects to La Plata. The envisioning of their (intended) temporary labour migration to Argentina along with their initial experiences in this country intersect in a number of important ways as well. Nevertheless, Ana and Leo's decision to reside in peripheries—as compared with César and Yolanda's to settle in urban areas—brought about important ramifications for them and their families. Namely, the weight of the *governmentalities* (Foucault 1975, 1978) ruling GBA's peripheries in combination with Ana and Leo's socio-economic background and personal choices contributed to bringing this couple's migration experiences much closer to those of fellow neighbours in peripheral areas, such as Paraguayan Nancy and Aníbal, than to compatriots from the same community of origin residing in the city. In this section, I utilize a number of one-on-one and group interviews conducted with Ana, Leo and other migrants who know them, along with informal conversations held with all of them, in order to describe this couple's migration trajectory in the GBA and to discuss its implications for their children.

When I met Ana and Leo in La Plata, they were 34 and 38 years old respectively and had already spent twenty-one years together, during which they became not only *compañeros* (companions/partners) but also confidants and best friends. Ana had moved in with Leo's family when she was fourteen years old and was grateful to her mother-in-law, who finished raising her. In her mid-teens, Ana began to study *costurería* (sewing), but quit in order to fulfill her obligations as a housewife, especially upon the birth of their daughter in 1991 (when Ana was 16 years old). Leo, for his part, worked in construction like his father, who had made his career in the industry, becoming a *maestro mayor de obra*¹⁷². Only in 1996, after the death of

their second child at the age of three due to a heart problem, did Ana begin to “work”. Following the advice of Leo, who believed that engaging in remunerated employment outside their home would help Ana overcome such a great loss, she became a street vendor, as she explains: “He told me to work, so I did, and because I had not finished my studies, I had to work as a *vendedora ambulante* for other people, but I was feeling better then.” In time, Ana managed to work independently by making at home the things that she was selling on the streets. Later on, thanks to the guidance of one of Leo’s sisters, who had several *puestos* (street stalls) where she sold clothes, Ana and Leo began to sell expensive toys and the business did well.

Like others, however, Ana and Leo wanted to improve their circumstances and saw migration to Argentina as a great opportunity to do so, as Leo says:

“At that time, we heard [back home] that the economic situation was good here [in Argentina], so even if I was working as an albañil [construction worker], travelling to build schools in different parts of the country, and we were doing well, we wanted to ‘get better’ [superarse] ...Even if we always worked, like my brothers and sisters.”

Ana’s explanation of their decision to migrate to Argentina was less complaisant, however. She raises the issue of the actual hardships faced by her family and the regnant social inequality pushing them to migrate:

“One has the dream ‘I arrive, work and make money for the progress of my family’ ...It’s the same necesidad [need that pushes you to migrate] because when you see that your child is being marginalized because of his clothes or when you see that everyone eats fruits while you can only give your child a cheap biscuit, no, no.”

Under these circumstances, knowing that a *cuñada* (sister-in-law) had quickly found employment as an *empleada doméstica* and was earning 1900\$ pesos a month, Ana left for Buenos Aires in 2001. As was often the case among migrant women, Ana brought with her the daughters of her former sister-in-law, who was the one “inviting” her (paying for her ticket). Since this relative had remarried and had a baby with a man who was not part of Leo’s family, Ana could not stay in their house. Upon her arrival, Ana’s breasts got badly swollen while her lips and nipples got infected because she had suddenly stopped breast-feeding her six-month-old baby. Not knowing that in Argentina public health care services were free and being used to Peru, where they were unaffordable to her, she did not go to see a doctor. Instead, even though ill with a fever, she had to find a way to survive. With no money left (only her plane

ticket was paid for), Ana moved in to the house of a female compatriot with four children, where she cleaned and cooked in exchange for her accommodation and some food. This so-called *alquiler de cama* or “right to bed” is still practiced among compatriots, although it was much more common in the past.

Upon her arrival in Buenos Aires, Ana assumed that her search for employment would go as smoothly as that of her sister-in-law and that it would result in the same profitable salary. Things did not turn out as well for Ana, however, and only after two months did she find a job working *cama adentro* for a family in Martínez, a city of the *partido* of San Isidro, GBA. This abusive employer exploited Ana’s “newness”:

“The first thing that they [employers] ask you is: ‘How long have you been in Argentina for?’ and I said ‘Two months’ and [this Señora responded] ‘Only [two]! so you know nothing! I’m going to pay you 300\$ pesos [per month].”

In this job, Ana worked six days a week, alternating between Saturday and Sunday as her day off, and had almost no time to rest or food to eat, as she explains:

“When they ate, I had to leave the room, and ‘God does not let me lie’; I quickly made myself a soup out of boiled water and four or five spaghetti, while the kids ate...Imagine, eating like a burglar! [fast and hiding] ...And when they finished, the Señora told me ‘Here you have what is left’ and sometimes she told me ‘Oh no Ana, there is nothing left’.”

A week after Ana started the job, Leo unexpectedly appeared at her door (Ana still rented a bed at the house of the female compatriot for her day off). It was Mother’s Day, a Sunday. Leo had arrived to work in construction and, after learning about the exploitation and abusive treatment Ana was being subjected to, asked her to quit. Yet, she rejected the idea, even Leo’s offer to give her the same amount of money she was making at the job, because she was excited about her financial independence: “In my country I never had money in my hands because I always depended on my husband, since I was fourteen years old...I never had 300 pesos that went directly to me.”

Le Vieron la Cara!: Living with Racial Profiling in a Periphery of the GBA

Leo worked in La Plata, but in order to be close to Ana, he found a room in a *pensión* in San Fernando city (capital of the *partido* of the same name, which neighbours that of San Isidro, GBA), where Ana could visit him on her weekly day off. Leo’s daily commute was quite long

as a result. The *pensión* was situated in a disadvantaged periphery, where the dangers of being caught by the police or assaulted by the *pibes chorros* were equally pervasive. At that time, *Migraciones* (the National Direction of Migrations) chased after undocumented migrants and police officers regularly stopped buses, making migrants get off and show their papers. Only those with a DNI could get back on the bus again. Under these circumstances, undocumented migrant women used a strategy that often worked, as Ana explains:

“You had to say ‘I have children at home and I do not bring my papers because they see my cara de extranjera [foreigner’s face] and they assault me’... ‘You’ll have to take care of my kids [if you take me away] and now I want to make a phone call because I need someone to help me’.”

Officers had always let Ana get back on the bus (when commuting between San Fernando and Martínez), asking that next time she bring her Argentinean papers with her (which she did not have at the time¹⁷³). This trick only worked for women, however, and the undocumented men who were caught were unfailingly taken away, often to be deported.

The fear of being deported was still quite present among undocumented migrants in the early 2000s; this was inherited from the previous decade and incorporated into the collective memory of migrant groups in La Plata). Under the circumstances, migrants deployed a number of preventative strategies seeking to save what they had obtained through much hard work. At the *pensión* in San Fernando, for example, close friends had copies of each other’s room’s keys, so they could eventually get the possessions of compatriots being deported in order to sell them, sending the money back home. In addition, migrants never had money in their rooms. Like other migrants with a commercial inclination, Ana and Leo initially collected items that they planned to sell back home, mostly goods with well-known brands such as perfumes, which were at least four times more expensive in Peru. Bringing money home had stopped being a profitable business when the parity between American and Argentinean currencies came to an end in the late 1990s.

Migrants also feared the *pibes chorros* in San Fernando, who easily recognized them, calling them *Peruchos*, a demeaning term used to refer to Peruvians, as Ana explains:

“Even my husband, who is very brave, always called someone to accompany him when he was about to return home... Other times he told me ‘Get out some coins’ since they asked him [for some change] and he gave it to them. Why? Because they saw his face! [le vieron la cara!]”

Commenting on this sort of incident, Ana remarks that she is also able to distinguish between migrants from neighbouring nations and Argentinians based on the former's "mestizo's face" (*cara de mestizo*):

"La cara del mestizo is very similar among peoples, we look alike...It's like the chino, who has his face, his physiognomy, you notice it...In contrast, you recognize the Argentinian because he is whiter...I distinguish them, even those from Catamarca [a province in Argentina's north-west] because their eyebrows are bigger or their face is thinner, you see". (I return to this racial classification later on).

The pervasive fear of deportation, combined with the distress generated by the *pibes chorros*' frequent assaults, led Leo's sister to return home with her husband. At that moment, Leo suggested leaving to Ana, which she rejected by arguing that they had just arrived. In fact, Ana's mother was then insisting that if she had decided to leave, she had to make it worth it. Meeting her mother's expectations to succeed (by fulfilling her kinship obligations) ended up being very costly for Ana, however. Even if she managed to stay healthy, the "tension at work", as she put it, affected her greatly and she began to get sick, which Leo noticed, but Ana dismissed. Ana's desire for autonomy and financial independence was stronger than her own health concerns and she continued to deny Leo's requests that she quit for several months. As a result, her initial mild malaise evolved into severe illness, including menstruating continuously for three months. Concerned and not knowing what was happening to her, Ana mentioned her symptoms to her employer, who responded: "Oh no Ana, but if you're going to get sick, no! You are not useful to me!". This callous remark combined with Ana's poor health finally led her to give in to Leo's requests, and they moved to a *pensión* room in Los Hornos, a peripheral locality in the *partido* of La Plata.

Vicissitudes of the Life of a Cuida Coches

By that time, Leo was already working as a *trapito* or *cuida coches* in downtown La Plata (see previous chapter), where he was well-liked. Clients wanted to help him find work in his trade (he was a *maestro mayor de obra*), but they could not because he did not have his Argentinean papers. Not only were the procedures to obtain the DNI complicated and expensive then, but migrants were also supposed to register in the AFIP (*Administración Federal de Ingresos Públicos*) in order to pay the *monotributo* (autonomous worker's unique contribution)¹⁷⁴,

which was unaffordable for most. By paying this tax, migrants had proof of legal residence in Argentina despite their irregular migration situation (from having overstayed their tourist visa). In this regard, several migrants mentioned being taken to the police station during the late 1990s-early 2000s, but being soon released after showing proof that they had paid this tax. Yet, others considered it a waste of money that did not solve their documentation problem. Such was the case of Lucas, a Peruvian man from Chiclayo in his late forties, who works as a nurse assistant for the elderly in La Plata. He had paid the *monotributo* intermittently over the course of six years, but it was only through a lawyer that Lucas managed to obtain his DNI, and in only six months. The services of lawyers were expensive, however, and thus unaffordable for most migrants¹⁷⁵.

Ana considers the environment of the *cuida coches* a bad influence for Leo because it promotes the constant consumption of alcohol: “Everyone drinks on your street, beer when it is hot, wine if it’s cold”. Although he agrees with her on this issue, Leo still believes that it is a decent job, one that permitted them to survive without having to steal. Leo also obtained social recognition and gratification from working on the streets and notes that Platenses from all walks of life offered him friendship, even if he was an “illegal” migrant then:

“When I worked as cuida coches, the Señora from across the street called me, a really tall blond woman, imagine!, to clean her window and she tipped me, she trusted me, she was not afraid of me. Another man asked me to go buy things for him with a 100\$ pesos bill, so I came back with his change and he tipped me. When I saw la Doctora [respectful title indicating someone’s high status often associated with a prestigious profession] cleaning her house’s entry, she gave me 10\$ pesos. The woman from the kiosco [corner store] always gave me something to eat, a soda, friendship...And I lived like that.”

Ana’s memories of that time are much gloomier, however, especially when she speaks about the hardships they went through, such as not being able to even pay for a bus ticket, which forced her to walk very long distances, daily, from the *pensión* in Los Hornos to downtown La Plata. At that time, Ana brought food to Leo and they returned home on foot when his work day finished, at around 18:00, with 1.50\$ pesos, which they saved for the following day. Reflecting upon those days, Ana adds:

“Let’s put it this way, there were good times and bad times [fechas lindas y fechas feas], but you can’t tell your family what you’re going through because you must send them money for food since you know that they’re looking after your children.”

As was the case of other migrant women I interviewed, Ana sought to protect her relatives who stayed back home from knowing of her suffering while fulfilling her financial obligations. Particularly pressing is the need to send remittances for those who leave their children behind.

From his time as a *cuida coches* Leo remembers many encounters with the police, who were always after him simply because of his colour. On one occasion, he stopped in front of a shop window to look at some glasses in downtown La Plata while doing his job of *cuida coches*. As he was stepping away from the shop, four police cars appeared behind him *por el color nomás*, he says with a laugh: “*And they told me ‘Let’s go, the comisario [superintendent] wants to meet you’, and, I said ‘But you already took me to meet him last week!’.*”

Leo explains that the police also rode on bicycles then in order to go everywhere when chasing undocumented migrants. They stopped people based on their looks (*te miran*) and asked for papers; if migrants did not have them, they ended up spending up to five hours in a *comisaría* (police station)’s cell, which Leo considers a waste of time. Another time, he went to make a phone call at 06:00 at a *locutorio* (store offering telephone, fax, and internet services) because it was the cheapest time to phone Peru. The *China* (Asian woman) who owned the place looked at Leo with mistrust, but gave him a phone booth. By the time he left the store, a police car was waiting for him. He was searched and interrogated as usual. According to Leo, the police sought to catch migrants right after they committed a crime, so as to have evidence to put them in jail. Talking about the incident at the *locutorio*, Leo explains in a jovial tone:

“She [the Asian owner] might have been afraid of me, imagine, un negro [a male black person] at 06:00, wearing Bermuda shorts, running shoes and a cap! hahaha, [she thought] ‘He’s going to rob me!’”

Leo’s accounts of his encounters with the police and the fear that he inspires in people due to his *mestizo* appearance are representative of those of others, who also become the target of racial profiling by the police and are the object of racist assumptions and attitudes by non-migrants and migrants alike. Other migrant men did not laugh about these incidents, however.

Leo's jocular reaction to the attitude of the police eventually led him to understand their reasoning, and he even wound up working for some of them. Because he was taken to jail innumerable times, Leo was able to earn the trust of some officers, he believes. Once when he was summoned in the middle of his workday, he told the policeman: "Look chief, these are all the car keys of people who trust me, let me go, I have to return them; if not, they will denounce me." Leo was then freed without having to spend the usual five hours in jail. Another time, policemen sought to prevent him and other *cuida coches* from working in an area of a street close to a bank, which Leo refused by asserting that he had a family to support. Eventually, his countless encounters with the police led him to internalize, to a certain degree, he asserts, their racial profiling and to be trusted by some of its members:

"Yes, they chased migrants, but it is because the same job that you do [cuida coche] can be done by a chorro [burglar], they're partly right...And in the end, I got to know some of them. I even washed the car of a policeman who worked at the bank, he left me his keys."

Leo's particular experience with the police shows that state institutions are not homogeneous entities whose bureaucrats implement received rules in a consistent and unquestioned manner (Trouillot 2001, Ong 2003, Wacquant 2008). Some policemen trusted Leo, treated him with respect and gave him work, which is not usual behaviour among members of this force towards migrants from neighbouring nations. Likewise, migrants are not pawns governed by strictly defined ethnic rules. Despite well-established legal and social conventions, individuals' agency works to transgress them through personal negotiation and collective organization, most often in complex and contradictory forms (Constable 2007).

Migrants' Marginality and their Racial Visibility

Soon enough, Ana's health improved and she began to seek employment, but not finding any in La Plata, she went to Buenos Aires city, where she made stuffed toys with her former sister-in-law. Shortly after, Ana got a night job at a private clinic providing in-house care for the sick, which nicely complemented her day-time occupation while providing free accommodation relatively close by. At that time, she could only afford one trip per week to La Plata. Ana soon realized that patients treated her differently because she was not Argentinian, which she regrets and considers "unnecessary":

“A friend of mine, who is an Argentinean nurse, was the one who recommended me for the job and she was really nice to me...But if I said to a patient ‘I need x to work’, the person told me to manage with whatever I had; yet, when my friend asked for things, she always got them.”¹⁷⁶

Lucas, the Peruvian man in his late forties mentioned earlier, recalls similar experiences when doing internships to complete his nurse training:

“I was vaccinating people, working in a public institution and when they found out that I was Peruvian, they got very uncomfortable, they blushed...Another time, I was doing an internship at a public hospital and a Colombian woman, who had a Master’s in vaccination, was also there, she was excellent; yet since she was *morochita* [a bit dark], they did not respect her, even if she was a professional!...The people she was serving were blond, blue eyes, you see.” (In the next chapter, I examine migrants’ frequent remarks on the “whiteness” of Argentinians and their own “darkness”.)

Migrants often speak about the “inferior” treatment they receive from Argentinians and women working in urban settings do so in particular, referring to it as *marginalidad* (marginality)¹⁷⁷. In everyday social interaction, this phenomenon is illustrated by the denigration permeating the attitudes of some Argentinians towards migrants; its economic ramifications become apparent in the exploitative labour regimes imposed on them by certain employers. Ana’s labour trajectory in La Plata contains many examples of *marginalidad*. When cleaning for a family-run, well-known *casa de comidas* (a take-away store offering homemade dishes), Ana’s employer reproached her: “What kind of heart do you have that you could leave your kids and husband behind?! Why did you come?!”¹⁷⁸. Abusive (female) employers do not engage in dialogue with their *empleadas domésticas* (even when asking questions), which serves to reinforce the distancing process integral to their contractual relationship, setting apart employers from employees in terms of class and racial/ethnic hierarchy.

Suffering (*sufrir, padecer*) is integral to migrant women’s experiences of marginality, which eventually, as they see it, leads to their personal growth, increased autonomy and *superación* (surpassing oneself). Ana’s experience of marginality in Argentina has taught her an important lesson about how crucial it is to share exploitation experiences among compatriots. She knows that migrant men and women alike usually do not tell the truth because of *orgullo* (pride), which brings about negative repercussions for newcomers. Ana believes that

so much suffering could be prevented if compatriots shared their hardships in the first place instead of letting their pride overcome them¹⁷⁹. Even for Ana, it took a long time to have the nerve to talk with her sisters-in-law about the exploitation that she had endured and, only then, did she learn to fight back, mostly by lying to new employers about how long she has been in Argentina. Talking about her suffering has also helped Ana become more assertive about who she is and what her rights are as an *empleada doméstica*:

“You see how they treat you, te marginan, if anything gets lost, you’re always the one blamed, but, I’ve learned. When I go to a new house I say that my only ‘reference letter’ is myself, my work...When they ask me ‘Where have you worked?’, I tell them ‘I’ll do my job and if you don’t like how I do it, I leave’.”

The extent to which migrants’ marginality is related to their visibility is explained by Peruvian Lucas, who emphasizes that even migrants with papers are in danger of being mistreated and exploited because they are identifiable by phenotype, accent and other characteristics:

“They look at you mostly [because of] your face, [also] for your way of speaking and expressing yourself...And te dejan de lado [‘they push you aside’]...[yet] since the work is a bit hard, rough, they hire you, but if it were otherwise, they would not do it...They go as far as not paying you!”

Migrants’ racial visibility, their *mestizo* appearance, also turns them into easy prey for *pibes chorros* and the police, as Ana and Leo’s examples have shown. Migrants remain forever identifiable in their papers as well because of a coding used in their Argentinean documents, as Lucas mentions:

“Sometimes they tell you ‘you’re an immigrant, you have [Argentinean] documents, but it does not give you the right to claim anything’...Because your Argentinean document has a code that indicates that you’re an immigrant, so when you go [to work], they know it and they ‘push you aside’, they marginalize you because they know it.”

According to Ana, the only place where she has found equality in Argentina has been in church, mostly in the prison congregation, where she went for years along with Leo and the personnel of the penitentiary (I will come to this issue shortly, in the next section). Ana believes that the equal treatment that she experienced there results from a combination of religious and educational factors:

“Because the Gospel calls you and teaches you that we’re all equal in front of God, so we got together policemen, lawyers, [medical] doctors and me, Ana, and in that way I’ve met

people with whom I could talk 'at the same level'...At the same time, [it's also because of] their knowledge, because they are professionals, so the treatment was better, I'm telling you the truth."

For Leo, being in prison at a Christian pavillion allowed him to become a better person not only through his relationship with God, but also by getting to know professional people:

"I learned from them, I see it clearly now; they speak to you with education, they talk to you in a way that you're not used to, they make you see things that are true, like the psychologist, so you start to treat people differently as a result...With lawyers, with prison chiefs, with police directors and sub-directors, you speak correctly, like them."

A lawyer who has called Leo "friend"—instead of a *preso* (prisoner) like any other—went to their home to offer work to Ana and their daughter while he was in jail. This was for him a clear example of the equal treatment he received from the penitentiary's professionals.

The Kids Raised Themselves

The life of Ana and Leo took a dramatic turn in October 2003, when they were getting ready to go back home the following December. After two years and three months in Argentina, Ana and Leo's sacrifices allowed them to repay the money they had borrowed for their plane tickets while accumulating a great deal of merchandise that they planned to sell in Peru. However, as Leo explains:

"I argued with a pibe [young man] and I went to jail, I ruined my life...He lost the fight and died...I had never fought with anyone before, I never had a problem before, no criminal record...But that happened to me, imagine! I was ready to go return home with my family and I practically ruined my wife's life and that of my children, who were in Peru."

For Ana, Leo ended up in jail due to an alcohol problem:

"He missed our daughter a lot and every time that we called Peru, she told him 'Papá, come back!', so what he did? Drink, drink and drink because he could not bear it anymore."

Leo considered himself fortunate to have spent his seven years in jail at a Christian Pavillion of the *Unidad 25* Prison of Olmos (a rural locality of the *partido* of La Plata), which was ruled by the Gospel: "The evangelists *tienen conducta* (behave properly, in good faith) while in Peru, jail is really tough, much worse than here". According to Leo, the Peruvian Consulate, together with God, intervened to grant him such an opportunity. His time in jail not only led to his conversion from Catholicism to Evangelism but also deepened his religiosity, which he had lost when he turned to drinking in La Plata. Even if Leo considered that because

of his time in jail he became a better person, he deeply regretted being locked up for such a long time without being able to support and protect his family. The thought of having killed a person still haunted him.

For Ana, who is a very religious woman and considers her husband *un amor de persona* (a truly loving person), it was emotionally draining to see Leo in jail. She never doubted her decision to remain by his side. Family at home were supportive after recovering from the shocking news; nevertheless, Ana remained by herself in a foreign country where she had to deal with the solitude of losing her partner's companionship. In addition, she had to assume the couple's kinship obligations when it came to supporting relatives back home financially and emotionally. She had to console their children and Leo's mother as they coped with the bad news: Leo would be in jail for a very long time and, as a result, they would not be able to return home as planned. Moreover, Ana had to send money to relatives at home in order to assure their subsistence, while paying particular attention to those who were in charge of their two children. Under these circumstances, Ana sought a number of other part time jobs in order to increase her income. Soon she was cleaning houses and business' premises during the day while caring for the sick and the elderly at night. Since her jobs were spread over different localities of the GBA, she spent her days running between jobs and a weekly visit to jail.

By mid-2004, Ana managed to bring their twelve-year-old daughter Emily from Peru and stopped working nights. The two of them moved to a *pensión* in the peripheries of the *partido* of La Plata, where Emily started to attend school, despite not having papers. In 2005, Ana's sister came to help, bringing with her Marco, Ana and Leo's four-year-old son, who was six months old when Ana left Chiclayo. However, what was intended as a relief to Ana's stressful life added to her multiple concerns instead, since Ana's sister suffered a kidney failure and had to be promptly hospitalized in La Plata two months after her arrival. Things became even more complicated soon after since Ana's sister, who was being treated in a public hospital even though lacking papers, needed treatment that exceeded the medical expenses amount granted by the state to foreigners. As a result, Ana often went to the Peruvian Consulate in order to intervene on her sister's behalf. When talking about those times and the recovery of her sister-in-law, Leo says:

“She spent four months at the Hospital Rossi, imagine! The jail and the hospital are the only things that my son knows! [he laughs]It’s terrible what happened to me!...She did not die because God didn’t want it and she has to thank Him because if she had been sick in Peru, she would have died! Here all her treatments were free.”

Ana’s sister eventually recovered and moved back to Peru.

With Leo being still in jail and her sister gone, Ana had to continue working several part-time jobs while leaving their young son in the care of their older daughter. Ana was then working with her former sister-in-law making stuffed toys in Buenos Aires and cleaning the house of a really nice *Señora* from 08:00 to 12:00, in Constitución, a disadvantaged neighbourhood of Buenos Aires city, where the train station of the same name is located. Even if Ana initially accepted this job out of necessity (she could not find any other in La Plata), she came to truly appreciate this employer, who has supported and treated her like anyone else. At that time, Ana’s meagre income was not enough to afford a daily, two-hour-long trip between La Plata and Buenos Aires¹⁸⁰, and for this reason, she could only see their children on the weekend:

“I lived there [in Buenos Aires] from Monday to Friday in order to work, Saturdays I went to see Leo and Sundays, here, with my children...It was a bit complicated...For this reason, my boy se auto crió [raised himself].”

Ana’s remark expresses a mixture of pride and regret. She emphasizes the extent to which Marco is self-sufficient and autonomous since he can prepare himself tea if he wants or even cook some pasta when he is hungry. His older sister Emily walked him to school until Ana found him another one, which is only a block away from the *pensión*. Since then, Marco has walked to school unaccompanied. From jail, Leo’s parenting role towards Marco consisted of his phone calls:

“I called him at 08:00 [to say] ‘Wake up, wash yourself, go to study’; at 10:00, 11:00, I called again to ask him what he was doing ‘Are you studying?, watching TV?’ and I ‘saw’ [supervised] him until noon, when I called to tell him ‘Go to school’.”

Leo’s calls also sought to give emotional support and moral (religious) guidance to Emily and Ana which was supplemented during weekly family visits at the jail. Based on this, Ana affirms:

“The seven years that he spent in jail, el siguió mandando en mi casa [he continued to be in charge of my house], ‘Dad said this, dad said that’, I never went to a party or anything like

that, I always told him ‘You continue to be el jefe de la familia [the family’s chief] and he always gave us that example.’

While Emily’s experiences at school were smooth, Marco had a much more difficult time. According to Ana, these differences resulted in part from their different personalities and their ages at arrival: “My son has a docile character while my daughter came here when she was older and she is tough, she defends herself, she’s rebellious, she contradicts everything”. From the start, Marco was bullied and discriminated against at school, which prompted Ana to forgo his enrolment in 2010: “Mama, my friends call me *peruano puto* [insult used for a male Peruvian], they beat me”, he complained, imploring Ana to stop sending him to school. In 2009, Ana removed him from school after a number of regrettable incidents. He was being insulted and bullied, and once, he was even forced to bring a pornographic magazine to school, an incident for which Ana was called down to the school. Ana explained to the school personnel that Leo was in jail (an issue that Marco never mentioned to avoid getting into more trouble) and that she was doing what she could despite her busy work schedule. Another time, the school psychologist told Ana that she should not force Marco to live in Argentina since he did not want to be there. Under these circumstances, Ana and Leo decided to send Marco back home.

Leo suggested sending Marco to live with his mother, the child’s grandmother: “Look, let’s do it and if he’s not doing well when you go visit, if he wants to come back with you, you bring him, but if he doesn’t want to, you leave him there”. Marco and Emily had lived with Leo’s parents when Ana and Leo left for Argentina even though paternal aunts and uncles were the ones in charge of the children. While Leo is thankful to his family for having looked after their children, Ana regrets it since she knows that they were treated “differently” by aunts and uncles, and marginalized by cousins. Ana explains that treatment changes when they’re not your own children:

“When you raise your children you spoil them even when they make mistakes, but when someone else knows that the kids ‘have a mother’, they tell them instead ‘Muchacho de mierda! [bloody kid!] behave! You’ll see when your father comes!’.”

After the difficult decision was made, sending Marco back home continued to be complicated since his passport had been stolen on the bus while returning from a jail visit.

Thieves had also stolen Emily's passport and cell phone on that occasion, without her even noticing it. (Since prison visits could not be made without a valid ID, this incident had complicated things for Ana¹⁸¹). Family members at home were to send the money for Marco's ticket and someone was assigned to accompany the child, but Ana did not have the 20\$ dollars to process his new passport¹⁸². Luckily, after learning about Ana's difficult situation, the Peruvian Consul prepared a legal document allowing the child to return home without a passport. Reflecting on their decision, Ana sadly indicates: "My son really felt the blow (*la pegada*), this is what hurts us; we can't enrol Marco in school because I have to look after what is best for him".

Over the years, and with the support of the Peruvian Consulate, Ana managed to obtain her Argentinean papers and marry Leo in order to prevent his deportation¹⁸³. Leo's situation is particularly challenging because he was an undocumented migrant without a fixed residence in Argentina when he was sentenced for homicide. Leo believes that God's intervention was crucial in shortening his sentence:

*"I saw how those who could pay for it, got out of jail before completing their time, so I began to pray and asked God, and soon my lawyer told me that a highly-ranked judge had reduced my sentence by three years...The judge who did not want to shorten my sentence, in the end, had to play by God's rules, subduing to His mandate."*¹⁸⁴

Leo got out of jail in April of 2010, almost two months before I met them. Since that time, the family has been living in a *pensión* room in Los Hornos, along with Emily's Peruvian boyfriend and their one-year-old baby. Emily was eighteen years old at the time.

Personal Projects and Legal Constraints

Since Leo was out of jail, Emily had started her own family and Marco was about to be sent back home, Ana could start thinking about her own plans. She wants to pursue her profession in order to buy a house in Argentina:

"My trade is la costura [sewing] and I began to study before I had my kids...Now, again, I registered myself [in a sewing course] in Buenos Aires and God wants it, they will call me... I have the practice, what I need now is to learn the theory."

Ana enrolled herself in a six-month sewing course offered for free by the City of Buenos Aires' government and she envisions travelling to Peru often in order to see Marco. She is not yet sure, however, if she will stay in Argentina for good. Leo, for his part, wants to

learn a trade that permits him to be off the streets, where the *vicio* (vice) and the problems associated with it rule. His main goal is to find a job that will allow Ana to stop working: “She keeps working now, but I tell her ‘It’ll change’ ”. Since his release from jail, some people (lawyers, psychologists), whom he met while completing his sentence, have offered him small jobs. Leo wishes to return home in the way that they left, that is, by airplane and not empty-handed, and for this reason, he needs to save money. Moreover, he has promised himself not to leave his son alone again. Before being able to fulfill his dream, however, Leo has to finish carrying out his sentence, which includes going to Alcoholics Anonymous, keeping out of trouble and regularly meeting with counsellors, while solving his documentation problem, as he explains: “I have been in this country for ten years, but I’m not sure if they’ll give me the [Argentinean] document because of my criminal record and because I entered illegally”.

Leo’s problems with the Argentinean justice system have also hampered the plans the couple once had to go to Spain, where Ana’s sister and her husband have lived for several years. From these relatives and other friends, Ana and Leo know that even if rules are more strict in Spain, there are also more opportunities there, as Ana says: “We see it when we they send us photos...We’ve learned to believe through photos, and yes, it’s the case, we see that the standard of living is better”. Migrants are well aware that in Spain it is almost impossible to live without having papers, and that entry regulations are getting increasingly restrictive as the process of obtaining a visa has become more complicated and expensive (see Richard’s case in the previous section; see also Hartman 2008). Some, like Ana, appreciate the Spanish state’s severe enforcement of the public order, considering that it makes both migrants and non-migrants better people. This is often contrasted with the more flexible, in their view, legal system of the Argentinean state, especially when it comes to sanctioning criminals.

Most of those I interviewed mentioned having family and friends in Spain¹⁸⁵. Indeed, this country has become for many either a plausible alternative to Argentina as a final destination or a subsequent stop in their rather cyclical migration route (see Hinojosa Gordovana 2008). Many also see their DNI as opening the doors to a number of European destinations. With their Argentinean nationality in hand, migrants believe, their entry to Spain and stay in Europe will be much easier.

Transit migration, as this phenomenon tends to be called, has become increasingly important in many parts of the world. Middle-income “developing” countries serve as a springboard for professionals from lower-income states bound for destinations in the North, as exemplified by Ghanaian nurses who work in South Africa for one or two years before migrating to Canada, the United Kingdom or the United States (Ratha and Shaw 2007). “Developing” countries also receive migrants in transit to industrial countries. Some Central American migrants settle in Mexico while others temporarily stop there on their way to the United States, just as migrants wishing to enter Germany first go to the Czech Republic and Poland. Likewise, West Africans travel to Cape Verde, The Gambia and Guinea to obtain false documents en route to Europe, whereas Turkey and North Africa serve as transit countries to Southern Europe (p.20). Whereas Canada is renowned as an “easy giver of citizenship” among migrants wanting to reach the United States, Argentina seems to be emerging as such among some South Americans.

In this chapter I have examined the effects of state governance by absence and neglect on the experiences of migrants living in the peripheries of La Plata and the GBA. This governmentality is most extreme in the *partido*'s rural areas, where the state has removed itself completely from its service-providing obligations and role as guarantor of public security. In the next chapter, I examine the impact of this state governance on Bolivian horticulturists living in Las Quintas.

CHAPTER VI: Experiencing Legality in Rural Areas of La Plata: Bolivians in Las Quintas

In this chapter, I examine the circumstances of Bolivians, the majority of whom are from Tarija province, who have settled in *Las Quintas*, a rural area of the *partido* of La Plata made up of three adjacent localities: (Lisandro) Olmos, (Angel) Etcheverry and Abasto, where small-scale horticulture is widely practiced¹⁸⁶. The term *quinta* designates a small parcel of cultivated land whereas its derivative, *quinteros*, is widely used to refer to the horticulturist Bolivian families in this rural area. Overall, this chapter documents the phenomenon that the Argentinean rural sociologist Roberto Benencia has dubbed the *Bolivianization of Argentinean horticulture* (1997, 2003, 2006, 2008).

In the chapter's first section, I look at the geographical and labour mobility of "Bolivians of Argentinean origin", as the children of Bolivian temporary farm workers in Argentina tend to refer to themselves. Often born in this country's Northern provinces, these self-identified Bolivians have dual citizenship, which permits them to move between the two countries easily. The case of one such family that settled in Etcheverry shows that migrants commonly resort to transnational kinship networks that reach back to the country of origin when they are in need of material, financial, emotional or social support. I examine the effects of *quinteros'* isolation on the commercialization of their products and the safety of their families, while making apparent the limitations imposed by horticulture's high time demands on their capacity to complete diverse bureaucratic procedures and visit family. The constraining circumstances of horticulturists in Etcheverry illustrate those of others in different localities of Las Quintas. *Quinteros'* critical views of the government and its policies along with their detailed knowledge of a range of bureaucratic procedures contrasts with the denigrating views of these migrants held by some municipal officials (an issue to which I return in the next section). I finish by reflecting on the strong desire of many rural Bolivians to return to rural life, often after long periods of peripheral residence and urban work.

In the chapter's second section, I analyze the experiences of another Tarijeño family who settles in Olmos. The husband's initial labour trajectory shows that the hiring *en negro* of recently arrived, undocumented migrants is common in urban areas neighbouring Las Quintas,

and seemingly easier to implement than in La Plata city. Unequal power relationships are inherent in horticultural production in the *partido*, which leaves poor *quinteros* with no leveraging power to negotiate the price of their production. The case of this family illustrates rural migrants' commitment to the educational success of their children and the mixed status of their families (Dreby 2012), whose different members are situated along a continuum of legal/migration statuses, ranging from not having even started procedures to obtain residency to already having Argentinean citizenship. My analysis of the unfair commercialization of *quinteros*' products takes me to La Plata's Central Fruit and Vegetable Market, where the monopolization of this industry is most manifest and reflects the *partido*'s ethnic hierarchies. Looking at this industry as a process that includes production, commercialization and consumption shows that a series of intermediaries with means of transportation are those benefiting the most, while *quinteros* and *verduleros de barrio* are among the most disadvantaged. This section also examines some of the policies of the Bolivian state that affect its citizens in Argentina and demonstrates that, in contrast with Peruvians and Paraguayans, Bolivians tend to keep in touch with the political reality of their country of origin.

QUINTEROS IN ETCHEVERRY

Caring For the Kids: Geographical and Labour Mobility Among Argentinean-born Bolivians

Rufino was born in the north of Argentina, as he puts it, of Bolivian parents from Tarija who were *golondrinas* or seasonal agricultural workers¹⁸⁷:

“They come and go, they work by temporada [agricultural season]...They go to Salta and when the work is done there, they go to Mendoza and, after that, they go to Bolivia, where they have their home and their land.”

Rufino spent his childhood watching his parents work in the fields and eventually joined them along with the rest of his siblings. When he turned fourteen, he left his parents' home and moved to the northern Argentinean province of Tucumán, where he worked as a *medianero*, sowing the unused land of his *socio* (partner). The *medianería* is a common practice in small-scale agriculture in Argentina, which consists of a verbal agreement between two people who seek to maximize the exploitation of available resources. In its most common form, the *patrón* (boss) offers the land, while the *peón* or *medianero* provides the labour. The leverage (negotiation power) of associates is often very unequal and depends on what is

supplied by each of them, such as land, seeds, machinery, infrastructure, labour, knowledge of new technologies and pesticides. In fact, even if the *medianero* shares the production risks with the *patrón*, he only receives between forty and twenty-five percent of the products' selling price, depending on whether he contributed some horticultural input or only his labour (Benencia 1997, 2006). The latter was the case for Rufino, whose work as a *medianero* came to an end when he turned eighteen and had to complete his one-year military service, which was then compulsory for all Argentinean male citizens¹⁸⁸. After completing his national duty, he moved to Salta province (situated north of Tucumán), where he worked for twelve years in a ceramics factory. While in Salta, Rufino met his first wife, with whom he had two boys. Years later, they would separate and Rufino would have the custody of their children.

Rufino's job situation deteriorated and in 2005, he decided to leave for La Plata with his young boys, who were then ten and five years old. Upon his arrival in the city, he worked as a construction assistant with his brother Julián, who, having followed a similar trajectory, had moved to La Plata in 1998 (see chapter V). Soon after, however, Rufino decided to go back to the *campo* (rural areas) in order to be able to spend more time with his children:

“Here [in Etcheverry], I can work and have the kids by my side, I'm close to them, whereas when I worked in the city as albañil [construction worker], I left home early in the morning, it was dark and they were sleeping, and by the time I came back late at night, they were sleeping again.”

Rufino settled with his two boys in Etcheverry and soon realized how challenging it was to look after them while taking care of the house and working the land all by himself. Resorting to his family networks, he found himself an *empleada* (housekeeper) in Tarija, who some time later moved to Etcheverry with them. This Tarijeña was to become Rufino's second wife, with whom he has two daughters, who were four years old and several days old, respectively, when I met them in early 2010.

Rufino's family live in an area inhabited by southern Bolivians who, like them, rent lots of different land sizes in order to produce fresh vegetables that are commercialized locally. Talking about the extent to which the area is ethnically demarcated along with the sacrifices made by Bolivian horticulturists, which Argentinians could not parallel (an issue also raised by Benencia 1997)¹⁸⁹, Rufino explains:

“The people who live in Las Quintas are in their vast majority Bolivians or descendants of Bolivians, almost all of them have ‘Bolivian blood’...Criollos¹⁹⁰ [Argentiniens] with quintas who do what a Bolivian does are indeed very few. We start to work when we wake up, even if it’s 05:00 since we can work with a candle and continue working until night; you can do it until 10:00 using a candle.”

Despite the sacrifices inherent in horticultural work in Las Quintas, Rufino considers his present labour situation to be much better than former ones:

“Before, since I was a peón, I had to do what the patrón told me, even if it was wrong, just to please him...Today, I see things differently, I try to simplify things, to make work more efficient, I rent some land and I decide what’s best and I do not depend on anyone else’s whims.”

Like other migrant men who managed to become their own bosses, such as those working in construction in the *partido*’s urban areas, Rufino sees his labour autonomy as very important since it has permitted him to leave behind exploitative and sometimes abusive *patrones*. As the examples that I have presented so far show, migrants’ exploitation is not only carried out by Argentiniens but also by compatriots and other migrants. In rural areas, the exploitation of Bolivians by Bolivians intensified in tandem with the so-called *Bolivianization of Argentinean horticulture* (Benencia 2003, 2006), which has restructured the country’s horticultural production. Since the mid-1970s, Bolivian families from Tarija, Cochabamba and Potosí provinces have been crucial in the creation and reshaping of “green belts” (*cinturones verdes*) in different regions of Argentina. Working as *peones* and *patrones*, they have specialized in horticultural production for fresh consumption. By the early 2000s, Bolivian *medianeros* constituted the largest group of hired workers in most horticultural areas of the country (Benencia 2006). Moreover, many of them have experienced a process of upward social mobility dubbed *escalera boliviana* or “Bolivian ladder” (Benencia 1997), through which they become either independent workers *arrendatarios* (renting the land) or, less often, land owners (Benencia 2003). In the Horticultural Area of Buenos Aires Province, which is the most important in the country¹⁹¹, census information indicates that in 2001 almost 40% of *quinteros* were Bolivians (88% of them were *arrendatarios* whereas 12% were proprietors) and that their labour force was exclusively Bolivian. The 2005 Horticulture Census of Buenos Aires Province confirms this trend, showing that out of the 2,934 horticultural sites in the province, 893 were run by Bolivians¹⁹².

Rufino sometimes hires a *changrín* or temporary agricultural worker because his wife can barely help him, being already busy with the house and the baby girl, and he does not want his children to neglect their studies. Hiring temporary labour was a common practice in Las Quintas when I did my fieldwork, which depends on a series of factors, including the household's size and its reproductive cycle; the size of the land parcel; the product; access to technical advice, new technologies and agrochemicals; connections with relatives back home who can help find workers; and the ability to remunerate labourers with very low pay or by providing accommodation, food and the opportunity to learn the job (see Benencia 1997, 2006).

Rufino is glad that his children do not neglect their school obligations, which he considers vital, and he speaks proudly about how happy they are to attend a nearby public institution, along with the children of other *quinteros*:

“One of them plays volleyball and the other one the guitar, and they only help me when they do not have homework or school-related activities, but only a little bit...They really like going to school, where teachers are very nice to them.”

Rufino knows that some *quinteros* prefer not to send their children to school so they can be free to help in the fields, but he thinks otherwise: “I prefer that they go to school, even if they don't [actually] study, but merely ‘sit, warming the chair’ [*calientan la silla*]...They have to fulfill their obligation.”. Most of the *quinteros* I interviewed highly regard education and would not waste the opportunity to study for free given to their children in Argentina. Parents often go beyond their poor financial means to support their children's success at school, an attitude that has also been documented by Benencia (2006) in other horticultural areas of Buenos Aires and Mendoza provinces.

When Isolation Becomes Safety

Rufino's dispersed neighbourhood¹⁹³ is comprised of several Tarijeño families, who know each other well and whose lots are adjacent. In all cases, households practice small, family horticulture while renting their parcels from Argentinean land owners who do not live in the area. Families have built their own precarious homes, which are situated beside their workable land (parcels) and separated from each other by dirt paths leading to some spacious areas

where people socialize and children play. Public services are practically absent in the neighbourhood, which is situated far away not only from urban centres (about forty-five minutes by bus), but also from the closest paved street (twenty-minutes on foot). Families' lack of access to basic public services, such as running water, electricity, sewers, septic tanks and paved streets and sidewalks, compromise sanitary conditions, while mobility is hampered by a highly inadequate bus system, whose stops are situated far away from the neighbourhood and whose service is unreliable. In addition, horticulturalists lack private means of transportation, except for a few households that have bicycles. Under the circumstances, the neighbourhood's relative isolation from the "outside" urban life of neighbouring Olmos, Etcheverry and Abasto have important repercussions for the commercialization of *quinteros'* products and the safety of their families.

When it comes to selling their products, including different sorts of lettuce, tomatoes, basil and peppers, horticulturalists do not have the leverage (for lack of financial, material and human resources) to negotiate the price of their vegetables or to decide not to sell when the amount being offered is too low. Their distant location from the urban fruit and vegetable markets in La Plata and Abasto, where their fresh products are sold, along with their lack of means of transportation have contributed to *quinteros'* disadvantageous position, as Rufino signals:

"Here, we are small producers and so we sell to anyone who comes and pays us a bit better... Three or four trucks come to take our vegetables to the market and we sell to the one who offers us one peso or five cents more."

Quinteros in Etcheverry have no choice but to sell in order to buy new seeds and sow again. In contrast, the choices available to big producers expand along with their financial means, access to transportation, machinery and hired labour. Despite the hardships involved in being a *productor chiquito* in Las Quintas, as Rufino puts it, he is satisfied with his decision to return to the *campo*. Even if struggling, he sells enough to feed his family and plant again while living in tranquility and working at his own pace.

Isolation also means for *quinteros* and their families that they can live in security, away from two dangers: the police and the *pibes chorros*, whom they often meet while doing their shopping in urban areas of Etcheverry and Olmos. According to Rufino, the police abuse of

paisanos (rural Bolivians) in the *partido* is restricted to Las Quintas, whereas the *pibes chorros*' crime is endemic in the GBA. When Rufino worked in La Plata city (in construction), *la cana* (the police) never stopped him although he travelled a lot. In contrast, policemen have continued to take advantage of horticulturalists in neighbouring urban areas, where rural Bolivians are bribed as soon as they come out of a corner store. For safety reasons, *quinteros* try to avoid urban areas as much as possible, as Rufino explains:

“Here [in Las Quintas] is very safe, but everyone comments that if you’re on the street [in neighbouring urban areas] those from the comisaría [police station] find an excuse to stop you and ask you for money, and if you don’t give them some, they kidnap you and they beat you up.”

The territoriality of police abuse in the *partido* has emerged as the result of some allegedly intrinsic characteristics of *quinteros* combined with the institutionalized corruption of this institution. Evidence of the latter, for Rufino, is that, even if officers of the local *comisaría* were sent elsewhere in the GBA in the past, following numerous formal and informal complaints, they were replaced by others, who soon resorted to deeply-rooted corrupt behaviours. Under these circumstances, *quinteros*' visibility and their complacent attitude combines to make them easy prey for corrupt policemen. According to Rufino, rural Bolivians never complain and, when being bribed or abused, they never do or say anything, but stay quiet. As compared with *criollos*, they're more cowardly and timid, and they dislike trouble or appearing on the news. These reasons altogether explain why people abuse them. Rufino's account of why “other” *quinteros* or *paisanos* in the area inexorably become the target of corrupt police sets him (discursively) apart from “them”. In addition, Rufino's comments on his non-compliant attitude regarding police abuse along with his knowledge of urban life (which *paisanos* lack by definition) position him with *criollos* instead, while reinforcing the distance separating him from other compatriots of rural origin:

“They [the police] have never abused me because I’ve always taken all precautions...Moreover, if they ask me [for money], I do not give them any, why should I? I would rather go to jail for two or three nights instead of giving them money...Here the comisarios constantly walk over the paisanos, on the street, in full view, but if you go to La Plata, things are different because those in police cars are different...Since I worked there for a long time, I know how things differ.”

As was the case for other migrants, the clear-cut boundary established by Rufino's narrative became blurry many times, when instead of referring to "them", he spoke of "us", as I show shortly.

Quinteros also mention another danger they encounter when visiting neighbouring urban areas: the *pibes chorros*. Rufino refers to them as *chorritos* in a denigrating manner that also highlights their youth:

"They are people who do not like to work, they 'disguise' themselves [referring to their dress code]...They go around in gangs on small motorbikes, so when you're at the bus stop, they come and steal whatever you have or they put a knife to your back and say 'give me what you have or you're dead!'"

Rufino's eldest son, who is fifteen years old, fell victim to the *chorritos* after doing some grocery shopping in urban Olmos. While waiting for the bus, they took the little money he had for the ticket while threatening him with a knife. According to Rufino, the *pibes chorros* are youth, between ten and fifteen years of age, who are everywhere in the GBA and commit their crimes in complicity with the police:

"They [the police] are the ones who send the others [chorritos] after you, and if you make a formal complaint or call them [police] when someone is after you, they pretend that nothing is happening in order to allow the others [chorritos] to finish committing their crime...And this scares people [quinteros] a lot."

In regard to these two urban dangers, the isolation of *quintero* neighbourhoods turned their (re) productive spaces into safety zones, which contrasts with the circumstances of migrants living in urban and peripheral areas of the *partido*, being regulated by different *assemblages* (Marcus and Saka 2006)¹⁹⁴ of state governmentality and crime territoriality (see chapters IV and V). Many *quinteros* believe that since justice does not exist in Las Quintas, they are left with no choice but to find ways to protect themselves and their families, an idea that was often expressed as follows: "Nowadays, if you don't take care of yourself, nobody will". Even if Rufino agrees, citing the impunity of police abuse and *chorritos'* crime, he finds it quite challenging for *quinteros* to keep safe because of their conspicuous mestizo and/or aboriginal visibility:

“For us it’s really complicated [to be safe] because we are cara de paisano [paisanos face]...Everyone says that we’re feitos [ugly], negritos [‘black’ meaning ‘dark’] and, as a consequence, easy prey for people who need money.”

Rufino’s explanation illustrates two important issues. First, it signals the extent to which migrants’ narratives shift back and forth across the classificatory boundary between (in this case) the *quinteros* being abused by the police and those who resourcefully manage to escape such predatory behaviour. In contrast with Rufino’s frequent efforts to distance himself from the *quinteros cara de paisano*, in this example, he clearly includes himself among them. Second, his explanation confirms the racial logic underpinning the hegemonic ethnic hierarchy of the *partido*, where Bolivians are invariably ranked last. In particular, the notion of *paisano in Las Quintas* reinforces the denigrated status of Bolivians due to a) their apparent visibility, resulting from their aboriginal and/or mestizo ancestry, and b) their rural origin, which would explain their timidity about defending themselves from state officials. Indeed, the latter (b) in this particular setting is often interpreted by migrants and non-migrants as a double handicap. It implies rudimentary levels of education that (supposedly) impair *quinteros’* ability to navigate the written world of law and commerce—whereas the (assumed) lack of education of Bolivians in urban localities of the *partido* is associated with rudeness and lack of manners. Rural origin also connotes the lack of a certain know-how associated with urban life, which (allegedly) equips migrants with the necessary symbolic resources to efficiently deal with state officials and institutions (the police among them) and fight for their rights. In the city, this sort of shyness and reticent attitude is not exclusively associated with migrants’ rural origin, but it is more generally perceived as a clear sign of their recent arrival in Argentina.

Denigrating Views of Quinteros and the Partido’s Grid of Ethnic Delinquency

The high labour mobility of Rufino’s parents, inherent in their lifelong career as *golondrinas* in Argentina, has led his family to be spread over both countries. Like him, half of his siblings decided to stay in Argentina: a brother and a sister live in the province of Salta, whereas Julián lives in Los Hornos and another sister in Las Quintas. The other half of the family chose to settle in Bolivia, even if they regularly travel between both countries thanks to their Argentinean citizenship. Like Rufino, many of his siblings were born in Argentina and his parents also obtained their papers. The situation of Rufino’s wife is different, however, since

she has not yet started the procedures to obtain her Argentinean residency, despite having lived in the country for several years. This does not worry Rufino, who considers that getting residency papers in Argentina is mostly an issue of getting into the right mind-set. In addition, his wife's "irregular" migration status did not prevent her from receiving care at a public hospital when she delivered her two babies, whose Argentinean citizenship is expected to speed up the processing of their mother's residency.

Rufino knows the required procedures very well and has an easy-going approach to completing them, even while acknowledging how lengthy and costly they are. This contrasts not only with the more generalized ignorance and confusion of migrants living in urban areas of the *partido*, but also with the views of *quinteros* held by municipal officers, such as the Director of the *Dirección General de Colectividades y Migraciones* of the Municipality of La Plata. In office since 2007, this young bureaucrat describes himself as a committed Peronist who fervently believes in the *Patria Grande* integration project (see Chapter III). His initial comments, when interviewed, seem to demonstrate his inclusive approach towards migrants, yet his degrading views of Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans in general, whom he collectively labels *latinoamericanos*, and those of *quinteros* in particular, soon becomes apparent.

He asserts that, unlike Chinese migrants who arrive with their papers in order, ready to work or with money to install a mini-market in La Plata, the Latin Americans do so empty-handed, without even knowing why they have migrated, which has led the municipality to develop a special policy for them. Their "integration hardships", he says, are caused by a certain *condición*, a vague notion referring to a mix of ignorance, disinterest and communication problems, that the Director associates with the "afflicted character" of migrants' countries of origin, whose societies have large aboriginal populations with low degrees of Westernization and high illiteracy levels. When talking about the implementation of the *Patria Grande* documentation program in the *partido*, which granted temporary residence to 3,000 Latin Americans, the Director asserts that migrants' "cultural" level (integral to their *condición*) explains why they lose their paperwork, do not complete the procedures or sometimes even do not understand anything at all:

“We gave them ‘one thousand’ notices because the program lasted for almost five years... We went a lot to their barrios, we went to see them... Those who did not get their papers were either colgados [lazy and negligent people] or lacked interest.”

The Director finds it extremely difficult to understand these migrants, except for the Peruvians who have studied at La Plata’s universities, with whom he can have a “different” dialogue. He also adds disapprovingly that Latin Americans have their babies at Argentinean public hospitals in order to promptly obtain their DNIs and so as to receive their Asignación Universal por Hijo (see chapter III). The Director’s degrading portrait of these migrants is completed by juxtaposing the *partido’s grid of ethnic delinquency* with it, which is often equally endorsed by its migrant and non-migrant residents. In this notion, Peruvians and Paraguayans are attributed the highest rates of *trata de blanca* (human trafficking for forced prostitution) while *quinteros* are depicted as having the worst slavery problem. It was when talking about rural Bolivians’ exploitation of their own compatriots that the Director advanced his pejorative views of these horticulturalists:

“They are like little animals, who have not mentally progressed... You get close to them and they run away, they enter their casillas [poor houses] and they do not want to talk with anyone, they feel threatened easily, like topos [moles].”

This denigrating portrait of rural Bolivians is not only alarming but also at odds with my own experience with them. It is indeed quite upsetting to hear such biased opinions coming from a public official whose role is to facilitate and enhance migrants’ full participation in La Plata, and who describes himself as an open citizen wishing for an increasingly diverse society. My fieldwork showed *quinteros* to be wise, critical and welcoming people, who kindly took unplanned pauses from work or permitted me to go along with them through their busy routines in order to share their views with me.

Quinteros’ Minimal Access to Public Entitlements and their Views of the Government

In contrast with the dehumanizing analysis advanced by the Director, *quinteros* provided a much more pragmatic answer when explaining why they find it challenging to obtain their documentation. Namely, the labour-intensive horticulture practiced in Las Quintas does not allow for parcels to be left unattended during long periods of time, which conflicts with the time required to complete lengthy bureaucratic procedures, including those to obtain residency

and citizenship papers and to access diverse non-taxable public subsidies. In addition, since most institutions processing entitlements and services are situated in La Plata city, *quinteros* have to commute for about two hours each way in order to start, follow up with and finish procedures. Travel and waiting times, combined with the cost of bus tickets and processing fees deter *quinteros* from leaving their parcels, though this does not tend to affect their children, who almost always have their Argentinean papers in order.

The demands of intensive horticulture also make it almost impossible for *quinteros* to visit relatives in other provinces or back home. Not only is it difficult to find someone who can replace them while they are away, but bus trips are about a day-and-a-half long. The last time Rufino travelled to Bolivia, he left his parcel with a young neighbour, who took good care of it; yet, this is not always possible. These constraints lead horticulturalists to seldom travel and, when they do so, only for short periods of time. In addition, although the cost of family visits is substantial, producers' main concern is rather leaving work behind. Rufino's comment illustrates the extent to which trips back home tend to be considered a waste of workable time for *quinteros*:

"We travel very little...A short time ago, my brother-in-law came, so we practically do not travel...The last time I went to Bolivia, at least three years ago, I did so fast because if you leave, everything here is abandoned...If you lose ten days, you lose all this [the crops], it's all destroyed, and it's really difficult to get it back again."

When expressing their views of the government, *quinteros* often express a certain perplexity resulting from the disconnect between what they hear and what they do not see, as Rufino's comment shows:

"To tell you the truth, one has to think about it, one who works...They say that there are subsidies but they do not arrive here...I've been working on an 'opportunity' [the possibility of obtaining public subsidies for his children] for a long time and it does not arrive...Honestly, I don't know what to think!"

Rufino has unsuccessfully tried to fix the bureaucratic glitch that was still sending the public subsidies granted to his children to Salta instead of Etcheverry, despite the fact that he had registered their change of residence five years earlier. Despite having invested large amounts of time attending to such procedures, nothing has changed. This sort of problem is rather common in the *partido* and affects migrant and non-migrants alike. Yet, horticulture's

time requirements impose particular restrictions upon *quinteros* seeking to fix such glitches, which involves completing lengthy procedures.

While horticulturalists in Etcheverry most often do not benefit from the wide range of public subsidies available to low-income families like theirs, they do receive some technical support from an agronomist paid for by the government (as part of its efforts to revitalize and democratize the *campo*). The young agronomist has helped *quinteros* to choose the most appropriate crops according to the season and market's needs while advising them on new pesticides. His regular visits have also served to inform producers about public subsidies suitable for them and to help get their requests ready. These joint efforts have not translated into horticulturalists' access to their entitlements, however, which has generated a sense of combined mistrust and perplexity regarding the government's actions. Like other *quinteros*, Rufino interprets the official promise of diverse subsidies, which they have never received, as a strategy to get votes. *Quinteros* are also critical of the taxation system imposed by the government because it harshly impacts households like theirs, with very little revenue, by demanding that people have everything *en blanco*, which Rufino expresses as follows:

“Here in Argentina, if you do not work you do not eat, and if you work more, the government comes [to you] and tries to find the way to take your money, I’m not sure for whom one works.”

In the end, *quinteros* claim a certain self-imposed disinterest in politics more generally, resulting from witnessing successive deceitful governments that, in their view, have all done the same: take the money, sell everything and leave people empty-handed.

The Return to the Campo among the Children of Golondrina Workers

The brief account of Rufino's geographical and labour trajectory illustrates that of other Bolivians and Paraguayans whose parents are (or were) also *golondrinas* in Argentina. Being born in this country and having obtained their citizenship at an early age permits these dual citizens to easily move between the two states. Initially, they settle in northern Argentinean provinces and eventually move to the GBA, while working in some of its *partidos* or Buenos Aires city. These migrants' high geographical mobility is often paralleled by their diversified labour trajectory. Having as a common point of departure the labour-intensive agriculture

passed on to them by their parents, migrants later work at a wide range of urban jobs. One of Rufino's brothers, Julián, constitutes a good example of such a geographical and labour trajectory.

Julián moved to the Argentinean northern provinces of Salta and Jujuy when he was a boy, where he worked in the *zafra* (sugar harvest) for eleven years along with his father. Like others before and after him, when work became scarce, Julián moved to the GBA, where he did a variety of urban, non-specialized, labour intensive jobs. The first one consisted of cleaning machines in a factory of lathes in Ranelagh, *partido* of Berazategui. Later on, Julián worked digging trenches for TELECOM (a privatized telephone company) in Buenos Aires city, from dusk to dawn, while living in Longchamps, *partido* of Almirante Brown. Even if this job paid well, he considered it *muy sacrificado* (it demanded too much sacrifice) since his two-hour commute (each way) involved taking a bus, a metro and two trains. After quitting, Julián moved to Ensenada city, capital of the *partido* of the same name in the Gran La Plata Agglomerado Urbano, where he worked as a welder for Astilleros Río Santiago until he was fired because his sight deteriorated. In 1998, he moved to the *partido* of La Plata and began to work in the construction sector, where he eventually pursued his career. Starting as an *albañil* or construction worker, Julián progressively moved up to reach the top of this sector's hierarchy by becoming a *maestro mayor de obra*. Like most migrants, Julián learned all his trades on the job, mostly by observing others.

Rufino and Julián's labour trajectories also illustrate the extent to which many of those who initially worked in the *campo* along with their families are drawn back to their early occupation. While Rufino's reintegration into rural life took place soon after he moved to the *partido* of La Plata, Julián's return was being planned in 2010. He already owned some parcels in Las Quintas, which were being worked by a *medianero*. Through this commercial relationship, Julián is learning about horticultural production and commercialization in the *partido* while building up his own production, both of which are essential for his desired transition from construction to rural work. Unlike Rufino, however, Julián does not want to live in Las Quintas, but only plans to work there. He is not willing to leave the comfort of his peripheral lifestyle to settle in Las Quintas, where the lack of basic public services is almost complete and housing is extremely precarious. This does not suit him or his family. Instead,

Julián envisions getting the best of both worlds by combining the advantages of his current residency with the tranquility of horticultural work. His main reason for shifting labour niches is the stressful complications inherent in being a *maestro mayor de obra*:

“I’m tired of this [construction work]...You start very early and it’s very problematic...I got the project [building a big house] myself, independently, so I have to deal with the owner, the engineer, the workers, and sometimes things don’t turn out as planned, so you are very stressed all the time.”

QUINTEROS IN OLMOS

Together from Tarija to Las Quintas

Pancho, Tomasa and their three children are southern Bolivians from Tarija who moved to Olmos in 2004. Initially, they lived with Tomasa’s parents in Etcheverry, where they practiced small-scale family horticulture while their children attended school. A couple of months later, Pancho found work as a carpenter, which allowed the family to move out of his in-laws’ home. Like most recently arrived migrants, Pancho was hired *en negro* and had to learn the trade on the job. He enjoyed making wooden furniture, but considered its marketing and selling challenging. Tomasa, for her part, soon found the opportunity to work in a *quinta* in Etcheverry, where she rented a parcel from an Argentinean owner. With the initial profit made, she started building a small greenhouse that was essential to continue growing produce during the winter. Problems arose, however, when the landlord wanted to double her rent after seeing the initial stages of Tomasa’s greenhouse.

In Las Quintas, leases last for three years and are signed at a bank that legalizes the commercial transaction between the two parties involved, whose leverage power is markedly unequal, as in the case of the *medianería* relationship. *Quinteros* are required to pay their rent each month without flexibility or consideration of the high risks involved in their work. Their production can be easily lost due to pests, fungus or bad or fast-changing weather, or not sold as planned since intermediaries decide from whom and at what price to buy. Equally insensitive to *quinteros*’ struggles is the market in charge of establishing seed prices. Horticulturists’ constraints contrast with landowners’ leeway to increase rent prices at their will, since no entity regulates this economic factor. This issue is the most unjust, since

quinteros' investment in infrastructure can only be transferred to another parcel with great difficulty, as Tomasa and Pancho explain:

“If the landowner sees that you have built a greenhouse, he doubles the rent by the end of the year...They take advantage [of quinteros] because it’s very difficult to move [the infrastructure] somewhere else. After you dismantle it, you might be able to recover about 70% of it, but it may be even less [than that].”

As was the case of most *quinteros* I interviewed, Tomasa’s rent continued to increase, which, combined with the rude manners of the landlord, led her to leave the parcel she had worked for almost two years. After that, Tomasa spent several months without work, a period that she recalls as being very challenging because she was used to working the land since childhood: “I didn’t know what to do because I was not used to being home all day, just cooking, cleaning, taking care of the kids, the clothes...I swear I could not put up with it anymore!” Eventually, a *quintero* offered Tomasa some of his rented parcels in *medianería*, which allowed her to go back to her work routine.

In the meantime, Pancho found a second part-time job working in a *country* or *barrio privado* (private neighbourhood), where he performed a variety of menial chores. To his surprise, he was hired despite not having his papers in a place where workers’ documentation was routinely controlled, though not so much for taxation purposes as for security reasons:

“They checked your documents before you entered [the barrio privado], as they did with everyone [workers regardless of their migration situation] in the wagon...They very carefully inspected every corner of the wagon, but they never asked for your papers when you left!”

Seemingly, strict control procedures sought to keep burglars out, not undocumented migrants, who were hired for low wages.

Upon the death of Tomasa’s father in late 2008, the family moved to the parcel he used to work in Olmos, when his widow decided to transfer the lease. Since then, the couple has practiced horticulture together. The family has access to electricity, but their house is still very rudimentary. Their work, even if performed under the auspices of the law, does not have any of the benefits associated with regulated employment, such as health care and retirement plan contributions. These problematic issues are common among *quinteros* in Olmos.

Pancho and Tomasa practiced agriculture since childhood in Tarija along with their respective families. Pancho learned gravity irrigation, the technology employed by his parents to produce commercial crops. Tomasa's parents, for their part, complemented the work of their own parcels with their seasonal agricultural employment in Argentina. As is the case of other children of *golondrinas*, Tomasa considers herself a Tarijeña, even if she was born and raised until the age of ten in Argentina. Tomasa's parents continuously travelled back and forth between Argentina and Bolivia until her paternal grandparents, who were in charge of looking after their property in Tarija, could no longer do it. It was then that Tomasa's family returned "home". Following her parents' path, Tomasa eventually became a *golondrina* and migrated for several years to seasonally perform agricultural work in Argentina's regional economies. This work came to an end when she met Pancho in Tarija, who "brought" her to the country. When talking about those days, Pancho does not regret his decision:

"We left at a critical moment and we are doing much better here, so maybe, we may go [to Bolivia] but only to visit...Because the children do not want to even hear about returning home."

Their two eldest children agree, asserting their desire to pursue university studies in La Plata city and find urban employment afterwards. Having completed public high school, their eldest daughter is taking some time off to choose her future career. Their son is pursuing the last part of his high school studies at a private institution because no spaces were left at his former public school by the time he chose his electives¹⁹⁵. Their youngest daughter is attending primary school. In all three cases, schooling has taken place in urban Olmos. Like many *quinteros* in Etcheverry, Pancho and Tomasa are committed to their children's educational success, so it is rare that they require their help to work the parcels and they go out of their way to support their aspirations.

The Future Barrio Boliviano in Olmos: A Once in a Lifetime Opportunity

Pancho and Tomasa have not returned to Bolivia since they moved to Las Quintas because tickets are expensive for five people and work cannot be left unattended for long periods of time. For Tomasa, this has not proved difficult since only uncles, aunts and cousins are left in Tarija; her parents (only her mother is left after her father's death) and Tomasa's sister are in Las Quintas as well, close to her. The situation is different for Pancho, whose entire family has

remained in Bolivia. He has five brothers, three of whom are *albañiles*, one who is a priest and another who is a serigraphist, and a sister, whose two children have completed university studies, which is remarkable in a country where education is both very expensive and highly regarded. Overall, Pancho's family is doing well and, for this reason, they do not plan to join him in Argentina, as he explains:

“They are okay there, some are doing fine even if not really well, but they have their homes, some also have their profession and my sister's children finished their studies, so they are doing well, even if they are struggling.”

While most migrants are only vaguely aware of how the economic, political and social circumstances of their countries of origin have evolved since they left, Bolivians tend to be well informed about how their nation has changed since President Evo Morales assumed office in January 2006¹⁹⁶. Popularly known as Evo, Morales was first elected President of Bolivia with 53.7% of the popular vote in December 2005 and was re-elected with 63% of the votes in December 2009. The Bolivians I interviewed in the *partido* are aware of the policies he implemented, which they tend to explain by his aboriginal, rural, poor upbringing¹⁹⁷. Most speak about his leadership in bringing about the country's land reform, which sought to give land to the poorest peasants while improving their living circumstances by providing them with running water and other basic services. Many also mention Morales as being the first Bolivian president of aboriginal ancestry, who has challenged the historical unjust distribution of wealth in the country.

Those I interviewed are also aware of Morales' policies for Bolivians abroad, especially those “facilitating” the issuing of their documentation in Argentina (I will return to this issue shortly). Some even mention that Peruvians in La Plata produced fake Bolivian documents in order to benefit from Morales' policies that aided Bolivians in obtaining Argentinean papers. Others are also aware of Morales' financing of a *barrio boliviano* in Olmos, which is to be allegedly the biggest one outside Bolivia. This project has been managed by a Bolivian cooperative that seized the opportunity to buy a large portion of land being auctioned by a bank in 2005. The cooperative then contacted the Bolivian Consulate in La Plata, which helped create the *barrio's* project proposal while seeking the financial support

from President Morales. With Bolivian public funds, the cooperative eventually bought the land, which was then strictly attributed to Bolivians (or to non-Bolivians with Bolivian partners), who are allowed to pay for their respective lots by installments and without interest. By the time I began my fieldwork in 2010, all lots were allocated and the cooperative was about to start making inner and outer streets so that public service trucks could access the neighbourhood. At the time I visited, however, the area was a wasteland that became inaccessible when it rained.

Although many of the *quinteros* I interviewed know about this project, none of them made it in time to acquire a lot. Pancho and Tomasa, for example, explain their circumstances as follows:

“They are about to start building a neighbourhood for fifty families, which is not far from here... We were late, we registered ourselves but since you had to be a socio [cooperative member] in order to access the lots [and they were not]... And you also had to pay the installments for the lot... You have to engage yourself in it [project] and sometimes in la quinta [it is very difficult to do so].”

A combination of lack of time and of financial resources did not permit those *quinteros* I interviewed to take advantage of this unique opportunity to become the proprietors of their land. Other Bolivians, however, were able to get their foot in the door on time and were active members of the *barrio's* project. Such was the case of Sandro, the Tarijeño who has a *verdulería* with his wife Edelina in La Plata city, where they live with their four-year-old daughter (see Chapter IV). Sandro has closely followed the evolution of the project and attends each of the monthly meetings organized by the cooperative in Olmos. Each of those trips, made by bus or on bicycle, permit Sandro to see his lot, where he spends some time envisioning what he will make out of it.

Sandro wants to build a house that will be big enough to lodge his family on the upper floor while using its ground floor as the premises of some sort of business. He is not the only future resident with a commercial vision, however. Indeed, since the *barrio* is scheduled to be an autonomous entity both economically and socially, many neighbours are considering launching small stores that will cater to the needs of a supposedly fast-growing population. Sandro also wants to leave something to his daughter and perceives his commercial project, or

even its premises, which could be eventually rented out, as a good economic prospect for her in the future. Sandro hopes for his daughter to study (at university), so she can become “someone”, unlike him, who only managed to complete rural primary school. Sandro believes that his project will provide her with the necessary financial support to succeed.

Like many other Bolivians of rural origin, Sandro wants to return to the tranquility of the rural life, which he longs for after years of *estar a las corridas* (running non-stop) in the city. Sandro misses working in the fields with his brothers and cherishes the *paisano* life, which he describes as developing at a different (much slower) pace, with people who are “much more cordial”. Actually returning to Bolivia does not seem to be feasible for Sandro at present, however, because Edelina wants to stay in Argentina. As a result, he has seen the *barrio boliviano* as a great opportunity to fulfill his desire. Sandro hopes to move into their lot as soon as the initial edification of their home is completed, or even by installing a precarious shed, in order to promptly launch his business while making sure that the construction of their house as well as the provision of public services are being properly done. By living on their lot and working on his business, Sandro also hopes to save on rent and transportation costs while avoiding the long commute between La Plata, Olmos and Etcheverry, which he does by bicycle several times a week to complete a series of deliveries.

When talking about who has obtained parcels in the future neighbourhood, Sandro mentions that both poor and well established (*bien parados*) Bolivians are among the forty-five families that will live there. The extent to which this is the case became most apparent when I accompanied Sandro to one of the meetings of the cooperative on a Saturday afternoon. As usual, I met him at the *verdulería*, where I played with their daughter while talking to Edelina, who was serving clients, until Sandro finished his deliveries. Right after he returned, we left for the bus stop, where we waited for forty minutes until the bus came. After the fifty minute ride, we walked an extra twenty minutes to reach Sandro’s lot in the future *barrio*, where we spent some time before walking fifteen minutes to the cooperative. When we arrived, only a couple of people were there and it was a little over an hour before the meeting was due to start. As Sandro explains, the project’s meetings always begin late because some of its “uninterested” participants are very unpunctual. By watching future neighbours arriving at the meeting, I witnessed the extent to which their economic means differ. While some arrived

by bus and walking like us, others rode bicycles or drove quite modest, old vehicles. A few others arrived in brand new, expensive large trucks however.

The progression of the meeting and its attendance rate reflect the diverse interests of future neighbours. In this regard, Sandro emphasizes that those who are well-off (the “successful” Bolivians) are not really invested in the timely advancement of the project because they are already all set. For them, having a lot in the *barrio* is one among several financial investments and they can afford to wait a long time until the project comes to fruition. These are the future residents who either miss most meetings or arrive quite late and whose participation is often limited to the timely payment of their installments. In contrast, the future poorest neighbours, such as Sandro, are those engaged in moving the project forward and who make great efforts to participate. For them, becoming landowners is an exceptional opportunity that can importantly change their precarious socio-economic circumstances. They never miss meetings, even if their participation is costly in terms of transportation and work time. These individuals are also the ones who struggle to pay their installments out of their meagre incomes and seek to get financial support to build their homes as well as to provide the neighbourhood with public services.

The *barrio's* project meetings are chaired by three men: the president of the cooperative, who is Bolivian; its treasurer, who is an Argentinian married to a Bolivian; and the project's consultant, also Argentinian (who missed the meeting I attended in order to participate in the celebration of his child's birthday party). None of them will live in the neighbourhood. Fewer than twenty people, men, women and children, were present when I attended the meeting and Sandro indicated that many were absent that Saturday. Most of them did not know each other and only a few shyly posed questions or raised concerns, which were mainly expressed in one-on-one conversations with the chairs after meetings. The timid attitudes of the majority contrasted with those of the few participants, who, with different degrees of assertiveness, put their ideas forward in public. Three core issues were discussed at the meeting I attended: a) the blueprints of lots had to be obtained in order for future neighbours to legalize their ownership before starting any sort of edification. Thanks to the support of the Bolivian Consulate, this process was already under way at the municipality; b) the *barrio's* main entrance had to be paved in order for construction and service providers'

trucks to access lots in the near future; and c) power lines had to be installed on all lots for each neighbour to have access to electricity. These concerns illustrate the basic demands expressed by the poorest future residents of the neighbourhood, whose financial situation remains precarious enough to hamper their actual ability to eventually move into the *barrio*. These are the disadvantaged Bolivians who hope to get financial support for their ownership dream, so the possibilities it entails can come true. Even if noted, as happened at previous meetings, no concrete answer was given to *socios*' main concerns, which left them with a mixed feeling of uncertainty and powerlessness.

The extent to which the project is stagnating and the limited leverage the poorest *socios* have to alter the situation became most apparent by the end of the meeting. While those in big trucks and the meeting chairs promptly left with a smile, as if indicating their satisfaction at having successfully fulfilled their monthly obligation, the majority of those who had either silently or timidly participated remained for a while on the cooperative's premises. Some looked concerned and others disconcerted, and most did not talk. Sandro was raging with frustration at the little progress made by the project since its start, which he believes has stayed stagnant for too long. Sandro is also upset at the lack of engagement of the few well-off *socios*, who could easily and substantially contribute to the realization of the neighbourhood, whereas the majority can barely give their opinions. On our long commute back to the *verdulería*, which was an extra hour long because Sandro needed to buy some medicine at a faraway pharmacy offering a special discount, he mentioned that one of those well-off *socios* wanted to buy his lot. This was one of those Bolivians with construction companies and we saw one of his buildings in progress on our way back home. Due to the favourable location of Sandro's lot in the *barrio*, this compatriot offered him a considerable amount of money (which was much larger than its actual cost), envisioning the future profitability of the parcel. Without thinking twice about it, Sandro refused his offer, reassured that he would never miss such a once in a lifetime opportunity. This was his chance to go back to the tranquility of the campo and to leave something to his daughter.

Breaking Down Prejudice: Quinteros' Critical Thinking

In most cases, the migration situation of *quintero* families is mixed since their members have diverse legal statuses. Households tend to have some Argentinean-born children (who are Argentinean citizens) and some Bolivian-born ones, who either already have their Argentinean residency papers or were processing them. Adults' legal situation was equally varied. Adults whose parents were *golondrinas* were almost always Argentinean citizens while those who were Bolivian-born often do not have their papers, were thinking of completing the requested procedures or, less frequently, had already obtained them. Even if several factors contribute to diversify *quintero* families' legal status (including the seasonal mobility of parents, the age and time of migration and changing migration regulations), horticultural work hamper their ability to process legal paperwork. Very long work hours, geographical isolation and meagre incomes combined to make it very difficult for *quinteros* to complete the necessary procedures, as I showed in the previous section. The situation of many horticulturists in Olmos was different, however, as Tomasa and Pancho's family case illustrate.

While Tomasa is Argentinean by birth, Pancho has already obtained his residency and their children are awaiting theirs. Their good standing is due to the Patria Grande documentation program (see chapter III) along with the invaluable support of the Bolivian Consulate. Aware that during the 1990s migrants found it almost impossible to obtain their Argentinean papers, Pancho felt very lucky in regard to how easily his family completed the procedures. Crucial for *quinteros* in Olmos was that procedures were completed in this locality's urban area instead of in La Plata, which made it difficult for those in Etcheverry to get documentation. In addition, the Bolivian consulate issued the requested official documents at no charge, which proved vital for *quinteros* whose meagre income left them with very little manoeuvring power when it came to choosing between important expenditures. The only drawback of the process was the location of their consulate in La Plata, which forced *quinteros* to engage in long commutes for obtaining their Bolivian documents.

The processing of Pancho's residency took a year and he speaks knowledgeably about the bureaucratic procedures leading to the issuing of his DNI¹⁹⁸:

“They gave me the precaria for two years and after that they issued my DNI. The precaria is to last indefinitely until you process your DNI. The first DNI that you receive lasts for two years and has to be renewed [after that period] in order to get the definitive one.”

Pancho’s explanation makes apparent that he understands the steps involved in obtaining permanent residency in Argentina, that is, first *precaria*, temporary residency and then permanent residency. As was the case for Rufino, Pancho’s knowledgability about these procedures clashes with the views of *quinteros* held by municipality officers, who often portray them as “illiterate”, “stupid”, “lazy” and “quasi-animals” incapable of understanding anything beyond horticulture. Pancho and Rufino’s clarity on the procedures also contrasts with the confusion and uncertainty that often permeate equivalent explanations provided by migrants living in both urban and peripheral areas of the *partido*. Migrants and non-migrants alike often argue that only those who acquire enough “urban savvy” are equipped to deal with state bureaucracies and abusive employers, but my fieldwork shows that this is not always the case.

Pancho and Tomasa’s views of the value of having their papers in order also differs from those held by many migrants living in urban and peripheral areas of the *partido*. Their own experiences proved that the legal status of family’ members did not affect their daily activities or social interaction with Argentinians (ordinary citizens and public servants alike). This contrast with the views of many migrants in urban and peripheral areas, who claim that their lives were markedly changed for the better since they obtained their Argentinean documentation (see chapters IV and V). Pancho makes his point by citing his former job in the *barrio privado*, where he was hired without papers, and adds: “*Da igual* [It does not matter]”. Likewise, their three children have been able to enrol in school immediately upon their arrival, before even starting the procedures to obtain their papers, and moved along with their schooling without any trouble. School personnel and teachers advised Pancho and Tomasa to get their children’s papers without hampering their access to public education. By the time I met them, their eldest daughter, who was about to turn eighteen years old, was close to obtaining her DNI, while the other two children were a bit farther behind in the process, but knew that they would obtain theirs eventually.

Pancho and Tomasa are critical of the sensationalist tone of some media that was promoting increasing levels of insecurity. They know from other migrants that keeping safe was difficult during the 1990s, yet, crime has not touched them. Upon their arrival, Pancho and Tomasa were perplexed by the number of houses in urban Olmos with bars over the windows and entrances. Their hometown in Bolivia is very quiet and people know each other very well, so there is no need to deploy such defensive measures. Their two teenaged children indicate that it is safe for them to go out in Olmos, and that nothing has happened to them or to their friends. Yet, they believe, it is important to play it safe, so they only travel by *remís* to avoid long waits for buses at night. Pancho and Tomasa hold that it is better not to watch the news. Both agree that there is crime, but consider that the sensationalist media exaggerate it in order to support the profitable security industry (see Chapter IV). For them, levels of (in)security vary greatly depending on the area: “If you live close to a *villa*, it is ‘heavy’ [really difficult]”, Pancho says while Tomasa adds: “If there is crime, it is in the *villas*; it is for sure that it happens there”. As was the case for most migrants I interviewed, Pancho and Tomasa make an implicit connection between *villeros* and crime, which is presented as an “undeniable reality”, even if they do not know anyone who has been affected.

Pancho prudently evaluates the public policies of the government, arguing that in order to compare Kirchner’s presidency with that of Fernández one would to have lived in Argentina longer than he has. He sees *quinteros* as not really in touch with the country’s political life because they are mostly devoted to their work:

“We practically live in a different world because we are here [in Las Quintas], we work, we produce and trucks come to load our vegetables, so we do not have much contact [with politics].”

Pancho also believes that *quinteros*’ focus on work helps explain why public subsidies (such as those for children) do not reach them: “Maybe those who are more into politics get them but us, we mostly work.” This last remark signals the extent to which he is aware of the political manoeuvres regulating the attribution of public subsidies, which are employed by some politicians to secure votes, as mentioned by some urban migrants as well. Despite his modest evaluation of his own political knowledge, his comments prove otherwise.

Lack of Regulations and Unfair Commercialization Rules: From Producers to Intermediaries

As was the case for other *quinteros*, Pancho and Tomasa do not have fixed breaks to eat, even if they start work very early. Only in the winter do they begin a bit later since they cannot get used to the *partido*'s "cold" temperatures (compared to those of Tarija). Horticulturists often refer to this issue by saying that they "fear" coming out of their houses and having to face temperatures ranging between zero and five degrees Celsius. Most *quinteros* in Olmos produced a variety of lettuces, tomatoes and peppers along with some herbs such as basil and oregano. Those who manage to build a greenhouse, often made with very basic, low cost infrastructure, continue to cultivate some of these products throughout the year whereas others seek to diversify their production (still within narrow margins) in order to maximize their commercialization opportunities. *Quinteros* in Olmos receive technical advice from the same agronomist paid by the government who has helped those in Etcheverry, and value his counselling on pesticides and new produce varieties. While they appreciate the government's help with these issues, horticulturists regret its lack of intervention when it comes to regulating the commercialization of their produce, which is extremely unjust.

As in Etcheverry, *quinteros* in Olmos are well aware of how unevenly distributed profits are in their industry. Small producers like them are at the bottom of the gain scale while a range of intermediaries, diversely positioned in the commercialization chain, are the ones benefiting the most. Horticulturists' meagre profits are related to their constraining circumstances, which result from playing by production and commercialization rules that grant them almost no negotiation power. As concerns their family and work-related fixed expenditures, *quinteros*' fluctuating production places them in a very unfavourable position that makes them most vulnerable in winter, when consumption of their fresh produce importantly decreases. In summer, in contrast, their circumstances tend to improve in tandem with the higher consumption level of their products, which leads to a modest increase in its price while speeding up its commercialization, as Tomasa explains:

"Now [winter] is a really tough time [está bravo]...And one wants to 'run away'! [quit]...But, we have to 'keep pushing' because if we quit, our situation can only worsen...The summer helps us a bit, especially after a difficult winter."

While *quinteros* in Etcheverry mention not knowing each other beyond those living close by in their dispersed neighbourhoods, which hampers their capacity to get organized to lobby for better commercialization prices, those in Olmos indicate otherwise. When talking about the government's lack of intervention in establishing fairer commercialization terms, Pancho signals that horticulturists in Olmos are in touch:

"We all use the same price grid in the zona, for example, if it costs 2\$ pesos, we all sell at 2\$ pesos...There is communication, even if we are lacking a way to get organized so that we are the ones setting the prices."

Horticulturists speak with frustration and resignation about how much the price of their produce increases as it moves further away from them in the commercialization chain. For example, *quinteros* were in early 2010 paid 1\$ peso for a box of lettuce weighing several kilos while at *verdulerías* the kilo was sold for 14\$. Tomasa wishes the president would regulate this process and Pancho laments that in its absence, it is the market law of supply and demand that unfairly does so:

"We do not really negotiate the prices of our products, nor those of the seeds...So, things do not work out well for us...Imagine, if you buy a plantín [little plant] of lettuce for about 6.50\$ pesos and you sell the box of lettuce for 1\$ peso, what can you do? You do not make enough [profit] to even plant again."

Horticulturists know that those who profit the most from their hard work are people who have means of transportation. The commercialization chain starts with intermediaries with trucks, who visit multiple family producers in the area before buying in order to compare the price and quality of produce. They are the ones who establish the price of *quinteros'* products, which the latter cannot reject, even when seeking to sell according to the area's grid of prices. These are the trucks that later on reach urban fruit and vegetable central markets. Intermediaries' gains are substantial indeed: if they pay *quinteros* 1\$ peso for a certain product, for instance, they sell it for 4\$ in the market. According to Tomasa, those who make the largest profit are the *verduleros* with small trucks or wagons, who are able to buy in the market and sell in their own store. At the other end of the gain scale are the *quinteros*, as Tomasa puts it: "We kill ourselves working here! It is really 'ugly' the sacrifice that one has to make in order to survive." The cost of commercializing horticulturalists' products is way beyond their meagre financial means. Indeed, they are not even able to afford the rental of a

truck and the wooden boxes needed to transport their products (*vacíos* or *cajones*)¹⁹⁹. These constraints are not exclusive to *quinteros* but shared by the *verduleros de barrio* in La Plata city.

Topographical Hierarchies with Strong Ethnic Counterparts: From the Market to the Verdulerías

The circumstances of *verduleros* Edelina and Sandro (chapter IV) are representative of those of others who also struggle to survive in an industry controlled by very few. As is the case among horticultural producers, marked differences exist between a majority of small *verduleros* and a minority of big ones. This is mostly the case due to the size of their respective businesses, including the volume of transactions, premises and employees, and their means of transportation, owned or rented. *Verduleros'* unequal profits translate into a wide variety of saving capacities, ranging from none to very high. Only a handful of very successful *verduleros* has managed to invest their financial capital in other business opportunities, such as the few Bolivians who have launched their own construction companies or were selling home appliances during the 2000s.

The extent to which the unfair commercialization of *quinteros'* products is central to the (re)creation of hierarchies in the horticultural industry of the *partido* becomes most apparent in the Central Fruit and Vegetable Market of La Plata. In this socio-economic space, crucial economic transactions take place between a series of social actors, materializing the second important stage in the commercialization of horticulturalists' products. The third and final node of the chain is constituted by *verdulerías* and other grocery stores (including *ferias bolivianas*, Chinese mini-markets and big chain supermarkets), where horticultural products are sold along with other merchandise. Located in the outskirts of the city, this central market runs from 01:00 to 10:00 and is open to the general public, yet only the automobiles of those there for commercial purposes can enter the premises. Locally produced vegetables, fruits and spices are commercialized along with merchandise coming from other provinces and countries. A range of *verdulería*-related items such as aprons and plastic bags are also sold.

The market is divided into four sections or pavillions, whose *puestos* (market stalls) noticeably differ in terms of size, visibility (strategic positioning), quality of their products,

and number of workers. This topographical hierarchy has important ethnic and financial counterparts, since the best puestos have historically been owned by a few Argentinians, who have made a family business out of this trade. Not only are these stalls the most expensive in the market, but they also sell the best quality merchandise (widely recognized by their brands) along with some “exclusive” products, which in both cases only a few *puesteros* can afford to carry. Streets and large open spaces separate the market’s four main pavillions and serve as loading areas, where vehicles are successively parked for buyers to load the merchandise. Within pavillions, market stalls are separated from each other by very small corridors or narrow paths where wooden and cardboard boxes pile up, full of fresh products early in the day and, with any luck, empty by the end of the morning.

Restrictive rules are in place to make it very difficult for new *puesteros* to enter the market, mostly in the form of complicated and costly bureaucratic procedures that have become real obstacles for those seeking to access this trade arena. Key to success in acquiring a market stall, however, is to know “someone”, that is, influential people. According to Sandro, puestos could be either bought for about 30,000\$-40,000\$ pesos or rented for 14\$ a day in 2010. Rental regulations are very strict and those who temporarily leave their puesto unattended or do not punctually pay their rent lose their spots.

Since the birth of their daughter, Edelina has run the *verdulería*, by serving clients, keeping vegetables and fruit “fresh” and choosing what to buy, while Sandro has made the purchases at the market. Like other small *verduleros*, Sandro makes three trips a week in order to supply the store with merchandise and leaves their home at 01:35. Making successive, small purchases gives *verduleros de barrio* flexibility without taking large risks, since they can replace the merchandise already sold while satisfying the particular demands of regular clients. Not having a vehicle, Sandro goes to the market by *remís*, always relying on the same company, and returns home with the same *fletero*. A *flete* is a transportation service offered by a driver with a small truck (the *fletero*), and is commonly used to carry either large objects or big quantities of smaller ones. Sandro has used the services of the same Argentinean *fletero* since they opened the *verdulería*, which have proved reliable and affordable, even if his truck is old. Sandro does not need to book him each time, but simply waits for him to finish serving two other clients (Sandro is his third). Sandro usually comes back home at around 07:45, and

after helping Edelina to arrange the merchandise, he walks their daughter to school and does some deliveries. Only in the early afternoon does Sandro manage to catch up on his sleep, although, over the years, he has gotten used to not sleeping much.

The time I accompanied Sandro to the market, I met him at their home at 01:35 in order to leave soon after in *remís*. He insisted that in order to buy the best produce at good prices, one has to arrive early—an assertion that proved to be true since it disappeared not long after we arrived. The purchase of merchandise at the market is a very intense process, combining fast decision-making and good judgment. Sandro has his own “route”, which he promptly completes by visiting a large number of *puesteros*, who know him well and greet him by name. Sandro closely inspects fruit and vegetables, knowing from their weight and appearance if they are good. After finishing his first round, which allows him to compare the quality, price, and availability of the products on his list, Sandro returns to the market stalls where he has decided to buy. During this second round, he indicates to each *puestero* what he wants and his merchandise is put aside. Only then does Sandro relax a bit and sits to socialize with some *puesteros*. The time I went with him, we spent most of his break time with a Bolivian *puestero*, born in the northern Argentinean province of Jujuy, whose parents had been *golondrinas*. His family eventually settled in La Plata and their joint hard work permitted them to succeed economically. They have built their own cement house and bought their stall in the market. All his relatives have remained in the horticultural industry, working as *quinteros* and *verduleros*.

Sandro emphasizes that Bolivian *puesteros*, like his friend, were increasingly found in the market, yet our tour showed otherwise. Most stalls continue to be occupied by Argentinians and very few of them are held by Bolivians. Moreover, based on stalls’ location, merchandise and labour force, it is clear that Argentinians continue to run the market. This being said, marked differences exist within both national groups. Only a couple of Argentinean families own the best *puestos* whereas the rest rent theirs, which are diversely positioned in the market’s hierarchies. Among Bolivians, only a few of them, who made their wealth during the 1990s, own their stalls, which still are not situated in the best areas of the market. We only saw one *quintero*, whose stall was very small, hidden and poorly supplied, in one of the worst areas of the market. The economic transactions taking place in the market

also make apparent the disparities between diverse *verduleros*. Those with large *verdulerías* arrive in their own large trucks or pick-ups with several employees, and make large purchases that included the market's best products. Others arrive in rather old vehicles, without personnel, and buy in much smaller quantities. And of course, there are others like Sandro, who rent the services of a *flete* and only buy a little each time.

It was already past 07:00 when Sandro managed to load the *flete*. He had borrowed a cart from a *puestero* in order to carry his purchases from distant stalls. It was a rainy, grey dawn and even though the sun had risen by then, the weather continued to be humid and cold. When we were about to get on the *flete*, the truck would not start. After several tries, the *fletero* informed us that he needed to get the parts to fix it and that it would take some time. I had no choice but to leave in a taxi since I had to take my child to daycare whereas Sandro was to wait for his *fletero*, whose services were the only ones he could afford. When I did some of my grocery shopping at their *verdulería* in the afternoon, I learned that Edelina had been worried sick because Sandro only managed to arrive at 11:00.

The ethnic hierarchies of the market, with their economic, social and political counterparts, confirm those of society at large and signal the extent to which the economic progress made by some successful Bolivians in La Plata is not matched by a concomitant rise in the district's social ladder (see chapter IV). Some Bolivian *puesteros* managed to buy their own stalls in the market while consolidating prolific horticultural, construction and commerce businesses. Despite these financial and entrepreneurial achievements, which demonstrate that they are much wealthier than many of their Argentinean counterparts, Bolivian *puesteros* have not been allowed to access the higher-ranked circles of the market. Economic success is not necessarily enough to overcome the well-established ethnic value hierarchy of the *partido*. The economic transactions taking place at the market also confirm *quinteros*' assertions about the unfair commercialization of their products, which continues to be monopolized by a handful of intermediaries with their own means of transportation.

The precarious positioning of the *verduleros de barrio* in the commercialization of horticultural products in the *partido* situates them close to *quinteros*. Both work to survive and their poor profits do not allow them to accumulate enough financial capital to improve their

respective negotiation power in this monopolized industry. Not having their own means of transportation proves crucial for both as well. *Quinteros* have no choice but to leave the commercialization of their products in the hands of intermediaries whereas small *verduleros* rely on often precarious *fletes*, whose cost remains substantial given their tight budgets.

CHAPTER VII: ‘*El Boliviano Es El Más Sufrido*’: Migrants’ Views of the GBA Ethnic Hierarchy

In this chapter, I examine migrants’ views and uses of the hegemonic ethnic hierarchy in force in the *partido* of La Plata over the past decade. As I have shown, the racial logic underpinning this ranking is not exclusive to the *partido* but representative of the GBA—and, generally speaking, also of migrants’ countries of origin. Even if migrants agree on the devalued status of Bolivians in Argentina, some criticize it, along with Argentinians’ denigrating attitudes and exploitative treatment of these migrants. The cases I examine make apparent migrants’ problematic operationalization of such a hierarchy in everyday social interaction, which tends to contrast with their theoretical mastery of its racial logic. Migrants’ re-elaboration of some sensationalist media discourse on “migrant crime” shows the extent to which their appropriation of such discourse differs according to the particular goals it endorses. Moreover, personal, situational and geographical factors influence migrants’ views and uses of the ethnic hierarchy in force, which impact social interaction among migrants, and between migrants and non-migrants.

The Belittlement of Bolivians

Ana from Peru notes that not only Argentinians mistreat migrants, but that the latter also do it among themselves. Ana considers that the foreigners “suffering the most” in Argentina are the Bolivians:

“The Paraguayan defends himself even if he’s a bit marginalized. They [people in general] know that if a Paraguayan se raya [gets upset, crazy], he reacts strongly, so there is some fear [towards them]; the Peruvian, if you treat him well, he treats you well, he prefers to quit his job [instead of getting in trouble], but the Bolivian es el más sufrido.”

Ana also believes that the distinctions endorsed by migrants often lead to belittling attitudes towards Bolivians:

“Even among us [migrants]...Because we say ‘Why does he [Bolivian] work for 4 cents when I said 10 [cents]?’ , so he’s discreetly given a bad look, in disapproval [lo miran mal], [thinking] este boliviano boludo! [what a stupid Bolivian!]...Because it’s like this, the Argentinian gets paid 20\$, the Paraguayan and the Peruvian get 10\$ or 15\$, but the Bolivian does the job for, say, 5\$, imagine!”

Ana's view of the ethnic value hierarchy classifying migrants in the GBA is representative of others I interviewed, migrants and non-migrants alike, who, even if flexible in terms of how they position Paraguayans and Peruvians, remain rigid about placing Bolivians at its bottom. In this regard, some migrants openly express their opinions while others only do so in a more discreet or indirect manner. Elva, for example, a Paraguayan woman from Encarnación in her late twenties, expresses her views of other migrants in an oblique manner. Elva arrived in La Plata in 2004 and since then has worked as an *empleada doméstica*, even if her original plan was to study nursing at the Universidad Nacional de La Plata. Initially, she found employment through an agency that her sister recommended and worked *cama adentro* under exploitative and abusive conditions. Eventually, a cousin passed on to Elva one of her part-time cleaning jobs with a "nice" retired widow in City Bell, which has better fitted with Elva's family life since she has a five-year-old son with a Peruvian partner. Talking about the bad treatment that migrants receive from state officials, Elva timidly mentions the "disadvantageous" positioning of Bolivians while distancing herself from them: "It varies but Bolivians are still the ones being treated the worst...This is what I've heard because, personally, I have not experienced bad treatment from municipal agents". Elva also minimizes the discrimination against Paraguayans in the partido brushing it off as a "personal issue": "I've heard that they [Argentines and other migrants] say 'bad things' about Paraguayans, but it depends on the person". Elva's opinion contrasts with the views of many Paraguayans I interviewed, however, who affirm that they have experienced discriminatory attitudes from Platenses and Peruvians; e.g., Richard (see chapter V).

Other migrants, however, are quite straightforward when it comes to expressing their negative views of Bolivians. Such was the case of Jorge, a Peruvian man in his late thirties from Huacho, a locality in the country's north-west. Jorge arrived in La Plata in 1996 and worked for several years at a construction company doing large public projects in diverse localities of the Gran La Plata Urban Agglomerate, which includes the *partidos* of Ensenada, Berisso and La Plata (see Fig. 4). Jorge talks at length about how he has earned the trust of his Argentinean employers, who almost exclusively hire Peruvians, Paraguayans and Bolivians. This makes him very proud. Speaking about discrimination, Jorge emphasizes that he never had a "bad" experience, even if he is aware that many of his compatriots have lived "really

bad moments”. Distancing themselves from those experiencing discrimination was a common discursive strategy deployed by migrants in 2010, though it was not used to the same extent as in the late 1990s, when *limitrofes* were criminalized by the government. When expressing his views of other migrants and Argentinians in the *partido*, Jorge openly advances his pejorative views of Bolivians:

“Me, never! [had a problem]. Instead, I’ve only “had words” [intercambios de palabras] with Bolivians, but not with Argentinians...The Paraguayans are buenísimas personas [great people] and I’ve had a really nice relationship with them...Bolivians are a bit ‘low in culture’ [bajos en cultura] and maybe for this reason they are mal hablados [rude, foul-mouthed]...One feels offended because most of them have not studied, and so they’re very vulgar.”

Justifying belittling views of Bolivians by citing their alleged lack of formal education was another common attitude among migrants and non-migrants in the *partido*, especially in its urban and peripheral areas. Ultimately, despite how migrants framed it, the vast majority of those I interviewed asserted the lowest ranking of Bolivians in what they considered a generalized ethnic value hierarchy extending beyond the *partido*. Even Bolivians themselves tended to agree regarding their own disadvantageous social status, which they illustrate with examples of other migrants and Platenses’ covert and overt demeaning attitudes towards them. Those living in the *partido*’s rural areas, most of whom are Tarijeños, are the ones who report such incidents more frequently in the form of abuse by police and *pibes chorros*, and Northern compatriots’ condescending attitudes and exploitation (see previous chapter). The latter is also the case among *verduleros* Tarijeños in the city, as Sandro and Edelina’s case demonstrates (see chapter IV). A flagrant and extreme version of the denigrating views of Bolivians held by some Platenses was bluntly expressed by the municipality’s Director of the *Dirección General de Colectividades y Migraciones*, when he described *quinteros* (Bolivian family horticulturists) as “almost little animals who have not progressed mentally” (see previous chapter). Bolivians, for their part, only seldom and rather timidly belittle other migrant groups, as we shall see in the last section of this chapter, even though they express their resentment towards *pibes chorros*, such as in Sandro’s case (chapter IV) and Julián’s (chapter V).

Migrants' Re-elaboration of the Discourse on "Migrant Crime"

While during the 1990s, the conservative media became a central tool in the government-sponsored criminalization of Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans in the country (see chapter I), the dissemination of such discourse became a rather restricted affair in the following decade. It was mostly when analyzing the "2000s insecurity" that some sensationalist media programming occasionally shifted its focus from the *villeros* as the *per se* perpetrators of all crimes to migrants from neighbouring nations. The extent to which this discourse informed migrants' opinions varied, as my interviews show. Raúl, for example, a Peruvian from Lima in his late thirties, endorses the discourse on "migrant crime". Raúl arrived in Buenos Aires city in 1993 with the intention to study fine arts at the Universidad de Buenos Aires, yet he soon began to work in construction and keeping up with school requirements became difficult. Sometime later, he met his future wife, an Argentinian from San Fernando (GBA), with whom he has two children; family obligations have prevailed over his desire to complete an arts degree. In 2006, they all moved to Lima, and Raúl began to travel back and forth between the two countries (by bus) in order to work independently on construction projects in Buenos Aires city. Despite his numerous border crossings and many jobs over the years, Raúl only obtained his DNI in 2007.

Talking about recent insecurity levels in the GBA, he mentions being robbed twice over the past six months, which he considers "the norm" in *provincia* (or the *interior*, see Chapter I). In both cases, the perpetrators were young Argentinean men under the influence of drugs and happened close to midnight, when Raúl was commuting from work in Buenos Aires city to his parents-in-law in San Fernando, about a two-hour long trip. When talking about this incident, Raúl promptly switches to the issue of "migrant crime":

"Maybe you watched it [on TV], heard it [on the radio] or read it on the newspapers, in the news, that there are foreigners [in Argentina] who 'have as a their profession' to rob, to steal; for example, there are Peruvians who do so, but they are not people who come to work...They were already chorros [burglars] before they came, back in Peru."

Raúl also cites a conversation held with an Argentinean police officer on this issue, who claimed that "Peruvians were *chorros* of cellphones" (in Argentina), while advancing his own view: "Yes, there are many [Peruvians who do so], everywhere, but not only Peruvians,

there are also Chileans, Paraguayans”. In the end, both agreed that the justice system in Argentina has significantly contributed to the creation of “migrant crime” because it is “too soft”. It does not imprison minors and releases criminals of all ages and nationalities “too fast” based on their good conduct.

Raúl’s account illustrates the extent to which his perception of “migrant crime” in the GBA is informed by sensationalist media discourse since his own “encounters with the 2000s insecurity”, as it was often put, and those of others he spoke about never involved migrants as perpetrators. Raúl’s resorting to the “authoritative” opinion of an Argentinean policeman provides supporting evidence for his media-informed opinion. While in Argentina this state force has been increasingly looked down on, being identified with corruption and abuse, in migrants’ countries of origin it is regarded highly. Raúl’s generalizations are partially narrowed down, however, when he seeks to exclude himself, along with other hard-working migrants in Argentina, from the criminalizing discourse he is endorsing.

Similarly, Edelina, the Bolivian *verdulera* who lives in La Plata city with her husband Sandro and their young daughter (see chapter IV), seeks to differentiate the “hard-working” Bolivian migrants from their “criminal” compatriots in the *district*. Yet, Edelina does so in a less assertive, more hesitant manner:

“If you came before [that is, during the 1990s] and worked like us, you made [a lot of] money and for that reason, some Bolivians have chalets and 4x4 pick-ups...But there are some who say that it’s because they bring drugs, marijuana...Some maybe, but I do not believe that all of them...An Argentinean friend of mine, who is a policeman, tells me: ‘All Bolivians bring drugs and carry them in their backpacks’ then he laughs and tells me: ‘Not you! You’re laboradora [industrious].”

In contrast with Raúl’s assertions on migrant crime which refer to migrant groups in general (Peruvians, Chileans and Paraguayans), Edelina’s remarks are embedded in a larger classificatory logic that, along ethnic lines, seeks to set apart northern from southern Bolivians (see chapter IV). What matters the most for her is to highlight the boundary separating ethnically “distinct” groups of compatriots instead of focusing on northern Bolivians’ particular link to crime, which always remains uncertain, as is also the case for Tarijeños. A way of doing so is to provide the country’s geography of drug production and then match it with the inhabitants of the region where production is allegedly carried out:

“Since there are drugs there [in the north of Bolivia]...Those that bring them are people from the north, us [southerners] from Tarija, which is closer [to Argentina] don’t do that...I do not believe that the Tarijeño brings drugs. I don’t know, maybe.”

More assertively, Peruvian César and Yolanda (see chapter IV) speak with indignation and surprise about the “loose” migration controls in Argentina that permit “criminal” migrants to enter the country, as César notes:

“Migration is expanding and more and more people come with a criminal record and I don’t know why they are accepted...I’m talking about immigrants from my country and from other countries...Friends from Peru who ‘know people’ tell me that some [compatriots who are in Argentina] were hunted in Peru, so what are they doing here? I don’t know how they entered!”

Paradoxically, however, what César and Yolanda do not mention is that the same “loose” migration controls that they criticize permitted them to enter the country with a tourist visa, which migration officers know was to be overstayed, and to live “irregularly” for many years until they could get their residence papers. Yolanda, for her part, seeks to differentiate the “criminal” migrant (as portrayed in sensationalist media discourse) from the “honest” hard-working one (like her and César) by employing a classificatory logic based on migrants’ type of entry in Argentina:

“Those people [the criminal migrants] enter by land...And at the border, they [migration officials] do not control; yet, when you come by plane [as César and Yolanda did], they control indeed [at the airport].”

Yolanda’s use of transportation type as the “marker of criminals” is not random but signals the divide between the majority of poor migrants from neighbouring countries, who can only afford a bus ticket, and the very small minority who can pay for a plane ticket. Indeed, migrants’ “choice” of transportation when travelling between countries (including annual trips) is an important indicator of their kinship networks’ socio-economic status. A plane ticket costs a great deal more than a bus fare, and involves a shorter and much more comfortable trip. In this regard, Yolanda’s remark echoes that of others who also associate migrants’ poverty, lack of formal education, rural origin or even aboriginal background with their alleged “propensity” to commit criminal acts—as was the case, yet in a more widespread manner, during the 1990s. This discursive strategy is employed to create or reinforce a

distancing process between the person who deploys it and “others”. Migrants seek to distance themselves from criminalizing discourse targeting *límitrofes*, whereas some Argentinians use it to confirm their prejudiced views of these groups and their devalued position in the GBA’s ethnic hierarchy, as was the case of the Director of the *Dirección General de Colectividades y Migraciones* in La Plata.

César’s comments reinforce the distinction made by Yolanda while making it apparent that he agrees with the “lowest” positioning attributed to Bolivia in the Southern Cone (Recalde 2004), understood as a country that, among other things, permits criminals to freely cross its borders:

“As they say, all ‘those’ people[criminals] enter through Bolivia because there is no control there, as to avoid Mendoza [central-western Argentinean province] ...In the news you see that ‘certain’ [criminal] individuals arrived and because of them we are all blamed, it’s their fault...Cuando llueve todos se mojan [‘when it rains everyone gets wet’], it’s wrong.”

Other migrants make similar, indirect remarks to signal Bolivia’s “low” rank in South America and, by extension, Bolivians’ “lowest” social status in the GBA’s (hegemonic) ethnic hierarchy. Some describe Bolivian crossing points (to Argentina) as the most “corrupted”, “bothersome” and even “dangerous” while others emphasize the country’s “poor”, “bad quality”, “always breaking down” albeit cheap bus services, which are compared to the “comfortable”, “reliable” and “great” service offered by Argentinean (and sometimes Chilean) bus companies.

Widespread media discourse on the “decade’s insecurity” (associated with the *pibe chorro*) significantly informed migrants’ views of their own safety in the *partido* of La Plata while affecting their use of public and private space, as I showed in the previous three chapters. Even if to a much lesser extent, the more occasional discourse on “migrant crime” also shaped the perceptions of migrants, or rather, migrants reproduced such discourse for diverse purposes in a number of ways. Some claim that compatriots or other *límitrofes* are perpetrators of a number of illicit activities, mostly drug trafficking and petty street robbery. These sorts of generalizing assertions do not convey the fearful images and feelings associated with the *pibe chorro* but are rather used to differentiate between the “honest” and the “criminal” migrant. Still others deploy such discourse to advance their views of the “lowest”

standing of Bolivians in the GBA's ethnic hierarchy and, more generally, of Bolivia as a country of a "lesser value" in the Southern Cone. Finally, some reproduce the discourse on migrant crime in a more indirect manner, and in the process highlight the boundary separating ethnically different compatriots, as in the case of Edelina and Sandro (chapter IV).

"Learning to Get Used to It"

When it comes to evaluating the views of *limitrofes* held by Platenses, some migrants are quite critical. Lucas, a Peruvian who provides in-house care for the elderly (see chapters IV and V) for example, opposes the prejudiced views of one of his elderly patients, a well-off retired Argentinean architect. Even if acknowledging the disadvantageous positioning of Bolivians in the nation's social imaginary, Lucas indicates that other migrants are not exempt from the sort of denigrating views held by this patient:

"He always worked with Bolivians in his construction projects and treated them really badly, 'however he wanted'...These are people who have been permanently marginalized [in Argentina] because of their colour, their size, their way of talking, which is really wrong...This man said that Bolivians were delinquents and brutos [stupid, ignorant, brutish] and that Peruvians were criminals...He even told me that I was not good for studying, but only good for work in construction."

Lucas' tolerance of this patient's condescending comments came to an end, however, resulting in a radical change in how the Platense treated him. Lucas says in a triumphal tone: "I do not remember how I did it...He went too far and I stopped him short, and since then, he changed completely. Since then, I was not a *negro* anymore. Most of the migrants I interviewed did not experience such a victory, though, and had get used to denigrating labels, such as *peruca*, *bolita* and *paragua*, as well as bad treatment. The comments of Raúl from Peru echo those of other migrants in the *partido*:

"In the construction company, they always bother you, they make rough jokes at your expense, and it's not only the Argentinians but also the Paraguayans, the Bolivians...That happened to me the first time I came [to Argentina]...When you are new, you have to pagar derecho de piso ["earn your place"]...In the beginning, I wanted to go back [home], but I got used to it little by little...Argentinians call you negro, gordo [fat] and they think that it's normal...In the beginning it shocks you but, later on, you learn that it's their way of treating people...By the time I became their co-worker, I understood that it was all a game."

Raúl's experiences as a novice in the *obra* were not funny, however. He was called names and told things that he "could not repeat" while co-workers kept stealing his possessions, including clothes and shower items. It was only due to his brother's encouragement to *aguantar* (put up with this abusive treatment) until things got "sorted out", that he managed to remain in the job. Raúl's disciplining into the rules of the workplace involved his progressive adoption of "heavy" joking and behaving "like the others", which showed his co-workers and employers that he could not be played around with anymore.

The disciplining process at work in the *obra*, a masculine workplace par excellence, parallels those inherent in two feminized economic niches of La Plata: the *ferias* (see chapter IV) and the care sector (see chapter V). In all three of these ethnicized labour niches, employers and some co-workers, including compatriots, take advantage of novices. Exceptions to this are jobs done individually, most often at private houses, such as those of the *empleadas domésticas*, whose broad job description includes caring for children and pets along with cleaning and doing the household's grocery shopping, and some nurse assistants or "helpers", who care for the elderly, the disabled or the sick outside institutionalized settings. Feelings of suffering and the longing to leave the job permeate the initial work experiences of migrant men and women in these three settings, and are counterbalanced by the encouragement they receive from experienced relatives and friends, who have already gone through such a learning process, to endure their exploitative and abusive circumstances. Migrants' socialization into the hierarchical and racialized power dynamics regulating their labour niches is mostly done through a "silent pedagogy" (Samudra 2008) by imitation that involves adopting well-established rules of conduct. Novices' progressive advancement in the hierarchy of the workplace translates into better treatment and pay, and is concomitant with the arrival of new co-workers. The newcomer status of the most recently arrived always interacts with their ethnic rank in the workplace, with both together affecting in the manner and speed with which they move in the ranks. Going through this painful learning (disciplining) process permits some migrants to obtain the necessary knowledge and contacts to either get a better job or start working independently. Those who decide to stay, for their part, are rewarded with better treatment, higher pay and a sense of belonging.

The Racial Classificatory Logic Underpinning the GBA's Ethnic Hierarchy

As Lucas' and Raúl's accounts illustrate, the xenophobic views of migrants from neighbouring countries held by some Argentinians are often condensed in the label *negro* ("black"). Emblematically incarnating the "non-white" Argentinean nation, this term and its historical derivatives have been used to refer condescendingly to subaltern social groups in Buenos Aires, such as the *negros Porteños* (black people who lived in the city during the 1900s-1920s period); the *cabecitas negras* ("little black heads", internal migrants of "dark" complexion who took part in the expanding industrialization of the metropolis during the 1940s and 1950s while becoming supporters of Peronismo); the *villeros* (inhabitants of *villas miserias*, or slums, in the subsequent decades); and the *limitrofes* (who, since the mid-1960s, have been settling in the GBA). Being perceived as cultural, social class, political and even residential "threats" to the alleged "whiteness" and decorum of Porteño elites (Guber 2002, Ratier 1971, Recalde 2006-a), all these social categories have been attributed similar negative social and psychological characteristics, making apparent a deeply rooted racial classificatory logic dating from the late 19th century (Frigerio 2006). According to the Argentinean anthropologist Alejandro Frigerio (2006), the production of "white" Argentina, notably in Buenos Aires city, involved rendering black groups and their descendants *invisible* while shifting from *racial* to social categories in the discourse on social difference and stratification (pp. 5-6)²⁰⁰. Indeed, the (re)creation of nationhood since the country's independence has been underpinned by a racist logic that has shaped national identity politics while regulating social interaction and classification (Recalde 2006-a). The extent to which this is still the case is evident in the popularity and stigmatizing power that the label *negro* continues to have today, as well as in the fact that it has come to encompass its historical variants, which have shaped public imagination until recently (Frigerio 2006). Paradoxically however, since official discourse has portrayed Argentinean society as "open and prejudice-free", both those who discriminate and those who are discriminated against do not admit it openly, but rather resort to evasive and concealing strategies instead (Margulis and Urresti 1998).

My 2010 fieldwork confirmed the prevalence of the label *negro* over the historical variants of the term among Argentinians from La Plata, Buenos Aires city, the GBA and other provinces, who commonly employ it to refer pejoratively to the most disadvantaged social

groups in the country, whether they be migrant or not²⁰¹. The use of this label also tends to prevail over its contemporary variant: the *pibe chorro*. Migrants, in contrast, tend to use the labels *villeros* and *pibes chorros* when referring to the most marginalized Argentinians, who discriminate against them overtly rather than using the covert strategies more often deployed by members of other social classes. Some migrants also mention becoming the target of “xenophobic crime”, explaining that *pibes chorros* seemingly “choose” them based on their “non-Argentinean” accent and “looks” (complexion). Ana from Peru, for example, was once robbed late at night in La Plata, while returning home from work, by an Argentinean couple in their forties, who were under the heavy influence of drugs and alcohol. Ana was cornered and searched, as she explains:

“Since I didn’t have any money, they took my cell and my [Argentinean and Peruvian] documents and because of my way of speaking, they asked me: ‘Are you Peruvian or Bolivian? Dale mami! [hurry up], stand up’...They wanted to take me to a dark place, but I told them: ‘Kill me here so my family will be able to find me’...My husband was in jail and my children waiting for me at home.”

While migrants living in the peripheries of the *partido* and the GBA also report being assaulted or robbed by the *pibes chorros* (see chapter V), Bolivians in rural areas of La Plata such as Olmos and Etcheverry are the ones who cite this type of incident most often. According to these family horticulturalists, the majority of whom are Tarijeños, the *pibes chorros* (and the police) easily identify them due to their *cara de paisano* or “aboriginal face” when they shop in neighbouring urban areas (see previous chapter). Similarly, those being assaulted in peripheral localities mention being quite “noticeable” due to their *cara de extranjero* or *de mestizo* (“foreign” or “mestizo” face).

Bolivians, Peruvians and Paraguayans’ comments on the “whiteness” of (some) Argentinians and the concomitant “darkness” of (some) migrants should be interpreted in terms of this ingrained racial hierarchy. Lucas’ emphasis on the contrasting complexion of Argentinians and migrants provides the rationale for the latter’s marginalization by the former. Lucas amplifies both the “darkness” of the Colombian nurse working at a public hospital in La Plata (who was *morochita*) and the “whiteness” of her Argentinean patients (who were “blond people with blue eyes”) while explaining this nurse’s devalued status by Argentinians’ negative assessment of her complexion. Likewise, Leo’s comments emphasize how “tall and

blond” the Argentinean *Señora* who tipped him in La Plata was, and the “attractiveness and sex appeal” of *most* Argentinians, while contrasting these stereotyped racial portraits with his self-description as “a *negro* whose appearance frightens migrants and non-migrants alike”. Both examples (from chapter V) illustrate the extent to which many migrants in La Plata, despite their gender, adhere to the *racial classificatory logic* underpinning the GBA’s hegemonic ethnic hierarchy. This is the case because racial hierarchies are integral to most Latin American societies, where people’s “colour” or the degree of *métissage* between European conquistadores, aboriginal peoples and African populations (initially brought to Latin America as slaves by Europeans) structures social interaction and power hierarchies. To various degrees, from one society to another, these racial classifications vary according to the person’s socio-economic situation, the context and his/her own identity construction (Frigerio 2006).

The Problematic Operationalization of the GBA’s Ethnic Hierarchy

Some migrants who sought to evade the issue of ethnic hierarchies by saying that they only relate minimally to other migrants; e.g. this Bolivian couple, who work as *verduleros* in La Plata:

“We speak with some [migrants] but only a little; there was a young Paraguayan woman with whom we used to talk, but in the end, she stopped seeing us because she likes to drink a lot and wanted to share it with us, but we do not.”

Paraguayans’ heavy drinking is often mentioned by Peruvians as well, and by Paraguayans themselves, as Aníbal and Nancy’s comments illustrate (see chapter V). Ricardo, a man in his early forties, migrated from Ascope, northern Peru to La Plata in 2005. He has worked independently in construction and lives with his family in the Altos de San Lorenzo, a peripheral locality of the *partido*. During a group conversation, he raises the “drinking problem” of Paraguayans in combination with their “language issue”, which seemingly makes it very difficult to work with them:

“As a Peruvian, you can’t work with a Paraguayan because he starts to speak his Guaraní and you don’t know if he’s insulting you! [laughs]...And the Paraguayan drinks too much [es muy borracho loco], every day, he is with wine, wine and wine! Ah mierda! Wine and cigarettes, they do it too much! [como le meten loco].”

Later on, Ricardo somewhat tempers his comment by highlighting a positive aspect of Paraguayans that signals a negative trait of (some) Peruvians:

“The Peruvian is a bit selfish, at least some of them, they don’t like to see compatriots making progress, prospering...He’s not like the Paraguayan who, yes, one weekend [says] ‘let’s go build a house’ and they get together four, five, six, ten of them...And we [Peruvians], no, as long as we do not pay people, they do not move.”

Ricardo’s composite and shifting views of Paraguayans are representative of those held by other migrants I interviewed and illustrate how migrants’ opinions of other migrants question (implicitly or explicitly) the classificatory logic underpinning the dominant ethnic hierarchy of the GBA

A good many of those I interviewed claim to be able to easily identify (or to have been easily identified due to) what they consider conspicuous *mestizo* or aboriginal appearance and demeanour (phenotype, accent, manners, etc.). As the examples I have presented so far show, some even claim to be able to discern the smallest details that distinguish groups from each other, such as the ethnically different Bolivians, or migrant and non-migrants of aboriginal ancestry and provincial Argentinians. In everyday social interaction, however, things get more complicated, even messy, as several comments from Paraguayans Nancy and Aníbal illustrate. They both assert the historical discrimination endured by Bolivians in Argentina, and Aníbal remarks:

“Since I came, I’ve heard that it has always been that way with them...I do not know why...It’s like if Bolivians were not taken into account as persons. In the obra, they called them ‘bolita’ or treat them as negros.”

Nancy and Aníbal also affirm that Bolivians carry conspicuous aboriginal traits (*rasgos indígenas*), yet, when they begin to elaborate on this issue, the ethnic boundaries that separate different migrant groups become blurred, as Nancy’s comment shows:

“They [Argentinians] treat them [Bolivians] like indígenas...And in Paraguay there are people who look like Bolivians: the aboriginal peoples...And Peruvians and Bolivians look a lot alike...Even if Peruvians are not discriminated against as much in Argentina.”

The extent to which ethnic classificatory logics are learned (and so vary across time and social space) and are differently operationalized by individuals, depending on personal and situational factors, became most apparent when the couple could not agree upon the labelling

of their close neighbours, whom Nancy identifies as Bolivians while Aníbal insists they are Peruvians. Likewise, Paraguayan Ana's actual *use* of the GBA's ethnic classification scheme became problematic sometimes, even though she demonstrates her own mastery of its racial logic by talking about how much "mestizo peoples" look alike and how easily she could distinguish between them. Indeed, migrants' accurate *knowledge* of the clear-cut-boundaries of this hegemonic ethnic hierarchy often differs from how these boundaries are used. Operationalizing the logic of this hierarchy in discourse or social interaction depends on a number of factors, including the person's social class, gender, age and trajectory; the social situation, that is, the presence of other people, their social statuses and the relationships between the participants; moreover, distinctive zones of graduated sovereignty have shaped people's interaction and perceptions in urban, peripheral and rural areas of the *partido*. As a result of these factors, migrants locate differently the dividing line establishing whom to include and where in the GBA ethnic hierarchy (or whom to exclude from which group).

Some migrants use a somewhat different classificatory logic, however, consisting in grouping together the *limitrofes* (Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans) with the Argentinians from the interior (or provincial) in order to oppose them to the xenophobic *villeros*. The case of Bolivian Julián comes to mind. After talking about the disparaging attitudes of *villeros* towards migrants and asserting his own denigrating views of these disadvantaged Argentinians, Julián brings out the solidarity that reigns in his peripheral neighbourhood, where Paraguayans, Bolivians and provincial Argentinians always look after each other. This "community of interest" has emerged in response to what neighbours perceive as a common experience of aggression and burglaries by *villeros* inside and outside their *barrio*. Similarly, most of the migrant men I interviewed emphasize that they are "hard-working and honest", making a connection with their Argentinean counterparts, before distancing themselves from the "lazy and good-for-nothing" *villeros* and *pibes chorros*. In a less confrontational manner, other migrants express their alleged "closeness" to provincial Argentinians by claiming that they all eat the same food and get along really well in La Plata—an issue that I also documented in the late 1990s, when *limitrofes* noted that Platenses discriminated against Argentinians from the interior as much as they did against them (Recalde 2006-a).

Subverting the Lowest Ranking Attributed to Bolivians

In this last section, I present two cases of migrant narratives that explicitly subvert the low status ascribed to Bolivians in the GBA's ethnic value hierarchy. They come from two migrant women: Soledad, Paraguayan, and Gladys, who is Bolivian. Soledad, thirty-five years old, is originally from Villeta city, close to Asunción, the country's capital. At the age of fifteen, she spent a year working in Buenos Aires and, since then, has been in love with the city. Yet, it was only in 2003 that she could move to Argentina while rejecting invitations to go to Brazil and Spain, a decision she explains as follows:

"I loved Argentina [at the time], and maybe I also retained the idea that I had when I was little...Grandmothers [hers and those of others] had really nice photos of their visits to relatives in Argentina, and so those images always stayed in my head."

In 2003, Soledad left her three young children with her second partner, who was the father of her third child, an eight-month-old baby. As was the case of most migrant women, it was in fact Soledad's mother who looked after her children by leaving her home in a provincial town of Paraguay and moving into the couple's house in Asunción. In Buenos Aires, Soledad took care of an elderly woman with Alzheimer's disease, until the latter attempted to commit suicide by jumping off a balcony, at which point Soledad decided to find a less stressful job. She cleaned houses for a year so as to save money to build a home for her family in Paraguay. Soledad's partner joined her some time later, when the company he was working for as a driver closed down; in Buenos Aires, he found a job at a glassworks factory. Only in 2007 did they manage to bring their three children to Buenos Aires. By the time I met Soledad in early 2010, she had a son who was almost two years old (her fourth child) and worked as an *empleada doméstica* in Buenos Aires. Her husband was doing a range of small household maintenance jobs since his contract working on the carpentry and refrigeration of a Japanese ship had finished. He had obtained this job through a compatriot, after completing government-funded training.

Soledad's family has lived in a number of dangerous peripheries of the GBA (see chapter V), side by side with other migrants and *villeros*. When referring to the criminal activities regularly engaged in by neighbours, Soledad does not seek to discursively distance her family from them, as many migrants do. She is not reluctant to share the neighbourhood

with the *pibes chorros* and allegedly “criminal” migrants, nor does she endorse the denigrating views of the *villeros* in general. Instead, she gives the impression of being “at ease” wherever she lives and of having adapted to the ethnically diverse and often dangerous milieus of the neighbourhoods she has inhabited with her family.

Soledad’s transgression of the GBA’s hegemonic ethnic hierarchy became apparent during a conversation we had about migrants’ exploitation and abusive treatment of their own compatriots. Commenting on her husband’s experience with this issue, Soledad speaks with irritation about the arrogance of some migrants, who, pretending not to have gone through hardship at home, mistreat compatriots who are new at the job. At this juncture, she comments, with a mixture of laughter and indignation, on her own female compatriots’ arrogance, which she contrasts with the courtesy of Bolivians and Peruvians:

“When I went to the agency where all people [migrants] go, women were waiting outside. I arrived and Bolivian and Peruvian women asked: ‘How are you?’ and introduced themselves, they offered you something to drink...But the Paraguayans, you look at them and they give you an arrogant look, they act like important people [se hacen las importantes], they do not greet you and they pretend to only speak Argentinean Spanish!”

Like Soledad, Peruvian Jorge identifies some positive attributes of other migrants (Paraguayans) that make apparent certain defects of his own compatriots (Peruvians); yet, he does not go as far as to speak highly of Bolivians. In fact, Soledad was the only migrant I interviewed who overtly emphasizes the “nice character” and “good manners” of Bolivians (specifically women)—an opinion that stands out against the demeaning views of Bolivians held by migrants and non-migrants alike in the GBA.

Gladys, a northern Bolivian woman in her early twenties, was the only Bolivian migrant I interviewed who overtly criticized the morality of migrants from another neighbouring nation. In different areas of the *partido*, her compatriots tended to “cushion” the denigrating attitudes of migrants and non-migrants towards them, without pronouncing themselves overtly against any migrant group—except when supporting Platenses’ negative views of Chinese migrants, as do *limitrofes* in general (see chapter IV). Gladys arrived in La Plata in 2005, at the age of seventeen, along with a cousin. Coming from a large, poor family, Gladys seized the opportunity to help her family by working in Argentina: “When my aunt

asked me if I wanted to come, I said yes, because we needed the help, we're many... So, I left to help my brothers and sisters to study". By the time I met her in 2010, Gladys was running a *verdulería* with her Bolivian partner, who had arrived as a young teenager in La Plata in 1995, and with whom she has a nine-month-old baby girl. Both have their DNIs, yet, ironically, while it took Gladys' partner four years to get his in the 1990s, Gladys promptly obtained hers in the late 2000s thanks to Bolivian President Evo Morales' support (chapter VI) and Kirchnerismo's documentation campaigns (chapter III).

When speaking about her previous experience of working without papers, Gladys advances her negative views of Peruvians. Soon after she arrived in La Plata, a cousin found her a baby-sitting job at *La Salada*, an area of Lomas de Zamora (GBA) where Bolivians and a few Peruvians produce a wide range of imitation designer-brand garments, which are sold cheaply²⁰². Before speaking about her own exploitation, Gladys mentions, without much surprise, that of her compatriots, while emphasizing that the issue was widely publicized by the media some time ago:

"There are some who mistreat you. It was well known in the sewing [textile] sector there in La Salada; they found many [migrants] without documents, en negro, who were exploited; it appeared on the news... There were Bolivians who exploited other Bolivians, the same compatriots who brought them."

Only at this point does Gladys raise the subject of her own exploitation at the hands of Peruvians, who, like Bolivians, force undocumented employees to work day and night, while hiding them from public view. Employees are young women and men in their late teens and early twenties, who work from 07:00 to 21:00, and sometimes until midnight in order to finish the job, only having a one-hour break at noon. Gladys notes with disapproval the exploitative atmosphere:

"I worked for a month for Peruvians in La Salada, they were costureros [people who make clothes], I looked after their children and cooked for them while their employees [also Peruvian people] could not even go to the street without their boss... I didn't have problems because I did not get into their business... But it was terrible to see how they [employers] treated people [employees]... It was horrible to work under those conditions, non-stop all day long."

Gladys also emphasizes that her employer, a Peruvian woman, found it so much cheaper to hire undocumented migrants than Argentinians that she even brought some into the country herself—this comment echoes Edelina’s account of her female boss in the *feria* (chapter IV). Even if aware that economic exploitation and mistreatment are endemic in La Salada, with her compatriots both perpetrators and victims of such a labour regime, Gladys still focuses her resentment on what she considers the “low morals” of abusive Peruvians. People are forced to “pile up” in tiny rooms and work like slaves while some are harshly reprimanded for no good reason. Such was the case of a boy, who was scolded severely when attempting to leave his workplace for a moment.

Gladys’ negative views of La Salada, along with her sister’s insistence that she quit, led her to leave the job and move back to La Plata, where she soon found work in a *verdulería*. Her decision represented a safe and comforting shift from what she considered “Peruvian” exploitation and abuse to a familial and flexible atmosphere, while working at the *verdulería* of a female compatriot whom she found agreeable:

“When I was working at La Salada, I called my mom every week because I could not get used to it and I cried...In contrast, at the verdulería I ate whatever I wanted, went out when I wanted, I took vacations, I went to church, I visited my sister over the weekend...I could go in and out, I had no problem.”

In this chapter, I have examined migrants’ views and uses of the hegemonic ethnic hierarchy in force in the *partido* of La Plata, showing that the racial logic underpinning it is representative of the GBA. Migrants’ problematic operationalization of such a hierarchy in everyday social interaction tends to contrast with their theoretical mastery of its racial logic. Migrants’ re-elaboration of some sensationalist media discourse on “migrant crime” shows the extent to which their appropriation of such discourse differs according to the particular goals it endorses. Moreover, personal, situational and geographical factors influence migrants’ views and uses of the ethnic hierarchy in force, which impact social interaction among migrants, and between migrants and non-migrants. Although migrants agree on the devalued status of Bolivians in Argentina, some criticize it, along with Argentinians’ denigrating attitudes and exploitative treatment of these migrants.

CHAPTER VIII: Conclusion

Broadly speaking, my thesis examines the workings of grounded social, economic and political processes that have contributed, often in a conflicting manner, to the (re)definition of membership criteria in both the nation and the state. It does so in dialogue with two broad, interrelated bodies of literature, citizenship and transnationalism, which have examined issues of belonging, exclusion, mobility and access to rights among transnational migrants, while highlighting the renewed capacity of the state to regulate both people's movements and migrants' actual access to public entitlements. My research has been carried out at two distinctive analytical and empirical levels. First, I have examined the "technologies of citizenship" (Ong 2003, Fujiwara 2008) deployed by the government to transform Argentina into a diverse, inclusive and Latin American nation over the past decade, paying particular attention to Kirchnerismo's creation of a "new legality" for the Paraguayans, Bolivians and Peruvians in the country. Second, I have analyzed the "horizontal dimensions of citizenship processes" (Neveu 2005, Pickus and Skerry 2007, Gagné and Neveu 2009) among these migrants in urban, peripheral and rural areas of the *partido* of La Plata. Namely, I have examined the extent to which migrants' socio-economic circumstances have changed in tandem with their new legal status (as nationals of the MERCOSUR in Argentina with rights equal to those of its citizens) and the "inclusive citizenship" policies deployed by the government. In this final chapter, I return to the core questions of the thesis set out in Chapter I and its research contributions (Chapter II) in order to advance some conclusions.

As introduced in Chapter I, a central threefold question has guided my doctoral research: to what extent has the new legal equality granted to Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans in Argentina affected a) their actual access to entitlements, b) their informal social interaction with other migrant and non-migrants residents, and c) their valuation of official papers in the *partido* of La Plata over the past decade? By answering this question, my dissertation has not only challenged a number of positions that have research and policy agendas on migrant transnationalism and citizenship, but has also questioned the hegemonic analytical and methodological approaches underlying them, as discussed in Chapter II.

THE HEGEMONIC ROLE OF THE STATE

My thesis shows that, even if in dialogue with regional bodies and international conventions, the state continues to play a hegemonic role when it comes to regulating people's movements across its borders and within its territory. In South America, states have independently decided if and how to implement adopted international conventions on the protection of human rights as well as regional agreements seeking the free mobility and equal treatment of nationals of the newly created blocs (Recalde 2008-a, Novick 2010,). As I have shown in Chapter III, Argentina, together with Brazil, has led these developments by making substantial contributions to the advancement of regional integration. Kirchnerismo has played a decisive role in moving MERCOSUR away from its neoliberal, mercantile origins while advancing other strategic alliances in Latin America, such as UNASUR and TeleSur. Its commitment to deepen regional integration has been inseparable from its effort to "Latin Americanize" Argentina, which has involved confronting ingrained national myths claiming the exclusive European ancestry and character of the nation.

Insofar as Kirchnerismo's political project is representative of a "moment" in Latin America's geopolitics (Chapter III), public strategies to firmly anchor Argentina's past, present and future developments to the region show the extent to which migration politics and policies have been crucial to the current nationhood-(re)making projects of particular states in the region. This South American example also illustrates the extent to which the boundaries of the nation-state are not merely territorial but also a function of the state's discursive authority. When it comes to national identity, immigration constitutes a "focal point" or privileged site in, about and through which the form and content of national identity gets shaped (Croucher 1998), which I have illustrated through my analysis of Argentina's new migration law. Yet, it is not just official immigration policy that constructs the contours of the nation since the politics, rhetoric and discourse surrounding immigration play an equally important role (Croucher 1997), as I showed in my examination of Kirchnerismo's celebrations of the bicentenary of Argentina's independence and its adoption of a new law regulating the media (Chapter III).

LEGAL RIGHTS VERSUS THE EXPERIENCE OF RIGHTS

My dissertation questions legalistic approaches to citizenship by showing that formal legal entitlements are translated into quite different “experiences of rights” depending on: a) the social status attributed to diversely defined groups based on their standing in local shifting ethnic hierarchies; b) the geopolitics of place and the attendant regimes of governmentality that have evolved in diverse settings along with the settlement of diverse ethnic and social class groups, which change over time and across space; and c) migrants’ embodied (gender, age, phenotype, etc.) and acquired (social class, ethnicity, etc.) characteristics and their access to networks of trust spanning across multiple countries, which are permeated by uneven distributions of power along lines of gender, age and status.

Membership in the Nation: Limitrofes Moving Up and Closer to Platenses

As the ethnographic chapters (IV to VII) demonstrate, migrants’ experiences of formal membership in the body politic, that is, their actual exercise of citizenship in the *partido*, varies substantially depending on their group’s relative positioning in the national moral order, which establishes the degrees of deserving and undeserving citizenship according to a wide range of non-legal factors, including racial classificatory systems (Ong 2004-a, 2004-b). While membership in the state is decided constitutionally through (exclusionary) citizenship policies (Shafir 2004, Howard 2006, Morris 2002), membership in the nation entails a much more complicated configuration of “us” and “them” (Gregory 2004, 2007). In this regard, national identity is defined and maintained in opposition or contradiction to some other group that, at best, becomes temporary outsider or, at worst, deeply despised enemy (Croucher 1998, Barth 1969). The extent to which this identity politics is a dynamic, historically situated process becomes apparent in the displacement of this “space of otherness” in the Argentinean national imaginary from the *limitrofes* during the 1990s to the so-called *chinos* and *pibes chorros* in the following decade.

As I demonstrated in chapter IV, the negative connotations attributed to the behaviours and alleged values considered “Chinese” by Platenses, notably in urban areas of the *partido*, have altered the city’s ethnic hierarchy, against which migrant groups in general are measured (Recalde 2006-a). This reformulation has led to a substantial improvement in the overall social

standing of Bolivians, Peruvians and Paraguayans in the course of the 2000s. *Limitrofes* have been repositioned *higher* in this ethnic hierarchy given their status vis-à-vis that of Chinese, who, by virtue of their standing at the bottom of the scale, have pushed *limitrofes* up. At the same time, given Platenses' revision of their own ethnic loyalties and ancestry (seemingly more and more anchored in South America), *limitrofes* have also been repositioned *closer* to Platenses because they are Latin American and not Asian. It is still early to evaluate the extent to which Kirchnerismo's strategies to Latin Americanize Argentina have contributed to this shift, and, if so, what their effect will be in the long run. It also remains to be seen how the more recent arrival of African migrants in La Plata will alter the hegemonic ethnic hierarchy of the *partido* (chapter IV).

What is clear by now, however, is that Chinese migrants have challenged one of Argentina's foundational myths over the past two decades, whereas *limitrofes* have not. This helps explain the shifting locations of these groups in La Plata's ethnic hierarchy. Namely, the solid economic and ethnic presence that Chinese migrants have established in the *partido* (and the GBA), in a relatively short period of time, transgresses a deeply rooted assimilationist mandate (Recalde 2006-a) in two important ways. First, their development of prosperous mini-markets and restaurants contradicts the notion that (ethnic or social) groups considered "inferior" or "undeserving" must occupy labour niches according to their "low" social status. Second, Chinese migrants' continuous use of their own language/s in everyday social interaction goes against the linguistic mandate establishing that migrants must promptly adopt Argentinean Spanish as their own language. The resentment expressed by Platenses at this double transgression is evident in their explanations of why they dislike these migrants in 2010 (see Chapter IV). Previous fieldwork I conducted in La Plata indicates that in the late 1990s, when Chinese migrants were developing then small businesses and their linguistic and ethnic visibility was less conspicuous, Platenses did not express as much contempt for them. So, it seems that the more pronounced the transgression, the stronger the rejection of the group and the behaviours and values incarnating it.

Limitrofes, in contrast, have largely remained in low status labour niches that have been considered in line with their "devalued" standing in the nation's social imaginary (Recalde 2006-a). This has been the case despite Kirchnerismo's strategies to create a more

favourable view of these groups while improving the work conditions and rights of the economic niches that they occupy (Chapter III). In urban areas of La Plata (and in those of Buenos Aires city and the GBA), Peruvian, Paraguayan and Bolivian men have continued to be concentrated in the construction sector, whereas Peruvian and Paraguayan women have been so in domestic employment. Bolivian women, for their part, have specialized in the commercialization of fruits and vegetables (chapter I). Bolivian men and women in rural areas of the *partido* have come to be the main horticultural producers there, as well as in the rest of the country (Chapter VI). The extent to which *limitrofes* have remained (symbolically and materially) “in their place” becomes apparent in the naturalization of their contributions to society by Platenses (and by Porteños and Argentinians from the GBA), who have come to identify Peruvians, Paraguayans and Bolivians with the jobs that they have historically performed. Those whose economic success has transgressed the boundaries established by the *partido*'s hegemonic ethnic hierarchy have not experienced a concomitant rise up the social ladder, as the example of the few Cochabambinos who became well-off during the 1990s, demonstrates (Chapters IV and VI). Moreover, *limitrofes*' use of a language other than Argentinean Spanish, or even of an accent or idioms other than those used locally, has been resented by Platenses, as my 2010 and previous fieldwork in the city showed. Migrants have been ridiculed and stigmatized due to their *cantito* (accent) and use of idiomatic expressions that are not strictly Platense, or for not knowing Spanish (Recalde 2006-a). Many have also mentioned feeling insecure in La Plata about the way they talk or that they are incapable of speaking Spanish properly, when this language is, in fact, their mother tongue.

Over the past decade, discourse on so-called “insecurity” emerged and consolidated, powerfully impacting the perceptions and behaviour of migrants and non-migrants in Argentina. Integral to this process has been the powerful social figure of the *pibe chorro*: young, poor Argentinean men, mostly minors, allegedly under the influence of drugs. The *pibe chorro* has come to incarnate the fear of being robbed at any time in the GBA and Buenos Aires province in particular, where the profitable (in)security industry has flourished (Chapter IV). The *pibe chorro* has also come to be considered the exemplary member of the most disadvantaged social groups (formerly called *negros*, *cabecitas negras* and *villeros*) while capturing the feeling of insecurity that closely associates uncertainty, criminality and a well-

delimited (racialized) social group. As a result, the *pibe chorro* has come to replace the *limitrofe ilegal* as the prevalent stigmatized social figure catalyzing the social, economic and political tensions of the decade. This shift has significantly benefited Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans in Argentina, who have become much less the target of stigmatizing attitudes and marginalizing behaviour.

Those living in La Plata have embraced this displacement, often echoing the prejudiced views endorsed by sensationalist media and some political discourse—as happened during the 1990s, when the government criminalized the most recently arrived *limitrofes* (Recalde 2006-a). This appropriation has brought about an important shift in the social representations of migrants. For those in urban and peripheral areas of the *partido*, the *pibe chorro*, with all the connotations that the term connotes, has come to replace the police, whose agents personified frightening reality for migrants in La Plata (and the GBA) during the 1990s (and early 2000s). In rural areas, corrupt policemen continue to represent an abusive, fearful force that *quinteros* encounter in neighbouring urban areas, with the *pibe chorro* in second place as the personification of danger.

Zones of Graduated Sovereignty and Variegated Systems of Rights in the Partido

Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans' actual experiences of their new legal status in the *partido* have also depended on whether they have lived and worked in urban, peripheral or rural areas. This has been the case because “zones of graduated sovereignty” (Ong 1999), which vary in terms of the mix of disciplinary and value regimes and often contain ethnically marked groupings, have evolved in these three settings, leading to the emergence of “systems of variegated citizenship” (Ong 1999, 2006), in which populations enjoy different kinds of rights, discipline, caring and security. Migrants living in urban areas of the *partido* have been the ones accessing most of their new rights and state protection, whereas those in its rural areas have been the ones enjoying them the least. This situation has resulted from the concentration of public services and regulatory efforts in La Plata city and a few nearby urban localities. The uneven distribution and quality of public services in the domains of education, health care, recreation and transportation have continued to prevail in the *partido*. This tendency has only been reinforced by the fact that most of the newly developed services have

been situated in a handful of urban localities. Likewise, the institutions where most official procedures are completed, ranging from processing public subsidies to obtaining legal documents, are still exclusively located in La Plata city. Under these circumstances, geographical proximity has become a determinant of migrants' access to public entitlements, given the implications in terms of cost and time. While those in peripheral areas have waited in vain to get the most basic public services, such as electricity, running water and sewage systems (Chapter V), migrants in rural areas have lived without even the expectation of such. The processing of new public entitlements (such as subsidies for low income families) in La Plata city has disadvantaged migrants in rural areas the most (Chapter VI). The active documentation campaigns of the 2000s, including the Patria Grande program, have likewise most benefited migrants who live and/or work in urban areas, where public efforts have been concentrated.

Official strategies to secure workers' rights (through work regularization campaigns), to adapt national and provincial programs to local needs, and to decrease the "deficiencies" of state institutions (from fighting against police corruption to improving the delivery of public services) have also been concentrated in La Plata city and a few other nearby urban localities. Migrants with urban jobs have been the ones benefiting the most from work-related public initiatives, whereas those with rural occupations (*quinteros*) have only obtained the technical assistance of an agronomist. However, these initiatives have had unequal results as regards improving working conditions and advancing the rights of migrants with urban employment. Kirchnerismo's fight against informal and precarious work, in particular, while benefiting most migrant men working in construction and promoting the hiring *en blanco* of Peruvian and Paraguayan women doing domestic work, has been rather disadvantageous for Bolivian women. This campaign's focus on the construction and textile sectors, along with its incipient interest in domestic work, has led to the deployment of blanket strategies that did not take into account the gendering and ethnicization of the labour niches occupied by migrants in La Plata (Chapter IV). Migrants in urban areas have benefited the most from the important changes introduced to the functioning and rules of some state institutions, such as the police, ministries and secretariats. As the ethnographic chapters show, the territoriality of police corruption and abuse dramatically changes from urban to rural areas, being particularly resilient in urban

localities near Las Quintas and disadvantaged peripheries of the *partido* and the GBA. The racial profiling of migrants (relying on their “*cara de paisano*”) and police abuse of their alleged complacent attitude have not changed from the 1990s in these areas, and have come to be complemented “xenophobic” crime perpetrated by *pibes chorros*’ during the 2000s.

The interplay between the availability, quality, and delivery of public services in the *partido* under Kirchnerismo’s inclusive federalism (Chapter III) has shaped the markets for housing, employment and educational credentials, as well as the distribution of basic goods and services. Thus, state structures and policies play a decisive role in the differential stitching together of inequalities of class, place and origin whether ethnoracial or ethnonational (Wacquant 2008). The attendant “degrees and forms of state penetration” (Wacquant 2008) in different areas of the *partido* have framed not only informal social interaction between migrant and non-migrant residents, but also the changing and often contradictory relations that migrants maintain with different public officers and agencies, such as schools and hospitals, entities processing public entitlements and official documents, the courts and the police. As I have examined in Chapter V, migrants’ past encounters with a wide range of public servants has informed their representation of the Argentinean state, which has shaped the strategies that migrants deploy to access their rights (such as the *usucapión* that establishes that a person can take possession of abandoned land or buildings) in peripheries of the *partido* or when making claims to obtain the most basic public services (Chapter V).

State governance by absence and neglect, the effects of which I have examined in the peripheries of La Plata and the GBA (Chapter V), is most extreme in the *partido*’s rural areas, such as Las Quintas, where the state has removed itself completely from its service-providing obligations and role as guarantor of public security (Chapter VI). The interplay between this governmentality regime and the particular ethnic and social class mix of each geographical setting has led to distinctive experiences of rights and (in)security among migrants. In Las Quintas, the isolation of horticulturalists’ neighbourhoods has transformed these (re)productive areas into safety zones away from two major dangers, the police and the *pibes chorros*, whom migrants often meet while doing their shopping in neighbouring urban areas of Etcheverry and Olmos. In peripheries such as Villa Elvira, Los Hornos and San Lorenzo (as in others of the GBA), by contrast, these fearful forces are integral to the daily experiences of

migrants. Most often, *villeros* and *pibes chorros* live side by side with migrants, while police incursions into their neighbourhoods or nearby areas happen frequently. Despite the more disadvantageous economic circumstances of *quinteros*, their manoeuvring power is greater than that of migrants in peripheries when it comes to exercising some control over these sources of insecurity. Horticulturalists minimize danger by rarely leaving their neighbourhoods, which is not feasible under the territoriality of police abuse and *pibes chorros*' crime in the peripheries. In both cases, however, migrants note that they are easy prey for these abusive social actors due to their *cara de paisano* or *cara mestizo* and general "dark" complexion.

Two types of circumstances are the most problematic and dangerous for migrants living in disadvantaged peripheries. On one hand, when some residents, often a minority in the neighbourhood, are engaged in the sex and drug trades, their nightly, clandestine activities perturb in important ways the social reproduction of households, whose members work and study during the day. Ironically, while most residents do not benefit from the financial gains of this minority, they are still forced to cope with the most pernicious side effects of illicit activities, such as witnessing or experiencing the violence that accompanies drug and sex transactions, being unable to sleep at night due to the noisy and abusive climate that is generated, and finding their surroundings polluted by a range of party leftovers (Chapter V). On the other hand, when migrants inhabit *pensiones* in marginalized areas, xenophobic and sometimes violent inter-ethnic crime hinders their normal routines, and combines with the racial profiling and abuse by corrupt policemen and *pibes chorros* in nearby areas. While in some cases, migrants manage to physically and/or psychologically isolate themselves from their challenging circumstances, in others they cannot and, consequently, live in great distress.

The safety of *pensiones* varies greatly, however, depending on the periphery (or the urban area), even if their multi-ethnic (migrant) composition prevails regardless of their location. Moreover, even under similarly precarious and perilous conditions, the relationships developed among migrants, and between migrant and non-migrant residents, differ greatly, as do the strategies that residents deploy individually or collectively to deal with contentious situations and general material deprivation. The heterogeneity of La Plata and the GBA's peripheries is apparent on several levels: physical (material circumstances and environment),

social (by class and ethnicity, but also according to social interaction) and political (state governmentality). This highlights the importance of using the plural when referring to such areas—an issue that Wacquant (2008) also raises when examining the French *banlieues*, which he contrasts with the homogeneity of the American hyperghetto

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Experiencing Difference while Participating in Reciprocity Transnational Networks

The ethnographic chapters show the extent to which citizenship constitutes a contested field of power relations and practices, where struggles over access to employment and other rights and goods are conducted between state authorities and the heterogeneous populations under their control (Gregory 2007). Through citizenship practices, along with their enabling discourse, norms and documents, differences tied to race, class, gender and national origin are embodied and articulated into a complex system of exclusions that is the social foundation of the division of labour (Gregory 2004). Moreover, since everyday behaviour and thinking define norms of belonging, which operate as informal modes of inclusion and exclusion, formal legal citizenship does not erase the enduring exclusions of the colour lines that often deny full citizenship to migrants and racial minorities (Rosaldo 1994, 1997). Under these circumstances, social status becomes a defining characteristic of citizenship, which is produced through everyday social interaction by transposing socially constructed distinctions into a formal (legal) system of exclusions (Morris 2002, Gregory 2007). The new legal status granted to *limitrofes* by Kirchnerismo, far from being evenly guaranteed to all in the *partido* of La Plata, has been differently enforced in its urban, peripheral and rural areas (as I have argued in the previous section) and unequally experienced by different categories of migrants.

The case studies that I have examined portray the socio-economic trajectories of various migrant households, whose members are spread over a number of countries. These cases highlight the agency of individual migrants and the extent to which, through their personal yet often family-informed decisions and actions, migrants both transgress and reinforce the residential and work patterns established by their ethnic groups over the decades. These cases also illustrate the commonality and uniqueness of migrants' experiences of "legality" in different areas of the *partido* during the 2000s. *Marginalidad* (marginality),

social discrimination and economic exploitation, along the *sufrimiento* (suffering) that they entail have framed the particular trajectories of migrant men and women in La Plata. In most cases, these shared experiences, emerging out of their perceived mestizo or aboriginal appearance and demeanour by Platenses (and other Argentinians), have generated a sense of commonality, even a certain empathy, among otherwise diverse migrants. A number of individual characteristics, both embodied (such as sex and age) and acquired (including social class and ethnic allegiances), along with migrants' idiosyncrasies, have contributed to the diversification of their exercise of new entitlements. Strictly legal factors, such as migrants' nationality or their (citizenship) status in Argentina, for their part, have not had a "homogenizing" effect on migrants' access to their rights—even when many mention that upon the birth of an Argentinean child the processing of both their own residency papers and a number of child-related subsidies (including the *Asignación Universal por Hijo*) was accelerated.

My interest in the gendering of practices and processes becomes an analytical thread that traverses all ethnographic chapters, and shows the extent to which migrants' gender intersects with their age, ethnicity and time of arrival in Argentina, under the *partido's* racial classificatory logic, to affect their experiences of formal (legal) equality vis-à-vis Argentinians. The cases I have examined demonstrate that the envisioning and implementation of the migration project are gendered processes, whose rationale and motivations differ between men and women. Men often emphasize the economic reasons that lead them to seek better prospects in Argentina; i.e., shrinking (personal) employment opportunities or the deterioration of economic conditions rendering their occupations unproductive in their countries of origin. Women, in contrast, emphasize the hardships experienced by close relatives, including social marginalization and discrimination due to lack of economic means, as the main reasons leading them to migrate. The actual implementation of the migration project also tends to differ between women and men, who tend to travel separately and draw on gendered transnational social networks of compatriots and relatives in order to access a panoply of resources, through which they make travel, accommodation and employment arrangements. Even if Bolivian households have traditionally migrated together to Argentina, this pattern has been changing in recent decades in tandem with the increasing feminization of

South American migrations to the country (Cerrutti 2009, Pacecca and Courtis 2008, Texidó 2008).

The cases analyzed also show the extent to which the labour niches that migrants occupy in La Plata are strongly gendered and ethnicized. Some urban economic sectors have experienced marked changes in terms of ownership, hiring practices, labour regimes and composition of the labour force over the past two decades. The *ferias* and mini-markets, for example, have come to be run by Cochabambina women and Chinese men respectively, who, having replaced Argentinians, preferentially hire Bolivian women. In other cases, however, the marked ethnicization and gendering of some economic niches' labour force have not been accompanied by a transfer in ethnic ownership or control. Such has been the case of construction and domestic and care work, whose labour force is almost exclusively migrant, whereas employers continue to be Argentinians. As a result, Peruvian, Bolivian and Paraguayan men are considered to be “the” construction workers in La Plata (and the GBA), while Peruvian and Bolivian women are seen as “the” domestic and care workers. Likewise, *ferias* and mini-markets have become exclusively *bolivianas* and *chinos* respectively. However, in rural areas, the “Bolivianization” (Benencia 1997, 2003, 2006, 2008), or rather “Tarijeñization” according to my research participants, of horticulture (in Las Quintas) and flower production (in Los Porteños) has not brought about the marked gendering seen in urban labour niches, since these occupations are jointly performed by men and women. Horticulture continues to predominantly be a familial, small-scale productive activity whereas flower production has become a larger business, whose ethnic ownership has diversified along with the homogenization of its labour force (see Chapter IV).

As I noted in the previous section, the interplay between the gendering and ethnicization of urban economic niches occupied by migrants and the gender-blind regularization campaigns deployed by the government have brought about disparate consequences for migrant women and men. In some of these niches, migrants' recent arrival, along with their lack of papers and ignorance of local legal norms and social conventions, has been capitalized on by abusive employers, who perceive new migrants' as “docile” in character. Such has been the case in both “feminine” (*ferias*, domestic and care work) and “masculine” (construction) economic sectors, where novices are disciplined into the

workplace rules through a silent pedagogy (Samudra 2008) that involves learning by imitation—except for the *empleadas domésticas* and in-house caregivers, who work alone. When migrants’ youth combines with these exploitative circumstances, their vulnerability further increases.

Migrant women and men’s accounts of their family’s socio-economic trajectory in urban and peripheral areas of La Plata also differ, which often reflects the gendering of their concerns. While men’s narratives focus on the “successful” aspects of their economic careers, women overtly speak about the marginalization and exploitation they have endured. Men either minimize or avoid talking about the emotional considerations and financial hardships inherent in the migration process, whereas women bring to the forefront the costly implications that migration has brought about for themselves and the relatives left behind. Women’s accounts often detail migrants’ initial “suffering in solitude” in urban areas, as they put it, which they perceive as being the result of their lack of access to local networks of trust (*confianza*) in combination with financial hardship, economic exploitation and denigrating treatment (*marginalidad*). By overcoming their initial struggles, however, women experience an important personal transformation, which they describe as a process of learning and growth leading to increased autonomy and financial independence. Only two migrant men expressed going through such a process: the Peruvian, Lucas, who works as an in-house caregiver of the elderly and sick and the Paraguayan, Richard, who does domestic work. Their transgression of traditionally gendered occupations has been coupled with an attendant feminization of their narratives.

In rural areas, in contrast, women do not seem to experience this sort of transformative process for at least two important reasons. First, Tarijeño households tend to migrate together to Las Quintas, where they often join relatives or close *paisanos* (compatriots). Even if this type of migration does not remove all emotional costs involved in leaving “home” (Al-Ali and Koser 2002), it does significantly reduce the feelings of isolation, solitude and marginalization experienced by women who migrate by themselves to urban and peripheral areas of the *partido*. Second, Tarijeño women work side by side with men in horticulture, so they do not acquire the financial independence or experience the increased autonomy often noted by women performing remunerated work in urban areas.

The questioning of the traditional division of gendered household roles by women in urban and peripheral areas tends to be rather temporary. As the leaders of their family's subsequent migration to Argentina, Peruvian and Paraguayan women acquire new financial obligations while still fulfilling, albeit transnationally, their former caring roles. They become their family's breadwinners, both locally and transnationally, and continue to play such a role even after their spouses have joined them in La Plata. Yet, women gradually go back to their former domestic obligations, while decreasing the amount of remunerated work that they do, as men's ability to earn a steady and somewhat substantial income increases and dependants arrive from the home country, mostly young children. In some cases, busy couples "invite" an unemployed female relative to join them and to take on the domestic responsibilities of the mother, which allows her to continue pursuing remunerated employment. Even when domestic roles revert to pre-migration arrangements, women in urban and peripheral areas try to keep some financial independence, however limited it may be.

Migrants' views of the government and its policies, and of Argentina, more generally, also differ from women to men. Most men strongly criticize what they consider the "negative" consequences of Kirchnerismo's inclusive citizenship policies (see chapter III), even when they or their relatives have benefited from government-funded training and a range of low-income family subsidies. Men claim that the government has been creating a *cultura de vagos* ("culture of idlers") among the *villeros* that fosters their transformation into *pibes chorros*, which they tend to contrast with both their own hard-work ethic and the "firm" public policies implemented in their countries of origin. In order to reverse this situation, they argue, the government should cut public subsidies and most social programs while reintroducing compulsory military service. Women, in contrast, view their family's access to public education and health care, along with other public entitlements guaranteed by Kirchnerismo, as invaluable new opportunities offered to them all. Women express being grateful to Argentina for the things the country has given to their families as well as for their own personal growth. Although men also consider Argentina a "generous" country, it is women who more often emphasize that none of the rights that they enjoy at present exists back home.

Migrants' experiences of their new legal status in La Plata have also been mediated by their participation in transnational social networks of kin and (ethnic) compatriots, which are

reproduced according to trust (*confianza*) and an ethic of care while being marked by gendered differences in power and internal rankings of status and class. Through these networks, migrants have been able to move to Argentina, and find initial accommodation and employment in La Plata, the GBA or Buenos Aires. The cases I have examined show the extent to which relatives and close friends are invaluable resources to help overcome the emotional, social and financial cost of their migration. These networks not only give migrants support in developing and carrying out their migration project, but they also continue to do so after migrants arrive in Argentina, in the form of emotional support and caring for dependants, property or a business left behind. Certainly, networks also demand from migrants various forms of material, symbolic and emotional compensation since they work through reciprocity. Exchanges do not take place exclusively between the people engaged in an initial “transaction” (favours, gifts, loans, moral support, services, etc.), but also include close and distant relatives and their friends, who might become the ones to be rewarded instead (see Cohen 2011 on this question). Members of these networks of care and trust are located in diverse destinations that tend to be spread over several countries in North America, South America and Europe.

Once they arrive in the host country, migrants draw on these networks to find new sources of employment and accommodation, to learn about how to complete official procedures or whom to contact (locally or abroad) in case of emotional, social or financial need, or when seeking to move to a new destination (in Argentina or abroad), mostly through “invitations”. As the case of César’s shop illustrates, through social networks migrants can access social spaces where they experience the comforting feeling of “being at home while abroad” (Chapter IV). Yet, networks can also pose obstacles for migrants who transgress well-established residential and labour ethnic patterns, as Sandro and Edelina’s launching of a *verdulería* shows (Chapter IV). The case of this Tarijeño couple also demonstrates the extent to which networks of compatriots are strongly ethnicized social fields, traversed by marked differences in socio-economic status (Glick Schiller 2004) that not only support migration but also function to prevent the geographical, social and economic mobility of compatriots in the *partido*. Depending on networks can also become problematic for migrants when they presume a certain shared ethic that others do not actually share, as Yolanda’s initial painful

experience when sharing an apartment with compatriots illustrates (Chapter IV). Migrants also belong to social networks which are not ethnically based, such as churches, whose ethnic membership tends to be quite diversified, including migrants and non-migrants. As Ana and Leo's participation in a Christian network around a prison congregation shows, faith-based networks can become essential for the emotional, social and economic survival of migrant families going through difficult times (Chapter V). Many of those who have become active members of churches, which are mostly Evangelical, note that religious congregations are the only social space in Argentina where they feel treated as equals by migrants and non-migrants, while benefitting a wealth of resources (see Steigenga and Cleary eds. 2007, and Levitt 2008 on these issues).

Migrants' Value of their New "Legality" in the Partido of La Plata

My fieldwork shows that migrants' views of their new legal status in Argentina during the 2000s, or of having their residence papers in order, vary depending on their actual exercise of citizenship practices (Gregory 2004, 2007; Gagné and Neveu 2009). The more rights migrants can access while fulfilling their civic obligations and enjoying somewhat convivial informal social interaction with migrant and non-migrant residents, the more they consider it important to be "legal", that is, to have their *precaria* or residency papers. This becomes most apparent in La Plata's urban areas, where the governmentality regime deployed by the state has not only granted residents the most benefits (in terms of public services and state protection), but also subjected them to the highest control (in terms of work and documentation regularization campaigns, for example). At the other end of the spectrum, migrants in rural areas do not see the difference between having their Argentinean papers or not, since their access to public entitlements, including state protection, has been practically non-existent. *Quinteros* tend to be rather perplexed about the dissonance between official promises and their non-fulfilment by the government. Those living in peripheries of the *partido* are in an in-between situation since they have been subject to a governmentality regime of neglect and absence in their neighbourhoods, similar to that of rural areas, yet, they have also exercised some of their new public entitlements given the close state scrutiny they experience working in urban localities.

INDIVIDUAL DECISIONS, HOUSEHOLD STRATEGIES AND KINSHIP OBLIGATIONS

The analysis of the ethnographic cases I have presented in the thesis demonstrates that transnational migrations do not exclusively respond to economically calculated reasoning, but are rather guided by complex decision-making processes integral to household strategies. Decisions to migrate are always gendered and are related to the positioning of different individuals in their household's reproductive cycle and power hierarchies at particular moments. Migration decisions often result from negotiations taking place within extended kinship networks and that are always framed by shifting economic, political and social circumstances, affecting the contrasting of prospects available at home and "somewhere else". "Better" prospects are not merely defined in economic terms, but rather, in varying combinations of social and environmental safety, civil and political freedoms, gender role expectations, access to a variety of public entitlements (notably education and health care) and upper social mobility opportunities (Merla and Baldassar 2010, Cohen 2011). The balance of migrants' evaluations of such bundles of prospects changes over time, yet it always involves considerations going beyond merely economic or individual factors. Migrants have not left Argentina in an exodus each time that its economy has markedly deteriorated, not even during the last financial crisis (Pacecca and Curtis 2008, Texidó 2008, Cerrutti 2009). In fact, their economic situation (in this country) tends to be characterized by rather long periods of financial hardship that migrants often balance out with a number of other rights that their families enjoy, and which they cannot even dream of in their countries of origin. Some migrants note that relatives live better and longer, and that parents can secure good prospects for their children (through their universal access to public health care and education); others emphasize the invaluable opportunity to acquire their own homes (through the *usucapión* or *planes de vivienda*), while others mention their increased autonomy and independence (mostly women and youth). Moreover, even in households that have done well economically, some of its members decide to return home for a number of non-pecuniary reasons, such as kinship obligations (having to care for elderly parents), nostalgia (longing to enjoy old age back home, often without having to work thanks to an Argentinean pension) or unbearable marginalization (often among children being bullied at school). While in some cases, people migrate to leave kinship obligations or gendered duties behind, in others, migrants feel obliged to remain in

Argentina, even when they yearn to return, to fulfil such obligations (see Merla and Baldassar 2010, Merla 2010 and Baldassar 2010 on these issues).

QUESTIONING HEGEMONIC APPROACHES: SOUTH AMERICAN MIGRATIONS TO ARGENTINA

My dissertation also contributes to the decentring of the hegemonic geopolitics that have shaped research and policy agendas in the scholarship on migrant transnationalism and citizenship. This literature's predominant focus on the Euro-Atlantic arena has brought about two particularly problematic issues. First, it has considered English-speaking settler societies and Western Europe as the destinations "par excellence" of transnational migrants, while assuming that an almost exclusive South-North dynamic propels these migrations. This assumption has not only permeated current literature on the "transnationalization or privatization of social reproduction" (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001, Parreñas 2001, Ehrenreich and Russell Hochschild 2002, Russell Hochschild 2002, Maher 2004, Herrera Mosquera 2008, Arat-Koç and Giles 1996) supporting the "social organization of care" (Glenn 2010), but has also guided research on the political economy of migrations from "poor" to "rich" countries more generally (Sassen 1998). My study of Peruvian, Paraguayan and Bolivian migrations to Argentina challenges this claim by illustrating the increasing centrality of intra-regional or so-called "South-South" migrations in Latin America (see also Ratha and Shaw 2007, Hujo and Piper eds. 2010, Goldade 2008, Gardner 2010). The International Organization for Migration (IOM) indicates that intra-regional migrations in South America are increasing, along with a concomitant decrease in the emigration of South Americans to European countries and the United States (Carmo 2012). Argentina continues to be not only the country that attracts the most migrants in the region, but also the benchmark for migrations in the Southern Cone (Texidó 2008). In this regard, my dissertation also shows the extent to which a "Southern country" such as Argentina can be at the same time an immigration and emigration state that plays diverse roles in the mobility trajectory of migrants, ranging from the desired "final" destination to a transitional one permitting those on the move to get the papers or the necessary capital to migrate to the next one; e.g., many Peruvians, Bolivians and Peruvians in the country, who see their Argentinean DNI as opening the door to European destinations, most often Spain.

Second, dominant paradigms (Glick Schiller 2004) in the scholarship on migrant transnationalism and citizenship, produced in the “Global North”, have often neglected the prolific work of scholars from the “Global South”, which has led to the use of diverse combinations of Euro-American value systems as “universals” when designing research (and policy) despite the diversity of the groups concerned and their geographical locations. My thesis draws on local and regional scholarship and is based on extended fieldwork in Argentina, undertaken in a serious attempt to further question my own disciplinary and scholarly geopolitical assumptions. As I have noted, however, “ethnographic truths” remain inherently partial and made possible by powerful “lies” of exclusion and rhetoric since power and history work through them, in ways their authors cannot fully control (Clifford 1986).

My dissertation makes apparent that the nation-state continues to play a central role when it comes to regulating peoples’ movements across its borders and within its territory as well as migrants’ access to entitlements. Its legitimacy and authority to do so have continued to prevail over other political entities, even if the powers of the state have been renegotiated in the context of regional integration initiatives and global economic and political processes. My analysis of Kirchnerismo’s policies has sought to bring to the fore the tension between somewhat neat official discourse and policy design, and its conflicting implementation along with the unexpected results that it brings about (see also Crewe and Harrison 1998). What I have examined in chapter III is the governmentality regime deployed by Kirchnerismo to govern different populations in the state’s territory (Foucault 1975, 1978) in an effort to shape the nation’s social imaginary according to its political project. Providing evidence for this tension, other than the implementation of the new migration law and migrants’ actual experiences of their new entitlements in the *partido* of La Plata, has proved difficult. In this regard, Argentinean colleagues note that up to the present most academic analyses of Kirchnerismo’ policies have been rather politicised, that is, pro or against (black or white), and based on rhetoric and isolated data. Scholars also indicate that solid empirical studies take time to be completed and are often published several years after a government has left office, which explains that up to 2006, the literature focused on the effects of the 1990s model, and

only in 2010, did it begin to examine Néstor Kirchner's policies (Argentinean anthropologist Pablo Rodríguez, personal communication).

I have also tried to show that migrants' exercise of their new public entitlements is never merely an issue of legal status. In the contrary, migrants' experiences of their new formal equality are constructed in daily social interaction, and depend of four sets of factors: a) the groups' (shifting) standing in the hierarchical national moral order (Ong 2004), b) the zones of graduated sovereignty (Ong 1999) evolving in different geographical areas, c) the embodiment of difference (Morris 2002), and d) migrants' belonging to transnational social networks permeated by power inequalities and differences of gender and social class (Glick Schiller 2004). Membership in the state and the nation has always been permeated by conflictive negotiation and exclusionary measures (Shafir 2004, Howard 2006, Morris 2002, Gregory 2007). Finally, my thesis emphasizes that in order to properly understand migrants' citizenship practices (Gregory 2004, 2007; Gagné and Neveu 2009), they have to be situated not only locally, but also in the context of national and regional politics.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Maps



Fig. 2: Political map of Argentina.

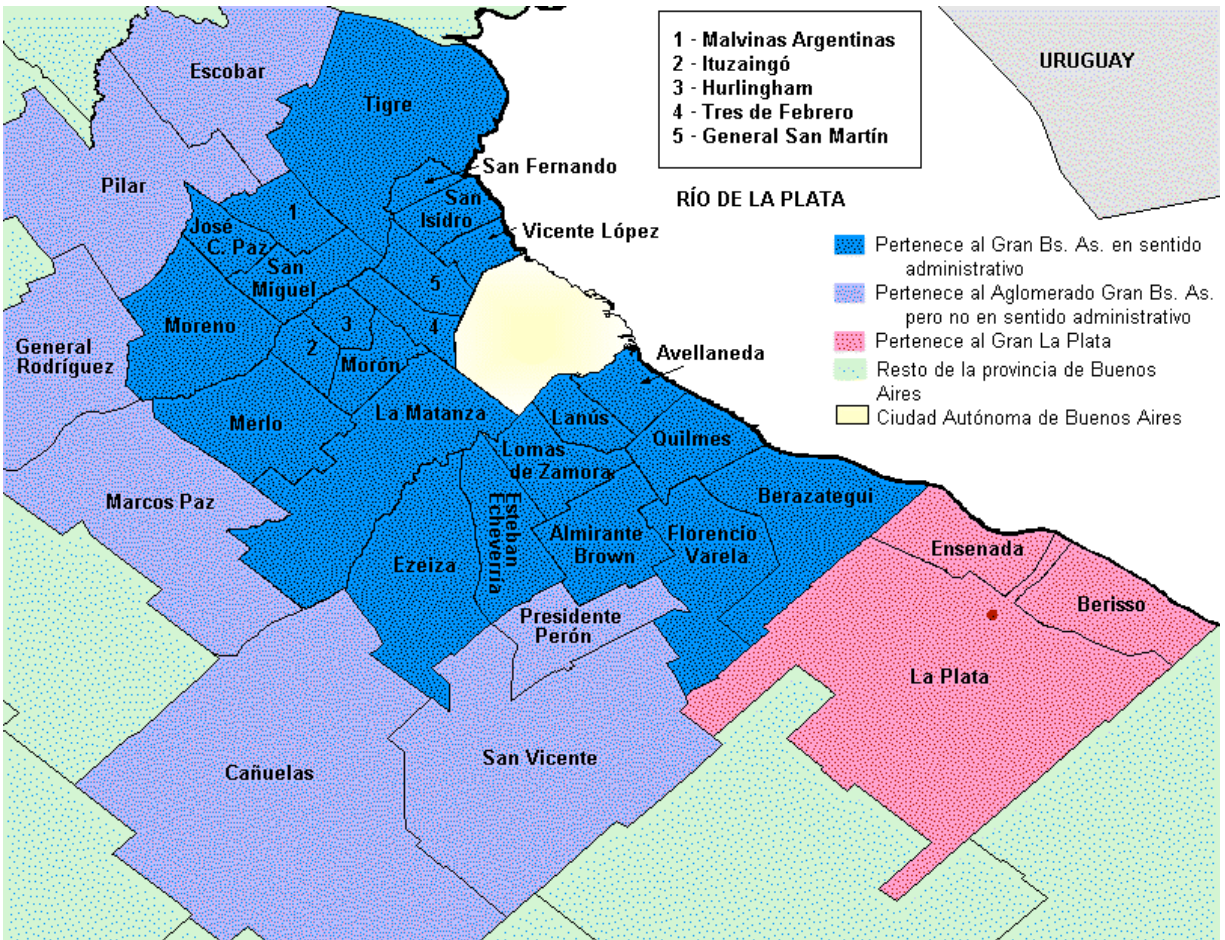


Fig. 3: Political map of the *Gran Buenos Aires (GBA) or conurbano bonaerense.*
 The GBA is composed of 24 *partidos*, with a total land area of 3, 680 km², and has a population of 9,916,715 inhabitants that accounts for 63.46% of the provincial total.
 The ***Gran La Plata Aglomerado Urbano*** is composed of the *partidos* of La Plata, Berisso and Ensenada.



Fig.4: Map of the *Partido de La Plata*.

The *partido* of La Plata is often considered part of the GBA due to geographical proximity and for demographic reasons, even if, from an administrative point of view, it belongs to the *interior* of Buenos Aires province. The *partido* has a land area of 942.23 km² and comprises its *casco urbano* or capital, La Plata city, and 17 *centros comunales* or localities with urban, peripheral and rural characteristics (*Abasto, Arturo Seguí, City Bell, Etcheverry, El Peligro, Gonnert, Gorina, Hernández, Lisandro Olmos, Los Hornos, Melchor Romero, Ringuelet, San Carlos, San Lorenzo, Tolosa, Villa Elisa y Villa Elvira*). According to the 2010 Census, the *partido* has 654,324 inhabitants and one third of them live in its capital. Situated 56 km south of Buenos Aires city, La Plata city is also the capital of Buenos province

Appendix B: Tables

Cuadro P3. Total del país. Población total, superficie y densidad por provincia o jurisdicción. Años 2001-2010

Provincia / Jurisdicción	Superficie en km ²	Año			
		2001		2010	
		Población total	Densidad hab/km ²	Población total	Densidad hab/km ²
Total del país	3.745.997⁽¹⁾	36 260 130	9,7	40 117 096	10,7⁽²⁾
Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires	200	2 776 138	13 880,7	2 890 151	14 450,8
Buenos Aires	307 571	13 827 203	45,0	15 625 084	50,8
24 partidos del Gran Buenos Aires	3 680	8 684 437	2 359,9	9 916 715	2 694,8
Interior de la provincia de Buenos Aires	303 891	5 142 766	16,9	5 708 369	18,8
Catamarca	102 602	334 568	3,3	367 828	3,6
Chaco	99 633	984 446	9,9	1 055 259	10,6
Chubut	224 686	413 237	1,8	509 108	2,3
Córdoba	165 321	3 066 801	18,6	3 308 876	20,0
Corrientes	88 199	930 991	10,6	992 595	11,3
Entre Ríos	78 781	1 158 147	14,7	1 235 994	15,7
Formosa	72 066	486 559	6,8	530 162	7,4
Jujuy	53 219	611 888	11,5	673 307	12,7
La Pampa	143 440	299 294	2,1	318 951	2,2
La Rioja	89 680	289 983	3,2	333 642	3,7
Mendoza	148 827	1 579 651	10,6	1 738 929	11,7
Misiones	29 801	965 522	32,4	1 101 593	37,0
Neuquén	94 078	474 155	5,0	551 266	5,9
Río Negro	203 013	552 822	2,7	638 645	3,1
Salta	155 488	1 079 051	6,9	1 214 441	7,8
San Juan	89 651	620 023	6,9	681 055	7,6
San Luis	76 748	367 933	4,8	432 310	5,6
Santa Cruz	243 943	196 958	0,8	273 964	1,1
Santa Fe	133 007	3 000 701	22,6	3 194 537	24,0
Santiago del Estero	136 351	804 457	5,9	874 006	6,4
Tierra del Fuego, Antártida e Islas del Atlántico Sur ⁽³⁾	987 168	101 079	0,1	127 205	0,1
Tucumán	22 524	1 338 523	59,4	1 448 188	64,3

Table I. Source: Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y Viviendas 2001 and 2010, Instituto Geográfico Nacional (INDEC 2012)

Cuadro P1-P. Provincia de Buenos Aires, 24 partidos del Gran Buenos Aires. Población total y variación intercensal absoluta y relativa por partido. Años 2001-2010

Partido	Población		Variación absoluta	Variación relativa (%)
	2001	2010		
Total	8.684.437	9.916.715	1.232.278	14,2
Almirante Brown	515.556	552.902	37.346	7,2
Avellaneda	328.980	342.677	13.697	4,2
Berazategui	287.913	324.244	36.331	12,6
Esteban Echeverría	243.974	300.959	56.985	23,4
Ezeiza	118.807	163.722	44.915	37,8
Florencio Varela	348.970	426.005	77.035	22,1
General San Martín	403.107	414.196	11.089	2,8
Hurlingham	172.245	181.241	8.996	5,2
Ituzaingó	158.121	167.824	9.703	6,1
José C. Paz	230.208	265.981	35.773	15,5
La Matanza	1.255.288	1.775.816	520.528	41,5
Lanús	453.082	459.263	6.181	1,4
Lomas de Zamora	591.345	616.279	24.934	4,2
Malvinas Argentinas	290.691	322.375	31.684	10,9
Merlo	469.985	528.494	58.509	12,4
Moreno	380.503	452.505	72.002	18,9
Morón	309.380	321.109	11.729	3,8
Quilmes	518.788	582.943	64.155	12,4
San Fernando	151.131	163.240	12.109	8,0
San Isidro	291.505	292.878	1.373	0,5
San Miguel	253.086	276.190	23.104	9,1
Tigre	301.223	376.381	75.158	25,0
Tres de Febrero	336.467	340.071	3.604	1,1
Vicente López	274.082	269.420	-4.662	-1,7

Table II. Source: Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y Viviendas 2001 and 2010, Instituto Geográfico Nacional (INDEC 2012).

Cuadro P6. Total del país. Población total nacida en el extranjero por lugar de nacimiento, según sexo y grupos de edad. Año 2010

Lugar de nacimiento	Población total nacida en el extranjero	Sexo y grupo de edad							
		Varones				Mujeres			
		Total	0 - 14	15 - 64	65 y más	Total	0 - 14	15 - 64	65 y más
Total	1 805 957	831 696	70 314	599 536	161 846	974 261	69 998	690 003	214 260
AMÉRICA	1 471 399	681 585	63 971	538 371	79 243	789 814	63 885	629 246	96 683
Países limítrofes	1 245 054	577 654	50 662	451 693	75 299	667 400	50 610	524 200	92 590
Bolivia	345 272	171 493	18 518	137 699	15 276	173 779	18 552	139 926	15 301
Brasil	41 330	17 423	1 717	12 816	2 890	23 907	1 782	17 704	4 421
Chile	191 147	88 973	2 457	65 668	20 848	102 174	2 363	76 500	23 311
Paraguay	550 713	244 279	26 112	190 172	27 995	306 434	26 083	243 263	37 088
Uruguay	116 592	55 486	1 858	45 338	8 290	61 106	1 830	46 807	12 469
Países no limítrofes (América)	226 345	103 931	13 309	86 678	3 944	122 414	13 275	105 046	4 093
Perú	157 514	70 899	6 860	61 393	2 646	86 615	7 058	77 060	2 497
Resto de América	68 831	33 032	6 449	25 285	1 298	35 799	6 217	27 986	1 596
EUROPA	299 394	131 577	5 424	46 332	79 821	167 817	5 200	48 163	114 454
Alemania	8 416	3 889	293	2 082	1 514	4 527	272	2 070	2 185
España	94 030	40 437	3 041	12 702	24 694	53 593	2 843	13 506	37 244
Francia	6 995	3 513	322	2 386	805	3 482	302	2 098	1 082
Italia	147 499	65 021	966	20 226	43 829	82 478	1 011	21 597	59 870
Resto de Europa	42 454	18 717	802	8 936	8 979	23 737	772	8 892	14 073
ASIA	31 001	15 997	747	12 757	2 493	15 004	779	11 444	2 781
China	8 929	4 897	124	4 635	138	4 032	116	3 817	99
Corea	7 321	3 671	113	2 989	569	3 650	132	2 999	519
Japón	4 036	1 944	122	973	849	2 092	129	946	1 017
Líbano	933	441	4	195	242	492	4	154	334
Siria	1 337	701	4	389	308	636	8	274	354
Taiwán	2 875	1 435	22	1 280	133	1 440	11	1 308	121
Resto de Asia	5 570	2 908	358	2 296	254	2 662	379	1 946	337
ÁFRICA	2 738	1 825	74	1 514	237	913	45	593	275
OCEANÍA	1 425	712	98	562	52	713	89	557	67

Table III. Source: Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y Viviendas 2010 (INDEC 2012).

Cuadro P6-D. Provincia de Buenos Aires, partido La Plata. Población total nacida en el extranjero por lugar de nacimiento, según sexo y grupo de edad. Año 2010

Lugar de nacimiento	Población total nacida en el extranjero	Sexo y grupo de edad							
		Varones				Mujeres			
		Total	0 - 14	15 - 64	65 y más	Total	0 - 14	15 - 64	65 y más
Total	43.397	20.425	2.097	15.316	3.012	22.972	2.088	16.764	4.120
AMÉRICA	35.293	16.914	1.971	14.000	943	18.379	1.953	15.351	1.075
Países limítrofes	27.585	13.364	1.673	10.988	703	14.221	1.664	11.649	908
Bolivia	10.212	5.335	678	4.468	189	4.877	642	4.047	188
Brasil	522	192	27	155	10	330	26	266	38
Chile	1.083	531	19	424	88	552	21	409	122
Paraguay	14.268	6.610	923	5.397	290	7.658	958	6.312	388
Uruguay	1.500	696	26	544	126	804	17	615	172
Países no limítrofes (América)	7.708	3.550	298	3.012	240	4.158	289	3.702	167
Perú	6.458	2.941	217	2.506	218	3.517	213	3.162	142
Resto de América	1.250	609	81	506	22	641	76	540	25
EUROPA	7.442	3.183	119	1.088	1.976	4.259	122	1.185	2.952
Alemania	99	47	6	30	11	52	4	29	19
España	1.356	560	67	204	289	796	58	244	494
Francia	107	48	6	33	9	59	10	33	16
Italia	4.914	2.111	28	651	1.432	2.803	38	696	2.069
Resto de Europa	966	417	12	170	235	549	12	183	354
ASIA	613	307	5	214	88	306	11	212	83
China	146	83	2	81	-	63	3	58	2
Corea	26	13	-	7	6	13	-	12	1
Japón	307	141	2	76	63	166	5	98	63
Libano	20	11	-	1	10	9	-	2	7
Siria	15	9	-	5	4	6	-	1	5
Taiwán	62	29	-	28	1	33	-	29	4
Resto de Asia	37	21	1	16	4	16	3	12	1
ÁFRICA	40	19	1	13	5	21	-	11	10
OCEANÍA	9	2	1	1	-	7	2	5	-

Table IV. Source: Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y Viviendas 2010 (INDEC 2012).

Cuadro P6-P. Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires. Población total nacida en el extranjero por lugar de nacimiento, según sexo y grupo de edad. Año 2010

Lugar de nacimiento	Población total nacida en el extranjero	Sexo y grupo de edad							
		Varones				Mujeres			
		Total	0 - 14	15 - 64	65 y más	Total	0 - 14	15 - 64	65 y más
Total	381.778	168.914	13.218	131.004	24.692	212.864	13.482	160.165	39.217
AMÉRICA	297.325	131.203	11.888	112.492	6.823	166.122	12.159	141.749	12.214
Países limítrofes	207.889	91.108	8.289	77.179	5.640	116.781	8.468	97.704	10.609
Bolivia	76.609	36.818	4.128	31.600	1.090	39.791	4.137	34.126	1.528
Brasil	10.357	4.254	375	3.614	265	6.103	373	5.149	581
Chile	9.857	4.386	216	3.609	561	5.471	155	4.251	1.065
Paraguay	80.325	31.752	3.266	27.041	1.445	48.573	3.467	41.725	3.381
Uruguay	30.741	13.898	304	11.315	2.279	16.843	336	12.453	4.054
Países no limítrofes (América)	89.436	40.095	3.599	35.313	1.183	49.341	3.691	44.045	1.605
Perú	60.478	26.360	2.267	23.444	649	34.118	2.341	30.862	915
Resto de América	28.958	13.735	1.332	11.869	534	15.223	1.350	13.183	690
EUROPA	66.083	28.206	895	10.745	16.566	37.877	896	11.467	25.514
Alemania	2.321	1.086	44	654	388	1.235	41	603	591
España	26.282	10.733	419	3.156	7.158	15.549	434	3.625	11.490
Francia	2.838	1.414	100	1.038	276	1.424	93	949	382
Italia	22.168	9.516	121	2.799	6.596	12.652	147	3.106	9.399
Resto de Europa	12.474	5.457	211	3.098	2.148	7.017	181	3.184	3.652
ASIA	16.670	8.418	390	6.812	1.216	8.252	399	6.489	1.364
China	3.932	2.051	58	1.909	84	1.881	49	1.775	57
Corea	6.242	3.110	97	2.545	468	3.132	120	2.567	445
Japón	1.484	702	36	380	286	782	43	398	341
Líbano	336	147	-	70	77	189	2	57	130
Siria	441	234	3	122	109	207	3	68	136
Taiwán	1.717	849	10	733	106	868	5	773	90
Resto de Asia	2.518	1.325	186	1.053	86	1.193	177	851	165
ÁFRICA	1.176	822	31	728	63	354	19	238	97
OCEANÍA	624	265	14	227	24	259	9	222	28

Table V. Source: Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y Viviendas 2010 (INDEC 2012).

Cuadro P6-P. Provincia de Buenos Aires, 24 partidos del Gran Buenos Aires. Población total nacida en el extranjero por lugar de nacimiento, según sexo y grupo de edad. Año 2010

Lugar de nacimiento	Población total nacida en el extranjero	Sexo y grupo de edad							
		Varones				Mujeres			
		Total	0 - 14	15 - 64	65 y más	Total	0 - 14	15 - 64	65 y más
Total	742.859	337.167	29.531	243.732	63.904	405.692	29.513	285.323	90.856
AMÉRICA	600.611	275.605	28.066	222.032	25.507	325.006	27.987	262.774	34.245
Países limítrofes	535.160	246.042	23.927	197.602	24.513	289.118	23.844	232.216	33.058
Bolivia	114.146	56.570	6.326	46.116	4.128	57.576	6.349	47.146	4.081
Brasil	6.779	2.374	443	1.699	232	4.405	456	3.360	589
Chile	23.667	10.750	413	8.013	2.324	12.917	401	9.435	3.081
Paraguay	334.866	149.758	15.932	119.773	14.053	185.108	15.856	149.486	19.766
Uruguay	55.702	26.590	813	22.001	3.776	29.112	782	22.789	5.541
Países no limítrofes (América)	65.451	29.563	4.139	24.430	994	35.888	4.143	30.558	1.187
Perú	52.806	23.618	2.628	20.212	778	29.188	2.701	25.670	817
Resto de América	12.645	5.945	1.511	4.218	216	6.700	1.442	4.888	370
EUROPA	135.831	58.198	1.283	19.065	37.850	77.633	1.341	20.330	55.962
Alemania	2.484	1.095	98	471	526	1.389	89	465	835
España	36.620	15.357	610	4.647	10.100	21.263	660	4.874	15.729
Francia	1.165	554	76	296	182	611	69	275	267
Italia	80.107	34.704	287	11.106	23.311	45.403	299	12.175	32.929
Resto de Europa	15.455	6.488	212	2.545	3.731	8.967	224	2.541	6.202
ASIA	5.602	2.861	142	2.261	458	2.741	152	2.025	564
China	2.554	1.399	40	1.341	18	1.155	40	1.096	19
Corea	341	180	3	139	38	161	2	141	18
Japón	1.210	558	45	251	262	652	45	262	345
Líbano	170	77	-	34	43	93	1	34	58
Siria	137	64	-	28	36	73	-	33	40
Taiwán	334	170	5	159	6	164	1	154	9
Resto de Asia	856	413	49	309	55	443	63	305	75
ÁFRICA	561	386	14	290	82	175	11	102	62
OCEANÍA	254	117	26	84	7	137	22	92	23

Table VI. Source: Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y Viviendas 2010 (INDEC 2012).

Appendix C: Notes

ON KIRCHNERISMO'S POLITICAL-IDEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Perón's Controversial Political Persona

In 1946, Juan Domingo Perón presented his presidential candidature with Hortensio Quijano as vice-president of the *Partido Laborista* and won the elections with 56% of the votes. This victory marked the beginning of what has been called the “Argentinean revolutionary process” (Aritz Recalde, 2010). The competing party, the *Unión Democrática*, headed by José P. Tamborini, obtained 44% of the votes. The *Partido Laborista* was a coalition integrated by the *Junta Coordinadora de la Unión Cívica Radical* (a dissident fraction of *radicalismo*), unions and other “political groups” (*agrupaciones políticas*). The 1946 elections were considered the “cleanest and freest” in Argentinean history, despite the campaign launched by the US Assistant Secretary of State for American Republic Affairs Spruille Braden (1945-1947), at the time US Ambassador to Argentina (1945), which attempted to discredit the corruption-free nature of the elections (Moniz Bandeira 2004, p.203).

The views of Perón are quite controversial. Those who see him as a *líder popular* (popular leader), who fought for *los intereses del pueblo* (the nation's interests), claim that his policies were aimed at resolving the problems of workers and national entrepreneurs. Accordingly, Perón is described as a nationalist, a Latin Americanist, an industrialist and an anti-imperialist (Aritz Recalde 2010-e, f, g; 2011). In contrast, others have highlighted Perón's coercion of those who opposed his regime, such as the American historian Whitaker (1956, cited in Moniz Bandeira 2004), who describes his regime as “the tyranny of the majority over a minority under democratic forms”. Critics of Perón argue that his accomplishments were partly based on both the coercion of those who opposed his views and the expansion of his discretionary powers. Persecution and imprisonment, which initially targeted the country's ruling classes, soon extended to all those who did not sympathize with *Justicialismo* (Perón's regime) and affected newspapers and universities.

Although under Perón's governments, Argentina normalized the functioning of its democratic institutions, from the beginning the PJ or *Partido Justicialista* (his own party), dominated both chambers of congress and gradually came to control the Supreme Court of Justice. In 1947, through a political process promoted by the congress, Perón managed to eradicate the judges who were hindering the implementation of new laws. In 1948, thanks to

the overwhelming victory of the PJ in the legislative elections, he amended the 1853 Constitution allowing for: a) a “direct vote” (previously voting was conducted with an electoral college system as in the United States), b) presidential re-election and c) the deepening of the state’s intervention in the economy, thus obtaining a monopoly over foreign trade, mineral exploitation, energy sources and public services. Perón also had the support of unions and the influential *Confederación General del Trabajo* (CGT), which counterbalanced the power of the *Fuerzas Armadas* (Army), and controlled a large proportion of Buenos Aires’ newspapers. Together, these circumstances gave Perón a great deal of freedom to personally determine the country’s destiny (Moniz Bandeira 2004).

Perón’s *tercera posición* (“third position”) program implied the consolidation of an economic and political community in South America, which he believed could evolve into a third bloc able to mediate conflicts between the United States and the Soviet Union, and ostensibly object to United States supremacy in Latin America. With this goal in mind, Perón intensified commercial and political ties with other South American countries while promoting Justicialismo in the region. In Perón’s project, this community of nations would include Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Bolivia and Peru, and would start as a customs union capable of regulating the world’s market of raw materials. By potentially incorporating Spain, Portugal and France, this community could evolve into a third bloc (Moniz Bandeira 2004). Perón’s third position also entailed combating communism by eradicating its causes: the poverty and misery resulting from the extreme social inequalities generated by capitalism in liberal democracies. Perón proscribed the Communist Party (which was in line with the economic and political elites opposing his government) and established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union a day after assuming his presidential mandate—despite describing himself as an anti-communist and being a former sympathizer of Nazi-fascism (Moniz Bandeira 2004).

Perón’s first presidential term (1946-1955) gave women the right to vote in 1947 and sanctioned the 1949 Constitution, which recognized the rights of workers and state companies while protecting the country’s natural resources. This constitution also established an eight-hour work day, paid holidays and workers’ leisure time (*derecho al esparcimiento*) while regulating rural labourers and lease-holders’ rights for the first time. Perón’s first mandate guaranteed the right to housing (*derecho a la vivienda*) through the creation of popular

neighbourhoods (*barrios populares*) financed by the state, while building community organizations' premises and neighbourhood clubs. He developed a universal (free) public health care system with the state as the producer of drugs, and made public education, from kindergarten to university, free. Perón also created technical schools, the *Universidad Obrera Nacional* and the Ministry of Education while building schools, libraries, laboratories and universities. National science was developed at military factories, the State Aeronautic and Mechanic Industries (IAME) and the National Commission of Atomic Energy. Moreover, Perón promoted the launching of political youth organizations, such as the *Unión de Estudiantes Secundarios* (UES) and the *Confederación General Universitaria* (CGU), and the creation of the *Confederación General Empresaria* (CGE). His policies also led to the centralization and strengthening of the *Confederación General del Trabajo* (CGT) and a dramatic increase in unionizing rates (Aritz Recalde, 2010-e; Moniz Bandeira 2004).

Perón sanctioned the first *Ley de Medios* (Law 14.241/53) in the country in 1953, contributed to the creation of *TELAM* (the Argentinean National News Agency) in 1945, and created a public TV channel (*Canal 7*) in 1951. Perón's first and second presidencies also promoted national cinema, which permitted the development of this industry—the International Film Festival in Mar del Plata in 1954 gave national artists global visibility, for example. Perón's third presidency nationalized the most important TV channels in Argentina and his “National Plan of Communication” introduced the professionalization of journalism and communication studies in 1954 (Aritz Recalde, 2009-b).

By the 1950s however, Argentina was showing an increasing tendency towards instability. Affected by the economic depression, Perón's government was falling into a political crisis while intensifying the repression of his adversaries. In a context of increasing tension in universities and the Army, Perón ordered a “state of internal war”, which furthered the persecution of the opposition and the restriction of political freedoms. It was under these circumstances that he presented his presidential candidature in 1951 with his second wife Eva Duarte, known as Evita, as vice-president, and they won with 65% of the votes. The death of Evita in July 1952, however, contributed to the weakening of the government. Inflation, increasing unemployment rates and a budget crisis forced Perón to improve his relationship with the United States and to accept its economic demands in order to obtain financial support.

Although the “opening” of the economy to foreign capital improved Argentina’s financial situation, a coup d’état forced Perón to flee to Paraguay in 1955 (Moniz Bandeira 2004; Aritz Recalde 2010). Being persecuted by successive United States-funded military regimes in Argentina, Perón obtained asylum in various Latin American countries, where he continued to plan his return to political life in Argentina while promoting Justicialismo. In 1973, he won the presidential election with his third wife, María Estela Martínez, known as Isabel, as vice-president, with 62% of the vote (Moniz Moreira 2004). Perón began to pursue goals similar to those of his first presidency, yet this time formulated in a *Plan Trienal* (three-year plan) instead of Quinquenal. Perón died on July 1974 and the subsequent deterioration of the country’s political and economic circumstances led to a coup d’état in 1976 which overthrew Isabel, who had succeeded Perón in office (Aritz Recalde, 2010-g; Moniz Moneira 2004).

The Celebrated Próceres Latinoamericanos

Francisco Morazán (1792–1842) ruled several Central American states during the turbulent period from 1827 to 1842, and was recognized as a visionary and great thinker who attempted to transform Central America into one large and progressive nation known as the Federal Republic. Due to his military skills, he was able to keep a firm grip on power until 1837, when his Republic became irrevocably fractured and was divided into five Central American nations by the conservative opposition. Morazán rose to prominence during the Battle of La Trinidad on November 11, 1827 and dominated the political and military scene in Central America until his execution in 1842.

José Francisco de San Martín Gómez y Matorras (1778–1850), known as José de San Martín, was the primary leader of southern South America’s successful struggle for independence from Spain. He was born in Yapeyú, Corrientes, Argentina, which he left as a child in order to complete his schooling in Madrid. In 1808, San Martín joined Spanish forces to fight against France. In 1812, after contacting the promoters of South American independence in Europe, he set sail for Buenos Aires and offered his services to the “United Provinces of South America”. After the Battle of San Lorenzo (1813) and spending time as commander of the *Ejército del Norte* in 1814, San Martín started to put into action his plan to defeat the Spanish forces that menaced the United Provinces. San Martín created the *Ejército*

de los Andes in the province of Cuyo, Argentina, which recruited soldiers from diverse parts of the region and carried this army's flag instead of the Argentinean one. From Cuyo, he led the "Crossing of the Andes" to Chile and prevailed over Spanish forces at the Battles of Chacabuco and Maipú (1818). This led to the liberation of Chile from Royalist rule. San Martín then set sail to attack the Spanish stronghold of Lima, Perú by sea. After seizing partial control of Lima in 1821, he was appointed Protector of Perú and, a few days later, on July 28, 1821, Peruvian independence was officially declared. After a closed-door meeting with fellow liberator Simón Bolívar in Guayaquil, Ecuador on July 22, 1822, San Martín unexpectedly left the country and resigned the command of his army, while Bolívar took over the task of fully liberating Peru. San Martín excluded himself from politics and the military and moved to France in 1824.

Bernardo O'Higgins Riquelme (1778–1842) was a Chilean independence leader who, together with San Martín, freed Chile from Spanish rule during the Chilean War of Independence. Although he was the second Supreme Director of Chile (1817–1823), O'Higgins is considered one of Chile's founding fathers, as he was the first holder of this title to head a fully independent Chilean state.

José Gervasio Artigas Arnal (1764–1850) was a Uruguayan national hero, sometimes called "the father of Uruguayan independence". In 1814, he organized the *Liga de los Pueblos Libres*, of which he was declared Protector. In 1815, he liberated Montevideo from the control of the Unitarians from Buenos Aires.

José Julián Martí Pérez (1853–1895) was a Cuban national hero and an important figure in Latin American literature. In his short life, he was a poet, an essayist, a journalist, a revolutionary, a philosopher, a translator, a professor, a publisher, and a political theorist. He was also part of the Cuban Freemasons. Through his writings and political activity, Martí became a symbol of Cuba's bid for independence against Spain in the 19th century and is referred to as the "Apostle of Cuban Independence". He also fought against the threat of United States expansionism into Cuba.

Tracing the Origin and Subsequent Use of the Term Patria Grande in Argentina

Widely employed by South American governments during the 2000s, the term *Patria Grande* was in fact coined in 1922 by the Argentinean writer, diplomat, and socialist politician Manuel Ugarte (1875–1951) when editing a book promoting Latin American union. The term has also been juxtaposed with that of *Patria Chica* to signal contrasting political projects in Latin America, as, for example, by Arturo Jauretche (1901–1974), a prominent Argentinean writer and politician. He used *Patria Chica* to designate the political projects of transferring resources and sovereignty into foreign hands, and *Patria Grande* to refer to those oriented toward the defense of the material, territorial, social, and cultural patrimony of peoples (*pueblos*) and the promotion of Latin American integration (Jauretche 1958). Generally speaking, the term *Patria Grande* has been used by activists, scholars and politicians in Latin America to signal a “shared space of belonging” (among nations) and the collective imagery built around the possibility of creating an enlarged political union in the region. As a result, the term has been closely associated with that of *unión latinoamericana* (Latin American union) and to the libertarian projects of Bolívar and San Martín.

ON KIRCHNERISMO’S POLICIES

Recovering Social Rights and Reaching Argentinians Living Abroad

The *Política de Recuperación de Derechos Sociales* implemented by Kirchnerismo targeted a wide range of social groups, as I showed in chapter III. Here, I briefly review the public strategies focusing on four of these groups: people with disabilities, homosexuals, aboriginal populations and the elderly. Kirchnerismo implemented an important number of projects, programs and subsidies in order to enhance the integral participation of individuals with disabilities and their families in all spheres of society (*Presidencia de la Nación Argentina* at www.caserosada.gov.ar, consulted between May and August 2011). Argentina also adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Person with Disabilities and its Protocol (under Law 26.378) on May 21, 2008 and the International Day of People with Disabilities (following the 1992 UN Declaration) on December 13, 2010 (*Argentina en Noticias* at www.argentina.ar and *Sala de Prensa, Secretaría de Medios de Comunicación* at www.prensa.argentina.ar, retrieved on January 20, 2011). Moreover, Argentina’s new *Ley de*

medios (Law 26.522) passed in October 2009, establishes that TV and cable stations must incorporate closed captioning, sign language and audio description in order to guarantee “equal opportunity” for people with sensorial disabilities, the elderly and others with difficulty accessing this type of content (www.argentina.ar, retrieved in January 2011).

Argentina passed the *Ley de Matrimonio Igualitario* (Law 26.618) in July 2010, which modifies the Civil Code to allow people of the same sex to get married (*Argentina en Noticias* at www.argentina.ar and *Sala de Prensa, Secretaria de Medios de Comunicación* at www.prensa.argentina.ar; retrieved on January 20, 2011). As part of Kirchnerismo’s effort to rewrite the nation’s official history, several initiatives incorporated aboriginal peoples’ own versions of history into it while revaluing their contributions to Argentinean society and culture (*Apoyo a los Pueblos Originarios* under *Obra de Gobierno* at www.casarosada.gov.ar, *Argentina en Noticias* at www.argentina.ar, and *Sala de Prensa, Secretaria de Medios de Comunicación* at www.prensa.argentina.ar; consulted between June and August 2011). See also Tamagno (1997), who examines the *políticas indigenistas* in Argentina, and Maidana et al (2010), who analyze the classificatory logics underpinning the creation and implementation of censuses on aboriginal populations in the country.

The elderly benefited from a substantial public measure implemented by Kirchnerismo: the universalization of a non-taxable pension given to all adults older than 70 years of age who do not receive any other social security allowance or a salary and who live in poverty (*situación de pobreza*). This measure sought to remediate the pernicious consequences of the AFJP system introduced during the 1990s, as part of Menem’s privatizations. The AFJP was a deregulated and private system administering workers’ contributions, which, by the end of the decade had left a very large proportion of the retirement-age population unemployed and without access to any pension despite decades of making pension contributions. The AFJP fiasco was not exclusive to Argentina but widespread in many other Latin American countries, where the International Monetary Fund (IMF) had imposed neoliberal and ultraconservative economic policies during the 1980s and 1990s as a prerequisite to obtaining financial aid (Black 2002). In October 2008, the AFJP system was replaced by the *Sistema Integrado Previsional Argentino* (SIPA), which restored public retirement and pension plans, where

participation was compulsory (*Administración Nacional de la Seguridad Social* at www.anses.gob.ar, *Obra de Gobierno, Ministerio de Trabajo* at www.caserosada.gov.ar; consulted between July and August 2011). According to official statistics, 100,000 Argentinians accessed a *jubilación anticipada* (an advanced retirement pension) thanks to the SIPA.

Kirchnerismo implemented a series of measures to decrease the heterogeneity of incomes among workers who were not protected by any collective agreement while increasing their purchasing power. Central to these measures was the progressive increase of the *salario vital y móvil* or minimum wage, which was implemented in three stages—to \$1,400 pesos in August 2009, to \$1,440 in October 2009 and to \$1,500 in January 2010. According to official statistics, this strategy reached 300,000 non-unionized workers, excluding those in rural areas and in the domestic sector, who were targeted by the specific measures I noted in chapter III. This measure was developed and implemented by the *Consejo del Salario* (Salary Council), which is composed by the Ministry of Work, the CGT, the *Central de los Trabajadores Argentinos* (CTA) and business entities (*Presidencia Argentina de la Nación, Obra de Gobierno-TRABAJO*, Ibid; retrieved on August 5, 2010; Cruces and Gasparini 2010).

Kirchnerismo developed a number of strategies to target Argentinians living abroad and the following four are the most noteworthy: a) the *RAICES* Program (*Red de Argentinos Investigadores y Científicos en el Exterior*) that seeks to connect Argentinean scientists living abroad with local research groups (see <http://www.raices.mincyt.gov.ar>); b) the *Volver a Trabajar* Program that seeks to repatriate Argentinean scientists living abroad through job offers, post-doctoral fellowships, and other measures; c) Inter-institutional strategies and partnerships (including doctoral, internship and post-doc fellowships) to train (locally and abroad) and retain scientists in Argentina's technology priority areas; and d) the *Provincia 25* Program that seeks to promote the democratic participation of Argentinians abroad and strengthen their relationship with the state (Texidó 2008).

LATIN AMERICAN REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND MERCOSUR

Integration Initiatives in Latin America since the 1960s

A number of regional integration projects in Latin America have generated disparate results, confronting social actors with differing interests; they include: the *Asociación Latinoamericana de librecomercio* (ALALC) created in 1960, which in the Montevideo Treaty of 1980 became the *Asociación Latinoamericana de Integración* (ALADI); the Managua General Treaty of Centro-American Integration (MCCA) of 1960; the *Asociación de Libre Comercio del Caribe* of 1965 which became CARICOM (Caribbean Community) in 1972; and the *Grupo Andino* (1966-1969) which became the *Comunidad Andina de Naciones* (CAN) by the *Pacto Andino* of 1969 (Mellado 2009, Armony 2011).

Following Ferré (2009), Aritz Recalde (2010-c) argues that two “big waves” of regional integration have taken place since independence in Latin America, one in the 1960s and the other in the 1990s, creating five “basic nodes of integration”: NAFTA, *Mercado Común Centroamericano*, CARICOM, *Comunidad Andina* and MERCOSUR. Recalde adds to this list UNASUR and ALBA (*Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América* created in 2004).

Member and Associated States of MERCOSUR Ampliado

The requirements for a state wanting to become *estado parte* (full member) of the MERCOSUR are different from those for a state wanting to become *estado asociado* (associate). In the first case, a state has to ratify MERCOSUR’s central treaties and adhere to the *Tratado de Asunción* of 1991 (i.e., incorporation into the bloc’s “free trade zone” and adoption of the AEC or External Common Tariff), the *Protocolo Oruro Preto* of 1994 (participation in the institutional structure of the MERCOSUR and approval of its resolutions) and the *Protocolo de Olivos* of 2002 (resolution of controversies). In contrast, to join the MERCOSUR as an *estado asociado*, the state has to a) be a member of the ALADI (*Asociación Latinoamericana de Integración*), b) subscribe to the Protocol of Ushuaia on Democratic Commitment (of 1998, ratified in 2004), and c) work to ratify other protocols on education, culture and judicial cooperation. Associated states can participate in MERCOSUR’s meetings, adding their opinions to the debate, but they lack voting power. In

addition, the demands that need to be met by associated states in the area of commercial integration are less stringent than those imposed on member states; their participation in the resolution of controversies is also less important. The conditions required in order to join the MERCOSUR as *estado asociado* were established in 2004 by the *Consejo del Mercado Común* (<http://www.mercosur.int>; retrieved on March 16, 2011).

MERCOSUR Político, Social and Institucional

MERCOSUR Ampliado sees integration as a “vital political agreement” laying the foundations for the stable, democratic, peaceful and just development of the region. Two foundational treaties were signed in 1998 yet only ratified in 2004: a) the *Ushuaia Protocol on Democratic Commitment* establishes that the proper functioning of democratic institutions is an indispensable condition for the development of regional integration, and b) the *Political Declaration of the MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile as Peace Zone* states that peace is essential for the continuity and deepening regional integration of the region, and puts in place regional mechanisms for cooperation and coordination on issues of security and defense, as well as on agendas of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In 2007, the *Democracy Observatory of the MERCOSUR* was created to strengthen the objectives established by the Ushuaia Protocol (MERCOSUR’s official website, Ibid; retrieved on March 16, 2011).

The bloc has also emphasized the need to foster economic development with social justice and to this extent it created the *Instituto Social del MERCOSUR* (SIM) in 2007, which has striven to strengthen integration while promoting “integral human development” in the region. A core part of the *MERCOSUR Social*, the SIM has sought to overcome regional asymmetries by collaborating in the design of regional social policies, systematizing and updating social regional indicators, exchanging “best practices”, and seeking new sources of funding for its projects (*MERCOSUR Social’s* website at <http://www.mercosur-social.org>; retrieved on March 16, 2011). The bloc also created the *Instituto de Políticas Públicas de Derechos Humanos* (IPPDDHH) in 2009 in order to make the defense of human rights “a fundamental axis of MERCOSUR’s identity and development” (MERCOSUR’s official website, Ibid).

Four sets of important modifications to the socio-juridical dimension of integration signal MERCOSUR's efforts to strengthen its institutions: a) marked changes and updates in the core laws of member states, notably, reforms of national constitutions; b) strong regulatory activity of MERCOSUR's bodies, especially that of the *Grupo Mercado Común* that deals with commercial issues; c) progress made in the areas of education, social security (*previsión social*), judiciary and health care policies, fundamentally in the hands of the *Consejo del Mercado Común*; and d) the limited role played by the legislative powers and political parties (Novick 2010). In addition, MERCOSUR's institutional structure and international legal entity were modified by replacing the *Comisión Parlamentaria Conjunta* (CPC, created by the Oruro Preto Protocol of 1994) with the *Parliament of the MERCOSUR*. The *Consejo del Mercado Común* set the directives for the bloc's new institutional stage in 2007, and created the *Reunión de Alto Nivel para el Análisis Institucional del MERCOSUR* (RANAM) in 2010 (MERCOSUR's official website, Ibid).

Despite the remarkable progress made in the social, political and institutional aspects of integration during the 2000s, MERCOSUR continues to be predominantly an initiative that focuses on economic integration, or as it is usually phrased, one marked by its mercantile origins. This becomes apparent in the amount of progress made by the bloc on the commercial and financial aspects of integration, which vastly surpass that made by its social, political and institutional counterparts. The strategies deployed by the MERCOSUR to consolidate an "external common duty" (*Arancel Externo Común*), to "correct" structural (economic) asymmetries and foster the productive integration of the region illustrate this imbalance (MERCOSUR's website, Ibid; retrieved on March 16, 2011).

¹ As I will show, this term had stigmatizing connotations during the 1990s, which progressively decreased in the following decade. My use of this label does not carry such meaning, however, and is justified instead in its synthetic capacity, that is, I can refer to these three groups collectively by using only one term. Throughout the thesis, I also use the longer label “migrants from neighbouring nations” as an equivalent to that of *limitrofes*.

² See Appendix C for the requirements to be fulfilled by a state seeking to join the MERCOSUR either as member or associated state.

³ This term was widely employed in the end of the 1990s in Argentina to refer to the processes that emptied or drained the state of its resources and services, transforming it into a hollow or empty structure.

⁴ Large cuts in the budgets of these public services were legitimized by ruthless campaigns praising the private, allegedly more efficient and transparent options offered by the market, which only a few could afford.

⁵ An excellent documentary that analyzes the roots and effects of the 1990s crisis in Argentina is *Memoria del Saqueo* (2004), directed and produced by Fernando Solana. Another one is *Bombón el perro* (2004), directed by Carlos Sorín, which examines the impact of this crisis in the country’s south. Both have been screened at international film festivals in 2005 with French and English subtitles.

⁶ Workers in their 50s were in a particularly vulnerable situation. Being considered too expensive and old for the flexible market, they were among the first to be fired and hardly ever found employment according to their qualifications and experience.

⁷ Perticará (1995) and Maguid (1995, 1997, 2001) show that migrants from neighbouring countries have posed no risk for Argentinean workers, whereas Torrado (1994) and Oteiza and Aruj (2000) emphasize that the actual problem was being created by the employers who exploited these migrants by paying them salaries that did not correspond with labour legislation.

⁸ The term *colectividad* is widely employed in Argentina by migrants, government officials, the media and ordinary citizens to refer to the country’s migrant groups or communities, which are defined employing nationality criteria.

⁹ These supposedly clear-cut distinctions often became blurry in migrants’ narratives, especially when common experiences of discrimination (despite their distinctive migratory statuses, arrival times and economic situations) provided Peruvians, Bolivians and Paraguayans with a fertile ground to equally identify with. See Recalde (2006-a), esp. ch. V.

¹⁰ According to successive national censuses, Europeans represented the following proportions of the total Argentinean population: 13.3% in 1947, 10.7% in 1960, 7.2% in 1970, 4.1% in 1980, 2.4% in 1991 and 1.6% in 2001 (Pacecca and Courtis 2008, p.10).

¹¹ Even if at that time, Argentina received fewer immigrants than the United States, its numbers were larger than those of Canada and Brazil. Compared to other countries in the Americas, Argentina attracted a larger proportion of family groups and a larger percentage of people who declared an occupation (more farmers and qualified workers than day labourers). In addition, its return rates were lower (Devoto 2004, Ch. 6).

¹² The estimates of these migrants’ associations were higher because they included their descendants who were born in Argentina: 20,000 Koreans and 40,000 Chinese (Pacecca and Courtis 2008).

¹³ In 1994, in the context of the dismantling of the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), the Argentinean Ministry of the Interior granted nationals of 21 Eastern Europe’s former republics special treatment, allowing them to solicit a one-year temporary visa without a work contract. According to official statistics, up to 7,500 of these visas were granted by 1999, in the vast majority of cases to Ukrainians (Pacecca and Courtis 2008).

¹⁴ Texidó (2008) proposes the same numbers even if using different sources and presents statistics disaggregated by country on extra-regional refugees. He combines data from the *Dirección Nacional de Migraciones* (DNM), Ministry of Interior, with that from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Pacecca and Curtis (2008) examine the demographics and specific challenges to socio-economic participation of different refugee groups in Argentina along with the problems permeating official statistics on refugees in Argentina.

¹⁵ See Aruj (2004) for an interesting (trans-disciplinary) analysis of why university students of the UBA (*Universidad de Buenos Aires*) decided to emigrate during the 1990s.

¹⁶ According to the 2010 Census, Argentina's total population was 40,117,096 inhabitants and was unevenly spread over a land area of 3,745,997 km². See Table I. (INDEC 2012, Cuadro P3).

¹⁷ I have conducted fieldwork research on migration and identity issues in La Plata city since 1995. My personal projects initially focused on Japanese migrants and their descendants (1995-1997) and, thereafter, on South American groups (1998-today). My early, urban research on the latter included Uruguayans, Brazilians, Chileans, Paraguayans, Peruvians and Bolivians (1998-2000), but, since 2001, I began to concentrate on the last three groups. Since I moved to Canada in the end of 2000, I have returned to La Plata (and Buenos Aires) for a month every year. In 2005, I spent the summer conducting fieldwork research in both cities. From 1995 to 2000, I also participated in a wide range of research projects on diverse migrant groups in the province of Buenos Aires directed by Professor Marta Maffia at the Universidad Nacional de La Plata.

¹⁸ Both migrants' nationality and sex were evenly represented: one third of them were Peruvian, one third were Paraguayan and one third were Bolivian. Within each nationally defined group, half of the migrants were women and the other half were men.

¹⁹ In the context of this thesis, calling the presidencies of N. Kirchner and C. Fernández's "the 2000s' government" or Kirchnerismo is justified in two important ways. First, even if facing specific challenges and dealing with them in particular ways, they have been perceived by their own cabinets, other political parties and society at large as the continuation of one another, that is, as the same government. I see them as representing two stages in the consolidation of the same political project. Second, the use of the analytical categories "2000s" and "1990s" governments allows me to make comparisons concerning public policy impacting migrants in Argentina. Namely, while Kirchnerismo created a certain "legality" for the Peruvians, Paraguayans and Bolivians in the country, Menem's government had criminalized them during the 1990s.

²⁰ Very influential in this regard has been the work of the prominent Argentinean writer and politician Arturo Jauretche (1958), who argues that the specificity of Latin America flows from its condition of political and cultural dependency. Aritz Recalde (2010-c) re-elaborates this proposition. Armony (2011), for his part, emphasizes that Latin America is united by a shared socio-political history and reality, namely, by its racialization and métissage dynamics, its religious syncretism and its hyper-politicization of social relations.

²¹ Perón even cited San Martín in public speech. He had learned about San Martín while completing his military schooling and later taught about him as a teacher in the military. Unlike Kirchner and Fernández, who were civilians, San Martín and Perón were both military men. Aritz Recalde (March 10, 2011), personal communication.

²² Prior to taking office as president of Argentina, Kirchner had been the mayor and governor of the city and province of Santa Cruz (1991-2003); Fernández had been the National Senator of Buenos Aires (2005-2007) and of Santa Cruz (1995-1997, 2001-2005) provinces, as well as the Deputy of Santa Cruz (1997-2001). After his presidential mandate was over, Kirchner became the Secretary of UNASUR (*Unión Sudamericana de Naciones*, 2004-2010) and the deputy of Buenos Aires province (2009-2010).

²³ At the time of the presidential elections of 2003, Peronismo was divided into 3 political lists: N. Kirchner presented his candidacy as a member of the *Frente para la Victoria* coalition (FPV), yet the other two Peronist candidates (Menem and Rodríguez Saa) did so separately. In 2007, C. Fernández also presented her presidential candidacy as member of the FPV coalition.

²⁴ This is an expression of a *kirchnerista* indicating that the Ks do not follow the formal party model, cited by Schurman (2006), who highlights the heterogeneous gamut of political affiliations inherent within Kirchnerismo, including *justicialistas*, radicals, *ex duhaldistas*, *ex frepasistas*, *ex aristas*, social orthodox and union leaders.

²⁵ Alfonsín's government sanctioned the so-called "impunity laws" (*Ley de Obediencia de Vida, Punto Final and Indultos*) that forgave the perpetrators of atrocious crimes committed during these military dictatorships. Likewise, Menem pardoned (*indultar*) them from those crimes. To learn about Kirchnerismo's work on this issue see: "24 de marzo 1976-2006: del horror a la esperanza" (March 24: from horror to hope): <http://www.24demarzo.gov.ar/html1976.htm>.

²⁶ The confrontation between N. Kirchner and former US president George W. Bush reached its climax at the Mar del Plata's Summit of the Americas in 2005, when Argentina refused to sign the Free Trade of the Americas Agreement (FTAA). In contrast, former president Menem had sought to implement the FTAA through the development of so-called *relaciones carnales* ("carnal relations") with the US (Aritz Recalde 2010-a).

²⁷ See *Políticas de Estado, Presidencia de la Nación*. www.casariosada.gov.ar. Retrieved on August 5, 2010.

²⁸ See *Políticas de Estado, Presidencia de la Nación*. Ibid.

²⁹ The scope of my thesis does not allow me to analyze a wide range of other public strategies (targeting other social groups) that were also central to the reinvention of Argentina during the first decade of the 2000s. These include strategies directed at a) the impoverished middle-classes: substantially increasing budgets for research and higher education, investing in technology and development, and improving working conditions and salaries of a wide range of professionals; b) Argentinians living abroad: repatriation programs, enhancement of exchanges between citizens in the country and those living abroad (see Appendix C); and c) a multitude of national and foreign economic actors: promoting the development of national entrepreneurship while expanding commercial partnerships and markets abroad. Detailed information on these strategies can be found on *Presidencia de la Nación's* website. Ibid.

³⁰ The Argentinean constitution establishes that all inhabitants of the territory regardless of their citizenship status—whether residents, citizens, naturalized citizens, refugees, etc.—are equally entitled to the rights, freedoms and protections guaranteed by the state, as well as being responsible for the fulfillment of their obligations to the state and society.

³¹ To fulfill this project, pedagogy's role was to be restored so as to enable an integral intervention in schools while teachers qua civil servants were to emphasize the political character of their responsibility as contributors to the creation of citizenship. See *Políticas de Estado, EDUCACIÓN* at www.casariosada.gov.ar, retrieved on August 5, 2010. See as well the *Ministerio de Educación's* website: <http://portal.educacion.gov.ar>, retrieved on April 7, 2011.

³² See the section *Ministerios y Secretarías* under *GOBIERNO, Presidencia de la Nación Argentina's* website for a comprehensive list of the state's institutions, their missions and composition. See as well the *Organigrama del Estado* (under *GOBIERNO*) for a concise chart of the *Administración Pública Nacional*. Ibid, retrieved on August 5, 2010.

³³ See *Políticas de Estado, POLÍTICA SOCIAL*, Ibid.

³⁴ See *Obra de Gobierno: GESTIÓN SOCIAL* for details on these three national programs and their outcomes (Ibid, retrieved on August 5, 2010). See as well the *Ministerio de Desarrollo Social* website

for information on these and related initiatives. <http://www.desarrollosocial.gob.ar>, retrieved on April 8, 2011.

³⁵ The wide spectrum of people covered by this national initiative was not merely a sign of the government's commitment to embracing the nation's "diversity" through the recognition of the heterogeneity inherent in these groups' particular needs and their ways of satisfying them. The alarming increase in both the heterogeneity and numbers of those people considered vulnerable by the government was also a strong indicator of the profound fragmentation and impoverishment of Argentinean society by the mid-2000s (Cruces and Gasparini 2010, SEDLAC 2009, 2011).

³⁶ The *Ley de Protección Integral de los niños, niñas y adolescentes* explicitly establishes the compulsory implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Children, and delimits the obligations and responsibilities of the state, the family and the community on this matter. Accordingly, national and provincial institutions were created and modalities of state intervention were defined for cases when the rights of children and adolescents are either threatened or violated. See www.argentina.ar for the complete text of this law and related articles. See also the *Ministerio de Trabajo, Empleo y Seguridad Social* website for detailed information about the Law 26.390 (*Prohibición del Trabajo Infantil y Protección del Trabajo Adolescente*), which seeks to eradicate children's work while protecting adolescents' employment. www.trabajo.gob.ar/leyes Retrieved on January 26, 2011.

³⁷ This national program had two components: "*Todos a Estudiar*" (All to study) and "*Volver a la Escuela*" (Going back to school), which together acted to guarantee equal access to and full completion of public school by reincorporating dropouts.

³⁸ See *Obra de Gobierno, MINISTERIO DE GESTIÓN SOCIAL*, for details on these and related public initiatives, their goals and outcomes. www.casarosada.gov.ar Retrieved August 8, 2010. See as well the *Ministerio de Desarrollo Social* for more information on the *Secretaría Nacional de Niñez, Adolescencia y Familia*. www.desarrollosocial.gob.ar

³⁹ See the *Ministerio de Salud de la Nación* website for details on its campaigns, programs and institutional structure. <http://www.msal.gov.ar>. Retrieved on April 8, 2011.

⁴⁰ The different websites that I have mentioned document in detail the outcomes of the specific initiatives deployed under the recovery of social rights policy.

⁴¹ By the term *informalidad laboral* or *trabajo precario* (precarious work), the government referred to employment that was not regulated, that is, a) it lacks mandatory benefits such as retirement, pension and health care contributions, and b) it does not respect mandatory safety norms.

⁴² This new law gave new competencies to the Work Ministry, which along with the AFIP (*Administración Federal de Ingresos Públicos*) performed official inspections and severely penalized employers that did not respect the new regulations dictated by the Social Security System (*Sistema de Seguridad Social*).

⁴³ This *Resolución* is part of the Law 26.063, *Recursos de la Seguridad Social* partially passed on December 6th, 2005.

⁴⁴ For details on this set of regulations see *Resolución General (AFIP) 2927/2010-Reglamentación Presunciones Laborales*, Ley 26.063-BO: 21/10/2010.

⁴⁵ See the Annex I of the *Reglamentación Presunciones Laborales*, where these two economic sectors are used to exemplify how calculations (estimates) are made. See the *Resolución General (AFIP) 2927/2010*, *Ibid.* for details.

⁴⁶ This tragedy was considered double because former complaints denouncing the circumstances under which migrants were being forced to work had been neglected by the city's government. According to the *Clinica Jurídica CELS-CAREF-UBA*, most of the complaints were informal because migrants were afraid of losing their jobs and housing; others were threatened with deportation (Acosta et al 2007). Pacecca and Courtis (2006) argue that complaints made by Bolivians in 2005 had already made

apparent the modalities under which exploitation and human trafficking were taking place along with the dangerous and unhealthy working conditions of some textile shops.

⁴⁷ According to Acosta et al (2007), migrants' vulnerability turned them into the victims of actors performing profitable unregulated activities. Pacea and Courtis (2006) show the complexity of these exploitative circumstances, which often involve compatriots bringing co-nationals to Argentina under false pretexts. They highlight three core issues: a) a wide range of actors benefits from these migrants' exploitation (the police, employers and state agencies); b) these practices are not new and combine intra- and inter-ethnic relationships regulating different work ethics; and c) the obligations and social networks surrounding remittances are based on kinship and friendship among other relationships.

⁴⁸ Pacea and Cerruti (2006) argue that the flaws in two specific areas of state controls (*fiscalización estatal*) are hindering the respect of migrant human rights in Argentina: a) migration controls and regulations at the border detecting irregular or clandestine entries that later on facilitate the exploitation and trafficking of people at the destination/s, and b) the regulation and control of workplaces, labour conditions and employment relationships under which foreigners work. Acosta et al (2007) claim that both the vulnerability and illegal conditions under which these migrants live are made possible by the lack of implementation of Argentina's new migration law of December 2003. The absence of information campaigns (migrants do not know their rights), discrimination and unscrupulous people contribute to this situation.

⁴⁹ *Régimen especial de seguridad social para empleados del servicio doméstico* is part of the Law 26.063 *Recursos de la Seguridad Social*. This new regime was partially approved on December 6th, 2005 and on May 5, 2011, the Deputy Chamber unanimously approved the bill: *Régimen especial de contratos de trabajo del personal de casas particulares* (see *Ley para el servicio doméstico, 05 de Mayo 2011*, retrieved on September 2011 from www.argentina.ar).

⁵⁰ The only antecedent to this new regime was the Decree/Law 326/56 of January 20, 1956, which rudimentarily regulated the rights and obligations of employers and employees of the *empleo doméstico*.

⁵¹ In the late 19th century, aboriginal women, who had been kidnapped as part of an official campaign to eliminate aboriginal peoples (Recalde 2006-a), and black women (Frigerio 2006) did the domestic work of wealthy households in Buenos Aires.

⁵² See 'Ya se blanquearon 400 mil empleadas domésticas, 14 de Agosto de 2010' at www.argentina.ar; retrieved on September 1st, 2011.

⁵³ See *Ley para el servicio doméstico, 05 de Mayo 2011* at www.argentina.ar; retrieved in September 2011.

⁵⁴ For details on these initiatives see the section entitled: "Trabajo Agrario" of the *Ministerio de Trabajo, Empleo y Seguridad Social*, which developed these measures together with the *Comisión Nacional de Trabajo Agrario (CNTA)*. www.trabajo.gob.ar/agrario Retrieved on January 27th, 2011.

⁵⁵ According to Cruces and Gasparini (2010), the fast economic recovery was aided by the new "relative structure of prices", which resulted from the strong devaluation of the Argentinean Peso in 2002. That is, the fall of real salaries increased the competitiveness of Argentinean products while discouraging imports. The peak in commodity prices, which increased the terms of exchange in the economy, and the high levels of liquidity of international capital markets also contributed to such fast recovery.

⁵⁶ See *Obra de Gobierno-TRABAJO* at www.caserosada.gov.ar; retrieved August 5, 2010, and *Inspección, Ministerio de Trabajo, Empleo y Seguridad Social* at <http://www.trabajo.gob.ar/inspeccion/metodologia>; retrieved January 28, 2011.

⁵⁷ See *Políticas de Estado*, under *POLÍTICA SOCIAL*. Ibid website.

⁵⁸ For details on this law and related issues see: “*Hablemostodos.ar: Ley Servicios Comunicación Audiovisual*” at www.argentina.ar/hablemostodos and *Autoridad Federal de Servicios de Comunicación Audiovisual* website at <http://www.afsca.gob.ar/web>.

⁵⁹ See *Radio y Televisión Argentina-Sociedad del Estado (RTA)*’s website, notably its section entitled: *Democratización de la Comunicación* at www.rta-se.com.ar/bicentenario.

⁶⁰ According to Kirchnerismo, this development “revealed” the inalienable human right to express, receive, disseminate and seek out information, ideas and opinions without any type of censorship. See “*Argentina en Noticias, La Nueva Ley de Medios punto por punto*” at <http://www.argentina.ar/es/pais/nueva-ley-de-medios>.

⁶¹ Aritz Recalde (2011-a) examines the relationship between the media and democracy in Argentina, and elaborates on the notions of “plurality of voices” in the 2000s vis-à-vis “free press” of the 1990s. Novick (2008) shows that the “neoconservative program” was put in place in Argentina by the military coup d’état of 1955, and how it progressively became hegemonic in the country’s institutions, so as to systematically oppose governments with strong popular support.

⁶² See this entity’s official website for more details: <http://www.afsca.gob.ar/web/>.

⁶³ The new law specifies who can be a license holder based on aptitude and experience in the activity (*idoneidad* and *arraigo en la actividad*) and, in tandem with Kirchnerismo’s human rights policies, specifically excludes those who held high-ranking positions under the military dictatorships. According to the law, the media plays a central role in the consolidation of the *Estado de Derecho* (law-abiding state) and democratic life (See *La nueva ley de medios punto por punto*, Ibid).

⁶⁴ When the service provider is a “commercial society”, it should always include national capital and limit the participation of foreign capital to up to 30% of the total shares.

⁶⁵ See the INCATV website at www.incaatv.gov.ar. The INCA is the *Instituto Nacional de Cine y Artes Audiovisuales*.

⁶⁶ See www.pakapaka.gov.ar and www.educ.ar, the two official websites dedicated to the production and promotion of quality programming for children.

⁶⁷ See the websites of *Canal 7*, *La TV Pública* (www.tvpublica.com.ar/tvpublica) and *Radio Nacional* (www.radionacional.com.ar) to have a better idea of their programming and the content endorsed by this new media law.

⁶⁸ This is mostly done by regularly broadcasting the diversity inherent in the country’s provinces. See the public TV and radio websites, Ibid.

⁶⁹ See, for example, the educational content and the resources available to teachers at <http://educ.ar> and <http://www.encuentro.gov.ar/EspacioDocente>.

⁷⁰ See *Obra de Gobierno-RELACIONES EXTERIORES* (www.casarosada.gov.ar, retrieved on August 5, 2010) and *Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Comercio Internacional y Culto* (<http://www.mrecic.gov.ar>) for details.

⁷¹ See *POLÍTICA EXTERIOR* for details on Kirchnerismo’s foreign policy at www.casarosada.gov.ar, retrieved on August 5, 2010.

⁷² Core to these goals have been two sets of developments: a) the ratification in 2004 of the *Protocolo de Ushuaia sobre el Compromiso Democrático* and the *Declaración Política del MERCOSUR, Bolivia y Chile como Zona de Paz*, which had been signed in 1998; and b) the creation of the *Observatorio de la Democracia del MERCOSUR* (ODM) in 2007 and the *Instituto de Políticas Públicas de Derechos Humanos* (IPPDDHH) in 2009. See Appendix C.

⁷³ Crucial to these efforts has been the *Instituto Social del MERCOSUR (SIM)*, created in 2007. See Appendix C for other important initiatives in this regard.

⁷⁴ Three initiatives have been integral to it: a) the *Protocolo de Olivos*, which regulates the resolution of controversies between bloc members (signed in 2002); b) the *Permanent Tribunal of Revision*,

which implements a mechanism of consultative opinion (created soon afterwards); and c) the *Parliament of the MERCOSUR* (functioning since 2005).

⁷⁵ Lazo-Civnades (2005) argues that the electoral victories of the political Left (*la izquierda*) in South America over the past decade have often been interpreted as the advancement of a homogeneous whole. For him, however, this left represents a rather heterogeneous set of forces carrying a certain discourse (ideology) that for large parts of the electorate is either *reivindicativo* (makes claims or demands) or offers an alternative to the (real or supposed) failure of neoliberalism and globalization. Armony (2011) claims that regional integration in Latin America is today a fact not only in the economic and political spheres, but also in the social and cultural ones. For Novick (2011), the Latin American integration process has generated a “strong strategic tension” with the model imposed by the United States through NAFTA.

⁷⁶ Aritz Recalde (2010-a) argues that the co-dependency developed between these two countries over the past decade structures their renegotiated roles in the MERCOSUR and signals a new era in Latin American regional integration, which is based on policy coordination and the consolidation of different “nodes of integration” in the region.

⁷⁷ The CSN was created by the *Declaración de Cusco* (December 8, 2004) and its name was changed to UNASUR by the *Declaración de Margarita* (April 16, 2007), when Quito (Ecuador) was established as the permanent headquarters of its General Secretariat. See UNASUR’S official website: www.pptunasur.com, retrieved on March 15, 2011.

⁷⁸ The core issues regulated by the *Declaración de Cusco* are the following: a) political and diplomatic consensus/harmonizing and coordination; b) deepening the convergence between the MERCOSUR, the Andean Community and Chile through the improvement of the free trade zone; c) greater integration in the spheres of energy and communications; d) the harmonization of rural development and of food and agricultural policies; e) the transfer of technology in the areas of science, education and culture; and f) the interaction between enterprises and civil society, taking into account the social responsibility of companies. See UNASUR’S website, *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ See the *Tratado Constitutivo de la Unión de Naciones Suramericanas* of May 23, 2008, which can be downloaded from UNASUR’S official website, *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ See the *Boletín-UNASUR* (on UNASUR’S official website) where the bloc expresses its condolences for Kirchner’s death. Retrieved April 5, 2011.

⁸¹ The meaning of *Norte* (north) here is double since it refers to (a) the geopolitical Global North, and (b) the Spanish expression of *perder el norte* (to lose one’s way). *TeleSUR* defines *SUR* (South) as a geopolitical concept that promotes peoples’ fight for peace, self-determination, respect for human rights and social justice. See *TeleSUR*’s website: www.telesur.tv, retrieved on April 11, 2011.

⁸² Among them, US Congressman Connie Mack (14th District, Florida) has accused *TeleSUR* of “creating a global TV chain for terrorists and other enemies of freedom” due to the exchange of audiovisual contents between *TeleSUR* and the Arab news chain Al-Jazeera in February 2006. See Mack’s official website for more information on his views and those of others seeking to discredit and shut down *TeleSUR*: <http://mack.house.gov>. Retrieved May 19, 2011. See also *TeleSUR*’s website for the evolution of its programming content, retrieved April 11, 2011.

⁸³ At the moment of its creation, 70% of *TeleSUR*’s financing was provided by Venezuela, while 5 other sponsor states (Argentina, Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador and Nicaragua) provided the remaining 30%.

⁸⁴ See *TELAM*’s official website for more details: www.telam.com.ar, consulted from March to May 2011.

⁸⁵ Argentinean diplomatic representations (embassies, consulates, etc.) in 90 countries also celebrated the Bicentenary. See *Bicentenario: festejos en el mundo. País, 28 de mayo de 2010*, retrieved from www.argentina.ar in May 31, 2011. For a complete list of celebrations see the *Bicentenario*’s official

website at www.bicentenario.argentina.ar. Retrieved on June 1st, 2011. The subsequent allusions I make to the celebrations taking place at the *Paseo* come from the official website's section entitled "*Bicentenario*", except when otherwise indicated.

⁸⁶ The *Revolución de Mayo* was a historical process that in 1810 led to the cutting of colonial ties connecting Argentina to Spain and made possible the independence of the country in 1816. A liberation movement had sought since 1806 to increase the *criollos* (Argentinean-born people of European and aboriginal ancestry)' economic and political participation in society. However, it was only in 1810, upon receiving the news of the Spanish defeat by the French, that the *criollos* convened a *Cabildo Abierto*, which led to the *Congreso de Tucumán* on July 9, 1816, thus concretizing Argentina's independence.

⁸⁷ Each of the twenty Argentinean provinces displayed their arts and crafts, gastronomy, and "natural beauty". The *Feria de las provincias* also included a) "*Provincia 25*": *Argentinos en el Mundo*, which represented Argentinians living abroad; b) "*Provincia del Futuro*": *Espacio de Niños*; and c) *Nación-Ciudad*, which highlighted the relationship between the Nation, as the organizer of the celebrations, and the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, as the host of the *Revolución de Mayo de 1810*.

⁸⁸ The participant countries were Brazil, Uruguay, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Paraguay, Ecuador, Chile, Venezuela, Panama, Mexico, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, El Salvador, Cuba, Spain, France, Italy and the *Secretaría General Iberoamericana* (Segib).

⁸⁹ Each of these *Puertas Temáticas* analyzed, through the work of an artist, one of the following six themes: Human Rights, Identity, Employment/Work (*Trabajo*), Culture, Democracy and Institutions. The three *Escenarios Federales* and the *Escenario Principal* hosted the tributes paid to National Rock and Cinema as well as performances of tango and folklore, the Argentinean Symphonic Orchestra, and the National Polyphonic Chorus among others.

⁹⁰ According to official statistics, 6 million people participated in the celebrations of the Bicentenary at free parades, shows and other spectacles: 15,000 people participated in the 4 parades, and 6,000 people visited, every day, each of the 117 stands of the *Paseo*. In terms of infrastructure: 20,000 square meters were fenced off; 50,000 meters of tubular structures were built; 27,000 square meters of canvas and backstage areas were put in place, and 7,000 lights and 2 million Argentinean flags were installed. See *La Fiesta del Bicentenario*, retrieved from www.bicentenario.argentina.ar on May 31, 2011.

⁹¹ Particularly monumental was one of the closing shows entitled *Desfile del Bicentenario*, an artistic and historical spectacle that I describe when I mention the parades held during the celebrations. For videos of the celebrations see the Bicentenary's official website, *Ibid*.

⁹² The most notable was the spectacle of lights and music called *Mapping del Cabildo* on May 25th, which narrated the country's history through the video projection of images on the *Cabildo's* façade. See the *Paseo del Bicentenario's* section (*Ibid*) for official speech on this issue.

⁹³ This was the Argentina-Canada match that was part of the World Cup of Soccer held on May 24, 2010.

⁹⁴ On May 25th, called *TC en el Paseo*, there was an exhibit of *Turismo Carretera* (Road Racing), and later on the start of the "symbolic race". The TC is very popular in Argentina.

⁹⁵ During my fieldwork, I often heard this sort of comment, emphasizing the emotional and touching tone of the celebrations, coming from both those who had participated in the events at the *Paseo* and those who followed them online and/or on TV.

⁹⁶ There were four parades: (1) the *Desfile Histórico Militar* on May 22, with more than 5,000 members of the *Fuerzas Armadas y de Seguridad*; (2) the *Desfile Federal*, also on May 22, with more than 3,000 people portraying urban and street music, dance and other artistic expressions; (3) the *Desfile de la Integración* on May 23, with more than 4,000 members of 80 *colectividades* (migrant groups) wearing "typical" clothing; and (4) the *Desfile del Bicentenario* on May 25, with more than

2,000 actors in scene for two hours, which integrated groundbreaking aesthetics with cutting edge technology.

⁹⁷ See the *AGENDA* section of the *Bicentenario*'s website.

⁹⁸ See *Comienza el año bicentenario*. Ibid. For the short biographies of the fathers of Latin American independence see the chapter's first section and Appendix C.

⁹⁹ See *Comienza el Año del Bicentenario, Cultura, 26 de Mayo de 2010* at www.argentina.ar, retrieved on May 31, 2012.

¹⁰⁰ The representatives of other countries came from Canada, Germany, India, Trinidad and Tobago, Austria, France, Dominican Republic, Peru, Ireland, Algeria, Spain, Serbia, Libya, Jordan, Palestine, Mexico, Panama, Cuba and Rumania. See *Fiesta del Bicentenario* for more details, Ibid, retrieved on May 31, 2011.

¹⁰¹ The *Casa Rosada* is the official seat of the executive branch of the Argentinean government and the office of the President. It is also considered to be one of the most emblematic buildings in Buenos Aires, having been declared a national historic monument in Argentina. See its official website for more details: www.casarosada.gov.ar.

¹⁰² The portraits on display were donated by other states in the region. The Argentinean government donated oil paintings of Juan Domingo Perón, Eva Duarte de Perón, José de San Martín, Juan Manuel de Rosas, Manuel Belgrano and Hipólito Yrigoyen. To see a list of the historical leaders selected by the other participating countries as their respective national heroes and Latin American patriots, see *Salón de los Patriotas Latinoamericanos*, at the Bicentenary website; retrieved on May 31, 2011. See as well *Galería de los Patriotas Latinoamericanos, País, 26 de Mayo de 2010* for a short clip that, through the narrative of a girl, portrays the Argentinean government's view of the current "Latin American union" and identifies the patriots considered the *Padres de la Patria Grande* (Fathers of the Enlarged Homeland).

¹⁰³ *Salón de los Patriotas Latinoamericanos*, Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ The opening of the gallery was followed by a *Cena de Honor* (Gala Honour Dinner) held at the *Salón Blanco* of the *Casa Rosada*. See *Cena de Estado en el Salón Blanco*, retrieved on May 31, 2011 from the Bicentenary's website.

¹⁰⁵ President Fernández emphasized the difference between the independence celebrations held in 1910 and those of 2010 at a speech she gave at the launch of the gallery. While in 1910, celebrations had taken place in a country under a state of siege, where socialist and anarchist union leaders (European immigrants) were being persecuted, the 2010 commemorations were "different and popular" (*con el pueblo en las calles*). See *Comienza el Año del Bicentenario*, Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ See *La Casa*'s official website for details at <http://www.casadelbicentenario.gob.ar/la-casa>, retrieved on May 30, 2011.

¹⁰⁷ This federal channel broadcasts content from all regions of Argentina and does not include any advertisements. See its website for details: www.encuentro.gov.ar.

¹⁰⁸ This portal implements the policies of the Ministry of Education in the area of Information Technologies and Communication (TIC) and focuses on aiding teachers and directors of educational institutions to incorporate the TIC into their work. See its website for more details: educ.ca.

¹⁰⁹ These were *200 sucesos* (http://www.bicentenario.argentina.ar/listado_historia.php?decada=1810) and *25 miradas_200 minutos: los cortos del Bicentenario* (<http://www.25miradas.gob.ar>). I consulted these websites between May and June 2011.

¹¹⁰ See *Bicentenario TV*, *Diario El Bicentenario*, *Reviví el Bicentenario*, and *Qué nos define como argentinos? Elegí los 200 símbolos del bicentenario* on the Bicentenary's official website; also follow the link to *2.0 participá* to access the Bicentenary's pages on Facebook, YouTube and flickr.

¹¹¹ *POLITICA EXTERIOR, Presidencia de la Nación Argentina*. Ibid.

¹¹² Representatives of migrant organizations, NGOs, religious institutions, human rights organizations, unions and some political actors (the Population Commission of the Deputy Chamber, the Direction of Women and the Sub-Secretary of Human Rights of Buenos Aires City, the INADI and the Human Rights Secretary of the Nation) worked since the return to democracy in 1983 to derogate the previous migration law. The *Mesa de Organizaciones por los Derechos de los Inmigrantes* also played a crucial role in this process. See Novick (2008) for an examination of the historical context and the parliamentary debates surrounding the sanction of the new migration law and the juridical discourse that it embodies. See as well the volume edited by Giustiniani (ed., 2004), who as the President of the Population and Human Resources Commission of the Deputy Chamber, drafted the bill and promoted its sanction. Domenech (2007) argues that the elaboration of this law made apparent the disputes, divergences and contradictions within the state.

¹¹³ By the *Decree 616/2010: Reglamentación de la Ley de Migraciones N 25.871 y sus modificaciones*. The whole text of the new law along with the modifications introduced by its *reglamentación* can be found at the *Dirección Nacional de Migraciones*'s website at: <http://www.migraciones.gov.ar>.

¹¹⁴ Jelin (2006) argues that even if the migration phenomenon was not central to the agenda of the post-dictatorship political transition, the state's dominant interpretative framework emphasized both the defense of human rights (which had been violated during the dictatorship) and the broadening of the notion of human rights (so as to make it the foundation of the new constitutional regime). This, along with the implementation of mechanisms of direct expression of citizenship demands made it possible for the migration issue to enter the state's sphere.

¹¹⁵ According to article 4: "The right to migrate is essential and inalienable to the person and the Argentinean Republic guarantees it under principles of equality and universality" (my translation).

¹¹⁶ Art. 17 establishes that: "The state will provide the means conducive to the adoption and implementation of measures seeking to regularize the migration situation of foreigners" (my translation).

¹¹⁷ In addition to what is stipulated in art. 28, on the first page of the law's *reglamentación* is indicated that "...Argentina has reformulated the objectives of its migration policy within the framework of Latin American regional integration, respecting human rights and migrants' mobility, which is aimed at fostering mutual cooperation among MERCOSUR's state members and associates..." (my translation).

¹¹⁸ At the time of writing this thesis, many studies had already analyzed this new migration law, which allowed me to evaluate the gap between its formal postulates and its deployment on the ground. This was not feasible for most public policies of Kirchnerismo, however, due to the scarcity of studies that have examined them.

¹¹⁹ According to the DNM, 12,065 migrants regularized their situation thanks to this plan; the largest group coming from China, followed by Koreans, Colombians and Dominicans (Novick 2010). For Ceriani Cernadas and Asa (2005), 14,000 people went to the DNM to benefit from this plan, and most of them were Asians, Africans, non-MERCOSUR Latin Americans and Eastern Europeans.

¹²⁰ See the DNM's website for the procedures to be followed and the requirements to be met by MERCOSUR and non-MERCOSUR migrants at <http://www.migraciones.gov.ar>.

¹²¹ The statistics of other MERCOSUR nationalities are the following: A) through PG: Uruguay (10,790), Chile (5,360), Brazil (4,600), Colombia (1,247), Ecuador (930), Venezuela (217) and Panama (1). These statistics correspond to migrants who were in the first stage of the program and had arrived in Argentina before April 17, 2006. B) Through the "nationality criteria": Colombia (13,538), Chile (12,311), Brazil (9,727), Uruguay (7,003), Ecuador (4,495), and Venezuela (3,115). Statistics elaborated by the *Oficina Temas Internacionales, DNM* (Sept. 2009), cited in Novick (2010), p.20.

¹²² The use of a legalistic paradigm in the analysis of migrants' rights and experiences is not unique to Argentina and South America (Domenech 2008-b, Novick 2010), but has also prevailed over other

approaches in Europe and North America over the past decade. The websites of two recent international events, in which I participated, are quite illuminating in this regard: the 11th EASA (European Association of Social Anthropologists) Biennial Conference, Maynooth (Ireland), August 24-27, 2010 and the Canadian Association for Refugee and Forced Migration Studies (CARFMS) Annual Conference, Montréal (Canada), May 11-13, 2011.

¹²³ Both the DNM and the RENAPER worked under the Ministry of the Interior. See its website for more information, specifically the sections entitled *DNI* and *Migraciones* at <http://www.mininterior.gov.ar>

¹²⁴ Acosta et al (2007) effectively show this problematic issue through their analysis of a) the case of Bolivian migrants working in textile shops (pp. 297-298), b) the illegitimate restrictions on access to social security (*seguridad social*) imposed on foreigners who have not spent “enough” time in Argentina (pp.299-303), and c) the refusal to grant juridical assistance to foreigners without a DNI (most often migrants who had been swindled with faked DNIs) (p.304). Ceriani Cernadas and Asa (2005) examined several restrictions imposed upon migrants and the abuses that they endured between the approval of the new migration law and *PG*’s implementation.

¹²⁵ Political views aside, this judgment might be at least partly influenced by the fact that these scholars have seen the whole development of the program (based on their publication dates) while the critics I mentioned earlier only examined its beginnings.

¹²⁶ Domenech (2007) has noted, however, that the participation of these diverse actors was not equal and that most of them were based in Buenos Aires, which reproduced the center-periphery relationship that Kirchnerismo was supposed to reverse. For him, the inclusion of a multitude of civil society actors is today part of the legitimization strategies deployed by the government.

¹²⁷ Novick (2010) claims that new migration policy in Argentina is being “de-nationalized” due to a) the adoption of international norms that consider migration to be an essential human right that limits the autonomy and power of the state, and b) the priority given to regional integration as a relevant factor in guaranteeing rights, which defines policy by criteria that exceed the strictly national. Nejamkis and Rivero Sierra (2010) argue that the deepening of MERCOSUR and the importance given to it by Kirchnerismo have been crucial in the development of Argentina’s new migration policy.

¹²⁸ For Domenech (2007), the control of borders and national territory are at the heart of regularization programs seeking to identify and track people’s movements in South America. In 2005, Argentina deployed two sets of strategies to expand its control of migrations in tandem with the deepening of regional integration. Namely, the Ministry of the Interior created the *Sistema Integrado de Captura Migratoria* while the DNM developed three National Registries (*Admisión de Extranjeros*, *Aptitud Migratoria* and *Ingreso y Egreso del Territorio*).

¹²⁹ As was explicitly stated at the beginning of this chapter, my intention was not to analyze the contradictions nor the internal frictions and divisions of Kirchnerismo.

¹³⁰ The restructuring of productive relations in tandem with evolving (ethnic, religious, national, class, political, etc.) group hierarchies in contexts characterized by the arrival of successive immigration waves has been well documented in the literature. See, for example, Bourgois (1996) and Devoto (2004).

¹³¹ Migrants who worked in rural areas of the partido before holding urban occupations in La Plata very often used the term *sucio* (dirty) to describe their former horticulture or flower production jobs. This label referred to the muddy rural environment as well as to its precarious infrastructure and public services. While “dirty” jobs were ranked lower to urban ones by most migrants who decided to stay in the city, those choosing to go back to rural areas of the partido disagreed. This was the case of Bolivians of rural origin, who valued the quietness and close social interaction characteristic of the partido’s rural areas (see chapter VI).

¹³² Barth (1969, 1998) defines *ethnic boundaries* as social constructions (even when they have a territorial counterpart) that organize people's interaction by entailing criteria for determining and signalling membership and exclusion. Thus, it is the maintenance of the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the 'cultural content' that it encloses. Moreover, socially relevant factors alone become diagnostic for membership, rather than overt 'objective' differences.

¹³³ My use of quotes here signals: a) the deployment of homogenizing national labels by Platenses and migrants alike, and b) the defying strategies often advanced by those being targeted by such labelling process (Recalde 2006-a).

¹³⁴ According to the Director of the Municipality's *Dirección General de Colectividades y Migraciones*, Chinese migrants arrived in La Plata (and other parts of the country) with their paperwork in order and ready to work either in the mini-market of a compatriot or with enough capital to open their own.

¹³⁵ The Chinese *Cámara de Comercio* in La Plata has been crucial in speeding up the processing of permits to open mini-markets in the *partido* and supports the profitable performance of these stores through subsidies.

¹³⁶ In one such store where I did participant observation and in-depth interviews, both husband and wife run the business. In order to so, they left their baby at home with a young Bolivian woman, who also cleaned their home and could replace either of them at work.

¹³⁷ Tax evasion strategies in Chinese mini-markets in La Plata mostly consisted in paying employees salaries much lower than the minimum wage (as established by the law), avoiding employer's contributions to employees' health care and pension plans, and declaring business profits far lower than their actual gains.

¹³⁸ If they saw someone they did not know suspiciously loitering around the *verdulería*, Sandro went to the sidewalk, where he could easily ask for help if needed.

¹³⁹ According to Devincenzi (2006) in October 2001, 55.6% of the country's minors (under 18 years of age) were poor and almost 60% of the nation's poor were younger than 24 years of age. By May 2002, these statistics were 66.6% and 56.3% respectively. In addition, 47.7% of the youth aged 19 to 24 were poor and 15.2% were indigent; 20% of those aged 15 to 24 did not work, search for work, study or do domestic chores. Buenos Aires province has 58.2% of the country's youth under these circumstances.

¹⁴⁰ See Echeverría (2008) who elaborates on the temporality of this insecurity: a supposed "glorious" past is compared to both an "insecure" present and a "terrible" future.

¹⁴¹ In 2010, it was mostly when purposefully asking people about (in)security or paying close attention to mundane details during participant observation that these precautions became evident to me. The extent to which this was the case struck me when, after some months of fieldwork, I realized that I had come to "alarm myself" even if feeling at ease. Systematically and without exception, I turned on and off the alarm system of the house where I lived, which was located in a neighbourhood of City Bell that was widely considered very safe.

¹⁴² The privatization of public security and public space in Argentina became most apparent during the 1990s in the GBA. The decade witnessed the proliferation of the so-called *countries* (private neighbourhoods kept under surveillance 24 hours per day) and a range of attendant services and goods catering to this well-off clientele. Capdevielle (2009) signals some of these developments.

¹⁴³ This phenomenon was not unique to La Plata but was also occurring in other parts of Argentina, and certainly in the GBA. Some Argentinean scholars have argued, however, that at the peak of the country's last crisis (2001-2002), an important change in the nation's social imaginary took place (affecting how the nation imagined itself), which in turn altered the way in which migrants were perceived and positioned in the national imaginary. The Argentinean anthropologist Grimson (2006) considers that the *limitrofes* were assigned a crucial role in the 1990s neoliberal model (where their

criminalization served to confirm the claimed “white superiority” of Argentina in Latin America) and that with the end of this model’s legitimacy, the stigmatization of *imitrofes* became irrelevant, albeit temporarily.

¹⁴⁴ Maffia and Zubrzycki (in press) examine the recent visibilization process of the “Afro” population in Argentina (Cape Verdeans, new African migrants and afro-descendants) and give a concise portrait of these groups. For an exhaustive study of Cape Verdeans in Argentina see Maffia (2010). See as well Frigerio (2006), who analyzes the processes involved in the (historical and present) invisibilization of blacks in Argentina and the concomitant shift operated in official and ordinary discourse to transform racial categories and classifications into cultural ones in the construction of a “white” Argentina.

¹⁴⁵ To complement the point that I make here, see Pickus and Skerry (2007), who argue for the strengthening of horizontal (informal) and vertical (institutional) relations integral to citizenship in order to overcome the illegal-legal immigration debate in present day US. To prove that both ties of membership into the political community are vital, the authors show that most Americans care about immigrants being good neighbours, while the government fears them failing to be good citizens.

¹⁴⁶ I am referring to the decree Dec. N 64/10, signed at Foz de Iguazú on December 16, 2010 in which the *Consejo del Mercado Común* introduced the *Estatuto de la Ciudadanía del MERCOSUR. Plan de Acción*, which stipulates how to establish MERCOSUR citizenship’s status in up to 10 years. The fundamental rights and benefits granted to MERCOSUR nationals consist of: a) free circulation of people in the region; b) equal civil, social, cultural and economic rights and freedoms; and c) equal access to employment, health care and education. This and other regulations can be downloaded from MERCOSUR’S official website: <http://www.mercosur.int>. Additionally, Argentina’s new migration law establishes the free circulation of people in the MERCOSUR as one of its objectives (art.28); see previous chapter on this issue.

¹⁴⁷ See the volume edited by Al-Ali and Koser (2002), particularly Chapter 1, for a critical examination of the meanings and uses of the notion of *home* by scholars and those on the move.

¹⁴⁸ Knowing someone as in the sense of Anderson’s (1983) imagined communities and being able to trust the person as in Barth’s (1969) basic value orientations.

¹⁴⁹ See Ratier (1971) on the notion of *villeros* in Argentina as well as the previous section.

¹⁵⁰ Reminiscent of a former architectural style, this type of multi-family housing referred to as *casa chorizo* is still very common in La Plata and other localities of the GBA.

¹⁵¹ By the time I met César, he was working not only on repairing shoes but also received orders from boutiques and designers to assemble sandals and boots (by sawing or gluing the already-cut pieces he received) and taught some courses on shoe-making.

¹⁵² Ong (1999) borrows Foucault’s (1975, 1978) notion of *regime* to refer to power/knowledge schemes that seek to normalize power relations by appealing to particular “truths” that have developed about science, culture and social life.

¹⁵³ Applied to the design of public policy, this repressive and austere ideology has only reinforced the historical concentration of wealth and opportunities in migrants’ countries of origin, leading to the deepening of their structural poverty levels. Under these circumstances, poor people have been left with only one “option”: struggle to survive, as most migrants I interviewed explained.

¹⁵⁴ Most women I interviewed mentioned having very negative experiences delivering their babies back home. Some talked about public hospitals rejecting them because they could not pay for the services, while others said that they had been charged exorbitant fees for products they never used. Some women also spoke about traumatizing experiences, where their hands and feet were bound while they were badly treated by doctors.

¹⁵⁵ See <http://www.gob.gba.gov.ar/portal/subsecretarias/SubGobierno/dniRapido.php> for detailed information on these centres.

¹⁵⁶ This was the way in which each of them described where they came from. Aníbal's home town is located in the south-west of the country whereas Nancy's is in central Paraguay, to the north of Asunción.

¹⁵⁷ I doubt that Nancy's employer, a mother herself, could have missed Nancy's (second) 7 month-pregnancy. I believe that this unscrupulous employer sought to defer paying her salary as long as possible, knowing that she would not leave without it.

¹⁵⁸ The whole issue remained unclear at the time I interviewed them years later. Nancy's aunt was a nurse and built two houses in Argentina (one in Villa Alba, another in Buenos Aires) and one in Asunción, Paraguay. After this incident she was not seen or heard from again.

¹⁵⁹ Taxi drivers helped the couple to find a recently opened clinic that accepted premature babies. Their stay at the hospital ended up being extremely expensive because they were charged not only for the room and arriving and departure fees, but also for a so-called *bolsa de parto* (delivery bag), which they never used. This lucrative business consists of imposing the purchase of these bags on clients, most of whom never use its contents, which permits the clinic to re-sell the same items many times.

¹⁶⁰ Nancy managed to get her DNI immediately thanks to their Argentinean daughter, whereas Aníbal, who completed the procedures before Nancy, was still waiting for his. He had initially done his paperwork when the local government offered to document migrants so they could vote in municipal elections. Nevertheless, despite having complied with all requirements, including paying the fees, he had never received his DNI. As a result, Aníbal ended up going through the procedure again, although this time, because of their Argentinean daughter, he was sure he would get his DNI quickly.

¹⁶¹ Interestingly, this double dynamic involving pushing to gain access and surrounding to prevent it resembles the general evolution of citizenship rights, which led to the emergence of civil, social, political and cultural rights over the 18th, 19th, 20th and 21st centuries respectively. See Shafir (2004) and Lipschutz (2004).

¹⁶² Those who occupy abandoned property almost always win their cases in court by proving that the sum of money they have spent taking care of the property is either greater than or equal to its actual price. This tends to be the case because most abandoned lots were originally purchased at low prices (due to their distant location from urban areas at the time), yet population growth and the need to house new urban dwellers have turned areas formerly considered distant into proximate ones. Aitor Recalde, Civil and Construction Engineer, *Subsecretaría de Recursos Hídricos de la Nación*; personal communication, April 2012.

¹⁶³ Through this sort of labour cooperative, compatriots (men) help one another build their houses by taking turns. The work is done on weekends (to avoid interfering with job obligations) and the owner of the house being built is in charge of providing food and beverages. According to those I interviewed, this practice is most common among Paraguayans and, to a lesser extent, among Peruvians and Bolivians.

¹⁶⁴ Nancy and Aníbal could not agree upon the nationality of some neighbours, who for her were Bolivians and for him were Peruvians.

¹⁶⁵ I believe this manifests their conflicting feelings about living in Villa Elvira, a part of them having naturalized their harmful environment, yet another still attempting to dismiss the *barrio's* most negative aspects by highlighting its positive sides.

¹⁶⁶ The extent to which parents deal with this issue in Villa Elvira varies enormously, ranging from some who do not explain these illicit trades to their children, simply telling them to avoid those neighbours, to others who discuss at length with them the dangers involved in the drug and sex trades.

¹⁶⁷ Soledad's family was registered into this plan by a Paraguayan man, who knew the rules very well. In the past, people waited for about eight years before taking possession of their homes, but President Fernandez has promised people access to their homes in less than three years from their enrolment.

¹⁶⁸ Female compatriots living in that *pensión* had taught César to cook, helped care for their child and shared food with them.

¹⁶⁹ Richard's voice, mannerisms, body language, postures and clothing are strongly feminine even if he does not present himself as a woman. Moreover, most of the work that he does at the house of his female employer in City Bell belongs to occupations traditionally considered feminine, such as cleaning, cooking and waxing floors.

¹⁷⁰ This was so common during the 1990s that migrants included this expenditure (the penalty to be paid at the border) when calculating the overall cost of their trips back home.

¹⁷¹ See Brettell's (2003) analysis of *Emigrar para voltar*, on the Portuguese ideology of return migration, which corresponds to the phenomenon I examine here.

¹⁷² The *maestro mayor de obra* is the person in charge of guaranteeing the good and timely development of a construction project. This job is the top-ranking authority in the day-to-day *obra*. Unlike architects or engineers, who visit construction sites only occasionally, in order to supervise their *maestros mayor de obra*, the latter are required to be on site until a project is finished.

¹⁷³ Both the sort of claim posed by Ana and the sensitive response given by the policeman signal an important shift from the 1990s, when the discretionary power given to this institution to handle undocumented migrants resulted in abuse of authority, easy deportations and a climate of regnant insecurity (Recalde 2006-a).

¹⁷⁴ The *Monotributo* or *Sistema de Régimen Simplificado* regulates the contributions to be made by autonomous or independent workers. It establishes a monthly, fixed amount based on the earnings of the worker, which includes taxes and social contributions (to retirement and pension plans for example). See the AFIP's website for more details: <http://www.afip.gob.ar/monotributo>

¹⁷⁵ Of those interviewed in my research (apart from Lucas), only two Paraguayan men working as building concierges in Buenos Aires and two Bolivian *verduleros* in La Plata city obtained their DNI through the services of a lawyer.

¹⁷⁶ Although this private clinic paid them well in the beginning, their salaries dramatically decreased over time because they were not paid for all the hours they worked. This situation led Ana's friend (the Argentinean nurse) to take their employers to court, but Ana abstained from doing so herself, fearing that such a legal action could hamper getting her DNI.

¹⁷⁷ Interestingly enough, the two men who spoke at length about the marginalizing they experienced, and the suffering that it involved, were Lucas from Peru (in his late 40s) and Richard from Paraguay (in his mid-20s, see previous section). Both men occupy labour niches traditionally considered feminine, such as caring for the elderly (as a nurse assistant) and performing domestic chores (as an *empleada doméstica*) respectively. Their transgression of a well-established gendered division of labour seems to have been paralleled by their going beyond the conversation topics identified as masculine by interviewees.

¹⁷⁸ Another *Señora*, who was the owner of a fashionable boutique in La Plata, only paid Ana 5\$ pesos per hour and treated her with disdain. This employer's high expectations did not match Ana's miserable pay and mistreatment since she wanted her house to be spotless and shining. Others even made Ana do "light jobs", such as cleaning windows or ironing clothes, during her breaks.

¹⁷⁹ A friend of Ana's, for example, sent her daughter to Peru in order to work without consulting anyone, out of pride and ignorance of citizenship norms, and by the time she tried to bring her daughter back, it was impossible. Since the child was Argentinean, expensive paperwork had to be done, which the mother could not afford. Moreover, after years of separation, the daughter did not want to join her mother, but demanded a great deal from her financially.

¹⁸⁰ Ana took a bus from the *pensión* in Los Hornos to La Plata's train station, where she took the train to Buenos Aires. From the station, she walked several blocks to get to her employer's house.

¹⁸¹ Ana was also robbed of her documentation in a separate incident, which complicated her visits to Leo in jail. She had been robbed at night by an Argentinean couple in their forties, who were under the heavy influence of drugs and alcohol. I come back to this incident in chapter VII.

¹⁸² Prices in Peru are expressed in US dollars even if its official currency is the *Sol*.

¹⁸³ The strong support that Ana obtained from the Peruvian Consulate contrasts with the experiences of other Peruvians in La Plata such as César, who considers that their consulate is useless, except when it wants to get migrants' votes.

¹⁸⁴ Leo's initial sentence was of twelve years and was reduced to nine, while his good conduct in jail permitted another reduction of two years through probation. As a result, he spent seven years in prison. Leo's good conduct also allowed him to obtain some very advantageous jobs, such as being the Director's *mozo* or personal waiter. When this Director left, his replacement took Leo to work in an outbuilding in Olmos, where he washed cars and loaded trucks practically on the streets, as he puts it.

¹⁸⁵ Some migrants mentioned having family in Chile and Brazil, whereas only a few indicated Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela and Switzerland as their relatives' destinations.

¹⁸⁶ I use parentheses to indicate that these two localities are commonly designated Olmos and Etcheverry respectively.

¹⁸⁷ The Spanish term *golondrina* (swallow) emphasizes the seasonal mobility of these workers by comparing them to the migration bird.

¹⁸⁸ The military service in Argentina, normally referred to as *colimba*, changed from being compulsory to voluntary in 1995. This was the result of the diminishing number of conscripts every year, the experience of the 1982 Guerra de Malvinas (Falklands War) which proved the superiority of professional servicemen over conscripts, and a series of conscription-related brutality scandals which culminated with the death of Private Omar Carrasco at an Army base in 1994 due to brutal disciplinary action. The term *colimba* is a composite word derived from the verbs *correr* (to run), *limpiar* (to clean) and *barrer* (to sweep).

¹⁸⁹ Benencia (1997) highlights the "work without rest and with sacrifice" of Bolivians in the *cinturón verde bonaerense* (Buenos Aires province's green belt), which "native workers cannot imitate" (p.85).

¹⁹⁰ The term *criollo* is used in Latin America to refer to those people resulting from the *métissage* between European colonizers (mostly Spaniards) and aboriginal peoples. In this context, however, Rufino uses the term to refer to Argentinians and to distinguish them from Bolivians.

¹⁹¹ The *Area Hortícola Bonaerense (AHB)* is the most important in the country because of the volume that it produces and the number of productive sites that it contains. The AHB not only supplies Buenos Aires City and the GBA, but also exports to other provinces (Benencia 2003).

¹⁹² *Subsecretaría de Coordinación Económica, Ministerio de Economía* website: <http://www.ec.gba.gov.ar/estadistica/chfba/censohort.htm>, retrieved on May 1, 2012.

¹⁹³ Rufino did not use the term "neighbourhood" but *acá* (here) when talking about the nearest residential area that his family shared with others, and *la zona* (area), *el campo* or *la zona de campo* when referring to the larger area comprised by *Las Quintas*. I chose to use the term neighbourhood to convey the sense of *locality* and *close relationships* between families, which were characteristic of Rufino's residential area. I qualify this social geography as *dispersed* to emphasize its rural setting, which is more spacious than its urban counterpart, and does not separate residence (home) from work spaces, as tends to be the case in urban areas, except for *verduleros* and *costureras* or seamstresses whose workplace was also their family's home.

¹⁹⁴ As emphasized by these authors, assemblage is a conceptual resource that has to do with the imaginaries of shifting relations and emergent conditions of spatially distributed objects of study in the contemporary period of globalization. It is a notion that evokes emergence and heterogeneity.

¹⁹⁵The restructuring of Argentina's education system during the 1990s required students in their final high school years to choose an area of specialization according to their closest interests and future choice of university career. This was problematic because most youth either did not know what to choose or were not planning to attend university. The number of years to be spent at primary and high school also changed. These modifications brought about serious problems of a strategic, financial and training nature. Teachers were not prepared for teaching the newly proposed curricula, buildings were not adequate to receive fast-changing populations (resulting from a change in the zoning of school districts), and funding was not well allocated to finance the wide range of changes taking place. Various changes have been implemented since then to reverse the negative consequences of such educational policies.

¹⁹⁶Juan Evo Morales Ayma (born October 26, 1959) is a Bolivian politician and activist. Morales has been the leader of both the *Movimiento al Socialismo* party (MAS) and the *cocalero* trade union. Morales' presidency has focused on implementing leftist policies and poverty reduction measures, introducing a new constitution and land reforms, nationalizing various key industries, and opposing both United States and corporate involvement in the country's politics.

¹⁹⁷ Morales was born into a working class Aymara family in Isallawi, Orinoca Canton, and grew up helping his parents as a subsistence farmer. After studying, Morales undertook national service until 1978, when he returned to family farming and eventually settled into growing coca. His social activism led him into the political arena. As the leader of the MAS, Morales has been involved in the gas conflict and the Cochabamba protests of 2000, which sought to give more power to the country's indigenous and poor communities by means of land reforms and redistribution of wealth.

¹⁹⁸ There are two main types of Argentinean DNI (*Document Nacional de Identidad*): one for temporary and permanent residents, which is dark red, and another for citizens, which since 2010 is light blue (it had been dark green before).

¹⁹⁹ The *cajones* or *vacíos* are used to store, carry and display horticultural products. Their rental involves paying a small price for their use, which is added to that of the products being bought. *Cajones* circulate among the different social actors involved in the commercialization process.

²⁰⁰ The construction of the so-called *blanquedad* ("whiteness") *porteña* has occurred at two levels since the 19th century: a) in the dominant narrative of the Argentinean history through the constant *invisibilization* of the "black presence" and its influences and contributions to Argentinean culture, and b) in quotidian social interaction through the continuous *invisibilization* of black phenotypical traits (Frigerio 2006).

²⁰¹ Although to a lesser extent, the term *negro* can also be used in a positive way, to denote affection and closeness between people who know each other very well, and interact in informal settings. The term still makes reference to the person's "dark" complexion.

²⁰² See the official website of the *Feria La Salada* for further information, including an historical account of how it was created in 1991 and its evolution since then: <http://www.ferialasalada.com.ar>

²⁰³ The disadvantaged peripheries of La Plata and the GBA, where some of the migrants participating in my research have lived, lack the strong presence of public institutions catering to social needs characteristic of the French working-class banlieues studied by Wacquant (2008), however.