

**GRATITUDE
AS A SOCIAL
PRAXIS**

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César Ceriani Cernadas (ed.)

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INTRODUCTION

César Ceriani Cernadas

This work is the outcome of the collaboration between the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative Foundation (AHI) and the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences, Argentine Headquarters (FLACSO) since September 2017. In fact, the two institutions signed a cooperation agreement at the Aurora Prize event, held in Yerevan, Armenia between May 25 and 27, 2017.

The FLACSO – Aurora project involved two types of activities on the same theme: the symbolic and the practical action of gratitude in the dynamics of contemporary social movements. With the title Social Movements and the Praxis of Gratitude, the first activity of the project consisted of organizing and implementing a Research Contest. The contest granted three grants to carry out short-term investigations during 5 months, between April and August of 2017. The second activity involved the organization of an International Seminar among Latin American academics and practitioners from human and social sciences who, from different points of view, debated the role of gratitude in the construction of social movements' identity. The event was held on April 24, 2018 at the FLACSO headquarters in the City of Buenos Aires as part of the Aurora Dialogues Global Programming.

Participants in the Seminar included Luis Alberto Quevedo, FLACSO's Director, and Valentina Delich, FLACSO's focal point for the the Collaboration Agreement. After the opening remarks, César Ceriani Cernadas, Project Coordinator and Pedro Mouratian, member of the Panel of Independent Experts of the AHI, made presentations explaining the project's objectives. At the Seminar, they announced the three finalists of the 2018 Aurora Prize 2018, synchronizing the Buenos Aires event to the global communication of the candidates, which is made every year on the commemoration date of the Armenian genocide.

The call aimed to involve well established academics as well as advanced graduate students in the field of social and human sciences.

As it was established in the bases of the contest, it was expected that projects should contribute to the investigation of social forms in which gratitude, as expression, emotion, and social value, is manifested in social movements' collective actions, in particular, political and economic contexts.

The contest featured 50 projects, from a wide variety of countries (in order of number of proposals: Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Venezuela and Bolivia). Being a novel and original subject, scarcely investigated in the field of social and human sciences, we considered that the amount and quality of submitted proposals was auspicious. Likewise, we believe that this success sets a praiseworthy antecedent for the future of research on this topic, as in the link between gratitude and social action.

The three winners were Alejandra Naranjo González from Chile, Sebastián Fuentes from Argentina and Mariela Pena from Argentina. Winners participated in the International Seminar held in Buenos Aires, exposing the fundamental objectives and methods of each investigation, that, at that point were still at their beginnings. The cases studies, on which we will turn to in detail, address the problem and the right to adequate food (Naranjo González's theme); the formation of an association and networks of help on the transitory care of children (Fuentes' research); and the territorial claim as identity construction and community utopia in a peasant movement of the Argentine North (Pena's inquiry).

Although research revolved around different social areas and case studies, the three case studies converge in thinking of gratitude as a social praxis that build and strengthen ties of reciprocity, solidarity and mutual aid. Works reveal, in addition, that far from being a passive feeling and value, gratitude is also an emotional and moral input for collective action in defense of human rights and transformation of social, legal, or economic inequality conditions. In this sense, all three investigations insert themselves in the field of sociology and anthropology of gratitude.

First, this socio-anthropological approach implies taking as key the actions and feelings involved in gratitude, that is, locating them as a social fact resulting from relationships and interactions between people in specific cultural, economic and political contexts. This relational character of gratitude defines its specificity insofar as it reveals itself as part of a “chain of reciprocity”, according to the sociologist Aafke Komter, “where the exchange of gifts and the concomitant feelings of gratitude serve to confirm and sustain social ties” (Komter, 2004).

Thanks to Marcel Mauss and his essay on gift that became one of the most influential works in the history of anthropological theory, we know that the foundations of a social bond is built out from reciprocity: the moral obligation of giving, receiving and returning. Along with this, as anthropologist Mary Douglas remarked, the theory of gift and exchange leads us to a theory about human solidarity: “a gift that does nothing to enhance solidarity is a contradiction” (Douglas, 1990). Thus, the obligation to return a gift also creates a moral virtue, which is educated, learned, and practiced, and an intersubjective feeling that unites the giver and the receiver in a virtuous circle. It is in this intersection of meanings, affections, and values that gratitude is revealed as a social praxis, that is, as a humanly productive action that connects in solidarity (from the Latin *solidus*: uniting parts in a compact and solid way) individuals and social groups.

As praxis, gratitude is also a value for the transformative action, where the recognition towards the group itself, or toward the other that provides help in critical life contexts, constitutes the raw material that drives policies for change promoted by social movements, or State and civil associations.

Secondly, a socio-anthropological analysis is constituted as such based on a sustained research methodology in participant observation of daily routines and fluent communication with the subjects that are part of the social groups under study. This emphasis of the ethnographic tradition in empirical research, which the three studies of the book develop with precision, also allows the emergence of another characteristic that

distinguishes anthropological knowledge with respect to other forms of social analysis: an affective intimacy and commitment to research subjects. This does not imply either denying or fully accepting the principles of axiological neutrality that define social sciences, but rather recognizing, as put forward by Edward Evans-Pritchard, that the results of these studies derives “not merely from intellectual impressions of native life but from its impact on the entire personality, on the observer as a total human being” (Evans-Pritchard, 1951)). Between the scientific rigor and the imaginative sensitivity of the artist, pointed out the renowned English scholar, social anthropology finds its horizon of meaning in order to understand the vicissitudes of human cultural experience.

Now, once we have presented the conceptual and methodological approach that links all pieces in this book, we are in an optimal condition to make a brief summary of each research and indicate its main contributions.

The study by Alejandra Naranjo González is entitled “*When giving is receiving gratitude experiences in times of food crisis*”. It presents a comparative study of two associations linked, for several reasons, to the food problem in Chile. In fact, the food crisis is at the center of the discussion that encompasses her research work, focusing on two of its core topics: inequality in human consumption, under the polarity of abundance of scarcity, and the tension between extensive agricultural exploitation and agroecological production, and consumption systems. A detailed fieldwork in the Rabbani Pot Foundation of the Sufi Naqshbandi Order and in the family agriculture organization Huertas a Deo allows Naranjo to construct analytical concepts in pursuit of a critical humanist reflection. In this line, the author postulates the notion of *experiences of gratitude* to account from a rights-based approach to the social forms in which an ethic of reciprocity mobilizes the circulation of food goods by humanizing a social economy based on service to the other (Rabbani Pot case) and in short marketing circuits through a small-scale economy (Huertas a Deo case).

Certainly, the Rabbani Pot devotes its efforts to relieve hunger of homeless people who live in the streets of Santiago de Chile, an important social problem in this metropolis. The organization Huertas a Deo, settled in the south of the country, activates a network of families dedicated to organic agriculture also proposing a moral economic system. In both “spaces of food sociability”, as the author calls them, women have a key role, although in symmetrical and inverse positions: in the Sufi foundation the organization and direction of the work is carried out by women. In the agro-ecological organization women are the main agents that fold the proposal of cultivation and sale of products offered by male managers from Huertas to Deo. We remark that Naranjo's work illuminates how the experience of gratitude, as a feeling and moral value, unfolds in multiple directions according to the network of relationships that groups establish in order to help and empower vulnerable social subjects.

Gratitude, gift, and humanitarianism are the corner stones that organize the study by Sebastian Fuentes, entitled: “Gratitude in movement: families and babies in transit as a humanitarian movement”. The work exposes a case of strong social and sentimental impact, associated to the feelings and actions that gratitude gets in adoptive families in transit in small children that they care for and in the families that adopt them definitively. Framing empirical and analytical work from a rights based perspective, Fuentes comprehensively describes social and symbolic practices in which gift and gratitude shape a moral economy.

Along with this, the study advances in the exploration of the social value of gratitude as a structuring form of social relations and movements. From a sustained fieldwork in the “Families of Guadalupe” Program, directed by the organization “El Vallecito de la Guadalupe”, in the San Miguel district, Province of Buenos Aires. The program is in charge of professionals of social work, psychology and psychomotricity, and has risen before an important demand to take care of newborn children, up to two years old as an alternative to their institutionalization in minor's state homes. The research unravels the complex relationships between community and professional initiatives and the development of

public policies, that is, the articulations between social and state actors in the development of practices for the protection of the rights of children.

In the context of “Families of Guadalupe”, gratitude unites and mobilizes adults through an affective and moral web that places them in the role of factual defenders of the rights of young children. In a similar way to the social groups studied by Naranjo and Pena, and beyond dissimilar socio-economic contexts, families engaged in loving and disinterested care of the children waiting to be adopted build an empowerment that motivates them to collective action. This “emotional energy”, using the term that Mariela Peña proposes in her study, is revealed as essential for these families to be actively engaged against a system of justice and public policies of adoption perceived as unjust and emerging from a crisis of values of a society meant as utilitarian, individualistic and interested. It is precisely this conjunction of gratitude and unified action to achieve an effective change in the current system, which gives, in the suggestive interpretation of Fuentes, the character of a humanitarian movement to the organization.

Making a difference vis a vis the other studies, the research of Mariela Pena takes as object of study, a social movement in the more classical sense in social sciences. In fact, the study analyzes the motivating role of gratitude in a movement of countryfolk from the province of Santiago del Estero, whose structural poverty rates are among the highest in the country, which was united by the active defense of the territory and its way of community life. Under the title “Gratitude, gifts, and emotions in the struggle for the land of a countryfolk social movement”, Pena focuses her ethnographic research on the Countryfolk Movement of Santiago del Estero, “Vía Campesina”. There, she manages to inquire into the social, ideological and cultural forms in which gratitude, as social praxis, is constituted as the cornerstone of the group's sense of belonging, sustained in the project of bringing an alternative and autonomous way of life. As a “concrete social utopia”, in the sense coined by the German philosopher Ernst Bloch, the “Via Campesina” movement is based on the principles of unconditional defense of the territory against regular attempts of forced exile by large landowners, mutual aid and

the community life. Inquiring into the daily micropolitics of the movement, Pena notices the ways in which education, agricultural-livestock production, the use of public and private spaces, and the forms of political participation of women, men and young people, build meanings of central reference. In this way, an empirical case is incorporated into the discussion about the potential of contemporary social movements to think about community life as a form of alternative or counter-hegemonic sociability, locating the notion of reciprocity along with values, ethics, and sensitivities such as gratitude, solidarity and cooperation.

Reflecting analytically from social studies on emotions, the author warns that groups tend to be fortified when they share feelings in response to certain events that reinforce affective loyalties and collective identity. It is in those critical events that the “emotional energy” generated in face-to-face situations infuses the social agents with a group identity that reinforces the collective project. Thus, questioning the dichotomy between rational choice and sensitivity, thought and feeling, Pena proposes, as well as Fuentes, to include gratitude as a structuring factor of this form of collective action.

In this context, the methodological option of working in depth with the autobiographical narratives of “Via Campesina” actors, enables the author to elucidate the collective reconstruction of a “mythical structure” shared by the members of the group and where the Gratitude, towards the ‘foundig fathers’ and actual leaders, towards the nature that shelters them and toward the members of the collective, is established as an essential affective and evaluative engine.

These studies were built from systematic research in which deep immersion of academics in these particular social worlds allowed us to explain different realities from a simultaneously objective and sensitive perspective. We consider that the three studies will be able to stimulate new original and critical explorations that will allow us to expand our knowledge about the productive action of gratitude in the consolidation of solidarity bonds and in the concrete orientations of collective action.

As we said at the beginning, this is the desire that led the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative and the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences to develop a joint project. Here, we share with the reader the mature fruits of this project, which impels us to enunciate that maxim that closes the still valid work of the renowned scholar Marcel Mauss: “Therefore let us adopt as the principle of our life what has always been a principle of action and will always be so: to emerge from self, to give, freely, and obligatorily. We run no risk of disappointment” (Mauss, 1990).



Closing these introductory words I would like to express my deep gratitude to the people and work teams that made it possible. From the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, the coordination work was simply brilliant. The rigorous management of the stipulated agenda, the professionalism in the organization of communication tasks, and the human warmth manifested throughout the work process made this project a wonderful partnership experience.

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the coordination from the first day. I invited them to join the project and together we overcome, step by step, the different obstacles of the process. Thanks to their generosity, commitment and wisdom, we managed to reach this final stage.

Special thanks are due to the main contributors of this work: Alejandra, Sebastián, and Mariela. In two decades of continuous work in university education, academic investigation and the training of young researchers, I can honestly prove that the three have exercised a total responsibility in the studies carried out and a wonderful human quality. The dialogue and regular meetings between us, the dissemination activity of the project we did with Sebastian at the Lange Ley Institute in Buenos Aires in November 2018 and the preparation work of this book were a very enriching situation for all. The experience, in short, of having formed this work group has given us the possibility of knowing ourselves and finding in the social problem of gratitude a new and stimulating theme to continue developing.

“We can only give what is already from the other”, wrote Jorge Luis Borges in the prologue of his last book of poetry (Borges, 1985). The work we are presenting is thus transformed into a gift for readers, whose ideas, reflections and analysis will initiate new questions and practices aimed at broadening the key value of gratitude in the (re) construction of our common human links.

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WHEN GIVING IS RECEIVING: GRATITUDE EXPERIENCES IN TIMES OF FOOD CRISIS

Alejandra Naranjo González

INTRODUCTION

The following work presents a synthesis of the research carried out between April and August of 2018, aimed at the study of gratitude experiences among people who travel through food sociability spaces in Chile. In the two social spaces analyzed, the *Rabbani Pot of the Naqshbandi Sufi Order* and the cooperative *Huertas a Deo*, the circulation of food goods is promoted from the ethic of reciprocity, which strengthens the expression of specific values and the search for the right to adequate food¹. It is important to note that the chosen organisations for the research reflect at, a local level, the global food crisis; specifically, the abundance or scarcity dichotomies in human consumption, and, on the other hand, extensive agricultural exploitation versus agroecological production and consumption systems. In different parts of the world, we find people who are alarmed by the indisputable social and environmental risks. Some issues gain full visibility, such as hunger, poverty, obesity, the use of agrotoxins, sustainability of agricultural systems, and the deterioration of the quality of life of the countryfolk among others, which encourage an urgent commitment. Along with the emergence of these variables, new political subjects emerge. The latter promote and activate a social experience that transforms the local environments and that yields to the participants the gratitude and commitment that give sustainability to the projects.

1. "The right to adequate food is exercised when every man, woman or child, whether alone or in unison with others, has physical and economic access, at all times, to adequate food or means to obtain it." ... "The right to have access, on a regular, permanent and free, either directly, through purchase for money, to a quantitative and qualitatively adequate and sufficient food, which corresponds to the cultural traditions of the population to which the consumer belongs and guarantees a psychic and physical life, individual and collective, free from anguish, satisfying and dignified." (UN CESCR Committee, 1999, p.3).

The concept of food sociability used in this research was used in the methodology of multilocal ethnography proposed by Marcus (Marcus, 2011). These are places that follow multiple trajectories and are located not only in specific sites, but in the very same invisible networks that they weave between them, giving an account of superimposed routes. It is necessary to articulate in a more evident way with the own narratives and practices of the subjects that pass through them. Under this analytical proposal, the primary objective of the study was to research the social experience of gratitude. Such are expressed in the chains of food reciprocity exercised by the aforementioned social organizations. The entry into the field and the framework of action considered that in both projects *the circulation of food goods comes through the ethics of reciprocity*, which humanizes the economic circuit, which, as noted above, allows the expression of specific values, among them gratitude.

There is also a conscious and manifested social commitment between the participants of both organizations. The food exchange networks were also analyzed from the approach offered by the *rights approach* and was a key element when deciding the ethnographic spaces. The research references have a strong commitment to the right to adequate food, a fundamental basis to analyze and know their work. The anthropological movements were carried out in the spaces proposed by the social actors, considering that the typical dynamics of their work as a group are manifested there, meaning the usual collective actions where the senses of collaboration are experienced.

The fieldwork was carried out *exhaustively* in favor of the analysis of cultural and social events, adjusting to the theoretical frameworks proposed for such purposes and to the accounts of those who travel through the zones of interest. For this purpose, a series of in-depth ethnographic as well unstructured interviews and informal conversations were conducted. Both the key informants and other interviewees formed a consistent sample on the explored narratives and intersubjectivity processes that occurred (Atkinson, 1998). There were 12² in-depth interviews.

2. In relation to ethical safeguards, the criterion of informed consent was applied to each of the persons interviewed, and express authorization was also requested to record the interviews and the use of textual references. At the same time, it was proposed to protect the identity of the participants, but none of them chose to maintain anonymity; on the contrary, each of them expressed their enthusiasm for explicitly collaborating with the process. All the interviewees are of legal age and actively participate in both social organizations, from their respective roles.

Each of them was chosen according to the phases and activities carried out by both organizations while, also trying to get the perspective of men and women in different stages of life. In addition, participant observation of the periodic activities was carried out, experimenting the daily life of the cultural landscapes studied. With Rabbani Pot, it is relevant to remark that I have regularly done volunteering there, which allowed me to know the daily dynamics and, at the same time, access a level of trust from the organizers. Although, considering that they are democratic and freely accessible spaces, sharing the symbolic value of their religious rituals, facilitated the understanding of the facts studied.

On the other hand, in Huertas a Deo, I followed the trajectory as a consumer to experience the route of agroecological food commercialization. I also made a prolonged visit to the places of residence and work of the young people from Huertas a Deo, and of the countryfolk in their family gardens. Both experiences are models offered by the participants, as a way of knowing the work ethics mediated by agroecology.

Explaining another one of the references is also essential. In 2016, I worked in the Sistema Elige Vivir Sano (Choose Healthy Living System) of the Office of Social Development of the government. There, I was able to know several of the public policies and inter-office coordinations that seek to promote healthy habits and lifestyles to improve the quality of life and well-being of people. This experience could give me quite a detailed map of the tasks performed by public institutions regarding food, its practices and the spaces where it operates. However, what was happening in the places where self-management, entrepreneurship, good personal and collective intentions also want to contribute in this regard? This question will be answered within the fieldwork carried out in the different organizations. Before immersing ourselves in the social experiences of gratitude in each of the spaces described, it is essential to provide context about the social, cultural, and historical context in which the research on the food crisis in Chile is developed.

ALTERNATIVES SPACES AND TRAJECTORIES IN THE FOOD EXCHANGE NETWORKS

As we previously mentioned, the core of this research is *to describe the experiences of gratitude in spaces of food sociability*. The reciprocity of the exchanges originated in these places is what gives sense and identity to the organizations and consolidates the idea of circulating in an unconventional way. Faced with the traditional processes of goods trading, a group of people get organized, guided by a series of moral principles, create a form of work to avoid conceiving food only through monetary exchange, but also under the idea of reciprocity and solidarity practices.

Therefore, the constant articulation between these notions strengthens social ties, with an emphasis on values and moral affections that allow re-signifying the nature of social life in situations of crisis or rights vulneration.

One of the rights that is being transgressed and for which The Rabbani Pot assumes responsibility, *is the need that homeless people have of feeding themselves* and that they do so in adequate quantity and quality. Although homeless people do not happen to form a group that fights for their social rights, it is evident that their life needs are so urgent, that their energetic and rational capacity does not allow them to join any kind of claim. Several of them are highly aware of the situation in which they find themselves: lack of food, water, shelter, space, support networks, and with little management capacity. However, the Sufi organization recovers the food from the conventional market system and takes it on a path of a *moral economy*.

When the Office of Social Development was asked about this problem, they said that they do not have a program that directly works on the issue of food security and poverty with an emphasis on hunger (OSD, 2018). The measures planned to overcome the hunger of homeless people are addressed by the Programa Noche Digna (Dignified Night Program), whose target population is within this group.

This program includes "resources to provide daily food services that directly impact food security indicators such as the daily supply of calories per capita" (OSD, 2018)³. In no case do they indicate how many times a week food is delivered and during what period of the year. As for the number of people who are under these circumstances: "they once reviewed the database of Social Registration for Homeless People⁴, for the Metropolitan Region, with a cut-off date to April 2, 2018, 6,114 people are registered."

Regarding the situation of physical and mental health of the homeless people, the OSD states that: "it is not possible to answer because it is not a matter of competence of the Undersecretary of Social Services." (OSD, 2018). However, according to data found on the website⁵ of the same Office, it is possible to mention some crucial characteristics of the population in question. The leading causes that lead a person to become homeless are related to family problems, excessive and problematic consumption of alcohol and drugs, and, finally, economic issues. They spend on average seven years living as homeless, the average level of schooling is eight years, and 85% correspond to men versus 15% who are women (OSD, 2018).

Another topic of interest for this research is the situation that many of the small farmers in Chile experience. Some of them have damaged cultivating areas due to extensive and intensive agriculture and, low consumption of fresh and healthy foods, among others.

3. Response letter answered due to Transparency Law. "The principle of Transparency is to respect and protect the publicity of the acts, resolutions, procedures and documents of the Administration, as well as its foundations, and to facilitate the access of any person to that information, through the means and procedures established by law for that purpose. The means and procedures to access information include active transparency and requests for access to information." Retrieved May, 30th 2018
4. "Since the beginning of 2016, applications and access to the set of benefits provided by the State is made through the Social Household Registry. To complement this effort -and with the objective of eliminating access barriers that affect people living on the street- the Ministry of Social Development initiated the implementation of the Social Street Registry in August of last year. This Registry allows, for the first time in our country, to identify and characterize people living on the street, in order to allow them priority access to State benefits, and also to design and implement public policies aimed at them." Information published August 31, 2017. (Paragraphs 1 and 2, extracted on May 30, 2018 from: www.gob.cl/noticias/registro-social-calle-un-esfuerzo-para-que-las-personas-en-situacion-de-calle-no-queden-fuera-de-la-red-de-social-protection/)
5. Retrieved May 30th, 2018 from: <http://www.ministeriodesarrollosocial.gob.cl/noticias/registro-social-calle-identificado-10610-personas-en-situacion-calle-a-agosto-de-2017>

Although several of them have the intention and commitment to solving this problem through agroecology, the next difficulty is the commercialization of their products. Huertas a Deo is, as we described, the other collective with which we worked with. They promote and develop the agroecological farming with around 50 farmers and in the area where they have decided to work. A large number of hectares is used for organic agriculture. This projects the assumption of an expanding universe of agroecological activity in a relatively high population for a rural area in Chile⁶.

To obtain information on the public policies applied by the State and their implications in the agrarian systems, the Transparency Law described above was chosen, and again this information is properly referenced. Through the Office of Agriculture, the data of *Certified Organic Production* during 2017, corresponds to 176.666 hectares at country-level, where the regions with greater cultivation are the Los Rios Region with 50.630 hectares, Maule Region with 40.086 hectares, Bio Bío Region 35.769 hectares and Araucanía with 33,979 hectares.

Regarding the most cultivated products, the largest area is occupied by large fruit trees and vineyards with 9,138 hectares, followed by smaller fruit trees with 6,069 hectares; meadows with 1,844 hectares; productive area fallow with 1.34 hectares; medicinal and aromatic herbs with 490 hectares; cereals 310 hectares; 369 hectares for vegetables and finally, seeds and nurseries with 157 hectares. According to the Office of Agricultural Studies and Policies (2017) "Chile is an important exporter of organic products, taking advantage of the existing demand for this type of produce and the advantages of counter-season offered by our country. However, organic products are also imported, usually not produced in our country, such as coffee, tea, and organic sugar, among others." (OAS, 2017)

It is important to note that the office was asked for separate data of the number of countryfolk and by gender, but that information was not delivered. At the same time, data was requested on the agricultural techniques used, but that information was not detailed.

6. Curanipe is a small village/area that belongs to the commune of Pelluhue. According to the last census carried out in 2017, the Pelluhue Commune registered 7,745 inhabitants.

There was no specification about how the programs seek to encourage this type of agriculture. We assume that they are not yet an issue of interest or analysis at that level. However, the rest of the figures given is interesting since it allows us to have an idea of the cultivation zones.

The organizations in this research seriously consider the problem of the current food crisis. Although their modes of action are different, they present essential elements in common: *both aim to achieve social equity and food justice where the social value of gratitude is critical, assuming it as a social commitment that makes food circulate.*



1. SUFI NAQSHBANDI ORDER: RABBANI POT FOUNDATION



One eats and becomes hungrier, more vicious, while someone else eats and turns everything into divine light.

One eats, and one becomes more impure and distanced, while another eats and transforms everything into the light of God.

(Rumi)

The Sufi Naqshbandi Order in Chile is an Islamic religious group, which, through the Olla Rabbani

Foundation, does a chain of charitable activities, that are at the service of people in social vulnerability. The Rabbani has been working for seven years with no gaps, handing out food to people living on the street. It is a great pride for the members of the organization to consider that the service they have delivered

has been carried out successfully since its inception and above all that the achievement is articulated by the social bonds that gradually rise among the participants. Later we will be able to clarify which are the fields of moral sentiments involved, but, we can affirm, for the moment, that the responsibility assumed is what allows its strengthening. As noticed by Amina, director of the foundation:

“ ... it has been seven years since we’ve been giving food, but for five years we have worked with no gaps. Then, this started to be an extraordinary goal, that this system would not fail. At first, it was hard work because there wasn’t much commitment from the people. And that is the essence, the essence of this system is the commitment of the group...”

The origin of The Rabanni Pot has, as its story, the concern of a group of women of the Order who wanted to do a good service. However, they faced the dilemma of also having to do their daily tasks, such as taking care of children their and domestic chores. They began to devise a way to carry out a collaborative activity, but, from one of their highly valued spaces, the house and the kitchen. At the same time, Amina returned after living in the South of Chile where she learned, with the indigenous communities of the zones, several ways to avoid the food loss and maximize its lifespan. It is important to emphasize that in the different activities that are carried out, the Sufi tradition has particular respect and gratitude for food. Food is shared, and as a group, they have been making incipient recoveries of food. The social problems of homeless people moved Amina personally to continue trying to do something more about it. Once she returned to Santiago, she was impacted by the number of people who were homeless and needed to be fed. This context expressed a personal and collective annoyance. That’s how the idea of recovering food for the homeless people came to be. *In the first instance, women are the ones who bring life to it and look for methods to generate a cycle of product recovery and deliver them in the most respectful way possible.*

It is with this group that I have done active volunteering, especially in the tasks of cooking and food recovery, which is the recycling of fruits

fruits and vegetables that could have been destined to the garbage for aesthetic issues or lack of demand by consumers. The first impressions after being in that space is realizing the large amount of food that is delivered. These goods are outside the market, but they, nevertheless, circulate among people. In this sense, we noticed that the work and exchange networks of food or social services had a fascinating part that to them, at first glance, was not easy to distinguish.

The aid cycle consists in visiting every Thursday a Feria Libre⁷ of the Peñalolén Commune, in Santiago, Chile. Every vendor is asked for a donation of foods that will be disposed of in the garbage, but that is still in condition to be used to cook and a prior sensibilization is made with the vendors in order to obtain a voluntary donation of these products. The impact of the contributions has been such a remarkable thing that it is no longer necessary to motivate them, they spontaneously do so. Some even deliver fruits or vegetables that are in the right aesthetic conditions. Considering the powerful message of the activity, these sellers are inviting others to offer their help. Once a month, the Sufi Order prepares a breakfast or lunch as *a way of thanking them*, rewarding the dedication, affection, and materiality they have received from the vendors. Such are recognition practices that are the beginning of *a virtuous cycle of solidarity*.

This task is carried out by a team of women and men of the Sufi Order. However in the whole chain of solidarity, some secular people also participate. They are all welcome to contribute in what they deem appropriate. The day after the collecting stage at the Feria Libre, the stage of selection and cleaning of the donated products comes in. This work is carried out by women and is organized in the Sufi temple kitchen. That same day, food is left half-cooked. In general, the products that are made are stews, since it is easier to cook and deliver. At the time of preparing the food, it is blessed with songs and prayers so the people who are going to receive it can count on a consecrated food.

7. Feria Libre are spaces for the commercialization of fresh foods, mainly fruits, vegetables, fish and seafood. Although its origin goes back to this type of products, different kind of goods can be seen, which are sold in informal posts. These markets are part of the country's heritage. In the city of Santiago these are itinerant and are located every day of the week in a different district of the city. It is one of the main forms of medium-scale trade.

It is important to emphasize that there is a nutritional concern regarding the dishes that are delivered. The chosen menu will vary according to the season, but it has been evaluated by a nutritionist so that it has the necessary and sufficient It is important to emphasize that there is a nutritional concern regarding the dishes that are delivered. The chosen menu will vary according to the season, but it has been evaluated by a nutritionist so that it has the necessary and sufficient nutrients that a person in a socially vulnerable situation needs and, also, according to the weather conditions of the moment.



On Saturdays, a team composed mainly of men take these foods to a region called La Chimba, a well-known area in the city of Santiago, where there are many homeless people. The delivery is mainly made by men since it requires physical force to move tables and large pots. At the same time, male energy is necessary, since, as reported by several of the interviewees, the region is a place where street fights take place, or people attend under the influence of alcohol and drugs, and it is necessary to regulate those issues and have the essential safeguards at the time of delivery. Anyway, each person of the Sufi Order puts their best skills at the disposal of the social service they perform, for that reason they can rotate in their roles.

Since its inception, The Rabbani Pot has delivered their food in the La Chimba area. At first, they toured the Vega Central⁸, with the objective of finding homeless people and recognize how the physical space to make the delivery was. For several years, the distribution was made at the doors of this market. In 2017, and after some conversations with the priest of the Recoleta Franciscan Church, Fray Andresito, they changed to this place and the natural setting for the food delivery was the esplanade of the church. They can use this place more comfortably, unloading and loading the car in which they transport tables, pots, and food.

It is important to reflect on the immense food paradox that occurs in this space of sociability. While the Sufi organization manages to consolidate the delivery of food every Saturday, the moral field of action that activates the social responsibility of its members has, as its broader context, a large food trading market. *One of the most moving issues in the region is to carefully observe this paradox: very vulnerable and hungry people, versus extravagant food stalls, full of colors, aromas and flavors, that sell food, but at the same time, create food waste.* Therefore, we can observe that social protection is expressed not only through public policies, which sees its environment and admits social contradiction, but can also do something about it.

The commitment, as noted by the famous anthropologist Margaret Mead *"is the result of prioritizing some options over others"* the trade logic predominates as a form of social relationship making this space a critical point where the described reality, reveals with clarity and vehemence, the moral inconsistencies of the food system. (Argemid, 2017)

People who benefit from this food are in complicated health situations. At first sight, you can see excessive consumption of alcohol and drugs, maladjusted mental health and, poor hygiene, among other issues.

8. La Vega Central is one of the trading spaces for fresh fruits and vegetables for retail and wholesale distribution in the city of Santiago. Its location is very central, which makes its route quite interesting. For this reason, it has become a focus of popular culture and tourist routes. It has a sales area for fresh, non-perishable food and also restaurants with typical Chilean food and from other foreign immigrants that have arrived in the country.

Sharifa, one of the people who works for Olla Rabbani and who has participated in the deliveries on Saturdays, points out that, as time has passed, people are self-regulating and begin to organize their Saturdays based on these deliveries.

“... These deliveries makes the situation of a family change completely. The possibility that someone knows that once a week they will have food, good food, is like saying: “I have a resource, I'm not so alone... I can organize around that on Saturday. My two or three children, and I will have a meal and I can allocate the money that I have for that day, for the rest of the week.” It is an effect that allows you to dignify a person, which reinforces their identity and allows them, perhaps, to try to do something else, to look for work, etc ...”



Another remarkable element is that people in socially vulnerable situations, try to attend food delivery in the best way possible. They wash, look for clean clothes and, have less alcohol consumption as a way of thanking the benefactors. In any case, the members of The Rabbani Pot do not discriminate in the delivery of food, nor on the conditions in which people are presented, nor in the amount of food they wish to take. This can be interpreted as a way of thanking the benefactors, as a counter-gift that they give and add by being part of that social bond. In the words of Sharif Hamed, 24, a student and collaborator:

“... Everyone already knows how respectful you must be. Before we give food, we give thanks. All are very respectful, all go silent, they pray with us, then when you arrive at this street environment, which is very hostile and at first there are frictions,

I feel that thank God we all go in the same line ... no one is judging anyone, many times they arrive inebriated or they were in a fight, they know that we are going to give everyone food. //

The beneficiaries know the day and time of the delivery and maintain a hopeful wait for the food. The Rabanni Pot delivers 300 servings per week, equivalent to 100 kilos of food recovered per week and 1,000 people fed per month. An important fact to emphasize is that each delivery is done based on ritual: giving the best service is a religious imperative. This includes the quality of the food, delivering it in a suitable dish with cutlery, aprons are used, and it is made certain that the hair is covered. Above all, as Sharifa clearly said *"be attentive in the here and now. We must be present and attentive to what is being done, attentive to the service."*

Most of the ingredients of The Rabbani Pot come from collecting donations at the Feria Libre, but it is necessary to have other ingredients to make the food they deliver a nutritionally complete diet. These non-perishable foods are donations made by other people and another network of collaborators is created, who from their homes, without necessarily participating in the daily help, can make donations in cash or in food.

Finally, I want to mention that during the fieldwork I was able to prove that not all the beneficiaries are homeless. The type of people is variable, all have the characteristic of living in a situation of social vulnerability, but people from the surrounding areas also attend. They probably have a house, but they do not always have a plate of food. The majority of the attendees are men. *There was also a large amount of migrant populations from countries such as Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, and Cuba.* There are also people who come from their respective informal jobs in the La Chimba area. Therefore, the service delivered, although it has as its objective the population of maximum vulnerability, does not discriminate in who needs to eat.

2. HUERTAS A DEO



Food is the fertility of the human being

(Raimundo Labbé, Founder HAD)

The social enterprise Huertas a Deo, carries out a work focused on small rural family farming in the Curanipe area. This is a coastal town in the Province of Cauquenes, Maule Region, which is located between the Coastal Mountain Range, Cordillera de la Costa, and the Pacific Ocean. The primary objective of this enterprise is to safeguard food security and sovereignty, where the relationship between rural culture and the ecosystem has a moral aspect. Since, in food trading chains, exchange networks are produced, the purpose is creating sustainability, innovation, and food justice, both for producers, intermediaries, and consumers.

Curanipe has had a long tradition as a port. At one time, it was one of the important piers in the southern part of the country. In its surroundings, there are some rural lands that are made up of continuous human settlements. On the mountain range of the coast, there is a landscape composed of forests of native trees, also, and to a greater extent, monoculture forests of pine and eucalyptus. In the coastal plain, there are terraces of about 200 meters interrupted by rivers bound for the sea. In the middle of the soft plains, medium-sized crops and fishing coves are seen in the larger towns. Consequently, their main economic activities are related to forestry, agriculture, and fishing.

The forestry activity is a work carried out mainly by men. There are two forms of activity. First, monocultures of small-scale forests that are managed by families on their land and, from these, wood and coal are extracted. Second, the installation of large forest monopolies who employ locals for their commercial purposes.

This type of economic activity has required transportation and the creation of specific roads. The construction of these roads and the use of heavy machinery has eroded the soils of this mountain range. As explained by Eric, HAD worker, on the division of labor:

“ Man has more of a vision of war; they have to fight against nature, they are in the most productive and most destructive work. The woman is in the house doing house work, raising children, taking care of the territories, taking care of the seeds, controlling the hen’s reproduction. ”

This denotes the more traditional definitions of gender roles where reproductive and care type tasks are intended for women and productive tasks for men. However, the people from Huertas a Deo break these schemes because their work is valued socially and economically remunerated, a matter traditionally assigned to men.

Regarding agriculture, the people of the area have maintained subsistence agriculture throughout their lives. This is a local trade, transmitted from generation to generation and most of the people, especially the older ones, cultivated without agrottoxins. Therefore, for them agroecology is not a new task, they have only known it by a different name, but they value being able to exchange knowledge about this type of crop. Mrs. Elvira Muñoz Valladares from the town of Cardonal states:

“ I think we teach each other. For example, they teach us how to make the compounds: we have to put the poop of the chickens in a soaking pot and after several days, apply it to all the vegetables in the greenhouse, that's a fertilizer. The thing about the seaweed, that I learned from the other ladies, and this thing you do with the shell of the mussels, that's how it always has been. ”

The production seen in the area is almost all on a small scale, This allows domestic consumption and eventually sales at the neighborhood level. Women are in charge of the majority of the organic gardens however the men participate in certain activities, for instance when some greater physical effort is required. In general the garden is a feminine space.



“ They are mainly women because the woman has always been in charge of the garden, and the vegetables in order to provide food to their family. The woman was always the one who valued and rescued, the seed caretaker, the one who had

to make lunch every day. Then, they had their little gardens, their things. So the woman has a more direct connection with the production of food, more than the man. They sometimes go out to sell it or look for work outside. ”

(Raimundo Labbé, Founder of HAD)

The plantation of strawberries has entered gradually. With the use of agrotoxics and with other contrastive forms of agriculture, it is intended to enhance the area with this fruit. Several families are beginning to plant and have annual sales on a larger scale. In these types of crops, extensive and with higher production, the participation of men can be seen, while the vegetable gardens are still womens' land.

An incipient activity that seeks to grow its contribution to local development is tourism. This coastal area is booming in the region, both because of the number of beaches and the characteristics of its waves, which invites many surfers to practice this sport. Some people in the area have noticed the need to increase the gastronomic offer to serve tourists. During the summer months, the population can be doubled by visitors. This has meant that the number of buildings has increased, which implies another economic activity for the area, construction.

It is important to note that the land of Curanipe was affected by an earthquake on February 27th, 2010, which reached a magnitude of 8.8 MW. The epicenter was located in front of its coasts. For this reason, it was also affected by a tsunami that followed the earthquake. The waves destroyed the fishing cove, a tourist camp, and, some buildings.

At least 32 people lost their lives, and due to this catastrophe, it is easy to distinguish the governmental presence in the area. While visiting the town, the presence of the State, with its different plans and public policies, is present. At the same time, when interviewing the countryfolk, the vast majority report that they participate in one or more state programs. The team of Huertas a Deo (HAD) consists of eight young people. They migrated from the city to the countryside with the desire to promote the agroecological system of crops. They work with 50 rural families, of which 17 of them are stable and sell their vegetables weekly to the social venture so that they can be delivered in the cities of Santiago, Talca, and Concepción. Through a long process of collaborative learning, the HAD team helps to recover or create new planting spaces based on agroecology. The rural women participating in the project have arrived in different ways, in general, neighborhood or institutional contact networks are created. The work that is being done is communicated through these networks by some of the females working the land. After establishing agreements on how to work, they visit the orchard and, especially after proposing to diversify it, the men begin to work with HAD.

The orchards, as I have pointed out before, serve both for family consumption and trading. The domestic economy of women changes profoundly. They now have a higher level of independence and autonomy. However, most of them also diversify their sources of income. Sometimes motivated by this first impulse to feel that they are enterprising, and other times for the desire to achieve more material goods and support their families. Some of them sell clothes, make flours, cultivate oysters, perform gastronomic activities, and some have even come to plant with agrottoxics to have greater seasonal sales. Rosa Vega, a woman from Mata de Boldo, explains how she changed her life after starting to work on this:

// ... How can I explain the impact?... In the economic part, in the building blocks of the households... In all those things, there is so much change. Because there is a contribution to my home, with this income, I have money for so many other things. I pay for the water, I pay for the electricity, and I buy my essential things, the personal ones, the ones a woman needs. I do not have to be asking anyone to get those now. //



The trading circuit between the rural and the urban areas has the distinction that while in rural places the most pedestrian and austere forms of cultivation are highly valued, in the urban, the sophistication of the purchase, even online, is part of the assessments made by consumers. For example:

People who want to get a “random” basket of food, make their orders via the website to the Huertas a Deo team. On Monday and Tuesday of the following week, the young people of the enterprise make the respective requests to the producers, also delivering their money back at the same time. As for the countryfolk, they harvest the day of delivery, food that will be organized in the baskets that will go to the city. On Tuesday, these baskets are transferred to Santiago, through a 5-hour trip, where they are delivered to each consumer's home, either on Tuesday night or on Wednesday morning.

Delivering fresh vegetables is the main commercial task of the company. Little by little, they have incorporated other types of products such as fruits, bread, dehydrated goods, jams, charcoal, quinoa, eggs, garden supplies, etc. They also offer consultancy, so that any person, family group or organization that is interested in growing their food can do it in the best way. They try to integrate a series of crop designs and rotations so that it is healthy for the whole system. In the consultancy, the area suitable for cultivation and the recycling of organic matter is identified, a customized agroecological manual is created to manage the productive unit adequately, free seeds so that people can also create their seed bank, and, finally, they make periodic visits to the spaces to make sure the project will succeed.

An essential factor to consider is that this circuit has the quality of collaborative growth. Consumers from the cities assume, along with the farmer, the fruitful and scarce harvest times.

A quantity and diversity according to the season of the year is guaranteed, but it is not a system of choice. As they declare on their website: "Each basket contains natural vegetables of the season that vary week by week depending on what the rural families that are part of Huertas a Deo have." Also, the constant growth of the garden will be directly proportional to the number of consumers who are committed to the project, since it will reflect what they can sell.

Marcela, a consumer of the city of Santiago, speaks very well of this commitment that goes beyond the purchase and has to do with charitable purposes: "... we do not like dehydrated mushrooms, and the children always send me those. However that would not be a reason to stop asking for the basket, because I understand that this project is much more important. "

In Chile, an innovation award is given each year. In 2015, the Avonni National Innovation Prize was awarded to Huertas a Deo, a prize that implies recognition for the creative nature of the project, but also highlights the objectives of the organization.

In the experiences of the researched subjects described above, the central issues have to do with the *small-scale economy, networks of solidarity in local spaces* and the *notion of risk* associated with the fundamental right of *access to food*.

FINAL ANALYSIS

In conclusion, it is necessary to summarize some of the most significant ideas of this ethnographic approach. A socio-anthropological approach on gratitude experiences of people in two heterogeneous spaces of food sociability in Chile, The Rabbani Pot of the Sufi Naqshbandi Order located in the city of Santiago and the social enterprise Huertas a Deo, in the town of Curanipe in the Maule Region. Both organizations are addressing, from their respective areas of action the critical issue of the global-local *food crisis*. Regarding the practical aspects, an exhaustive work was carried out through the different anthropological methodologies with permanence in the field.

This allowed to carry out the exposed ethnographic story. The challenge of any investigative process lies in the incorporation of the social categories and the symbolic framework that are recorded in the contexts studied. This is what happened in this research, where the registration of the different cultural systems gave consistency for the analysis. The processing of the information was based on the conceptual framework in some fundamental thematic axes: current food crisis, the right to adequate food, and gratitude in action.

First, the subjects have a critical view of the modes of food production, both from the perspective of hunger, waste, industrialization, and intensive and extensive agriculture. The way in which they have specific local solutions to face the social inequality caused by the food crisis is the way in which they address not only the agroindustry but the whole society.

The perception of belonging to a project with social and environmental impact generates social cohesion and helps strengthen social determinants, in this case partially addressing the food crisis and even strengthening local economies.

It can be concluded that current consumption styles generate a single culture, as occurs in the land when a single product is sown, and the soil wears out, as well as in social relationships based on this type of consumption. That is why it is a priority to diversify the forms of food circulation with the aim of building a system of reciprocity and an ethical economy that strengthens social cohesion and types of production. Even with all the rules that are available to consumers, and with a society that has an increasing awareness of their rights, preventing that the market would be the only regulator that manages access to food is a strategy that falls within the framework of food security and sovereignty, creating a *moral system of consumption*.

Both The Rabbani Pot and Huertas a Deo demonstrate that there are forms of solidarity and reciprocity that contribute to achieving fundamental rights, such as the right to adequate food. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that these are social problems that require the support of other structures to redistribute responsibilities.

In this sense, the participation of the government and other organizations could help to reverse the problems of malnutrition and hunger, as well as the ecological impact of intensive agriculture. We know that there are public policies with some approaches to this, but also medium-sized organizations that achieve transformations at a local scale with greater agility than more influential organizations.

In the field of moral affections, *emotions, mediated by the socio-historical context, effect social reality, in the form of practice, modeling behaviors*. In the people observed, it was seen that they have managed to consolidate their organizations because the expression of social unrest, although it requires a rational exercise, is activated from a personal feeling. They not only strengthen food practices but also social ties between people who participate in the circulation of food products, becoming a *collective moral experience*.

Regarding the key question of the study on the social role of gratitude, one of the most important issues that was observed in the spaces studied is that the evolution of *deliveries and returns produces generous and altruistic behaviors motivated by the well-being of the environment and people, therefore promoting a sense of belonging and cohesion*.

The *experiences of gratitude* that are highlighted by the observed subjects strengthen the construction of social relationships. The establishments of this type of bonds consolidates a morally appropriate relationship by assigning spaces of protective coexistence with others, with the environment, and with their resources. It is for this reason, and following the premises of Marcel Mauss in his seminal essay *The Gift*, that the material and symbolic exchanges are so transcendental for the people who participate in the social act of feeding themselves or others, that, beyond the very nature of what is exchanged, a vast network of mutual attention is generated (Mauss, 1925).

Situations that are evaluated as negative, such as food scarcity, mediated by experiences of gratitude define a moral standard that tests the very norm of what's good. Thus, actions that are used give the strength to face adversity and sustain a *debt of collective gratitude*. Debt that in the case of the organizations that participated in this research, brings more virtues rather than negative issues, since it is seen as a constant *cycle of mutual aid*.

As an academic challenge, studies on gratitude must be approached from a social and moral perspective. Gratitude is a moral affection, which passes through personal experience, but finds its transforming expression in collective action. Some experience it as an attitude of life, positive emotion, moral virtue, social commitment, among others. However none of them occur alone, nor do they go in the same direction, it is multidimensional and dialectical.

A in this research is to explore the intensity of gratitude and its sustainability over time. *Does the ethic of reciprocity give force to certain moral affections?* If so, what is its reach? For this case, it is necessary to have fieldwork with a more extended stay and to know in depth the life cycles of the organizations, which in this case could not be researched.

Another aspect that is interesting to explore is what happens in *moments of ingratitude*. It is possible that the groups researched, even sharing clear objectives and until the moment of success, experience a lack of reciprocity. While this experience was not stated by any of the people interviewed, it is essential to consider what happens when there is no moral reinforcement of gratitude. Is the virtuous chain of reciprocity still going on? With what reasons? What happens when the expected result is not achieved? It seems to us that these concerns can continue to contribute to the construction of the notion of gratitude in action.

A significant element in the work of both organizations is that, with different methods and processes, both feed others. Although there is a tendency to think that moral sentiments are mobilized with close or equal people, the action of these groups reaches people who could not even be part of their usual circuits because it goes beyond the spaces of their belonging. Thus, people who experience gratitude or who tend to be more willing to make some kind of effort with other people is because they have a sensitivity that is awakened in the light of the evaluations they make of events. In the first place, there is the recognition of a third party, be it individual or collective, and the benevolent behavior of the latter. Once that moral affection is activated, the behaviors are coherent with that feeling, and a *virtuous chain of solidarity begins*.

When a benefit has been received, such as the construction of an orchard or the recovery of food that was going to the garbage, *the gratitude mobilizes, in ascending scale, the chain of reciprocity*. When the people feel the satisfaction of feeding someone else, taking care of the land, selling food at a fair price, in addition to triggering a benevolent behavior, *that generosity invites greater human greatness because the perception of the world changes and strategies of coping, reciprocity, and mutual collaboration emerge at critical moments*.

People who participate in solidarity networks in the face of social crises reconfigure their social ties, economic circuits, forms of retribution, and become new political subjects. In the spaces of food sociability that address critical issues, there are aspirations such as social equity and food justice. These orientations are a moral motivator to give continuity to humanitarian sociology based on the *notion of gratitude as a social praxis*.

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GRATITUDE IN MOTION: TEMPORARY FAMILIES AND BABIES AS A HUMANITARIAN MOVEMENT

Sebastián Fuentes

“Everything becomes a complicity and you get twice as much as you gave (...) this is something I cannot explain because it is something pretty emotional, pretty spiritual, pretty energetic. It is not a small bundle and it is not a prize; we have to see the child as a son or as a kid who is going to be with us; they are neither a prize nor an award; they are not a necessity; they are simply there to give us love and it is a reciprocal thing.”

Griselda, a member of a temporary family

INTRODUCTION

Social values are produced in exchange of social practices: among them, social actors build meaning and power. Gratitude is one of the values and emotions produced in different exchange systems. In this case, I am addressing a legally established circulation system aimed at the care and protection of babies in the Province of Buenos Aires in Argentina. They are the main actors of what is called the Children’s Rights Protection System, whose circulation is crucial for the production of the social value of gratitude: felt by the adults taking care of these infants places babies in an agency position, as active producers of the care and “love” they require.

Gratitude gathers and mobilizes adults through an emotional and moral weave, and allows them to become actual advocates for these babies’ rights because, as Griselda says, it gives them “energy”. That power is built in opposition to a judiciary system and public policies perceived as unfair, and to a society whose values are utilitarian and greedy.

This paper presents an analysis of a research done among babies and infants, temporary families called “familias de tránsito” (“foster families”), professionals belonging to El Vallecito de la Guadalupe Civil Association⁹ which has developed the foster care families programme (Familias de Guadalupe) since 2013, psychomotricity students engaged in a “Social Commitment Program”¹⁰ working in the same association, and judges and professionals working at the Family Court in the Province of Buenos Aires.

Since 2014, I have developed an extension university initiative with psychomotricity students at the Familias de Guadalupe program, registering situations, conversations, and activities carried out among families and babies. In 2018, fostered by the Aurora and FLACSO Call for Research, I assembled and finished the fieldwork, which encompassed my active involvement in participant observations, interviews, and the analysis of babies’ personal files¹¹ held by the Familias de Guadalupe program (from now on FGP). In this report I present the research results, aiming at *understanding the humanitarian dimension implied in the social practice of caring and “loving” infants temporarily*. The potency and agency fostered by the circulation of babies among families and the program enhances the building of power positions and the questioning of the prevalence of the judicial apparatus.

9. The Civil Association emerges as a social work initiative to help children and young people in a street situation, in the San Miguel district, located in the Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires (AMBA), approximately 30 km from the City of Buenos Aires. The original team was formed in the years of the social and economic crisis of 2001, to give some response to the situation of children and young people who were traveling by the San Martín Train, which connects that region with the City of Buenos Aires. Towards 2003 the professional team establishes a work agreement with a civil association linked to the local Catholic Church, with the purpose of having spaces and resources for the development of a Children Day Center. Towards 2005, the group becomes independent and legally constituted the Civil Association. Since then, it has developed in addition to this program, others aiming at intervening with adolescents in conflict with the criminal law, and other social problems linked to situations of marginalization and rights ‘violation. It also develops training activities for other professionals of the Protection System in the San Miguel region.
10. Such is the name given by the Secretariat of University Policies of the Ministry of Education of the Nation, which evaluates and partially finances this type of extension projects, aimed at strengthening university education through community activities. It is an extension project, which I coordinated since 2013 at the National University of Tres de Febrero.
11. All documentation, as well as personal references of the interviewees and infants has been anonymised by means of pseudonyms or positional references (eg in relation to the professional role) in order to protect the identity and integrity of the people involved.

THE CIRCULATION OF INFANTS ACROSS THE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS PROTECTION SYSTEM IN THE PROVINCE OF BUENOS AIRES



The circulation of children as a lens to focus on social processes related to childhood and kinship allows to place experience and trajectory of infants all through the organizations that families set up to ensure the caring and future of their descendants (Fonseca, 2010). This category enables me to identify instances in which infant circulation ceases to be an arrangement among family and family groups with the intervention of the State in order to address the effects of that kind of intervention, also involving social and community associations such as FGP.

The Children's Rights Protection System is founded by Provincial Law Nº 13.298 (2004) and later modifications, laws Nº 13.634 (2007) and 14.537 (2013), among other regulations, and National Law Nº 26.061, which establishes a new legal paradigm and the State's responsibilities aiming at the protection and promotion of children and young people's rights. Although Argentina had signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, the country's laws remained unmodified. The so called Patronato de Menores (National Patronage of Minors) Law was not only old, as it was approved in 1919, but was also detrimental. That law regards children as "minors", not as a subject but as a kind of object to be controlled by a Patronage State, from what was considered an irregular situation.

The authority to decide about children's situation was the Minor's Courts, whose interventions were arbitrary, and merged child poverty or defenselessness with "irregular situation", enabling judicial actions over socioeconomic situations that should be solved with public social or economic policies, not judiciary actions coming from a State Power devoid of any resources to tackle that kind of "irregular situations". Therefore, Minor's Courts¹² managed, with a high level of arbitrariness, to institutionalize children in Shelters and Children's Home, secluding them in large and careless places.

Promotion and Integral Protection of Children's Rights Provincial Law Nº 13.298 not only specifies an executive authority, named the Provincial Agency of Children and Adolescence since 2016, but also establishes that local authorities, e.g. municipalities, helped by economic provincial resources, must create and develop their own Local Social Protection and Promotion Services (from now on, LPS) to take formal action in the presence of situations that threaten children's integrity. At the same time, the provincial law grants the legitimacy to intervene not only in Minor's Courts (now changed into "Family Courts"), to the Provincial Agency and to LPS, but also to social organizations working in communities and developing different initiatives to protect children's rights. The Children's Rights Protection System is made up of this complex scheme, starting with the State responsibility, Executive Power and legitimating an inter-institutional intervention where social organizations have a key role (art. 14, ley Nº 13.298).

Article number 35 (Law Nº 13.298) sets a legal instrument called "medida de abrigo" (protection measure), as a mechanism among other cautionary actions, "aiming at granting the child or adolescent an alternative space to their current cohabitation group when their rights are being threatened or damaged, until other actions have been assessed in order to preserve or restore their rights". LPS are responsible for these decisions, and they have a 180-days period to solve the situation and make new decisions. In this context, temporary families appear, named by the law as "alternative familiar spaces", as a possibility in the system but lacking any legal status.

12. In the province of Buenos Aires, the law of Patronato was regulated by a law Nº 10,067 of the year 1983, released during dictatorship.

Protection measures are exceptional decisions made facing serious instances of children's right damages, known by LPS through different means. One of them might be the child relatives or neighbors who witnessed abandonment of or violence against the child. It is possible that the local police officers receive the complaint, but they must submit it to the LPS, the body designated to process the report. Another instance is that hospital social services acknowledge a baby abandonment after, for example, a woman leaves maternity hospital without the child, or expressing her decisions of quitting motherhood.

Faced with situations that are evaluated as "at risk", "threat", or "abandonment" by LPS, children are removed from their family space, they are sheltered, they arrive at the court, they are evaluated, and they are heard "(María Julia, Psychiatrist, Family Court). The intervention of the Family Courts are limited to the control of legality, to the control of the protection measure taken by the LPS, and, as María Julia said, in cases of older children, they are taken to the Court in order to get to know that child, their situation and to start "working" with their on the decisions that will be made by the Services and the Court. In the case of small children, the Courts usually intervene more at



a distance, controlling that the measures adopted by the LPS are justified in certain risk, violence, and abandonment towards that child. In the control of legality, a third juridical figure also intervenes, the Minor Advisor, representative of the child, whose dependency is the Public Prosecutor of the Province of Buenos Aires, that may or may not agree to

a measure of protection. Once the measure of protection is decided, the LPS seeks an institution or program where the child resides and is cared for temporarily. This search is carried out in coordination with the Zonal Service for the Promotion and Protection of Children Rights, which

which depends on the Provincial Agency of Children and Adolescence. To understand this inter-state procedure, it is important to situate the actors. The Familias de Guadalupe Program belonging to the Civil Association El Vallecito de la Guadalupe is located in the town of Muñiz, in the district of San Miguel. The Zonal Service is located in the district of San Martín, a place where the majority of courts are located and which are incumbent on the entire judicial department, including Muñiz-San Miguel.

The LPSs report a measure of protection to the Zonal Service, and they contact the coordinators of the Program to consult if there is a family available to. “take in a child” This starts the circulation of children to temporary families. In the province of Buenos Aires these families, in their great majority, integrate programs: they are gathered, convened and coordinated by an organization, civil association, or by a municipality through their LPSs. The Zonal Service keeps track of “vacancies” in programs of temporary families for a child to reside temporarily, and oversees the work carried out by organizations like El Vallecito de la Guadalupe. As part of this agreement, the Province of Buenos Aires grants a "subsidy" to the social organization that receives an amount of money for each child being sheltered. This money is used to pay the salaries of the professionals involved in the program, per diem and operating expenses of the organization. The temporary families, meanwhile, are "voluntary" families: which means that they do not receive any amount of money for carrying out the care of the child they embrace¹³.

The professional team of the FGP is integrated by professionals of social work, psychology and psychomotricity. The Program was born from a request of the Zonal Service of San Martín which was dealing, on a daily basis, with a lack of vacancies in Shelters and Children’s Homes, residential institutions in which to temporarily place young children who were under a measure of protection. For that reason, there were many children in hospitals a health institution that is not prepared to care for

13. There are other temporary families programs, often referred to as foster care, in which the State provides directly or through social organizations, a monthly amount of money to families. This is the case of the Family Foster Program of the Government of the City of Buenos Aires.

and provide the necessary emotional support for a newborn child. In the homes where they received babies, vacancies were scarce since a small child demands more attention from the personnel employed in them. Facing that demand, FGP professionals created a program to gather families willing to taking care of children from 0 to 2 years old as an alternative to their placement in huge homes.

Although the specific request was to create a home, from the Civil Association, the creation of a Temporary Families Program was counterproposed. On the one hand, because it ensured a more personalized and continuous care to a baby than what a home can provide. Assessing the positive impact of a family on the early development of these children were a key differential that the creators evaluated¹⁴. In this sense, it is to weigh the very trajectory of those who lead that organization; mostly social workers, many of whom worked in large cohabitation homes. From that experience, the evaluation, which was generally negative, about the real possibilities of offering a space that welcomes, protects, and tends to the particularities of each child also conditioned the search of modalities for the development of the program. On the other hand, sustaining a Children's home, with a significant increase in the number of personnel in charge, implied taking on important salary and economic commitments, not ensured in its continuity by the provincial government. Among its tasks, the Program follows the administrative and judicial files and the children's court cases, both in the Courts and in the LPS, seeking to know the decision-making processes on the infant adoption or on their return to the family group of origin or to the extended family group (e.g. relatives).

This search for information is crucial for temporary families because it nourishes and strengthens this transitory situation. What we have been observing throughout the years from accompanying the monthly meetings of families convened by the FGP is that the lack of information feeds the uncertainty about the period, that is, about the temporality of the experience, both for the children and for the families.

14. The Social Workers Gabriela Guzmán, Jessica Michea Duarte and Natalia Delgado intervened from the beginning. Then the psychologist Gisela Zabala joined, and later, in 2017 psychomotricists Lili Onaga and Andrea Vieites also joined the team. I want to thank all of them, the Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero Students, the psychomotricity undergraduate program coordinator, Leticia González, and above all, all the temporary families and the babies: they all shared their doubts, worries and hopes with me during 4 years, and I am deeply grateful for their trust and their work.

In many cases, the processes extend well beyond the 180 days. In some cases, the children spend more than 2 years with the temporary family, several of which are explained by the negligence of some family courts at the time of making decisions and not prioritizing these cases. The task also involves reviewing how the process is working and the fatigue that sometimes occurs in temporary families:

// *Many families sometimes need support families (other families that accompany them in the task) then it is also assessed the possibility of providing an accompanying family and for this we also have to do a whole previous evaluation because they are families that let's say are convened through those of transit, they are the ones that present them, right? many times they are friends.* **//**

(Psychologist, FGP)

In this way, the support and alleviation of the temporary family is ensured, as well as the bond already created with that baby the same time, the network of caregivers and infant referents is expanded, a process that can be positive in terms of easing the exogamy of the child from their temporary family, until his adoptive family arrives, if that is the decision. Until the social situation of the child is solved, return to the family group of origin or to relatives once the conditions of risk or violation have been modified, or a statement of adoption status by an adoptive family, the organization assumes legal responsibility for the child's care and entrusts their care to a temporary family. In this sense, the temporary families assume the daily care of the babies, and are accompanied by the technical team of the program, appealing also to other resources or networks which they rely on (social, religious, family, etc.).

Since its creation in 2012, PFG professionals have been calling interested families through different means¹⁵. From the moment that they are contacted, the PFG carries out a task of "education" on the process of circulation of children, clarifying in all cases that this is not a method to accelerate the adoption process.

15. Since the arrival of the first child in 2013, around 20 temporary families have gone through the Program, taking care of 32 children, until July 2018.

Therefore, families who are enrolled in the registry of adopters are not allowed to enter the program¹⁶. The families have a class background that was also diversified throughout the development of the program in its 6 years of existence. In the first years, a profile of families with high and middle high average incomes prevailed, while in the last three years the social profile responds more to medium-level income, although this class diversification is maintained.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to have a volume of economic capital available to cover the expenses incurred by a baby, such as the purchase of diapers, milk, and in many cases specific milks counter to afford nutritional situations or pathologies brought by these infants, medications, transfers to hospitals, etc. Although this may lead to the assumption that the possibility of low-income and middle-income families to participate in the program is narrow, there have been cases in which this has happened, and a large family group usually participates in them. For example, a single woman who lives with her sister, or a single woman and her mother, and whose neighbors are her other brothers. This situation makes evident a strategy of low middle class families to engage in the program, gathering all the material resources of the entire family. The social profile does not allow us to identify a single trend in terms of the religious beliefs of the temporary families. Families that do participate actively in creeds and institutionalized religious practices recognize that religious experience help them sustain the child, and place their task within the framework of a moral or religious mandate for love. 'Love one another'. All the love, everything is based on that. That's where the egos go, the limelight vanishes", said Mirta, a member of a temporary family. Some are evangelical believers, others are Catholic, others are Mormons, and others are recognized as part of philosophical-religious systems, such as anthroposophy. Some marriages, for example, are integrated by one believer and another more agnostic. Although the Program bears a Catholic name, like the Civil Association, its members do not necessarily profess that or any other belief, and have no link with the Catholic Church.

16. The meaning of this restriction starts from considering that it is not only an experience and an alternative and transitory protection device, different from the institution of adoption. It is also considered that the creation of an alternative, and illegal, channel should be avoided by means of a temporary families program, because it would be bypassing the Unified Registry of Aspirants for Adoption, which is the device that coordinates the adoption processes in each provincial jurisdiction.

What appears from the analysis of the trajectories of the families interviewed, from what they say in the monthly family meetings and from the analysis carried out by the FGP coordinators themselves, is that the solidarity trajectory is a mark of many of the families, that make a profile with a series of previous practices, which were usually "crowned", with the involvement in a more radical and committed "solidarity" experience than those previously made. The majority of the families come all with vocation for service and wanting to do this from a long time ago. The majority always worked or were involved in the community and in the help. There are families that are volunteer firefighters and those same families go out at night to feed the people who are in the streets. They have the voluntary profile, which also brings together other families (Social Worker, FGP).



Between the return to their original family and adoption: the role of temporary families

After a period of work and evaluation by the LPS with the family group, the child can return to his or her family of origin, or to the extended family group, a brother, uncle, grandparent, with whom they have had some bond or such bond can be built. Otherwise, the infant's adoptability status is declared, and adoption procedures are initiated.

It is expected that while the parental responsibility in the measure of protection is suspended, and the child is still removed from the space of his family of origin, Family Court and LPS assesses the "*conditions of possibility of the family to modify the situation for which that little boy fell into and then see how the child is willing to*¹⁷ adopted" (Psychologist, Family Court).

17. In the case of older children, not in the case of infants of 1 or 2 years

To declare the adoptability, some judges follow the work of the LPS, they make sure that all possible strategies are exhausted: "there has to be a goal to follow from the activity of the local service tending to say *"Well, where do we aim?"*, *We always aim to revive the family; The last resource, for me, is adoption"* (Family Court Judge). The legal regulations stipulate that all possible means must be tried in order to make this happen.

The possibilities of changing the situation are often very difficult to achieve: in the study of the files of the 32 children who went through the PFG, the return to the family group of origin did not happen in any case. In a minimum percentage, however, only 4 children (12.5%) who passed through the PFG were release under the tutelage of a member of the extended family group, usually to uncles or grandparents.

When a court proceeds with the selection of adoptive families for a child with a declaration of adoptability, requested by the SL, a particular situation is often played out: even though in many courts the economic capital of the adoptive family is not hierarchized, they do evaluate certain degrees of economic "stability" that allow them to ensure certain conditions for infants. This creates a problem that many court professionals acknowledge, as the movement of children from the popular and impoverished sectors, to families with more resources than them. Their destination, in adoptive families, set a direction of circulation in "ascending social mobility": adoptive families generally have incomes and insertions in the labor market typical of the middle and upper class families.

Once the adoptive family has been decided by the court, the pre-adoptive guardianship is granted, which will last 6 months and immediately begins what all the actors of the System call the period of bonding ("*vinculación*") between the child and the adoptive family. This can last for months in the case of older children, but rarely lasts more than three weeks when it comes to infants of 1 or 2 years like the ones going through the FGP.

In general, the actors agree that the smaller the child is the faster the bond is built, compared with children of 5 or more years of age. Through this, the role of temporary families is key.

When being notified about the state of adoptability, the temporary families prepare the child for adoption:

“ I used to tell Martin (the infant), since he was a baby, "Your parents are going to come and they will love you, they will give everything for you (...) there are loves ... love for me is a decision". Then, I said to Martin "We decided to love you. Just as we decided to love you, there are parents who are waiting for you since you were born, before you were born, because life already knew, in my case, God already knew what was going to happen to you, that you were going to be abandoned, that you were to get to our family, and now we are waiting for your parents”, we always told him. ”

(Griselda, temporary family)

The criteria for the assessment and the place that they give to the temporary families, contrast starkly from court to court. It is at this moment in the children's circulation that the power exercised by some courts is visible, denigrating or subordinating the bond that the child built with the temporary family. In the following field note that process is described :

“ M. was with Cristina and Diego’s family for 7 months. The Family Court informed the FGP, on Thursday, that they had already chosen a family for M. They notified both the adoptive family and the FGP that on Friday, the day after, "the child can be taken to her adoptive house." On Friday, the adoptive family meets the temporary family and the little infant at the Civil Association's headquarters. After that pleasant and emotional meeting, the same adoptive family realized that they could not take the girl without making a process of progressive bonding with her, as the FGP professionals had told the Family Court. They decide to wait until Monday for it, and make visits to M. in the house of her temporary family during the weekend. They inform the Family Court of this. The Judge, upon receiving this notification, manifests the doubt of whether the adoptive

adoptive family really wants to adopt that child or not. Meanwhile, the professionals from the FGP talk with the technical team of the Court, who apparently were not in full agreement with the decision of the judge, and present a note to the Court, informing and requesting that the process must respect the adjustment and progressive bonding of M. with the new family. The Judge, however, does not address the claim, and finally, on Monday M. is moved in with her adoptive family from the temporary family, in a process of abrupt adaptation of only 3 days and favored because it happened during a weekend. //

(Field note, April 2017)

While the temporary family, the adoptive family and the team that coordinates the PFG struggle for the respect of the process of knowledge and mutual recognition between the infant and the adoptive family, the judicial authority imposes a temporality that does not respect those subjective and cultural processes, and even doubts the adoptive intentionality of the aspiring family. These type of situations, although specific, are not so exceptional, and speak of a strong ignorance about the subjective processes involved in adoption, the right perspective that governs or should rule the process, and, finally, the role of the temporary families and the bond created with the child.

In other situations and other courts, the relationship created between the child and the temporary family is valued, and they are actively included in the bonding process with the adoptive family.

// Usually, we work with her (the professional member of a Temporary Family Program) and the temporary family has come here and met the adoptive family ... there, the families, not the children, get to know each other and then the temporary family tells her, things like , "this is the carpetita (little folder), he likes to sleep with the little thing (doll). //

(Psychiatrist, Family Court).

I also found different speeches that concern the bond between adoptive families, temporary families, and the child. In some cases, the personnel of the Family Courts directly propose the cutting of that bond: recommendations such as *"You, as adoptive family, have to make your own nest", or, if they are still visiting the temporary family, "that will confuse the child"* are frequent. These are discourses that ignore processes of subjectivation and social bonds that occur between children and temporary families, and, before a technical or disciplinary position, they are based on fears that judicial actors have in relation to these processes. Other judicial actors circulate more respectful discourses related with the process previously indicated, although they do not fail to point out the legal "void" or legal recognition that exists on the relationship between children and temporary families:

// but at the moment that they are ultimately in charge of that baby, we understand that it is the criterion of those parents (the adoptive ones) that we, in some way, at some point choose, and they can not be forced to hold the bond with the temporary family. //

(Family Court Judge)

The judge points out a real situation: temporary families, although they are recognized by the Provincial Agency for Children and Adolescents, which supports the development of temporary families program all over Buenos Aires, have no legal recognition. The bond that is created between them and the babies they care for and raise does not give them legal recognition over the baby. In this situation, the legal hierarchy stands out in an evaluation made by the FGP on the power held by judicial actors in the Children Rights Protection System:

// If there is a judge that says "OK, look, now the baby is your son. You don't have to give more attention to the temporary family". If the judge says that, I as an adoptive father with fear of the figure that judges represent, being afraid of them taking my new son away from me, I would pay attention to him, I do not associate with the temporary family anymore. //

(Social Worker, FGP)

MAKING SOCIETY: TEMPORARY FAMILIES AS HUMANITARIAN MOVEMENT

In social circles in which temporary families move, their social experience of commitment towards a specific cause mobilizes and provokes a certain sensitivity. Although temporary families come from and participate in social networks in which they develop altruistic practices, there is a kind of *ascending solidarity trajectory*, which reaches a certain level in the experience of taking care of babies.

This experience **//** *of aid and commitment to the humanitarian cause* **//** triggers the mobilization of feelings of people "with whom they cross", as a contagious effect (Psychologist, FGP):

// *it is the same in temporary families, where a friend of them is touched and now wants to have the experience of being a temporary family. Then they go recruiting for themselves in their own circles, in their own networks.* **//**

(Social Worker, FGP)

Within and outside the religious spaces of belonging, families become involved and involve others in the care of these children, even if they do not **//** *become temporary families like us* **//** (Mirta, temporary family). A certain movement of *sympathy for what we do is awakened*, which is not institutionalized as a social movement, nor is it territorialized, but takes form in interactions, emotions and practices for example of donation of material resources, that people who interact with temporary families perform when they know what they are doing.

The particularity is the *babies effect* in that movement: the feelings of support and gratitude that it generates even in strangers towards temporary families, expresses a compassionate attitude to the other, a kind of fraternity and of admiration towards the temporary families for the task they perform for a child who they previously did not know and from whom they must "separate" at some point (Revault D'Allonnes,

2009). In the monthly meetings of these families, I recorded numerous accounts of the temporary mothers, who go with the baby to the supermarket, or to the school of their biological children, and they meet people who they do not know and who ask them about the baby. When the relationship between the child and the woman is told, comments of gratitude and admiration arise, and curiosity and an emotional tone move those who know the experience in these kinds of situations.

Families find in the FGP a reason to be and to commit themselves. In some way, they "feel" that they become a society, that there is a social bond that unites them with others. It is not surprising that this happens here. On the one hand, because *humanitarian and solidarity practices are also built to give meaning and social density to personal life*, as analyzed by Malkki in *solidarity practices in Finland* (Malkki, 2015). The specificity that can be observed here is linked to the social representation and emotional mobilization about infancy. The involvement in the care of other people's babies, places those who commit to this in a humanitarian task of quasi-rescue, because of the fragility associated with the first months of life and the need for personalized care. In general, babies going into the FGP come from poor neighborhood families, which add to temporary families a specific representation on poverty and social inequality as damage. Ultimately, what happens to babies puts on the table the biological and social reproduction of society itself.

The families interviewed commented that in these common instances, and in other more intimate and close ones, such as in the same group of the FGP, they feel that babies enable them to build bonds with people not necessarily previously known. Being a temporary family constitutes an instance of sociability and construction of new ties, and the realization that there is *good people even if one does not know* (Mario, temporary family).

The health situation is a relevant notion to observe not only the humanitarian sensitivity, but also the strategic uses that families make of it. The temporary families, in general, through their networks, or

networks being created with doctors in public hospitals, get access to medical examinations and even sometimes to surgical interventions covered by the public health system. There is no legal measure that allows children in temporary situations to be admitted to their regular or prepaid health insurance that these family groups have, since they do not have a legal guard of the baby, but a measure of protection, and which is also in the name of the FGP and not of the families¹⁸. However, something special happens. In general, these babies in temporary families are prioritized in the attention of professionals or by the administrative staff of public hospitals. This is evidence of the humanitarian social sensitivity that presents itself in a wide range of ways and among different social actors that, at some point, intervene in the circulation of children who are separated from their families of origin. Babies separated from their families awaken feelings that, even shadowed under the stereotype of "abandoned childhood"¹⁹, open doors, facilitate access, and guarantee coverage of basic rights. This happens through the affections and sensitivity produced by that same circulation of children. On the contrary, the circulation of children is interrupted when some actors of the protection system interfere with that process, according to the bureaucratic and political logic within which they often work. *My hypothesis is that the greater the distance between the child and the intervening actors, the greater the difficulty in achieving that the circulation process of children, as established by the normative framework, follows its course and is respectful of the process of subjectivation of the babies.* It is interesting to note how what the temporary families name as a "lack of empathy", a denial of the prioritization of children, appears strongly both in the actors of the Zonal Service and in Courts members.

Federico, a child who was being taken care of by a temporary family for more than 2 years, suffered a discretionary and arbitrary management of the Family Court Judge in charge, postponing without justification the decision on his state of adoptability for more than a year and a half.

18. In fact, the children are under the legal responsibility of the coordinator of the Program, as designated by the directive Commission of the Civil Association.
19. As I have already remarked, social situations are much more complex. I only point out that this stereotype and representation, as well as that of temporary families as humanitarian "heroes", is strategically a tool of power for these families and for the welfare of these children, since it facilitates procedures, ensures attention in the health system, disability, etc..

When the Judge declared it for the first time, after about one year and seven months of being with a temporary family, she chose a family who, after meeting the child, decided against the adoption. No one in the Court knew the child, and at a distance, after that event, she took the decision to force the child to undergo a neurological evaluation for what the frustrated adoptive family had told her. However, all the previous clinical evaluations indicated that Federico's development, with its own temporality, was adequate, and that he was healthy. It is a Family Court that, in previous cases, had also taken decisions that did not contemplate the real situation of the babies. After several comings and goings and other discretionary management of the judge who threatened to remove the child from that temporary family to a huge Children Home, by August 2018 Federico was finally initiating in a relationship with his supposedly definitive adoptive family.

The situation is framed then, not only by a factual distance, such as not knowing the infant by some Courts and Zonal Services, but also by the pre-eminence of a political logic that prevents problematizing and pushing further the moral and ethical questioning that families raise before judges like this one. Thus, for example, the Zonal Services do not usually question decisions of the judges, as it happened with Federico. Ensuring compliance with the 180-day timeframe established in the law is not a priority, and when this does not happen, the Zonal or Local Services, which have much less interference in the Courts, neither question judicial decisions nor assume a defense position of children, which are carried out by various means by FGP professionals and families.

The FGP showcases and visualizes the hierarchy of Courts over the power of the LPS and organization, such as Vallecito, hierarchy that continues working in spite of the more than 13 years of validity of the laws on protection of rights of children in the province of Buenos Aires and in the country. These hierarchies are questioned by this group of families and professionals:

“ There is something, there is something ... some fear that they have, something that does not allow them to advance. I know that justice is very annoying and most of the courts are

disgusting., There are judges who are geniuses and there are others who are a disaster. But these are children. I couldn't care less ... when I went to fight with judge B ..., I don't give a damn about my fear. My fear, I left it in a drawer. I went to face something I did not know, but there is something missing. //

(Griselda, temporary family)

Griselda's story situates the problem in relation to the times handled by the courts and the type of decisions they make, delaying the prioritization of childhood. In this sense, temporary families and professionals of the FGP assume, in practice, a position of advocacy and practical defense of children's rights in front of the Judicial Power, constituting a kind of tactical movement in defense of criteria that prioritize babies' well-being over the logics and practices of distancing that other actors of the Children Rights Protection System perform. This kind of tactical militancy, which in some moments denounces²⁰ and makes visible, and in others "is saved" for an upcoming battle, as one of the FGP professionals said, constitutes a strategy of practical knowledge accumulated by the FGP to deal with the preeminence of what they call the spirit of Patronato (the old children law), and the limited involvement in the singularities and situations of each of the babies.

The FGP clearly goes beyond what it should do according to the normative framework and agreements to make sure that the voluntary families are taking care of the children in a healthy way, and to raise the respective reports to the supervisory bodies. The professionals of the program, when carrying out this follow-up on what kind of decision the LPS and the Courts are about to take, as in returning to the family of origin, declaring the state of adoptability, etc., put pressure on the judiciary, submitting notes, asking for reports, "visiting" the courts, etc.

The FGP professionals assume the intermittent collapses of the Protection System, or its constant²¹ overflow when establishing direct communication channels where they were not requested.

20. The FGP has made several complaints to judges who have taken this type of postponements or arbitrary decisions. These are accusations made before the Supreme Court of Justice of the Province of Buenos Aires. None of them had any effect on the career of the judges reported.
21. According to what they informed me, in some courts up to 2000 different types of cases can be handled during a year.

For instance the association sends reports to the Court and to the Zonal Service and the LPS, when in fact it would be sufficient to send them only to the Zonal Service. In this way, it opens a gap to ensure a greater follow-up and pressure on the resolution of the case, on the decision of what should happen with the babies. The FGP actively produces the situation of transition, so that it does not become "permanent" as in abandoned case, and, of the infant in the temporary family. This way a process of power construction is taking place:

“What happens is that we optimize time. The truth is that between going to a place that does not know and having to ask a court, and a zonal Service that does not know and having to ask a judge, we go directly to the court. We try to be part of it, by force, and we try to have participation there. That's what happens.”

(Social Worker, FGP).

This construction of a position of power is based on the situation of babies and the commitments assumed by the FGP with the families, to ensure that the deadlines established by law for transit, (180 days, are met. The children's rights perspective works as an articulator that legitimizes certain actors to intervene, in which conflicting ways of intervention are disputed (Villalta and Llobet, 2015). In this framework, the legitimacy of the approach and the affectivity and power of the bond with the babies, as Griselda says in the epigraph, enables the PFG and the families themselves to become part of the infants' defense.

That activism in defense of the integrity of babies in circulation is based on arguments and evidence about *the power of the social bond built*. Before reaching the conclusions, I find it interesting to point out two characteristics about the bond and its power. The first is linked to the subjective recovery of these children and their healthy development. The second, to the way in which kinship is resignified through the link with the temporary baby in these families.

Among some specialized actors in the field of health, the positive

evaluation of temporary families is highlighted due to its salutogenic potential and the developing body of children emerges as the great field of action and evidence. The step through the family space does not only produce a mere familiarization, but also a singularization of the corporal attention that is reflected in the vitality, in the capacities of interaction, reaction, attention, in the tone and in the establishment of corporal positions of interaction as in the glances for each other (babies and adults), that make possible evidence of the salutogenic potential of temporary families for infants in circulation.

The families themselves place their practices in an institutional framework in which the salutogenic capacity of the temporal process in families is strengthened. Families locate themselves in a larger context, in a social project, linked to social organization but far beyond it, in which it is the society itself that takes charge of the child, "repairing" a harm that is not the exclusive responsibility of the original parents of the babies. One of them explained:

// Gabriel always knew we were expecting his parents, he was not an emotional conflict. Today he is a healthy, healthy, healthy child. But who makes him healthy? We, society. It is not "He healed free"; the society, the adoptive parents who accepted us as we are and we accept the parents as they are, without judging and without criticizing. //

(Graciela, temporary family)

I want to emphasize that it is the potential of the process of circulation of children through the system that, from Graciela's perspective, produces health, rooted in the possibilities of establishing imaginary social ties between parents, children, and the temporary family, and "face to face", among children, temporary, and adoptive families.

The impact on their subsequent development is staged in the looks, in the "comfort" and "looseness" body, that these babies are producing in the family spaces that host them, both in the temporary families and in the adoption (Bourdieu, 1986). The center of attention they become in the temporary family, the "spoiling" that the social worker points out,

makes up one of the basic functions of families in our societies. Sometimes this is staged as an intimate affection, exclusive attention, being pampered by the whole family and the extended family, and by neighbors and acquaintances of that temporary family. It is the whole society deploying a policy of care and unique attention in early childhood, and which also focuses on the production and physical development of children.

Throughout the process in which I was involved in the monthly family meetings, in the visits to the homes with the psychomotor students, in the interviews with the families, and in the frequent encounter with the same children, I was able to observe how children moved to occupy a central place in the life of families. In analytical terms, the production of kinship was key to "housing" children in a position in the family structure²².

In addition to all health care and clinical controls, temporary families offer these children a place of cultural recognition, which is the position of infants, even if it is temporary. In fact, in many families, there is a certain reluctance to name them as their own child. If the infant stays for much longer than 180 days, and begins to gain oral language, the babbling of "dad" or "mom" causes concern in the adults of the temporary families.

Many of the families relate their fear to this situation since "we are not their definitive family". This is where the situation of temporary families question the social representation of the definitive family, granted by the metaphor of blood. However, crossing that tension is productive, and, in conversations with families, I have been able to point out that a child, as anthropological research has indicated can have several mothers throughout his life, and it does not involve, per se, any kind of psychological risk or confusion (Fonseca, 2010). The productivity and the mobility of kinship in contemporary societies, which a social worker of the court indicated as a difficulty, appears here as a possibility: most of the adoptive families of children who went through the PFG, end up establishing more or less permanent ties with the temporary families, and end up placing them as the "uncles" or "aunts" of the child.

22. "A kinship system does not consist of the objective ties of filiation or consanguinity given between individuals; it exists only in the consciousness of men; it is an arbitrary system of representations and not the spontaneous development of a de facto situation" (Levi-Strauss, 1987: 94).

They are thus incorporated into a structure of kinship known but novel at the same time, in which the preeminence of the blood as a conditioner of the family bond is no longer only placed in parentheses by the same legal and cultural operation of adoption, but also by the link created between the child and the temporary family, on the one hand, and between the adoptive and the temporary families, mediated by the infant, on the other.

This location in the structure of kinship, which seals an alliance between families, that, in many cases, lasts for years or a lifetime, is motivated by the feeling of gratitude. *Gratitude is experienced here as an emotion as well as a moral value.* As emotion, it is linked to the process of circulation of children, which has the adoption and the adoptive family as its point of "arrival".

The care and love given by the temporary family to the infant is experienced with a deep feeling of gratitude on the part of the adoptive family. The reception of a healthy, strengthened, caring and cared for child, who also knows life in a family, constitutes one of the facets of the relationship of exchange and reciprocity, and a subjective experience of gift and debt towards those who took care of the child, that installs the value of recognizing part of that same system, the dignity of recognizing the other as equal. On the part of the temporary families, gratitude appears as an expected feeling, but also as a given feelings. They recognize the gratitude felt towards them by the families that adopt the baby, they expect this recognition, and, when talking about that, *they acknowledge their feelings of gratitude towards that baby and "towards life" and other nominations of the transcendence that they elaborate according to their religious beliefs,* as the speech of Griselda outlined in the epigraph of this document.

The daily task of constantly taking care of a baby, to which the temporary families are devoted to, constitutes in itself a strong emotional work of involvement, from the constant grooming of the child, the celebration of his or her birthday in prolonged transits, holidays or family parties, etc. The fatigue and wear that it often produces is compensated and sustained in the *social recognition of the value of the work they do.*

This recognition comes from the social spaces through which they circulate, whether they are known or anonymous and crowned in the "stable" position in the kinship structure to which the temporary families are invited motivated by gratitude and debt. Although social recognition functions as a moral capital I would like to emphasize that this recognition is based on, and, in turn, produces a social representation about early childhood, about babies, as keys in the continuation of society, that is, as the successors of the social group (Wilkie, 2010, Fuentes, 2013). That representation is framed in the re-production of the social as a public problem. Not being babies from a specific group, but children that could be any child, what is at stake in the moral economy that produces the social value of temporary families, is that, by ensuring the circulation of those children and their health and life, *the humanitarian practice of these families "makes society". This contributes to humanity and the feeling that there is something shared that unites individuals and groups.*

CONCLUSIONS

The circulation of children produces concerns and gratifications when a resolution is made that can have a positive impact on them. Infants in circulation modify kinship relationships: families see their dynamics transformed and everyday life becomes embellished with other senses and degrees of significance. As in other humanitarian practices, the social life of those who are involved in this type of programs is re-signified (Malkki, 2015). The evidence that is gathered from the analysis of the daily life of families with babies is the experience of a social bond construction that goes beyond the idea of "cohesion". *The work of temporary families produces a bond and resolves social anxieties in relation to the future of society. It is here where the experience of social movement appears, of people who approach temporary families and children, of professionals of the courts and hospital, who feel "touched" by that task of care, and support them in terms of recognition, material in some cases, and moral in almost all. Families thus have a scarce and highly valued asset: altruism, specifically aimed at the care and reproduction of society itself, materialized and made possible*

by the circulation of children capable of unleashing innumerable humanitarian values and feelings. Secondly, the possession of that good, of those virtues, is constructed in a broad social field, diffused in terms of its limits, and not necessarily organized or coalesced in terms of what is classically understood by social movement (Falero, 2012; Svampa, 2010). However, in terms of sympathy and closeness to the task, the feeling of fraternity that they awaken and the "humanitarian", as one psychologist said, of the temporary families' task, constitutes an *ethical agency* for those who develop this social practice and those who know it, from near or far, that allows to question a series of values and established orders.

One of them is the legal system, specifically the *judicial hierarchy*. The praxis of the organization, and the questionings coming from the families, install a series of objections to the arbitrary power and bureaucratic logic of the judicial power. The latter constitutes a key tool for the extension of the rights. Paradigm, established by the normative framework in force since 2005, above the power of Patronato. In this sense, it is not merely a matter of the dispute between two paradigms at the "theoretical" level, but of families and social organization praxis, tactical, sometimes strategic that in order to carry out its task of protecting the rights of children, must even legalize the illegality in which the same system of protection moves under the judicial hierarchy.

The other is the ethical hierarchy in which society locates these families, made possible by the feelings and the value of gratitude that comprehensively encompasses their practice. The families give time, effort, networks of containment, "love", care, economic resources, innovative ways of organization for the care of the babies, configuring, towards the end of the process, a feeling of gratitude in multiple directions. Gratitude towards the babies, with whom they are still linked in many cases, towards adoptive families, towards the FGP of the organization that groups them as temporary families, and towards "life" and other senses or figurations of transcendence and the sacred. In this sense, *gratitude and the gift enable that experience, sustain it, and, at the same time, reproduce it in a social context in which the temporary families and the organization interpellates, in different ways, dominant*

notions about social values, in the context of a society as unequal as symbolically egalitarian and meritocratic as Argentina. The gratitude experience installs a reverse or bracketing of current "values".

Although these virtues have specific names and are culturally endowed with particular meanings, such as "disinterest", "sacrifice", "heroism", "dedication", the relationship between temporary families and society installs not only admiration and moral capitalization, in the one we are all involved in, even the one who writes, but also the preeminence of ethical values over others, such as economic capital, wealth, success, etc. This deep social feeling conditions the production of this extended sensitivity to babies and to temporary families. Their task is also praiseworthy because they raise what, for common sense, is the reverse of kinship: the obligation to have to say goodbye to that child at some time, with the possibility of not seeing him or her ever again. This kind of assessment of disinterest, however, is misleading: families and professionals of the FPG act strategically to achieve this, even questioning the representations and hierarchical discourses of judicial actors who usually act against it. *The past gratitude or the one that will come, seen from the trajectory of the temporary families, and the bond created with the infants, enhance them to build power, to get themselves organized and extend humanitarian feelings as a movement, and even to become experts in protecting the rights of these unique babies.*

Finally, I note that in the circulation of little children, there is a series of emotions and values linked to the social representation of childhood as a commitment of society as a whole to its future, but that is about poor and vulnerable children and the social representations associated with it. The gratitude experience is also configured in an inequitable practice, in which the "rescue" also implies the circulation or upward mobilization of children from impoverished sectors towards sectors that are not enriched, but have more resources in the class structure. Nevertheless, the "community" and diverse experiences in terms of the FGP analyzed here relativize this directionality, which is not so linear (Fonseca, 2010).

23. I understand the production of humanitarian feelings as a modality of the present time in which a certain type of civic virtues is specifically produced, and where the economy of values, their production and differential circulation is not necessarily opposed to the search for social prestige. That is, I do not want to oppose the field of moral economy to the field of market economy, but both are part of the daily life of adults and children. The humanitarian reason produces subjectivity (Fassin, 2012) and power, possibilities of particular agency in highly demanding and complex systems, as in this case the system of protection of rights.

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GRATITUDE, GIFTS, AND EMOTIONS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR THE LAND OF A RURAL SOCIAL MOVEMENT

Mariela Pena

INTRODUCTION

This work explores the *praxis of gratitude* category in different spheres of political action. A promising approach to the subjective motives and to the affective nature that, as has already been revealed by social sciences, through the so-called *affective turn*, conform behaviors related to political life (Ahmed, 2004).

Specifically, this study is proposed as a theoretical reflection anchored in a concrete empirical case. It takes as a reference the Rural Movement of Santiago del Estero-Vía Campesina (MOCASE-VC), a social movement in the north-central region of Argentina, consisting of rural marginalized people, which by now has a 28-year history of political life. This organization, which initially aimed to act as a trade union and to offer legal advice regarding conflicts with business sectors on land possession and ownership, later became a social movement as a response to contemporary capitalism's way of life.

My interest in addressing this empirical case as a means to investigate *gratitude as motivation for action on social movements* stems from the attention to the centrality assigned in their collective identity to the concepts of *territoriality*, *solidarity*, and *community life*, perceived as the horizon for a *new way of life*, which repositions the organization as the pivot of social life. From this perspective, I have designed a series of objectives that approach us to the values and practices built by the organization and to its connection with what is known as the praxis of gratitude. These objectives are carried out under two complementary approaches:

“ On the one hand, I focus on a biographical narrative analysis of active members of the organization, inquiring on the expression of gratitude towards the organization as a vehicle for political participation and its connection with the subjective transformations that took place since political performance (Arfuch, 2014). Based on this, two types of narratives were selected. The first corresponds to one of the movement's mentors, who is of non-rural origin and who decided to dedicate his life to political participation in the rural area. The second belongs to a couple of local political leaders, or historical members²⁴, born in one of the base communities of the MOCASE. I argue, from this source of analysis, that in the mythical structure that founds the identity base and sustains the political praxis of the Movement, the notion of gratitude is a key meaning that activates a series of motives, rewards and satisfactions, acting as a gift. ”

(Mauss, [1925] 1980, cited in Abduca, 2007)

On the other hand, I explore, under the category of *praxis of gratitude*, the collective actions of the organization in connection to what, in previous works, we called *policies of daily life*. The latter refers to the assignment of domestic, productive, and political tasks, the use of different public and private spaces; and the forms of political participation of women, men, and young people (Pena, 2017).

Regarding the anthropological fieldwork, most of the interviews and observations were done during cohabitations with families of two of the organization's base communities from 2015 until the present day. I conducted the aforementioned autobiographical narratives, in-depth interviews, and employed the technique of participant observation. Furthermore, these data were complemented with content analysis of written publications, such as "memory books" produced by the MOCASE-VC, which were facilitated by individuals with whom we have worked.

For methodological purposes, I find it is key to make the study's field

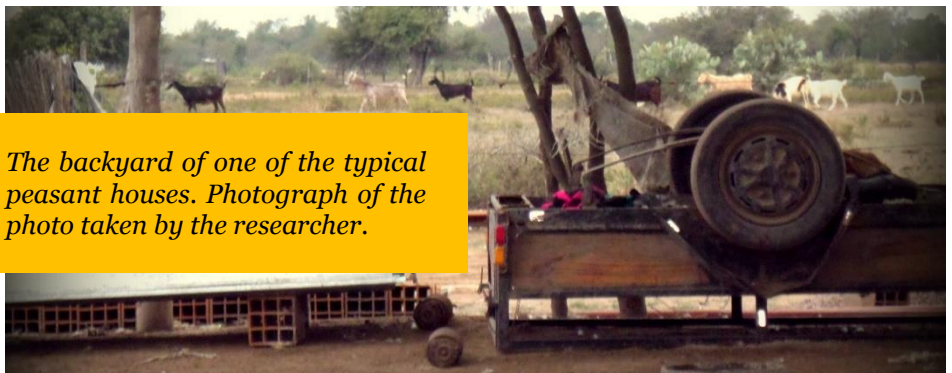
24. Militant or "historical" partner is the native term by which the organization refers to those who belong to the movement since its inception, most of which occupied a central role during its founding, and who still actively participate today.

conditions explicit, since it is placed in a rural and socio-economically disadvantaged location, to which entry and transport are very difficult. At the organizational level, the MOCASE-VC currently centralizes ten *Centrales Campesina*, Centrals, which are spread out in different regions of the province of Santiago del Estero. In turn, each of them assembles a variable number of *base communities*, which are the most basic level of *rural families'* organization. Since the beginning of our research, we have focused our field work on the Quilimí Central, but we have, at times, contacted members from different Centrals.

Quimilí is a city located in the center-east of the province, about 200 km from the provincial capital and 80 km away from the provincial border with Chaco. It has a population of approximately 15.000 inhabitants. From there, *base communities* are scattered at 5 to 70 km from the city on dirt roads. During our research, we visited the Santa Rosa, one of the closest, and Rincón de Saladillo communities, whose access conditions are more restricted. The latter *base community* is located at about 60 km from Quimilí connected by an unpaved road which contains a high level of clay and becomes waterlogged to the point of being impassable during the rainy season. One of the main concerns for rural families is the lack of drinkable water, which makes it necessary for them to store rainwater in earth dams or cisterns. During winters the problem worsens, as water quality deteriorate and people end up drinking dirty water.

In Rincón de Saladillo, and several other communities', houses are usually built by countryfolk using their own hands and *mud*. Only some families have accepted construction with brick and cement. Families often live with more than seven children in very small spaces. Access to electricity in households is very recent, dating only to 2013. The basic means of communication is battery-powered radio. The Internet signal is very low in some places and only one family we visited had a television. Households do not have natural gas either, which means that food is cooked using firewood, whether in or out of the house. Boys and girls attend the only primary school in the area, where groups of students of different ages meet in the same classroom. For primary health care they must go to the nearest town, which is 30 km away.

Several families who usually receive visits from other related organizations which are integrated to global Vía Campesina, kindly offer their homes, waiting and appreciating that the guest, in this case the researcher, learns *factually* their way of life by accompanying them in their routine and daily social activities. This includes food preparation, family visits, community meetings, work with animals, *matedas* (a native social meeting organized around the *matte* beverage), and everything else involved in their daily routine. *Ir al campo* staying in their communities, is strongly recognized by, members of the communities and it reinforces trust, not only in the researcher's good intentions, but also in the seriousness of the constructed knowledge, since they dislike the information that is known about them "without having been there". In turn, for the countryfolk it provides a way of showing their way of life's legitimacy, the authenticity of their peasant identity, the "good use" of the lands they occupy, and their honesty as political activists. Additionally, the urban environment is hostile to many of them, a fact expressed openly in recurring statements. They said that "they do not feel comfortable" outside their homes and that they feel the need to return home as soon as possible. Following observations during this work in the communities, we indicate that the MOCASE-VC features a process of construction of a sociability mode based on the community, as part of its symbolic world, which is key in sustaining their daily political practices. In this context, *the gratitude to the organization, meaning the group as a whole, provides the social actors with sensitivities that act as a model to support political participation.* In summary, this study provides knowledge about the specific experience of the MOCASE-VC, its impact on organized countryfolk' biographies, and its potential in the face of research on *the praxis of gratitude* in social movements.



The backyard of one of the typical peasant houses. Photograph of the photo taken by the researcher.

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The work is organized into four sections. The first focuses on the current characteristics of the social movement that I find of special importance for this, and reviews their emergent conditions and political trajectory. The second part introduces a series of theoretical lines and focuses on the autobiographical narratives of some key members of the rural movement. These provide strong indication to my argument that, in this collective organization, the praxis of gratitude plays the role of a mythical structure. The third section analyzes the politics of daily life, based on my field work in two of the base communities of the movement. The fourth section concludes the findings of all three sections. My aim is to incite new questions to encourage future research that will help consolidate the *praxis of gratitude* category and demonstrate its potential for the analysis of the social world.

PRESENTATION OF THE EMPIRICAL CASE: THE MOCASE-VÍA CAMPESINA

The Rural Movement of Santiago del Estero (MOCASE) began formally in 1990 in the city of Quimilí, in the Argentinian Province of Santiago del Estero, where most of the rural population lived for generations on land plots that they used in subsistence farming, without property deeds. Santiago del Estero has one of the highest poverty rates,

the largest number of rural population as well as migration and environmental degradation. Part of its population began to organize in what later became a movement that turned the land conflict into a symbol of territorial disputes, and of confrontation to the development model, to private property, and to capitalism as a way of life (Michi, 2010).

Previously, from the 1970's onwards, a process of "silent evictions" developed. This was based on the settler's ignorance regarding their rights on the lands and on the extreme power inequalities that prevailed back then. Expropriations escalated in the 1990's, when export, as in oriented mechanical agricultural production, known as the *soybean frontier*²⁵, led by a business sector of extra, resulted in a profound change in the agricultural structure. Additionally, these expropriations were performed within an autocratic government system, despite its formal democratic context, which was implemented as the working: "and peasant population suffered through various forms of complicity and overlaps between the political, economic and legal regional power."

Against this background, part of the rural population gathers in an organization whose most urgent problems were linked to the conjunctural conflicts regarding land possession and ownership, and seek legal and union advice from external agents who are then incorporated into the movement as *technicians* or *soft hands* (Durand, 2010). During the initial stage, a rural organization started developing, accompanied by these key external actors. This organization is symbolized as a popular mobilization in 1986 known as "El Grito de los Juríes". Representatives of these same organizations meet three years later, and finally, on August 1, 1990, the Rural Movement of Santiago del Estero was formally established.

Soon afterwards, the organized countryfolk realized that these transformations had also occurred in detriment of forests, and natural soils, and that they had caused a general rural life precariousness, unemployment, deepening poverty, and increased migration.

25. The term refers to the increase in land available for the planting of soybeans and other export-oriented agricultural products through transgenic and technological modifications.

The idea and the need to "unite" to address the imposed changes rose, and several collective efforts were proposed regarding land conflicts as well as labor, political, and economic issues. Examples of this are the "stops in front of the *topadoras*, bulldozers, of the businessmen who came to occupy the land, which consisted in impeding their passage with their own bodies. Also, in the economic sphere, incipient forms of organization were created in the form of cooperatives for the commercialization of products that previously could only be sold at a very low price (Durand, 2006).

Thus, this organization quickly became a means of collective action around the identity of *countryfolk*. On this basis, the opposing ways built around the capitalist way of life can be understood: individualism and private property, and their proposal for the creation of horizontal *networks* and solidary *sociability*, sustained in the notion of *community life* as an alternative political form. This comes from the amalgam of its own framework, coming from the experience of local struggle, with external and global discourses such as environmentalism and conservationism, influenced by experiences such as the Zapatista Movement (EZLN) of Mexico or the Movement of the "Movimento de Trabalhadores Sem Terra" (MST) of Brazil.

Later on, after a fracture in 2001 due to differences regarding the organizational form, which strategies to follow, and the ways for obtaining resources and political alliances, two different groups continue as MOCASE and MOCASE Via Campesina. The latter assumes a horizontal structure, as in without leaders and assemblies involved in the decision-making process. It also acts through alliances with other national sectors, especially some unemployed people urban movements, and with global organizations such as the Latin American Coordination of Field Organizations (CLOC) and the Via Campesina.

In this process, in which the countryfolk assumed themselves as part of an alternative *way of life* that recovers and reworks traditional knowledge, they propose transformations in five key points:

1. The political form of direct participation and decision making through assemblies, the respect for Human Rights and the notion of relative autonomy from the State;

1. The agricultural and livestock production, respect for the environment, ecological awareness, and economic criteria to distance themselves from the capitalist logic of “accumulation” towards the notion of *soberanía alimentaria* (food sovereignty);
2. The concept of *territoriality*. A place where solidary, alternative, and fair social bonds are created;
3. Instruction through a recovery of the popular education theories, in order to promote autonomy and horizontal participation in the production of knowledge and political education (Michi, 2010);
4. The reconfiguration of gender relations, since many women have become activist, as well as leaders of cooperative productive projects. Also the implementation of sexual and reproductive rights programs in their communities.

Currently, people organized as the Rural Movement of Santiago del Estero, Vía Campesina (MOCASE-VC), have achieved formal recognition in most of the territories they inhabit. In some cases, over achieving family properties’ deeds, and, in others, through registration as indigenous communities. This allows most of them to maintain their traditional way of life, growing food and grazing goats on small areas of between 1 and 4 ha, their homes and farms for subsistence activities, combining them with new strategies based on some of the transformations achieved. Mainly, they mix traditional activities based on family administration with others organized at community level, such as community gardens and grazing spaces, and cooperative ventures such as jam production.

In many cases, the mentioned alternatives are fostered through provincial, national, and international funding and subsidies, which the MOCASE-VC administration is responsible for managing, based on its global political orientation of confrontation, claim and multiple strategic alliances with both governmental and non-governmental organizations. Thus, the MOCASE-VC has managed to combine its rural identity with the indigenous origin of a large part of its population in its policies of resistance and legitimacy in the face of conflicts over land.

Considering the rural organization's path and achievements, we are interested in analyzing the reconfiguration of the dominant values and the way they are experienced in everyday interactions, creating an alternative sociability and dissent against the morality of individualism, proposing the notion of *community* as a privileged horizon (Michi, 2010). Related to this, during the field work carried out previously (2015-2018), our findings about *emotional energy* have been significant (Jasper, 2012). The latter was inspired, at a subjective level, by protest experiences in the public space and different key events in the path of the collective struggle. To illustrate this point, it is remarked that within the set of forms of protest are especially highlighted what they call *retomas* and *aguantes*, which consist of actions carried out as soon as the rural organization becomes aware of the eviction of some family belonging to the organization. As a result, the mode of operation is to communicate the situation to all the centrals and base communities, from where men, women, and children come to relocate families who were evicted in their old *ranchos*, to rebuild them if they have been burned or destroyed, and then make a kind of collective and provisional *camping* that can last several days or weeks. While the custody is being carried out, they live in community, with mixed groups and rotating tasks, and the course of action is discussed in assemblies. Regarding this way of collective action, it has been said:

“ The aguante is a material and spiritual help, and, at the same time, where people expose their own bodies to police violence and topadoras. They fight to support those who may lose everything over the course of one night. It is an activity of support to other families in which the mystique of the resistance action joins the idea of a pilgrimage, of movement towards another space ... ”

(Heller, 1998, cited in Durand, 2006: 140, *own translation*).

These experiences were key to the construction of the MOCASE-VC's identity, and to the strengthening of the movement's internal loyalties, providing *affective commitments* that tend to be prolonged in the long term. They have also contributed to the resignification of individual experiences generating feelings of gratitude, strength, and self-esteem.

In this context, it is understood that issues related to the transformation and strengthening of community bonds within daily life are not indifferent to the MOCASE-VC. For example, from the early stages of the movement's formation, in the 1990's, certain problems that affected women's participation in political life were incipiently incorporated. Later on, they gradually added their own educational institutions dedicated to children and adolescents, such as the School of Agroecology and the recently established Rural University, which regain Popular Education elements.



A practical class for the young people who attend the School of Agroecology, in the Central de Quimilí. Image taken from the MOCASE Via Campesina website

These contestations to the dominant values of individualism provide the men and women with a sense of *dignity*. Therefore, it can be observed that these meanings and practices oriented to collaborate with this project are incorporated under what we could term *praxis of gratitude or reciprocity*.

GRATITUDE AS A MYTHICAL STRUCTURE IN THE LIFE STORIES OF THE POLITICAL LEADERS: "THE MOCASE GAVE MEANING TO MY LIFE"

As was previously stated, the purpose of this analysis is to address the notion of *praxis of gratitude* from the case study of the Rural Movement of Santiago del Estero, Argentina, this will be done by taking into account both its manifestation in the *autobiographical narratives* of the political leaders of the organization, as well as the representations and *daily political* practices linked to it. In this sense, the empirical case also incorporates the discussion about the potential of contemporary social movements to think about the community as a mode of alternative or counter-hegemonic sociability, locating the notion of *reciprocity*, together with values and ethics such as gratitude, solidarity and cooperation, as part of that framework of response to capitalist society. To this end, our research was framed in the theoretical line of social studies on *emotions* and oriented around the concept of "cultural policies" in the study of social movements and their disputes to redefine the different areas of social life in the current neoliberal context.

Studies on emotions demonstrated that groups tend to become stronger when they share feelings in relation to certain events that reinforce their loyalties and their collective identity. The *emotional energy* generated during face-to-face interactions provide the individuals with a group consciousness and contributes to the feeling of belonging to collective ventures. Within this theoretical framework, the 'sense of belonging' to a group involves different feelings, such as love, pride, and enthusiasm, which together generate *affective commitments* that tend to last in the long term (Jasper, 2012). Social movements, while instrumentally motivated by power or material benefits, are also grounded on motives such as honor, pride, and concern about human dignity. According to the author, loyalties and collective identity "expand the list of goals of an

individual to include benefits for the group beyond those received by that individual as a member. These goals are not completely selfish, nor fully altruistic" (Jasper, 2012). Thus, we can include *gratitude as a structuring element in certain forms of political action, exploring their role in processes such as participation in collective organizations*.

On the other hand, Álvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar propose that social movements are a crucial field to understand cultural practices and politics' interconnections from a perspective that conceives both aspects as inextricably linked and intertwined in social life (Alvarez et al., 1998). Cultural practices, as drivers of new meanings, values, and subjectivities, possess a quality of redefinition of the political, that is often underestimated. Based on these considerations, they suggest extending Jordan and Weedon's *cultural politics* concept to the analysis of the daily interventions of contemporary Latin American social movements (Alvarez et al., 1998). In addition, this perspective includes contributions of gender studies in social movements, which consider this category as a primary form of significant power relationships, while incorporating the political dimension of daily family life. Thus, for countryfolk organized in the MOCASE Vía Campesina, whose daily lives are completely shaped by the experience of political organization the ideological or moral motives cannot be separated from their material interests, which are clearly also vital to their subsistence. They live on a territory, within a social environment, and with a set of natural resources created by this collective's experience.

In summary, we were able to observe, in the studied collective processes similar to those that Jasper evidenced in other contexts: "The desire to produce an effect on the world is another great family of motivations, together with its inherent emotions, this desire often comes from a moral perspective, or an ideology, that suggests that the world should be different to the way that it is" (Jasper, 2012). Therefore, social movements like this can be thought of as promoters of alternative modernities that resignify notions such as those of ethics, rights, and social equality.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE OF ÁNGEL STRAPAZZON

“I am grateful to the monte [dry forest] because my life made sense, it took all the senses of the world. Because I discovered that the value of loving and being loved is more beautiful, because I'm strong-headed, I like to face giants, and because capitalism is a mill that seems invincible, but I think we're going to beat it.”

Angel Strapazzon

The stories or narratives that take their own biography as central axis constitute a privileged way of access to the social meanings and to the terrain of the subjectivities produced in a specific historical conjuncture. They also allow an approach to the *affective* dimension of social and political life, an axis that the social sciences have already recognized as a key perspective (Arfuch, 2016).

According to Lindón, this perspective implies removing us from the particular values, beliefs and *ethos* that are a constructive and indivisible part of the social action (Lindón, 1999). Autobiographical narratives do not tell about the action that occurred in itself, but they are a later version that its author recounts on past action. They have the characteristic of being fundamentally *experiential*, implying that the author narrates, remembers, interprets, and connects lived experiences. The author suggests that he or the narrator performs a ‘montage’ that should not be understood as a deceit but comprehended as the perspective that the subject imprints on the facts, in reference to the current conditions of existence. From there, the narrator establishes new connections, sequences of events, and can even interrogate his own past. The relevance of the autobiographical narrative is that the individual is transformed into a "singular expression of the social".

Moreover, a key about thinking of the autobiographical narratives as *stories* or *fables* is that they carry out “social meanings”, and, therefore, they can be connected to a form of *myths*:

“ ... the myth would represent a kind of mediation between the collective memory that speaks of the common past, and the individual experience [...] the myth assumes the role of a 'collective metaphor' that preserves and perpetuates a memory, a common past, in systems of representations that can be narrated, and organized by symbolic codes. ”

(Lindon, 1999)

Taking into account these considerations, we argue that *the praxis of gratitude is a key component in the mythical structure of these life stories transcending the individual experience to express shared meanings that conform the identity of the Social Movement.*

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Angel Strapazzón could be as one of the main mentors of the MOCASE Via Campesina, even though he refuses that name precisely from his own logic, which places himself in a chain of *gift exchanges* and reciprocity rather than in a leadership role.

As it has been analyzed in previous studies, at the beginning of the conformation of the movement the specific conjuncture, and the long history of oppression to the rural population, converges with external influences of urban roots, also interested in generating transformations (Durand, 2006). One of the thoughts currents is linked to Christian missionary organizations, established in the area since 1960. Those linked to the Rural Movement of Catholic Action, grouped locally in the Agrarian Leagues, and later, without the support of the Catholic Church due to internal tensions, formed different NGOs such as INCUPO or FUNDAPAZ (Durand, 2006).

Within this trajectory there is also a more microscopic history, which explains the origins of the MOCASE-VC from a network of singular individualities that stand out and converge in specific interests and actions, and allows reconstruction from another level of analysis. Much of this micro-history has to do with the influence of Angel Strapazzon, whom I first met through the voices of the countryfolk, who recognize him as a key actor in their militant trajectories, and who later agreed to being interviewed with the autobiographical technique.

In the life of Angel there has been a breaking point since his initial encounter with one of the *wise elders* or *sacháyoj*²⁶, that originated a cycle of motivations, gratifications, and rewards, and that was founding both of the organization itself and of its identity imprint.

Ángel came from a working family from the neighboring but richer province of Córdoba. As a university student he belonged to the intellectual and artistic environment of the city of Córdoba in the early 1970s. He was part of an environment of musicians, today popularly known, who interspersed creative concerns with intellectual and political ones, influenced by the revolutionary environment of those times.

As a young student of philosophy, a musician, and following American and Indigenous intellectuals, Marxists such as the Peruvian José Carlos Mariátegui, in Ángel rose the curiosity for Argentinian folklore and, more specifically, for *ancestral* rural and indigenous *thought*, as it was called in those social circles. Consequently, he makes a first trip to interview one of the so-called *wise elders* of the *monte* in Quimilí. With him, Angel initiates a bond that, in his story, is the *catalyst* for his subsequent political action and a radical change of life and thought. Tito Rabello²⁷, according to Angel's oral memory, was, around the time they met, an old man who still lived *rancho adentro*²⁸ and had shared instances of literacy with *rural bandits* like the popularly legendary Mate Cocido and Zamacola²⁹. He was recognized as a *wise elder*, but also as a former political activist in defense of rural workers, akin to Peronism³⁰. Our interviewed recalled, for example, that in a previous stage he had led a mobilization of workers to free the Peronist priest

26. In popular mythology of the region, the term Sachayoj, in Quechua *sacha* (forest) + *-yuq* (the one), means "owner of the forest", and refers to mythical figures considered nature's protectors.

27. His biography is being prepared by the same organization.

28. It is the local expression to refer to the traditional and simple type of housing of the local inhabitants, known as *rancho*, and inside in relation to its isolated location, in the most remote and undeveloped areas of the forests.

29. Rural bandits are a common figure in folk projections of Argentina, a local version of the universal figure who steals from the rich to help the poor. The historical figures of Mate Cocido and Zamacola, allude to personalities that during the 1930's confronted the powerful entrepreneurs of the region, and were protected and immortalized by the peasants.

30. Here he refers to Peronism in a broad manner, as a political movement that emerged in the 1940s around the figure of former President Juan Domingo Perón (1946-1955), with predominantly worker and popular traits, and with internal and heterogeneous ideological aspects.

with the surname Durovich³¹. He was also a *payador* or reciter in rural schools and was recognized for with esoteric qualities³².

According to Ángel's life story, during these first visits to the *monte*, with the initial motivation of making recordings about the "traditional wisdom", Tito Rabello had established with him a series of *trials* or *rites* that he should pass before showing his suitability to get the information he was looking for. This process lasted about three years:

“*When I arrived and told him what I was going to, he said: 'Yes, it's all right, but who are you? Just a young boy. Let's see if I'll give it to you, if I'll let you record my life'. Three years he had me waiting, three years, do you understand me? [...] And he gave me brutal trials, but do you know what brutal trials mean? [...] He sent me to the monte to see 'the lights' referring to mythical lights I laughed and said that it was superstition, he left me in the forests for three days, telling me: 'I'll be back, I'll come find you', and he left me abandoned.* **”**

Within the framework exposed in the previous fragments, one of ideological and ritual experiences, furnished the *key milestone* that marks the beginning of Ángel's life as a political activist, which does not follow rational motives but rather *affective* and *mystical* ones:

“*One day, following a fortuitous event for me, but for him a 'message' that was expressing 'this is your moment', he comes and tells me: 'Now, I'll put back my life, you, I'm going to put my life on your back. And you're going to take care of that. Because my life is not my life, it is the life of many beings that are from the monte [Own highlighting]. [...] He told me so for the (...) wasp bee. I see a wasp bee that makes a hole in the yard, he gets in and tells me: 'look, there are the children'. And the children got out botijas of those jugs holes.* **”**

31. No date.

32. In the voice of Angel appear mystical tales of telepathic communications between these wise elders, who lived in remote places and exchanged knowledge..

E: What does “botijas” mean?

A: Did you see what the vases of water are, like the funerary urns? But tiny ones, which bees make. A wasp bee called chilalo; and as I am able to see it, he says to me: 'now you know how to see, you are going to start seeing, but you are going to stay here.' //

After this event, Ángel narrates a period of personal crisis that results on the decision to permanently move from his hometown to Quimilí, adopting a new way of life that at that time, meant a radical turn for him. This transition is, in part, explained from the fact that he had taken the words of the wise Tito Rabello as a sign, which affected him deeply and; in another part, it is motivated by personal aspirations such as the senses of novelty and adventure, which he remembers as components of his youth. The next stage, catalyzed after this event, is the political meeting between Ángel and the group of so-called *third-world agrarian priests*, belonging to the aforementioned Agrarian Leagues and adherents to the Theology of Liberation. This group of around 30 religious people, who, according to the interviewee, ‘disguised as priests, but in reality were revolutionaries of Marxist-Gramscian roots’, had Argentinian or European origin (Italian, French and Catalan mainly) and were settled in the area working in rural schools:

"The priests 'took' primary schools and trained teachers, received social psychologists from Argentina, set up literacy teams ... that is, there is a pre-MOCASE that these guys are" (Interview with Ángel).

However, this political impulse does not find a complete explanation without also considering Ángel's former gathering with the former local leaders and thinkers, also immersed in the experiences of political organization that had existed among rural workers during the years of the Peronist government, and that had been later placated during dictatorial governments.

Thus, Ángel's political work, together with other political leaders of rural and urban or even foreign origin, in confluence, first begins in a covert and incipient manner during the civic-military dictatorship (1976-1983), and then deepens with the return of democracy in the 1980s.

Afterwards, when the expansion of the soybean frontier exacerbates the processes of evictions and territorial conflicts, it finds him already shaped by a previous trajectory of organization and pedagogical-political transformation that acts as a fertile substrate for the later implosion of what would happen to be called since 1990 as MOCASE-Vía Campesina. Without encouragement to expand on his political background, it is relevant to point out that the basic "political work" that Ángel carried out together with other rural leaders in the community that I have visited is central the figure of Raimundo Gómez³³, another *wise elder* consisted of touring the different homes, traditionally isolated, promoting political reflection and collective activities to promote social organization. This task arises in an anticipated and defensive way against what they considered 'the march of capitalism' over the traditional way of life. According to Ángel, what motivated his concern and the consequent political action was:

//... that they wanted to sustain their ways of life and their dignity; and win the capitalist, the estanciero, the patron of the estancia.

E: Was the eviction process already beginning before this conflict?

A: No, the 'old man' [Tito Rabello] told me that they were going to come for them again, as the English forestry companies came, so he told me: 'they are coming, you have to come and help, because if you come and say that you are a professor of philosophy and go to many ranchos, together with us, they will believe. He told me that I was the one they had been waiting for for many years. So, he organized strategies. He designed my life, definitely. //

[Own highlighting]

This life story does not narrate any other topic than Ángel's initial political motivations in the first person. In other words, from his own memories and reconstruction from present times, when around 40 years have passed since the events reported. From that time on developed all the events that make up the origins and evolution of the MOCASE-VC, now a broad and consolidated rural-indigenous social movement, whose course exceeds the scope of this work.

33. On the life and political action of him has been published "Raimundo Gómez, Walker of the monte [forest]" (Gómez, Ithurralde and Otero, 2011).

However, I must emphasize that, from the moment that is narrated in his story to the present, Angel has had a preponderant role as organizer and activist of the organization, in a constant and permanent way, since he has settled down in the town of Quimilí and he works in that and other Rural Centers. Since that time, and with his partner for 27 years, "La Flaca" María, also the political leader of the movement, they have remained key participants, being present even during the stays in which this research took place.

In this work, we are interested in that fragment of his narrative for the purposes of our objectives, because the figure of Angel and the *wise elder* we have mentioned, Raimundo Gómez, will also later appear as a *catalyst* for most of the stories of the countryfolk whom we interviewed, especially those from the *base communities* belonging to Quimilí Central.

These life stories will also recover the idea of *gratification* and recognition to another person who gives a *gift* [don], who comes to reveal something that was 'in there' of the person who relates and who drives a radical turn in biographies, initiating political activity and contributing to sustain the value of political practices for a prolonged period, up to the present.

Thus, the idea of *gratitude*, the revelation of an identity and a *sense of life* that was overwhelmed, as well as the need and *responsibility to circulate that gift* reappear. *This mythical structure promotes the reciprocity intention. It is a key part of the original myth, or in other terms, of the MOCASE's "mysticism", inexplicable for outsiders.* According to Angel's words, Tito Rabello "designed his life, in definitely".

In consequence, as I try to show below, others will be the ones who reiterate that signifier in their narratives, as receivers of Ángel's political actions, together with the *elders*, who started the organization. The MOCASE-VC, now as a collective organization and beyond individualities, appears in the biographies as *giving a gift* in the form of a *sense of life*, in a holistic and integral way, a life that appears as gratifying, dignifying, and restorative to the oppression previously suffered. It is this *gift* that, through political activity, the organized countryfolk contribute to sustain

and convey to the community and the generations that follow. These senses of gratitude and reciprocity, in the form of a *myth* that is recreated daily, sustain and contribute, to a large extent, to the identity and political praxis of the MOCASE-VC.



A typical countryfolk-indigenous assembly for the discussion and collective decision making. Image taken from the official website of the MOCASE Vía Campesina.

FROM RURAL WORKERS TO RURAL LEADERS: THE NARRATIVES OF TWO “HISTORICAL MEMBERS”

The auto biographical narrative previously presented has a counterpart in the first encounter with the local inhabitants of the town of Quimilí, mostly temporary rural workers in conditions of exploitation for foreign large companies, and are offered as unique expressions of the emergence of MOCASE’s history. In their narratives, the first instances of meeting between Raimundo Gómez, Ángel and "La Flaca" María are represented as key founding events. Since then, they began to periodically visit the different rural homes of Rincón de Saladillo during the decade of 1980 aiming to have initial political talks with the local people, and afterwards they managed to politically organize the community in the early 1990s.

To begin with, recounts a ‘suffered and difficult’ childhood and adolescence, characterized by poverty and naturalized *gender asymmetries*, centered on the authoritarian figures of her father.

At the age of 15, being single and cursing her first pregnancy, she was sent by her family to work as a domestic employee, living in a separate room inside their house, for one of the wealthiest families of the City of Santiago del Estero, which was usual in such cases. When her son was 8 months old, she returned to her family's home, and her parents and brothers became a key part in her son's upbringing. Soon after, she married Raimundo and they built their own *rancho*, close to her family's.

For Luisa, meeting Angel and La Flaca was a key *pivotal point* in her life as a *woman*, initiating what she considers as *starting to speak*, or starting to *have a voice of her own*. In previous works, we have already extended on this argument from the analysis of what have been denominated by the MOCASE as gender *workshops*, initially organized by La Flaca and then followed by other rural women, addressed exclusively for women mainly as a result of the observation of their difficulties for public speaking and participation in the political organization (Pena, 2017). According to Luisa's memories, the beginnings of the political intervention of Raimundo Gómez with Ángel and La Flaca, at the beginning of the 1990s, are also some of the *crucial moments* that provoked a redefinition of gender relations and a comprehensive change in women's lives:

E: *Do you remember when they started talking about those things?*

L: *...when the organization started. Because, when we were in the first meeting organized by Don Raimundo, he started. He saw that there were many women who did not speak, who remained silent. The woman looked always behind. The man sat here, and the woman was hiding because she could not talk. And if the man went to the meeting and said, 'Let's go to the meeting, woman,' she would leave, and if he did not say 'let's go', the woman did not know where she was going because she could not ask.*

In her own trajectory as a political member of the MOCASE, Luisa recalls her own fears and difficulties, as well as her remarkable turns, recalling the beginnings of her shyness and introspection during political meetings and, later on, her transition towards organizer of meetings focused on 'the new' women in the organization.

Today, Luisa has been married to Mundo for more than 25 years and they have nine children and a grandchild who, according to her, was raised oppositely to the way she had learned from her own parents. Not only has Luisa's family life dramatically changed, but so has her role in the community. She is one of the most active participants in the organization. The visual material made by the social movement, such as videos, photographs and documentaries circulating on the Internet, clearly and frequently show her on the front lines of protests, leading manifestations towards the public authorities and raising her voice on more than one opportunity, facing police forces. She has also traveled to other countries in the region to attend global social movements' meetings, and she actively participates in her community in the different internal *work areas* of the MOCASE. Luisa is also a usual host for activists, students, and young people coming from other organizations or the community in general, who are interest in getting to know the movement, such as myself.

Once again, the notion of a gift that has been delivered and in relation to which the subject feels *grateful* reappears. That gift, in turn, drives the political motivation to keep, recreate and extend it to the community. In the words of Luisa:

// He [Raimundo] is the one who has founded this so that we can stay here, he Angel, and Skinny have started fighting. We always say, they have paved the way for us and made us open our eyes so that we can see that there was another better life. //

On the other hand, Mundo, Luisa's husband, is the grandson of two rural workers who were evicted from their home in a neighboring area, called *Pozo del Toba*, in the 1970s, as part of the aforementioned "silent evictions". As a result, his family moved in to Rincón de Saladillo when he was 10 years old. He is also a key actor in the creation of the MOCASE and his memories are key to recall the beginnings of the social organization. When they met Angel, they did not have any experience in politic activism. In fact, he and Luisa worked in the cotton harvest and their own farming and Ángel was, at that time, conducting his first visits to Rincon de Saladillo.

From then on, they began to meet periodically with social and political purposes, and, afterwards, Ángel was introduced with Raimundo Gómez, Mundo's uncle, who was in charge of the local primary school. Mundo had a leading role during the creation of these first political instances that we can now recall as MOCASE's founding moments. He was also a participant of its subsequent split in 2001 between the initial MOCASE, those who wanted a traditional political structure, and the MOCASE – Vía Campesina, which is oriented towards relative autonomic decision-making politics, and focused on a more 'microscopical' political intervention, organizing countryfolk into base communities:

“We had the opportunity, when we had the last assembly, when we decided as MOCASE Vía Campesina. I was happy that they choose me to go and talk to the other compañeros, (partners), so that we can meet in one place. It turns out that when we go, we are not accepted. Those leaders do not accept us because we wanted them as communities that participate, not that the leaders participate [...] And they were in a seat that belonged to the ministry that was part of the government's production. They gave them headquarters where to meet. And they always, the leaders, paid attention to the government. We wanted autonomy. So that was the decision [...] they made, they were not taken by the communities. We did not want that. We wanted the communities to have their decisions.”

Based on these facts, Rincón de Saladillo was organized as a *community base* belonging to the MOCASE-VC and began to build the notions of community life, solidarity, and territoriality from the local political practice promoted by these initial leaders. At first, one of the fundamental changes had to do with cotton harvest's cooperative marketing and subsidies, program searches for the entire community, and then the creation and/or recovery of traditional practices and communitarian spaces, such as *community orchards*. These notions of community and solidarity include "the Earth" as part of their whole identity. To illustrate this, Mundo contrasts the MOCASE perspective with that of the *agribusiness* entrepreneurs, who they define as lacking the sense of transcendence and communion with a 'deeper way of life that countryfolk possess.

Mundo's narrative also allows us to reconstruct the fact that, based on the political organization, and what they perceive as 'the new path' that has been opened to them, countryfolk are also *dignified* and *gratified* by having recovered their previous knowledge, traditions and conceptions, which had been underhanded by capitalism:

“From the assembly meetings in the 90s, we started to see how the earth could be looked after, but we did not understand anything yet. We did not understand anything of what it was, let's say, the Pachamama, we did not understand anything, but it also throws you away, it's like a magnet, it's like one already comes from our ancestors, from our grandparents.”

To conclude this part, Mundo's words are illustrative of what drives and mobilizes them for their political participation beyond the substantive material issue that is the permanence in the territory they inhabit. These notions, taking up what we developed when we introduced the autobiographical narrative technique, speak to us of the *praxis of gratitude* as a fundamental part of the *mythical structure* that sustains the identity and daily practice of the MOCASE-VC.

What changed the movement is dignity. The strongest thing that it has taught me is to return to dignity, be worthy, be happy, not worry about anything. To enjoy that one can be with the family, can be calm, to be able to help the one who needs it, we who are not organized go and help him too. Or there are families that need things, we go and we help them. One says 'no good, this is not about the movement, we should not help it', BUT *We think of humanity.*



Luisa and Mundo with some of their children and their grandson, Angelito, in their rural home, together with the anthropologist. Base community of Rincón de Saladillo, Quimilí.

THE PRAXIS OF GRATITUDE IN THE POLITICS OF EVERYDAY LIFE

As I have examined in previous works, the notion of *community life* is key to support the resistance in the territory, but also as an identity structure that sustains participation and is considered as a fundamental anchor for individual and collective goals (Pena, 2017). The new collective body reorganizes the ethics around individuals' lives. Subjects visualize that 'every aspect of life' of each of them also belongs to the collective and, therefore, as an organization, they should interfere and collaborate in any of them. The notion of 'private life' or 'family life' is no longer perceived as a separate sphere from that of political participation, and it is replaced by the idea that the well-being of its members is a collective aim that benefit the group as a whole.

In addition, I raise the argument that gratitude as a form of action or 'political praxis', *gratitude in action*, is a useful concept when it comes to shedding light on the dynamics and meanings that the people of MOCASE conduct within their daily life, comprehended and experienced as community life. To illustrate this idea and only for analytical purposes, I differentiate between values and meanings that manifest at a discourse level; and secondly, practices that can be observed during the base communities' daily life. Needless to clarify that both instances imply each other and that there is no strict division between action and words, but both are essential elements of a particular way of feeling and living.

However, I find it useful to separate different forms of expression, such as words or speeches, on the one hand, and community practices on the other, to clarify my idea.

The most forceful expression of *gratitude in action* I have observed during everyday community practices consists in the *constant availability* of all or most of the families to tend to what they call homes or zones *in conflict*. With this jargon, countryfolk refer to an eviction attempt, most of the times literally by 'rented' armed civilians for intimidation, and in others occasions through different kinds of legal instruments. As explained before, the irruption of these critical events initiates communication to organize peasant *aguantes* and *retomas* on behalf of the members of the MOCASE-VC being under risk.

During the beginning of my research, a mixture of innocence and hope made me think that perhaps these events were part of MOCASE's 'folk' and that they would have been become sporadic. On the contrary, I sadly had to witness the painful naturalness with which rural families coexist with the fact that usually one or more members of the family is absent from their homes, because some place is at the risk of violent eviction. When I conducted my first visits, I always asked about the household's formation and I usually found out that some of their members 'were at the *aguante*' or in the 'conflict zone', and it was impossible for me to gather all those who made up the domestic unit at the same time. Thus, it is not about extraordinary events but about the daily life of rural families.

In terms of the domestic economies, the costs that these practices represent are immense, since they lose part of their work force for the arduous rural work. It is far more difficult to quantify the subjective costs of coping with the reality that a close relative is often attending a confrontation which involves a greater or lesser degree of risk and physical violence or even life risk, depending on the case, and the uncertainty or the anguish implicated is even known by the youngest.

This organization, for territorial defense, also requires preparation in advance. Since countryfolk know that conflicts arise 'here or there' and 'at any moment'. This reality has reformulated relations within families including household tasks between the genders and generations, since the social movement does not distinguish between men and women when it comes to asking for assistance for families in the process of eviction. All 'hands' and 'bodies' are needed and necessary, either to *stop the bulldozers*, to cook, to assist those who are in the *aguante*, to propose strategies of legitimacy and dialogue, and to prevent physical violence. In terms of the *politics of everyday life*, this means rethinking and practicing previous conceptions around work distribution, relations at distances, and also the liberties and competences of each family member, not only between men and women but also among the younger ones, whose lives are essentially shaped by these activisms and the previous processes.

It is not difficult to understand that, in a collective organization that rose from the common conjuncture of territorial conflict, the logic of reciprocity is dominant and necessary.

However, it is a practice of reciprocity that is not usually rational or calculated and that, I dare to suggest, would be untenable without having the emotional driving forces and the *affective loyalties* built up by the organization over decades, the creation of a *rural identity* and its foundation in the traditional solidarity practices.

When I interviewed one of the oldest members of the community of Santa Rosa, he explained that his home was one of the few that had no direct conflicts because his property did have deeds, since it had been assigned through a social subsidy in the 60s. However, he and his family have been major players during several of the *retomas* that compound the memories of the MOCASE. The interviewee had no words to answer my question: why did he put his life at risk to help another family that is not even from his own community? He simply remained silent and I watched him cry. Then he replied: "I do not know if I did it out of interest or disinterest ... I just wanted to be there, it's like we have made a big family".

CONCLUSION

The category of *praxis of gratitude*, or gratitude as a mode of political action, is a concept undergoing consolidation that promises to shed light on the *analysis of the affective dimensions that sustain social movements, and collective processes in general*. Anchored in a case study, the analysis presented in this paper helps demonstrate the feasibility of applying this notion to social studies' approaches, in this case an anthropological study, but with an interdisciplinary intention - and its potential to delve into different types of political processes, their conditions to perpetuate and strengthen themselves, and their subjective motivations. For the historical members of the Peasant Movement of Santiago del Estero-Vía Campesina, we suggest that gratitude is expressed as a *mythical structure* in the identity of the social organization, which is a key component of territorial conflict sustainability in adverse material conditions.

The individual political trajectories were narrated as catalyzed by an encounter with *another* that *gives*, revealing the possibility of "a new way of life" which delivers hope and the possibility of transformation at a political, symbolic, and material level, which works as a *don*, recovering the concept of a classical anthropological theory.

The innovative aspect of this is that, according to our observations, the *emotion of gratitude*, the feeling of having been gratified and dignified from this initial exchange, is an important symbolic component when it comes to promoting responsibility and motivation to *circulate* that *gift* or *don* towards the created community and, in this case, also extending it to the territory, the nature, and the future generations as an integral part of a holistic thought.

This emotion of gratitude is put into action and becomes a practice completely imbricated with the political and material issues of this collective struggle. We tried to demonstrate, from the moment it is verbalized and manifested as the basis of the countryfolk's daily practices in the last 28 years, and their resistance is proof of that.

Those who are part of the MOCASE-VC have *realized* that they have something valuable to defend, something that gratifies them and encourages them not to let it be taken away, and to *give to the others what they already have*.

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