The concept of intersectionality, a contribution to the discussions on the political participation of immigrants.

The case of Paraguayan women in the Greater Buenos Aires Area.

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Abstract

Through the contributions made by the concept of intersectionality, this paper delves into the issue of the access to rights and the exercise of citizenship of immigrant women in the Greater Buenos Aires Area (primarily in the municipality of Florencio Varela). Within this framework, variables such as class, gender, and ethnicity play a key role in understanding the processes of political participation in which they are involved. In this context, the work on territory focused on migrant women as a political subject. Likewise, on that basis, it was focused on migrant women in their struggle for access to land. To that end, a qualitative methodological approach was carried out. Field work included in-depth interviews as well as participant observation.

Keywords
Intersectionality, immigration, women, participation, access to rights

Author’s Biography

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Introduction

In 2003, a new immigration Law, No. 25871, was passed and this represented a historical change for Argentina. This legislation signifies a major shift from its predecessor, the Immigration and Immigration Promotion Act No. 22439, enacted by the last military government (Nejamkis, 2011).

In general terms, the respect for human rights is what drives much of the outline of the 25871 Act. Consequently, it states that migration by itself is a human right. Chapter I of Title I brings forth the equality of treatment and draws a series of fundamental rights which are granted to migrants: labour, social security, health care, higher education, the right to be informed about these and other rights and on their obligations, to participate or be consulted in decisions concerning the life and administration of the communities where they live, as well as meeting with their family. Moreover, it highlights the importance of the consolidation of a regional migration policy within the Mercosur (Nejamkis, 2011).

While changes in the legal field do not always represent actual transformations in practice, the new law places the migrants as subjects with a set of rights that had been previously denied. These changes give new ground to reflect upon the issues which relate to the effective access to those rights, as well as making new demands.

In this context, this article is part of a broader research in the matter of access to rights and the exercise of citizenship by the two main migrant groups living in Argentina nowadays: Paraguayans and Bolivians. The overall aim of this proposal is to analyze the exercise of civil, economic, social, cultural, and political rights of immigrant groups in the Province of Buenos Aires particularly in the district of Florencio Varela. It was viewed as a need for the study to investigate the conditions under which these minorities become, or may become, democratic political subjects in order to articulate their demands to the State and the consequences that such process has, or may have, for the development of democratic citizenship.

1 Political demands are defined as those needs whose satisfaction is considered dependent on government action and that are exerted by individuals or groups with specific demands to the government.
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In previous papers, we have discussed the political participation of women and its impact on the construction of identities in migration processes (Nejamkis, 2014). This allowed for a contribution which goes beyond the classic association of immigrant-participation-incorporation or that of the integration into a “target” society. In turn, this view challenges the predominance of state and its view on this matter which conceives the migrant as a subject with no conflicts, submissive, subordinated to the rules of the game, and with little organizational capability.

From previous results, in this instance, it is considered necessary to go a step further and advance with the proposal made by feminist studies through the contribution of the concept of intersectionality. Said perspective not only makes it possible to emphasize, but also to bind together the notions of class, gender, ethnicity, which are fundamental elements in order to understand the relationships of power and domination in general political processes and in those linked to migration in particular. In this regard, we want to establish a theoretical discussion, but with strong empirical foundations through the examination of a concrete case focused on lower class migrant women as a political subject and their struggle for access to rights, especially land.

Therefore, it is interesting to investigate further, in which way do the categories of class, gender, and ethnicity intervene in the organizational dynamics of migrant women? How are these concepts intertwined in the construction of those dynamics as the subject of rights and when it comes to the demands before the State? How do these categories operate in the decisions made to mobilise?

Regarding the methodological approach, a qualitative study was proposed, as we understand that these studies facilitate a first approach to the current complexity of international migration for the following reasons: the particular traits of location and contextuality of the field work, which requires the researcher to be direct contact with the actors of the migration process on the field; the search for depth rather than extension; detailed and microscopic analysis of the data; and the flexible nature oriented towards the theory of the inquiry process (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003; Korntblit, 2007).

1. Methodological Decisions
Based on the issues and objectives we laid out, research methodology consists in the use of integrated and complementary approaches and qualitative analysis tools. As Ariza (2012) states, in the case of migration studies, the knowledge of a complex and ever changing reality, in which a multiplicity of factors converge, requires a process of reflexivity when it comes to the research methods and analytical strategies usually applied.

In this matter, so as to answer our initial questions we found it necessary to resort to the contributions made from the ethnographic perspective proposed by Rockwell (2009), for whom an investigation of this type must meet with the following requirements: an extended stay of the researcher in the social space of study; interaction with the subjects that inhabit said space; developing a descriptive final product which takes into account the social reality, that up to that moment has not yet been documented, and the local knowledge, in addition to a self-reflexive analysis, that enables the researcher to clarify the concept from which the observation and description are carried out.

By the same token, our work is based on the construction and analysis of cases, participant observation (Paris Pombo, 2013), and the conduction of in-depth interviews (Vasilachis, 2009)

During research, a typical case was built so as to analyse the ways of exercising rights of the group of Paraguayan immigrants from Florencio Varela to the Argentine State before its different levels (national, provincial, and municipal). In order to do this, based on a prior diagnosis, in-depth interviews were performed to: a) immigrants of the communities mentioned; b) representatives of different immigrant organizations c) as well as state officials in charge of all matters related to these groups. The interview guide was designed according to the themes of the study which began with an open and then a semi-structured guide, in which items of flexible information were put forth without influencing the interviewee, allowing us to get information about the practices and theories built by the subjects themselves.

In these interviews the following information was gathered: (a) Gender and age composition (b) different times of arrival and settling time; c) ways and places for the exercise of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights d) mediations between...
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the immigrant community of Florencio Varela and various levels of government e) the reaction the State (or lack of it) to the requirements and demands of this group of immigrant origin as a way to understand the model of citizenship and democracy in this ongoing process

To carry this out, 20 in-depth interviews were made and they mainly focused on Paraguayan women (aged 20 to 50 years) and female social leaders grouped around the Social Movement Land for All (Espacio Tierras para Todos y Todas); and, also, in the observation of two settlements in the municipality of Florencio Varela district known as Lujan and October 13th.

In relation to the field observations, these included a) assemblies, forums, encampments, demonstrations, and scheduled or spontaneous meetings, as well as any other type of meetings that constituted a call for the participation of immigrants in Florencio Varela.

2. Territorialities

AMBA is an acronym which refers to the Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires, located on the west bank of the Rio de la Plata. From its original center, now the City of Buenos Aires (CABA), it kept growing as time went by, without solutions to this expansion, through the Province of Buenos Aires (which surrounds the city). As it is an expanding area, there are different ways of considering what its limits are, but the most widely used denomination is Greater Buenos Aires Area (AGBA) which includes the original city and 24 municipal jurisdictions (called Partidos).

According to data from the last National Census of Population and Housing (2010), Buenos Aires is one of the largest urban areas in the world with 12,801,364 inhabitants. Of this total, 2,891,082 people reside within the boundaries of the city of Buenos Aires. The population of the Metropolitan Region of Buenos Aires (City of Buenos Aires plus

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2 This movement gathers the demands of the citizens of different settlements and implements various interventions in order to achieve a solution to shared problems.
3 Groups of people illegally settled on state or private land that cannot be urbanized, nor intended for residential use. These constructions are very poor and lack the basic urban services.
40 districts or *partidos*) stands at 14,819,137 inhabitants, accounting for 37% of the total population of the country. (Maceira, 2006)

In this context and in demographic terms, the Metropolitan Area grew by just over 950,000 inhabitants, which represents a 10% increase between 1991 and 2001. (Fernández, L. 2011). AMBA has historically played a key role in the reception of various migration flows (Bruno, 2009; Maguid, 1997). 2010 census data confirms the urbanization process of the most dynamic groups: Paraguayans and Peruvians, and to a lesser extent Bolivians. This is due to the migration flow of the last decades, where immigrants have chosen to settle in geographic locations where the chances of getting a job are greater. Consequently, big cities are considered as the ideal places for migrants.

On this topic, in his analysis of the relationship between the formation and growth of an "informal city" and the modalities of arrival of immigrants from neighbouring countries and Peru, Cravino argues that "When migrants from neighbouring countries come to Buenos Aires, they face serious constraints to find a place to live [...] the possible options that they have left are those within urban informality "(2012: 132-133).

In the particular case of the Paraguayan population, according to the Household and Housing Census of 2001, around 6 percent of the population born in that country resides in Argentina and they are mainly concentrated in the Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires, more specifically, in the Greater Buenos Aires Districts.

A distinct trait of this type of migration is its greater female presence; by 2001 nearly six in ten Paraguayan migrants in Argentina were women (INDEC, 2001). It is acknowledged that the female Paraguayan migration has been strongly linked to the employment opportunities generated in the housekeeping sector (Cerruti and Parrado, 2006).

Due to the socio-economic characteristics, its geographic location, the significant presence of immigrants, especially from neighbouring Bolivia and Paraguay, and the existence of a considerable number of immigrant organizations, the municipality of Florencio Varela offers a privileged field of study for the treatment of the exercise of citizenship and the articulation of demands to the state of the population of migrant
origin. Of the three groups in which the AMBA conurbation is divided; Florencio Varela, in the south, belongs to the second one. A comparative analysis of the cartographic representations of the living conditions in the region in 1991 and 2001 has allowed the identification of certain socio-economic aspects, which are characterized by having the worst living conditions, both at the beginning and the end of the decade, and for its low participation in the general socio-economic progress (Marcos, 2009).

According to the 2010 census data, out of the 426,000 inhabitants of the Florencio Varela district, 29,291 are foreigners, of whom 26,188 were born in neighbouring countries: 4,292 Bolivians, Paraguayans 18,629, 152 Brazilians, 959 Chileans, and 2,100 Uruguayans. As reported by the data obtained from the 2002-2003 Supplementary Survey of International Migration, more than 5% of the residents of the district are immigrants from Bolivia, Peru, and Paraguay (Cerruti, 2009).

Paraguayans represent a salient case as they are quantitatively the largest minority inhabiting the city among the population of migrant origin. Even though in recent years the number of studies about Paraguayan migration to Argentina has somewhat increased (Halpern, 2010; Bruno, 2009; Maguid, 1997, Cerruti, 2009) there still remains a lack of studies particularly dedicated to the Southern AMBA area.

Regarding access to land, it is worth mentioning that over 30% of households in the Greater Buenos Aires are non consolidated spaces, that is, their environments lack at least one basic infrastructure service (Torres, 1993). In the specific case of the Florencio Varela district, according to municipal records, in the office where the unmet demands for housing are handled, 17,000 households report a housing deficit. Broadly speaking, the level of consolidation of the urban space in the district is low, with 50% of its residential fabric being in unconsolidated environments, i.e., in areas that lack at least one public water supply service. These values are lower than those of the Greater Buenos Aires conurbation (Relli, 2011).

Under the given conditions, the lack of resources to acquire land, appropriate building materials and technical assistance, added to the impossibility of connection to the public utility grid and the subsequent payment for its consumption, force poor families to take

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unregulated strategies for their provision of housing and services, but above all, these solutions do not satisfy human needs. The unlawful occupation of land and buildings, alongside the construction with poor quality building materials, among other things, constitute the main means by which this infrastructure deficit is alleviated (Vio, 2011).

The above mentioned is evidence that the struggle for land in this area is a major and long-standing conflict. According to the NGO Techo\(^5\), there are 17,488 families living in 36 informal settlements in the district. In this context, social organizations fulfil a crucial function in the recognition of concrete demands. The main mediator between social demands and the municipality is recognized as “Movement Land for All”\(^6\), a collective that for 8 years gathers the claims of the residents of different neighbourhood-settlements with the idea to organize themselves to find a solution to this problem.

It is noteworthy that the women we interviewed in our research belong to the “Movement Land for All”, and its most urgent claim is the right to the land. Throughout the research process, we have observed that in this exercise of citizenship of fighting for access to rights, nationalities become blurred and the right to have rights is unified in one single claim. Once again, this represents an opportunity to reflect upon the relationship between citizenship and migration, with special attention, on the one hand, to the link between the exercise of citizenship and nationality, and, on the other hand, the possibilities of dialogue between the idea of citizenship from above and citizenship from below, and the possibility of considering the combination of both processes.

At the same time, being poor and immigrant women the ones leading these demands, it becomes essential to look for and visualize categories that might shed some light on how these elements function in concrete practices.

3. Intersectionalities or how to combine race, gender, and class in migration studies

Academic studies agree that the issue of migration is one of the matters of greatest importance in the present and future agenda of Social Science and Humanities. The

\(^{5}\) http://www.techo.org/

\(^{6}\) Denis Merken states that neighbourhood organizations have proven to be an important factor of social integration, especially in the case of marginal populations of large Latin American cities.
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reason being that migration goes across the political, social, economic and cultural spectrum, consequently, it is essential to provide a clear vision of both, the theoretical and empirical aspects articulated in this process. So, it becomes almost impossible to try to explain migration processes from a single theoretical perspective.

In the case of our study, there are two main thematic lines we must resort to in order to delve into the problem in question. On the one hand, we find theories dedicated to explain the processes of participation in immigration policy, and on the other hand we find those studies that allow us to investigate the role of women in these processes. In previous work, we expanded the analysis of the participation of immigrants, their ties to the access to rights and the construction citizenship. From that point onwards, we found that to provide a more complete explanation of activism in migratory conditions, there was a need to include and make a reading of the categories of gender, ethnicity, and class because sometimes the weight of the immigration status is not the central element that determines, shapes, and promotes political participation.

Particularly, in relation to the political participation in migration contexts, many studies have highlighted the low participation of migrants in societies of destination. According to the researchers, this happens primarily due to two factors: first, the political culture of migrants; and the other, the structure of political opportunities that granted by the host society.

At present, several studies focus on proving how the countries of origin of migrants affect their political participation and how immigrants become stakeholders in both countries. These studies conclude that the political participation of immigrants is influenced, first, by the self identification with the political system, that is, if they feel represented by it; secondly, with the active political participation through voting or participating in the public sphere; and third, with the perception of being heard by the authorities.

In this line of analysis, from the European context, Koopmans and Statham (2000) analyze how national contexts influence the potential for mobilization of immigrant groups referring to citizenship systems as structures of discursive opportunities. Their research shows that these structures have a significant influence on the way immigrant
populations are incorporated into a society, on how to organize their participation and their demands, and on the way in which they define themselves. In this sense, the local political culture builds a structure of opportunities that determines which ideas are considered to be prudent, which constructions of reality are defined as realistic, and what type of demands qualify as legitimate in a particular time and space. Therefore, in order for the claims of immigrants to be considered legitimate, they will have to be organized, both in form and content, within the set of parameters of the political culture in which are brought up (Koopmans and Statham, 2000). So, the participation of low-class and immigrant women also finds their specificity in the societies of origin and destination. The political culture, where these agents operate, has hegemonic figures of class, ethnicity, and gender which reconfigure the modes of participation.

So as to show this situation, over the years, migrant studies have included the perspective of gender. Through the analysis of the categories from feminist approaches, it allowed the restoration of the agency of women and to account for the fact that they swell the ranks of citizens of the world who go across boundaries, both real cross and symbolic, getting stronger and stronger. Definitely, this contributes to the dismantling of the representations of international migration as a matter of men, immigrant workers, and their families. In Gil Gregorio’s words these works are based on the approach called "of women", as they propose to visualize the experience and the particularities of female migration, with the intention of filling the void of a male-centered view which considers men as the sole protagonists. We agree with the author in that the denunciation of power relations that produce a genre distinctions (class, immigration, ethnicity, race, sexuality) which in turn leads to building the category of "Immigrant women" does not need to lead to assign passivity to those subjects in an inferior position.

In relation to this topic, we believe that the immigration contexts bring about experiential transformations of both women and men that not only resignify the places of origin and destination, but also their “standing” in both societies. In our particular case, as we shall see, the changes become evident in the commitment and concrete participation of women in their neighbourhoods. Likewise, these experiences will translate into modifications in the identity processes that may produce new identifications.
When analysing the participation of these women, is it possible to speak of a specificity of the migratory condition in the construction of identity? From the data collected throughout our research, national identity, i.e., representations revolving around the sense of belonging to the Paraguayan community, is not seen as a unifying element at the time of practical politics.

The contribution made by Grimson (2007) helps to clarify the issue. As the author states, there is an absolute autonomy between the territorial and identity areas. A person of any group may feel symbolically close to someone who is on the other side of the world and feel an alien to his neighbour. If at any point in time, mistakenly or not, the difference was associated with remoteness, today, the impossibility of such presumption is clear. Migrants from the same country and social group who do not interact with each other, or who do not have a strong sense of belonging, indicate that this diaspora is a specific form of identification and a means of group cohesion. In this regard, the author believes that there is migration without identification and that awarding to all of them a diasporic identity implies a essentialization, a construction of subjectivity through the "immigrant” trait.

Just like in other studies analysing this relationship in the Argentine context, what we did identify as a unifying element is the social class, and with it the struggle for access to rights. That is to say, it appears that the classist articulations are the features that function as integrators and not nationality which, in many cases, promotes fragmentation and the multiplication of the segmentation of identities.

Be it a matter linked to access to resources (class) or belonging to a certain nationality other than one of the majority, or to a gender that is not the dominant one, inequality appears as a cross-cutting element with which these women live on a day to day basis, it also becomes a pivotal theme in the struggle and redefinition with regard to the identity constructions and participation in their places of destination.

Concerning this, as pointed by Duarte Hidalgo (2013), feminist research, as well as the movement itself, faced some criticisms and questions about the homogenized notion on the "woman” category. Critics were mainly centered around the idea that the feminist
movement conveys an image of a white heterosexual bourgeois Western woman, who does not represent the rich diversity of women and the different situations of oppression and domination that they go through in their particular contexts.

With this type of questioning, the aim was the existence of a homogenizing view of “women”, not in tune with the realities of racialized and ethnicized women. The definition of the category "women" has been made from privileged positions of ethnicity, class, and sexuality (Curiel, 2011).

Consequently, it is necessary to incorporate the contribution made by feminist studies of the concept of intersectionality, to reflect on the social inequalities that are hidden in practices and discourse. This notion coined by Kimberlee Crenshaw (1992) enables the analysis of the ways in which different categorization and differentiation themes such as gender, race, class, citizenship status, ethnicity, sexuality, age, education level are embedded in a complex way in the processes of domination. It is necessary to take this perspective as a contribution which helps to prevent the interpretation of migration processes as isolated, allowing more a complex view over the production and multidetermination of inequalities in specific contexts, but also recognizing the structural exclusions put in place by the centers of power that keep supporting inequality.

Crenshaw (1992) argues that intersectionality reveals what remains hidden when categories such as "gender" and "race" are conceptualized as separated one from the other. The author, then, shows how intersectionality makes visible what is lost, and raises the matter of reconceptualizing the logic of intersectionality to prevent the separation of the given categories.

As Romero Bachiller says on this point:

“Therefore, articulation, linked to the intersectional perspective, constitutes the explanatory framework and the onto-political model which is able to address equality and difference without nullifying the tensions; to "unite" contingent and partially seemingly unlike things as long as they are related; to avoid matching terms which may vacate force differentials inherently attached to said terms; to allow room to address not only the interrelationship of different elements, but also
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how these are intertwined and, ultimately, inseparable "(Romero Bachiller, 2006: 107).

Keeping in mind that the concept of intersectionality has come under diverse criticism, since for some authors, though useful to rethink certain positions of oppression, it is currently conceived from certain circles as a fashionable neologism in feminist theory, specifying, on the one hand, the processes of oppression but running into the risk of blurring structural discrimination (Gandarias Goikoetxea, 2013).

In relation to our specific context of study, poor Latin American migrant women within Latin America, besides taking into consideration gender, race, and class, one should epistemologically and politically challenge the academic production and knowledge on the "women of Third World " from the incorporation of the concept of "colonization defined as the Western" discursive dominance " and as a " form of appropriation and codification "through particular analytical categories (Vazquez Laba, 2012). Both postcolonial and decolonial studies have proven essential to rethink the categories in which women have been "named", "studied" and "understood" by the dominant countries.

In this regard, Vazquez Laba (2011) insists on how crucial it is to bring into the discussion Gayatri Chakravorty Spivakt’s thesis, widely known through "Can the subaltern speak?" (2011), where the answer is "no, they cannot talk, "but not because they are unable to speak; they cannot talk in the sense that they are not listened to, because their discourse is not validated by the institutions that not only have taken care of silencing their voices, disciplining their bodies, but have discarded and belittled their knowledge. Spivak sees it impossible to recover the voice of a woman when she has not been given a position-of-subject from which to speak (Bidaseca, 2010).

Giving an account of the conditions of gender, class, or ethnicity in specific cases allows for the deepening of knowledge on ways and strategies of participation adopted by different groups. In this sense, in the case of our work, the concept of intersectionality if presented as a tool to recover and visualize the experience of those immigrant women that in their daily struggle for access to rights employ multiple
participatory strategies, producing new connections with the State, the host society, and the members of their community.

4. Participation, Migration and Public Space

This study is not intended to be one which draws a comparison between men and women in participatory processes in migration contexts, as if that were our goal, we also should have conducted a field work that included interviews with and observations of men. What we want from the support of the intersectional perspective, and through the study of a specific case, is to describe the specifics of the participation women and how it interacts with the category of ethnicity and social class.

In this context, it is important to clarify that, when the investigation began, within our goals we had not planned to study the political participation of women only, as interest was given to the immigration status of the subjects. However, as field work progressed we observed that it was women who organized to exercise the collective actions, women who shared certain traits as belonging to lower social classes as well as the majority coming from rural areas of Paraguay and whose native language is Guarani. Our analysis is not intended to establish "determinants" or to clarify that element weighs more on the political participation of immigrants. Our goal is to account, through the voices of the actors themselves, for the impossibility to conduct a study on participation and migration without taking into consideration gender, ethnicity, and social class. Consequently, the interest is based on describing how these elements interact and how these categories of power affect the redefinition of certain groups.

Therefore, this section proposes to make an association between the actual experience of Paraguayan women who are part of the “Movement Land for All” and the categories of analysis raised by feminist theory as an attempt to unravel the questions previously exposed: What role do class, gender, and ethnicity play in the organizational dynamics of migrant women? How are these concepts intertwined in the construction of those dynamics as the subject of rights? How do these categories operate in the decisions made to mobilise?
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Although in this paper we focus on analysing the case of immigrant women, it is worth mentioning that when analysing the political participation of the popular sectors, analysts are tempted, almost instantly, to simplify the practices and the motives behind them to mere necessity (Quiros, 2011). Regarding this, Quiros (2011) argues that the joy to do, to see, to participate, to be involved, is a dimension practically absent in political and popular sectors related studies. So it is clear that as access to rights is differentially expressed in actual practice, also the struggle for the exercise of said rights presents certain characteristics according to social classes. In spite of this, simplifying participation to mere necessity prevents further analysis in search of the underlying motivations that lead people to engage in a political process.

In order to go beyond the traditional points of view regarding participation, in our case, it is noted that the "neighbourhood" represents a fundamental space to make use of the different political strategies, personal experience and, and forms of militancy. These women centralize their participation in the neighbourhood space, politics becomes spatialized and it coincides with their main demand of getting a decent place to live. The "neighbourhood" appears as another possible area for politics, as it represents a modality of localization, of establishment of a context of social interactions and social identification.

In the case of Latin America, when thinking of the power disputes associated with the spatial dimension, the differentiations that both the bibliography as well as the "common sense" established between the slum, neighbourhood, and settlement are at stake. Ferraudi Curto (2014) explains that the distinction between slum and neighborhood is not so much a matter of living conditions (which vary significantly between different areas of the city, be it in parcels, settlements, or slums) or lifestyle (which are not even locally homogeneous) but of status and prestige.

The case of settlements has its own characteristics, it is in the late 70's early 80's of last century when the process of unlawful occupation of land in suburban Buenos Aires began. In the words of Stratta (2011), one of the distinctive traits of settlements is given for having had a variable degree of previous planification. While in many cases spontaneity was an important factor, which responded primarily to the need to find an solution to the critical housing situation, it is possible to identify the emergence of
Organizational instances within the settlements which arose in the same process the occupation of the land.

Stratta (2011) explains with precision the organizational model of the settlements, which is established on the basis of an assembly for each block. From those assemblies, with each lot entitled to one vote, a block representative and a deputy representative were elected. Said representative was in charge of addressing the issues of each block (with reference to the improvement of sidewalks, afforestation, cleaning of lots, rubbish collection, etc.) thus promoting collective participation. In turn, all elected representatives formed the body of representatives, where all problems of all blocks were brought forth through their representatives. A settlement also elected, by direct vote, an internal committee or executive committee, composed of a small group of people who worked on specific tasks such as solving infrastructure problems, making contacts outside the settlement, and supporting the work performed by the committees and block representatives (called manzaneros). One of the tasks of the internal committee was to promote the establishment of special committees, working groups formed voluntarily to accomplish some specific goal. These committees (on health, sports, women, green spaces, youth, etc.), tough not elected by the vote of the settlement, played an important role in the organizational structure and were real instances of participation.

According to the author, the collective response of the settlements represented more than a way to solve the issue of access to housing, and was showed as a project of urban integration of vast sectors of the population, against the process of impoverishment.

It is noted that the settlement, just like any other space in conflict, lays out formal and informal rules of the game, which involve various positions of agents in the field, as well as disputes for the modification or continuity of said rules. Throughout the research process, these tensions have come to the surface while, at the same time, influencing the political agenda.

However peculiar, the fieldwork included two settlements in an ongoing process of formation, whose idealized form of organization is the one previously described above. Without generalizing, one can say that the interviewed women come from different parts of Paraguay, are mothers, have Guarani as their first tongue and, employment wise
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talking, both in their country of origin and destination, were employed in the housekeeping sector.

It is important to clarify that most of the respondents their documentation in order, they expressed not to have had more difficulties in accessing rights than those who are nationals of the same socio-economic status and, in many cases, they have access to social programs as the Universal Child Allowance (Asignación Universal por Hijo). Making a direct reference to the concrete participation of immigrants, we dismiss the positions that associate linearly the participation and "integration" of immigrants in the host society, coupled with the idea of immigrants being submissive and passive subjects. In our case, an active participation and a constant concern by women, in relation to the problems in their neighbourhood, has been noted. These concerns include the relationship with the State/Municipality, police, health centres, education, as well as conflicts between neighbours.

Here organizational capability plays a key role in the case of an organization which has been backed and supported by the local institution “Movement Land for All”, enriching the learning process with tools when demands need to be raised.

It is important to point out that most respondents saw their basic rights violated since they were children, for example, they all said to have worked from an early age, and in many cases were victims of what is known as criadazgo. The violation of rights from an early age, in tandem with the total absence of their original State when it comes to the resolution of social problems, has molded into submission the political practice of these women.

Many stories tell the same. Just to portray a more concrete example, Ramona tells us how her early life in Paraguay was like:

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7 The Universal Child Allowance for Social Protection (AUH) is a type social insurance given in Argentina as a benefit for each child under 18 years old to unemployed people, people working in the informal market, or those earning less than the minimum living wage.

8 Common term in Paraguay to refer to children and adolescents who perform domestic labor in exchange for shelter, food, clothes and, sometimes, education. Currently around 47,000 children and adolescents live in criadazgo, almost 14% of all working children in the country.

9 For their privacy, the names of interviewees have been changed.
"I was a maid for another family, at age 13 I escaped. They treated me very badly in all aspects. No school, no nothing. I ran away and my brother found me and took me to where he was working, then my mom came for me. I went to night school for adults because I had to start first grade and that I no longer could ‘cause of my age. In Paraguay I went while to school until fourth grade but then not anymore ... and when I wanted to enter night school again my mom would not let me "

Likewise, Blanca tells us about her little chance of access to rights such as health, back home:

"Well, I had also told you, we were talking on the economic level, but also health has much to do with it, health has a lot to do with it and study too, for example here you get so much help for studying and for health. Over there, one has to pay for everything. I do not know, now, supposedly, some say you do not have to pay for a family no more. I do not know how things are right now. As I am not in touch with my country anymore, as my parents are here and all, but beyond all, over there if you do not have the money you can die like... "

Regarding the present situation, however far from idyllic, we have observed that the mere fact that different social organizations, and even the host State, are mediators in the claims for rights (some of which are non-existent in the country of origin), combined with a discourse in tune with the idea of expanding access to rights, modify the view that these women have about their own practices and, therefore, broadening their possibilities.

In regard to formal participation, most of the respondents expressed they never had voted or participated politically in their country of origin. However, several expressed to have done so in Argentina. Nevertheless, in these recounts, this experience was seen as random and by chance, considering it of minor importance.

\[10\] While at the national level, the political rights of foreigners are not recognized, as foreign residents cannot vote in national elections (congress representatives and senators, President and Vice President), They are entitled to do in those provinces whose legislation allows foreign citizens to vote. Concretely,
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In Eloisa’s recount of her story you can observe how gender, participation, and the place of origin are intertwined and how then this relationship changes in the country of destination.

“\text{A}_1 \text{ Were you politically active in Paraguay?} \\
\text{B}_1 \text{ No, not in my dreams.} \\
\text{A}_1 \text{ Did you vote?} \\
\text{B}_1 \text{ No, not either. Hey, I got together with my husband and he was very closed. He is one of those old school guys that you had to be there with him, you were a woman there, you had to stay there and not even talk, not to be a nuisance for him, nothing. He was one of those macho types…}”

Once in their territory of destination, despite being the chosen representatives of the settlement, they do not consider what they do as a political activity. In this context, it is an important detail to understand that politics is perceived as something negative, directly associated with corruption and political clientelism, both in their country of origin and the country of destination. Thus, militancy in their neighbourhood is understood as an action taken in pursuit of greater family welfare: several times we heard the phrase "I do it all for my children, so they have a piece of land and a future."

In the collective imaginary, this participation seems to be associated with the realm of private or family matters. Therefore, encampments in front of municipality demanding\textsuperscript{11} rights, neighbourhood organization, all struggle related actions, and the exercise of citizenship are represented as actions of a private matter, carried out almost exclusively by women while their partners are engaged in the insertion into the public world, which, in many cases, is understood as the world of work.

\textsuperscript{11} By the term encampment, we refer to the prolonged installation of tents in public space with the intention of demonstrating and making their claims and their presence felt.

\textsuperscript{11} the provinces whose legislation allows foreign citizens to vote are: Buenos Aires, Ciudad de Buenos Aires, Catamarca, Chaco, Chubut, Córdoba, Corrientes, Entre Ríos, Jujuy, La pampa, La Rioja, Mendoza, Misiones, Neuquén, Rio Negro, Salta, Santa Fe, San Juan, San Luis, Santa Cruz, Santiago del Estero, Tierra del Fuego, and Tucumán. In these cases, in order to be able to vote, foreigners must have a National Identity Document (DNI in Spanish).
So, in Eloisa’s beginnings as a delegate, she did not want to participate in political matters, until one time during a raid she was taken into custody by the police and this experience transformed her perceptions about participation.

"And after that, yes. Later on, I left the police station but I had nothing to do with it. I said to myself, “Now, they will see what I am capable of, I am really going to be a delegate now, coordinator, I’ll be everything. And then I started. You know, it was 12 at night and they came for me. My husband slept, so I got up slowly, and there I went. Cristina, they came with guns to take John Doe’s tent down and I was there. "

In this sense, after multiple observations, we were able to show that the interventions of these women were entirely leaving the realm of the private and that their appearances in the political arena were expressed in concrete actions. These actions ranged from the occupation of land, being block representatives, participating in the Movement Land for All, to performing a more than ten days encampment outside the City Hall to demand a solution to the lack of urban public services.

In reference to the above, in a research dedicated to the political practice of Bolivian women in Argentina, Vazquez understood that the distinction between public-work space vs. private-domestic space does not help much when analysing this type of participation. The author argues that feminism has already managed to explain that the "personal is political" and that, consequently, we must overcome the dichotomy that places women in the private domain and men in public one, taking into account, also, the power relationships that cause this inequality.

While observing the triangulation between gender, ethnicity, and class proposed by the intersectional perspective, there is one element that is repeated over and over in the stories when expressing stigmatization by the majority and it is the concept of social class. And Antonia makes it perfectly clear

A_" I do not know, really, because there are many people here who went to file a complaint and the police are not taking any of them. They said yes, that they will take the complaints.
B_ why are those complaints not taken? Is it because they supposedly do not to know where you live?
A_ No, they say that everyone at the settlement is a criminal.
B_ I see ... is it because you have taken over land or because you have another nationality?
A_ It is because of the land. Because we took over land once and that means that we are criminals. But it does not really mean we are. Because if the poor for being poor are not ... And because people who have nothing, because there are actually some people who sold it, but it's not the fault of those who stayed. So, I think "

Through the analysis of the interviews and observation, it can be added that the particular context has helped in the development of the struggle for new rights that, in the case of Paraguayans, were previously unknown. Regarding this matter, and as expressed in these recounts, there are certain elements of the political and legislative context, both at the national and provincial level, which are articulated by different territorial organizational experiences that enable a channel of migrant participation. Thus, women who had never participated in processes of making demands in their country, discover new practices that often times contradict their previous experiences.

With regard to the country of destination, until the early 2000s, democracy had not paid much attention to the demands made by immigrants. Moreover, as posed by Alejandro Grimson, in the 90s, and with a negative connotation, began to arise a change in the regime of visibility of ethnicity in Argentina: it went from a situation of "invisibility of the diversity" to a growing “hypersensitisation of the differences”. From the perspective of the State and the civil society, this hipervisibilización produced high levels of discrimination, hardened the stances of already restrictive regulations, and the media used immigrants as scapegoats of the economic and social crisis which the country was undergoing.

In 2001, the crisis of the neoliberal project and the political system became evident. This framework was the perfect ground to establish the discussion on migration in the Argentine political agenda. It is from here that several analysts agree that there was a change in the political life of the migrant ethnicity. In the words of Grimson, this new
trend could be explained due to the dimension of the economic and social crisis, which
diluted corporate claims making the most pressing social demands of food and work
more relevant. These demands created solidarity ties and common actions between
groups of different origins. The context of this crisis was also a facilitator of the change,
in 2003, of the immigration legislation, hitherto highly restrictive with the migration
from neighbouring countries. The transformation of the immigration laws, allowed the
regularization of the documentary situation of a large number of immigrants. It, also,
allowed granting, at least in written word, equal treatment and laid out a number of
fundamental rights which are granted to migrants: labour, social security, health care,
higher education, the right to be informed about these and other rights and on their
obligations, to participate or be consulted in decisions concerning the life and
administration of the communities where they live, as well as meeting with their family.

It is clear that the changes made in the legislation are not as fast as their actual
implementation. It can be said that after 10 years of the enactment of the new law,
migrants who have had access to the information no longer base their claims on unique
aspects of their immigration status, but also in the access to the same rights demanded
by the nationals.

**Final Thoughts**

The possibility of remaining on the territory and the experiential work provided tools
from which to associate the theoretical concepts with specific practices, that, in turn,
facilitated the broadening of the reflection on participation, intersectionality, and
migration.

As it has been evidenced already, studies on the participation of immigrants in general
have focused on the nationality as the central element which gets immigrants together at
the moment of participating politically. In this paper, the analysis from the intersectional
perspective, let us unveil how the categories of class, ethnicity, and gender intervene in
concrete experiences. Thus, we have demonstrated that in our case the immigration
status was not the main element of identification of these women in their political life.
On the contrary, we have observed that at the time of the struggle for the access to a
right, national boundaries become blurred, understanding that both identifications as
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well as the participations find greater grounds in common in relation to social class rather than nationality.

In turn, we must understand that the political culture of the countries of origin and destination in which people develop their practices have hegemonic ideas about gender, ethnicity and class. These dominant representations structure and shape political practices establishing the limits of what is possible when making political demands. In this context, one of the findings of our research- which is supported by the dialogue with both, the intersectional perspective and theories on participation of immigrants- refers to the fact that while these women share a high degree of social vulnerability, in their country of origin as well as in their country of destination, the environments of the different countries influence greatly on how their political activities, particularly those involving demands against the State. Being part of a collective of struggle, added to the fact of them exercising their duties as block representatives in their neighbourhoods, which implies that all demands should be channelled through them, in addition to the specific actions so as to demand solutions, among others, a larger infrastructure in different settlements, generates a transformation of their political life, their personal relationships, and their connection with public and private spaces. These new roles expanded the set of identifications that, until now, these women had virtually been forbidden the access to.

In this regard, it was noted that the immigration experience brought the learning and subsequent implementation of the exercise of citizenship. The possibility of getting involved politically pursuing a change of their own situation was something virtually unknown to these women, who in their recounts refer to an absolute apathy to these matters in their home country as those lack the structures that make the acquisition of rights viable. Therefore, the experiential paths of migrants become a process that contributes to the construction of citizenship, while, at the same time, giving guidelines to rethink the identifications and, consequently, the pre-existing identities. In colloquial terms, one could say that it is difficult to demand that which one does not know.

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