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## Urban mobility practices and family proximity

A study of middle-class households in a neighborhood in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

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### ***Abstract***

Through analyzing residential and daily mobility practices from a qualitative approach, this paper shows that families sustain a residential pattern by which they value and pursue proximity to relatives. This residential rationale prioritizes living “nearby” rather than living “together”. The families examined throughout the study maintain family residential proximity at the intra-urban and even intra-neighborhood levels. The article accounts for and examines the residential trajectories that uphold proximity to family members and their interactions with urban dynamics. Finally, it shows the significant role of family in achieving homeownership, which does not always contribute to the geographic aggregation of relatives.

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### ***Index terms***

**Keywords :** mobilities; residential mobility; daily mobility; family networks; family proximity; urban kinship; middle-classes.

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### ***Full text***

- 1 The presence of a large middle class is a phenomenon that distinguishes Argentina from the rest of the region, and has been a recurring topic in different moments of the country's

history, both in public debate and in the academic sphere (Germani,1942; Sautu,2001; Svampa, 2001; Wortman, 2003; Minujín y Anguita, 2004; Visacovsky, S, 2008, Visacovsky et al, 2009; Adamosvsky, 2009; Adamovsky et al, 2014, among others). However, scholarship that examines how this group, in all its heterogeneity and ambivalence, uses, appropriates and contributes to the construction of the city is still scarce. Despite the ubiquity of the urban dimension in the characterization of middle classes, spatiality has not been considered a relevant dimension of analysis, and important questions have been neglected: How do these sectors achieve their inscription in the city? What rationalities underly their mobilities and territorial anchors? How are their networks of relations spatially inscribed and how are their (im)mobilities linked to those networks and to the configuration of the city itself?

2 Urban studies have shown scarce interest in this social sector. Scholarship has focused much more on working-class households and how they inhabit, appropriate, use the city and mobilize their network of relations (Liernur, 1984; Bellardi et al, 1986; Oszlak, 1991; Rodríguez,2005; Di Virgilio, 2008; Cravino, 2008, among others), than on the ways in which middle classes do so. Probably the “normalized” character of middle class social and urban experience contributed to the scarce production of research on the unique ways in which these sectors are able to be part of the city, how they produce territorial anchors, and even more so the role of their networks of relations in the differentiated production of those anchors.

3 For their part, family studies in Latin America that focused on understanding the dynamics and organization of domestic units in both rural and urban contexts (Roberts, 1973; Lomnitz (1975), Jelin (1979), González de la Rocha (1986), among others) also focused on working-class sectors and usually disregarded the expressions and interactions household members established with territory, mostly considered only as a contextual variable (Salazar Cruz, 2003; Di Virgilio, 2008). This research showed the ways in which domestic units, when conducting their daily maintenance and reproduction tasks, integrated into broader networks of mutual aid, neighborhood and kinship networks, as well as friendship ties. They showed –as noted by Jelin (2010) – that although secularization had expanded the role of different state-run and private institutions for solving certain daily needs, kinship relations were still important. However, the specific focus on working-class sectors implies an underlying assumption in this scholarship –and beyond it- that obstructs inquiry about the relational networks of middle classes. This assumption asserts that where the state is less present there is more marginality and more use of mutual aid networks, among them kinship. Thus, the question about the relational networks of integrated and individualized middle classes continues to be a difficult to formulate issue. In fact, usually local scholarship has only addressed the role of networks of relations in the middle classes in the context of the impoverishment of a portion of this sector (Lvovich, 2000; Kessler, 2000; González Bombal, 2002).

4 This article aims to contribute to understanding the ways of living of Argentine middle classes, particularly the spatial organization of families in the city and their familial residential configurations (Pfirsch,2008). These issues have hardly been explored in local academia<sup>1</sup>. Far from entirely covering them, this article offers a first approach through a qualitative study of the residential trajectories and daily uses of urban space of residents of the neighborhood of Caballito in the city of Buenos Aires. Fieldwork shows that families uphold a residential pattern by which they value and pursue proximity to relatives, even when each nuclear family lives in a separate home. This is a residential rationale that prioritizes living “nearby” rather than living “together”. Throughout their residential trajectories the households have had the resources to uphold the cultural pattern of residential separation between generations, and cohabitation with relatives has been a temporary residential arrangement within this social group, always experienced as an exception. However, when reconstructing daily mobility motivated by family reasons, proximity to relatives is noticeable. The studied families are not at all indifferent to the residential location of their relatives. On the contrary, they are committed to upholding

residential proximity to relatives on the intra-urban and even intra-neighborhood levels. The article sheds light on these residential trajectories sustaining family proximity and on how they interact with urban dynamics. Finally, it shows the significant role of family in achieving homeownership, which does not always contribute to the geographic aggregation of relatives.

- 5 The article is structured as follows: first, I present a brief discussion of theoretical-methodological considerations. The following sections present the findings. The article ends with closing remarks about these first findings and points to future avenues of research.

## Theoretical-methodological considerations

- 6 For a long time, the intersection between city, family and kinship was difficult to approach. Segalen (2006) shows how the emergence of the modern State, the market system and wage relations contributed to relegate kinship and to downplay its importance, while underestimating its role as an organizer of various aspects of social life, including life in the city. Moreover, a “paradigmatic consensus” established that modernity was expressed in small and nuclear sized families, and that this evolution was closely linked to industrialization and urbanization. Finally –again according to Segalen (2006)– the study of family and kinship was approached through different paths. Family, considered a modern institution and reduced to the nuclear model, was assigned to the field of Sociology, whereas kinship, considered an institution of “exotic” societies, remained in the realm of Ethnology.

- 7 While Anthropology established a dichotomy between kinship and non-kinship based societies, Sociology mainly narrated the shift from a multiple family, loaded with social functions, to a nuclear isolated family. Modern thought thus marginalized kinship, and considered it an irrelevant factor for the analysis of modern society (Bestard, 1998). In the meantime, within this dichotomy between the traditional-communitarian pole and the modern-societal one that constitutes the “threads of sociological tradition” (Nisbet, 1990), the modern city became the realm or “locus” of cohabitation among strangers, a place of anonymity, individual isolation and social disorganization (Frisby, 2007), further reinforcing the separation between family, kinship and city.

- 8 During the 70’s, a series of kinship studies in urban contexts emerged, analyzing beyond the nuclear family, and shedding light on intergenerational relations and the importance of powerful support networks and exchange between family members (Cfr. Segalen, 2006; 2007). Currently, a broad array of research addresses spatial mobility and residential strategies, and focuses on understanding the collective dimension of residential practices (Dureau and Hoyos, 1994; Dureau, Dupont et al., 2002; Delaunay and Dureau, 2004; Dureau, 2004; Dureau, Barbary et al, 2007). This research problematizes the threefold notion of families that links urbanization-industrialization-nuclearization and its effect on the superposition and identification between family, domestic unit and coresidence. Instead, they look into the relations system between individuals, families and places. In so doing, they not only shed light on pluri-local or multi-residence practices, but also on mobilities that maintain (and produce) these configurations. Analysis of these configurations considers “an individual’s different time scales (from daily to biographic), different spatial scales of mobility (from the neighborhood to international movements) and multiple social scales (from individual to family and other networks)” (Dureau, 2004:43). Methodologically, this approach comprehensively addresses spatial mobility, focusing analysis mainly on the way in which different temporal and spatial scales come together in the production of relations among individuals and groups with the different places they practice.

9 This agenda appropriates one of the basic postulates of the so-called *mobility turn* (Urry, 2000). That is, focusing analysis of social processes on networks, relations and fluxes, and considering the essential role of movement within institutions and social practices (Sheller y Urry, 2016). From this perspective the question about territorial inscription shifts away from an analysis that treats stability as “normal” and distance, change and movement as problematic. Moreover, it enables and focuses attention on the emergence of a rich network of social relations and practiced spaces, with a greater or lesser degree of stability, continuity and intensity.

10 In my research, following this approach entailed inquiring about territorial inscription in the reconstruction of residential and daily mobility practices of individuals and homes. This involved mobilizing a biographic temporal dimension to reconstruct residential trajectories (residential mobility), and a transversal one, to show uses of the city according to different reasons (daily mobility). Everyday or habitual mobility is also dubbed pendular mobility (Módenes Cabrerizo, 1998) because base residence (fixed residence, multi-residence or the action area from which movement take place), represents a return point, and is defined as a social practice of moving that enables access to activities, people and places (Vega Centeno, 2003; Bericat Alastuey, 1994). When focusing on daily mobility, base residence functions as a place of return from the spatial anchors produced for different reasons (related to work, consumption, leisure, family, etc.) that make residents habitually go from one place to the other. Empirical approach to daily mobility involved constructing a matrix from the interview material that allowed me to reconstruct the places participants interact with and establish a relation with as a result of their daily movements for different reasons. Neighborhoods (within the city of Buenos Aires) and municipalities (for the case of movements towards the province of Buenos Aires) were considered the minimum units of reference for identifying the visited places. Mapping daily mobility made it possible to visibilize the most visited places. This article only refers to daily mobility for family-related reasons<sup>2</sup>.

11 Empirically, I approached residential mobility through the reconstruction of residential trajectories, that is, the “totality of a household’s residence and location changes in the urban environment” (Di Virgilio, 2008:7). Biographical interviews attempted to reconstruct residential trajectories, from the moment participants had moved out of the parental home to their current residence. In relation to each residential movement I reconstructed the type of home, the residential arrangement that made the occupation of that home possible (homeowners, tenants, de facto occupants or sharing with other households, among other modalities), location and the resources mobilized in order to access property ownership. In addition, biographic interviews inquired about residential choices and the ways in which households made decisions about their movements, identifying social, cultural and spatial conditionings, as well as their own assessments in specific contexts.

12 I interviewed forty male and female heads of household in their homes, two to three times each, with a few exceptions. The sample comprises 19 men and 21 women between the age of 28 and 70, who live in different types of housing. Regarding their formal education, they are a relatively homogeneous group: they have all attained secondary education and the majority has undertaken tertiary studies, although some have not completed their degrees. In terms of occupation, most are self-employed or salaried professionals (20), but the sample also includes employers (3), managers (2), self-employed workers (9), and salaried high or mid-level technicians (6). The vast majority owns the house in which they live (31), but the sample includes some renters (9), who for the most part are young.

13 It is important to highlight that this study does not aim to make generalizations; statements are circumscribed to the studied households. Nevertheless, they represent a good starting point for future research.

# A residential rationale that prioritizes “living nearby” over “living together”

14 Caballito is a neighborhood located in the geographic center of Buenos Aires. It is connected to different parts of the city and to the Buenos Aires Metropolitan Area (AMBA) by a rail line, two subway lines and many bus routes. Its urban fabric is continuous, and presents the infrastructure and equipment of a central and consolidated urban space. It is one of the most densely populated neighborhoods in the city (27,000 inhabitants per sq. km.), and homeownership is the dominant form of housing tenure.

15 The neighborhood of Caballito is “in the middle” of the city, located in between a working-class and popular South and a rich North. In *porteño* imagery, Caballito is pictured as a place between myth and reality, between historical narratives and autobiographical accounts, as a neighborhood belonging to upward moving middle classes. Since its foundation in the first decades of the 20th century, Caballito was envisioned as a place embedding values such as privacy, respectability, tradition and family. At that time, single-family housing units were considered positive in relation to collective housing, especially in relation to *conventillos* or tenement houses, perceived as “a physical and moral hazard” (Aboy, 2007:28). *Conventillos*, as well as boarding houses and other forms of tenement housing, were dominant in the city’s central areas and housed people beyond kinship relations. In contrast, single-family housing was perceived as suitable for the suburbs and would become closely tied to the notion of family home, a cohabitation arrangement sustained by blood ties (Torrado, 2003; Aboy, 2007). In the new society taking shape during the first decades of the 20th century, immigrant or native workers found an element of both security and respectability in homeownership (Adamovsky, 2009). In this context, arriving in Caballito symbolized achieving social and spatial stability, as well as higher social esteem.

16 The autobiographical account of an interviewee is eloquent. Cristina is sixty years old. She lives in Caballito in a two-storey house with a garden, with her husband –a permanent doctor at a public hospital in the city of Buenos Aires– and one of her two daughters. Her other daughter lives a few blocks away. Cristina dropped out of medical school when she was only one exam away from getting her degree and she works as a Special Education teacher in different institutions. Her father was a lathe operator and she was born and raised in Caballito. Cristina recalls with pride and emotion that her grandfather Ramón arrived in the neighborhood in 1917. He was one of the four million European immigrants who arrived in Argentina between 1880 and 1910, and part of the 60% who settled in Buenos Aires (Aboy, 2007). Ramón came to Buenos Aires from Spain. He lived in different rented rooms in tenement houses downtown. He worked as a driver for a “wealthy” family for five years and was later a taxi driver. In 1917 he bought a plot of land in Caballito. In addition to financing offered by land dealers, Ramon borrowed from moneylenders at different times. With this money he built his house; first the ground floor, then adding another storey; he built a large garage and on top of the garage two apartments to rent out. Soon, Cristina’s grandfather was living off rental income. From then on, Cristina’s family spread throughout the neighborhood. Currently she lives in the house that belonged to her parents, and her sister lives only a few blocks away.

17 In Caballito the dominant pattern of households replicates the predominance at the city level: family households and, particularly, nuclear family ones. But Caballito presents a larger share of single-person (31.77%) and nuclear households (56.97%) than at the city level (30.31% and 54.49%, respectively), while extended households (4.76%) are less prevalent than in the city (7.21%). In line with this, interviews showed that it is very infrequent for older family members to live in the same household as their adult children who have already formed their own home. It is also infrequent for newer couples or, in general, young families to live in their parents’ home. Reconstruction of interviewee’s trajectories, from moving out of the parental home to current place of residence, showed

that coresidence with relatives –*allegamiento*– is a very rare residential arrangement. Only five out of forty interviewees, once they had already formed their own family nucleus, had lived with other relatives.

18 Ways of living are part of family and cohabitation models that are unique to each time and dominant in certain social groups, and cannot be understood outside of these models. This is crucial to understand why cohabitation with relatives is so rare within this social group. In the foundation of this social group’s residential practices, *nuclearity* and *neo-locality* operate as cohabitation models –what “decent” and “respectable” households ‘should be’ (Cosse, 2010). A nuclear neo-local family is composed of a conjugal core that establishes separate and independent residence from other family members as soon as it is formed (Torrado, 2000). As a counterpart, as noted by Araos (2016b), “cohabitation with family members has frequently carried a negative moral connotation, as a residential morphology that obstructs the adequate development of the ideal model of nuclear family” (2016:199). Araos (2016a) highlights the role of a political-technical discourse about *allegamiento* in this sense, which has installed the idea that residential proximity is “a matter of poverty” and a “problem”, overlapping it with overcrowded housing.

19 Adela is an architect, she was born in Caballito and currently lives in the house that belonged to her parents. Her father was born in Parque Patricios, a working-class neighborhood in the southern part of the city. He was the only child of a single mother, a Spanish immigrant who arrived in Argentina at the age of 14:

My dad lived in conventillos and boarding houses. He was a go-getter. He was a boxer first and won a Golden-Gloves championship, and then he was a teamster until he was able to have his own fleet of trucks. He did very well. Later, he started a auto spare parts business, which my sister still owns to this day [...] he went to school later on and got a Public Auctioneer degree [...] he became so refined ... ihe knew so much about opera!...

20 In 1959 Adela’s father purchased a house in Caballito with personal savings and a home loan.

21 In 1989, after living for two years with her husband in a rented apartment in Caballito a few blocks away from her parents, Adela was compelled to return to their home:

...we couldn’t afford rent any longer because rent was increasing by 100%, it was crazy to continue renting, so we moved in here with my parents, in a small room upstairs next to the terrace, which is like the utility room. We fixed it up, the two of us, so we could live there for a while, until we could buy something...

22 A few months later, she and her husband found out they were expecting their first child; this “pressed” them to solve their housing situation. They bought an apartment in Once, in the downtown neighborhood of Balvanera:

We found a small two-bedroom apartment in Once, a second floor walk-up, that needed a lot of renovation done.

And why did you chose Once?

It wasn’t a choice, not at all! It was what we could afford! I sold the car and with a small amount my mother lent me and another small amount mi sister lent me, we were able to buy that apartment for US\$ 7,000... it was the only thing we could afford.

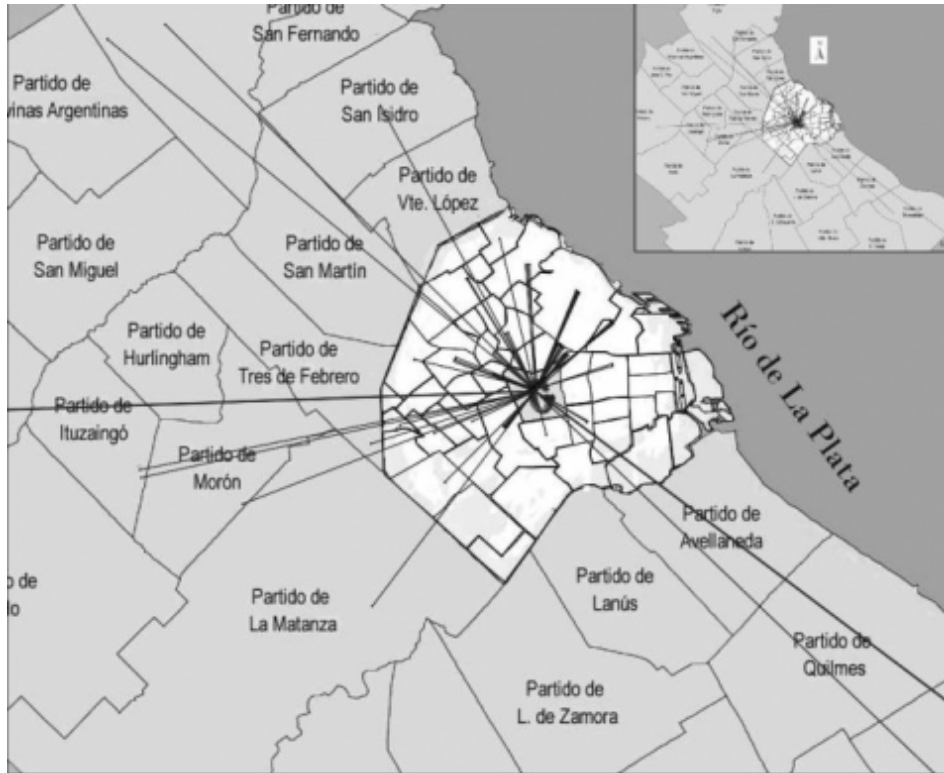
23 In 1993, a few months before their second child was born, they bought a house in Caballito, because they wanted “to return to Caballito”.

24 Although nuclearity and neo-locality are normative models, they are actually highly conditioned by the possibilities of insertion in labor, land and housing markets. That is, resources are needed in order to pursue this cultural model by which the formation of a new home occurs in a residence separate from that of other relatives. Throughout their residential trajectories, the households here studied have had the necessary resources to uphold the cultural standard of residential separation between generations. Within this

social group, co-habitation with relatives has been a temporary residential arrangement, always experienced as an exception, although possible in the face of critical situations.

25 However, when reconstructing daily mobility driven by family reasons, the proximity of family members becomes obvious. The households involved in the study are not at all indifferent to the residential location of their relatives. Figure 1 shows that movements produced to maintain family ties are carried out mainly within the neighborhood or in other neighborhoods near the residential location, and almost all take place within the city.

**Fig. 1. Destination of movements due to family reasons**



Source: own elaboration using the analysis matrix of daily mobility linked to upholding family networks, based on biographical interviews (Cosacov, 2014).

26 The analysis of destination-places that people interact with shows that individuals visiting family members move, first of all, within the same neighborhood (38.04% of destination-places are concentrated in Caballito) and in the second place, through areas near or adjacent to Caballito, be it towards the North (29.35%), West (17.39%), East (9.78%) or South (5.43%). When comparing mobility motivated by family ties to mobility responding to other reasons –addressed elsewhere (Cosacov, 2015)– it is clear that the former presents a more similar distribution of frequencies among the different directions taken into account. This means that visiting relatives leads individuals to move mainly within the same neighborhood or its surroundings, rather than in a dominant direction.

27 Far from geographic dispersion, analysis shows significant spatial concentration, relevant even at the neighborhood scale. Taken as a whole, 42% of relatives (50 people) live in the interviewees' same neighborhood, 47% (55 people) live in other neighborhoods but within the same city, and 11% (13 people) live in the same province but not in the City of Buenos Aires. In the examined middle classes, as a result of the geographic distribution of non-co-resident relatives, a large part of interviewees' daily mobility takes place in the same neighborhood and its surroundings.

28 Even though we are not in the presence of extremely local forms of family proximity on the scale of a street or building, it is possible to posit the existence of intra-urban and even intra-neighborhood forms of proximity. Families live in the same, or nearby, neighborhood, and there is even a case of *quasi*-cohabitation in the same building. Conversely, cases of family separation and metropolitan dispersion are less significant.

29 The positive assessment of residential proximity to relatives can be considered part of these families' social and economic reproduction strategies; however it must also be understood in relation to the significant historical continuity of the cultural tradition of familism (Jelin, 2010). Jelin highlights that the nuclear family as a cultural model "is combined in the region with a strong familistic ideology, where blood and kinship relations as basic criteria define responsibilities and obligations toward others (Jelin,2010:137). Although it is necessary to deepen the analysis, the spatial organization of these families seems to be framed between two cultural patterns that carry out an interplay of proximities and distances: the *nuclear and neo-local family model* and the *importance of the family of origin* that leads to the valuation and pursuit of proximity to relatives. Following Araos (2015), it is thus possible to understand the fulfillment of the nuclear and neo-local model and the fact that there is a certain "predisposition" to *allegamiento* in the face of critical situations, as was mentioned above.

## Family proximity and *mobility efforts*

30 Daily mobility that responds to family motives can be understood as the spatial dimension of a cultural pattern of attachment to relatives. Indeed, the spatial distribution of non co-resident kin shapes the practices and rhythms of interactions. However, it does not impede –at least not linearly- the everyday frequency of contact that guarantees the flow of aid and affection.

31 An inverse relationship exists between family member proximity and *mobility efforts*. Bericat Alastuey (1994) uses this concept to refer to the psychophysical and economic effort, as well as the time, people put into moving from one place to another throughout the city. Geographic proximity minimizes mobility effort, thus reducing physical and psychological fatigue as well as monetary expenses.

32 Visits to relatives are more frequent during the week among individuals that have been able to maintain physical proximity, especially among those who live in the same neighborhood as their non co-resident relatives, or near it. This is the case of Daniela, Jimena, Marcos, Ramiro, Pochi and other interviewees, whose grandparents, parents, siblings or children live in the same neighborhood and are able to visit them during the week -and not only on weekends, or for birthdays, Christmas and New Year celebrations. Ramiro is responsible for taking care of his mother and helps her quite frequently during the week, either by dropping off medication or shopping for her. Susana picks up her granddaughter from daycare every day. Marcos routinely runs "errands" for his grandparents, who live in the same neighborhood. The time devoted to these daily mobilities, many of which are linked to care (Jiron, 2017), is facilitated by spatial proximity in the context of a big city. Julieta was born in Caballito but lived in Palermo after moving out from her parents' home, then returned to Caballito after having her first child: "I work in [the neighborhood of] Flores and I'm closer to work from here, but I also wanted to be close to my parents". A few days a week her mother picks up her children from kindergarten and takes them home until Julieta returns.

33 However, even when greater geographic distance is involved, many people are still willing to move around, even at the metropolitan scale, to visit and help their relatives. This is the case of Antonia, for example, whose daughter lives in Ciudadela (in the Greater Buenos Aires, 15 km away from Caballito) because she was not able to rent or buy property in Caballito. Twice a week, Antonia goes to Ciudadela to take care of her granddaughter. Mariana, who just a year ago moved to one of the new gated high-rises in Caballito, visits her parent once a week in the neighborhood of Recoleta. However, individuals who experience more mobility effort due to geographic distance from their non co-resident relatives, visit them more frequently on weekends, and the "visit" is more leisure and affection-related than strictly cooperation. This is the case of Nacho, who was born in Ciudad Evita (in the Greater Buenos Aires, 20 km away from Caballito), where his parents



still live, and who still returns to that neighborhood quite frequently, especially on weekends.

## Family proximity as a result of residential trajectories of ego and his/her kin

- 34 Spatial distribution of non co-resident kin must be understood as the result of ego's (the interviewee's) and his/her relatives' residential trajectories; specifically, of residential location decisions and the way in which they interact with the city's own dynamic, especially with the land and housing market (Dureau, 2004). Everyday uses of urban space related to the maintenance of family networks –interpretable through daily mobility– and residential trajectories are closely linked. Residential mobility and everyday mobility are spatial practices with different temporalities, but they work together to define relationship systems between individuals, families and places.
- 35 The significant concentration of relatives on the intra-urban and even intra-neighborhood level is tightly linked to the type of residential trajectories: in the studied universe trajectories produced within the same neighborhood or the city are predominant. Indeed, the reconstruction of residential trajectories through the successive locations that shaped them shows a pattern of residential mobility marked by short-distance movements (between neighborhoods or within the same neighborhood) and with a dominant orientation towards the consolidated center of the city. When reconstructing residential trajectories, it became apparent that the examined households came mostly from the same neighborhood or from another neighborhood in the city (31 out of 40 of the surveyed experiences), whereas interurban trajectories (those that cross city limits) were less frequent. Despite the lack of statistical data on intra-urban mobility and on *degrees of residential retention*, it is possible to state that members of households in Caballito were mainly born in the city of Buenos Aires itself and, most likely, a significant portion were born in the same neighborhood, although this information has not been gathered by any official statistic.
- 36 Biographical interviews show that when deciding to move, people's priorities shift between family proximity and the demand of urban centralities. It is critical to consider the urban dynamic itself, the ways in which the city is expanding and its structure of centralities, as well as the residential opportunities presented by certain areas. These factors play a part in the possibilities of carrying out and juggling those priorities.
- 37 Many of Caballito's current residents present intra-neighborhood trajectories –that is, their parents also lived in this same neighborhood. Some of them even belong to families who have been in the neighborhood for over three generations. Among participants presenting intra-neighborhood trajectories, some were able to maintain the same location upon moving out from the parental home; others “left” the neighborhood, to later return. The latter “left” the neighborhood usually searching for a more affordable home, but they expected to return at a time of stronger family or work-related consolidation. In his study on the upper classes of Naples, Pfirsh (2013) uses the notions of “familial curl” (*boucle familiale*) to refer to residential mobility similar to the one discovered in Caballito: “people, after a sometimes long period in Rome or abroad, return to settle in neighborhoods, streets or even buildings where they have spent their childhood, in a home that belonged to their parents or grandparents” (Pfirsh, 2013: 9). However, returning to Caballito is not linked to the donation, succession or free provision of family housing.
- 38 This is the case of Omar, who lived with his parents in Caballito until he was 27 years old. He has a bachelor's degree in Communication, a postgraduate degree in Psychology and now owns a marketing consulting company. In 1995 Omar resolved to move out of his parent's house and look for an apartment to rent in Caballito:

Prices were really high. I was a salaried employee at that time, but I couldn't afford to rent in Caballito, so I moved to Flores, to Nazca and Vallese, where I lived for five years. I always worked downtown, so my commute back home was even more painful because I was passing Caballito and had to continue on to Flores. Plus, Flores has some particularities that are not so great. I lived a few blocks away from the Alvarez hospital and something you never saw in Caballito were the transvestites. Flores has more minorities, I was crossing Nazca and there were many orthodox Jewish people, even in the summer dressed with fur jackets, it's really something else [...]. Caballito never had that, it was more family-friendly.

- 39 Omar was married in the year 2000. He and his wife bought an apartment in Caballito with a loan through the Bank of Galicia. He currently lives in the same home, a few blocks away from his in-laws and from his sister. Aldo tells a similar story: he was also born in Caballito and lived a few years in Floresta until he was able to purchase property in the neighborhood where he was born:

The first home we bought was in Floresta, with the money we had we were able to buy an apartment there; we had some savings, plus money her father had given her. We lived there a few years until we were able to sell, and with that money we bought the place where I live now [...]. I never really liked Floresta, I'm used to Caballito, where I was born and raised, but at that time we didn't have a choice.

- 40 Julieta moved out of her parent's home to an apartment her father, a mid-level businessman in the metallurgic industry who lives in Caballito, purchased for her in the neighborhood of Palermo. In her case, moving to Palermo was a choice:

...most of my activities took place in that area, my friends lived there, my school friends don't live in Caballito anymore, some were living abroad, others had moved to Belgrano, Palermo, and I also thought it was a nicer area, it has much more night-life.

- 41 Julieta is 34 years old, she is a food technology engineer, she studied at the Argentine Catholic University and she works at the Coca Cola concentrates plant, in Flores. The birth of her first child was a turning point, this was when she moved back to Caballito: "I wanted to be close to my mom and it was also more convenient for my commute to work". Julieta lives in an apartment in one of the new gated high-rise buildings. She rents out her apartment in Palermo and with that pays rent in her current place.

- 42 The significant concentration of relatives is not only the result of intra-neighborhood trajectories. Intra-urban and inter-urban trajectories also contribute to this pattern. This is the case, for example, of Susana, who was born in 1950 in a neighborhood in the north of the city. She lived at her parents' home until she was 21, but then moved to Ramos Mejia (Buenos Aires province) where she was able to purchase a home. In spite of living in the outskirts of the city, Susana commuted daily to the center of the city:

I used to work at Banco Frances, I worked there my whole life until 2000. So I commuted every day here to Caballito; I dropped Diego [her first son] off at preschool –we had decided to bring him to school here because my mother-in-law lived a few blocks away and she picked him up– and then I took the subway and I went to work downtown. I did this everyday, it was crazy! So after living like this for a few years, coming and going, we decided to sell that and move to Caballito. We bought an apartment near my mother-in-law's place.

- 43 Susana's story refers to the gradual construction of the relationship with a place and the role of the network of family relations. She and her husband chose the school for their child in Caballito because her mother-in-law lived there and she could help them with school pick-up a few days a week. Currently, Susana does this same thing for her granddaughter, who also lives in Caballito, only a few blocks away.

- 44 It often occurs that those who reached the neighborhood not because of family networks but simply looking for better location, unleash –with their choice of residential location– the relocation of other relatives. In this way, and over time, residential itineraries reconstruct residential proximity to relatives. Such is the story of Virginia, who moved to

Caballito because she wanted to be closer to her son. Virginia is 70 years old, was born in the neighborhood of Mataderos, in the southeast of the city, and had always lived there. Since her immigrant grandparents arrived in Mataderos at the end of the 19th century, her family always stayed in the neighborhood. She moved four times within Mataderos, looking for the “house of her dreams”. But three years ago she moved to Caballito following her son, who had decided to move to this neighborhood with his nuclear family, seeking better location and education opportunities for his daughters.

My granddaughter started school here, at McAlister [...]. They saw the opportunity of buying an apartment and moved. And then my son heard about this apartment, and suggested that we buy it and sold the house in Mataderos. It took me a long time to make up my mind because, imagine, leaving my house in Mataderos, where I lived for 43 years.

45 After Virginia moved, her cousin also bought an apartment in the same building. In a short timespan, Virginia’s family mobilized resources and was able to maintain geographic proximity with non-coresident relatives.

46 Maximiliano’s case is similar. He moved to Caballito searching for better location and later on his brother also moved, just a few blocks away from him. Maximiliano is a 30-year-old telecommunications engineer. He was born in Haedo, Buenos Aires province, where he lived with his parents until 2008. As a teenager, Maximiliano experienced “endless rides” from Haedo into the capital city and back. Today, Maximiliano works in the *porteño* neighborhood of Barracas, in the South of the city, he is a presales engineer in a transnational company that produces optic transportation technologies and supplies companies like Telmex, Claro, Telefónica and Telecom, among others. As he moved forward in his career and began to think about moving out of his parent’s home, he decided he was going to live in the city: “I wanted to move to a place that was accessible in terms of transportation, connectivity and returning home”. Just like other interviewees, Maximiliano chose Caballito because of its centrality and accessibility. Moving here entailed moving away from his parents –whom he visits during the weekends, especially on Sundays– although not from his brother, who later on also moved to Caballito.

## The “neighborhood effect” in family proximity

47 Kinship relations constitute a vector that gives direction to both residential mobility and the daily use of urban space. In addition, the urban dynamic itself conditions the spatial distribution of relatives (Dureau, 2004).

48 Caballito, located in the city’s geographical center, is an important urban sub-centrality that is going through a process of real estate valorization, expressed in an increase in rent and property prices (Cfr. Baer & Kauw, 2016). Over the last two decades, Caballito went from being a territory envisioned for rising middle classes (and to a large extent, functioned as such), to an increasingly exclusive territory. The real estate boom after the 2001 crisis played a part in this process. These urban transformations took place in a social context marked by the increase of inequality and exclusion, part of a broader dynamic of socio-spatial fragmentation of the city of Buenos Aires.

49 The real estate market dynamic seems to strongly determine if residential proximity to relatives can be maintained or not when moving. Caballito’s attributes in terms of location, accessibility and position in the structure of centralities in Buenos Aires affect the geographic proximity of family members, but it does so in an ambivalent way: the neighborhood is attractive to new generations, that is, it “retains” descentance, but at the same time it also “expels” residents, because increase in land and housing value can become obstacles to staying. Fieldwork showed that due to this, the offspring of some of the

interviewees are not able to reproduce the same spatial position or perpetuate proximity to relatives.

50 Marcos is 33 years old; he has a degree in Political Science and is currently pursuing a postgraduate degree. He was born in Caballito. He lives in an apartment that he rents, a few blocks away from his parents and a few blocks away from his maternal grandparents. His grandparents and his parents own the property they live in. His family arrived in the neighborhood in 1970, when his maternal grandfather purchased an apartment in installments from a private company. This was quite common at the time, when the neighborhood was undergoing a process of densification and verticalization, and it was possible thanks to the Horizontal Property Act that facilitated access to small urban property for large sectors of the middle classes (Torres, 1992).

51 Miriam, Marcos' mother, recalls:

The apartment was small even for one person, and the four of us moved in there! But we were happy, it was ours and it was also in Caballito, this was a big change for us! On the one hand, we were closer to the center of the city, it wasn't the center, but Caballito was a sort of intermediate stop, it was like the place, let's say, for moving on to something else... Clearly my parents were prioritizing location, the neighborhood, and property, but it was also something about the atmosphere... On the other hand, my mother's sister lived here, she was her closest sister, she lived in a very nice house!

Marcos rents his apartment from friends of his parents' who charge him below market rent. Thanks to this he is able to stay in a location that means a lot to him. Marcos mentions that if this were not the case he wouldn't be able to live in Caballito, and would have to live in a less expensive neighborhood:

If I had to pay for an apartment in Caballito at its real cost, plus property taxes, plus other expenses, let's say, it would cost quite a lot more, my current income wouldn't be enough, so I would have to look for cheaper neighborhoods; I would try to stay close by.

52 In contrast to Marcos, other descendants of Caballito residents have not been able to maintain the same residential location after moving out. Antonia has lived in Caballito for over thirty years. She and her husband, born and raised in the neighborhood, live in an apartment they own. They have a store downtown where they both work. Their four children were born in the neighborhood, two of them still live at home with them, the other two moved out and live in other neighborhoods. Although they wanted to, they were not able to stay in Caballito:

Our daughter bought a small one-bedroom apartment in Floresta, she's still paying for it [...]. She looked for one here, but she couldn't afford it, Caballito is impossible now, the difference was really big and she couldn't afford it at all. Now she rented out the apartment in Floresta and with that rent she's able to rent a larger house in Ciudadela [...]. At first my daughter was afraid of moving to Ciudadela, but now she's used to it. And then I have my other son who moved in with his girlfriend in Berazategui because he couldn't find anything here, so they are far away; but I go quite often to Ciudadela to take care of my grandchildren and also on Sundays my children come over for lunch.

53 Patricia is 61 years old, she was born in Caballito and she never moved out of the neighborhood in spite of having moved houses three times. She lives in a house with a patio and a terrace, in front of a small park that she looks after along with other neighbors.

I was born a block away from Parque Rivadavia, in a house that my parents rented. They later bought a place, when I was around thirteen. My father owned a TV and radio broadcasting school, he was an engineer, and my mother was a seamstress. My dad made good money, we were very well off. The house he bought was a small palace. It had a garage, a terrace, stained glass windows, it was built at the beginning of the century, he had to do a lot of work on it; recently they tore it down to construct a building. We enjoyed it very much, we held great parties, it was luxurious, my parents

always made my sister and I feel like princesses. The truth is that I would have loved to give that to my children, and this makes me feel *less than*.

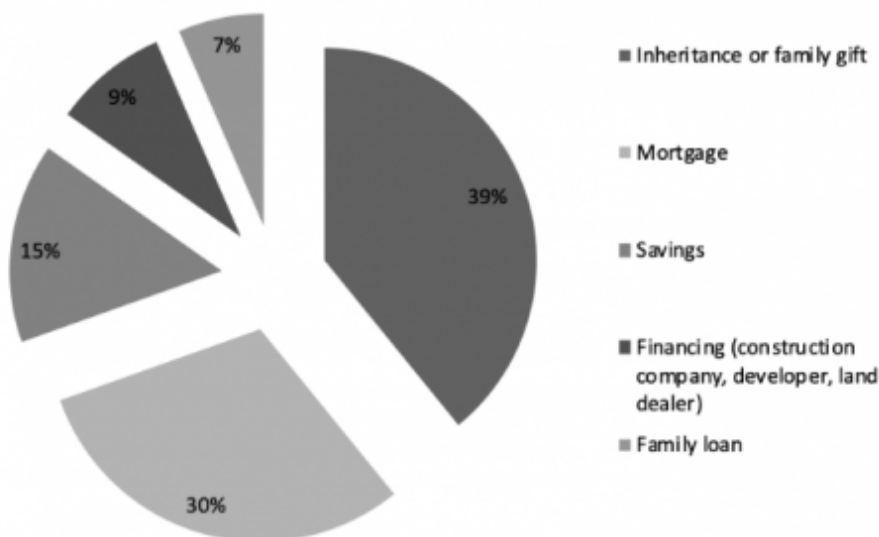
54 Patricia is sorry that her children could not live in Caballito: “They are all spread out because they weren’t even able to rent here”. In her account, her children’s difficulty to reproduce their spatial position is framed within a broader feeling of not having been able to give them what her parents gave her.

## Family proximity and the role of family in achieving homeownership

55 In these middle classes, intergenerational transmission of material heritage, that is, inheritance, is one of the main resources for accessing homeownership. Bourdieu’s (2007) understands this as one of the shapes taken by the perpetuation of a social group: economic capital that moves through kinship networks in the form of heritage. In addition, transmission of this heritage is also produced through transference of assets or gifts by means of which parents many times advance inheritance to their children. When the children move out on their own or get married, the family gives them money, or will even purchase a home for them, or lend them money, thus helping them avoid ordinary bank circuits with difficult-to-comply-with conditions. Therefore, networks operate all through the life cycle in these families, and the favors and resources that move around vary from care to heritage.

56 Figure 2 shows that 46% of mobilized resources<sup>3</sup> for first-time buyers comes from inherited money or patrimony, a family gift (39%) and a family loan (7%).

Figure 2. Mobilized resources for first-time property buyers



Source: Own elaboration based on biographical interviews (Cosacov, 2014).

57 The fact itself that inheritance, gifts and family loans considered together represent 46% of mobilized resources, points to the crucial role played by family networks in the access of homeownership. Katzman (2000) had already noted that the family networks’ contribution for accessing homeownership is one of the fields in which social capital plays an important role as a source of advantages. The significance of family networks is what differentiates

Marcos and Jimena's position regarding the land and housing market: they are both under thirty-four, they hold university degrees and are the children of professionals. Marcos' father is an engineer and owns a tourism agency; his mother has a postgraduate degree, is a municipal public officer and a university professor. Jimena's father is an accountant and owns a real estate agency and her mother is a dentist, although she does not practice. Jimena's parents were able to buy an apartment for her; Marcos' parents, who also live in Caballito, while not able to purchase a home for their son, might be able to help him access one. Thus, Marcos rents an apartment just a few blocks away from his parents and grandparents.

58 It must be noted that in most cases homeownership is accessed through the mobilization of a combination of resources, not just from one source; however, when only one resource is mobilized, it mostly comes from the family in the form of inheritance or gift.

59 A public or private home loan is the second resource most frequently mobilized to access homeownership (30%). An analysis of the origin of these mortgage loans –always considering first-time buyers' access to property among interviewees-, shows the pre-eminence of private mortgage. Savings represent 15% of mobilized resources and 9% corresponds to financing of land dealers, construction or developing companies. Savings, in the majority of cases, rather than providing full access to the land and housing market, supplements another resource.

60 The action of the State, specifically through its housing policy, by either facilitating homeownership through mortgage policies or providing housing directly, occupies an insignificant place for these families. Among interviewees, the presence of the State in residential trajectories is secondary in relation to family and the market. In the cases it has left a mark, it has been exclusively under the form of mortgages. None of the interviewees benefitted from any direct housing policy.

61 Thus, in the households examined in this study access to homeownership is facilitated by the mobilization of resources, especially family resources and to a lesser extent mortgages, personal savings and financing offered by land dealers, construction companies or developers.

62 Although analysis must be further deepened, it safe to assert that the mobilization of those economic resources does not mean that access to property is simultaneously tied to the preservation of the local family surroundings. In his work on the Neapolitan elite, Pfirsch (2013) showed that real estate property was one of the mechanisms that made family aggregation possible. Pfirsch shows a patrimonial system where parents strongly contribute to their children's access to property and control over urban land partly explains intergenerational proximity. In the case of the middle classes here studied, the relationship between heritage and location is different. Heritage dynamics does not necessarily play a role in processes of family aggregation. Moreover, it sometimes places tension and jeopardizes the possibility of perpetuating geographic proximity to relatives. Preference for proximity to relatives is sometimes overridden by the value placed on homeownership, as shown by the pendular residential mobilities mentioned above. Future research will attempt to better understand the relationship between family heritage and residential aggregation.

## Conclusions

63 The findings here presented not only contest the widespread notion that the relative significance of kinship ties decreases in cities; they also show that kinship is a key factor in the residential logics and uses of the city not only for working-class sectors. The nuclear, middle class households examined here maintain relations with their relatives –relations of mutual affection and mutual aid- and this is both cause and effect of residential proximity.

64 The considerable geographic concentration of families opens up a question regarding the sociability of these households and to what extent they are ingrained in the local context. In

these middle classes, there is a form of intraurban and even intraneighborhood family proximity –with varied geometries- that is in between two cultural patterns: the *nuclear and neolocal family model* and *familism*, which generates commitments with kin and blood relations. Residential trajectories respond to both patterns. Individuals seek to create a home in a house separate from their family of origin while at the same time upholding proximity to those relatives. The likelihood of juggling both depends on the ability to mobilize resources and on the urban dynamic itself. Moreover, the possibility of becoming homeowners –a process in which family resources play a key role- is another factor that might disassemble family residential aggregation –at least for some time- when looking for more affordable locations for purchasing property.

65 This paper is but a first approach to understanding the residential organization of middle class families. To account for the existence of *familial residential configurations* as formulated by Pfirsch (2008) requires further inquiry that will guide the future development of research.

66 Finally, mobilities as analytical devices, and due to their dynamic, processual and relational nature, enable the emergence of a rich fabric of social relations and spaces that are always practiced in movement, with a greater or lesser degree of stability, continuity and intensity. Thus, they provide a privileged path for approaching the intersections between family, kinship and city and, in particular, for identifying and representing spatial configurations of urban kinship.

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## Notes



1 In contrast to other countries, Argentina does not conduct national surveys about family networks. Statistical data still focuses on the household and housing unit as units of analysis, thus the collected information is limited to socio-demographic characteristics and kinship relations between household members. No official statistics approach spatial organization of families, nor residential mobilities and, more specifically, intra-urban mobilities. In the academic sphere, inquiries about spatial organization of families and residential mobilities are still incipient. Di Virgilio's (2008) pioneer work must be mentioned. More detailed analysis of research on residential mobility in Argentina can be found in Ramirez (2016) and Di Virgilio (2018).

2 I inquired about non-coresident family members with which participants had a relationship and contact frequency at least every 15 days. I took into account when the head of household mentioned his/her in-law family (for example, a spouse's parents or siblings), given that they are part of that household's family network, so as to not lose information. In doing so, I attempted to elude the disadvantages presented by interviewing only one household member and to ponder the fact that "natives" themselves use kinship language to account for these relationships.

3 In order to reconstruct mobilized resources, interviewees were asked how they had been able to achieve homeownership each time they had done so throughout their residential trajectories. Later, frequency analysis was conducted taking into account only the first property bought, including the resources mentioned in the categories presented in Figure 2.

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## List of illustrations

	<b>Title</b>	Fig. 1. Destination of movements due to family reasons
	<b>URL</b>	<a href="http://journals.openedition.org/articulo/docannexe/image/4418/img-1.png">http://journals.openedition.org/articulo/docannexe/image/4418/img-1.png</a>
	<b>File</b>	image/png, 277k
	<b>Title</b>	Figure 2. Mobilized resources for first-time property buyers
	<b>Credits</b>	Source: Own elaboration based on biographical interviews (Cosacov, 2014).
	<b>URL</b>	<a href="http://journals.openedition.org/articulo/docannexe/image/4418/img-2.png">http://journals.openedition.org/articulo/docannexe/image/4418/img-2.png</a>
	<b>File</b>	image/png, 46k

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