

Urban Space, Forms of Living, and Intersectionality. Constructions of Urban Inequality in Buenos Aires, Argentina

Espacio urbano, formas de vida e interseccionalidad.
Construcciones de la desigualdad urbana desde
Buenos Aires, Argentina

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| Abstract: This article explores how various intersections of social markers such as race/ethnicity, gender, and class (re)produce the materialities of urban public space in Latin America. Based on five ethnographic studies conducted over the past two decades, we analyze how different social groups –skateboarding enthusiasts, street vendors, informal recyclers, seamstresses, domestic workers, and women and non-binary gamers– utilize and influence the urban public spaces of Buenos Aires, including virtual environments. The unequal urban experiences of these groups –characterized by distinct modes of resource acquisition, spatial navigation, and moral impositions– highlight the necessity of an intersectional perspective in comprehending the spatial processes that perpetuate inequality.

Keywords: Ways of Living; Intersectionality; Urban Inequality; Public Space; Buenos Aires.

| Resumen: Este artículo analiza la influencia de la raza/etnicidad, el género y la clase en la configuración del espacio público urbano en América Latina. Basándose en cinco estudios etnográficos realizados en Buenos Aires, estudia cómo *skaters*, vendedores ambulantes, recicladores, costureras, trabajadoras domésticas, así como mujeres y personas no binarias que participan en videojuegos, utilizan y transforman estos espacios, incluidos los virtuales. Las diferencias en su acceso a recursos, movilidad y las imposiciones morales evidencian la necesidad de adoptar una perspectiva interseccional para comprender las desigualdades espaciales.

Palabras clave: Formas de Vida; Interseccionalidad; Desigualdad Urbana; Espacio Público; Buenos Aires.

INTRODUCTION

Buenos Aires, like many Latin American cities, is a place where disparities are conspicuously observable, continually generated, and encountered through social interactions. The distribution of opportunities and recognition via infrastructure, routines, and moral norms is intertwined in the (re)production of inequalities. In this context, inequalities are not an abstract notion hovering above daily life, but rather a network of relationships that involves perceptions, movements within, and utilization of space.

This article examines the production of social and spatial inequalities within urban public spaces, directly engaging with the central question of the dossier: How do intersectional inequalities relate to the physical and social fabric that has shaped urban public (and non-public) spaces in Latin America? By analyzing Buenos Aires and its surrounding areas –encompassing both physical and virtual public spaces– we delve into how intersecting categories of race/ethnicity, gender, class, and other social markers are both (re)produced and (re)produce the materiality of these spaces.

The ethnographic approach developed in this article is derived from over twenty years of fieldwork in Buenos Aires and its metropolitan region. Through distinct yet interconnected research initiatives, we have documented the lives of informal recyclers (*cartoneros*), domestic workers, Bolivian seamstresses, feminist skateboarders, and women and non-binary professionals within the video game industry. These are not presented as comparable cases, but as contextualized experiences through which in-

equality can be understood as something experienced, negotiated, and endowed with meaning.

These lives unfold across diverse temporalities and spaces—on the nocturnal routes of recycling carts, within the intimate rhythms of domestic labor, in workshops that serve as residences, in parks reclaimed by skaters, and in digital environments where creative labor transforms into care. The commonality among them is not solely their occupations but also the shared condition of navigating a city that incessantly assesses worth through moral and affective standards. Buenos Aires is not merely a site where inequality manifests; it functions as a moral instrument that generates difference through proximity.

Approaching inequality through intersectionality enables us to recognize how gender, class, and race intersect not as isolated axes but as mutually constitutive dimensions of social existence. In accordance with Latin American feminist and decolonial perspectives, we interpret intersectionality as a lived experience rather than merely a theoretical framework of categories. It emphasizes how people perceive and perpetuate hierarchies in their daily interactions, translating structural relations into gestures, emotions, and physical comportment. In Buenos Aires, intersectionality manifests in urban environments: it is spatially embodied within transportation networks, domestic boundaries, and digital infrastructures that simultaneously connect and segregate.

The city thus becomes a laboratory for observing how inequality is made and justified. Its physical and social infrastructures do not merely reflect social hierarchies—they materialize them. Streets, buses, parks, and apartment buildings organize relations of dependence and distance, offering certain bodies visibility and confining others to invisibility. These arrangements are sustained by moral languages—of decency, effort, discipline, and respectability—that define what counts as proper behavior. In this sense, the production of inequality in Buenos Aires is inseparable from its moral regulation.

Ethnographic attention to these practices reveals that the boundaries of class and gender are drawn not only through institutions but through emotions, gestures, and expectations. People learn to recognize themselves and others through the city's moral grammars: who can speak, who must wait, who can take up space, who must apologize for doing so. The urban fabric becomes an affective and relational network through which power is continuously enacted.

In this article, intersectionality is not treated as a fixed analytical lens but as a way of engaging with the empirical reality of these intertwined lives. It allows us to trace how difference is experienced across domains of labor, care, leisure, and creativity. Through these, we perceive how inequality is organized and how coexistence is achieved despite, and through, hierarchy.

Our perspective situates inequality within moral and relational orders (Di Virgilio and Perelman 2021; Lamont and Molnár 2002). The affective dimension of urban life assumes a central role. The practices of endurance, care, and discipline through which actors navigate the city are simultaneously forms of survival and modes of moral expression. They render inequality bearable, yet also perceptible. Following Veena

Das (2007), the ordinary is not a neutral terrain; rather, it is where power is most effectively embodied and where violence assumes its most intimate forms. In the city, urban inequalities are sustained through these daily negotiations—through the ongoing calibration of proximity and distance, attention and indifference, recognition and avoidance.

Thus, to examine Buenos Aires ethnographically requires attention to the interplay of structure and feeling, of inequality and intimacy. The analysis of intersectional inequalities in Buenos Aires requires considering the coexistence of different moral grammars (Thévenot 2016; Boltanski 1990), where gender, class, and race interweave with the city's spatial organization. These ethnographic cases show how these categories are lived, embodied, and made visible through everyday interactions in public and private spaces.

The city's material, moral, and affective dimensions are inseparable. Intersectional inequality manifests here as a common condition of life: a way of inhabiting the world that demands effort, tact, and endurance. By following the gestures, rhythms, and emotions that shape these lives, this article investigates how Buenos Aires produces inequality intersectionally, how its very ordinary fabric sustains hierarchy.

2. SNAPSHOTS OF INTERSECTIONAL INEQUALITIES IN BUENOS AIRES

I

Rosario, like many others, began collecting waste in 2002.¹ It was towards the end of 2001 and the beginning of 2002 that informal garbage collection, known locally as 'cirujear', gained public notoriety as part of the crisis that affected Argentina in 2001, which resulted in unprecedented levels of poverty and unemployment. Rosario began traversing the streets of Buenos Aires in middle-class neighborhoods with her cart: "People look at you as if you were some sort of bug. They think you're going to rob them." While it is impossible to fully comprehend Rosario's experiences, I could perceive the demeanor of others towards her, which markedly differed from the silent reactions I —being a white middle-class man— regularly received or did not receive. One of the methodological challenges we occasionally encounter is the (im)possibility of articulating a series of perceptions, feelings, and hostilities that people experience daily. Rosario was born in the province of Formosa, and her skin tone is darker than that of most residents in the neighborhoods where she collects waste. This does not occur in her community, located approximately 20 kilometers from her collection route, where her skin color aligns with that of the majority of inhabitants. However, within the city, she is perceived as "black." When I converse with residents, many refer to her as a "dirty black," "fucking black," or "thief." Rosario's behavior is entirely different

¹ The fieldwork on which this section is based was done by Mariano Perelman between 2002 and 2011.

where she lives and where she collects. While shouting, loud music, insults, and smoking are common practices in their neighborhoods, most *cartoneros* (informal recyclers) behave almost the opposite way during their routes: insults are avoided, music turns into conversations with neighbors, and politeness becomes the norm. Based on moral values, conduct becomes a key aspect for understanding how these values are interpreted, constructed, and lived. How people “behave” reflects one group’s views about another and the explicit and implicit negotiations of how people place their behavior in the urban space if they wish to establish and maintain relationships. In other words, it shows how social groups impose urban ways of life.

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Maria awakens each day at 5 a.m. and departs from her residence at 6 a.m. to arrive at the gates of Pilar Lakes, the gated community where she is employed as a domestic worker, by 7:30 a.m.² She commutes using three buses to cover a distance of 15 km: initially from her neighborhood to the highway, then traveling three stops along the highway, and finally taking the last bus to the entrance of Pilar Lakes. Each part of the journey lasts less than 10 minutes; however, the bus schedules are irregular, with waiting times extending up to 45 minutes. The bus stops lack shelters and are frequently overcrowded, offering no protection during inclement weather, which compels Maria to monitor weather forecasts prior to her departure. During rainy conditions, she carries an umbrella, a raincoat, and rain boots due to muddy sidewalks. Upon arriving at the gates of Pilar Lakes, Maria joins a queue behind other domestic workers. A line of vehicles enters the gated community nearby. Vehicles have a designated entrance, whereas pedestrians must wait on the sidelines. Visitors and residents of Pilar Lakes arrive and depart by car. It is understandable, given the absence or poor condition of sidewalks, and the streets’ crowded and unsafe nature due to high vehicle speeds. Pedestrians, mostly domestic workers, line up adjacent to arriving cars. To gain access to the gated community, Maria must pass through security procedures: she submits her ID to security personnel, contacts the owners for authorization, and upon confirmation, is permitted entry. She then walks for 10 minutes to her residence, carrying her backpack and work clothes. At 3 p.m., Maria departs from her house and proceeds to the gates. En route, she passes by nannies walking with children and residents, predominantly women, who are either running or exercising. She can distinguish them as nannies rather than mothers because they are dressed in work clothes, some even in uniforms. They are also shorter than the women running; their skin is darker, and their hair appears un-styled, unlike those freshly styled at a hairdresser. Upon reaching the gates, she again submits her ID, and security examines her backpack. Pía, the woman for whom Maria works, provided her with some toys belonging to her sons. She said,

² The fieldwork on which this case is based was done by Agustina Frisch in the Municipality of Pilar between 2021 and 2023.

“For your son. Mine no longer play with them.” Security notices the toys in María’s backpack and contacts Pía to verify if María has authorization to take them. A visitor waiting in his car for approval to enter observes this interaction.

III

During a hot summer afternoon, the skatepark in Comuna 8 becomes a hub of activity, resonating with a symphony of sounds.³ The persistent noise of wheels on concrete is complemented by conversations, laughter, and shouts from individuals waiting or practicing tricks on their skateboards. Notably, a group of girls distinguishes themselves by embarking on an excursion to this public and professional skatepark, situated within a district of the city that Buenos Aires’ urban imagination perceives as one of the most stigmatized, belonging to its degraded southern constellation, in contrast to the more affluent ‘north.’⁴ Lucía, a 40-year-old woman, is among the ‘girls’ who chose to participate in the female skateboarding school’s “excursion” to the skate plaza, despite the ‘prejudices about age.’ Adjusting her helmet, she comments during a day of fieldwork on February 11, 2023, “The skatepark is normally... a male territory...”

The collective presence of “the girls” in this urban public space marks it as a contested site where gender and generational relations intersect and manifest, challenging male dominance and expanding the boundaries of who can inhabit these areas. However, fieldwork from 2011 to 2018 highlights how class also plays a crucial role in shaping these experiences. For the area’s male residents, the “skate plaza” and the various platforms that have hosted it since its inauguration in 2013 (mainly through events and skate school) symbolize hope for their ability to create and sustain alternative ways of making a living in a territory that, in their words, “always spits out,” “kids with no ambition,” “without drive,” “disillusioned.” Lucía’s statement then invites a deeper exploration of how gender, class, and age intersect in reproducing Buenos Aires’ heteronormative, youth-centered public urban space.⁵

Consider, for instance, some activities that take the skatepark beyond the fixed boundaries of the “neighborhood,” integrating it into the broader local and national skateboarding scene. An amateur competition tournament—a milestone in the ongoing sportification process gaining momentum in Argentina (Saraví 2019)—chose this skatepark for some of its key events. The ‘circuit’ generally excluded female skaters, occasionally offering an ‘open’ category for separate evaluation. In contrast, skaters

³ The fieldwork on which this case is based was conducted by María Rosa Privitera Sixto.

⁴ Comuna 8 has consistently ranked highest in critical socioeconomic indicators (unemployment rate and average years of schooling for those 25 and older). Nearly 60% of its population live in multi-dimensional poverty. Local urban socio-anthropological studies highlight it as a prime example of residential segregation, (Di Virgilio 2008).

⁵ Particularly if we take into account the consideration of space/territory as a significant category in the analysis of masculinity processes, which remain on the periphery of Gender Studies (Delgado Ontivero 2019, 47).

valued the circuit more for challenging traditional views of youth and adulthood by including the ‘over 30’ and ‘over 40’ age categories in some events. Finally, the choice of this territory for the circuit’s most significant dates reflects a network of collective experiences, including the creation of temporary infrastructure (removable ramps and skate events) and affective connections formed since the early 2000s through the practice of ‘going out’ to skate (Privitera Sixto 2017), which involves not only physical movement but also ‘making friendships’ and a ‘love for skating.’ In this way, residents invite reimagining of ways to make a living, describing their urban interventions (physical space and socializing) as ‘grassroots entrepreneurship,’ with the goal not of living *off* skateboarding but *for* and *through* it.

IV

Sebastián hails from a family dedicated to the craft of sewing.⁶ He is 38 years of age and the son of Bolivian immigrants from Oruro. Born and raised in Argentina, he is the youngest of five siblings. From an early age, Sebastián contributed to family work, and in 2012, he assumed responsibility for managing the workshop located in the Mataderos district alongside his sister Laura, who is currently 55 years old. Since then, they have gradually expanded their operations to accommodate major brands, engaging in the production and marketing of their products. They discontinued employing additional staff, and when supplementary assistance was required, they subcontracted certain segments of production to workshops operated by compatriots in Villa 20, situated in the nearby Lugano district. Their principal products include boxers and sportswear. When I first visited their workshop, located at the back of their property, it contrasted with the image of other family-run workshops I had previously visited. Although it was a family workshop, as his sister and father lived in the same PH and were relatively small, the conditions were far from those typically considered “precarious.” It opened to a patio and, in addition to the door, had a window, making it bright and ventilated. It had air conditioning and advanced sewing machines. They had built a separate bathroom on the patio. The entire space appeared, above all, clean. I later learned that it was Laura who arrived at the workshop an hour before Sebastián every day and took care of cleaning both the workshop and the living quarters. She stopped working at the sewing machine at noon to prepare lunch and returned afterward. Laura also spends more hours sitting at the machine.

Sebastián sustains a network of relationships with the workshop and external connections. Besides purchasing fabrics, negotiating with suppliers, and occasionally delivering finished products, he manages sales: “I’m more on the street selling,” he states. He operates in various public or semi-public spaces within the city, as he prefers not to maintain a fixed stall at any fair due to associated costs. Sometimes, it is sufficient to

⁶ The fieldwork on which this case is based was done by Antonella Delmonte Allasia between 2023 and 2024.

simply cross the street. Opposite his sewing workshop is a row of mechanic shops with numerous male workers to whom he frequently offers and sells his produced boxers. He maintains similar sales activities at a bus terminal located in the Villa Riachuelo neighborhood in the southern part of the city, where he sells products to a fellow countryman who is a bus driver delegate and then redistributes them. He relies on WhatsApp as a business tool to reach more distant clients, periodically sending them information about his offerings. He also visits banks and offices in the downtown area. In these instances, due to the perceived social distance from these workers, he sells the boxers at a higher price, associating them with the middle class of the city. Sebastián trains at Parque Chacabuco on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and this recreational space has also become a source of income through the sale of running gear. Again, the issue of gender is significant. Firstly, the workshop produces clothing intended for a consumer perceived as male. In this sense, the public and semi-public spaces through which Sebastián moves and sells clothes are strategic, as they are primarily male-dominated spaces, such as the bus terminal or the mechanic shop. Secondly, beyond the material nature of the product they make, the division of tasks between the siblings in the workshop is significant. He has more connections to the “outside,” unlike his sister, who (in addition to sewing) takes care of the domestic tasks inside the workshop.

He capitalizes his double nationality, emphasizing either his Bolivian or Argentine identity depending on the context. However, he identifies himself as Bolivian, stating on various occasions, “I am Bolivian, not Argentine.” As with other experiences of seamstresses and tailors (Delmonte Allasia 2024), when analyzing their way of life, it is essential to adopt an intersectional perspective that incorporates the racialized migrant condition concerning gender. Sebastián’s memory is characterized by the discrimination he and his family encountered due to their migrant status, and these past experiences have significant repercussions in the present. Sebastián regards and dedicates his workshop as his territory, as he articulates. When engaging with representatives from major companies (typically white Argentine men) he endeavors to counteract those experiences that conveyed the subalternity he endured as a child, through discourses that promote equality and active practices of negotiating payments.

V

In 2019, the Argentine Video Game Expo (EVA) was conducted in September, featuring events organized at various locations throughout the nation.⁷ Among these, the Cultural Center of Science in Palermo, a district of Buenos Aires, served as a prominent venue. During the event, a noteworthy incident occurred when women from the gaming industry assembled in a restroom and decided to establish a WhatsApp group. As one of the participants recounted, “It was formed... we always say, right?... in the bathroom of EVA, where the women met.” It is significant to note that this assembly

⁷ The fieldwork was done by Ivana Bachmanovsky between 2021 and 2024.

took place in a restroom (an isolated space separate from the main conference areas). Within this secluded environment, where male attendance was limited, the dispersed women involved in the gaming sector were able to connect and subsequently created a women-only group. This initial group continued to grow and ultimately developed into a community known as Women in Games Argentina (WIGAr), the only organization in the country dedicated to uniting women and gender minorities within the industry.

WIGAr experienced growth and implemented initiatives to foster a more inclusive industry. Among these initiatives, the Women Game Jam (WGJ) stands out as particularly significant. The WGJ is a virtual event in Argentina during which participants spend a weekend developing a video game from inception to completion. A member of WIGAr, who is involved in organizing the WGJ, explained, “All the activities we do are public; all the content we generate is freely accessible on all our social media platforms and beyond.” This transparency aligns with the WGJ’s objective to enable participation from anyone, regardless of prior experience in game development. While specifically targeted toward women and gender minorities, the event is not exclusive, as men also participate. Notably, women tend to constitute the majority of participants in these virtual events. In light of the ongoing gender disparities in access to the gaming industry, the virtual platform of the WGJ seeks to challenge and transcend these inequalities. During my participation in the related fieldwork, I was a member of a six-person team, none of whom were previously acquainted. Communication was managed via Discord, relying on both voice and text channels. Throughout the weekend, we worked intensively in collaboration to develop our video game, dedicating several hours each day. Notably, we did not activate cameras during our collaboration. The only information available to me about my teammates was their usernames, which did not reflect their real names; moreover, none possessed profile pictures, opting instead for illustrative images. Until engaging in voice communication, my knowledge of their identities remained limited. Once we began voice chatting, differences in accents revealed that our team members originated from various countries, including Mexico, Chile, Venezuela, and Argentina, a fact they later confirmed. Prior to this, I was unaware of their nationalities, genders, ages, or other personal details. Throughout the weekend, we maintained our anonymity, characteristic of virtual environments.

This anonymity, however, assumes a different form in the virtual context: our team collaborated throughout the weekend while preserving our identities. When the WGJ concluded and we uploaded our game onto a virtual platform, we were required to provide our real names⁸. Only at this moment I learned the true identities of my teammates. The virtual space facilitated an environment in which social markers such as gender, social class, and age were temporarily set aside, enabling interaction centered on anonymity.

⁸ In contrast, as Perelman (2019) develops, an urban public space is not configured as the place of anonymity sought by popular sectors trying to make a living.

This experience highlights that in a predominantly male industry such as gaming, women and gender minorities find common ground and establish environments where they constitute the majority. Frequently marginalized, these groups utilize anonymity to influence their interactions. Consequently, space emerges as a vital factor in understanding how, through various public domains, including the bathroom at a Buenos Aires event and the virtual space of the WGJ, women and gender minorities assert and forge new modes of engagement.

These initiatives are supported by women and gender minorities who possess a sincere passion for video games. As one WGJ organizer remarked, “If you truly love this, know that it is possible to work in it.” This collective enthusiasm encourages women and gender minorities to navigate and excel within these domains. The same organizer conveyed, “Seeing all of this fills my heart with pride; it makes it worthwhile to dedicate so much time to this.” She is a member of WIGAr and, like many of her colleagues, dedicates significant time to the organization’s various initiatives. As clarified at the beginning of the event, WGJ organizers do not receive monetary compensation for their leadership or activities conducted through WIGAr. They undertake these responsibilities out of a steadfast commitment to their way of life (believing it to be a valuable investment of their time and effort) and aim to cultivate a more inclusive industry and enhance access for women and gender minorities, whether through physical spaces such as restrooms or virtual environments that ensure anonymity.

3. BETWEEN SPACE, INTERSECTIONALITY, AND THE ORDINARY

This section builds on the previous analysis, which examined the coexistence of diverse moral grammars in Buenos Aires. It aims to consider how spatiality, intersectionality, and quotidian realities interweave in the genesis of inequality. Our inquiry advances in two principal directions. Firstly, from a Latourian perspective and drawing on Reygadas (2019), it is argued that understanding the origins of inequality requires more than analyzing individuals’ strategies and the power relations among them; it also needs considering the roles of objects and spatial configurations within these relationships. From this viewpoint, space is not simply socially constructed but is an active and fundamental agent in the production of inequalities. As Reygadas states, space “serves not only as a foundation for other actors but also as a collection of diverse agents. Without their presence and agency, social processes would be inconceivable, and life itself would be unattainable” (Reygadas 2019, 23). From this lens, Buenos Aires is not merely a setting where inequalities display; it is an assemblage of infrastructures, moral codes, and temporal rhythms that participate in their reproduction. The city’s architecture, transportation systems, and digital networks materialize hierarchies and uphold social relations through which differences are rendered visible and lived.

Therefore, understanding inequality in Buenos Aires entails careful consideration of the agency of space and its role in conditioning, facilitating, and constraining in-

teractions among people and objects. Simultaneously, if intersectionality enables us to understand the experience of inequality, it is because it irradiates the interconnected forms of urban existence; the quotidian ways in which actors define legitimate modes of being in the city, consuming, earning income, spending time, or expressing themselves. Intersectionality is a critical perspective derived from non-hegemonic feminist theories, revealing that class, race, gender, and other axes of difference are not merely additive but are co-constitutive. As Viveros Vigoya (2023) underscores, an intersectional analysis does not perceive identities as multiple separate dimensions (woman, Black, poor); but as a singular, intertwined experience which continues to influence colonial knowledge and understanding of feminized populations (Lugones 2008). It encourages us to examine how urban life is experienced at the intersection of multiple hierarchies that generate not only social distance but also moral significance.

We comprehend intersectionality both as a condition of urban life in Buenos Aires and as an analytical perspective that emphasizes the interdependencies of inequalities. This approach incorporates both structural and affective dimensions: the material organization of the city alongside the emotional responses, gestures, and temporalities through which inequality is experienced and maintained. In this context, intersectionality connects bodies to infrastructures and affects urban forms, illustrating how gender, race, and class distinctions are spatially embedded.

The five ethnographic snapshots presented earlier (of recyclers, domestic workers, Bolivian seamstresses, feminist skaters, and women in digital gaming) demonstrate how this intersectional dynamic unfolds in distinct spaces, both physical and virtual. Each of these spaces is not merely a backdrop but an actor that shapes relations. A bus route, a gated neighborhood, a workshop, a skatepark, or an online chat are configurations that participate in the production of inequality. Their materiality and temporality define what kind of social interactions are possible, who is recognized, and who remains invisible. Claudia Fonseca (2005) highlights the importance of studying popular sectors and the spaces they inhabit through the lens of social class, which she notes has often been neglected in anthropology. She stresses the utility of working within “margins,” “flows,” and “in-between spaces” to address the complexity of everyday realities and the creation of new social configurations (Fonseca 2005, 119).

An intersectional and spatial perspective also necessitates consideration of a temporal dimension. As Frehse (2016; 2017; 2021) asserts, spatial arrangements are imbued with historical temporality; they embody and transmit inequalities across multiple generations. The manner in which bodies move, rest, or circulate within the city sustains entrenched hierarchies. In this context, the inequalities of Buenos Aires are not solely mapped across space but are layered throughout time. Public space thus emerges as a domain where these temporalities converge and become perceptible, revealing borders (whether physical, legal, or symbolic) that govern urban coexistence (Reygadas 2004).

In Argentina, racialization and poverty often intersect, but it is appearance rather than skin color that rules. While the northern area corresponds to residences of the

higher-income and wealthier sectors of Greater Buenos Aires (GBA), much of the recent expansion of this northern sector results from affluent groups requiring gated communities as living environments compatible with their lifestyle.

In Buenos Aires, where our cases take place, spatial distribution and socioeconomic sectors are interrelated. According to Grimson and Segura (2016), two overlapping spatial systems shape social life in the city and surroundings: three concentric zones: the capital (3 million inhabitants) and the first and second rings of Greater Buenos Aires (over 9 million inhabitants)⁹. Grimson and Segura (2016) highlight that, although socio-spatial segregation is usually thought of in terms of class, race/ethnicity plays a central role. Without endorsing the ghetto model, they argue that

the places of poverty in Argentina are usually racialized [...] meaning that from the perspective of higher and middle sectors, it is where 'blacks' live. This attaches a racial or ethnic stigma to the inhabitants of these heterogeneous spaces in different social contexts, such as public transportation, educational and health institutions, and workplaces, among others (Grimson and Segura 2021, 26-27).

Racism, at the same time, coexists and merges with other systems of social classification, such as class and gender, and thus operates in the "ambiguity of appearances and the intersection of inequalities" (Caggiano 2021, 259). Consequently, the question of race also emerges in three cases analyzed here (among seamstresses, cartoneros, and domestic workers). For example, María, although white, lacks the commodified beauty practices (such as skin care, clothing, and body maintenance) that wealthy women use to signal status (Caggiano 2021).

Urban encounters reproduce hierarchies through proximity rather than distance. The train that María takes, the park where Lucía skates, or the chatrooms where WIGAr members collaborate are all spaces that reveal the city's moral architecture. In Buenos Aires, whiteness is not merely a racial category but a mode of occupying space—defined by appearance, behavior, and access to infrastructure. As Boy and Perelman (2008) note, public space remains the arena where differences meet, confront, and coexist uneasily.

Spatiality is not neutral but constitutive of inequality. As Massey (1994, 19) contends, "all places are shaped by relationships that meet and intertwine at a particular point," historically situated and interconnected through networks of practices and memories (Gordillo 2014).

The urban form of Buenos Aires—its layout, rhythms, and segregations—crystallizes social relations. Following Reygadas (2019) and Latour (2005), the city can be seen

⁹ These circles also have an economic dimension: wealth concentrates in the city, decreasing as one moves outwards. Additionally, the capital/province border often reinforces a deep-seated capital/interior divide, evoking Europe/Latin America and even civilization/barbarism distinctions. The second circle divides the city itself: the poorer and "blacker" South, and the wealthier, whiter North (Perelman 2010).

as a heterogeneous assemblage of human and non-human actors whose interactions produce mobility and immobility, visibility and invisibility.

Intersectionality reveals multiple hierarchies, while spatial analysis shows how they become materialized and preserved. Objects such as buildings, streets, and technologies mediate power relations, shaping perceptions of decency, modernity, and belonging. Thus, Buenos Aires embodies not only inequality but moral judgments about worth and place.

Das (2007) invites us to perceive violence not as an exceptional rupture but as an element embedded in everyday life. Intersectional inequalities thus become embodied and naturalized. In Buenos Aires, this violence operates not only through exclusion or aggression but through subtle moral and emotional negotiations that make coexistence possible—the glance that averts contact, the silence that signals deference, or the humor that diffuses tension.

Intersectional inequalities in Buenos Aires manifest not only through economic deprivation or spatial segregation but through gestures, silences, glances, and customs, that structure coexistence. Violence infiltrates daily interactions that regulate proximity: who speaks, who listens, who waits, and who proceeds first. The moral efforts of Rosario, María, Sebastián, Laura, Lucía, and the WIGAr members are not merely adaptive but foundational to the city's order. Their acts of endurance and care uphold a system that converts inequality into coexistence. Ordinary life thus becomes the terrain where hierarchies are reproduced and rationalized through moral and emotional labor. Inequality in Buenos Aires is continuously reconstructed through daily practices that imbue differences with meaning. The city teaches its inhabitants to move, speak, and feel according to moral and aesthetic rules learned through repetition and tested across encounters. Inequality persists precisely because it becomes routine: normalized through politeness, restraint, and endurance.

The moral work performed by María's restraint, Rosario's politeness, Sebastián and Laura's discipline, or Lucía's insistence on joy allows life to continue within domination, transforming subordination into decency and exclusion into self-control. Buenos Aires depends on this invisible labor to sustain coexistence without rupture. Through intersectionality, we see these gestures as part of a broader urban process. The city's infrastructures, transport networks, public spaces, digital platforms, create encounters that reproduce difference. When María travels north, her two-hour commute traverses moral territory, enacting the racialized geography described by Grimson and Segura (2016): a gradual whitening of space toward the center. Rosario's night work, or Sebastián and Laura's discipline, likewise respond to the city's demands for respectability. For feminist skaters and digital workers, exclusion operates symbolically: who may appear in public or be heard online. Their affective networks (WIGAr's emphasis on emotional support or the skaters' collective laughter) revalue care and pleasure, yet remain entangled in the same hierarchies they contest.

Everyday life is where the city's moral order is made and remade. Intersectional inequality is not a background condition but a continuous performance sustained

by emotional calibration; what we might call *ordinary intersectional violence*: the normalization of hierarchy through moralized interactions. Yet the very acts that sustain coexistence (care, humor, mutual support) also hold potential for critique.

Ethnographic cases reveal how people navigate between accommodation and resistance. In Rosario's greetings, María's silences, or Lucía's joyous defiance, moments arise when hierarchy becomes perceptible and unsettled. Intersectionality thus operates not merely as theory but as a lived epistemology: urban inequalities are structural and relational, manifesting in spatial, emotional, and moral dimensions. Buenos Aires, marked by proximity and distance, segregation and coexistence, exemplifies how the city translates inequality into moral behavior.

According to Latour (2005), Buenos Aires is an assemblage of unequal agencies. Buses, parks, and smartphones collaborate with human actors to sustain social order. Each carries signs of power: the locked gate, the surveillance camera, the digital profile. As Reygadas (2019) observes, inequality endures because it holds meaning—residents transform subordination into virtue and hierarchy into dignity. Ethnographic evidence shows inequality persists not despite moral effort, but through it.

Considering intersectionality in everyday urban life requires rethinking violence beyond overt harm, recognizing how cohesion itself privileges certain lives while appearing natural. Das's notion of the ordinary illuminates this process: the small gestures that render hierarchy tolerable, but also contain possibilities for alternative politics grounded in attentiveness and care. Buenos Aires emerges as a city of intersections—of infrastructures, emotions, and hierarchies in motion. Its inequalities are dynamic, sustained by daily interactions that make life possible while reproducing asymmetry. Intersectionality here signifies resilience and moral economy: a way of living diversity that bears both the weight of history and the endurance of hope.

4. CONCLUSION

Considering intersectionality within the urban context reveals that inequality manifests itself not only as social or economic disparity but as a set of spatial, moral, and affective phenomena. Buenos Aires shows how hierarchies of class, gender, race, and citizenship are concretized and perpetuated through urban life.

The cases discussed (recyclers, domestic workers, Bolivian seamstresses, feminist skaters, and women and non-binary game developers) demonstrate that inequality is not merely reflected in spatial arrangements but actively produced by them. Transportation routes, residential patterns, digital networks, and moral norms intersect to determine who circulates, who remains discreet, and who gains recognition. The city thus functions as a moral apparatus translating structural categories into everyday expectations.

Across these experiences, inequality appears both structural and relational. Urban proximity continually tests and reinforces hierarchies: recyclers remain unseen, do-

mestic workers balance intimacy and distance, migrants regulate bodies and spaces for dignity, skaters transform ridicule into joy, and digital workers confront gendered exclusion through solidarity. Each illustrates intersectionality as an embodied and emotional condition of life.

In Buenos Aires, intersectional inequality operates through moral evaluation sustained by daily acts of endurance and self-regulation. These gestures (though seemingly trivial) constitute the mechanisms through which hierarchy is reproduced. Yet they also contain moments of reconfiguration (acts of care, laughter, and pride) that expose the fragility of the social order.

The city is not a mere backdrop but an active participant in producing inequality. Buenos Aires distributes dignity unevenly yet demands moral consistency from its inhabitants, cultivating closeness while maintaining distance. Its intersectional violence is rhythmic, embedded in repetition.

Through moral and emotional work, actors transform structural inequalities into lived experiences. Their gestures (Rosario's route, María's caregiving, Sebastián and Laura's discipline, Lucía's persistence, and WIGAr's mutual support) make the intersectional logic of the city visible and open paths for reconfiguration.

Interlocutors draw on past stigmas, such as being called "negros", to claim legitimacy or exclude others. Gender, class, phenotype, and origin operate as social markers with shifting meanings across contexts. Analyzing diverse groups reveals that inequalities are situational and historical, shaped by the materiality of urban space and the temporal layering of difference.

Gender, while central, is not the sole axis shaping inequality. Intersectionality demands examining how social hierarchies are perceived, heard, and felt. Buenos Aires demonstrates that intersectionality functions as both an analytical tool and a lived reality structuring the city's moral and affective order.

The intersecting city embodies both oppression and generativity. It reproduces hierarchy through intimacy yet also reveals possibilities for alternative equality within routine life. Anthropology, by tracing these mundane negotiations, exposes not only the endurance of inequality but also the fragile openings through which transformation becomes imaginable.

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