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Creating Agoras in Buenos Aires: Time, Ritual, and Sociability Among a Spanish Ethnic Group

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Abstract: The aim of this article is to provide an ethnographic investigation on how community consciousness is forged through daily rituals of encounter and sociability among the Calós of Buenos Aires. The research method used was ethnography based on participant observation. The daily encounters and the intensive frequency of repetition are posed as ritual actions that create agoras in public and semi-public spaces of the neighbourhood. The logic of socialisation expresses the very life of the Calós and their capacity to transform spaces into places. Social rituals and the use of time and tempo are tentatively addressed, as well as the relevance of gift exchange and reciprocity.

Keywords: Gitanos; ritual; memory; life narratives; time; spaces; Argentina

1. Introduction

Since the 1950s, the dynamics of migration and the social, economic, and political integration into Mexico and Argentina of a Spanish ethnic group, the Gitanos[1] (Lagunas 2023a)—self-styled "Calós americanos"—have forged a diasporic consciousness and a transnational mode of existence. The racialisation of migration (see Erel et al. 2016) means that the desirability of a migrant group or individual is directly related to the place these migrants occupy in a web of power relations, which necessarily includes colonial and late imperial hierarchies. Processes of the ethno-racial recognition of the Roma people in Latin America and the Caribbean reflect forms of ethnic recognition that differ from European and US models (Fotta and Sabino-Salazar 2023).

The nickname "Galician" is widely applied to Spaniards in Argentina. Historically, the Galician migrant was negatively evaluated through stereotyping, since to an Argentinian, a Catalan or a Madrileño was not the same as a Galician. The Spanish migrants who arrived in Argentina from the mid-19th century onwards had low qualifications and a high degree of illiteracy. Their intention was to "make the Americas". In Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Venezuela, Paraguay, Bolivia, Uruguay, and the United States, they would settle in urban areas. The migrants brought with them this difference, which is projected in the eyes of the Buenos Aires Creoles, who perceived Galicians disdainfully, as ignorant rustics, because they were low-skilled workers. However, Spanish migrants were perceived as tenacious and hard-working in Argentine society. For this reason, one of the visions that has long endured in the collective imagination has been that of the Galician who owns a bar, a negative association for the Argentinean upper class.

The history of the American Calós is part of this history of Spanish migration to America, with points in common among different histories of mobilities, though some are fulfilled with more personal opportunities than others. Unlike the stereotype of the Galician and the bar, the social status of the Calós was associated with street-vending activities, achieving middle-class status as traders in textiles, gold and jewellery, and, more recently, as dealers in antiques and personal goods. Historically, Avenida de Mayo in Buenos Aires had been a symbol of Spanishness due to the presence of bars, restaurants, hotels, and the

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Avenida Theatre, inaugurated in 1908. Moreover, paradoxically, the bar united Spanish migrant families.

Our contribution in this article is to investigate how ethnography about the Calós has developed in Buenos Aires since 2018 to 2024 (see Lagunas 2023b), providing original empirical material on rituals of encounter and sociability in urban spaces. The process to enter the field began when one of the authors completed a first stay of one month in 2018, showing up in Buenos Aires looking for several people that the Gitanos in Mexico City had recommended him to contact. While attending one of the celebrations at the Philadelphia Evangelical Church, a Pentecostal denomination led by the Gitanos themselves, he met Americo, one of the Calós whom he had previously befriended in Mexico City, and who was temporarily residing in the city. Americo began introducing him to several Calós men at their subsequent reunion in the Plaza del Congreso as "My cousin, who had been with the Peret family in Barcelona, living with Catalan Gitanos". Thanks to this protection and sponsorship, he quickly began to live and converse intensively, through daily encounters in the streets, cafes, and bars with several guys who ended up becoming his best friends. Using the method of prolonged and multisite participant observation, both authors later immersed themselves in the rhythms of the social life of the Gitano community. Conversations, and to a lesser extent semi-structured interviews, were the ethnographic techniques employed. Perhaps one stands out above the rest, immersion research (Piasere 1999, p. 77). This ethnographic technique implies a total ethnographic experience, which includes the rejection of the direct question-answer method, discarding of technology (camera, tape recorder), and a deep and intense cognitive-emotional relationship with the interlocutors (Piasere 2002, p. 34). Likewise, the ethnography was developed both through offline and online participant observation by monitoring social media networks. The interlocutors included the authors' activities with their Facebook and WhatsApp accounts and their engagement with the particular ways they connected with each other. The way to control this process of participant observation was a researcher attitude based on natural social interaction; we did not want to be treated as researchers but as a human beings, to make the interlocutors feel comfortable with our presence.

On a daily basis, members of the Caló community form clusters and meet at different times in the street, the Plaza del Congreso, the cafés and coffee shops of the Montserrat[2] neighbourhood, at kiosks, bars and restaurants, shopping centres, and casinos. In these encounters, people talk about everything and nothing. Each conversation is made up of various types of conversations. There are practical conversations in which business is largely conducted, problems are solved, and strategic information is exchanged. Other conversations have a more emotional character, as the Calós tell each other how they feel and want you to listen and understand them. Conversations have a social character because the Calós connect with each other through their social identities. Coffee is almost always drunk during these conversations.

The focus of our analysis, the social practices of co-presence and proximity in the public square, in the street, and the neighbourhood shops, considers the urban space as an open space of social life in which sociocultural structures are not only reproduced but also transformed. On the one hand, routines and repetition in the daily activities associated with social life are best understood as a dimension of practices associated with a habitus (Bourdieu 1991). For the Calós, the spatial frameworks where they meet on a daily basis signify the importance of being and acting together; the way culture is imprinted on the body, through gestures, postures, and ways of speaking, as an idiomatic code and not an objective cultural trait is considered a habitus (Williams 1996, 2011; cf. Grill 2012).

The ethnographic reading of these everyday rituals of encounter, thought of as ideas and systems of social interaction (Hutchins 1995), is based on a folk model that is repetitive and based on personal, not abstract or contractual, attachments. Interpersonal relationships are direct, mandated through personal oral communication, and based on communal ideal models, so these social practices, values, and subject orientations are culturally channelled. Everyday encounters constitute a model of sociability that depends on socio-cultural and

historical factors. This model was developed by a small community in the Caló implantation in Argentina in the late 1950s. It thus expresses the historical durability of a model of oral communication, and therefore, the importance of ritual communication (see Leach 1975). It is also evidence of the continuity of informal spaces and contexts such as the square, the street, the bar, or the café, which have become the agoras (Lara 2016) of social life. In this sense, it is worth mentioning the important sociological contributions on the public space in relation to the regular, voluntary, informal, and mirthful gatherings of individuals beyond the home and work (Oldenburg 1989). The street and the square, the bars and cafes, are the practised spaces of urban life, of meeting as a stage for social life (Lofland 1998). The predominance of emerging, spontaneous sociability in these public and semi-public spaces constitutes a cultural model. This model requires a lot of work to nurture social connections and achieve a prosocial outcome without destroying the former. This conviviality is associated with the 'proper life' as a Calós, and is an affirmation of Caló society, of camaraderie, the pleasure of being together, and joy.

The community culturally values horizontality, i.e., the tendency to the symbolic negation of social differences and structural inequalities intersected by hierarchical relationships based on gender and age. In this context, personalised, direct and affectively charged relationships become important. This model of sociability attenuates ideological differences and gives value to personal social dignity. The participation of social actors in these contexts, relationships, and frameworks is carried out from relatively homogeneous social positions according to an egalitarian model and the horizontality of relationships. This model of sociability reflects the importance of social mediation in these encounters in which it is important to be accepted by the group. Those who participate in these daily encounters understand that they benefit from the social cooperation of others rather than being alone.

The daily life of the Calós is synonymous with ritual. The concept of the ritual is often used for such things that, in a phenomenological sense, are more 'important', such as a ceremony, a feast or a performance, as Tambiah (1995, pp. 126–27) points out in relation to the difficulty of differentiating ritual and non-ritual phenomena absolutely. Turner (1982), for his part, argues that everyday life is synonymous with ritual and dramaturgy. The elements that define ritual are regularity, rules of conduct, the stereotyped and conventional character of the gestures and words used within its framework, and the regularity of its execution at established times, days, and periods of the year (Rappaport 1971). Corresponding to our interests, we start from an analytical minimum in the sense that ordinary actions among the Calós are frequent, repetitive, redundant, and stylised, but more strongly expressive and communicative. They therefore possess a ritual dimension.

The reason for these rituals has to do with the patterned way of conforming to a model of social life. This model serves to maintain the social structure by showing what each individual should do or feel (Turner 1980). Ritual symbols function as driving machines, repeated ad nauseam, and act to locate subjects in a social form that engages and impels them to action. Ritual action also settles the contradictions, tensions, conflicts, and incoherence of social life.

This ritual character creates the possibility of validating the social order through interaction and the sharing of meanings. The everyday encounters of the Calós in the public and semi-public spaces associated with the space of proximity[3] are evidence of the mechanisms through which unanimity is affirmed, thus affirming coherence (Williams 1984, p. 433), cultural conformity, and the bonds of sociability. At the same time, they are part of a strategy of everyday resistance to the majority society; grouping together and coming together repeatedly opposes multiple impositions and the micro-politics of power (Foucault 1992). These are popular, tiny, everyday procedures (De Certeau 1996) or, in James Scott's terms (Scott 1992), an "infrapolitics", a strategy of resistance to the world of the Payos (non-Gitano people).

These rituals are not only strictly symbolic, formal, structural, or everyday liturgical products but are also part of "the life really lived", the lived identity (Terradas 2004). From a

realist perspective, the context of Caló society is very important. The ethnography explores how encounter rituals are explained by deeper dimensions such as a sense of belonging and identity, morality, love, obligation, and reciprocity. Reciprocity is a crucial dimension of the subjects' social capital. Specific forms of sociability are consciously used and produced as mutual, non-contractual, and long-term obligations, giving rise to a sense of belonging that provides access to valuable material and symbolic resources and brings into play particular forms of dependency, power, authority, and justice as economic factors (Narotzky 2016).

To address this logic, we also rely on the use of conceptual metaphors (Kövecses 2010). Metaphors of everyday life (Lakoff and Johnson 2017) underpin culture's fundamental ideas and assumptions. They help us understand collective representations as a conveyance of meaning. Accordingly, the core values and ideas of the Calós are embedded in everyday metaphorical language, which structures the field of their experience. The Calós use tropes that frequently underline important ideas and values associated with the social order, influencing and guiding thought and behaviour.

Metaphors have great power in the community as they represent a way of understanding an idea and influence thought. One of the metaphors the Calós use is the affective and emotional enjoyment of being together, which relates to human happiness in the realistic sense of the term. They also refer to the lost as those subjects who have renounced the social life of the community. Generosity, gift, and hierarchy are structures of social organisation (see Manrique 2008) that relate the distinction between Gitano and Payo and between man and woman. Buying someone a coffee or dividing it into a glass for two, offering a croissant to another during breakfast at the bar, and attending to someone who asks you for cigarettes are but small everyday gifts.

The ordinary rituals of sociability have a 'why' and a motive for action as well as metaphorical and metonymic connections. They represent a way of creating meaning in the present for the Calós and an awareness of being part of a moral community separate from the Payos. We have specifically observed and participated in the daily encounters of men and women in the company of their relatives in ludic, family, economic, and religious contexts. To this end, we have analysed various moments of the day during which clusters are formed through affinities, friendships, or kinship. This is the lived time and part of what happens every day because the former are everyday experiences. Our ethnography is based on the experiences of one day after another, recurrently, in which the experiences of the Calós are not overly transcendent.

The main aim of our work is to address how community consciousness is forged through everyday encounters that reflect the density of interactions (Pontrandolfo 2013), a key factor for the reproduction of the community's cultural identity.

2. Results

2.1. Why Ritual?

The first key moment of the day starts with breakfast in one of the two cafeterias near Congress Square, where a group of men and women have breakfast before leaving for work. Some of them have breakfast there and then pick up others in another cafeteria to go to work together. On their way back from work in the early afternoon and very close to the neighbourhood's Plaza del Congreso, adults and young married men, who call themselves Los Chicos de Buenos Aires, meet in cafés, ice-cream parlours, or coffee shops. After drinking coffee, they continue their conversation in the street and near a kiosk open 24 h a day until 6 p.m. Another important meeting place is the bar-restaurant Los 36 Billares on Avenida de Mayo, where people usually play cards and dominoes.

Later, around 7 p.m., many families attend the religious service of the Philadelphia Evangelical Church. When leaving the church at around 9 p.m., the Plaza del Congreso is the point of maximum visibility where we can see most of the families of the community, in a number that fluctuates at around 100–150 individuals, gathered in small groups. In this nocturnal gathering, community identity is spatially reproduced. The metaphor used in this social interaction is arrimarse, which means getting together with others in the square

to socialise and talk. Spaces are structured differently according to the culture; being alone in the square or not going near it is an indicator of the individual's lack of integration or a kind of symbolic punishment or ostracism.

Finally, after going out for dinner with the family or another group of peers or acquaintances, meetings take place from 11 p.m. onwards in the neighbourhood area, in front of a 24 h kiosk. Married adult men and young unmarried men arrive to go out for a walk, have coffee, go on a spree, go to the casino or a discotheque, have a drink, or simply stay in the area and chat. These groups of men are organised in playful association.

The Calós project is of rich symbolic value in relation to specific spaces in the neighbourhood. The Plaza del Congreso is one of the symbols of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (CABA) and was built on the centenary of the 1810 Revolution against the Spanish colonial empire. It is imbued with great symbolic weight as an annexe to the legislative buildings and a symbol of the Republic. On the one hand, it is a central space where power imposes itself (Lefebvre 1991). However, it is also a place of recreation and welcome for the population and s place where popular demonstrations of protest against the government occur. Moreover, it is a social attractor for the Calós, who use one of the streets adjacent to the square for their cultural codes, circulation and movement, social exchanges and conversations, and experiencing the space.

The Philadelphia Evangelical Church, known as El Culto, does not shirk its character as an institution of social control but facilitates the development and maintenance of healthy social ties. Another meeting place for the male domino- and card-playing segment of the Calós is bar Los 36 Billares on Avenida de Mayo, the nerve centre of Spanish immigration to Argentina for several decades. Los 36 Billares is a legally protected establishment and was declared part of the cultural heritage of Buenos Aires in the categories "historic site" and "intangible expressions and manifestations" to prevent its closure in 2013.

In the case of Mexico City, ethnography (Lagunas 2023a) showed that the Calós went every night to the McDonald's near their residential nucleus to dine and gather. The paradox is that the Calós used the multinational franchise, one of the icons of the depersonalisation and standardisation of global cities, as an agora. The Calós' "made city", which involves the use of not only McDonald's but historic cafés such as Gaby's café in Mexico City, as well as Los 36 Billares in Buenos Aires, acts as an activator and curator of these spaces of social relations that identify a neighbourhood (Lefebvre 1991; Lagunas 2023a). By moving in unison through the streets, squares, and catering businesses, on the one hand, they contribute to the citizen appropriation of public space and the preservation of small neighbourhood premises as spaces for sociability and the social fabric of the neighbourhood. However, they also make differential use of the hotel and catering businesses. In Buenos Aires, McDonald's and well-known pizzerias such as La Continental and La Americana, the Cervantes restaurant, the Avellaneda Mall, and the Abastos Mall are very popular for family and group dinners.

Food and drink function as social glue, as symbols of sociability. Eating and drinking in these circumstances (for example, having snacks and dinners with other people) is presented as obligatory and ritualistic in nature. Carsten (2000) points out that living and eating together constructs personal forms of relationships not exclusively founded on kinship. Eating and drinking refer to banqueting and commensality; this links, circulates, and brings people together in addition to bringing them closer. All gatherings for the purpose of eating and drinking are associated with a protocol which is recurrent and obligatory. Isolation or disconnection from these activities is associated with poverty, mental health, or even bad luck. The code of commensality implies a lot and often takes the form of small gifts. Eulogio (63 years old) had the habit of sharing with us his second or third cup of milky coffee every morning in the cafeteria (in equal parts, in two glasses), just as he reserved one of three croissants for us from his breakfast when we arrived (the other was for himself and the other for his son). In the cafeteria in the afternoon, Eulogio would also share a mineral water or a soft drink, and would ask for two glasses so he could offer

us half of the drink. This ethic of equality was evident even in minimalist gestures, such as splitting a piece of chewing gum in half and sharing it with us as a symbol of friendship.

The coffee that is drunk in these encounters is a very complex and meaningful substance. Coffee is metaphorised as a symbolic consumable that evokes aspects of the sociability and identity configuration of the Gitanos. The sensory qualities of coffee are also recognised. In conversations in cafés, we often heard Antonio (65 years old) ask the waiter, "Serve me a hot Gitano coffee". On many occasions, the coffee was returned to the waiter to be warmed up or because it was not strong enough and tasted more like milk. We also observed that the coffees had a significant amount of sugar added to them. Coffee is a kind of trope in this case that marks, on the one hand, the "small difference" between Gitanos and Payos by producing alterity into the world in which they live (Bordigoni 2007). In this case, coffee is a marker of social boundaries concerning non-Gitanos, even though there are no great objective differences with respect to the form and content of the coffee served to the Payo customers in these establishments.

Through coffee, one can see how the Calós add meaning to something that already had meaning. This cultural process that Piasere (2011) defines as degaggizare and Gomes (1998) as gitanización consists of creating new meanings to those already existing in the materials, objects, goods, or spaces within the Payo symbolic universe. In linguistic terms, the culture of the Calós is a connotative culture; it adds associated or different meanings to the expressive meaning of something depending on the context, in addition to the primary meaning. The fact of adding a lot of sugar; asking for the coffee cup to be well filled and the coffee very hot (to the point of returning it if it is not at the right temperature); sharing a coffee—with or without milk—with a diner in two glasses; the invitation to coffee as an act that symbolises reciprocity and belonging to the group; its function as a cultural artefact for socialisation; and its connection with attendance at wakes where black coffee is drunk or in hospitals where the relatives of the sick person are invited to coffee, all show how coffee is connotatively used in the Caló culture.

For the Calós, the importance of drinking coffee together represents a minimal form of gift that symbolises togetherness and friendship and has a ritual dimension. Sharing food and drink is a form of non-commercial exchange and defines belonging to the group; it even marks the fact that even an outsider, such as an anthropologist, is under the protection of the host. The gift is a vehicle for making people think of other things as metaphors and is posited as a social fact in which retribution plays a key role (Mauss and Beuchat 1979). Inviting someone to a coffee, breakfast, or whisky expresses a symbolic form of resistance to market relations. Among the Calós, the one who has the most is the one who gives the most. This process of redistribution and reciprocity is a mark of distinction (Bourdieu 1988).

"With the Gadjé one does business, with the Gypsies one can enter into a circuit of gifts", as Piasere (2011, pp. 199–200) pointed out. At the card or domino game every evening or at dinner at McDonald's, someone may take the initiative to invite others. However, being over-polite or not polite at all when one enjoys a high socioeconomic position attracts envy. For older people, young Calós who have become rich are inauthentic because they only appear to have money. They are the so-called "fantasists", those who are criticised for their vanity and the appearance of a socioeconomic position in the eyes of others that generates envy.

Gift exchange is part of the functioning of a moral economy and also a means of symbolic participation that is expected within the network of relatives and the community, excluding the Payos. Therefore, this moral economy expresses the relations of friendship and trust since one does not exchange with the untrusted; it structures a social hierarchy (giver/recipient) and affirms who the members of the community are. The gift can be dangerous (Small 2018). To refuse gifts is to reject being in a position of indebtedness and to the expectation of reciprocating to the giver. Clearly, the Payo is never a donor and cannot initiate an ideological relationship of reciprocity. However, in the exchange of small gifts, there is no reintegration of an initial gift. In practice, this means that the Calós do not behave based on a coherent system of gifting and counter-gifting because this approach

would imply constant reciprocation, immediate or otherwise. If this were the case, it would be as if the giver had to be repaid at every moment. The question would be, can something circumstantial, such as being superior to someone for being a giver, build social structure?

In the culture of reciprocity, it is almost always about knowing how to give, knowing how to receive or accept, and knowing how to return or increase the gift (Terradas 2002, p. 205). The Calós use a metaphor to describe those members of the community who do not participate in social life, have broken off daily contact with their family or relatives, and do not participate in the daily rituals of encounter. They are the "lost ones", those who have withdrawn socially and have distanced themselves from the circuits of reciprocity. The metaphor has several meanings. It is associated with those who have become disconnected from social life in the community and are known to live in another locality of Buenos Aires and do not interact with the Calós. For these subjects, this anti-social behaviour exhibits evidence that the social environment in which they were socialised has failed, and they find no benefit in what they could obtain by pursuing prosocial outcomes. A secondary meaning applies to those who, despite maintaining contact with the community's social life, display immoral behaviour, have lost social esteem and credit, and are rejected by the community due to extreme anti-social behaviour.

"Lost" people have abandoned the intensive frequency of meeting and living in society. The absence of relatives or friends with whom to interact socially is perceived as an anomaly. The risk of leaving the social life of the community is experienced as an asocial or antisocial situation. The expectation that women should be the main carers does not create a thread of economic dependence on their partners because this care work is combined with work outside the home; husbands who do not work are tied to their wives. Support for exploited women is activated through sorority and shared parenting within the immediate family.

Reproduction is best observed at the micro level and is very complex and linked to the issues of power and dominance. Women's status is defined by their position in a system of dominant relations, in which they possess parcels of power with the ability to influence and decide their own life circumstances, emphasising the interpersonal level. The greater their ability to control their life circumstances, the greater their status in a patriarchal system of domination (in the sense of a system of beliefs and social structures that grants privilege and power to men) (Ehrenreich and English 2010). Women's social practices are saturated with expectations that assume subordination and good behaviour, leading to particular difficulties in being heard and believed. One of the women's prerogatives is their competence in speaking out about conflicts within their kin and as defenders and guarantors of morality to a greater degree than men. "We talk among families, on the phone, in the homes and solve problems. Even if it is not so visible to others", says Mari (64 years old), a Calí well-respected in the community for her age, her clean moral record, and for being an excellent seller of goods. Women also have a more legitimate say in the conduct of their families' affairs and as defenders and guarantors of morality than men. If the conflict is between kin, hostility may be permanent, even across generations.

As members of a subordinate segment, women express more conventional and self-controlled behaviour. This is associated with the more significant devaluation of women who transgress the prevailing morality in relation to men. The distribution of forms of control at the spatial level occurs primarily informally through small social groups and the family. Women are subjected to social scrutiny just like men in the residential neighbourhood—but with a difference. Although eyes watch what men and women do in the streets, men enjoy more social permissiveness. At the same time, Calís are subjected to greater social pressure and a stricter socio-moral evaluation of their behaviour. Calís may accumulate more informal controls and "faults" (in folk language), typified as transgressions of norms and "Gitano laws". "We do not have so many freedoms, but we are happy with our sisters, cousins, friends", says Juani (51 years old). However, they also reserve the right to decide whether to prevent any woman with "faults" from approaching the square or the church.

Economic activities are segmented by gender, with watchmaking being a male activity, as well as the purchase of jewellery and antiques, although with some exceptions. In terms of chronology, watchmaking has gained a lot of momentum in the last ten years, from the young men who have taken up watchmaking to the young men who have now learned the skills and use social networks and digital information for their activities. The first generation of watch buyers is now retiring, and their methods, based on a network of contacts, have declined in favour of the immediacy of the new generation's use of technology.

The Calís are dedicated to the sale of items for personal use. Age, in the case of the Calís, is a factor to be taken into account as it conditions the type of the sale. Young Calís may take trains and buses to reach their points of sale in different localities of the conurbation and province, while middle-aged or older Calís may hire the services of a driver with a vehicle or travel shorter distances by bus or on foot. Skills in action are more diversified. Some specialise in selling in hospitals, sanatoriums, or police stations, while others work in kiosks, shoe shops, cafés, or other commercial establishments.

It is a fact that women provide the resources and manage the domestic economy linked to the support of the family, covering the ordinary expenses of reproduction in the home. "We women are the ones who support the family, pay the daily utilities, pay for the food. Men, only those who work, can sometimes sell a watch", says Manuela (47 years old). Conjugality is important. This involves both a domestic or affective relationship and an economic one because the ideal is that men and women cooperate economically. Interdependence in the nuclear family is an ideal model which, in practice, is not realised. In about one-third of the community, the sexual division of labour is accentuated in relation to men who do not work and women who work and who also take care of the house and the family.

The sale of personal items is an activity that is primarily female but also practised by men. However, there is less chance of accumulating a surplus this way than for those who successfully purchase and sell antique watches, silverware, or jewellery. Men who are not financially adept, who do not work, or whose income is more irregular enjoy less status, social reputation, and power. In fact, they are socially ridiculed, all the more so if they exploit their wives by begging for money for their ostentation, carousing, drinking, drugs, casino gambling, or immoderate idleness. It is also plausible that there are men and women with a high social status but no power, and vice versa.

In any case, this kind of interpretation comes close to a kind of patriarchal negotiation in the sense of the existence of a set of rules and scripts regulating gender relations to which both genders accommodate and acquiesce, but which can be contested, redefined and renegotiated (Kandiyoti 1988, p. 286). That is, women recognise the limits of a situation but also develop instrumental interests and strategies for both active and passive resistance (idem 274); on the one hand, this concerns their practical interests (what is ordinary) but also strategies (what is desired) or what ought to be (Molyneux 1986; Young 1997).

These instrumental interests have to do with maintaining life as best as possible as active agents based on the economic activities that women carry out, which ensure the reproduction of the domestic group, i.e., the sphere of necessity. These economic activities, when they involve short trips across the country, taking public transport, and sleeping in hotels in women-only work groups, make men jealous.

However, apart from satisfying these needs, women meet with other women at different times in various public and semi-public spaces in the city and the private sphere of the home. These everyday encounters for talking, relaxing, resting, socialising, or exchanging information are strategic, as they help identify key aspects of one's society. These face-to-face meetings feed the intertwined circuits of communication that rely heavily on the exchange of WhatsApp messages and information received through WhatsApp statuses.

Sorority and mutual support among women are key. Women meet daily and engage in resistance, with convictions and many relationships among them. The sisterhood between them allows them to generate an affective universe, the relationship between the women themselves who resist the patriarchy. Great friendships are created as if they were sisters.

"There are friends or cousins that I treat like sisters and we are very close", says Juani. They also appreciate belonging to a group, a community that is difficult to be part of because it is subject to strong social controls based on morality. This social control—the "what people will say" (in Spanish: "el qué dirán") that Calós men and women complain about—is most evident online in social networks, specifically WhatsApp. Men and women point out that "we are connected through WhatsApp". Through this social network, Calós can get to know and exchange strategic information about any member of the community. WhatsApp statuses are updates that disappear after 24 h and that the Calós profusely use to share videos and photographs of trips, birthdays, dinners, a chat at the café, a walk around the mall with the family, pictures of a new car, and other everyday activities. Social control through WhatsApp reflects how everything one says and does as a Caló is subjected to social judgement, which concerns ideal norms and values. Everyone is online through the WhatsApp contact list, making WhatsApp a virtual "public square" and agora.

Further, this represents a counterpoint to the corporeal experience of work, which sometimes stretches well into the evening and involves the great physical effort of walking and hawking wares in the localities. The bodily outcome for women is the constant complaint of tiredness, sore feet, or back pain due to street vending, working at home, shopping in the supermarket, or dealing with the administrative bureaucracy.

This underlines the importance of women as workers in the sphere of necessity and, at the same time, as political agents, far different from the supposedly negative views concerning the passivity of Gitano women. The former meetings are for women and occur not only as a means of socialisation but also to reinforce sorority and public agency and promote social transformation based on everyday experiences. Obviously, the public sphere can also be transformed by changes in the private sphere. In any case, women's specificity as housewives and mothers, to which the problem of invisibility refers, is combined with their role as external workers and their presence in the public sphere, which generates instabilities in the world of work and identities of ethnicity or class, as well as offering opportunities for social change concerning what each woman thinks and shares.

2.2. Ritual and Lived Time

We need to systematise the perception of time in all its aspects, limited to the here, the now, and the imponderable. On the one hand, the seasonal rhythm and the daily circadian rhythm of people and societies (Terradas 1997; Carbonell 2008) are the most important rhythms. From the pioneering work of Radcliffe-Brown (1964) in the Andamans, the seasonal rhythm of the Inuit by Marcel Mauss (Mauss and Beuchat 1979) to the rhythm analysis of Lefebvre (1992), rhythm, at the phenomenological and conceptual level (Lara 2014), is conceived to emerge from the conceptual opposition between tension and distension.

For Cali women, when work is performed by going out to sell personal items in the morning, prior sociocultural protocols are interpreted in playful terms. The logic of the rationality of joint economic activity begins with the collective breakfast in the cafeterias. This preliminary step serves to get into the rhythm, exchange information, and encourage each other to work. "We encourage each other to go out to sell with optimism", says Mari. This rhythm of work is imprinted with a routine that is in itself a component of the identity and experience of society itself as a paradigmatic expression of the social structure.

The social rhythm is a reflection of the general rhythmicity of society. Doing something together implies a social rhythm that makes acting as a single body possible. It is about the resolution of rhythm on a social level. However, this rhythm is also a rhythm of movement that occurs when the Calós start singing or clapping their hands, which sets the rhythm and occurs whenever the Calós get together at a domino game, during coffee time, or at a kiosk. Over and above bodily movement, expressiveness through improvised solo performance is important. This is something sensitive and physical and dialogues with society through complicity with the sense of rhythm. The integration of the body with society is expressed through the state of mind through gesture, the spontaneous soloist or the performance induced by a group of peers who initiate the invitation to sing or clap. These performances

can be of short duration, with 'dry' stops, and are generated through improvisation. This vitality speaks of the most essential role of integration through a gesture, half ceremonial and half playful. To refuse to sing, dance, or clap one's hands is to refuse sociability. In fact, what most discomforts the Payos who observe Calós in the confectionery, café, or bar is not the noise of clapping or singing but its spontaneous exercise. This sense of rhythm is a discrimination of privilege in which the logic of the group prevails. Payos are said to be static and limited because they do not have the capacity to move at any time and in any space. We have been observers of the pressures and attempts to repress and expel Calós from the cafeterias, bars, and restaurants of Mexico City and Buenos Aires.

The social rhythm is part of a language that occupies a broad, general space in social life and gives fluidity to communication. The sense of the social rhythm of frequentation dialogues with society, and what is important is maximum social participation. This frequency of contact is segmented into informal clusters. This means that different sectors of the community, men and women, on their own or in the company of their families, meet in different public and semi-public spaces in the neighbourhood. There may be dissonance, avoidance, and social distancing between them, but it is part of the very language of social integration. The fact that clusters form spontaneously and change daily in composition does not obviate the fact that clusters metonymically represent the community. They are not sporadic clusters, but—in contrast to Bauman's (2003) ephemeral groupings of "instant obsolescence"—are permanent clusters that are formed due to prior obligations, such as sharing tobacco, lending money, buying drinks, or exchanging information. Every day during coffee time in the bakery, we found almost the same people around the table in the bar. If one day someone could not come, the next day he was asked: "Why didn't you come yesterday?". Ritual responsibility in everyday encounters is a social mandate that is thought of collectively. The experience of the world of the Calós has a rhythmic dimension of time. Moreover, at the same time, it is synchronous with respect to numerous events that occur in unison, with no apparent causal relationship. In folk language, the Calós use another metaphor, "manías", to convey meaning in relation to the frequency with which "pedimientos" and weddings are celebrated in short intervals throughout the year. Everyone gets married at the same time, dies, buys cars, phones, and clothes, and goes on holiday to the beach during the same period. During our ethnography in 2022, one of the authors bought a relatively new iPhone 13 from Spain, and the Calós men were surprised to see us with such a technologically advanced phone. Within days, several of them, as Pedro (23 years old), had bought the same higher-end phone. The desire to emulate is very pronounced among Los Chicos. The collective mimesis in usage and taste includes going to a new restaurant, wearing similar branded clothes, changing cars in unison or buying a second car, going to the gym to do bodybuilding, playing football on the fields, growing a beard, etc. The most recent mimetic behaviour was the acquisition of several pit bull and golden retriever dogs as pets by young males. Particularly among the Los Chicos cluster, we observed the recurrence of honour exchanges and the testing of manhood. The metaphor of Caló culture as a game is relevant here as the exchanges of words and banter between them challenge manhood. In some cases, we observed exchanges of blows between them without actual fighting. This is better understood if we think of some rules in the culture as moralistic. Violence is wrong, but Calós think that you cannot be a man if you are not prepared to fight, nor can you be a real man until you have answered a verbal challenge that questions your sexuality or your manhood. For example, Robert, a young Caló, had to resist his classmates' constant teasing because he had not yet married at the age of 24. Cultural codes enable understanding of when violence is okay or expected, and, in particular, the procedures for getting tough among Los Chicos, but without having to actually fight back.

Sociability is expressed in patterns of everyday practices embedded in a time and rhythm. This time of life is essentially rhythmic because it is a time that is the opposite of linearity. Rhythmic time, as opposed to linear time, expresses the liveliest aspects and is a very vital response. Moreover, the instants of meeting and chatting evoke concrete times.

This repetition of meetings and chats is reflected in one of the expressions most frequently mentioned, precisely at these moments of meeting, in the bar, the street, the café, the square, "I'm bored".

The Calós' taste for the most concrete and precise aspects of life can be seen in their treatment of temporality. It is life and the past that it evokes. Time lived is sometimes captured intuitively by evocative memories that go from lived subjectivity to a scholarly depth of temporality. Assman and Czaplicka (1995) clarify more clearly the distinction between communicative "lived" memory and social and cultural memory. For these authors, communicative memory involves the everyday, personal, first-hand communication of lived past experiences. Social memory has a constitutive role of founding historical events expressed through images or rituals; among other ways, the individual memory of the Calós is used when they communicate experiences of the past and present in everyday encounters.

When the Calós meet, they often recall past events, personal experiences, and memories of the deceased. At these gatherings, elders talk about their memories. Anthropologists such as Llewellyn and Hoebel (1999) with the Cheyennes, and Spencer (1976) with the Inuit started from this perspective by recording the lived memories of their informants and the existence of conflicts. This articulation of memories through conflicts also leaves its mark on the Calós when they recall in their conversations conflicts linked to social, political, or economic issues that affected, their lived reality. This "memorialisation" also serves to strategically legitimise certain positions in favour of the dominant morality and is opposed to the anodyne memory that also exists (Dalla Corte 2001) that refers to more trivial matters, but which also plays a role in preserving the memory of the Calós.

From diverse experiences of the past, memory is obviously idiosyncratic, selective and influenced by experience when used to construct different stories with similar structures but different contents (Papadakis 1993). However, this diversity of individual memories is mutually articulated in social frameworks of memory; memories are pooled and construct a minimal collective and affective memory, without which there is no community. This shared and reconstructed past provides meaning and identity and is projected by the community onto particular places, including streets, squares, bars, buildings, and objects that evoke historical events (Halbwachs 2004).

The past always returns and evokes feelings of time passing, of what was before and what is now. We had coffee every morning with Eulogio in the bakery in the Montserrat neighbourhood. Eulogio spoke nostalgically of his past life and that of others when he travelled around the country in his car, buying jewellery. The drama of something that has been lost also evokes life itself, the rhythm that is disappearing, according to Manuel (56 years old), "in the 1990s, I used to meet a hundred Calós in the billiard halls. The hospitals were full of Calós from all over Argentina who had come to see the sick; we celebrated weddings for three days". This is an evocation of the vitality of the community that has been lost, describing in talks multiple acts now in the past, including people, events, and situations that evoke a vitality lost through time. This vitality evoked is related to sociability through the intersubjective elements of temporality, the full local social life and the authentic life of the Calós that best symbolise local identity.

Nostalgia is for a more enjoyable past. "Gozar" is a metaphor recurrently mentioned in conversation and connected to the daily reunion as a material and symbolic representation of cultural norms and codes that mark both what "should be" and the enjoyment of living together. Juan (49 years old) says, "this is what Caló does. Enjoying, enjoying. It is affective enjoyment. A Caló will call you cousin and want to be with you. With a second cousin, it is the same; you would go out of your way in the same way as with a cousin. Also, with the people you have as friends". Enjoyment is part of the Caló ethos and means the taste, the experience itself, the thrill of eating and drinking, of revelry, enjoying the money earned during the day, the church, a new car, a coffee and an ice cream at the patisserie, when gambling or at the casino, the aesthetic enjoyment of a wedding or an engagement, or dancing and singing flamenco in unison.

3. Discussion

For Williams (1984, pp. 433–34), the encounter may be a general rule of Parisian Rom identity; to be Rom is to meet Rom again. The repetition of encounters, meeting, and realising oneself together, is more relevant than gestures; the fact of meeting builds the value system and creates unanimity among the Rom. This approach is a good starting point but on the condition that it explains the variety of the type of social interactions that take place within the social and family network in each local Caló community. This diversity of interactions can be defined in terms of other parameters such as the density of the relationship within the social structure (frequency of interactions) and the intensity (emotional and affective content) of the relationships (Pontrandolfo 2013, p. 176).

In the case of the Calós in Buenos Aires, and unlike the Gitano communities in Spain, the density of interactions is higher. Breakfast is usually the first collective action of the day and the time when cliques are formed, a group of individuals, men and women, together or separately who have breakfast together in the cafeteria. On the other hand, for example, among the Catalan Calós of Mataró, Barcelona, the reunion begins in the afternoon, in their associative premises where they play cards or dominoes and the women play bingo. In Polígono Sur, Seville, the Andalusian Calós men also play dominoes in their local association in the afternoons. There are countless examples of this coexistence and socialisation. Attendance at the church, also functions as a general meeting place in Spain, as it did in Buenos Aires and before that in Mexico City. But one of the distinctive characteristics of the American Calós is the recurrence of the collective gatherings from 9:00 p.m. onwards in the Plaza del Congreso and in the Plaza Washington in Mexico City, which reproduces dense internal and external social relations within and outside the family. In Spain this nocturnal, collective reunion of the family and the families in a concrete point such as the square, the street, or the restaurant is not usual. Moreover, in Buenos Aires, especially young men, married and single alike, usually stay together until late at night outside the home in another nocturnal reunion around 11:00 p.m., after having dinner with the family.

The intensity and the affective and emotional content, being unquantifiable (Pontrandolfo 2013), have particular characteristics in this case. The emotions from the practice and the language used in the lived situations are modulated and, in this sense, the emotional tone of the events and the symbols should be taken into consideration on the basis of the associations they evoke in individuals and human groups (Leavitt 1996, p. 518). In this sense, the Calós attach great importance to the life cycle. Specifically, if people grow up together, even among non-relatives, the fact of living together throughout childhood, adolescence, and youth makes them quasi-relatives. In the case of American communities, the fact of being small in size, the physical proximity at the residential level to the neighbourhood, and the distinct cultural environment has facilitated reciprocity. Being and doing things together has promoted greater direct contact, and therefore, relationships of greater density and intensity. Likewise, the tensions of this more direct and frequent contact are modulated and restrained by adults and are also influenced by the American Gitanos' own ethos, cosmopolitanism and openness, cultural refinement, "good" education, as well as skill in managing intercultural relationships, as noted by the Calós themselves. These symbolic forms have modulated emotions and, on the other hand, have structured and promoted a high power of cohesion and collective social action in a network of families of a small demographic size.

In Spain, on the other hand, the larger demographic size, the cohabitational culture, the historical marital alliance with their Payo neighbours, and the aspects linked to the type of work organisation, more integrated and normalised in the dominant economic system, have configured another type of social construction.

Being together and doing things together, social life, community connections, and intensive frequentations with other Calós represent a social and cultural habitus. In a symbolic way, through actions, gestures, and words, the idea of "society" emerges as a mechanism through which the pieces cannot be distorted, and the new and the strange

can be seen as similar to the old. These everyday encounters are a localised way of doing the same things, where the community participates in an intimate and connected way. This generates a habitus, a way of behaving and relating to each other in a repetitive way through social action that requires the collaboration of the subjects. In doing so, the Calós exist as a community and celebrate being together, i.e., "we are the ones who do this".

The ritual dimension of these encounters occurs when there is social agreement. The society, the family, and the moral conscience of collective life itself integrate social values and norms of behaviour and thus express the sense of belonging as Calós, of feeling included. Through the social practices of sociability in the agoras, offline and online, "we are Calós" is explicitly affirmed. The sense of belonging, of forming a collective, is expressed in being and doing things together on a daily basis. To be able to come together, to meet fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers who have taught their traditions and continue to value them, nephews and nieces, grandchildren, cousins, friends and acquaintances, is the most important thing in ordinary life.

We have tried to underline the ability of the Calós to transform spaces into places that express a reciprocity between identity and space, which are concomitantly constructed. The identity of certain people with respect to specific spaces and vice versa implies that symbolic processes are mediated by the cultural context. In this way, space is considered an inherent process involving how the configuration and bodily uses of spaces and their repercussions intersect dialectically with the construction of the identity of reference, the feeling of "being", the ontological identity, which emerges in the social interaction and co-presence in space, being a social, existential process. Particularly, the social practices in relation to urban space indicate the management of the spatiality of the group, that is, the spatial logic or model of structuring space based on customs and memory. This space is transformed into a space practised at the micro-local level that materialises within the neighbourhood and beyond through informal devices that link people through words and trust. In this sphere, an extensive relationship network is established, mainly involving informal information chains that construct the social dimension of the space of proximity. This also brings us closer to the urban space experienced in all its dimensions as a material and social fact that is both experienced subjectively and intersubjectively. The Calós transform spaces into places, and identity is also constructed by practices of places.

The daily rituals of re-encounters and sociability entail a constant social rejuvenation. At certain times and in specific spaces, the community is set in motion and interacts in a ritualistic way, as a Durkheimian mechanism of social cohesion, as a model of social life, and as a staging of the social structure. It functions as a corrective and ensures that the system returns to equilibrium. This shows the importance of social ties and bonds, as well as the importance of living in society, the recognition of the importance of the social structure, and the existential and experiential recognition of the need to rely on society (cf. Bordigoni 2007, p. 91; Piasere 1991, p. 140) and contact for the reproduction of ethnicity. It is the fact of being and living together.

And time is a key element. The time of the Calós is the opposite of linearity. It always returns; the day ends and begins. This is the relevance of rhythmicity. Seasonal time also returns in the calendrical rituals of the year, such as on Christmas Eve, All Saint's Eve, or the beginning of the summer holidays, because they always meet again on a daily basis or throughout the annual calendar. Temporality has to do with the Calós' perception of time. This time is not to be found in a treatise or a historical philosophy but is captured in the ethnography of everyday life.

4. Materials and Methods

The article is based on the personal experiences of the authors and on the analysis of secondary data.

Academic research methods have included in-person interviews and participant observation. The data were recorded with field notes that have been kept by the authors. Part of the information was obtained by audiovisual means, specifically by cell phone,

following the local custom of recording and sharing on social networks various types of events and everyday social situations.

Researchers have developed sensitive methods suitable to each of the research locations such in the public space, the street, the church, private homes, and celebrations such as marriage rituals or funerals. Consent has been obtained verbally and on an ongoing basis during the various research interrelations. Throughout, the authors have paid particular attention to the ethical implications of carrying out research with the participants. Additionally, the authors have engaged in ongoing and dynamic discussions with interlocutors about the nature of the project and their participation. The authors have actively sought the advice and opinion of elderly men and women, as they are highly respected people in the community.

Among the secondary sources we have reviewed are the scarce bibliography on the Roma in America, journalistic notes, and documentaries.

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Notes

1 In Mexico, there is evidence of the presence of Romani people: Rom kalderash in Mexico City, Puebla, Guadalajara, Michoacán, Querétaro, Nuevo León, Oaxaca, and Veracruz; Ludar in the centre of the country (San Luís Potosí, Guadalajara); and Gitanos in Mexico City. In Argentina, there are Gitanos (Spanish Calós, Argentine Calós, Portuguese Ciganos), Ludar (Ludar, Servian), and Rom (Kalderash, Lovara, Jorajai, Machuaia).

2 The Montserrat neighbourhood is the oldest in the city and is located in the historic centre. Its socioeconomic profile is middle class, although heterogeneous, and the neighbourhood is home to artists, former neighbours, and small businesses. It is a neighbourhood with an outstanding cultural, gastronomic, and architectural heritage. Currently, the neighbourhood is one of the busiest places in Buenos Aires as it is the epicentre of the social and political life of the city. There are located the Casa Rosada—headquarters of the Government—, the Plaza del Congreso—headquarters of the legislative power—, and the Av. de Mayo, a place of symbolic identification for the Spanish community, where the Bar 36 Billares is located, one of the emblematic places for the Calós.

3 We refer to the public and semi-public spaces close to the home of our key interlocutors, that is, in the neighbourhood. But we have also lived together in other social spaces, including private spaces and places not necessarily in the neighbourhood, such as places where weddings occur, hospitals, flamenco clubs, or funeral spaces.

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