

**GRATITUDE
AS A SOCIAL
PRAXIS**

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César Ceriani Cernadas (ed.)

CONTENTS

Introduction **4**

References **12**

César Ceriani Cernadas

When giving is receiving gratitude: experiences in times of food crisis **14**

References **36**

Alejandra Naranjo González

Gratitude in movement: temporary families and babies in transit
as a humanitarian movement **38**

References **64**

Sebastián Fuentes

Gratitude, gifts and emotions in the struggle for the land
of a rural social movement **66**

References **94**

Mariela Pena



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

Sebastián Fuentes

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

Griselda, a member of a temporary family

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Psychologist, FGP)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Griselda, temporary family)

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

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

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

(Field note, April 2017)

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

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

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

(Psychiatrist, Family Court).

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

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

(Family Court Judge)

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

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

(Social Worker, FGP)

MAKING SOCIETY: TEMPORARY FAMILIES AS HUMANITARIAN MOVEMENT

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

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

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

(Social Worker, FGP)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Griselda, temporary family)

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Social Worker, FGP).

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Graciela, temporary family)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CONCLUSIONS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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