

Migrations in the Local Agenda of the Municipality of General Pueyrredón, Buenos Aires, Argentina

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How to cite this paper: Nicolao, J. (2018). Migrations in the Local Agenda of the Municipality of General Pueyrredón, Buenos Aires, Argentina. *Open Journal of Political Science*, 8, 163-192.
<https://doi.org/10.4236/ojps.2018.82013>

Received: March 1, 2018

Accepted: April 13, 2018

Published: April 16, 2018

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Abstract

This article intends to reflect upon the place given to migration policy in the public agenda of General Pueyrredón municipality, in Buenos Aires Province, Argentina, during the period of 2010-2017. Among the process of policies, it focuses on the initial stage related to the inclusion of the migration issue in the local agenda; with the purpose of identifying the mechanisms that set up its inclusion, the reactive or proactive mode in which it is introduced, the social actors that promote the inclusion, among others. It shows that the migration matter does not have a pre-established place in the agenda of General Pueyrredón municipality, however, there are occasional, reactive and superficial entries, which are not enough to question the access of migrants to social rights.

Keywords

Regional Migration, Local Agendas, Migratory Policies, General Pueyrredón Municipality, Social Rights

1. Introduction

Most recent reports of MERCOSUR (Southern Common Market) Institute of Human Rights Public Policy recognize that, the implementation of actions aimed at ensuring migrants rights force to direct the attention *to cities and municipalities*, increasingly.

Considering that migrants from within the block have to go through many challenges, in order to ensure the effective guarantee of their rights, and in the context of the progress made from a formal point of view-expressed by national legislations and regional agreements, a required change would be a shift in the

focus of National State to Municipalities. Since, even though local authorities do not tend to participate in the migration policy making, they assume specific and irreplaceable responsibilities in their implementation (IPPDH, 2017).

This work takes as antecedent a wider investigation line that attends to the analysis of real and effective social rights (in the fields of education, health, work, and social services) of regional migrants in Argentina; and, specifically, in the inland areas of Buenos Aires Province. The analysis starts by confirming the gap between, on the one hand, the formal recognition of vested rights in the legal framework that, takes as central axiom the Immigration Law of Argentina (No. 25871), and an additional set of international and regional tools; and, on the other hand, the real access to these guarantees on the part of these groups.

There are diverse research and investigations documenting situations of violation of migrants rights in specific areas (access to documentation or residence, health, education and social programs, among others), some, on the territory under study, are detailed further in this article; as well as the most influential factors and problems that affect each experience (CEIPIL 2011, 2013a, 2013b; Nicolao, 2013; IPPDH, 2014; Santamarina, 2016).

As a consequence of these findings, the need of attending local contexts, in the addressing of politics to general migration groups is reinforced; and particularly, in the MERCOSUR, as fundamental and primary requests in response of conditions of social inclusion and rights access of migrants.

This article intends to reflect upon the place given to migration policy in the public agenda of General Pueyrredón municipality, in Buenos Aires Province, Argentina, during the period of 2010-2017. Among the process of policies, it focuses on the initial stage related to the inclusion of the migration issue in the local agenda; with the purpose of (if it is possible) identifying the mechanisms that set up its inclusion, the reactive or proactive mode in which it is introduced, the social actors that promote the inclusion, the understanding of other topics, problems and opportunities associated to migration, among others.

This work is based on the qualitative analysis from built or collected data obtained from sources such as: interviews to key informants¹, reports from technical agencies, policy documents¹, regional and local press³, discourse devices of public officials from the municipal administration and representatives from migrant communities, among others⁴.

This article shows that, in spite of the quantitative weight of migration, the receptor tradition of the district, the impact of these groups in the world of work and the local productive economic structure, or situations of lack of protection and violation of rights experienced by regional migrants in the local sphere; the migration matter does not have a pre-established place in the agenda of General

¹For example, authorities in charge of municipal departments of protection and promotion rights.

²Such as reports made by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses, the MERCOSUR's Institute of Public Policies of Human Rights, or the Social Legislative Observatory of the Chamber of Deputies of the Buenos Aires Province.

³Especially, La Capital, the local newspaper with largest circulation.

⁴Immigration legislation, municipal ordinances, among others.

Pueyrredón municipality. However, there are occasional, reactive and superficial entries, which are not enough to question the access of migrants to social rights. This is the main contribution of the paper.

By virtue of this situation, the weak formal powers that the migration law gives to municipalities, regarding the insertion of these migratory groups in the host society, and the weak capacity of the regional migrant community to transfer their demands, concerns and interests related to this field, to the local State are considered as potentially influential factors.

2. Municipalities and Migratory Policies: Theoretical-Conceptual Approaches

The place of migrations in the agendas of local public administrations is, without doubt, one of the unpaved ways in the field of migratory studies; particularly in Argentina, of special interest within the field of MERCOSUR.

In a recent revision about the historical development in the field of migratory studies in the country, and the academic production around the so called “migratory policies”, the most significant contributions during the past thirty years are highlighted. Domenech and Pereira (2017: 100) state that “(...) *an increasing interest in the local scale ... questions the national framework of most studies that deal with the relationship between State and [international] migrations*”. Likewise, they maintain that “(...) *the revision of the uses of the scale of analysis in studies regarding ‘migratory policies’ would also allowed to modify and, at the same time, question implicit assumptions in the way of understanding its construction (...)*”.

However, in spite of its increasingly obvious importance and the country’s broad historic tradition in terms of reception of international migration flows, the fact is that investigations regarding migratory policies at the municipal level are scarce.

Thereon, it is worth noticing that while it is true that international migration flow have a global dimension, it is, actually, defined within the local dimension. On the one hand, the migration project of an individual or a family; since the departure starts in a specific town to arrive to another one, which constitutes also in a particular spot of the map. Besides, it is at the local sphere where the migration phenomenon occurs. In fact, nowadays, it is beyond any doubt that, the place where migration starts as well as the place that receives international migration experiences a significant transformation in diverse fields beyond the specific socio economic aspect (Camós Victoria, 2017), adopting different shapes, intensities and nature.

In connection to these transformation, Thayer and Duran (2015) detail the impact of the inclusion of international migration in local segments of the labor market (Stefoni, 2009 and 2011); as well as the coexistence in neighborhoods, their inclusion in schools, hospitals, first aid units and municipal public services in general. They also mention territorial transformations that occur in some communities due to the economic settlement of migrants (Stefoni, 2008), or

cultural expressions that modify habits and customs of the community (Garcés, 2014), among other.

As a consequence, modifications in the shape of the local administration of some municipalities are observed. These changes occurred in a reactive or a proactive way, in an attempt to attend the reception of immigrants in different social spheres. Even though these administrations do not have formal powers to face the situation and, in many cases, nor the resources needed (Camós Victoria, 2017).

A paradigmatic example within the MERCOSUR is the Municipal Law No. 16478/2016 passed on July 7th 2015, which establishes the municipal policy for migrant population in the city of São Paulo (Brazil). While it is true that the constitution of that country does not give powers to state or municipal governments regarding migratory legislation; it has been determined as a novel legislation whose enforcement authority is the Municipal Secretary of Human Rights and Citizenship. Some of the purposes listed are the following: *I-Ensure immigrants the access to social rights and public services; II-Promote respect to diversity and intercultural differences; III-Prevent human rights violations; VI-Promote social participation and develop coordinated actions with civil society*. This constitutes the first Brazilian law that establishes guidelines for a public migratory policy in the municipal sphere (IPPDH, 2017).

In this sense, it is a fact that the impact of migration has different effects on every local administration. This depends, mainly, on the number of migrants that arrive, the accumulated stock in a particular city or town, the proportion that the migrants represent in the resident population, the origin and language of the migrants, the way in which they get into the national territory, the places where they settle, the temporary, circular or permanent nature of the migratory projects; including the recipient tradition that each city or district presents.

Secondly, it has to be considered that the municipality is the administration that is closest to the citizenship; and, even though it usually does not have enough power, the need of solving the requests of the migrant population in every ambit of their integration in the community, is undeniable. Although migratory policy is conceived as a task to be carried out by every state administration (in Argentina: national, provincial, municipal) it is at a local level where, practical, immediate and effective responses are needed to attend the challenge of migration adequately (Belil, 2017; Camós Victoria, 2017), and particularly, to warrant social rights of migrant communities.

Likewise, these demands are modified in time, since migrants needs are different at different stages of their path (Castles & Davidson, 2000) and, as well as the role that the municipality can have (Thayer & Durán, 2015).

Thirdly, *it is assumed that, even the political situation of the migrants is in touch with the definitions of the nation's limits and the citizenship, the problem of effective recognition of the rights, central aspect considered in this article, develops, mainly, at the local level*. In this regard, the importance of the municipal-

ity has two senses. First, within the creation of politics needed to guarantee the access of migrants to every institution; since the municipality is in the best position to transfer the elements of the conflict of the integration of migrants in the new community, to other levels of the state. If in the first sense the municipality acts as the direct agent in the acknowledgment of migration; in the second, it acts as a “sounding board” of the migration’s reality and the limitations in the recognition policies that depend of the superior levels of the State (Thayer & Durán, 2015).

So, as it has been noticed, municipal agendas, of host societies, do not have a particular place assigned to migrations of every town of reception. Furthermore, when they are incorporated, they do so with a diverse intensity, level of sustainability, causality and promoters involved.

In order to analyze the case of the municipality of General Pueyrredón, we focus this work on the initial stage of the political process, related to the government agenda; which constitutes a fundamental aspect to understand the place it reaches. Furthermore, the way of incorporation (proactive-reactive), the social actors (“initiators” or “promoters”); and, most important, the way in which problems and opportunities related to migration are defined. These factors, ultimately, mold the decisions around political solutions, responses and programs designed to attend migration.

In this regard, from the point of view of public policies, it is noticeable that certain topics or social problems have a bigger probability of being incorporated to the government agenda if they have certain characteristics. Among these, having acquired crisis proportions, having adopted certain distinctive features, being related to emotional aspects, having a wide social impact, being close to power or legitimacy issues, having a great symbolic sense or being a trendy topic (Hogwood & Gum, in Fernández, 1996).

At the same time, the possibility that problems have of being incorporated to the government agenda also depends on them becoming an *issue*; that is to say, “*Acontroversial and polemical matter*”. This kind of “*triggers*” and the social actors “*that initiate*” are key factors that favor the inclusion of certain topics to the agenda. In this process, the media, also, plays a fundamental role. In fact, frequently social problems are included in the agenda under the shape of “*families*”, since the incorporation of one problem leads to others of similar nature (Cappellini et al., 2011: 168).

Paying attention in the process of designing the agenda allow us to take part of the problem configuration, from the perspective of the different social actors that intervene in the decision process; and, by extension, in the shaping of answers defined to confront it.

3. Municipalities and the Current Migration Policy in Argentina: Formal Powers

For the purposes of this work migration policies are conceived as “(...) *the set of*

regulations, laws, practices and instruments of the state destined to regulate the sequential access of foreigners to different spheres within the host society and, as a natural consequence, the gradual access to ownership rights” (López Sala, 2005: 112). Policies have two fundamental dimensions: the regulation and control sphere, in charge of rules and requisites that determined the conditions of access and permanence, temporary or definite, of foreigners to the national territory; and the integration sphere, that attends to measures, strategies, models of socioeconomic and cultural incorporation of immigrants to the host society (Arango, 2000; López Sala, 2005).

The national constitution of the Argentine Republic establishes that the national government, by means of the National Congress, has the power of defining international migration policies (art.18). In addition, article 125 of the Magna Carta states that provinces have the power of “encouraging” migration (an expression associated with the way in which colonization politics and promotion of migration was early conceived in the country). Nevertheless, the fact is that provinces just regulate aspects related to foreigner’s access to political rights under their jurisdictions; while the remaining rights, related to other aspects of the host society, are ruled by the national migratory law.

Along its history, in Argentina have only existed three legislations that regulate, in a comprehensive manner, the migratory issue (and only one of them have intervention of the Parliament).⁵

The current law 25.871, called “Migration law”, was enacted in 2004. It has its origins in a broad struggle that several social institutions had since mid-nineties, claiming the abolition of the previous legislation passed by the last de facto government. That regulation violated human rights of the migrants and was based on the national security doctrine.⁶

The proclamation of the law 25.871 meant a radical change in the way of conceiving the relationship between migrants and State; particularly, due to the assumption of a different approach on the rights, that shed some light on this previously dark topic (Nicolao, 2014). Firstly, migration was recognized as a fundamental right inalienable of individuals that must be guaranteed on equal treatment basis (CELS-FIDH, 2011). Secondly, it was a step forward in the formal recognition of a long list of human rights (access to health and education irrespective of the immigrant status-, family reunification, equal treatment to that received by citizens at different social sphere; to receive information and counseling by the State, legal aid, temporary residency automatically granted for immigrants from Expanded MERCOSUR in accordance with the Residency

⁵It shows the complex historical difficulty to regulate the sensitive and multidimensional subject of migration, which has always involved different ideological views and opinions, difficult to reconcile.

⁶Participation of these kind of organizations (of human rights, academic, unions, church and pertaining to migrant communities) in the decisions that gave content to the law, guaranteed the emergency for an inclusive element, focused on human rights and built through a wide social consent (Correa, 2004; Badaró 2006; Caggiano, 2011; Nicolao, 2014).

Agreement of the Member and Associated Countries-, among other).⁷

Additionally, in Argentina, existing migration regulatory standards include a wide set of international treaties with regard to human rights ratified by the country. Many of them are constitutional and include migrant's human rights; other, are regional and where signed in the area of the MERCOSUR.

However, beyond the formal recognition of rights, their effective guarantee depends, mainly, on the policies adopted by every geographical space and political and administrative jurisdiction. It also depends on the promotion of the national government to reach the whole territory. Therefore, it is relevant to attend the powers this legislation gives to sub-national governments (especially, municipalities).

That is to say, some dispositions of the regulation directly involve the different levels of the government as committed parts in the recognition of rights, especially in the *integration sphere*.

For instance, article 6, law 25.871 states that:

“The State, in all areas falling within its jurisdiction, whether at the national, provincial or municipal level, shall encourage equal access for all migrants to the protection and the rights afforded by Law to Argentine born citizens, particularly to social services, education, justice, work, employment and social security”.

Similarly, it stipulates that: *In no case shall a foreigner's irregular migrant status prevent him or her from being accepted as a student in a public or private national, provincial or municipal educational establishment at the primary, secondary, tertiary or university level. The authorities of educational establishments shall provide guidance and advice with regard to the relevant procedures for rectifying migratory irregularity*. (Art. 7°)⁸

Likewise, article 14 provides that:

“The State in all its jurisdictions, national, provincial or municipal will favor the initiatives tending to the integration of the foreigners in their communities of residence, specially focusing on: 1) Carrying out the courses of Spanish language in schools and foreign cultural institutions legally recognized; 2) The spreading of useful information for the accurate insertion of

⁷There are diverse studies that have analyzed the law 25.871, highlighting the most significant innovations and other matters that this instrument have left pending, and also, those considering controversial points (Giustiniani, 2004; Courtis y Pacceca 2007; Pacceca y Courtis 2008; Domenech 2009, 2011a y 2011b; Nejamkis y Rivero Sierra 2010; Nicolao 2010, 2011; Nejamkis 2012; Novick, 2012; among other). In more recent studies, risks for foreigners of re-entering in a securitization of migration policy, since the phase started by the Need and Urgency Decree 70/2017 (Amnesty International, 2017).

⁸In the same sense, article 8 establishes that: “No foreigner can be denied or restricted access to health care, social welfare, or medical treatment, whatever the migration status. The authorities of health facilities shall provide guidance and advice with regard to the relevant procedures for rectifying migratory irregularity”.

the foreigners in the Argentine society, particularly the one related to rights and duties; 3) The knowledge and the evaluation of the cultural, recreational, social, economic and religious expressions of the immigrants; 4) The organization of the training courses based on judgments of cohabitation in a multicultural society and the prevention of discriminatory behaviors, for managers and government employees and private entities.”

These articles recognize the inevitable participation of the different levels of the State, including municipalities, in respect to the deployment of strategies to guarantee rights related to integration. However, effective powers or roles distributions remain undefined; perhaps, due to the principled nature of this legislation.

Meanwhile, the regulation of this policy (Decree n 616/2010), which makes it effective does not solve the limitation previously mentioned. On the one hand, it establishes the obligation of the National State, through the National Directorate of Migration of Argentina (Law enforcement authority; hereafter, NDM), of working “*in collaboration*” with other areas of the national, provincial and municipal governments to develop different programs or actions aiming at the integrations of migrants into the host society. However, it only mentions the required combination of efforts between different levels of government, but does not detail any instrument or modality to materialize the demanded articulation.

Article 9 establishes that, the NDM by itself or “*by agreements that endorse with institutions belonging to the national provincial or municipal sphere*”, shall develop actions aimed at a regular training of public agents and other actions declared in the previously cited article.

Thus, as in most countries throughout the world, in Argentina, the design of the migration policy is a National State responsibility and cannot be delegated. The current migration law regulates every aspect related to the systems of admission, access to residency, permanence, expulsion and outflow of international migrants to the country. In regards to integration, even it involves sub-national levels of the state (provincial and municipal) and gives them a collaborative role in the implementation of dispositions in the central areas of access to rights. In all cases, the scope of action to establish the articulation is subject to decisions taken by the national government. Municipal responsibilities are not specified in this scheme.

The formal-legal level becomes essential to understand the treatment that the migration issue receives, in practice, in municipalities. It is also helpful knowing whether, it is an issue in the agenda of the local public administration, so migrants can enforce the access to their rights.

The following reflections are focused on the General Pueyrredón Municipality, in Buenos Aires Province, Argentina, between 2010 and 2017. The selection of this period directly corresponds to the regulation of the migration law, enacted in 2010, establishing the manner of law enforcement.

4. Migration Context in General Pueyrredón Municipality, Buenos Aires Province

Buenos Aires province has been the most attractive destination for international migrants who have arrived not only in the past but also in the present to the Argentine Republic. Nowadays, migrants arrive mainly from the MERCOSUR region. According to data from the last Census (2010), Buenos Aires gives shelter to the 52% of the whole foreign population that resides in the country. Therefore, the percentage of migrants over the total population in the province (6%) exceeds the national average (4.5%) (INDEC, 2010).

Formed by 135 municipalities, due to its territorial extension and the demographic and socioeconomic diversity, the province is divided in two main regions: the suburban belt around the city of Buenos Aires (The Greater Buenos Aires Conurbation) and the province's hinterland. The first centralizes 24 judicial districts, which gather 64% of the total population of the province, in an area of 3.55618 km². Its hinterland is formed by 111 judicial districts, which gather the remaining 36% of the provincial population in an area of 301.35052 km² (almost 99% of the provincial territory) (Ministry of Economy of the Buenos Aires Province, 2011).

Although most of the migrants reside in the suburban belt around the city of Buenos Aires, some inland municipalities accommodate a considerable number of foreign population; as in the case of General Pueyrredón Municipality, located in the southeast of the province.

Next, the map of the Province of Buenos Aires is presented, with the visual reference of the location of the Municipality of Bahía Blanca.

Buenos Aires Province Map, with a visual reference to General Pueyrredón Municipality

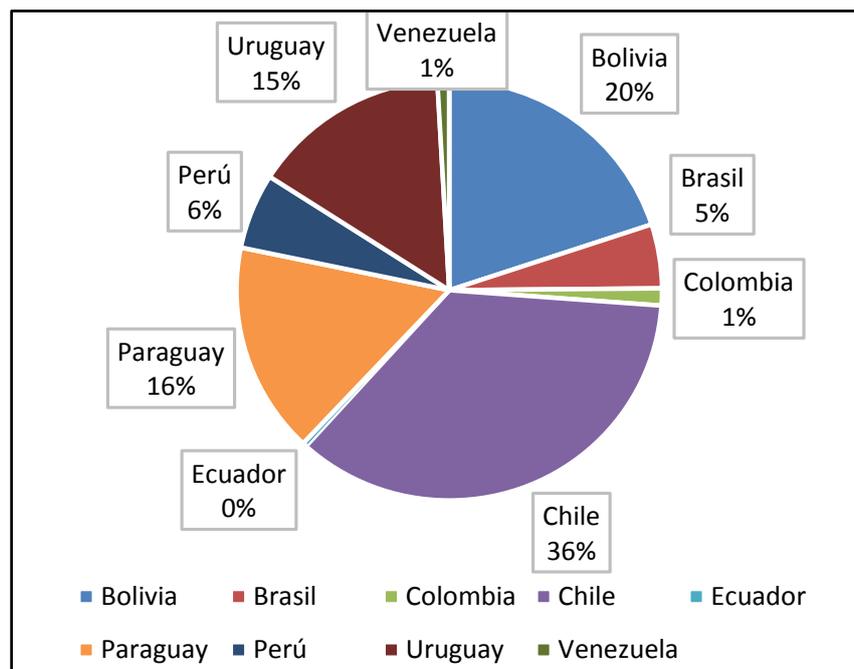


The most important city of the General Pueyrredón Municipality is Mar del Plata, a very significant city within the country due to its touristic value in the Atlantic coast. It is also formed by a group of smaller towns, such as Batán, Sierra de los Padres, Estación Camet and Chapadmalal, among the most relevant. It constitutes one of the few metropolises in the Interior of the Province. Due to its demographic size, with a population of 618.989 according to the last Census (INDEC, 2010), it is the second most important after La Plata (capital city of the province)⁹.

According to the same source, foreign population in this district amounts to 23.231. Among these, the most important communities, according to the number of people, are the Italian (5.182), the Chilean (4.345) and the Spanish (3.279); being the first and the third one, the ageing communities (INDEC, 2010).

In this regard, it is important to note that Mar del Plata is distinguished by the historical reception of international migration flows, especially since 1890. These flows shared the same pattern that the rest of the country, with prevalent working-age men, mainly from Italy and Spain. In fact, in 1914, 47% of the 32.940 inhabitants of the district were foreigners; and, among these, 87 % were Italians and Spanish. The last significant migration flows of this nature arrived after the Second World War (Maronese, 2001).

That said, regarding to migrants from the Expanded MERCOSUR, the largest group today, the most significant communities are, in order of relevance, Chilean (4.345), Bolivian (2.436), Paraguayan (1.984), Uruguayan (1.838), Peruvian (709) and Brazilian (603) (INDEC, 2010).



⁹The data correspond to the National Population, Household and Housing Census that takes place every ten years in Argentina. The last census was conducted in the year 2010, therefore, these are the latest available official statistics of migratory stocks.

Distribution of the migrant population from MERCOSUR countries in the General Pueyrredón Municipality, according to national origin

Generally speaking, this regional migration constitutes, a working migration; since most are motivated by a job search, better wage conditions and greater possibilities of social mobility. This fact becomes evident, among other indicators, by the high concentration of these migrants of potentially active age¹⁰ (INDEC, 2010).

As regards their incorporation in the world of work, in general, there is a concentration in the fields of construction, commerce, domestic services (in the case of women), clothing and footwear industry, which denotes a selective labor modality. General Pueyrredón territory (especially, the towns of Batán, Chapadmalal and Sierra de los Padres) is part of a phenomenon that has expanded at a national level, in the last decades, called “Bolivianization” of Horticulture, (Benencia, 2012: 219). This circumstance constitutes a distinguishing figure of the district and it is associated to the notorious participation of these migrants in the production of vegetables, destined to the fresh market in different green belts of urban centers. Bolivian families in Mar del Plata started to join agricultural production as part of the metayage system. Nowadays, they control a significant part of the production and commercialization of vegetables in the green belt of Mar del Plata (Benencia, 2012). As a result, regarding their geographical distribution, *Bolivian migrants are mostly concentrated in rural areas*.

The present article is concerned with migrant population of regional origin in this district. There are several reasons to justify this focus. On the one hand, their quantitative significance, their impact in the economic structure and the world of work; and the fact that they are citizens of countries, that are associated with Argentina in an integration process. On the other hand, there was a previous verification of their vulnerable situation that includes rights violation.

To mention just a few examples, regional migrants in Buenos Aires present inferior life conditions than Argentine native population. Depending on the municipality, the percentage of Unfulfilled Basic Needs varies between 30 and almost 100% higher among foreigners. In the area of education, regional migrants show a significant deficit in the access of post-primary education, showing important gaps in comparison to the native population regarding to attendant rates to educational establishments (In General Pueyrredón, persons in the age group of 15 - 19 account for the 57.2% of access for the migrant population, in contrast to 71.1% for the natives).

With regard to housing, also displays that the percentage of migrants that reside in unsuitable housing (ranches, shacks, movable shelters or in the streets) is significantly superior among the migrant community in comparison to the native population. Meanwhile, in the field of healthcare, the percentage of people, who do not have medical coverage besides the one provided by the government

¹⁰Almost one out of two regional migrants in the province is between 20 and 44 years old that represent 35% of the native population (IPPDH, 2014: 62).

is considerable superior among migrants (IPPDH, 2014). Other studies have established that, in the central and southern zones of the province, representations and social perceptions about discriminatory practices show that Bolivian origin migrants are the second group most segregated, after people of a low socioeconomic level. This pattern is repeated in the most important cities of the province, as in Tandil, Mar del Plata, Azul, Necochea, Bahía Blanca and Tres Arroyos. Employment, health and social care and educational establishments constitute settings where these deficits are highlighted (CEIPIL, 2013b).

As a consequence of the situation previously described, it becomes necessary to consider the municipal context. At the local level, the absence of formal guidance to guarantee the effective exercise of the rights, granted by the law, ends up subject to the people in power of political and administrative decision in local state agencies, and depends on their arbitrariness or willingness.

5. Migrations in the Political Agenda of the Municipality of General Pueyrredón

The starting analysis about the place migration holds in the political agenda of General Pueyrredón Municipality can be summarized in four central areas, which resume a comprehensive perspective on the subject matter. These focal points are the following: 1) *the role of mass-media in the treatment of migration and migrants*; 2) *the analysis of the structure of the municipalities and its political agendas in regard to protection and promotion of rights at a local level*; 3) *the recognition of certain issues that brings migration to public attention*; and 4) *the role of migrant organizations from the MERCOSUR and their ability to place topics related to the protection of their rights in the political agenda*.

It is worth noting, that during the analyzed period (2010-2017), there was a succession of two municipal administrations in General Pueyrredón: the government of the accountant Gustavo Pulti (2007-2011/2011-2015), belonging to the political parties Acción Marplatense y Acción Marplatense/Frente para la Victoria, respectively; and the government of Carlos Fernando Arroyo, as part of Cambiemos, who assumed in 2017 and finishes the term in 2019.

5.1. Migrations and the Media

With respect to the first focus of analysis, the treatment of migration and migrants, and their role in the local media, represents an indicator to understand the way in which migrant communities are represented, as legal subjects, in the media discourse. Furthermore, it is also helpful to identify the kind of events, and the section where they appear in the news, since these aspects affect, with a variable intensity, the government political agenda.

Using as a reference the print media, attention is drawn to the fact that, the main topics where migrants take a prominent position are related to the coverage of communities' festive activities. That is, celebrations of cultural or identity nature that bring migrants into the center of the picture.

After analyzing the provincial newspaper *La Capital*, which represents one of the most important journals in the area, it was noticed that, during the period between 2009 and the first half of 2016, 159 articles about migrants and migration, in general, are registered. It represents an average of 21 news items a year, during the time mentioned.

Of that total, 50.3% (80 articles) are related to international migration; with territorial references outside Argentina. While the remaining 49.7% (79 articles) focuses on the coverage of issues related to migration at internal level (including at this sphere, Argentina, Buenos Aires, the coastal area of this province and, specifically, General Pueyrredón municipality).

Regarding this second group of news, the mentioned journal has focused the treatment of the topic, broadly speaking, in 5 big categories:

1) aspects concerning the social participation of communities; especially, celebrations and cultural or identity related events (33%); 2) violence situations or crime; in particular, those where migrants are presumed or effective criminals (20%); 3) references to migration trajectories, processes and experiences of specific groups (19%); 4) exercise of rights (16%); e) discrimination to migrant population (7%); and other (5%).

Therefore, the cultural and identity dimensions of migration prevail; tied to the coverage of celebrations and diverse cultural expressions of migrants communities. Among these events, the Communities Fair¹¹ stands out. Most of these articles belong to the newspaper section called *La ciudad* (The City), and they are addressed from a social, cultural, and even touristic perspective. The form of social inclusion of these groups is not outlined or made visible; much less their access to rights at the different spheres of the host society. Besides, most of the articles that are included in this category mention communities or migration groups in general, involving communities of different origin, from current or historical migration flows, disregarding varying realities, experiences or trajectories.

Secondly, coverage of violent situations or crime, especially, where migrants are presumed or effective criminals give account on the cooperation of the media with a possible stigmatization of migrants. Generally speaking, migrants' public image is related to violence and crime. These articles are published in the a section of the newspaper entitled "police", regarded as sensationalist journalism, where events are narrated in order to cause emotional impact in the reader; leaving aside argumentations to explain and analyze real facts (OSL, 2015). Besides, in such cases, the concepts of migrants or immigrants are replaced by foreigners, with a negative connotation; referring to individuals instead of groups, emphasizing, without any reason, on the national origin of the victims and perpetrators.

The third category, that includes articles referred to migration journeys,

¹¹This celebration is mentioned further on.

processes and experiences of specific groups, does not mention migrants from the MERCOSUR. Instead, the distinctive feature of this set of news is that there is a prevalence of stories about European migrants that belong to earlier flows of migration. In addition, it focus on Chinese migration or young people that arrive in Mar del Plata to study in a school facility, that, even it constitutes a novel, it is a minority phenomenon.

In the fourth set of news, that relate to the exercise of migrant rights, most articles consist on the coverage of special administrative processes of regularization or personal documentation in the district. It is important to mention that, these programs have been arranged by the national government through the local office of National Directorate of Migration. Some other articles mention the actual right to vote, exercised by foreign. However, news do not include the sphere of social rights; as a result there are references on the access of migrants to education system, public health, social security, housing or labor market.

In the fifth place, the coverage events of discrimination against migrant population, mostly relate to violence and xenophobia. In particular, offences from neo-Nazi groups that became part of the public debate, between 2013-2016; which will be examined thoroughly in the third main area of analysis related to the emergence of *issues*.

Thus, it might be conclude that the media, as an active social actor with the power to publicly place the challenges that regional migrants face in the process of integration in the hosting society, do not directly contribute in that sense; at least initially.

On the one hand, the intense spreading of news related to the social dimension, such as the participation of migrants in celebrations and festivities, covers up other relevant dimensions related to the inclusion of these groups, which constitute real issues at the local level. On the other hand, sometimes migrants are described with stereotypes that, relate them with the problem of lack of law and order. As a result, a complete awareness of their rights is obstructed, since they are distanced from certain places or the public agenda. Furthermore, only 3% of the articles analyzed, by different perspectives, include migrants as a source of information for the development of the articles. This also reveals the biased point of view that affects the exercise of their rights; since the main participants of an event, whose testimony is essential to the description is slanted by personal interpretations that disregard their view.

5.2. Local Government and the Organizational Structure

The second focus of analysis, the organizational structure of the Municipal State, shows that the municipality did not have an organization chart incumbent upon the relations with migrant communities and their access of rights, during the period analyzed.

In those years, no municipal department created a *program or instrument specifically directed to the social integration or recognition and protection of*

migrant's rights. This fact reinforces the idea that these groups did not have an established place in the local agenda.

However, these facts are not enough to confirm that migrant communities have been left aside of any municipal program or institutional measure aimed to affect their living conditions or any dimension of the host community, in a direct or indirect way. As a result, it is required to attend the functioning of the departments that potentially include migrants in the agenda as part of wider sectors of population.

The *General Directorate of Community Affairs* is the municipal department in charge of supervising and collaborating with the running of associations and organizations of civil society in general¹², including migrant communities. This division is recognized an area of interest.

In particular, during the period analyzed, the Communities Fair (an annual activity that hold a special interest for the migrant community, that will be described in detailed in the next section) has been the central topic that, has acted as the link between migrant organizations and this department.

Furthermore, the General Directorate of Community Affairs, along with the Directorate of International Cooperation and Relations with NGOs, have developed applications aimed at providing tools and training on legal, accounting and administrative areas, to communities and neighbor's civil associations. Even though these services have not been conceived only for migrant communities, it is a fact that they have, especially, taken advantage (even if most organizations are of European origin).

In fact, in March 2017, the Directorate for Relations with NGOs promoted the configuration of the *Communities Forum*. Initially, around twenty migrant organizations took part in the Forum. "*The objective of this organization is to become a common area to work in a connected way, receiving concerns, needs and projects, that participants can have, in order to strengthen the culturally diverse communities that reside in the city, said the head of the organization*" (Official site of General Pueyrredón Municipality, 3/3/2017)

During the first meetings carried out in the context of this forum, the topics discussed were related to organizational actions for commemorations such as the Flag Day and the calendar of activities of each community to celebrate the Immigrant Day. As a result, from the starting, the topics dealt only include the cultural dimension and leave aside problems regarding the exercise of social rights.

This is closely connected with the distinctive feature that the clusters of migrant organizations share, in this district. As will be noticed it the fourth central theme of analysis, these organizations constitute social participant groups aimed

¹²It is the area in charge of designing programs to support the exercise of neighbor unions and to promote the approach of neighbor to entities. It also supervises and modifies communal agreements with associations for the supply of services or construction of small projects. Besides, this Directorate manages the requests of neighborhood associations and deals with the creation of new entities as a response to the neighborhoods' needs. <https://www.mardelplata.gob.ar/comunidad>

only at spreading the culture of their home countries (especially folk dances, food and typical religious celebrations); for the purpose of preserving cultural practices, reinforcing ties among the people from the same country, and mostly going forward in the idea of full integration with the host society. As a result, the interests of migrant groups, and their connection with the local public power are shaped by this distinctive feature.

Secondly, in General Pueyrredón since 2011, the *Directorate General for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights* began operating to replace the Department against Discrimination. The Directorate constitutes the formal setting in the municipal that shapes initiative to the promotion and defense of human rights of the district population. According to the definition of the responsible of the area, the name of the Directorate defines its main focus of management:

Promotion and protection constitutes the two central focus of management. In the protection area, in the face of violation of rights, first we make a formal statement where we register the information of the individual that describe the event. Then, we start an articulation with the corresponding areas, entities or sections, and we try to solve the situation in this way. Occasionally, this type of procedures derives in actions for the promotion of rights (Interview with the General Director of Protection and Promotion of Human Rights in the Municipality of General Pueyrredón, 21/10/2017).

Among the most important topics deal in this Directorate, regarding protection, are the powers related to consumer protection rights since 2015 and, since 2016, for people older than 70. Intersectional roundtables, some coordinated, directly, by the area (such as the Roundtable of Gender and Sexual Diversity and of Native Affairs), and some other, that do not coordinate but participate, such as the Commission of Remembrance, Truth and Justice; the Roundtable against Human Trafficking, and the Roundtable of self-reliance, among other, are also part of the agenda. In addition, topics related to the elimination of child labor, mental health, among other are also addressed (Interview with the General Director of Protection and Promotion of Human Rights, in the Municipality of General Pueyrredón, 21/10/2017).

However, regarding the place that migrant population have in this Directorate agenda, it can be observed that they are not considered as a group “at risk”, at least compared with other “minority groups”. According to the description made by the head of the directorate, taking into account the formal complaints received in the municipality, “*most issues relate to cases of bullying due to sexual orientation in the school setting. In different areas, acts of discrimination against people in the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community are very common, although they are not referred to as bullying*” (Interview with the General Director of Protection and Promotion of Human Rights, in the Municipality of General Pueyrredón, 21/10/2017).

Besides, regarding the promotion of actions, the Directorate carries out a lite-

rary contest called “Valijas con Historia” (Suitcases with History); a short stories competition open to the community. It is based on the historical and cultural process that the migration means, inspired in personal, family or communities experiences in the district of General Pueyrredón:

“The precise idea is to collect migrant histories and make them part of the cultural knowledge. It is also helpful to understand the formation process of the societies of Mar del Plata and Batán, where we live. It constitutes very important information that has been uploaded to the municipality web page, so schools can have access to when dealing with migrant issues” (Interview with the General Director of Protection and Promotion of Human Rights in the Municipality of General Pueyrredón, 21/10/2017).

“(…) the purpose of the contest was to gather fragments of life to contribute to the awareness of the multicultural dimension of our community” (Official site of the Municipality of General Pueyrredón, 2017).

From this point of view, in the context of activities for the promotion of rights, it is possible to identify actions aimed at highlighting, spreading and giving a place, in different social institutions, to the historical process which originated the formation of a multicultural city or community. However, there is not enough space to make an issue of topics related to the exercise of social rights.

It is interesting to note that, according to testimonies gathered in interviews, during the last years this direction has accompanied the Senegalese migrant community in Mar del Plata. It is a minority, with no more than 50 individuals, that approached the authorities asking for counseling regarding procedures related to the regularization of their migrant situation. In addition to the provided guidance, the incorporation of members of this community in a provincial initiative was achieved. It is a program entitled “Be Part”, and is aimed at the integration of knowledge; including literacy, primary education and a combination with the secondary schools through the FINES program (General Director of Protection and Promotion of Human Rights in the Municipality of General Pueyrredón, 21/10/2017). It constitutes an example of the way in which the approach and transference of the demands of a specific community to this Directorate, had positive outcomes in the improvement of their access to rights; something that has not been possible for organizations from other nationalities.

Finally, along with the work of the Directorate of Human Rights, there is, in the sphere of the Municipal Ombudsman Office, a section of the National Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (known in Spanish as INADI) that receives formal complaints. It was created, under particular circumstances that will be explained further on, to receive every citizen that has experienced violation of rights, for the intervention of the institute.

Due to the recent creation of this unit (2016), and spite the dissemination efforts, it is not still really considered a reference place for potential or real victims of rights violation. However, it is important to highlight the existence of an

INADI unit in the municipal territory:

“(…) Many times, people prefer to go to a physical place to make a complaint; of course there are a lot of people, who are not able to go to Buenos Aires; as a result the dispatching of correspondence does not fulfill their expectations. They need an office to be listened to and leave and to make a formal presentation; which has been the Ombudsman Office” (Interview to the Ombudsman of the General Pueyrredón Municipality, 26/10/2017).

According to reports provided by the authorities of the area, from a total of 25 formal complaints received in the period between January and November 2017, two cases of discrimination on the basis of national origin were registered, which did not specify the places or settings where they occur. Within the framework of such a small dimension regarding a quantitative analysis, it is complex to draw conclusions about the approach of the topic.

Finally, in addition to the analysis of the structure of the local executive, the function of the Legislative, in the creation of regulations that involve the migrant population, needs to be considered. As a result, there are two applicable ordinances passed by The Honorable Council, in previous years to the analyzed period.

The first ordinance, N° 16890/05, states that:

1st Give public recognition to different communities that have main offices in the city, because of the activity developed, distinguishing the immigrant with the greatest seniority of every community, in Mar del Plata city. 2nd Publicly highlight the contribution of migrant communities in the creation of the Argentinian people, in particular in Mar del Plata city; especially their integration in every moral, spiritual and material values. 3rd Honor, in a public event, pioneers and descendants that, came, offered their lives and rest for ever in our land.

The second ordinance, No. 17464/2006, states that:

Every year on September 4th, pay particular tribute to the pioneers and descendants, who came, offered their lives and rest forever in our land”.

As it can be noticed, both regulations refer to a symbolic recognition, and deal with the migration topic in a superficial manner, highlighting the migrants “contribution to different facets related to the conformation of the city and the district. However, neither ordinance attends to the protection of migrants” rights in the host society.

5.3. Migration Related Issues

Finally, the third main area of analysis focuses in the topics that became controversial issues (topics that, due its polemic or emotional nature, favor the attention of migration in the public arena and associate it to an opportunity or a

problem). In this regard, two examples may be identified:

On the one hand, during the period of study, the subject of migration has emerged in a relatively sustained manner in the municipal agenda, and it has been associated to an “opportunity” (social, cultural or touristic) due to the annual *celebration of the Communities Fair*.

This event, that has become a tradition for the local society, is carried out during the winter break and consists on a Cultural and Food Fair of Communities. It is located in the San Martín Square, the green heart of the downtown area of the city. Typical food, craftwork, costumes, and photography, among other things, are exposed and sold there. Besides, there is a theatre, with over 300 seats, that offers first class shows, free of charge and open to everyone; such as dance shows, circus performances or concerts. It constitutes a typical attraction for tourists and also for the locals.

Besides culture, this event, that lasts 15 days, has strong touristic connotations (due to the number of visits it receives). The Communities grouped in the Federation named “Presencia de Colectividades”¹³ (Communities Presence) is in charge of the organization and execution of the fair; with the aid of the Municipality, through the Municipal Touristic Entity (EMTUR, by its Spanish acronym) and the Directorate for Relations with NGOs, that provides logistical support and, to a lesser extent, financial¹⁴.

In 2017, the Fair has reached its 23 years. At this last edition, communities of Chile, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Brazil, Italy, Greece, Israel, Armenia, Serbia, Arab World, Portugal, Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, Republic of Macedonia-Montenegro, as well as Argentina (Punto-noticias.com, 17/07/2017).

The conception and inclusion of the celebration in the government’s agenda, is shown by the successive public declarations; made by representatives of the municipality regarding the impact and presence of the migrant communities in the city and the district.

¹³The Federación Presencia de las Colectividades (Presence of the Communities Federation) is currently integrated by the institutions “Por Amor al Aborigen” (For the Love of the native), Asociación de Residentes Armenios de Mar del Plata (Association of Armenian residents of Mar del Plata), Centro Cultural Aurora (Aurora Cultural Center), Asociación Cultural Brasileira (Brazilian Cultural Association), Centro Cultural Eslavos Unidos (Cultural Center United Slavs), Agrupación Tradicionalista del Folclore Chileno “Violeta Parra” (“Violeta Parra” Traditionalist Association of Chilean Folklore), Colectividad Helénica de Mar del Plata (Hellenic Community of Mar del Plata), Sociedad Unión Israelita Marplatense (Mar del Plata Jewish Community), Centro Laziale Marplatense (Mar del Plata Laziale Center), Sociedad de Beneficencia Unión Árabe (Charitable Society Arab Union); Centro de Residentes Paraguayos (Center for Paraguayan Residents), Asociación de Residentes Peruanos de Mar del Plata y Zona (Association for Peruvian Residents of Mar del Plata and the Surrounding Area), and Club Portugués y Centro Uruguayo de Mar del Plata (Mar del Plata Portuguese Club and Uruguayan Center. (Punto-noticias.com, 17/07/2017).

¹⁴The mentioned department even participated in a direct way in the 2015 edition, with a stand to disseminate the services offered to every civil society organization. Their presence motivated a stronger participation of the commune in the fair, including the areas of Human Rights, Social Development and Tourism, with the purpose of make public the tasks performed by every department of the municipality (General Pueyrredón Municipality Official Site, 15/7/2016).

A revealing piece of information distinguishes the notion of opportunity in relation to the Communities Fair; especially due to the contribution to the cultural enrichment of the city. Namely, on occasion of the 2013 edition, at the opening ceremony, the Mayor, Pulti, stated: “(...) *it is an honor that Mar del Plata, the meeting place—par excellence—can be the home to a Communities Fair that represents every sector ... And, from native communities to the migratory flows of the last decades, that came from Asia and other places; we can have this great celebration in this meeting place, Mar del Plata; in this brotherhood, Argentina*” (General Pueyrredón Municipality Official Site, 13/7/2013).

Likewise, during the opening in 2014, he said that “(...) *this is a representation of the intersections that, along history happened in this city of natives from different spots of Europe, Eastern Europe, Asia and America; mainly from our neighboring countries. The Communities Fair shows our best desires for Mar del Plata; it shows the sense of work, fellowship and the ability to live within diversity; a city that lives free of xenophobia that condemn discrimination*” (Punto-Noticias 19/7/2014).

Similarly, the President of the EMTUR described the fair as “(...) *an excellent opportunity to meet the mosaic of cultures and races that we are as Argentinians*” (Punto Noticias 19/7/2016).

During most public appearances, when the Mayor Pulti addressed the migration topic, he highlighted the idea of Mar del Plata as a “meeting place” or “meeting city”; always in direct reference to the cultural richness that these groups represent. Only on one particular occasion, the Mayor underlined the Bolivian community, regarding “*the importance of the skilled work that they carry out (...) in our area, in a deep look to the land inhabitants. They own a precious craft , experts in the production of fruits and vegetables, supplying the whole areas of Mar de Plata and Batán, and making us feel proud and grateful of being their neighbors*” (General Pueyrredón Municipality Official Site, 26/9/2015).

It may be noted that, far from associating migrant population to the effective exercise of their rights in the community life, their appearance and visibility is connected to festive and commemorative occasions, as in the case of the Communities Fair. Whereby, migrant population appears in the public scene as colorful and attractive actors, due to the staging, dissemination and touristic “exploitation” of the multiple facets of their cultural heritage.

The “opportunity” that migration represents for the current government, is directly connected with the recognition of the contribution of these groups to the host society; emphasizing the cultural dimension, and to a lesser extent, the economic and productive field. Defining migration on the basis of the acknowledgment of “what they have to offer” is associated to the undeniable need of legitimizing “the unnatural presence in the national order” of migrants according to certain assigned characteristics. However, this appraisal criterion of certain migration groups, based on their contributions to the host society, contradicts with hu-

man rights focused policies. Precisely because the foundation for the guarantee of human rights to migrant people, based on their human condition, is transmitted and reproduced, underlining their contributions to the host society. As a result, it can be infer that only some groups are able to be legal subjects¹⁵.

It is a fact that, for migrant communities under consideration, events such as the Fair mentioned, possess a fundamental value, and represent an opportunity for social participation and strengthen bonds with their compatriots, which are also part of their rights. However, it is also true that, there is no contemplation or consideration of the problems of integration suffered by a significant number of these groups at the local level; especially the vulnerability of their access to rights.

As it will be noticed in the last section, the ones who participate of the Fair or Associations of foreigners in general, represent a section of the migrant communities. In general, they have been residents of the city for longer periods, and are owners of social asset that allows them a less difficult integration, in comparison to those who have recently arrived. This is important because it helps to explain, on behalf of migrant organizations, the low level of transfer of their demands to the State, regarding their access to social rights, to a large extend.

The second issue that made of migration a controversial topic emerged from episodes of discrimination and xenophobia in the society of Mar del Plata. On this occasion, they were part of a wider group of social concerns and due to a particular conjuncture of events; concerning victims of Bolivian origin. From 2011 to 2016, neo-Nazi groups were responsible for a series of violent events, which included attacks on homosexuals, aggressions against punks, graffiti of xenophobic nature and damage to remainders of the illegal repression; that progressively intensify (Página 12, 20/2/2016; La Capital, 22/2/2016).

The Assembly for a Society without Fascism and the Foundation La Alameda prepared a report that included each of those events. It was released on January 2016, in the context of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day commemoration. That day, the entity requested the Mayor Carlos Arroyo greater commitment in order to avoid any further attacks: “*The great number of formal unresolved allegations; in spite of the large amount of complaints presented on police stations, district attorney’s offices, courts and municipal entities, and also the recent media coverage ... State powers should take responsibility for the aberrant acts described in the present report and act accordingly, being the political authorities who must lead the fight against fascism, in a democratic State.*”

¹⁵According to Pacceca, this contribution criterion, from the cost-benefit point of view, is very common among civil servants and migrants as well. They feel questioned by this reasoning, believing that they have to give an explanation on how they benefit, help or contribute to the host society (...) there is a kind of interpretation of the migration process, still incipient, that is not at academic level and will not be accepted by the migration policies areas, which suggests that, immigrants are not particular in any way, nor activists for human rights or developers. The effects caused by migrants in the host societies are related to the characteristics of migration laws and the places that native give them. There is, always, the idea that certain migrants naturally benefit the host society (Pacceca, 2012: 166; en Nicolao, 2014).

(Página 12, 12/2/2016).

Even though this topic is not strictly connected to the migration issue, it is directly included; since one of the violent actions perpetrated by those groups, was against the main office of the Center of Bolivian Residents. In 2014, the front part of the entity's building was covered with a xenophobic graffiti that had the message: "Out Bolivia from Salta. Our homeland is not under negotiation. Careful ... the punishment will burn. Fonapa-La Giachino. Hurray the country" (Página 12, 14/9/2015). In addition, there was an attempt to commit arson on a gate adjacent to the wall of the Bolivian community office.

Demands for justice on the part of a significant number of institutions and social organizations increased, the topic had a strong media impact and a growing social condemnation in the local community. The justice system, institution in charge of the clarification of the facts and sentencing the perpetrators, was too slow to proceed. There was a measure that revealed, at least initially, the problem of the discrimination phenomenon at a local scale; it was the signing of an agreement to open a section of the INADI to receive formal complaints in the sphere of the Municipal Ombudsman:

Our first approximation with the INADI was in 2016; some acts associated to a neo-Nazi group took place and generated a series of attempts and threats in Mar del Plata. So, the Association of Ombudsman of Argentina made contact with the INADI that sends a representative, in March 2016. We outlined a framework of cooperation and collaborative work and signed the first agreement for the creation of an office to receive complaints for the INADI in the Ombudsman Office. Even though the mentioned events proceeded the creation of the Office, in 2016, within the community of Mar del Plata emerges, a greater sentencing state because some of the latest events involved physical aggression. Then, the president of an entity associated with sexual diversity, called AMADIS, is threatened; as a result the situation gets worse (Interview to the Ombudsman of the Municipality of General Pueyrredón, 26/10/2017).

It is worth mentioning that, despite its demographic and territorial magnitude, there are only three INADI's delegations in the Province of Buenos Aires; located in La Plata, the Regional Provincial of the Southern of Greater Buenos Aires Conurbation (Lanús) and Olavarría. Even though it is not a delegation, having a representative of the INADI in Mar del Plata, recognizes the emergency regarding the discriminatory and xenophobic situation in the local society. In this context, it is a crucial element to understand the situation of access of right of the migrant population.

5.4. Organized Migrants and the Inclusion of Topics in the Local Public Agenda

In the Municipality of General Pueyrredón, there is a large amount of migrant

organizations (of European, Asian and Latin American); it is an important aspect to understand the social networks that develop among compatriots in the host community. Occasionally, drove from specific demands or conflicts that need a collective attention or as a strategy for promotion from the State. Either way, at this stage, making a closer analysis is an effective way to understand to what extent, organized migrants transfer demands to the State and the answer or the kind of articulation that this exchange generates.

The organizations or associations of migrants, with different levels of formality, practices and methodologies of participation, are generally oriented to multiple dimensions and may juxtapose economic, social, cultural and political purposes (Pizarro, 2009). In general, they oscillate between four different central functions: a) help to overcome social isolation; b) confirm group values and beliefs; c) provide assistance support to its members; d) help to defend and solve conflicts in the context of the host society (Rex, 1994) related to the concepts of sociability, identity, solidarity and participation (Gadeay Carrasquilla, 2009).

These organizational experiences are strongly conditioned by the migratory trajectories of the ones who initiate and invigorate them. In fact, their original functions and activities are generally connected to diverse difficulties and challenges that migrant population faces in order to overcome the process of settlement into the host society (González Gil, 2007); that later, diversify or broaden depending on the possibilities offered by the context of reception and the changing interests of the community.

While there is profuse bibliography and definitions on this regard, it is deemed appropriate to use, in advanced, the concept of migrant organizations and not associations. Since, the first is wider in terms of the experiences that may include; while the second is restrictively linked to formal sociability, implying two concrete difficulties. On the one hand, it is difficult to establish a boundary between formal or informal partnership, and there is also a risk of underestimating meaningful experiences, from the point of view of the multidimensional impacts in the local area where they function. In fact, in contrast to the migrant associations of European countries, that have acquired a relative notable level of formality (in fact, they are commonly entitled associations); Latin American organizations have, as a general trend, a lower level of formality and institutional and economic consolidation (Caggiano, 2011)¹⁶; although there are clear exceptions (Nicolao, 2015b).

¹⁶Regarding this point of analysis, *Pereyra (2005)* notices that, Latin American organization emerge and disappear at the same pace, in the context of the diversity that characterized them, it is clear that occasionally they emerge and disappear at the same pace. The great majority does not have a physical location for their meetings; the official address is in general, the house of one of the leaders, who may change due to political fluctuations and the variability of the community. In some contexts, organizations emerged as a consequence of “political opportunities” (Gamson and Mayer 1999 in *Pereyra, 2005*) or in the face of the demands of sub-national government bodies (provincial and municipal) for participation and representation. Furthermore, on many occasions, the scarcity of economic resources makes it difficult to maintain a minimum operation structure or internal segmentation, among other.

Furthermore, official records at municipal level reveal that, organizations formed by natives or second and third generations from different regions of Italy and Spain, are the ones with the greatest institutional trajectory and reached greater levels of formality.

According to several sources of information, there are, in the Municipality of General Pueyrredón, the following organizations of South American origin: *the Center for Bolivian Residents in Mar del Plata Don Pedro Domingo Murillo*; *the Association of Peruvian Residents of Mar del Plata and y Atlantic area*; *the Cultural and Social Center of Uruguayan Residents José Gervasio Artigas*; *Center of Paraguayan Residents of Mar del Plata*; *the Traditionalist Group of Chilean Folklore “Violeta Parra”* and *the Brazilian Cultural Association* (Community Presence, 2017).

Regarding the objectives that encouraged the creation of these organizations (that have evolved and changed) and the activities that distinguish them, general identity issues, the need of reasserting their own values and beliefs, and mainly, to reproduce in the host society different cultural practices from their countries of origin, taking a chance of a greater visibility that favors their integration, are among the most significant. Secondly, in certain cases, there is the need to give assistance support and a few specific services to their members.

The Brazilian Cultural Association of Mar del Plata can be included in the first group. It was created in 2006, and plays a major role in the diffusion of the language and culture of the country, by means of organizing typical celebrations, promoting traditional food and other activities of this nature. According to its members, the Association is devoted to “(...) *integrate Brazilian culture through courses, classes or workshops of literature, dancing, music, food, craftwork, theatre, capoeira and other Brazilian rhythms*” (XVII Communities Fair, 2011).

The Traditionalist Group of Chilean Folklore “Violeta Parra”, with more than 30 years of existence, was founded in 1985 in the context of a very significant amount of Chilean migration. Nowadays there is no renewal of migration flows. Thereon, two significant Chilean migration flows are recognized in Mar del Plata: the first one, in the decade of 1960 (promoted by natural disasters, such as tsunamis or earthquakes in that country), that resulted in the establishment of important amounts of migrants in the area of Batán. The great majority chose the stonecutter job, due to a significant demand of labor force in the quarries that employed them. They also work in the potato harvest and at the brick ovens. Afterwards, there was a second flow, between 1973 and 1990, during the dictatorship of A. Pinochet. Migrants that escaped from the regime and settled in these land, worked as builders, plumbers, carpenters; or fishermen in the port of Mar del Plata. That said, this community have evolved and the most important activities that the organization Violeta Parra develops in the city, are almost circumscribed to representations in festive or commemorative events. These include their culture in the form of costumes and dances; for example in the Fallera Week, Native Land Holidays and anniversaries of the independence of other

countries (XXI Communities Fair, 2015).

The Cultural and Social Center of Uruguayan Residents José Gervasio Artigas, founded on April 19th 1997, perform similar activities to those previously described: participation in the Communities Fair, in diverse commemorative acts, ephemeris or film exhibitions; and they also developed their own radio program. In addition, there is the celebration of the, so called, “Oriental Hugh”, which consists on a year-end lunch in the center of their association, that is really significant to its members. Though not in a systematic matter, their agenda includes the circulation of information concerning the exercise of their rights; especially in regards to migratory regularization.

The Association of Peruvian Residents of Mar del Plata and Atlantic area organizes social and cultural activities, to represent their roots and spread their dance and food traditions, as well as promote sports according to its member’s preferences. They consider that the Peruvian contribution to the city is reflected by the work they carry out in specific trades and professions, where they have specialized (domestic service, in the case of women, and gardening, building, nursing and medicine) (XXI Communities Fair, 2015). They have their own place, thanks to a donation of lands of the municipality.

The Paraguayan Residents Center in Mar del Plata, was born in 1987, being the third oldest, after the Chilean and the Bolivian. It has an active participation in events, where its members display the cultural heritage of their country. Likewise, the Paraguayan House in Mar del Plata (headquarter of the community), provides services related to the paperwork and acquisition of documents; such as Paraguayan card, criminal record, documentation in Argentina, among other. The institution organizes diverse activities to promote the Paraguayan culture and to generate “a living place” in the community. They have their own radio program “Music and Landscape of Paraguay” that is broadcasted locally, and they also teach Guaraní language (XXI Communities Fair, 2015).

According to its representatives, the Center for Bolivian Residents in Mar del Plata Don Pedro Domingo Murillo, founded in 1986, has the major role of “*helping their fellow nationals in the process of settlement in the new country, in the context of a migration that occurs from the countryside of Bolivia to the countryside of Argentina*”. Taking into account that, even in the last years, the regularization of documents was really positive, there are always needs to attend among the community.

Bolivian migration in Mar del Plata can be summarized in the following way: “(...) *the great majority came from Tarija, and they are the ones that work in the land. Some are owners, other pay rent ... There is a 30% that comes from the Potosí and work in the brick ovens of the area of Chapadmalal; nowadays, there is a new migration flow, from areas such as La Paz and Santa Cruz, that work in the strawberry harvest*”. Likewise, “it is estimated that, in the city; particularly, in the productive areas of Batán, Chapadmalal and Sierra de los Padres, there is a community of 25 thousand Bolivians, out of the two million that have settled in

Argentina”, which corresponds to the numbers revealed by the census records (Interview to the President of the Center for Bolivian Residents in Mar del Plata, La Capital, 20/8/2011).

Similarly, the community representatives distinguish the typical feature of the Bolivian migration, that is, essentially familiar: “The concept of family is in the Bolivian roots and for this reason when the Bolivian men migrates *does so with his whole family; in contrast to what may happened with Paraguayan, Peruvians or Chileans*”. Their leader explains that, occasionally, some Bolivian arrives to the country alone and do not make contact with others from the same country. As a result, they have a solitary integration until they participate of some of the events, that are monthly organized in their center, and realize that they are thousands and thousands (Interview to the President of the Center for Bolivian Residents in Mar del Plata, La Capital, 20/8/2011).

As a general characteristic of the local organizational sphere of South American migration, the participation and the agenda, that members of the migration groups are able to develop, in the context of their organizations (on several occasions, reduced to symbolic aspects), are related to the difficulties experienced by the migrants who, work long hours to maintain the dedication and effort demanded by the most ambitious tasks.

Thus, among the civil society organizations, the communities from state members of the MERCOSUR, with heterogeneous compositions and trajectories, have a strong anchoring in the identity dimension; that supports and revitalizes them. Meanwhile, the need for providing support and other specific services to its members becomes significantly minor, at least in a preliminary analysis. Meanwhile, the connection between different Latin American organizations occurs, almost exclusively, on occasion of the preparation and execution of the Communities Fair and other specific celebrations. This also reveals a reduced capacity of migrants of exerting pressure to place in the public agenda issues related to the exercise of their rights. This feature is understood as an “uncertain disposition of migrants to place their demands regarding the improvement of their living conditions, in a political discourse oriented to the acknowledgment of their rights” (Thayer, 2013) at a local level.

6. Conclusion

During this work it was assumed, that the integration of migrants and the implementation of actions aimed at guaranteeing their rights forces to redirect the analysis to cities and municipalities, since they constitute an essential factor for the construction of a substantive citizenship in regional terms, in the context of the MERCOSUR.

After considering different elements or indicators along the study case, it has been revealed that, migrations, in general, and migrant population, in particular, are not previously established as part of the government’s agenda. The appearances of migration issues in the agenda have occurred under particular circum-

tances, reactive or connected to superficial aspects of the migration theme, with no reference to concerns related to the exercise of their rights.

Regarding potential factors that may influence this situation, besides formal limitations derived from weak or vague powers that the migration law grants to municipalities in the implementation of guidelines related to the multiple dimensions of the migrants' integration in the host society, it is also worth noting the weak capacity of the migrant community of the MERCOSUR, to transfer to the local state, their demands and interests, beyond the cultural and identity spheres cover up and subsume the bond between local State and Migrations.

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Appendix

Consulted Websites

Diario La Capital <http://www.lacapital.com.ar/>

Diario Página 12 <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/>

Presencia de Colectividades Mar del Plata

<http://www.presenciadelascolectividades.com/>

Puntonoticias.com Noticias de Mar del Plata <https://www.puntonoticias.com/>

Sitio oficial del Municipio de Gral. Pueyrredón <http://www.mardelplata.gob.ar/>

Othersources

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