

## Housing problems in La Matanza: an analysis of informal settlements from the perspective of social sensitivities

### *Problemática habitacional en La Matanza: un análisis de las urbanizaciones informales desde las sensibilidades sociales*

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#### **Abstract**

*The aim of this article is to describe and analyze the informal urbanizations of the La Matanza district, located in Buenos Aires, Argentina, distinguishing the characteristics of each zone into which it is segmented in order to study its socio-economic conditions and its differences. It also seeks to address some social sensitivities as cognitive-affective practices that are structured there, configuring ways of being, feeling, thinking and acting. This approach will be based on a methodological strategy that combines qualitative data - in-depth interviews with civil society organizations related to the housing problem in La Matanza - and quantitative secondary data from a survey carried out by the National Registry of Popular Neighborhoods (Registro Nacional de Barrios Populares).*

*It seeks to problematize the implications of studying informal urbanizations from a theoretical and background analysis of the subject. From different denominations used in Latin American literature such settlements, villas, favelas, campamentos known in English as 'slums', we coincide in the description of territories that have in common the link with different types of informality, precariousness, risks and vulnerabilities in a context linked to poverty.*

#### **Keywords**

*Settlements, informality, sensitivities, emotions, housing, slums, shanty towns, La Matanza.*

## **Resumen**

Este artículo tiene como objetivo describir y analizar las urbanizaciones informales del partido de La Matanza, —ubicado en Buenos Aires, Argentina— distinguiendo las características que presentan en cada zona o “cordón” en la que se segmenta para el estudio de sus condiciones socio-económicas y las desigualdades que presenta. También, se busca abordar algunas sensibilidades sociales en tanto prácticas cognitivo-afectivas que se estructuran allí configurando modos de ser, sentir, pensar y actuar. Este abordaje se realizará a partir de una estrategia metodológica que combina datos cualitativos —entrevistas semiestructuradas a personas que integran organizaciones de la sociedad civil relacionadas a la problemática habitacional en La Matanza— y datos secundarios cuantitativos, desde un relevamiento realizado por Registro Nacional de Barrios Populares.

Se busca problematizar sobre las implicancias de estudiar a las urbanizaciones informales a partir de un recorrido teórico y de antecedentes sobre el tema. A partir de diferentes denominaciones utilizadas desde la literatura latinoamericana como asentamientos, villas, favelas, campamentos y anglosajona como “slums” se coinciden en la descripción de territorios que tienen en común la vinculación con diferentes tipos de informalidades, precariedades, riesgos y vulnerabilidades en un contexto ligado a la pobreza.

## **Palabras clave**

Urbanizaciones, informalidad, sensibilidades, emociones, vivienda, asentamientos, villas, La Matanza.

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## **Introduction**

The housing problem refers to the unequal possibilities in the access and use of housing that people have, as well as the conditions of habitability in relation to the quality of basic services, the proximity or remoteness with sources of work, hospitals, educational institutions, transportation, recreational places, green spaces, streams and rivers, dumpsites, polluting industries, etc. It includes the housing, its environment and its connections with the territory (roads, streets, routes, infrastructure that surrounds it with other neighborhoods and cities) that structure ways of living, moving and appropriating the space (Lefebvre, 2017). This definition pursues a sociological perspective that is linked to the structuring theory of Giddens (2003) that involves addressing the ways in which social structure enables or restricts the action of people and gives an account of the way in which time

and space are linked, as well as the principles of organization of life based on these parameters.

We introduce a concept from the sociology of bodies/emotions called politics of sensitivities that crystallize in this process of social structuring (Scribano, 2009). These are cognitive-affective social practices tending to the production, management and reproduction of horizons of action, disposition and cognition that refer to:

i) the organization of daily life (day-to-day, waking/sleeping, food/abstinence, etc.); ii) the information to order preferences and values (adequate/inadequate; acceptable/unacceptable; bearable/unbearable); and iii) the parameters for the management of time/space (displacement/location; walls/bridges; infrastructure for the valorization of enjoyment). (Scribano and De Sena, 2019, p. 53)

Considering this theoretical perspective, and as part of a work that seeks to contribute to the study on housing problems, the aim of this research is to describe and analyze the informal urbanizations of La Matanza, located in Buenos Aires, Argentina, distinguishing the characteristics in each area in which it is segmented for studying its socio-economic conditions and the differences that it presents. Also, it seeks to address some sensitivities that are structured there configuring ways of being, feeling, thinking and acting (Scribano, 2010). This approach will be carried out from a methodological strategy that combines qualitative data—in-depth interviews with civil society organizations related to the housing problem in La Matanza—and quantitative secondary data, from a survey carried out by the National Register of Popular Neighborhoods (2023).

To describe the housing problems in this specific territory, we first mention some data on a national scale and then we will delve into the local. In Argentina, according to data from the National Institute of Statistics and Census, in the first half of 2024, resuming the Permanent Household Survey, 52.9 % of the population is poor; 14.5 % have partially insufficient living conditions and 8.2 % are insufficient; only 49.5 % of the population has access to the three basic services (running water, network gas and sewage drains); 5.6 % live near dumpsites and 9.1 % in flood areas. Regarding the quality of housing materials, 14.5 % of people have partially insufficient and 8.2 % insufficient housing, and as for overcrowding conditions, 77.6 % represent less than 2 people per quarter, 18.6 % 2-3 people per quarter and 3.7% more than 3 people per quarter (critical overcrowding) (INDEC, 2024). In addi-

tion, according to the National Register of Popular Neighborhoods (2023), 6467 informal housing developments were surveyed throughout the country, including villas, settlements and degraded housing complexes.

La Matanza is a municipality that integrates the urban agglomerate called Gran Buenos Aires. It has a total area of 325.71 km<sup>2</sup>, 1 837 774 inhabitants, a total of 577 276 private homes and is divided into 16 localities. The Unmet Basic Needs index is 12 %: out of a total of 484 909 households, 58 053 have unmet basic needs. It presents a deep segmentation and socio-spatial segregation that divides the territory into three zones differentiated in terms of their socio-habitational, economic, environmental and cultural characteristics, but if moving away from the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (CABA), greater conditions of vulnerability and precariousness are presented (PELM, 2005, De Sena, 2019). In this territory, the housing deficit (qualitative and quantitative) affects 331 420 households (Di Virgilio and Serrati, 2019) and the number of homes that present situations of qualitative deficit (expansion/improvements) is greater than the quantitative one (irrecoverable homes). Likewise, access to basic services and infrastructure of neighborhoods directly related to the habitability, health and quality of life of the population is unevenly presented in the territory where the best situations are in the first area and the worst in the second and third (De Sena and Bareiro Gardenal, 2019). In the massacre, 163 informal housing estates were registered (RENABAP, 2023).

The argumentative strategy of this article is structured as follows: the first section will develop a theoretical problematization and a background review on informal urbanizations. The next section will be devoted to some methodological clarifications, and then the analysis of the data will be presented. This analysis will be divided into two sections: first, a general description of La Matanza in relation to the housing problem; and then, a specific approach for each area, with the aim of deepening on the sensitivities related to the neighborhoods in each case.

### **A possible theoretical route to problematize about informal urbanizations**

The urban is defined as “belonging or relative to the city and, by extension, to other population centers” (RAE, 2024). Classical authors such as

Lefebvre (2017), from a sociological and philosophical perspective, and Harvey (1977), from a perspective that incorporates the geographical and economic aspects, addressed urban problems, the notion of city and the right to the city, and the social inequalities associated with the planning and production of space. For Lefebvre (2017) it is essential to start from the concept of “living” since the city “is the form of this place of ‘private’ life” (p. 83). From this approach, we move from the particular to the general and highlight daily life, its rhythms, its occupations and its spatial-temporal organization. For Harvey (1977) “every general theory of the city has to relate, in some way, to the social processes in the city with the spatial form that the city assumes” (p. 6).

In terms of Cervio (2020), from a structural perspective on socio-spatial segregation and the intensification of poverty conditions, the policies of sensitivities, in their daily and unnoticed operation, “create a set of walls (“mental” and “concrete”) around which cities are fragmented, leading to the emergence of a complex articulation of practices, experiences and conflicts” (p.138). Specifically, if we look at the sociospatial segmentations and segregations that occur in cities, we can see sectors populated by subjects who experience in their daily lives the fragility of this system which is precarious, clandestine and informal.

Following Lefebvre (2017) the phenomenon of segregation could be analyzed according to different criteria:

Ecological (shantytowns, poor neighborhoods, rot of the heart of the city), formal (deterioration of the signs and meanings of the city, degradation of the urban by fragmentation of its architectural elements) or sociological (levels and ways of life, ethnicities, cultures and subcultures. (p. 116)

Segregation, which Lefebvre described in Paris in 1967, would tend to enhance its results in relation to preventing “protest, opposition, and action” as it scatters spatially who would once participate (the working class, according to the author).

In working class neighborhoods, according to Garnier (2015), sociabilities linked to work could be traced given the proximity between factories and homes, as well as participation in political and cultural expressions of resistance. The same author refers to the fact that one of the fundamental objectives of urban policy was to “expel the popular classes to the periphery and

organize their spatial dispersion” (Garnier, 2015, p. 39) from urban planning and real estate speculation. In this way, socio-economic marginalization was added to the socio-spatial marginalization.

In Argentina, following Cervio (2020), the prototypical territories of poverty and social vulnerability are the villages and informal settlements since the mid-20th century. According to Alcalá (2007), a progressive and uninterrupted process of illegal occupations began in both fiscal and private lands since the 1970s, originating the process of urbanization with the construction of a minimum precarious housing and the irregular subdivision of the land. The provision of infrastructure was first clandestine and then consolidation could be recorded from residential constructions that were regularized. These urbanizations were connected by some access road that allowed the connection and supply with the rest of the city. In worse cases, they were in areas vulnerable to flooding and pollution, along with lagoons, river edges, cobbles, dumpsites, etc.

Some of these settlements eventually began a process of land regularization and urban improvement that were slow and generally unfinished. In addition, according to the author in these processes:

... roads with insufficient widths can be legalized both for the future extension of certain infrastructure and for the entry of vehicles, lots with widths and surfaces less than the regulatory one, lots without direct exit to public street, etc. For these reasons, although these processes represent a significant improvement in terms of legal security, it is difficult to guarantee that these neighborhoods can reach desirable urban and residential levels over time. (Alcalá, 2007, p. 45)

The author refers specifically to the case of the city of Resistencia in the province of Chaco, but considers that these situations are extensive to most Argentine cities and other countries in the south. In the case of Chile, taking the work of Campos-Knothe, (2025), informal settlements—known since the 1970s as “camps”—are characterized by a lack of access to services and by the occupation of areas exposed to environmental risks and disasters. The definition that the author takes based on the Ministry of Housing and Urbanism of Chile (MINVU) is the following:

A camp is defined as a settlement of eight or more households living in substandard housing that is clustered together and adjoining, that do not have regular tenure of the land they occupy, and that lack at least one of the three

basic services, i.e. drinking water, electricity and sewage. (Campos-Knothe, 2025, p.164)

In addition, according to data from the same ministry, between 2011 and 2020, camps in Chile grew by 22 %, equivalent to 145 new settlements in almost ten years (Campos-Knothe, 2025). The increase in informal urbanizations in recent years is a coincidence in several countries in Latin America and other continents such as Africa and Asia (UN-Habitat, 2022).<sup>1</sup> Following Kovacic (2022), who analyzes the cases of Brazil and South Africa, the persistence of informality can be linked to the social policies applied on “slums” (favelas) that do not lead to their decline, but produce new and adaptable forms of informality that tend to their reproduction.

Taking up Cervio (2020) “the social, economic, environmental and aesthetic impact that these urbanizations have on the urban fabric is undeniable, giving rise to different interventions by the State, as well as the real estate market” (p. 143). One of these interventions can be mentioned as the National Register of Popular Neighborhoods in the Process of Urban Integration (RENABAP), created in 2017 between the National State and various social organizations. From this first survey, the existence of more than 4000 popular neighborhoods throughout the country was detected and the Family Housing Certificate was also instituted as a sufficient document to prove the existence and veracity of the home, for the purposes of carrying out various procedures: requesting the connection of services such as running water, electricity, gas and sewers; requesting health, pension and educational benefits; making requests to public bodies; asking for the unique tax identification key and/or the unique labor identification key (Brizuela and Campana, 2020).

The survey keeps updating since its creation and there is a Manual for the conformation and updating of the National Register of Popular Neighborhoods (2023) that defines these as neighborhoods commonly called villas or settlements that were constituted through various land occupation strategies and that present different degrees of precariousness and overcrowding, a deficit in formal access to basic services and an irregular domain

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1 According to UN-Habitat (2022) data, more than 1 billion people live in slums and informal settlements worldwide, but their prevalence is highest in three regions that are home to around 85 per cent: Central and South Asia (359 million), East and Southeast Asia (306 million) and Sub-Saharan Africa (230 million).

situation in land tenure. However, there are some differences in relation to these types of housing developments, for example, villas, which according to Herzer *et al.* (2008) are defined as vacant urban land occupations that produce irregular plots and following Cravino (2018) these are located in the central area, in the Federal Capital and the first ring of the Buenos Aires conurbation. This type of settlement dates back to the early 20th century and its urban configuration is characterized by irregular streets and narrow corridors. On the other hand, the settlements are located more towards the periphery, in areas of lower population density and are characterized by imitating formal urbanizations in terms of the dimensions of the lots and the urban grid (Cravino, 2018).

A central aspect that encompasses the two types of urbanizations is “the extension of informal markets in the ways of production of urban land and housing” (Fernández Wagner, 2015, p. 32). Social processes ranging from tenancy in the villages (Rodríguez *et al.*, 2018) to land territoriality to establish settlements (Clichevsky, 2012) occur under a spectrum of informality, i.e., without a formal legal framework and in conditions linked to precariousness, vulnerability and poverty.

## **Methodological clarifications**

In order to carry out an analytical description of the informal urbanizations of La Matanza according to their general and specific characteristics of each area, this research uses qualitative primary data (semi-structured interviews) and quantitative secondary data (from RENABAP, 2023). We understand that these types of data are complementary and have the ability to be enhanced from a multi-method methodological strategy (De Sena, 2015) where different techniques and procedures are integrated on the same object of study to strengthen their reading and analysis.

Interviews were conducted in person to eight people from civil society organizations who carried out housing interventions in different neighborhoods of La Matanza between 2020 and 2023. These interviews focused on describing the role that CSOs have in housing issues, therefore, the dimensions that were addressed were: information about the interviewee, information about the organization and the link with the community – tasks, resources and strategies related to access to housing – links with other actors, emotions



related to the implementation of interventions for accessing to housing – how people who come to the organization feel, what they feel when intervening in the neighborhoods. Within this last dimension, descriptions were made about the neighborhoods where the organizations intervened, both in settlements and in villages of La Matanza. In some cases, the people who were part of these CSOs also inhabited these territories, in others they transited them by carrying out different activities that allowed them to know about these neighborhoods as external actors to them.

In other works, the role of CSOs in the network of actors that is formed around the housing problem was addressed (Bareiro Gardenal, 2023a) and also their practices and emotions (Bareiro Gardenal, 2023b; Faracce Macia and Bareiro Gardenal, 2025). Likewise, a distinction was made between those organizations internal to the neighborhoods (their creation and permanence is linked to the same territory where they carry out their activities and their members live there) and external to the neighborhoods (they have their headquarters in another place different from the territory where they carry out their interventions and their members do not live where they intervene). We use this distinction in this work to point out that some of the people interviewed live in the informal housing developments that they are going to describe and others “transit” them so that their living conditions are different. However, what we are interested in analyzing is how, from different perspectives, the informal urbanizations of La Matanza are described from the narratives of these two groups. Therefore, a matrix was made coding these interviews with respect to their descriptions of the slums of La Matanza in general and also according to area attending the CSO and whether the informant lived in the neighborhood or not.

In addition to this, a database was downloaded from the National Register of Popular Neighborhoods updated to 2023 that has the following variables: ID RENABAP, name of the neighborhood, number of families living in the neighborhood, year of creation of the neighborhood, decade of creation of the neighborhood, neighborhood typology (settlement, villa, degraded housing complex), domain situation, predominant situation on the connection to electricity, predominant situation on the connection to the water system, predominant situation on the connection to the gas system. The original base had information about the municipalities and departments of all the provinces of Argentina, but was leaked by those belonging to La Matanza, Buenos

Aires.<sup>2</sup> To complement the information regarding the localities and to be able to deepen on the differences in the areas, information was added from the [map.poblaciones.org](https://mapa.poblaciones.org)<sup>3</sup> portal in which different maps possible to modify according to the chosen indicators are accessed and visualized, in this case the data from RENABAP (2023) are also used for its elaboration.<sup>4</sup>

## **Informal settlements in La Matanza, between homogeneities and heterogeneities**

Below, we present some data that allow us to characterize the informal urbanizations in La Matanza. According to the data of Mapa Poblaciones based on RENABAP (2023), there are 163 neighborhoods distributed within the 16 localities of the district with a total of 65,132 families living in them. Likewise, the type of informal urbanization is distributed as follows: 50 are classified as villas, 110 as settlements and three as a degraded housing complex (map 1). And taking into account map 2, one aspect that can be observed is that in the area of the first settlement most are distributed as villas (red color) while settlements predominate in the second and third (in violet and light blue the three referred to as “degraded housing complex”), giving an account of a differentiated distribution with respect to the type of urbanization, the settlement and the location.

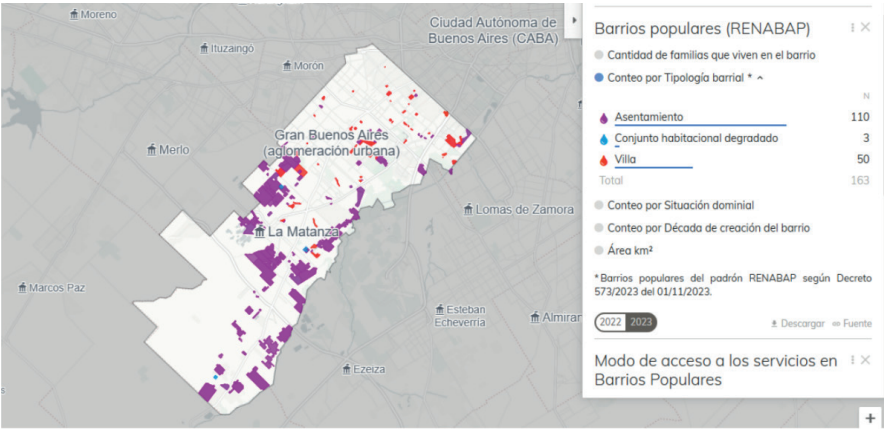
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2 On this basis the total neighborhood is 158.

3 Georeferencing and characterization of Popular Neighborhoods officially registered in RENABAP. Villas and settlements with a minimum of eight families grouped or adjoining, where more than half of its inhabitants do not have land title, nor formal access to at least two of the basic services (running water, electricity and/or sewage network) (Source: <https://mapa.poblaciones.org/map/191801>)

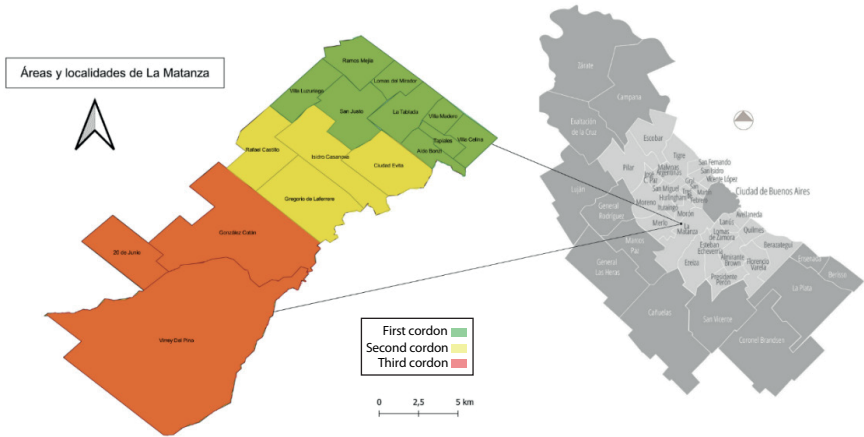
4 On this basis the total number of neighborhoods is 163.

**Map 1**  
*Type of informal urbanization in La Matanza*



Note. National Register of Popular Neighborhoods (RANABAP, 2023).<sup>5</sup>

**Map 2**  
*Areas and localities of La Matanza within the Metropolitan Region of Buenos Aires*



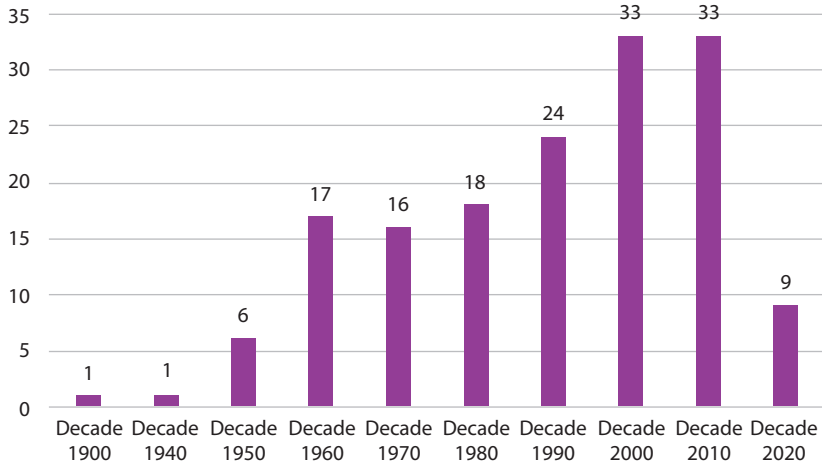
5 <https://mapa.poblaciones.org/map/191801>

As seen in the theoretical section, there are some differences in terms of the morphology of these types of urbanizations, but they also account for different socio-historical plots that link the conformation of the spatial and territorial with the social processes that take place there. From the qualitative approach, this distinction was reflected in the narratives of the interviews at the time of describing what problems linked to housing they detect in La Matanza. First, they draw some boundaries and borders between the first, second and third settlements:

There I would make a distinction ... from settlement one, i.e., from Route 4 for General Paz there are lots of villas, maybe covering one block ... and from there to the bottom, from Laferrere to Cañuelas, there are slums; first they were slums and then settlements. It is a general feature; it does not mean that there are no exceptions; maybe in Laferrere you will find a little village just like here. But in general, the villas are up to Casanova because in Casanova there is the Sanpete (*Villa “Saint Petersburg”*). From Casanova to General Paz, it is common to find villas. De Laferrere for the for the 35, 38, 40 (*kilometers of the Route 3*) are slums and settlements. This is a general characteristic, but it does not mean that everything is like that (OSC1, male, non-resident of an informal housing estate)

In other works (Bareiro Gardenal, 2023c) we have addressed the problem of land tenure and the creation of new informal settlements in La Matanza in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in the years 2020 and 2021. In this particular context, the health emergency—along with the food, housing and other emergencies—worsened the risky and precarious situation by adding the difficulty of complying with the slogans such as “stay at home” and “wash your hands with soap and water”, understanding that these territories lack basic services or are inefficient, in addition to the fact that they are overcrowded. Therefore, regarding the date of creation of the neighborhood, nine were created in the 2020s while most (66) have a date of creation between the 2000s and the 2010s. Likewise, 24 neighborhoods were created in the 1990s, there were 18 in the 80s, there were 16 in the 70s, there were 17 in the 60s and the remaining eight between 1900 and 1950 (figure 1).

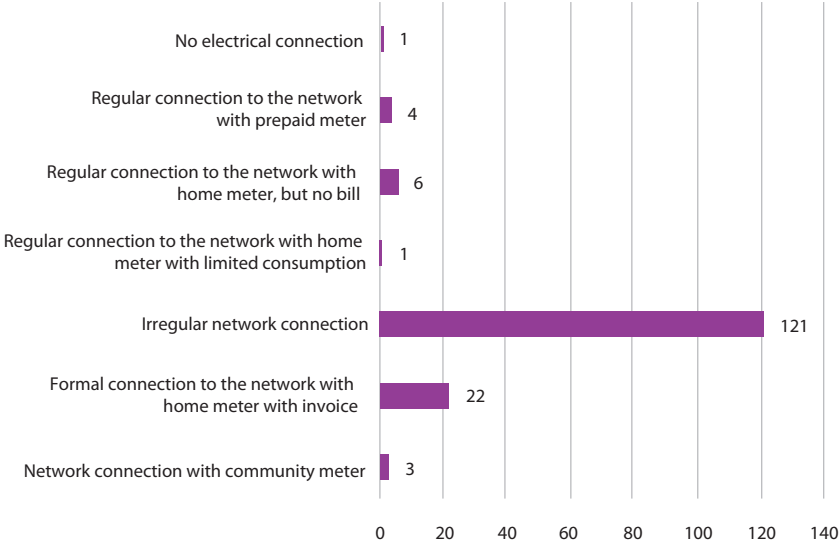
**Figure 1**  
*Decade of neighborhood creation*



*Note.* National Register of Popular Neighborhoods (RANABAP, 2023).

Given that access to land occurs informally and is linked to population poverty, lack of employment and/or labor informality, as well as low wages (Clichevsky, 2012), these lands are not urbanized or, if so, present precarious conditions (Alcalá, 2007). In this way, the structure on which those who live in these territories are based is predominantly the connection of irregular services, which presents risks with regard to living conditions. Figure 2 shows that most neighborhoods (121) have an irregular electricity connection, one has no connection, and 22 have a formal connection with a meter. Of the connections considered ‘regular’, six are home meters without invoice, four are pre-paid meters, three are community meters and one is a home meter with limited consumption.

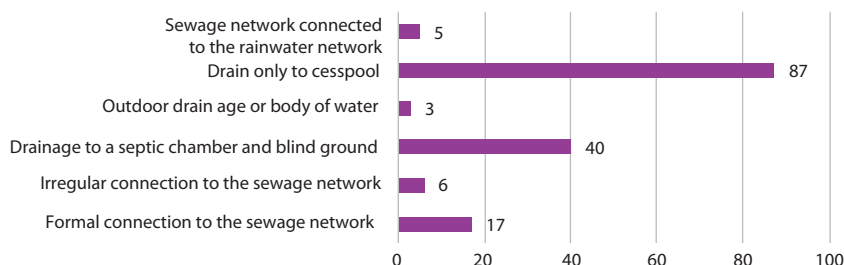
**Figure 2**  
*Prevailing situation on electricity connection*



*Note.* National Register of Popular Neighborhoods (RANABAP, 2023).

In relation to the sewage network, we observe different types of precarious and/or irregular connections as it happens with the electricity network. In general, the drain to cesspool predominates (87) followed by the septic chamber and well drain (40). There are also irregular connections to the sewage network (6) and formal connections (17). There are five neighborhoods that connect the sewage network to the storm network (i.e., the network that drains rainwater) and three leave their drains outdoors or to a body of water.

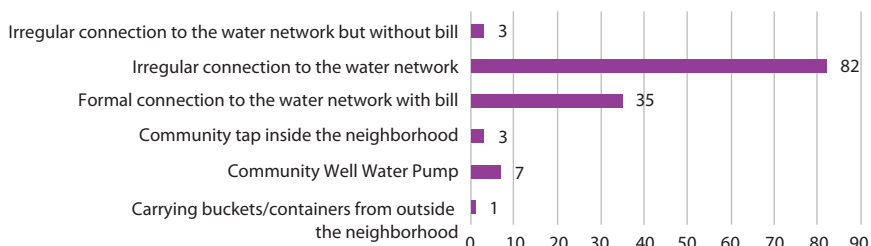
**Figure 3**  
*Prevailing situation on sewage connection*



*Note.* National Register of Popular Neighborhoods (RANABAP, 2023).

In addition to the connection to electricity and the sewage network, water is an indicator that is directly linked to the health of the population and as shown in figure 4. It is generally accessed irregularly (82 neighborhoods) while 35 have a formal connection with a bill, three do so without a bill and the others resort to other community modalities (tap inside the neighborhood, community well water pump) and outside the neighborhood (carrying buckets/containers).

**Figure 4**  
*Prevailing status of connection to the water network*



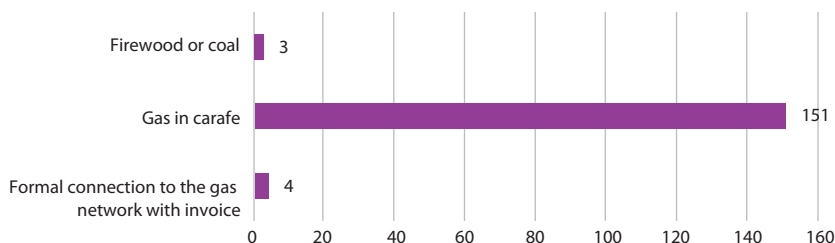
*Note.* National Register of Popular Neighborhoods (RANABAP, 2023).

In the case of gas, this is predominantly achieved from the purchase of carafes (Figure 5). In this case, it must be considered the high price of the packaged gas, the quantity required to be purchased per month and the risks

associated with its use.<sup>6</sup> Only four neighborhoods have access to the gas grid with electricity bills and three use firewood or coal.

**Figure 5**

*Prevailing situation on gas grid connection*



*Note.* National Register of Popular Neighborhoods (RANABAP, 2023).

As reviewed in De Sena (2020), access to basic services and other indicators of habitability such as overcrowding, as well as socioeconomic status, education, health and employment, worsen from the first to the second and third settlement of La Matanza. An index developed by the author on basic living conditions, which includes the aforementioned variables, identifies that in the first settlement most (69.7 %) do have basic living conditions, but this changes in the second and third slum, in which the population represents almost half (47.8 and 44.1 % respectively). Regarding the localities where those who do not have the basic conditions are located, González Catán stands out with 30.4 %, Rafael Castillo with 34.8 %, Ciudad Evita with 13 %, Gregorio de Laferrere with 4.3 %, Ramos Mejía with 4.3 % and San Justo with 4.3 %. This gives an account of some heterogeneities.

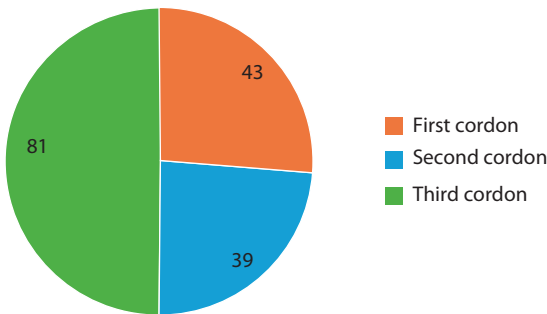
As mentioned above, there are some traits in the characterization of informal housing estates according to the slum and according to the locality. Most of the informal settlements are located in the third slum with 81, followed by the first slum with 43 and the second with 39 (figure 6). If we look at what happens according to localities, following figure 7, González Catán and Virrey del Pino are the ones that nucleate the majority with 44 and 37 respec-

<sup>6</sup> Reference prices for 2024 (in Argentine pesos) are: 10 kg carafe: \$10 500, 12 kg carafe: \$12 600, 15 kg carafe: \$15 750 (Resolution 216/2024) <https://bit.ly/40TnQ6n> More information at: <https://bit.ly/40BelqX>



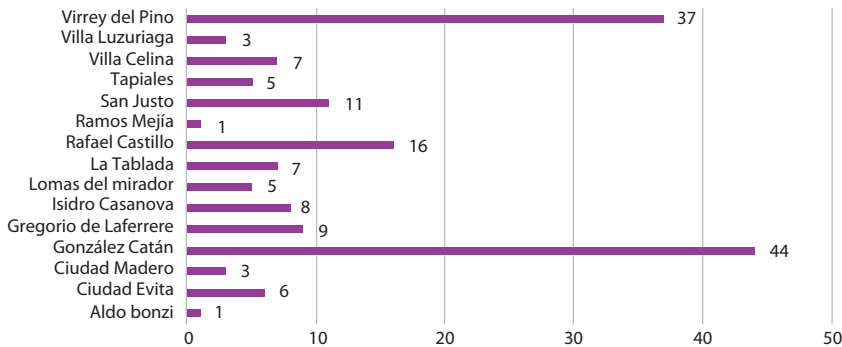
tively and both are part of the third slum. However, the locality that follows in quantity is Rafael Castillo with 16 and this is from the second slum. They continue in order San Justo (11), Gregorio de Laferrere (9), Isidro Casanova (8), La Tablada (7), Villa Celina (7), Ciudad Evita (6), Lomas del Mirador (5), Tapiales (5), Villa Luzuriaga (3), Ciudad Madero (3) and Aldo Bonzi (1).

**Figure 6**  
*Informal housing estates according to La Matanza*



*Note.* National Register of Popular Neighborhoods (RANABAP, 2023).

**Figure 7**  
*Informal housing estates by location*



*Note.* National Register of Popular Neighborhoods (RANABAP, 2023).

In what follows, we will focus on qualitative data to establish connections between the sensitivities that emerge around the housing problem linked to the different informal urbanizations of each slum of La Matanza. In each case, we will review the description of the subjects interviewed about the following aspects: the origin of the neighborhood, the infrastructure of the neighborhood and access to basic services.

## **First cord**

The localities that make up the first slum extend, some of them, along General Paz Avenue, which is one of the first borders indicated to divide —materially and symbolically— the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (CABA) with the areas that make up its conurbation and belong to the province of Buenos Aires, as is the case of La Matanza. Its proximity to CABA establishes certain socio-historical structures because they were the first territories to begin to urbanize as the urban fabric begins to expand throughout the 20th century. They were also the first places where the emergency villages that were in the Federal Capital were relocated, within the framework of an eradication policy that begins in the late 60s and continues during the 70s and 80s (Oszlak, 2017; Moreno, 2002).

In the following interview fragment, the notion of Transient Housing Nuclei (NHT) that were built within the framework of these eradication plans is highlighted. Specifically in the period 1968 to 1971 a total of 83 villages with 35 691 people were eradicated in the period 1968 to 1971, of which 25 052 were housed in the NHT. These were transformed into permanent residences, housing that had a high precariousness of materials and construction systems (Yujnovsky, 1984). Some were located in the first slum of La Matanza:

When the dictatorship arrives, it takes a series of measures... that took people out of the capital city and sent them here, to La Matanza to the transient housing centers such as Puerta de Hierro, Palito... I don't know if I have forgotten any... They took them out and sent them here with the promise that they were transient and were eternal. Today it has been more than 50 years, so we also say that it is a debt of our democracy to the land and housing because we failed in democracy to give a solution to the large housing deficit that has the province of Buenos Aires and the country. (OSC1, male, non-resident of an informal housing estate)

Not all the villages in this area started as NHT but there are different origins. In addition to the Av. Gen. Paz, another of the borders that delimits the spaces is the Provincial Route N°4, colloquially called “Camino de Cintura” since it crosses several municipalities of the Buenos Aires conurbation and also divides some localities of the first slum with those of the second slum. On this route are located some of the villas present in the area and also on Av. Crovara, across to the first.

I live in Aldo Bonzi, just over Camino de Cintura, i.e., Route 4; there are four aisles, it is like a T. We now know our corridors and how we are part of the territory through the national survey of popular neighborhoods. We didn't exist, we were a point, i.e., we didn't exist in the GPS, we didn't exist in the maps, we didn't exist anywhere... it was a field. We were green. Today I know that the corridor in my house is like this, I know how many people live in each of the corridors. (OSC4, Male, inhabitant of a village of the first cordon)

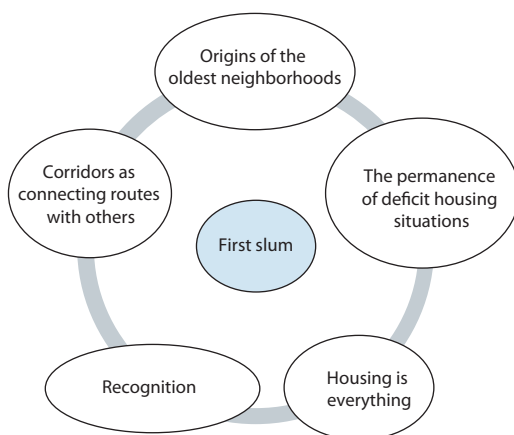
In the previous fragment, some sensitivities associated with the recognition by the State from a social policy that in turn allows to have greater knowledge about the territory in which they live: the corridors of the village, its corridors. Other emotions linked to the house as a place that structures and organizes daily life are described below:

As I told you, I have a house, it is small, we do not have gas because there is no gas; there is no gas in the villas in general nor in many formal neighborhoods... I have an electric thermotank at home, which I connect... I built my house, and I did it step by step, and now there are things that I want to change and I save money... for me the house is a lot, it is everything, is... where I live, where I eat, the house is part of us... it is our habitat. (OSC4, Male, inhabitant of a village of the first cordon)

From this qualitative approach, we can link some structural issues characteristic of this area and linked to each other: the historical origin of the villas that were formed there, the recognition of these territories, but still the absence of some basic services, the claim for the permanence of precariousness, the housing deficit and the notion of house and the corridors of the villa as the ways of connection with others (Figure 1).

## Figure 1

*Sensitivities associated with the informal urbanizations of the first slum of La Matanza*



## Second slum

We review in the previous sections that the area of the second and third slum is characterized by having more informal settlements and land tenures. According to Gusfield (2014), the policy in the late 90s and early new century in relation to informal settlements begins to change perspective moving from eradication to regulation, informal urbanizations begin to densify and extend to the peripheries. In these places, the experiences of self-construction as interstitial spaces stand out. Although they do not subvert the naturalized/naturalizing social order, their power lies in offering/building a collective opportunity to think about alternative ways of the social where affectivity is a central node (Cervio, 2018).

All the neighbors that are here are because of settlements since (year) 86 imagine... they lived in assemblies helping neighbors of the neighborhoods that they created afterwards... they supplied themselves, they installed their own meter... they bought the meters, did everything regarding water... imagine and afterwards the municipality wants to take out what is yours... is the worst thing they could do. The neighbors always remember that in 2000 they armed each other to defend and protect what they have installed...

*E. And why did they want them out?*

Because they wanted to put it for another neighborhood ... but as they told the people from the municipality, we paid for it and if you remove it you are affecting us. And it is the only phase we have here, the only meter that is inside the neighborhood... (OSC6, woman, inhabitant of a settlement of the second slum)

The above fragment can also be related to sensitivities linked to certain trust-distrust schemes towards one another, the neighbors, the municipality. Cervio and De Sena (2017) pointed out that, for a long time, many of the interactions that take place in cities have been built largely from distrust, i.e., supported by the construction of the other (anonymous, unknown) as a threat or, at least, as “possessor/deserving” of a limited reliability. This can also be analyzed in the following fragment linked to the infrastructure of the neighborhood:

In the neighborhood when it rains, we can not leave ... we have told the municipality and to this day we do not have an answer. (...) we are stranded here, I can't take him to school because it floods, you can't go to the hospital if there is an urgency, we don't have buses, so we don't have another way out. (OSC6, woman, inhabitant of a settlement of the second slum)

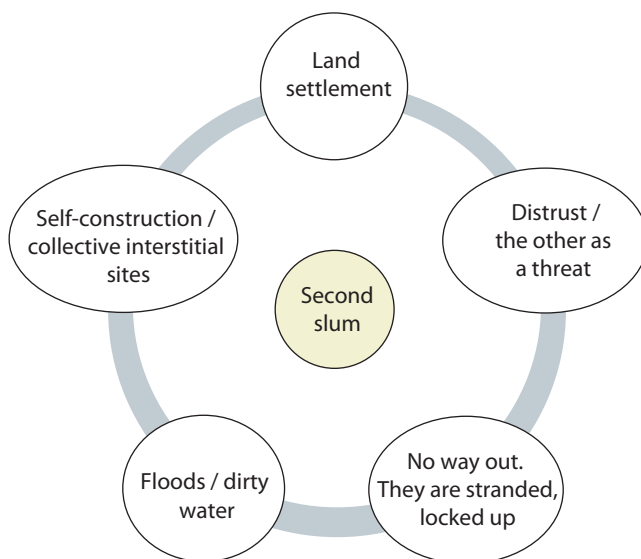
“To be stranded” refers to being stopped or stuck in time (RAE, 2024), in this sense the link between time and space and the organization of life based on these structural parameters is no less (Giddens, 2003). The “mental and concrete” walls (Cervio, 2020) are becoming increasingly evident in this habitat linked to lack, to the “worlds of no” (Scribano and De Sena, 2016) in the infrastructure of the neighborhood and in access to an essential resource such as water:

We do not have water now... there Is a little at dawn, then it no longer comes out and all day we have no water and that's it, I presented, but to this day we do not have an answer to that problem of water ... and is stagnant, then when the water comes It comes all dirty. (OSC6, woman, inhabitant of a settlement of the second slum)

In this way, the sensitivities associated with the informal urbanizations of the second slum have connections with some issues different from those of the first, as shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

*Sensitivities associated with the informal urbanizations of the second slum of La Matanza*



### **Third slum**

In coincidence with the informal urbanizations of the second slum, in this area the beginning of the neighborhood is also located from a settlement but in this case since the 1990s. There are also collective social practices that were formed to push the limits imposed on the “worlds of rejections”. These practices activate the recovery of the capacity to do with others and for others in nearby spaces (Cervio, 2018).

I’ve lived here in the neighborhood for 30 years. I tell you that this was a slum, so there was nothing, and... and well, with the same neighbors we started to see the need we had, we had no buses, we had no lighting, we had no street, we had no sidewalk. So we decided to set up the neighborhood board. Uh... the neighborhood board starts working through the statute rethinking what our need was and well, changing our quality of life. And through that we can achieve asphalt, which is lighting, sidewalk projects, among other things. We help

others. If they call us and they have the resources and the materials, we go and accompany them. (OSC2, woman, inhabitant of a settlement of the third slum)

While there are some homogeneities that link most informal housing estates as the unsafe/irregular connection to basic services in the third slum, there are certain heterogeneities in this area that are important to mention. The first relates to the remoteness of the territory:

In a neighborhood of Virrey del Pino that is called the last slum of the conurbation because it is really very far, and is one of the most forgotten, then that is where we always felt that we had to help more (...) signatures were gathered to claim for the light in a neighborhood and people did not even notice, it is frustrating. (OSC3, male, non-inhabitant of an informal urbanization)

Sensitivities linked to the “distant” have both a spatial and a temporal implication. It is far a point (a) in relation to another point/s (b, c, d, e, f, etc.) and that movement from one side to another carries greater bodily, mental, emotional energies. Scribano (2010) describes capitalism as a great energy predatory machine that consists in the appropriation of all forms of energy, involving the dispossession of common goods (related to the environmental) such as water, air and land, as well as bodily energies. This predatory process “does not consist in the mere alienation of goods, resources and energies, but in destruction and death” (Scribano and De Sena, 2013, p. 211).

The latter gives rise to another difference that, for the moment, could be captured in the descriptions made about the third slum, the imminent catastrophes as a result of occupying places that involve risks when settling on them – wetlands, streams, coasts – and/or that are environmentally degraded – garbage dumps, contaminated lands, fumigated –.

There was a very important flood in several neighborhoods of La Matanza in October 2019 and in Nicole (*settlement located in Virrey del Pino*). It was tremendous because the neighborhood grew up in such a way that today the Morales Creek is in the bottom and there are homes that occupy an area that should not be occupied because if the creek grows it floods and well, it is occupied and many of those homes were flooded and they lost everything. (OSC5, female, non-resident of an informal housing estate)

In this sense, one more factor is added to the sensitivities associated with these informal urbanizations. Proximity to pollution and potential for death (Figure 3).

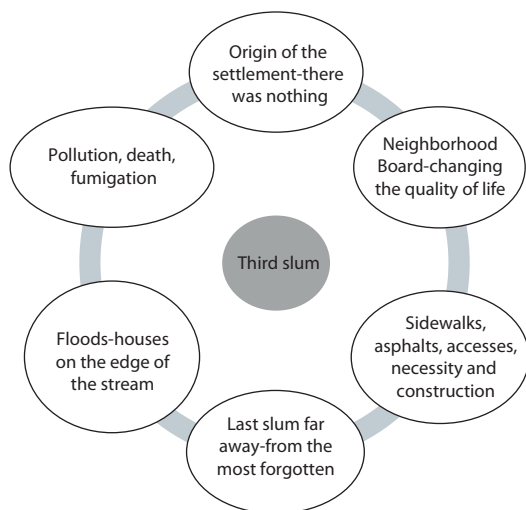
We accompany the issue of pollution -*company name*-, we have had several meetings in La Plata... several meetings .... with OPDS ... the last meeting was just pre-pandemic with the -*company name* lawyers, because they say they do not pollute, but most people there have died of cancer, i.e., there is pollution.

*E: And are there neighborhoods around?*

There is a neighborhood that is prior to the installation of the company. Did you see? And now there is glyphosate contamination at the bottom of (*neighborhood*) Nicole also because there are... there are several large acres with soybean planting and they are spraying with glyphosate. So that's a pretty hunchback problem, too. (OSC1, male, non-resident of an informal housing estate)

### Figure 3

*Sensitivities associated with the informal housing estates of the third slum of La Matanza*



### Conclusions

This article aimed to describe and analyze the informal urbanizations of La Matanza distinguishing the characteristics they present in each area or slum



in which this territory is segmented. In this way, both qualitative and quantitative data were observed, homogeneities (deficit infrastructure of neighborhoods, irregularity in services and land domain) and heterogeneities (origin of neighborhoods, differences between villages/settlements, problems related to the environment such as pollution, floods, degraded territories).

Another objective was to link the informal urbanizations of each slum to some sensitivities as cognitive-affective practices that organize daily life, order preferences and values, establish parameters for the management of time/space (Scribano and De Sena, 2019). The habitation (*sensu* Lefebvre) in these territories where vulnerability, irregularity, lack and risk predominate, becomes increasingly difficult as other “walls” that establish coagulated temporal and spatial rhythms, i.e., increasingly dense and heavy to sustain, are added.

The villas of the first slum could be associated with the permanence of the deficit housing situations as “unless if” (Scribano, 2010) but at the same time there is a plot related to “recognizing” that they exist (the corridors of the villas, the housing, the housing deficit). On the other hand, in the informal settlements of the second and third slum, there is something related to being forgotten, to being far away, to being “stranded”, to the lack of response. These sensitivities are woven around interstitial spaces that allow collective practices (neighborhood meetings, assemblies, self-construction, self-management of resources) but also insecurity, threat and distrust of other social actors (State, companies, organizations, other neighbors).

There are still many spaces to continue exploring in relation to these territories, their emotions and sensitivities. In terms of Lindón (2009) the transversalities and analytical intersections between the body, emotions, the city and spatiality from the perspectives of the inhabitants result in a powerful mechanism for understanding social processes. In future works, it is expected to continue to address, from the qualitative, the perspectives of the inhabitant subject with its corporeality and emotionality in relation to the housing problem of La Matanza.

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Author	Contributions
<b>Florencia Bareiro Gardenal</b>	Roles: conceptualization, methodology, software, validation, formal analysis, research, resources, data curation, original draft-writing, review-writing and editing, visualization, supervision, project management, fund acquisition.