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The 'She-Land,' social consequences of the sexualized construction of landscape in North Patagonia

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This article voices a perspective founded in gender geography and regional history, through the study of the symbolic constitution of core and peripheral areas inside Chile and Argentina. This analysis focuses upon the Patagonian territory and aims to reveal the use of female stereotyped metaphors as the basis for territorial subalternity. At this point, revision of Patagonian history shows that this construction of landscape is related to territorial integration, and could have been seen as gender ideology because of the metaphors involved in the State's arguments. This idea is illustrated with an ongoing nationalist discourse established in Patagonia since the 1930s, which operates as a permanent patriarchal reference and allows the projection of gender metaphors in land. It also takes the particular experience of Patagonian women to question the recognition of the problem behind the construction of landscape and the geographical and historical patriarchal order. As a result of this process, the possibility to argue against the subordination of the region emerges from highlighting feminine metaphors of land and feminine praxis, which nowadays confront both the landscape's official interpretation and an unequal access to resources.

Keywords: Patagonia; landscape; National State; feminization; subordination

This article discusses Patagonia's integration into Argentina and how there remains a permanent illusion of this region as deficient, poor and helpless. I review different documents that demonstrate that such illusion is anchored in a predetermined discrimination of 'land' as a 'woman' with a changing character, according to the argument of subordination sustained by the Argentinean and Chilean States. From the decolonial perspective, authors such as Escobar (2005), Grosfoguel (2003) or Quijano (2000) reveal that colonialism still survives in multiple hierarchies, supported in international division or work, the ethnic and racial hierarchies and class differences. Within Argentina's debates about social inequalities, Adamovsky (2009) recognized strong racist elements in the constitution of Argentine identity. In connection with this issue, Quijada (2000) noted that the social diversity in Argentina during the nineteenth century made it necessary that a unified sense of identity be created; that element was the land.

Patagonia is not only an Argentine territory, it is also a frontier. According to Bhabha (1994), the frontier is an area of open meanings. The author indicates that frontiers have Jano's face, looking at the same time the inside and outside: an in-between space where cultural and political authority is negotiated. From this perspective, the nation is a narration, and is central in the process of naturalizing the dominant logics which was

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installed at that time. Navarro (2012) analyzes that the notion of frontier projected in Patagonia in nineteenth century was a cultural rather than national reference. In line with the thought of the influential Argentinean politician, Sarmiento (1874), Patagonia, as a desert, was the border to barbarism, and barbarism set a limit to the possibility of building a modern nation.

Taking into account these debates, I explore gendered and geographical dimensions to rethink the larger problem of colonialism and social hierarchies. Patagonia's geography, especially the mountainous region border with Chile, was described as the material reference for those nations that were being built (Núñez, Sánchez, and Arenas 2013), and that reference adopted gender metaphors as the key to justify the imposition of a fixed territorial order associated with a social hierarchy established in both racist and sexist terms.

The article contributes to current Andean historical and geographical studies providing a gender perspective that will help to explore the complexities involved in understanding the diverse ways of living in this landscape, apart from the official discourses of an unequal destiny which needs to be reshaped. Consequently, in a reflection where the human practices are observed from their environmental interaction, these pages are in dialogue with ecofeminism, because, as Puleo (2011) indicates, the territorial sexist metaphors are the basis of an asymmetrical recognition of society. So, investigating space in a more egalitarian fashion is key to opening up an emancipatory debate.

Colonialism was replicated within the Latin American countries. The relationship between the capital cities of Argentina and Chile, Buenos Aires and Santiago, and the subordinated territories – the Argentinean National Territories or the Chilean South, where Patagonia was included – highlights the particular dependence policies, which Navarro (2004) named as 'inner colonialism.' To understand the web that supports the daily exercise of inequity, the existing colonialism in Patagonia can be interpreted through feminist geographies because of the sexist metaphors existing within these discourses. As Baydar (2012) notes, territory is never neutral. Space and sexuality are inevitably intertwined and sexuality cannot be confined to narrow definitions of sexed bodies as it permeates all material and representational practices. Following her idea, the landscape in itself could be seen as affected and constructed by those representations and preconceptions.

Patagonia is a heteropatriarchal matrix, and many people are not placed comfortably within the limits of action that this representation builds. The inner colonialism has been rooted in a centralist geography, which operates with a patriarchal logic. This evidences that, from its exogenous and superior position, the center decides what is best for the region without consulting, i.e., the center takes 'reason' as its property, assuming that the best for itself is the best for the whole country.

The language dimension is another aspect to consider. Patagonia was first described in Spanish, which introduces a subtle but important slant. The articles in Spanish grammar have gender; thereby the land is classified as feminine and is a 'she-land' directly projected in the 'mother-land' metaphor, usually associated with agrarian activities or cultures. The concept of 'Pachamama' ('Mother Land' in Quechua) is a classical reference to the original people of the South American Andes. The 'gendered' articles not always have these projections. For example, even though 'landscape' is a masculine word in Spanish, the land has a stronger female character. This female character ties the non-urban landscape to a feminine consideration, because of its referral to the 'land' or 'nature,' another female word.

All these characters, the nature, the savage land, or the woman, seemed to have grown in a Patagonia assumed as homogeneous. But it is a diverse space where its diversity is

eclipsed by the subordinated presentation. This geographical amplitude makes it necessary to trim the study of references into a smaller space, a specific Chilean–Argentine corridor, where it is evident how heteronormative social matrices introduce dynamics of disciplining the landscape.

The Chilean–Argentine corridor is the one which runs from the Pacific Ocean up to the Argentinean steppes of the Province of Río Negro and includes the cities of Puerto Montt and Osorno in Chile and San Carlos de Bariloche in Nahuel Huapi National Park. The towns of Pilcaniyeu and Comallo in the Steppe are also found in this corridor. Research shows different female models in this area and the parallel territorial policies associated with them throughout history.

Girbal-Blanca (2008) indicates that Argentina could be divided in three regions; first, the central zone, that includes the humid Pampa; second, the provinces, with a political organization inherited from the Spanish colonial period; and third, the historical National Territories, which were areas outside the Spanish domain, under control of original people. Those territories were incorporated into the Argentinean State at the end of the nineteenth century; however, the central government denied the political rights to all their inhabitants. This policy was based on the region's low population density, which was taken as a synonym of incapacity to decide what was best for the area. Patagonia is the main part of these National Territories, and consequently, all its growth and development were oriented to satisfy the needs and demands of the Center.

In Chile, the dependence pattern is similar. As most of the Chilean provinces, southern Chile had its authorities appointed by the central government; for 70 years, the local decisions were controlled by the Ministry of Interior (Iuorno 2013). Even nowadays, the development is defined according to the interests of the central region.

During the nineteenth century, the Argentinean State conquered the regions controlled by original people by means of a military campaign called 'The Desert conquest,' because native people were considered as intruders. In Chile, a similar process occurred and it was termed 'The Pacification of Araucania.' The Mapuche population was recognized as enemies by the Chilean State. In both cases, the State assumed that development would only be achieved through its organization. Both southern territories were incorporated as lands in need of joining a modern destiny (Navarro 2004; Almonacid 2009a). From the State's perspective, the savage nature of Patagonia could only be controlled and organized when the State became 'Father.' The Father metaphor symbolizes Patagonia's entire development. The notion of desert permeates official documentation: it appears in the debates of the Senator's Chamber (Daily Sessions [1858]1859) and is linked with the idea that it was essential to control that space because the desert was synonymous with sterility. After the military conquest, the need to dominate Patagonia was central to government policies. In official debates, the Patagonian land appeared as a rich supply of resources for national development and to make in-depth studies of the region was seen as crucial for the future of the country (Daily Sessions 1902, 932).

Sterility was associated with the absence of State and civilization (Navarro 2007). This has a feminine side, because the fertility of this virginal space depends on the masculine hand of the producers. Many local and foreign documents address the topic of production in Patagonia. Willis's investigation, published in 1914 and 1943, was the first systematic study about the possibilities of development, assuming that emptiness was a distinctive feature of the region. These ideas were reformulated by Sarobe in 1935. This author argues in favor of specific lines of migration, as the start of a new logic of production, also based in changes in public policies. During the second half of the twentieth century, the idea of sterile-desert-*virginal* emptied of humanity, even when people actually lived in the area

reappeared again. The original people, and also many small producers, became invisible to a State which homologates the virginal judgment of land with preconceptions as vacuum and incomplete. The feminine side appears in the paternalistic view projected in this interpretation of land.

In addition to the paternal constitution of the territorial order, the legitimation of hierarchical geography was sustained in metaphors that described Patagonia with alternative feminine terms, according to different National policies. This process led to assumed dependence as an evident outcome, while the public policies accentuated the gender and territorial differences. The territory is never an objective reference or an a-priori entity, so the symbolic constitution of land crosses the symbolic constitution of subjects. Thereby, feminist critics allow the questioning of the values framework of society and its impacts in material practices. Through time, gender geography has acquired central concepts of geography, proving that the hierarchies and power relations have historically underscored the sexual identification of places (Baydar 2012). According to Little, Peake, and Richardson (1988) the socio-economic, political and environmental processes create, reproduce and transform the places to live and the relationship between men and women, as well as the impact of gender relationship in those processes. Their most significant suggestion is the recognition of the geographical fluidity between landscape and social practices. The porosity appears in the boundaries of the concepts.

Navarro and Williams (2010) examine the geographical debates about Patagonia at the beginning of twentieth century. They bring to light the official decision to ignore the existing diversity in Patagonia. The Argentinean government tried to sustain the landscape of the *Pampas* as the most representative of Argentina while stereotyping the images of the rest of the country. The homogenized land of Patagonia was represented as a woman, and the feminized territory had limited ability to make decisions about its own interests. This operated as the main reference to argument the limitations of the Patagonian inhabitants' political rights. The area emerged feminized as a national strategy to consolidate the unequal integration.

For this analysis, this article contains, on one hand, historical documentation; especially the touristic journals and touristic guides of the 1930s published by the institutions that have played a key role in giving meaning to the landscape: the National Railways in Chile (National Railways of Chile 1933–45), and the National Parks Bureau in Argentina (National Parks Bureau 1938). These repositories are filled with references to significant books, published in subsequent years. These documents are articulated with oral sources. Since 2009, participant observations in social organizations of the vulnerable sectors of North Patagonia opened a door to the rescue of memories of small scale rural producers.¹ These testimonies are complemented with a 10-day workshop for reflection named 'Memories workshop,' which was carried out between 2010 and 2012. The 'Memories Workshop' interviewed about 60 small rural producers and sought to recover the productive memories of the Patagonian mountain and steppe inhabitants.

Feminine metaphors

In 1870 William Hudson² wrote 'Idle Days in Patagonia.' In this book, he described his observations about one of most inhospitable corners of the world. He presented the Nature as a woman and understood that the obligation of civilization is to dominate such a savage force. Both, Argentina and Chile used the idea of a savage land that is dangerous, as an argument to legitimize their military advance. Hudson described Patagonia as an untamed landscape and was fascinated by the experience. Patagonian nature, in his words, was

a fickle and capricious thing and difficult to govern. The naturalist compared the geography to a beautiful and cruel undine, a pretty mythological woman that looks the most beautiful in her ferocity. Hudson also contrasted the Patagonian and English landscapes. The Argentinean Steppe was presented as free savage forces, the English countryside, as the image of modernity at the time. He wrote that Patagonian Nature differed from England's domesticated Nature, which he described as obedient and hardworking, guide by a man that imposed tasks on her (see Hudson 1997). This last image illustrates the State's objectives for the region.

The official documents assume this conception from the previous mentioned concepts of barren desert or virginal characterization of land (Daily Sessions 1853–1904). They highlight the paternalism, because most of the references invoked the need for control as a basis for improvement. Patagonia could not be thought of or defined by itself, and all inhabitants, original people or immigrants, were affected by these considerations. Vallejo and Miranda (2004) indicate that nineteenth century Argentinean thought was impacted by a Lamarckian variant of Social Darwinism. In that context, the environmental characteristics were perceived as determinants of the inhabitants, whether they were originals or immigrants.

Among the different documentary sources, it is in memoirs of travelers, mostly climbers, where the female idea of land can be seen neatly illustrated. In 1952, the Yearbook of CAB (1932–54) affirmed that due to the wilderness of the area, trekking in the southern Andes was harder than in the Alps. Climbers said that, in this virginal forest, the mere approach to the base of a mountain was already an adventure. The dense forest vegetation, the lack of cleared paths, and also the long distances from the nearest towns and resources made it more demanding. In the account, they describe Patagonian Nature as if it were naked, as an obscene challenge (Venzano and Lamuniere 1952, 9).

Argentina and Chile under took the challenge of settling Patagonia. At that time, it was considered that, assuming that the environment defines people, the desert was partly responsible for the region's state of barbarism (Vallejo and Miranda 2004; Navarro 2012). In the emblematic book of Domingo Sarmiento,³ 'Facundo, Civilization or Barbarism in Argentinean Pampas' (first edition in 1845), the desert, due to its environmental characteristics, was described as the factor that prevented Argentina from achieving any kind of modernity. Sarmiento argued that the desert builds wildness. It was the opposite of the urban, not in the architecture, but as regards the model of country that the National State tried to build. South American countries were formed based upon classist and racist bases which consolidated an exclusionary citizenship, while idealizing the economical and social process of the central areas (Adamovsky 2009). These regions became the model of modern development. Gómez (2012) admits that the capitalist organization of territory was responsible for the unequal relationship between regions and within the social fabric. The author stresses the disregard for the value of reproductive work, which rests on unpaid women hands. Such indifference operates lowering the costs of maintenance and reproduction of capitalist society, but it also project the different recognition when constructing space. This idea can be projected in the 'she-land.' The ideal model was concentrated in specific regions and only worked for certain social group. Moreover, appealing to paternalistic arguments, the efforts or developments of other areas were dismissed as any subordinated group.

In the South of Chile and Argentina, the idea of 'Patagonia as a danger' turned into 'Patagonia as promise' through military occupation (Navarro 2007), and Hudson's image of a mythical woman developed into a variety of different – but real and subordinate – women. It should be noted that during the first decades after Patagonia's conquest, in the

southern lands there were several autarkic economic developments, always associated with international trade in wool and private resources. Coronato (2010) suggests that during those years, both States prioritized the localization of private capital over national projects and promoted the monopolization of production. These policies resulted in an image of Patagonia as a region with only sheep and trade enterprises. As Figure 1 shows, domesticated animals and the sign of an international company appear, but hardly any human being. Until the beginning of the twentieth century, this type of image symbolized progress in the Argentinean and the Chilean Patagonia.

Argentina assumed that sheep breeding was the only possible way to modernize Patagonia, and at the same time recognized the need to establish a new type of population. Until the 1920s, the migration in the mentioned corridor was organized as a result of international trade. Here, the frontier between Argentina and Chile was open and both countries understood that development in this remote place would only be possible by the integration of their activities. Consequently, several productive corridors were established

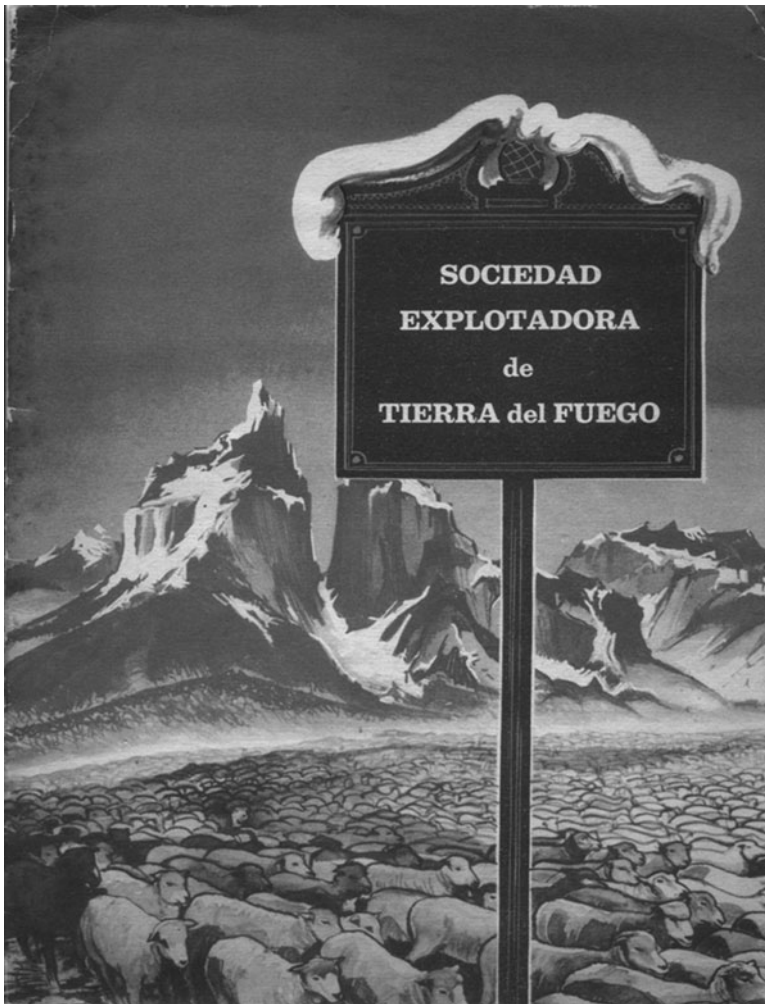


Figure 1. Memory of SETF cover.

for international trade. Moreover, the Chilean history points out the German population in the south as the base for the initial phase of industrialization, which took place in cities such as Valdivia and Osorno (Almonacid 2009b). Argentina, meanwhile, gave territorial privileges to British citizens for sheep breeding in large ranches and farm productions in the Andean Valleys. In this corridor, the production was industrialized in Chile, with capitals linked to Germany. Taking a capitalist approach, both Argentina and Chile's south pursued primary and secondary rural production as a way to begin controlling the wilderness of Patagonia.

The Nations depicted Patagonia as a woman because it was incomplete, capricious and contained a small population. And as a woman, free to her initiatives and ideas, she was a danger to herself or to the countries (Cibils 1902; Sarobe 1935; Ygobone 1947). The latter characteristic was used as an argument to show that Patagonian inhabitants were not qualified to organize their own region. Being a small population was taken as indicative of their limited competences, projecting a territorial integration in terms of 'minority.' The result was restricted autonomy, not only in the design of public policies, but also in the granting of permits to develop their own region (Iuorno 2008).

Taking Bachelard's concepts, Saïd (1994) mentions that it is more important the poetic quality with which the space is provided, than the material space itself. The feminine metaphors of land are rooted in the poetic. In Argentina, the feminine ferocity of the environment was dominated by farm and ranch activities, but they were always insufficient to reverse the reasons for national paternalism (Sarmiento 1874). The land images reiterated and reinforced the importance of the National State intervention (Sarobe 1935); they expressed a geographical logic of subordination. Until 1920, the mythical woman was presented as the bedrock of the domination strategies, where the imposed rationality was recognized in the international character of trade.

During the World War I, that disrupted the economic development in both countries, this feminine configuration of landscape changed. Argentinean Patagonia had large wool production and livestock while Chilean Patagonia supported its industries with modern machines and semiservile work (Almonacid 2009b; Muñoz 2011). Restrictions of navigation that triggered the slowing and stopping of international trade had a negative economic impact. On the other hand, a xenophobic nationalist discourse against immigrants gained ground, and Patagonia was seen and stigmatized as a land of anarchists and communists (Bohoslavsky 2009). The Russian Revolution and the Argentinean Patagonian strikes in the 1920s were the reasoning for the introduction of order to the area. Within that context, the government repressed wool workers and small rural producers, and expelled them from the lands they worked, thus leading to the concentration of land ownership in the region (Suarez 2005). The State control was achieved by closing the borders and the deployment of a border police along the southern Andes. As a consequence of these initiatives, the economical organization in the corridor was dismantled.

Hence, the poetic of the land changed in line with the new kind of nationalism. This process, beginning in the 1920s and climaxing in the 1930s, advanced in the organization of activities in both States' territories benefiting the center, and as a response to the economic crisis. The industrialization and the substitution of imports were the main objective in that decade, and industries were based exclusively in both central areas. Since the 1930s, it is possible to find an even more distinctive geography. It is in this period when Patagonian corridor was fragmented into several models of feminine images, which introduced new destinies for the region; all of them invariably subordinated. In southern Chile, the State's policies introduced the idea of the 'Nutrition Mother' for the territory,

while the early industry was being ruined (Almonacid 2009b). Figure 2(A) shows the rural image of southern Chile in the 1930s. Thus, the southern landscape became rural at the same time that the State recognized the center as the country's industrial area (Ansaldi 2003).

One of the most influential publications in the construction of this symbolic discourse was the National Railway magazine 'En Route [*En Viaje*]' (National Railways of Chile 1933–45) that described the landscape to tourists and systematically incorporated the feminine metaphors. This Magazine had a feminine side, for it typified the ideas about the women at that time. The tourist woman appears as an urban, middle-class person, well educated and with a European and young physiognomy, as Figure 3(A) illustrates. According to this magazine, she needs a permanent reminder about the proper way to be a woman. Her liberal ideas were presented as dangerous possibilities, which could harm her as well as other people. Many stories and special sections were dedicated to this topic. On the contrary, the southern land description was purely rural. As shown in 'En Route,' she (land or person) is hardworking and artless at the same time (National Railways of Chile 1933, 14). The southern woman does not need these explanations, because she has



Figure 2. Landscape of the corridor.

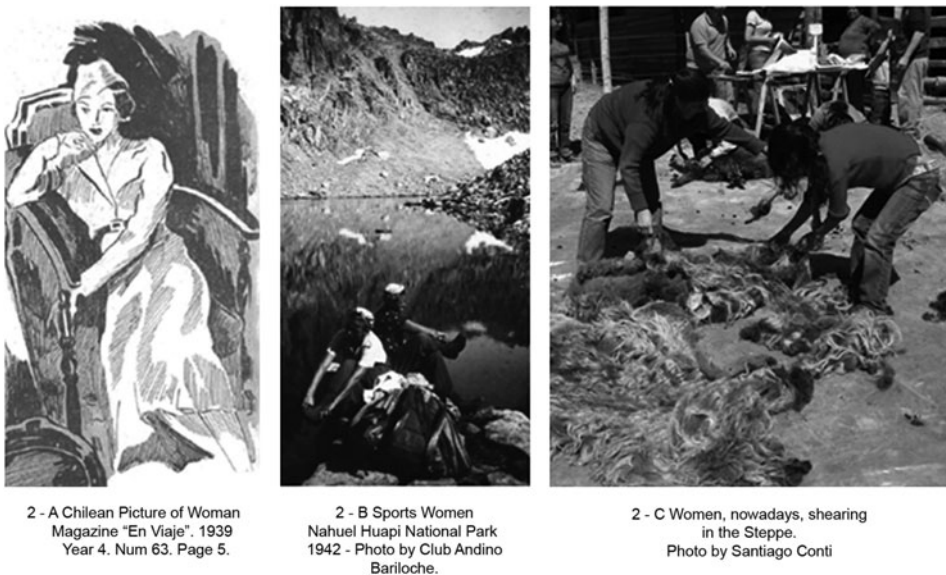


Figure 3. Corridor women.

no access to liberal dangers. In fact, she is the guardian of ancient values, guided by her husband, father, or brother, who takes care of her best interests.

These narratives fluctuated between southern land and woman, building materiality from the official discourses. The landscape, first industrial and then rural, was taken as a device to draw a veil over the national logic of domination. Hence, the magazine never mentioned that not many years before the rural area also included Argentinean valleys and that the Chilean South rural areas were internationally integrated, combining industrialization and trade. In line with the notion of an ancestral nutrition mother defined (and fixed) as a countryside landscape (Almonacid 2009b), this argument reinforces social control and the maintenance of social order. Andean trade was closed; meanwhile, the South was incorporated on to Chile's map as a rural zone, with limited autonomy but with the State acknowledging the Rural Societies of the South as regional partners. These organizations had claims and were also the beneficiaries of the new economical regime (Carreño 2008).

On the other side of the Andes, the closing of borders to bilateral trade and the establishing of the frontier as a wall was consolidated by the creation of the National Park and Border Police. In 1922, the Argentinean national government promoted the creation of the Southern National Park as part of its strategy for social control carried out during this decade. As noted by Anasagasti et al. (1924), initially the creation of this park not only included the idea of preservation, but also the permanence of trade, wood exploitation, agriculture, and animal breeding, all limited by nature conservation policies. However, in subsequent years, the idea of Patagonia as a promise become blurred and returned to the idea of Patagonia as a danger. The frontier ceased being considered as an open area and the Border Police began to implement a control scheme that opposed the existing trade (Núñez 2008).

During the following years, the ideas of protection were articulated by policies of control. In 1934, with the creation of the Nahuel Huapi National Park, presented in Figure 2(B), there started to form a national protected in the region delimited by the Southern National Park. With the new administration, all productive activities were banned, and the Chilean space changed from its role as a partner to a potential enemy (Núñez and Núñez 2012). The book that narrated the creation of this national park, written by its first director Exequiel Bustillo, had a significant title 'The wake up of Bariloche.'⁴ The director argued that the destiny of this privileged geography was to become a national park where tourism would be the only permitted economical activity. From his point of view, the entire history of the place was a mistake. In contrast to the Chilean narratives, the Argentinean publications, edited by Railway Company and the National Park Directorate, made reference to 'State building' instead of 'social behavior.' The landscape was the framework of the activities of the State (Bustillo 1999).

From a gender perspective, the Father-State ordered the woman-land, recognized her beauty, and guided her toward development. The nature was being 'improved' by official policies such as the replacement of some native trees for alien pines (Núñez and Núñez 2012), and the introduction of alien species for fishing and hunting, in accordance with the expectations of tourists. In fact, the national park's landscape looks like the tourist woman in Chile: beautiful, young, and in need of care. Most of the local needs, and clearly the productive practices, were concealed and the land was presented as empty and untouched (Diegues 2005).

During this process, some local women became visible for their social actions or sporting achievements. At the same time, another group of women, mostly coming from the surrounding rural areas, was hidden (Núñez 2010). The ideal woman embodies real women representing the proper way to live within the landscape. The mountain sport

emerged as a guide of proper activities to engage in the former livestock-farming area. These sporty women can be seen in the images of the Mountain Club of Bariloche (CAB), during the 1930s and 1940s, as shown in Figure 3(B). As a civil society organization, CAB members were the city's major traders, who organized a net of shelters and trails for visitors as a space for recreation.

The written memories of the CAB contain several feminine references to landscape, presenting a clean and virginal image of nature where the national park was created. The Minute Books of the CAB, during 1930s and 1940s, expose different cases that show how landscape was reformulated as a place free from social tensions, unpolluted, and empty. For instance, the building of a shelter in the Chilean area on the region's main mountain, the Tronador volcano, was quite an issue. CAB members declared that on the mountains the frontier tensions did not exist; however, this was an illusion. The Chilean government insisted on the need to destroy the shelter; finally it was spared due to diplomatic initiatives (Núñez 2008). Still, according to the CAB, mountains were neutral and virginal (Núñez 2014).

The geography was forced to change in order to stand up for ideal relationships, and that process in turn influenced both society and maps. Consequently, local links suffered a sharp decrease in favor of central ones, as shown in Figure 4. These maps are particularly interesting. The map on the left side of Figure 4(A) shows the idea of the territory in the mind of the National Park Administration, edited in 1938, with the title 'How to get to the Park,' reveals the idea of territory the National Park Administration had in mind. The map on the right side of Figure 4(B) is the copy of an actual map of Patagonia. If we compare both, some notable differences appear. In the map of Figure 4(A), Peninsula Valdés is located in the north side of the park, but in Figure 4(B), that same Peninsula is shown to be located in the south. In fact, the map of Figure 4(A) allows one to assume that the park is further south than its actual location. Furthermore, on the other side of the Andes, the map of Figure 4(A) shows the ocean. The 1938 map introduces the idea that there is no Chilean land near the national park. According to the map shown in Figure 4(A), the only road to get to the park starts in Buenos Aires. Regions around the Nahuel Huapi National Park became invisible and, actually, the social net linked to these areas was weakened (Picone 2011).

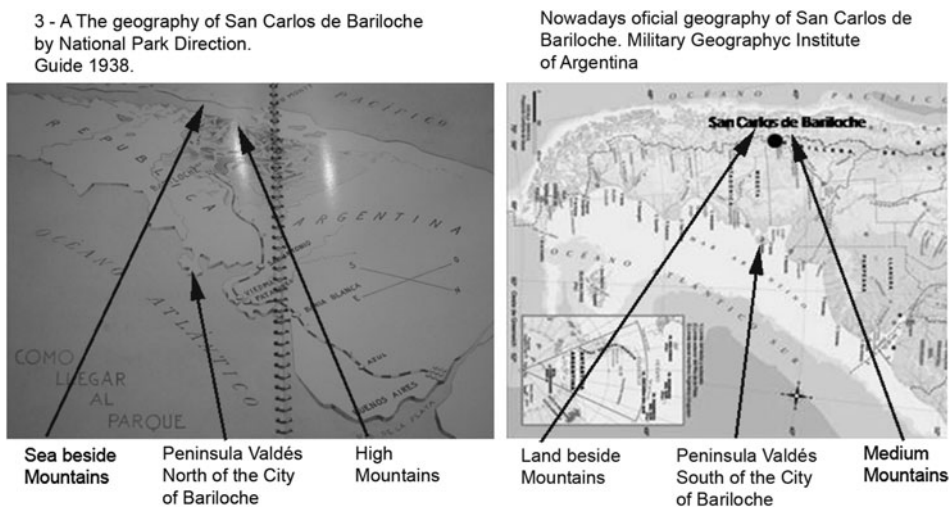


Figure 4. The forced geography by National Park direction.

Due to the creation of special control agencies and racist and xenophobic policies, frontiers became more restrictive in the 1930s (Picone 2011). Everything was naturalized by the reshaping of the geographic frontier. The height of the mountain peaks blurred the easy Andean passes through the valleys. But, this idea of change also affected the East. In the Steppe, the landscape would turn more arid, the vegetation would become smaller, and the horizon broader. Figure 2(C) exhibits an image of the area. This landscape is the depiction for Hudson's thoughts about the savage and spectacular spirit of Patagonian nature. However, this land image could not be more different than that of an epic and free woman. This area is one of the most subordinated spaces, always presented with structural needs that only the State can solve, but never really does (Masera 1998).

This was the land given to sheep breeders at the beginning of twentieth century. The original people, and even smaller producers and other inhabitants of the region became the necessary – but belittled – manpower for this work (Coronato 2010). The land remains savage and hostile, but was submitted to the desertification and the fluctuation of an activity connected with the international trade that progressively declined because fleece price started to go down since 1920. The desert's image as linked with the steppe was strengthened during the 1930s: the land was perceived as a space to be used and dismissed, with inhabitants limited in their capacity to improve their own land. Elias Chucair's poetry, one of the most significant of steppe, appeals to landscape as a builder of inhabitant's character. He mentions limited actions and word 'as it if were hard to face the silence, that has become his life partner' (Chucair 2013, 8).

We may think that the figure of the woman slave underlies this description. The land was a body to be used and abused without concern. It was not a mother or a young and pretty woman, the steppe was a slave doomed to be penetrated, and transformed into a sterile and useless land for any initiative other than sheep-breeding or, as in present times, gold mining with cyanide.

Rankin (2003) indicates that the ideology of gender, projected in geographical considerations, affects negatively the lives and material opportunities of women. In the Patagonian steppe, this truth borders tragedy. In a context where rural work is mostly undervalued, the efforts in households' activities are completely ignored. Women's work, historically situated in reproductive roles such as gardening, livestock raising, shearing, spinning, and weaving among others duties, seemed to be attached to that which is depreciated. Confronting this disparagement, the Memory Workshops show that the most ignored group, the rural women as steppe producers, is debating the idea of transforming the historical reproductive activities into productive ones. In this process, landscape, animals, and flora are being re-signified from a perspective that takes into account the feminine values.

Before removing it, the feminist geography needs to understand that there is a fixed and a-priori geography. Masculine aspects were discovered in the materiality of cities and also in the concepts used to understand it (Pratt 1992). The ethnocentric categories emerged linked with a gendered and hierarchical geography. Paraphrasing Rankin (2003), the naturalized landscape is a gender ideology that takes the landscape as a destiny, and this affects the material opportunity for women. Throughout the whole region, it was (and is) possible to find cases of battered women.

In Chilean cities and Nahuel Huapi's towns, the social fragmentation projected hierarchies on to the feminine population and introduced important differences to their experiences. In the steppe, the experiences as regards feminine work linked with the rural context involve most of the population (Conti and Núñez 2012). These aspects appeared in interviews. Domestic work emerged as the base of subsistence and rested in women and

children's hands, with a sexed division of work in adulthood. 'In the field there are no games, only work, and women and children have the strong part' indicated one of the participants while speaking of the struggle to survive in that region. Nowadays, in a context of increasing difficulties, men and women start to find in the feminized labors an open door to plan other economical processes. 'With our orchards we eat and sell, and we learn how to organize as producers, because we need to market in group,' explained one of the actors involved in the current regional egg production. At the same time, references to mothers and grandmothers as the origin of local knowledge appeared again and again.

Still, the difficulties arising from this attempt affects many levels. The vindication of feminine work does not imply the claim for gender equality, at least as regards domestic organization. 'We still work more than men, I get up several hours before my husband, light the fire and do the cleaning before preparing the mate when he wakes up,' said a woman in the workshop. But it is clear that those movements of small producers' organization cuts across the gender social structure, the domestic and market labor as well as the relationship with nature.

In the Patagonian steppe, household activities imply craft and rural work, as well as a permanent struggle to find basic subsistence resources. At first this was seen as a weakness, but in recent years it is beginning to be considered a subverted action. The value placed on domestic life emerges in people's memories as a bridge between the symbolic constitution of landscape and the feminine work experiences. The link is rooted in the need they had to treasure landscape in a subsistence context and takes part in a larger strategy which seeks to improve people's life quality.

During the last few years, several initiatives in that direction emerged. All were organized as small producer cooperatives like the 'Amulen Co' in Comallo, 'La Mosqueta' in Ñorquinco, or the 'Steppe Market' in Dina Huapi,⁵ all in steppe towns. The latter cooperative comprises up to 90% women among its associates (Zubizarreta and Campos 2010). It is a commercial organization that aims to sell domestic crafts made by the steppe people, avoiding intermediaries, in order to build a self-sustaining trade. These intermediaries, people known as 'mercachifles,' used to exchange quite elaborated crafts for a bite of food or something similar. The unfair historical trade is discussed by a concrete praxis. Many women remember their mothers or grandmothers struggling to get by, exchanging a spun and hand-woven poncho for a pair of shoes. These women started the discussion about the geographical interpretation of their space, not as an explicit objective, but as the result of the changes they perceived in their own work. 'Before I was just a housekeeper, now I'm a producer,' they say. This process has improved the women's self-esteem and, furthermore, now they can provide a new consideration about the landscape, their own consideration which gives a meaning to their organizational effort. 'You come from the university' one participant said, 'but I do not need a teacher to teach me anything, my mother tough me all I need. Now I need the right to sell.'

Where the State's account describes a desert, these women remember pastures and orchard plantations. In local memories, the green possibilities appear mixed with the craft activities. 'Our grandmothers grew lettuce, tomatoes, potatoes, onions here; that need work but they have the food for their kids,' remembered a participant. Trejo (2012) mentions that the transition from productive spaces to nonproductive deserts in Latin America may be related to the concentration of limited resources, especially water. In Patagonia, large ranches operate as the most prominent businesses in the region; however, groups of women and men organized as producers tell stories about small-scale farming, with domestic productions and animals that can be the first step toward building a different society.

Through the producer's eyes, the landscape is green, full of possibilities, with different animals, calm and familiar. This image could be seen as romantic, but actually it is anchored in the actual women's perceptions. 'Look at this watermelon,' said one of the older participants, 'it grew in my orchard, with effort all is possible.' These women have a different relationship with their environment, one that is political and interpellates the current geographical order, because it claims and builds a legal framework to be considered as producers (Conti and Núñez 2012). The situation of women, or of those persons who have historically performed feminine activities could be associated with the situation of their land. The current ignorance about the land, and the consideration of it as a slave, is open to discussion through the valorization of feminine activities.

The land emerges as a new woman, one who respects her own efforts and addresses the challenge to make a change. Figure 3(C) shows a group of these women shearing Linca sheep. This is not a minor issue because they are engaging in a historically masculine activity with their own sheep, with a noncommercial fleece in international trade, but particularly appropriate for handcrafts, as they explain in the workshop. The producers – women and men – remember the domestic activities, and explain the historical importance of these activities for their survival and, nowadays, as an optional economic opportunity. At the same time, they describe the land as full of spirits and magic, evidencing their own logic in their productive approach, both in the material and in the symbolic aspects.

Time and geography are in tension. For example, the national narrative asserts that Comallo Town was originated on 30 March 1918, a date linked with the construction of the railways. But interviews make reference to a previous, permanent, and productive population before this date. The interviewees locate the origin of the town on a road that used to cross the village toward to the western mountains. They call it the 'pine kernel road.' Trips, sheep breeding, and pastures crop, among other farming activities, appear in earlier exchange of memories and experiences. Time and space adopt a different character in the stories of small producers, who are entirely unaware of the subvert potential of their memories.

The steppe inhabitants and their activities question the land and resource concentration processes, showing alternatives as regards the different ways in which the steppe should be taken into consideration. They move away from the idea of the land as slave, through the vindication of different animals and rural practices; actually they are working for the introduction of new laws that will deal with these issues. Because they need a geographical description that takes into account their customs and persons, they are writing a new geography of the area. Porto Goncalvez (2001) indicates that culture, through the sequence of knowledge, marks the land. The Brazilian author reformulates the geographical analysis; he abandons the primacy of one culture and interpreted the human use of land to understand his map. That link between economy and culture is the most significant one for this analysis. The steppe people are doing something similar. They understand that demanding more consideration will only be possible if they vindicate and value their jobs, landscape, culture, and gender. On the path of changing the reproductive work into productive work, they must overcome individualism and trust their new associative organizations. Nowadays, after acknowledging the structural weakness of the steppe economy, which is in turn traversed by the instability that characterized the current economic situation (Femenías 2008), they are starting to diversify their initiatives.

Conclusions

Among the issues that link gender inequalities and development, the continuity of the symbolic construction between land and women is one of the frames for naturalization.

Geography appears as the material reference of the unequal relationship with different capacities in the decision-making processes. In fact, the importance of valuing and respecting landscape and the need to eradicate the sexist considerations is an essential claim for small producers' organization, where the number of women is considerable. They point out the ignorance shown about their domestic animals that are associated with their traditional practices and directly linked with their region and landscape. From them, devaluating one of these elements is equivalent to the devaluation of all elements. So, the recognition of Patagonia as a region of Argentina and Chile, represented in many documents as a stereotyped woman, emerges with new meaning.

Within a territorial logic, this construction of the land as a woman introduces the subordination of Patagonia for paternalistic reasons. The constitution of Patagonia by the State was based on specific maps, which guided the territorial reading toward notions of incompleteness, lack or need (Navarro and Williams 2010; Quintero 2002). Rankin (2003) argues in favor of considering the gender ideology as a spatial praxis, as well as the implications of women's spatial strategies in order to rethink the paternalist approaches to development. In this geographical corridor, gender ideology reflects in landscape and operates as a disciplinary reference. In two of the three areas selected, southern Chile and National Park of Nahuel Huapi, this constitution emerges as the basis for a fragmented society. The limits of landscape–gender ideology impact in the possibilities of most excluded women, through arguments based on racism, xenophobia, or classism (Núñez 2010). In the third area, the steppe, the most vulnerable and violated one, a large group of women started to discuss about the territorial destiny as a part of their debate over their own role as women, working around their self-esteem and claiming for a new way to understand landscape. This claim could be reflected in all the area, as the basis for confronting a long-term ideology of inequality.

Inner colonialism and the core-periphery logic were legitimated in a landscape taken as the basis for social differences. Thereby, the descriptions of landscape are not minor issue. National States appealed to female stereotypes to justify inequalities. In turn, accepting the feminine as subordinated also impacted in the social fabric. Craftswomen's claims associate productive aspects with environmental values and domestics practices. Thus, they interpellate an official narrative that sees unfitness where they see possibilities.

The idea of a new women is projected in the land again, one that transforms all the scenarios, independent and with multiple faces, trying to move away from the exclusionary dichotomy between masculine and feminine. The claim to change feminine considerations goes hand in hand with the claim for diversity rights. The symbolic constitution of places is one of the strongest threads of the weft of inequalities in this corner of the world.

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Notes

1. These projects are: (A) PIP Conicet 0133 'La Patagonia Norte en las políticas nacionales de planificación, 1943–1976.' No. 0133. (B) PICTO FONCyT-UNRN 'Desarrollo regional e identidades diversas. Un estudio de la Patagonia Norte durante la segunda mitad del siglo XX.' (C) PI-UNRN 40-B-228. 'Debates y perspectivas de la teoría social contemporánea, el enfoque de género y ambiental: una revisión crítico-conceptual transdisciplinaria.'
2. Hudson (1841–1922) was an Argentinean naturalist and writer. He was one of the most important researchers at the end of nineteenth century. He described, from a romantic perspective, the Pampa and Patagonia regions. He passed his last years in England.
3. Sarmiento (1811–88) was an Argentinean politician, writer, teacher, journalist, and military, Governor of the Province of San Juan from 1862 to 1864, President of Argentina between 1868 and 1874, National Senator between 1874 and 1879, and Minister of Interior of Argentina in 1879.
4. The Wake Up of Bariloche (El Despertar de Bariloche) was written in 1968 by Exequiel Bustillo, first director of the National Park Directorate between 1934 and 1944.
5. Amulen Co and La Mosqueta cooperative concentrate on the sale of wool of small producers since 1990s, and they have met more than 500 small producers. The Steppe Market started in 2001. It brings together more than 300 producers in the region, and was the basis of the first provincial law of popular initiative: the law 4499 of associative productive markets, enacted in 2010.

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ABSTRACT TRANSLATIONS

La “Tierra Ella”. consecuencias sociales de la construcción sexualizada del paisaje en el norte de Patagonia

Este artículo tiene una perspectiva basada en la geografía de género y en la historia regional, a través del estudio de la constitución simbólica de áreas principales y periféricas dentro de Chile y Argentina. Este análisis se centra en el territorio de Patagonia y apunta a revelar el uso de metáforas estereotipadas de mujeres como la base de una subalternidad territorial. En este punto, la revisión de la historia de la Patagonia revela que esta construcción de paisaje está relacionada a la integración territorial, y podría haber sido visto como ideología de género debido a las metáforas involucradas en los argumentos del Estado. Esta idea se ilustra con un discurso nacionalista que aún persiste y que fue establecido en la Patagonia desde los años 30, lo que opera como una referencia patriarcal permanente y permite la proyección de metáforas de género sobre la tierra. También necesita la particular experiencia de las mujeres patagónicas para cuestionar el reconocimiento del problema detrás de la construcción del paisaje y el orden patriarcal geográfico e histórico. Como resultado de este proceso, la posibilidad de argumentar contra esta subordinación de la región emerge de resaltar las metáforas femeninas de tierra y la praxis femenina, lo cual hoy en día confronta tanto con la interpretación oficial del paisaje como con un acceso desigual a los recursos.

Palabras claves: Patagonia; paisaje; Estado nacional; feminización; subordinación

“她的国度”——巴塔哥尼亚北部性化的地景建构的社会后果

本文透过研究智利和阿根廷内的核心及边陲区域的象征性建构，传达一个以性别地理学及区域历史为基础的视角。本分析聚焦巴塔哥尼亚的领土，并旨在揭露运用女性刻板印象的隐喻作为领土从属性的基础。此时，回顾巴塔哥尼亚的历史，显示出此一地景建构与领土整合有关，且因国家政府的主张所涉及的隐喻，而可被视为性别意识形态。此一概念将以一个自1930年代以来，在巴塔哥尼亚建立并续存的国族主义论述描绘之，该论述作为永恒的父权参照，并使性别隐喻得以投射在土地之上。同时也需要藉由巴塔哥尼亚女性的特殊经验，质问指认地景建构以及地理与历史父权秩序背后的问题。此一过程，致使反对该区域从属性的可能性，从强调土地的女性隐喻和女性实践中生成，在今日更同时与该地景的官方诠释与不公平的资源获取进行对抗。

关键词：巴塔哥尼亚；地景；国族国家；女性化；从属