

9 Processes of heritagization of indigenous cultural manifestations

Lines of debate, analytic axes, and
methodological approaches¹

Carolina Crespo

Bases of discussion or starting points: patrimonial poetics and politics in studies of heritage

Since the eighties, studies on cultural heritage became remarkably important within Latin American academia; meanwhile, its conceptualization and approach was being modified. 'Ideas, cultures, and histories cannot seriously be understood or studied without their force, or more precisely their configurations of power, also being studied' (Said 1977, 5), so researchers were drawn into inquiring not only the *poetics* found in processes of heritagization² (the ways of its functioning), but also the politics and forms of power they generate.

Indeed, at this point, several social scientists who were interested in these problematics shifted their focus from *essentialist* and *static* concepts of heritage and memory to their *dynamic* and *historically built* condition; from the study of an intrinsic quality of the object to the *process* and the *context* within which certain events and cultural practices get redefined and *selected* as constituent of a social group's identity, memory, and heritage; from their value as inheritance coming from the *past* to their construction in the *present*; and from their *authentic* or *true* condition to the *social relations* they express and how they *legitimize* such relations, that is, to the *uses and effects of power* they produce (e.g., Arantes 1984–1997; Bonfil Batalla 1989; Brow 2000; García Canclini 1989–1993; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Rosas Mantecón 1998; Prats 1997; Rotman 1999).

Some of the aforementioned studies have especially emphasized the political–ideological dimension of cultural heritage, since it makes certain social groups visible in time and space and/or excludes others, it configures spaces and identities, it legitimizes or denies rights and resources, it establishes rules, values, and patterns for legitimate and illegitimate behavior, and it attempts to produce social consensus around them as it generates important conflicts (e.g., Arantes 1997; Bonfil Batalla 1989; Cruces 1998; García Canclini 1989; Prats 1997; Rosas Mantecón 1998). Within this frame, studies have been less focused on documenting the object and more interested on the history of its constitution, thus linking the

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object to a particular historical-cultural moment like the formation of nation-states (Prats 1977), the way it relates to political projects and hegemonic values, and how it excludes what does not adapt to these interests (Bonfil Batalla 1997; Florescano 1993). These studies are also focused on the discourse and the meanings associated to certain referents that have been constituted as such; the several interests and political usages that are set in motion (e.g., Florescano 1993; García Canclini 1989–1993; Prats 1997; Rosas Mantecón 1998); its constituting nature and its performative effects on social relations and practices; the inequality expressed in its selection, shaping, signification, and management (Cruces 1998); and/or the conflicts brought about by this situation among several agencies that are unequally positioned—not only nation-states, but also multilateral agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), different social groups, private sectors, and so on (e.g., Arantes 1984–1997; Cruces 1998; Rotman 1999). Others have undertaken the analysis of its more recent stages of activation and entry into the market as a form of economic resource (e.g., Aguilar Criado 2003; García Canclini 1993; Prats 1997), its insertion into ‘policies of development with identity’ arising from multilateral agencies that run through national state programs and actions (Benedetti 2007), and their connection to tourism.

For the last few years, the notion of heritage began to blend with discourses on the recognition of cultural diversity. Within the frame of what has been called ‘neoliberal multiculturalism’ (Hale 2004), which simultaneously implied the deepening of inequality and a claim on the recognition of cultural difference, heritage policies in Argentina—in accordance with changes generated in international programs—enhanced the activation of cultural references from social sectors that had previously been made invisible or included in a subordinated way to the repertoire of national heritage and so therefore read from an hegemonic key.

The incorporation of these other cultural references was brought about by the struggle of several ethno-political movements, gender movements, etc., as well as international regulations and programs by multilateral agencies and NGOs that have been interfering with state policies to a remarkable degree. But apart from being a political matter, heritage was linked to the rationale currently imprinted in a market where the promotion of a different and particular culture (e.g., Aguilar Criado 2005; García Canclini 1993) was constituted as a resource for economic development and a way out of ‘poverty and marginality.’

In Argentina, anthropological studies on the heritagization processes of cultural manifestations and indigenous human remains have been focusing on state policies as well as those of international organizations and NGOs, aiming to elucidate their definitions, implementation methods, and effects. Otherwise, they focus on reviewing recent definitions and demands made by some indigenous peoples to the state and/or academics, around their signification, classification, belonging, and/or management. Most of them pay special attention to cases in which a contention on this matter has emerged, and they usually analyze the views or conceptions of heritage and memory that arise in each sector. On the one hand, they describe the perspective of indigenous peoples as groups, and on the other

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hand, that of state agencies—national and/or provincial—or other international organizations and NGOs, according to the case. Some even examine these processes by including how academic discourse and practice—both past and current—become articulated with them. Others also analyze relationships that come up within the group and with other agencies—state agencies, NGOs, academics, etc.—bounded by these policies and interrelated with asymmetric interethnic historical relationships.

That being said, the notion of ‘indigenous diversity’ and particularly the programs aimed at facing policies that focus on ‘ethnic and cultural diversity’ are far from offering a single common horizon of thought, definition, and action; in fact, they reveal a rather diverse range of conceptualizations and implications. As Hall (2010) suggests, the term multiculturalism is polysemic. Under the notion of recognizing and respecting the ‘other,’ different devices have been consolidated for the production of ‘otherness’ as a correlate to what we think of as ‘us.’ Meanwhile, indigenous peoples maintain a diversity of positions *vis-à-vis* these processes.

In this article, I am interested in discussing some possible axes or coordinates of analysis as well as methodological approaches for examining heritagization processes of indigenous cultural manifestations; that is, of memories,³ multiple forms of knowledge, practices, and cultural goods belonging to social sectors that have been construed as ‘subaltern’ and ‘others.’

My aim is to differentiate my work from those that, when looking at heritage, only see the instituted and the instituting in order to critically debate ‘heritage’ as a process and as a political practice, by considering less what heritage *is* from the perspective of a normative analysis and rather looking at what different social sectors *do* with heritage, as well as the relationships and the implications generated by this. This means that, in order to analyze these processes, we must see them not so much as a field for consensus but as a field of force that involves the setting of tensions within certain relationships, subjectivities, emotional attachments, ways of knowing and seeing the social world and the space, all of which is involved in the processes of creation and dispute for hegemony.

Therefore, two questions guide my work: first of all, how and to what extent is it possible to rebuild the voice and agency of indigenous peoples in this process without falling into dichotomist and bipolar understandings; and second, is it not necessary to review the analytic criteria with which we approach those hegemonic practices of heritagization regarding the significations, practices, and/or claims established around heritage by subjects that have been historically construed as others and subalterns, as it happens in Argentina with indigenous peoples?⁴

From an examination on how expressions and repertoires relating to indigenous ‘past’ and ‘culture’ are currently being considered as susceptible of heritage status and the hegemonic bases of discussion set by indigenous populations, this proposition’s final aim is to rethink how to analyze the ‘geographies of imagination and management’ (Trouillot 2011) of ‘ethnic diversity’ within the processes of heritagization and construction of memory as well as the variable joints worked on by these sectors. In order to do this, I offer a selection of situations drawn from

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my own research and from the work of other colleagues dealing with this topic that, functioning as a state of affairs, will allow us to continue problematizing this field of studies and suggesting an approach that I consider appropriate to address the complexity of this process.⁵ On the one hand, I am referring to certain coordinates of analysis that I consider fertile fields for the discussion on the heritage of indigenous sectors that have been construed as others and subalterns and which deserve a place for deeper exploration. On the other hand, and as a closure to this text, I address a perspective that, in my understanding, achieves a contemplation of the aforementioned analytic axes in their full complexity and dynamism.

Bases of anchorage or analytic axes

A On silencing and memories of silences

Heritage policies are revealing for that which they enable, recognize, and produce through their discourses, repetitions, and actions, but also for what they ‘forget,’ exclude, or render unthinkable, unspeakable, or marginal. Apart from configuring the rightfully acknowledged past and present, these policies produce—through their activations and omissions and even through their contradictions and paradoxes—certain authorized physical and social places as well as accepted subjectivities *versus* others that are denied.

Now, in spite of the fact that every process of heritagization implies the commemoration of certain cultural productions and memories within a hierarchy and the silencing of others, and that absences and silences ‘of’ and ‘on’ certain cultural manifestations have in fact been a constitutive part of heritage policies and programs faced both by state agencies and by international and nongovernmental ones, this is a field that has rarely been deeply explored.

Studies on these processes have virtually never focused on drawing the itineraries of silence of those subjects and/or cultural productions that have been left out or on the margins of history and heritage, or that have been left without a voice to speak about themselves and their relationships, or denied their own past. Neither have these studies attempted to place silence as the main focus of their endeavors. Rather, most of these works argue in favor of accounting for selective discourse and not so much on strategies, mechanisms, implications, and contexts in which silences are both created and transmitted not only from hegemonic sectors but among subaltern sectors as well. These aspects are particularly relevant, especially if we consider—as several academics already have (e.g., Sousa Santos 2009; Spivak 1998)—that silence and forgetting contribute to the very configuration of the processes that construe the subaltern and the other.⁶

In order to account for the centrality acquired by silence within these processes, especially when we refer to Argentinian indigenous peoples, allow me to illustrate this point with an example. In 2010, after about two decades of ‘recognition of ethnic difference’ at least within the legislative corpus in Argentina and after many more years of struggle for recognition by indigenous movements, the Historical Museum of El Hoyo—Andean Region of Parallel 42°, Chubut, Argentinian

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Patagonia—opened its gates permanently with an exhibition in which native peoples and their heritage were absent.

Indigenous peoples had been silenced from local history in both the past and the present of this space, and the demands and territorial conflicts of several communities that had recently been publicly ascribed as Mapuche in that area had been omitted. These omissions could be tracked, although with differences between one and the other, according to the case, in mechanisms produced and diffused in the region of the ‘Andean Region of Parallel 42°’ where El Hoyo is located: in institutional practices and procedures; in documents from official historical archives; in many books about the history of the area sponsored by municipal agents; in political discourses of several local civil servants; in the common sense of many residents; in monuments, mural paintings, and sculptures exhibited in public spaces belonging to nearby localities; etc.⁷

The museum, as many of these mechanisms of power, can be read as ‘itineraries or tracks of the unsaid’ that reproduce—in other temporal contexts and with some variations, according to the case—a historical hegemonic silencing operating in the constitution and consolidation of the national historical narrative. Regimes of the quiet that have worked as part of the ‘epistemic violence’ exercised on and shaping—along with physical violence—of the experiences historically lived by these peoples.⁸

Silences—not only discourses—set up within processes of heritagization have a crucial political role. It is in the tension between what is said and what is kept quiet, but more importantly between how it is said and how it is not said, that objects and subjects are categorized, classified, and ordered according to certain *statuses* or roles such as ‘national,’ ‘provincial,’ ‘foreign,’ ‘poor,’ ‘citizen,’ ‘deviant,’ ‘undesirable,’ ‘indigenous,’ etc. Thus, specific kinds of social relationships are established as inclusive and/or exclusive, as are visions and divisions of the past and present world and, in the process, someone or something(s) are given existence, that is, they are rendered thinkable, sayable, and visible (Grassi 2003–2004) in certain ways, while others are overshadowed and/or stigmatized. Far from constituting voids, silences inscribed within processes of heritagization are sources and practices of production, imagination, and management of subjects, spaces, knowledge, and relationships.

Studies developed in the field of memory offer interesting inputs about this. Trouillot (1995) analyzes the silences in the production of official historical narratives and shows how silencing operates on the level of content by resorting to ‘formulas of erasure’—avoiding to talk about something, as in the aforementioned example. But there is also the level of poetics—*how* things are said, by what Trouillot calls ‘formulas of banalization.’ Therefore, if the employed vocabulary or language and the actions implemented through policies create meanings and ‘effects’ (Shore and Wright 1997, 21), it becomes essential to examine, along with content, the style, the strategies, and the poetics used in practices of heritagization, which are boosted by the hegemonic sectors in order to impose silence. To give another brief example, during the last years, archaeological resources have been declared as national heritage and as belonging to the

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different provinces of Argentina. This constituted an important change for a country that has configured its identity around the figure of the *gaucho* and has stigmatized indigenous people. Nevertheless, the way in which this heritage status was declared shows important omissions, among which—and perhaps the most discussed by some indigenous peoples—has been the absence of any mention of them as ‘inheritors’ with rights to decide on that ‘past’ and its management.⁹

On this trend, the problematization of silence leads to another aspect that has been widely debated, not only among academics but even among indigenous people, such as the differential possibility of self-representation by sectors that have been construed as subaltern, establishing their own meanings and exercising control over their cultural productions.¹⁰ Here I am referring to the importance of problematizing the instance of enunciation and shaping of authority and power within any heritage activation, that is, the importance of reflecting on who has the power of constituting and omitting something as the heritage of a group, the power of talking ‘about’ and ‘for’ which subjects and how they do it, and the power of communicating, spreading, and commercializing that heritage, and by whom it is considered meaningful (Cruces 1998).

Now, there is a double significance to the silences and the imposed asymmetries. Not only because these are structural processes that are expressed through official heritage policies built around cultural manifestations and memories of indigenous sectors construed as subalterns and others, but, simultaneously, because of the slides produced during their course, as they constitute their political–affective experiences and subjectivities. As Briones (1994) points out, within the frame of these processes of silencing, omission, and absence—not only of the elaborated and propagated discourse—where everything can be said and argued, these peoples construct themselves in variable ways and, whether it is done in a positive way or not, they make sense of the omitted discourse and, sometimes, they can recognize its political key.

Whether it is due to imposed silence or shame produced by stigmatization, traumatic experiences, expropriations, and lived discriminations, the public diffusion of some histories, cultural practices, and even forms of ethnic self-classification has not only been made difficult, in many cases they have also faced, as a correlate, the total or partial interruption of the communication of stories, knowledge, experiences, and practices by the elders with the family and private environment. In my own fieldwork, some members of the Mapuche communities are constantly commenting on the silence of elders over certain experiences, knowledge, and memories as a common practice both outside and inside of the household. While, sometimes, this is lived with sadness due to the limitations it involves, it is defined, at the same time, not just as an intergenerational void of knowledge, histories, and practices, but as structuring of relationships, feelings, and experiences—of which they are even a product—as constituting their subjectivities and, in changing contexts, as a drive toward mobilization and struggle (Crespo 2014).

If, as Pollak (2006) contends, there are certain social conditions that hinder the possibility to talk, to listen, and to think on some experiences and memories, others

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can turn them sayable and audible, or even a matter for contestation and for making claims within public space. Thus, in some circumstances, silences and, moreover, ‘memories of silences’ as I named them elsewhere (Crespo 2014), become—as lived and learned practice and beyond their contents—not only significant for their own subjectivities but also relevant as part of the reconstruction of a common trajectory, of ‘structures of feeling’ within collective social fabrics, since they exhibit the hegemonic conditioners they have suffered collectively. Besides, they can also be charged with a performativity that would have been unthinkable in other historical periods,¹¹ mobilizing emotions and cognitive processes in political terms and at odds with hegemony, since the latter only defines and grants heritage status to ‘pure’ indigenous manifestations that show continuity with the past.

In Argentina, members of indigenous peoples have reflected on and expressed the silences imposed through various means on the field of heritage. Since ‘heritage’ is a category both historically and culturally foreign to the indigenous worldview, a concept that belongs to a process of self-recognition within an order characterized by forms of domination, some started to reflect on it from political and revindicating instances (Crespo 2005; Slavski 2007). They resorted to ‘heritage’ to claim rights and they redefined it, first of all, not so much as a selection of significant and representative aspects of culture but as culture itself, that is, as a whole: *cultural heritage is everything* (Interview of the sub-coordinator of the ‘Bilingual Education and Mapuche Cultural Heritage’ agreement in the Andean zone, December 2005).

The totality attributed to ‘heritage’ by these indigenous people can be understood in different ways. Rotman (2010) suggests that in the case of some Mapuche communities from the province of Neuquén, this holistic and encompassing conception is crossed by a ‘rhetoric of loss.’ According to Rotman, this rhetoric is in itself a counter-hegemonic practice since it implies the recognition of many acts of violence, imposition, and material and symbolic loss suffered¹² as they emerge as products of ‘what has been transformed into shortage or oblivion and that has lately been attempted to “recover”’ (Rotman 2010, 24).

During my fieldwork with Mapuche communities of the northwest part of the Chubut province and the southwest of Río Negro, as well as in other studies developed with different Mapuche people in the province of Buenos Aires, I found another kind of reflection on the matter. Instead of configuring it within an interpretation frame centered around the notion of ‘loss,’ some Mapuches in this regions redefine and recategorize these ‘oblivions’ as ‘knowledge that has been kept quiet, saved, and sleeping’ among the members of the household (Crespo 2008; Sabatella 2011)—*They don’t dare to say. They are not lost . . . it’s like they are saved* (Interview with a member of the ‘Rinconada de Nahuelpán,’ March 2006)—and/or, sometimes, as ‘secrets’ or, according to Sabatella (2011), as ‘valuable secrets.’¹³

Therefore, the concept of heritage and the processes of memory construction, in these cases, are not built upon the basis of ‘shortage’ but on a ‘rhetoric of what has been silenced,’ ‘saved,’ or of what ‘survived in the quiet’ and which is liable to be brought to light and redefined—according to the circumstances—and, even,

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in some more precise exchanges, as what is ‘kept in secret.’ The latter refers to the practice of *pewtüm*—a healing Mapuche practice through which sickness is visualized—whose silencing among the Mapuche people of Los Toldos, according to Sabatella (2011), became a ‘valuable secret.’ I am even referring to the way in which I have specifically heard how the archaeological heritage of the Andean Region is signified. Indeed, a Mapuche woman with whom I interacted in that region conceived archaeological heritage as a ‘secret,’ a mystery known and shared only by its ancient indigenous creators and by the elders of the Mapuche community, thus attributing both them and their cultural manifestations a hierarchical knowledge, power, and differential value (Crespo 2008).¹⁴ This shifting of meaning from what is ‘lost’ to what is ‘saved’ and, on more specific occasions, to the ‘practice of secrecy,’¹⁵ invite us to rethink and discuss the specific relevance of the continuity of traditions, culture, and the past for hegemonic definitions as well as classical anthropological understandings of what indigenous peoples should ‘be’ and ‘do.’ It questions hegemonic views that appealed to the ‘lack’ of indigenous presence to discredit and stigmatize them,¹⁶ and, mainly, it sheds light on the ways through which these subjects define and redefine, in different ways and in each context, values, experiences, knowledge, belongings, exercises of power, ‘continuities and discontinuities’ produced by imposed forms of violence as well as means of resistance elaborated *vis-à-vis* that violence.

Along with the study of discourse and concrete action, the dynamic of silences and absences as existing practices within heritage policies make up a privileged observation point to apprehend the power relationships involved in these processes, the systems of belonging-differentiation, and the forms of stratification that were established in both time and space. It also, and primarily, helps to understand asymmetric historical experiences, conditioners, and current standpoints as well as political-emotional answers produced by it, that is: possibilities of identification, construction of certain memories, forms of struggle, shared social fabrics, affects, experiences of mobility and circulation within the social space of subjects that have been construed as subaltern and others, as it happens with indigenous peoples. We just need to learn to perceive and interpret them in all their complexity, remembering that silences and omissions are never complete and that their significations and effects are nor permanent, homogenous, or equally strong, according to who conducts them and social context.

B The place of ambivalence, heterogeneity, tensions, and contradictions

As I pointed out in the beginning of this text, over the last years there has been room for expressions on ‘indigenous diversity’ in heritage policies. Nevertheless, how this diversity has been ‘valued’, spread, and commemorated reveals some subtleties and ambivalences in comparison with other manifestations from different sectors that have been granted heritage status. By this I mean that, in spite of the fact that the granting of heritage status is considered to be carried out by state agencies, multilateral agencies, or NGOs, it implies recognition, a symbolic,

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political, and economic ‘valuing’ where not everything that is configured as heritage has the same hierarchy or awakens the same interest. Some cultural manifestations from specific social groups that have been constituted as heritage receive less attention than others, as it happens with those linked to Argentinian indigenous peoples (Crespo 2008).

Besides, after a history of physical and symbolic violence, of stigmatization, expropriation, and visibility of the indigenous merely as part of a superseded past and/or one that has yet to be surpassed, ‘ethnic difference’ became thinkable, possible, and manageable within the field of cultural heritage in different ways for each level of the state—national, provincial, and municipal—and even inside the same institution and according to parameters that are sometimes congruent but other times contradict the policies formulated in other spheres—territorial, for productive development, etc.—(Belli and Slavutsky 2006; Citro and Torres Agüero 2012; Crespo 2008).

A revision of these heritage policies in different geographical-jurisdictional spaces and with regards to other policies directed at indigenous peoples allows us to show the diverse and complex way in which ‘indigenous diversity’ is created, defined, and attempted to govern, as well as current prevailing contradictions. Some national, provincial, and municipal state agencies’ heritage policies on indigenous matters construe ‘geographies of imagination and management’ of the ethnic as something with boundaries and as opposed to the West,¹⁷ so, as Hale (2004) proposes, the ‘allowed indigenous’ is differentiated from the ‘inadmissible’ or ‘conflictive’ one. Thus, within a single group, hegemonic sectors consider some manifestations and forms of knowledge as more legitimate or authentic than others and, therefore, as susceptible of being incorporated, preserved, divulged, and even commercialized as representative heritage of that ethnic group as long as they do not oppose ongoing hegemonic interests (Benedetti 2007; Citro and Torres Agüero 2012; Sabatella 2013).

These agencies institutionalize indigenous boundaries, memories, and cultural productions in a static and dogmatic way that leaves behind everything they have in common with the experiences of other social groups, when they have in fact been constantly changing.¹⁸ But in other cases, municipal policies configure diversity from guidelines that differ from those of the provinces they are a part of and/or national ones. For example, some municipalities that have only recently and selectively acknowledged the existence of indigenous communities when it comes to cultural tourism policies, undermine ethnicity not so much for its specificity or over a radical difference, as in the aforementioned cases, than from their ‘undifferentiated integration with regard to other ethnic-national groups,’ thus making dissimilar histories equivalent and configuring them as ‘foreigners or other inner residents,’ as it has been historically done. Other municipal policies assert their integration as autochthonous peoples without distinguishing specific ethnic groups. In both cases, none revise the histories of instituted subjugation and invisibility (Benedetti and Crespo 2013).

The situated and dialogical analysis of actions undertaken at different levels of the state (Briones 2005)—not only international, national, and provincial, as it

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has traditionally been done, but also municipal—contradicts the idea of the existence of a univocal and homogeneous context of congruent public policies. Hence, the relevance of revising how ‘multicultural regulations’ in local spaces, where the conformation of alterity acquires its own styles in the construction of hegemony, are reformulated, re-appropriated, and re-signified (Rodríguez de Anca 2013). Similarly, it is important to observe the extent to which these heritage actions are crossed ‘by contextual factors, personal wills, and relationships of clientele’ as well as its effects (Citro and Torres Agüero 2012, 170).

We can also observe contradictions or contending standpoints within a single institution or organization. As Hall (2010) suggests, ‘multiculturalism,’ far from being only one strategy and a policy adopted to rule and manage cultural diversity, is based on multiple strategies and policies.¹⁹ Within this multiplicity, sometimes implying contradictions, subjects must move and struggle to change their situation. Therefore, in the context of current ‘multicultural rhetoric’ where indigenist rights are legislated and limited spaces for ‘indigenous participation’ are opened, ‘political dynamics operating on the basis of ‘unfinished transitions’ (Hale 2004), and combining the rationale of the recognition of diversity with the old rationale of subordinate incorporation of ethnic difference’ can simultaneously prevail (Benedetti and Crespo 2013, 181).

Whichever the case may be, heritage policies, in their ways of saying, doing, and/or keeping quiet, produce knowledge and define subjects, spaces, values— affective, political, economic, and significantly symbolic—and relationships that have political implications and determine contesting political fields. Hence, their greater importance as practice than as ‘representation’ (Hall 1998); since these referents become prescriptive and regulators of social life, they establish a basis for conversation and a kind of morality, they condition and demand certain forms of performing difference, and they are internalized and/or confronted in various ways, thus configuring specific kinds of inter and intra-ethnic relationships.

Among the most frequent topics addressed by studies on the heritagization processes of indigenous cultural manifestations and human remains, there are the confrontations that occur between the different intervening agencies and, particularly in Argentina, recent processes of public claims over the archaeological heritage, especially of human remains, by some communities and indigenous peoples, according to each case (e.g., Arenas 2011; Curtoni and Chaparro 2011; Endere and Curtoni 2006; Di Fini 2001; Lázzari 2008; Oldani et al. 2011; Podgorny and Politis 1990; Rodríguez 2011). The transformation of archaeological resources into provincial and/or national heritage brought along discussions not only on the meanings assigned to these cultural productions and human remains, but also on the way in which indigenous peoples have been classified/categorized²⁰ and the possibility to self-manage them, which implies, as Slavski (2007) suggests, a dispute for the acknowledgement of their political rights: the right to self-definition, self-determination, and participation in matters that concern them.

The history of interethnic relationships in Argentina, the way in which their goods, productions, and human remains were collected by the end of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, explanations given to them until

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approximately the 1980s,²¹ and the disputes around granting heritage status to practices, goods, and indigenous human remains give, in my opinion, a certain specificity or particular imprint to the processes of heritagization of cultural manifestations of other social sectors.

In the dispute to redefine their position, indigenous peoples gradually were appropriating, questioning, and/or re-signifying concepts set on the agenda by the dominant sectors of each context (Delrío 2005), and constructing in various ways their sense of belonging, their pasts, their presents, and their hopes for the future.

Over the last years, while some indigenous peoples resort to hegemonic vocabulary such as the concept of ‘heritage,’ redefining its meaning in order to frame their demands and stage a reflection on one’s own and other’s belongings and on the history of asymmetric interethnic relationships and deprivations experienced in different spheres of social life in Argentina (Crespo 2005), others demand the restitution of human remains as part of their ‘forefathers/ancestors’ (e.g., Di Fini 2001; Endere and Curtoni 2006; Lázzari 2008; Rodríguez 2011) or of some archaeological sites, re-accentuating them under the category of ‘sacred spaces’ over which they demand rights (Crespo and Rodríguez 2013).

Some academics look at indigenous claims around patrimonial manifestations as instrumental-political strategies. However, many who, like me, are involved in the study of indigenous problematics, discuss those views that reduce and explain identifications and claims over cultural manifestations as exclusive products of strategies or rationally and consciously calculated orchestrations with specific aims. We recover the importance of complex analysis. On the one hand, we differentiate the instrumentality attributed to the actions of hegemonic sectors around the patrimonial activation of those ‘strategies’ that—drawing on Bourdieu’s formulations—result from force relations, ‘the product of the practical sense [. . .] for a particular, historically determined game—a feel which is acquired in childhood, by taking part in social activities’ (Bourdieu 1990, 62–63).²² On the other hand, and aiming to detach from those instrumental views by showing its political implications in the field of ethnicity, some analyze the relationships established with that memory of longer duration from its political–affective quality (Escolar 2007; Rodríguez 2011a; Sabatella 2013); that is to say, it is conceived as a ‘voluntary and affective affirmation based on feelings and perceptions, and not only on arguments and explanations’ (Escolar 2007, 58) or as part of ‘affective [experiences], alliances, and actions constrained by hegemonic social space’ (Rodríguez 2011a, 2). Others, including myself, also observe in these claims a demand for justice and reparation of damages (Arenas 2011; Lázzari 2008), an attempt to revert an ongoing history of asymmetry, deprivations, and invisibility (Crespo 2005; Rotman 2010) that leads them to publicly connect with their ancestors as members of a specific people or as their ‘descendants,’ and to constitute themselves as a space for political–affective mobilization and attachment (Crespo 2005–2011; Rodríguez 2011b).

In many cases, even with different explanations and implications, identification with these memories and pasts is analyzed not only as a product of the present but of the complex articulation of historical and current experiences of dispute

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over hegemony. But as Appadurai (1981) points out, not all interpretations of the past made by sectors construed as subalterns and others are open to free acceptance. There are conditioners that limit what, how, why, and what for can something be said (Popular Memory Group 1982). To include the analysis of processes of heritagization and indigenous memories within processes of construction of hegemony means to also give account of other cases that have scarcely been addressed in Argentina and which allow us to keep adjusting theories and explanations in this field.

I refer, on the one hand, to those in which the absence of a public claim on heritage does not imply the lack of identification with a certain fragment of the past, with an experience, a tradition, or a cultural manifestation by a social group. As Gledhill (2000) pointed out, there is more than open claims and visible movements of resistance and opposition; there are also tactics and forms of resistance that operate more silently in everyday life. To give an example, some Mapuches do not publicly claim rights over archaeological heritage neither to state institutions nor to academics, but, in certain contexts, they refer to the distant past and its cultural manifestations as theirs. That is to say, within a frame of claims over territorial rights and as one of the ways to build autochthony *vis-à-vis* hegemonic historical views of them as foreign, as well as to explain other uses and definitions of territory, some Mapuches at Lago Pueblo started to spread—sometimes through the media and/or through personal interviews—the contention that Mapuche cultural manifestations related to an ancient past belonged to them and, simultaneously, they started to spread an interpretation of history before the ‘Conquest of the Desert’ that is opposed in many levels to the area’s official historical narrative and to some aspects of academic discourse (Crespo 2011). Others, rather than making public demands, observe, in the context of interviews and more informal conversations, that the constitution of archaeological resources as part of the provincial and national heritage of Argentina is another form of expropriation and subjugation of their own history.

These situations illustrate why we need to take into account that identification with memories and pasts by sectors that have been construed as subalterns and others are not only a product of the present but of the complex articulation of historical and present experiences with hegemonic discourses and practices. We can also acknowledge the importance of observing not only that which is made visible and spread on public arenas, but also that which can take place in everyday life and private contexts through images and discursive genres considered as ‘minor,’ ‘depoliticized,’ etc. Often, the production of memories and silences around knowledge, experiences, and memories become vehicular not only through narratives chronologically organized in a linear manner, but also through legends, fantastic stories, cultural performances, and images. These expressive genres, which sometimes, according to the researcher’s perspective are less used as sources, can, if they are examined situated and contextually, shed light on tensions, debates, senses of belonging, forms of resistance, and valuable aspects of social life, which are not always staged in other discursive genres or which are not always disseminated through words.²³ Before attempting to establish whether these stories

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are true or false, what ‘matters is to unravel—as Gordillo points out—the force fields and collective experiences underlying its production’ (Gordillo 2006, 28) and how they are inscribed and how we can access through them ‘to the conflict between possible and impossible sayings’ (Vich and Zavala 2004, 109).

But I’m also interested in adding the importance of starting to examine that the sense given to certain pasts, patrimonial productions, and/or traditions considered to be ‘indigenous’ can take upon more complex, heterogeneous, and ambivalent trajectories when it comes to identification, appropriation possibilities, and signification among the members of indigenous peoples. In other words, certain fragments of the past as well as experiences, practices, goods, spaces, and so on, can contain views, within the same self-identified group, that are ambivalent, simultaneously positive, and negative, expressing continuity and estrangement, all denoting ways of internalizing hegemonic discourses and practices alongside defiant visions *vis-à-vis* the established social order, whose political implications are, at the same time, divergent (Crespo 2008; Gordillo 2006).

Therefore, it is my understanding that the analysis of the heritagization processes of cultural manifestations and indigenous production of memories and silences cannot overlook these considerations. Besides, I think that these subjects’ variable and contending positions can only be understood in their full complexity if they are historically located and connected with past and present structural processes experienced collectively by these social groups and with colonialist scientific discourses and practices (Gnecco 2005), as well as with subjective experiences, whose articulations differentially articulate significations and contentions on the matter of the past and of traditions within hegemonic relationships, and how these influence their political practices.

This would allow a contribution to the field in several ways. In the first place, it opens the possibility of accounting for and understanding the heterogeneities existing within a single group occupying the same position in the social structure by explaining how processes of subjection, subjectivity, and possibilities of indigenous agency operate differentially in the reconstruction of memory and heritage, framed by historical and current conditioners of them as social groups and, as Pizarro (2006) argues, the particular way in which past and present structural conflicts are mediated. Second, it allows questioning the current common understanding of a calculated, strategic construction and self-interested usage of the past, heritage, and/or culture (whichever may be) by indigenous populations. Third, it allows to ponder, as Grossberg suggests, how certain cultural practices which, on one occasion, habilitated cultural *empowerment*, can lead to the opposite direction and, even, that some ‘forms of empowerment which are effective as resistance over there, might be ineffective over here’ (Grossberg 1992, 95).

Bases of approach: historical ethnography as an approach to processes of heritagization

The role played by processes of silencing, ambivalences, paradoxes, tensions, and heterogeneities are key to understanding the dynamics played out in the processes

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of heritagization. An ethnographic analysis crossed by a historical dimension allows an input into the necessary complexity of this kind of perspective, which emphasizes less the object and the rule, than the contending practices and relationships displayed before, during, and after the formulation of these policies and go beyond written norms. This is even more so if these policies and relationships are historicized within processes of construction and dispute over hegemony of longer duration.

Anthropology, centered on an ethnographic perspective, can ‘underline the complexity and the lack of order within the processes of formulating policies, especially the ambiguous and often disputed ways in which policies are issued and received by the people’ (Shore 2010, 29). Norms and policies that are based on determined ideological paradigms, on views and constructions of social order, and they are reformulated as the products of confrontations and negotiations. Far from a bipolar reality, we find ourselves facing a multidimensional world where complex dynamics of processes of domination and struggle are generated (Roseberry 2007). While, in certain cases, some subjects follow hegemonic scripts or they use them only partially and in specific circumstances, in others they abandon and defy norms, taking unexpected roads. The heterogeneous processes, practices, and effects of these policies, as Trouillot (2011) suggests, can be recognized by using an ethnographic strategy that studies not only within institutional contexts, but at its points of emergence, production conditions, and boundaries in different realms of everyday life and in the network of interpersonal relationships.

We advocate for a perspective that can de-naturalize behaviors, discourses, and silences, and which breaks with dichotomic and linear views and classifications that prevail in the field of heritage between: identity and market (Benedetti 2013), the material and the immaterial (Bialogorski and Fischman 2001; Lacarrieu and Pallini 2001), the political and the affective (Sabatella 2011), thus shifting the focus toward the study of how these aspects become contentious. We also advocate for an approach centered on the study of how local—municipal—heritage policies are articulated with and disarticulated from those of other instances of wider jurisdiction—provincial, national, and international. Finally, this approach should examine the emerging tensions within a single institutional context or agency in the processes of conformation of these policies, and should also give priority to the way it intertwines with other policies and demands at the local level.

Undoubtedly, the importance of conducting more local studies comes from the fact that the prevailing power dynamics in these spaces can complement, contradict, and overlap with the actions effected in other orders and state or non-state wider levels—NGOs, intergovernmental agencies, and so on—but, especially, as we noticed elsewhere (Benedetti and Crespo 2013), because it is in this relatively autonomous spaces that indigenous people constantly interact with local agencies of power and experience directly: the enabling and the boundaries imposed on their behaviors and the occupation of social and territorial spaces; relationships of inequality and subordination; expropriations and subjugations. Studying the dynamics of articulation between municipalities and other state or even non-state levels, while trying to shed light on how programs and wider

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policies intertwine with processes, relationships, social trajectories, and local power sectors, can contribute to sketch a less homogeneous and schematic panorama over epochal context frames. But, especially, it can contribute to a deeper and more complete understanding on how and why certain shifts and continuities of public policies implemented in different spaces occur, and on the thickness of the responses deployed by a part of the indigenous population.

Through different mechanisms and interpretations of ethnic diversity in each space, hegemonic sectors establish—within these processes of heritagization and of construction of memory—silencing, stereotypes, invisibilities, exercises of control, and asymmetries that have led indigenous people to undervalue themselves, to silencing and/or hiding their own cultural practices, experiences, knowledge, and pasts. Sometimes, as I mentioned above, certain contexts allow some silences and even ‘silence’ themselves as a practice to become an object of reflection, significance, and transmission, so they reach the public sphere by configuring themselves under a political–affective sense as constitutive of the group’s subjectivity and a drive to struggle.

However, as I have also shown here, these interactions are not always in the form of open and visible opposition, nor do the confrontations occur only at the level of words. There are socio-historical conditioners which, combined with personal life trajectories, explain processes of interpenetration, ambivalence, heterogeneities, and/or questionings on silences, hidings, definitions, and contradictions of state and non-state agencies’ programs and practices by indigenous peoples in each context. These processes are manifested through different expressive genres or forms of expression—different kinds of discursive genres, images, performances, and so on—which affect inter and intra-ethnic relationships in various ways.

An ethnography centered on a historical perspective allows a glimpse into the complexity of this phenomenon by de-naturalizing and contextualizing norms, discourses, practices, and programs, and distinguishing singularities within epochal frames, observing its historical nature and dynamism, burst into the study of the quotidian and the private as articulated with the public and the official, methodologically involving the study of how it emerges in different expressive genres, traditions, images, commemorations, ways of knowledge and exchange, and under which significations in each case, and shedding light on its usages and constituting power relations, tensions, ruptures, and crossovers.

If ethnography, with its thorough analysis, contributes to contemplate the extents, meanings, and political effects of the heritagization processes of indigenous peoples’ cultural manifestations, showing how macro political coordinates intertwine with micro political phenomena and the dissimilar effects that progressively inscribe themselves in the local arena, then historicization of patrimonial practices contributes to calibrate its changes and continuities and to explain practices and relationships within longer processes. Nowadays, a great variety of actors coexist in the methodological design, with their own factions and inner divisions. A remaining matter for another article is to discuss the role of academics in this process, a significant task if our purpose is to ‘constitute

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ourselves as a source of decolonizing knowledge whose contributions are not only directed at some sectors of society but at humanity as a whole' (Verdesio 2011, 8).

Translation: Lucía Cirianni

Notes

- 1 I wish to acknowledge the comments and the contributions to this work made by Sandra Rozental, Mario Rufer, and Frida Gorbach during the Third Biennial Conference of the International Association of Inter-American Studies that took place at Lima, Peru, on August 6–8, 2014. But I especially appreciate the generosity of Mario Rufer for the translation of this article and both editors of this volume for their invitation to participate in this book. And finally I thank Julieta Infantino for the revision of the translation.
- 2 I will use the term 'heritagization' instead of 'heritage.' That concept refers to the processes by which heritage is constructed.
- 3 Here, the term 'memories' is not to be understood as 'recollections' but as the multiple expressions of social and historical memory. (Translator's note)
- 4 Here, I am taking up a discussion from the current of studies on dominant and subaltern memory. For further information on this discussion as well as on the need for other theories to approach the processes of construction of the past among subordinate groups, see Briones (1994).
- 5 The following reflections are, in great measure, a product of my own experiences researching on memories and processes of heritagization in the area of the Andean Region of Parallel 42°—northwest of the Chubut province (El Hoyo, Epuyén, Lago Puelo, Cholila, and el Maitén) and southwest of the Río Negro province (El Bolsón)—in the Argentinian Patagonia. This work also draws upon experiences of extension-transference with the Indigenous Community of Quilmes in the Tucuman province—northwest Argentina—just as the exchange between indigenous leaders and public servants, and the reading of other studies on memory and heritage of indigenous cultural manifestations developed in Argentina and in other Latin American countries.
- 6 I understand the term 'subaltern', as Coronil (1994) proposes, less as a fixed position or the definition of a subject than as a process of subjection or a state of submission.
- 7 The formulas of silencing used and, specifically, the silenced aspects or dimensions in each of these mechanisms of power vary.
- 8 A deeper analysis of the mechanisms of silencing played out in this museum and their political implications can be found in Crespo and Tozzini (2014).
- 9 On the way archaeological resources were granted heritage status in certain provinces of Argentina, see Endere (2000), Crespo (2005), Rodríguez (2013), among others.
- 10 Many indigenous leaders actually define the silencing established by the state around heritage policies throughout time and even until today, as part of the outrages, subjugations, and expropriations lived in all spheres of social life—from things concerning their territory to symbolic matters (Crespo, 2008).
- 11 As Nahuelquir, Sabatella and Stella (2011) point out, meanings associated with silences vary within people's subjectivities throughout time and according to their social conditions.
- 12 Rotman points out that 'in processes of granting heritage status, the 'rhetoric of loss' (as defined by Gonçalves) related to the construction of a national culture and identity, is configured as a discourse from hegemonic sectors and it is structured as a hegemonic practice. This category, related to developments on ethnic identity of the Mapuche people, operates by enabling memories, legitimizing experiences and constituting

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subjects—within processes that imply subjection and compliance as well as forms of reordering and resistance in subaltern conditions—thus allowing us to consider it as a counter-hegemonic practice’ (Rotman 2010, 24).

- 13 In her thesis in Anthropology, Sabatella analyzes and introduces an interesting discussion about the displacement of ‘silences’ to ‘valuable secrets.’
- 14 Although the limitations of this space do not allow me to analyze this here, I must mention that these secrets and mysteries are synchronized with some popular stories around archaeological heritage. For further information on this, see Crespo (2008–2011).
- 15 I consider ‘secrecy’ as a practice that allows to both create and maintain links of affective affinity, belonging, authority, and power, as well as to divide, isolate, and build otherness or even break social relationships by the more or less porous closure of information that is invested with a social ‘value’ (whether it is positive or negative) (Berliner 2005; Giraud 2006). Secrets are based on a game or a dynamic that implies closing and sharing information, hiding it. They can be linked to mysteries—as in the aforementioned example—that can incite fascination, and/or also with the register of something socially considered as a prohibition, a stigma, the inadmissible, or deviated. Since secrecy implies silence and sharing, it is often motivated by other factors around the practice of silencing and it entails other effects that are not necessarily equivalent, which makes it prone to other kind of connotations and meanings. About this, see Berliner (2005) and Giraud (2006).
- 16 For example, historical narratives from the Río Negro region produced after the territory was provincialized in 1955, have combined nationalization and foreignization of different ethnic groups within this land with racialization of the indigenous past, the emptying of these populations after the conquest, their later location in specific geographies within the province and into a class structure, and the loss or extinction of their culture in the present. As for the dominant anthropological discourse in Patagonia until the eighties, it defined the ‘indigenous’ from the notion of loss and backwardness, as a ‘legacy of the past,’ and it considered its own professional practice as the only one capable of ‘rescuing’ what was left of that difference from oblivion.
- 17 These boundaries of ‘the indigenous’ appear too in the actions of some NGOs and they are linked to a definition of ethnicity and the policies that are to be applied on these peoples determined by multilateral and international agencies.
- 18 As Gordillo (2006) contends, indigenous subjectivity is not so much something fixed and eternal, but the product of historical, cultural, and political experiences that are always changing and contradicting each other in regard not only to their ethnicity but to experiences that other social sectors have gone through.
- 19 For an analysis of ‘multiculturalism’ as an umbrella term, see Hall (2010).
- 20 The core of this questioning is the appropriation of the past by the national and provincial agencies of the state by classifying it as ‘national and provincial heritage’ and omitting the presence of indigenous peoples.
- 21 Over the last years, the collecting urge that impregnated science and the political violence implied in the way these collections were made, have been frequently criticized even within academia. Estanislao Zeballos, and attorney and an organic intellectual of the era of President Julio Argentino Roca, gathered a private collection of skeletons stolen from tombs in Patagonia which he later donated to the Museum of La Plata, in the province of Buenos Aires. Francisco Moreno himself, the first director of this museum and an explorer of the Patagonia region, declared to have exhumed remains from that area too. The private collection of the Police Commissioner of the province of Tucumán, Manuel Zavaleta, which ended up in the Ethnographic Museum of Buenos Aires, had been the product of plundering ‘Calchaquí antiques.’ Some of the human remains exhibited at the Museum of La Plata even belonged to indigenous people who, after the Conquest of the Desert, were transported to that institution as service personnel

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and as scientific subjects of study, and who, after their deaths, were added to its patrimonial repertory and exhibited in one of its halls (Cf. Podgorny and Politis 1990; Di Fini 2001; among others).

- 22 It is worth mentioning that these ‘strategies’ are produced by force relations within the hearth of a group and they can be explained by rebuilding its history, its differential conditioners, the circumstances of their members, current revindications, and the trajectory followed by the constitution and signification, in this case, of that which is being disputed (Crespo, 2008). The variability of the strategies used to claim the recognition of rights and resources relates not only to the position of the involved agencies within the social structure, but also to the circumstances, social roles, trajectories, and specific social conditions of these sectors—even within the same positions. As I explain below, cultural practices or memories that can enable power and become effective forms of resistance at a certain point may not be seen in the same way by others who belong to the same group and social sector.
- 23 Archaeological resources and especially human remains are usually charged with performativity in stories. I have often heard indigenous people mention how the dead men participate and impact on the life of the living (Crespo 2008).

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