

# **'The good memory of this land': Reflections on the processes of memory and forgetting**

Memory Studies

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## **Abstract**

The 'good memory of this land' is the way the Mapuche define the processes of remembering and forgetting. From this point of view, memory becomes the means by which the past is acknowledged and advice is transmitted; an instance where people reconfigure their subjectivities and the bonds of belonging that connect them, their ancestors and the physical world. In the specific context of some Mapuche families who decided to recover lands in Argentinean Patagonia that were disputed by the Benetton firm, memory became a central subject of reflection among those involved. This article, based on Mapuche reflections, deals with the theoretical implications of two main demands of collective memory in the local arena: the truth about history and autonomy in the practice of remembering and forgetting in order to create people's own culture of relatedness.

## **Key words**

images, Mapuche, relatedness, subjectivity, territoriality

*let him have a good memory of this land where he will always be from.*

(Personal interview with Mercedes Meli, February 2002)

## **Starting Point**

### ***The conflict of the Santa Rosa lot in context***

I started my fieldwork on *Mapuche–Tehuelche* communities and organizations in Chubut, a province of Argentina, in 1994. In 2002, I met the members of the Santa Rosa Mapuche community who had decided to quit city life and 'go back to the land'. This specific case of territorial recovery was not only a challenge to its participants, but also to those like us who have long been thinking about the processes of memory and forgetting.

The dispute began when the Benetton Corporation charged a Mapuche family with usurpation. The lot in question, called Santa Rosa, is located in the north-west of Chubut bordering a large

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**Figure 1** Map showing the location of the Santa Rosa lot

estate that the Argentinean government gave to Argentinean Southern Land Company Ltd in 1889 (see Figure 1). Nowadays, the Benetton Group is the company majority shareholder.

Like many other families of the region, this family had already been evicted years before, when they had been forced to leave in search of better working opportunities. In 2002, they decided to return to work the land. Only after they had checked on the legal status of the Santa Rosa lot at the local state office did they conclude that it was state-owned. Nevertheless, in October 2002, and as a result of Benetton's accusation, the family was violently evicted by the police. In May 2004, the charges against them were dismissed. Even though the judiciary concluded that there had been no secrecy or violence in their actions, the lot was nevertheless given to the Land Company. For the past few years, the dispossessed family has actively participated in Mapuche demonstrations, articulating its own dispute with that of others in the region in Mapuche parliaments, gatherings, visits and religious ceremonies. In this process, which participants refer to as 'being in a struggle', the collective project to recover Santa Rosa was created. On 14 February 2007, they finally returned to the lot as a Mapuche community and as part of a *people*. The legal process resumed once again after a new accusation from Benetton; yet the Mapuche families of Santa Rosa community still live on 'recovered territory'.

This article does not deal with the dispute – which is the subject of previous works (Briones and Ramos, 2005; Ramos, 2005; Ramos and Delrio, 2005) – but with the topic of memory. In the local context, where the land disputes between indigenous and non-indigenous people are circumscribed,

the Santa Rosa community case becomes representative in two different ways. On the one hand, the lack of documentary evidence to prove the legitimacy of the recovery transforms the dispute into a 'difficult' case. However, it has fostered solidarity and commitment from indigenous and non-indigenous people alike. The fight over rights to the Santa Rosa lot dates back to the end of the 19th century, when the military campaigns of both Argentinean and Chilean national armies against the indigenous peoples of Patagonia took place. Simultaneously, the biggest estates of the country emerged in very obscure ways. On the other hand, the Santa Rosa community, formed by families whose history is related to the Cushamen Colony, became one of the largest Mapuche communities in Argentina created by presidential decree in 1899 and located in the area. Therefore, both in terms of common sense and bureaucratic definitions, it is impossible to think of the emergence of a new grouping that includes urban members different from that considered be the original community. Along with many others, I consider these Mapuche families' decision to return to be based on a legitimate claim and on their ancestors' councils. But then I became aware that they were also engaged in a profound debate concerning the bases of what we consider to be *collective memory*. This article is a compilation of the public reflections of those who are participating in the recovery process to bring to the fore the core demands of memory. Taking into account shared everyday practices and the conversations held with them during these last few years, I believe that the 'Santa Rosa community case' is representative because of its realignments regarding memory.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Mapuche and Tehuelche in Argentine Patagonia began engaging in alternative contexts of demonstrations, claims and fights for their rights. In those years, the disputes over the official discourse and the legal framework were mainly concerned with acknowledging the status of native people as subjects of the law. However, Chubut, one of the provincial states in Patagonia, took the lead in legal and administrative matters when the provincial government proposed a more active participation from the native people and a reformulation of laws. At that time, and in contrast to the situation in Neuquén and Río Negro, the local social imaginary held the native population to be small and concentrated in rural communities. From the mid-1990s, the indigenous groups were devoted to proving that the Mapuche were not just a few, and that they did not live just in rural centres. Since then, oral archives have begun to grow as groups, families and individuals have got together to give accounts of their histories of persecution, and of how they were evicted from their land. They also related how they were forced to migrate to the city for mostly labour-related reasons or because of land shortages, how they were threatened, or how the ongoing farming conflicts affected them.

At the beginning of this century, and as a result of this new social scenario, native organizations and communities came into existence. As they enjoyed increased visibility and the power to influence social spheres, they brought up issues different from those other Mapuche groups had been spearheading in other provincial states in Patagonia. At this point, it was not a matter of pushing for the recognition of the indigenous communities and their rights to their ancestral land, a fact that had already been indisputably established as the starting point for discussions by international, national and provincial laws; rather, it had to do with questioning the assumptions that prevailed in contexts where the concepts of community, ancestry and territoriality were applied by lawyers, judges and politicians. In 2001, we were surprised to learn about the results of the national census, which showed that Chubut was one of the provinces with the greatest indigenous self-affiliation level. It was even more remarkable that even though the land conflicts were the most frequently tried in court, there had been no rulings favourable to the native groups' claims.

Thus, even if it is true that the experiences of living in rural or urban contexts are different, the Mapuche and Tehuelche from the Chubut countryside and cities faced the same reality. The laws and the rights rightfully gained did not acknowledge either their past and recent history of forced

displacement, or the most usual ways in which they had related to each other and formed groups of belonging since the 19th century. The relations between the countryside and the city finally began to flow and claims were shared. The quotations in this article come from both groups, because both participated in the recovery process of the Santa Rosa lot.

A woman from the Cushamen Colony had this advice for her son: 'let him have a good memory of this land where he will always be from'. The good memory, anchored in the land, represents for her the memory of a lineage, which is not understood as a kinship category but as a way to understand past and present. It is on the land itself where ancestors and living persons become one in a group of belonging. The good memory is also the complex amalgam of sad stories and struggle kept in culturally significant images. The good memory is the result of the different 'portals' of the land (I borrow the term from Michael Taussig, 1987); that is to say, portals of reunion, transmission and translation between the experiences of humans and non-humans, and of past and present. In a recovered territory, in the ancestors' graves or the *camaruco pampas* [Mapuche religious ceremony fields], the relations with the ancestors and nature are part of a common memory.

This 'good memory of this land' gradually gained relevance in the participants' subjectivity during the recovery of Santa Rosa. After specifying an initial approach to the memory that encompasses both accumulated experiences and their historicity, this article will discuss the theoretical implications of two fundamental problems in the local arena: the *truth* about history and the *autonomy* to trigger memory to create its own culture of relatedness.

### *The subjectivity of memory*

In other work (Ramos, 2008; see also Ramos, 2005) I have suggested that the metaphor of *fold* or *pleat*, drawn from Nikolas Rose's (2003) interpretation of Gilles Deleuze's (1989) work, constitutes an adequate frame to think about the memory process. There, subjectivity was defined as an inside without essence, as a fold of the outside that includes the world of social relations, the world of objects and the natural world. From this point of view, the process leading to subjectivity implies a chain of folds that gather the experiences of circulating within the social space in an uneven and non-totalizing way. In other words, the affective subject is the product of a series of historical events that have shaped him or her into the person he or she is in multiple ways. People are represented by mandates, advice, techniques, habits, emotions, routines and rules that go beyond their bodies in the physical and material world.

Furthermore, the folding also entails a permanent reordering of subjectivity because it modifies its boundaries and reflexively reconstructs the historical experiences. The relations with oneself do not cease to be translated and reborn in other places and in different ways. The foldings are associated with an experience and this cannot be repeated except through a new experience, that is, when the exercise of translation brings about an evocative and creative relation between the inside and the outside (Benjamin, 1969). The outside turns into the inside while the inside is found beyond one's body limits.

As anticipated, this process of mediation between past and present, and between the subjective and objective worlds, is implied in the Mapuche quote in the epigraph to this article. In the concept of a 'good memory of this land' there is a convergence of various accumulated experiences that make up the folding of the particular relatedness of ancestors (*kwifike che*), living persons, the forces of nature (*nehuen*), and people's respective objectifications in the physical surroundings.

Through these experiences the Mapuche people see themselves as linked, as members of a lineage and as part of a people. Returning to the land is one of the many ways of reuniting with a past of images and relations where the affective force remains to create bonds and political commitments in the present.

During the last few years, from the first occupation of the Santa Rosa lot in 2002, the subsequent eviction, the trial, to the 2007 recovery, the collective work on the land and the performance of religious ceremonies, the Mapuche people who were involved in the process have begun locating their social path and dissimilar family experiences in the framework of a collective memory. Thus the Mapuche Community Proclamation of 14 February 2007 states:

In the year 2002, a Mapuche family tried to materialize their dream on these lands. This was not possible. The monster of repression immediately bared its teeth. Despite it all, they kept dreaming until that dream became collective. (Mapuche Community of Santa Rosa, 2007a)

In Ross Poole's words, 'It is only by learning to place our experience in the framework of collective memory that we are able to remember our own past' (2008: 155)

The metaphor of the folding makes memory become intelligible in terms of its external location in the specific fields of action and value. Just as Rose suggests substituting the possibility of the narration of the *being* – with its lineal, unidirectional and irreversible parameters of time – for its spatialization in a multiplicity of places and practices, other authors have argued that the images of the past are not always encoded and embodied in chronological narratives (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1987; Rapaport, 1990; Bloch, 1993; Olick and Robbins, 1998). As noted by Maurice Halbwachs (1980), it is the built environment that generally operates as a mnemonic for memory. Consequently, land can be circumscribed as both one of the fields of action and value of the past times of asymmetrical relations with the state, and 'a story of ancestors and their continued power and ability to bless their descendants and make them prosper' (Cole, 1998: 621)

According to what I have presented so far, I define memory as the discontinued set of accumulated experiences that make up our subjectivity. In the process leading to subjectivity memory becomes collective and it can be traceable to the outside and material world.

### *The historicity of memory*

Various authors have proposed that remembering and forgetting are constitutive processes of memory (Melion and Kuchler 1991; Battaglia, 1992; Weiss, 1997; Cole 1998; Ricoeur, 2000). In opposition to the assumptions that underlie the definitions of forgetting as 'loss' or of innovation as 'invention', anthropology has supported the view that it is precisely through the practice of remembering and forgetting that collective memories keep their cultural and local autonomy (Cole, 1998).

Along this line of thinking, Paul Connerton (2008) has identified different types of forgetting, arguing that neither forgetting nor remembering are homogeneous phenomena. Therefore, I consider memory as the result of a historical process in which different instances of forgetting and remembering have left their imprints.

In some historical contexts, the state has practised greater physical or symbolic violence to impose specific instances of forgetting on indigenous memories ('forgetting as repressive erasure', Connerton, 2008: 60). The destruction of certain images of the past in the public arena, however, does not necessarily lead to the interruption of the daily flow of transmissions (Berliner, 2005). Hence, I understand forgetting as the inaccessibility to particular images of the past that, nonetheless, and in different ways, may still be transmitted from generation to generation. Thus, remembering is the historical possibility of bringing those images inherited in silence to the present and identifying coherence where there was disconnection. In this sense, the relativity of memory is just a consequence of its historicity, because it is directly connected with how much of the past is available in a certain historical context (McCole, 1993).

Memory is also the historical outcome of those cases of forgetting that have been constitutive of new senses of belonging (Connerton, 2008: 63). Over time, the ways in which certain external spaces are experienced as constituents of collective memory have been changing. In contexts of crisis, memories and forgettings have been at work more intensively both to create alternative ways of transmission of images and to rebuild social relations (Melion and Küchler, 1991). Agreeing on some silences is part of the creative process of rebuilding bonds and collective memories in contexts of repression, disintegration and family dispersion and separation. The historicity of memory also relies on the renovation and resignification of the places of memory that have been constitutive of the new groups of belonging.

When framing memories and forgetting within the historical processes that comprise them, we likewise acknowledge two fundamental demands of memory. First, the demand for truth that emerges in the contexts where repression and asymmetrical power relations are revealed. Second, the demand for the autonomy of memory to rebuild bonds of belonging. Thus, the sections that follow focus on the local characteristics and theoretical insights of these demands.

### The Demand for Truth

In Argentinean Patagonia there are numerous land disputes between the indigenous settlers and ranchers, the state or corporations. Most of these disputes call for a revision of the history of frequent evictions and deceptions over the course of the last century. Even if the Santa Rosa community members' story is just another part of these processes, the specific recovery of this lot is circumscribed within a long-term history that challenges collective memory. It represents a profound reconsideration of the official historical narratives and the dominant images of the past used by the establishment to define only some indigenous demands as legitimate. The dispute over the Santa Rosa lot questions the bureaucratic category of community, as understood by families related through strict biological terms of kinship, and by its permanence in the same location throughout time. Santa Rosa sets off the debate about the past when it bursts into the midst of the continuity of the official history by bringing up images until then unthinkable, where communities are actually the outcome of forced relocations, the breaking up of families and enslaved workforces.

The association between ancestral occupation and biological family group has been the hegemonic construction used for the judicial and historical assessment and recognition of an indigenous community. In this context, the Benetton Corporation lawyer's argument, taken from the 2007 case file '*Compañía de Tierras del Sud Argentino S.A. vs. Curiñanco and others*' states:

I deny ... that the pseudo and self-appointed Santa Rosa community constitutes or has ever constituted an indigenous community and has ever lived in the Santa Rosa lot ... regardless of the legal and factual impertinence of the alleged justification, the insincerity, illegitimacy and historical fallacy of the matter, we feel forced to make a brief historical and anthropological consideration of the process of peopling in the north-west of Chubut.

The case file continues with the quotation of an academic work by a local researcher that establishes that the ancestors of the Mapuche families of Santa Rosa lot come from the Mapuche Cushamen Colony, not far from the lands in dispute, which was founded through a presidential decree in 1899, ten years after Argentinean Southern Land Company Ltd had been granted its lands. Here the emphasis is first put on the denial of the families' pre-existence in the province because they had come from the National Territories to the north (Neuquén and Río Negro) and,



second, on the supposed freedom of choice that the families would have had to settle in the lands of the Cushamen Colony by the end of the 19th century. Consequently, and according to this argument, the Curiñanco and Nahuelquir families could be recognized as members of the Cushamen Colony but not as an autonomous community, let alone as legitimate inhabitants of the Santa Rosa lot.

These conclusions not only result in an arbitrary displacement of the national and provincial borders back in time, but also to forgetting. The idea of a group moving willingly around the territory after military subjugation and their later settlement in a discrete physical space has become the way in which social differences are justified in history. In the official history, persecution, forced relocations and the perpetration of genocide developed into unthinkable facts (Trouillot, 1995).

This matches Connerton's first suggested instance of forgetting, that of 'repressive erasure', which is derived from a destruction of images of the past through physical and symbolic violence (2008: 60). Concentration camps, the breaking up of families, deportation and slave labour of the late 19th century, as well as the exploitation of workers, legal arbitrariness and expropriation of the lands that followed, were the various ways in which the Argentinean state exerted physical violence on the indigenous peoples. But violence has also been encrypted in museums, statues, official curricula and academic texts that have denied the means of that repression. As a consequence of these mechanisms of historical erasure, the Mapuche have displaced certain images from the past beyond expression and memory – 'humiliated silences' (Connerton, 2008: 67) or 'humiliated memory' (Langer, 1991) – as a strategy conditioned by power relations.

It is the new Mapuche generations who have identified forgetting and taken on the responsibility of re-encountering the past that parents and grandparents had apparently silenced. It has been only recently that the Argentinean academic field has identified the existence of concentration camps (Delrio, 2005) or that the indigenous deportations (Mases, 2002; Lenton, 2005) of the late 19th century have been widely researched. The recent and incipient incorporation of these images in articles or the media has been the outcome of the accumulated experience of 'struggle', which, from the Mapuche's point of view, is also the struggle of memory against forgetting.

In this context of asymmetrical power relations, we wonder: how memory works in order to identify the forgetting imposed by repression and humiliation in an apparent vacuum of meaning. Using a Mapuche expression, how is it possible to 'let out what is locked inside' so as to remember and revisit the images inherited in silence?

Remembering can be an intentional undertaking we share with Mapuche communities and organizations, with the decision to rebuild the history that has been denied. In this sense, one of the members of the Santa Rosa community once said that he had been severed from his past, like many other Mapuche people, when he had been forced to migrate to the city:

but I am content with anything we can rescue and with all the different information that our brothers bring from all sorts of places, with everything they too have learnt. I feel good, and I am willing to keep on learning and listening. (Pivke, 2007)

However, remembering is not only a salvage undertaking, in which 'loss' is a permanent threat. In a conversation held with Atilio Curiñanco, a member of Santa Rosa community in 2004, he explained that the process of territorial recovery was producing changes within him. In the first place, he had been forced to do away with an 'education based on respect', whose primary mandate was to obey in silence. Only then could he express his pain and anger, and denounce the numerous acts of injustice he had inherited and lived through. Three years later he went back on this concept on regional radio:

I am not armed, I am not a warrior, I do not feel successful yet, but I am a fighter. And a fighter for what the *mapu* [land] is making me feel, because my courage and strength have sprung from the *mapu*. I used to be a fearful guy. Extremely shy. I marvel at myself today: where has that fear gone? (ALAS FM, 2008)

In this awakening as a fighter, Atilio refers to one of the central issues regarding memory. Along with Walter Benjamin's argument, John McCole (1993) defines politics as the reception mode that activates, based on certain physical objects, such as the *mapu*, the acknowledgement of a particular temporal constellation between the current review and a specific moment of the past. This way to understand politics as a recognition instance enables a better understanding of the conversion that the Mapuche anchor to memory.

In the first place, it draws our attention to the possibility of this acknowledgement. The interfaces between past and present are not always equally accessible, let alone in historical contexts where repressive erasure has been the rule. Only the experiences accumulated throughout time will allow new access to the images from the past in full detail. The Mapuche have been fighting for their lands, for autonomy in their territory and for their rights. These different practices have led to empowerment and reflection experiences. They have been reformulating the terms under which questions should be thought out. For most of the Mapuche, who nowadays live in urban centres, the question 'why aren't we with the *mapu*?' has taken on political power in detailed images of a past that, not long ago, were equally inaccessible. Set in these more general processes, the personal paths of those who participated in Mapuche parliaments, religious ceremonies and land recovery processes also meant new and more intimate relations with memory objects. The awakening from 'fear and shyness' in the shape of a 'fighter' is, ultimately, the rebirth to experience, to make the past become the present through everyday practices that Atilio, like other community members, daily embarks on to survive and fight back occupation. Thus, the shared experiences inherited and lived by the Mapuche nation in general, the experiences of shared itineraries among those who feel they belong in the same struggle, and each one of the personal and daily experiences that support everything else, make up the context that enables the acknowledgement of those until now unintelligible images.

Second, the Mapuche have defined the acknowledgement instance as a re-emergence of the imprints of ancient experiences. 'These elders' footprints have become inspiring traces. We are a consequence of those traces. We keep on being Mapuche and we have the responsibility and the need to reveal the historical truth ...' (Mapuche Community of Santa Rosa, 2007b). Yet, what do these traces of memory consist of?

These traces of memory, which are identified as a source of inspiration in the present, are the images that suddenly become legible. They are moments from the past whose meaning remained barred until remembered, and whose images begin to be identified through historical indexes (Wolin, 1994). The latter are the vehicles between different experiences of the past and the present. The acknowledgement of these secret agreements with the past generations can be observed, for example, through the index of crying. Celinda Leviú, one of the oldest women who helped to 'bring back' the *camarucu* [religious ceremony] to the Santa Rosa lot, defined family chants as follows:

many things come from the *kempeñ* [family chant], many good things and (one) must have a lot of history to be able to understand ... it is much more than a chant to let out, it is something big and painful too, it makes you want to cry. (Personal interview, 10 January 2005)

The memories of 'trackway' include those about the return 'home', in which certain 'spiritual beings' embodied by animals or stones show the way and protect their ancestors during their journey. They come back home – to the village or to join their relatives – because they have



been 'captives' in concentration camps during the military campaigns. However, this piece of information is given only if asked about, since it is often implicit in the narration. Thus, for example, *Nahuel Ngtram* [The tiger's story], one of those stories known to be true, narrates how an ancestor came back from captivity to his relatives' village with the aid of a tiger. Although these performances start with the phrase 'Granny used to cry when she narrated ...', the retelling of the comeback highlights the achievement of overcoming the obstacles found during the long walk leading to the family reunion.

According to Carlos Fausto (2007), this is perhaps a paradoxical form of social memory, one capable of simultaneously forgetting and remembering traumatic stories in the shape of reunion and restructuring. While analysing other Yanesha processes, Fernando Santos Granero (2007) suggests that rather than historical facts, what people recall is the emotions, feelings and moods resulting from their social relations. In this sense, we believe that the question 'What do they remember and, above all, what do they choose to forget?' (Santos Granero, 2007) allows us to explain that forgetting is a strategic choice for the Mapuche to define their native agency in a significant way, just as the author supports. On the other hand, the sad feelings expressed in gestures, or in phrases such as 'Granny used to cry when she narrated ...' hint at events that are purposefully omitted from the narration, but that these indexes may evidence. On the other hand, the memory emphasizes the story of the pilgrimage towards reunion and restructuring, which is also shown in most Mapuche memories of trackway. Further, we might elaborate that the recognition of silence as the result of a forgetting imposed by force embodies this paradox in a local and specific sense, a concept already pointed out by Fausto (2007). It frames silences in a cry for truth, with the strength of condemnation and in an attempt to counter the neglect of the official position; it reinstates these silences in a memory of comeback, and in the permanent restructuring of the people, as a way to give direction to their political agency and other political practices.

It is in this way that apparently unconnected practices, such as 'letting out' a *kempeñ* or retelling a *ngtram*, start the of sharing images of the past that turn out to be both painful and liberating. In the last few years, these reading clues have allowed the revision of many of the practices, which had generally been confined to the space of mythical repetition or aesthetic contemplation. Nevertheless, the acknowledgement of images that were illegible until recently now enables the restoration of historical experiences and contexts in which the Mapuche people struggled to reorganize even in the face of tremendously painful situations. Only then do certain images become detailed pictures of captivity (concentration camps, forced relocations, tortures and family break-up) as well as images of struggle and restructuring.

These two dimensions of the acknowledgement stage – the social and subjective context of possibility, and the access to new connectivities – lead us to think about the nature of these images that, according to various interpretations of Benjamin, we define as 'truthful images' (McCole, 1993; Wolin 1994; Kohn, 2002).

The studies on memory have pondered on the resignification of the past, taking the present contexts that we remember as starting point. Other authors have already pointed out the inadequacy of merely a constructive approach. According to Jonathan Hill, the challenge for anthropology is 'to maintain a balance between a concern for documenting "what really happened" in history and the effort to understand local histories in terms that are culturally meaningful and relevant to contemporary social processes' (1992: 811). Similarly, Claudia Briones supports that, when the focus is on the 'invention of tradition', the fact that people remember under circumstances they have not chosen is often forgotten, while the resignification of the past cannot change what actually happened (Briones, 1994: 111–12). The truthful images are, in this sense, partially autonomous images of the past – 'neither fully structuring nor fully structured by current understandings of the past'

(Kohn, 2002: 562; see also Rappaport, 1990; Friedman, 1992); images that transmit enigmatic connections with the past from generation to generation, and once and again inspire people in their search to give meaning to experience.

The experience of returning to the land has consequences for the productive economy of the families who carry out the recovery. But for them and those who accompany the process, 'returning to the land' has also implied once more coming into contact with the messages of an oral tradition that was enclosed in powerful non-discursive images (Benjamin, 1969; Taussig, 1987; Rappaport, 1990; Kohn, 2002). Dreaming, letting out a *kempeñ* or retelling a *ngtram* offer specific images of the past, even when they cannot be fully understood at present. Even so, the demand for truth is based on its capacity to encode 'what really happened' and, simultaneously, to enable the reinterpretation without fully overriding its basic and enigmatic connections with the past (Kohn, 2002). These associations remain like brushstrokes of the past in the foldings of Mapuche subjectivity and, therefore, cannot be reconstructed only by the documents of the archive or the reinterpretations of the 19th-century chronicles that Mapuche and non-Mapuche intellectuals can lay their hands on.

In this sense, the demand for historical truth that the recovery of the Santa Rosa lot has set in motion does not seek to incorporate the lost images in the continuum of the hegemonic traditions but rather, to restore these images in their own experiences of transmission. The Santa Rosa recovery becomes the political gesture of a specific acknowledgement: the restitution of truthful images for a critical and culturally significant understanding of their current experiences of domination and subordination.

So from now on, 14 February, we have returned to Santa Rosa to become what we are: Mapuche, people of the land. Through this gesture we wish to say that we all have the right to design our own future ... Today we, the ones who have always been silenced, speak to the deaf pretenders that have 'ruled' this country. *Pu peñi, pu lamuen*, comrades, friends: this is the right time to rewrite our histories (Mapuche Community of Santa Rosa, 2007a)

## The Demand for an Autonomous Culture of Relatedness

Memory calls for historical truth as well as for autonomy in its everyday construction of *relatedness*. We use this term with the twofold meanings suggested by Janet Carsten (2000).

On the one hand, an epistemological approach to the cultures of relatedness presupposes suspending the modern established assumptions on nature and society. When Mapuche people inscribe their present experiences on those inherited from their family histories, they also update a particular network of knowledge and affection. This network is, at the same time, real as nature, narrated as discourse and collective as society (Latour, 2007: 22). In this alternative epistemology, the Mapuche past returns as a skein of bonds, associations and unions of meaning with the necessary political strength to intervene in history (Ramos, 2008). For the Santa Rosa community, the guarantee and strength of their political action rests on the combination of the strength derived from the land, their ancestors and their own lives:

I hold on to the *mapu* and say: surely the *nehuen* [strength] of our *mapu* and of our ancestors' spirits, who have suffered so much, is among us too, and also gives us the strength and knowledge for us to stand up in the name of all the Mapuche People. (ALAS FM, 2008)

On the other hand, the comparative approach to the cultures of relatedness stems from the question of 'what being related does' for certain people who live in certain areas. In this sense, Carsten

(2000) focuses on 'kinship' definitions and supports that this concept should not be dealt with as a pre-established notion from the occidental biological point of view. Rather, she proposes the study of the social, material and affective weight that bonds bear to the people who practice them.

A Mapuche activist used to say that 'understanding oneself through native beliefs' is 'to know one's lineage', that is, 'knowing where one comes from'. In the interrelation of the twofold meaning of 'relatedness', the purpose is then to understand what the Mapuche call 'to know one's lineage' while taking into consideration two simultaneous processes in the constitution of relations: the creation of memory places and the recreation of social bonds through the transmission of experiences.

In the first place, I will elaborate on the memories of trackway, the creation of places and the importance they have had in the construction of social relations. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries – the period when the Argentinean and Chilean national armies carried out the extermination and relocation of subjugated indigenous peoples – the dispersed people and families entered new alliances and created new groups of belonging. Thus, for example, the *lelfun* or *camaruco* lands – physical places where the altar (*rewe*) was erected to perform the religious ceremony – became one of the material places in which to anchor the origin of the family groups or lineages that were reconfiguring themselves.

In the Andes range, in the years when the great-grandparents of the Santa Rosa community members were running away from the armies, the chief Fernando Nahuelquir – like many other family heads – was entrusted with the mission of starting to 'raise' his own *camaruco* in the course of a dream at the top of a mountain. The Mapuche families who, like them, had lived in the 'Country of the Apples' had been dispersed or subjugated. Fernando Nahuelquir was hiding in the mountains with his family and other family groups not necessarily related by blood, when he visualized his ancestors performing the *camaruco* that he had dreamed about at the mountain top. By teaching 'his people' that *camaruco*, he was also founding a new lineage:

This was what my father and my mother told me. My father, I don't know how old he was, he must have eleven. He said that when they got to the *pillañ* [volcano], when they were running away, they stayed there several months. Then, up on the mountain, he said ... in the afternoon people started moving, riding in circles. Movement was beginning; it was felt clearly up there ... And well, then my grandfather ... who had already dreamt about it, knew that he had to take that *camaruco* and get it through to his people. (Personal interview with Fernando Nahuelquir's grandson, 14 October 1996)

The current residents of Cushamen mark that place, named Trankura Mapu, and deem it the origin of the group of belonging that they usually call 'the people of Nahuelquir'. This group, once reunited, continued taking in more families on its way for the next ten years. The group's journey ended up in the Cushamen Colony, where they started negotiating the legal possession of the lands with the Argentinean state. Once settled with their families and with those who kept coming from the west, north and south, they decided that they should return to Trankura Mapu, relocate the altar (*rewe*) of the original *camaruco* in the new *lelfun* in their current lands for the sake of their animals and a bountiful production. Since this relocation ritual was performed, 'the people of Nahuelquir' have raised the *camaruco* in the lands of Cushamen every year to date. During the 20th century, however, many families were evicted from those lands by the landowners of the region, and forced to migrate to new areas. Some of those families decided to recover the Santa Rosa lot in the vicinity of Cushamen and, in 2008, once settled, they felt the need to raise a *camaruco* of their own. In order to form this new *lelfun*, they talked to the elders in the Cushamen Colony who confirmed their mandate to be constituted as a new group of belonging, accompanied them and advised them in this complex and delicate task.

In this way, as time goes by, memory slowly leaves an imprint on different physical spaces (Rappaport, 1989; Hill, 1993; Santos Granero, 1998; Schama, 1995), as exemplified in the *lelfun* and *camaruco rewe* cases. For the Mapuche people, their family history is written in the landscape where certain places protect the memories of the forced relocations and dispersal imposed by the state, while evoking the images of reconstitution and configuration of new 'lineages'. A member of the Santa Rosa community involved in the land recovery process said 'every year that goes by I give more value to my grandmother's words, [who used to say that] when facing hard times, they did what nobody believed they would, which meant surviving and then reorganizing as a People ..., that is wonderful' (Hacher, 2007).

Establishing these places of memory is also a way of putting in practice the work of remembering and forgetting. However, 'forgetting is here part of an active process of creating a new and shared identity in a new setting' (Carsten, 1996, cited in Connerton 2008: 63). Although this other type of forgetting is framed in contexts of persecution and repression, it is also a strategy to 'survive and then re-emerge as a people'. The *camaruco* fields and altars gather up experiences and shared paths while constituting memory of the ongoing relatedness. Relatedness not only implies keeping genealogical memories and ancient bonds but also, and more frequently, creating new alliances among those who were not previously related.

In the second place, understanding memory as a constitutive practice of social relations also drives us to ponder on the importance of its transmissibility. From this point of view, memory is not a mere reservoir of texts, values and past practices. Memories situated in their own contexts of transmission restructure the relations with the inherited knowledge and among the persons who also experienced them too.

The Mapuche culture of relatedness, as anticipated above, includes relations with the ancestors, with the people in the present, and with the physical world. It is in each one of these bonds that memory is permanently produced and put into practice. As for Mapuche people their ancestors and nature keep on being the source of historical knowledge, the contexts of transmission are not limited to communication events among living persons, but they include the portals that emerge in dreams, in the prayers at their ancestors' graves, or in the signs offered by nature. In these contexts of transmission, people acquire the knowledge of their lineage and, consequently, a place in history.

For example, an elder from the Cushamen Colony recalled that he was still young when he was asked to advise some people on the *camaruco* final act. When presented with that opportunity, his tongue got 'tied' and his relatives laughed at him. It was then that the elders suggested to him that he pray at the grave of an ancestor who had been known 'to speak like an open book' and who 'owned the history of every aborigine of this place'. The elders advised him to 'go and ask about everything, to let their spirits give (him) the abilities that they had, so that (he could) speak in the *camaruco*'. The narrator finishes the story saying: 'when I got to the following *camaruco* having done as I had been told and, I spoke, I spoke with the elders' spirit and then people respected me. Knowledge that they give us' (Nahuelquir, interview with the author, 1996).

In this sense, 'to know one's lineage' is to acquire the necessary abilities to receive and retransmit the 'advice' inherent to memory. In the experience exchange, the advice on how to continue the ongoing history is also inherited (Benjamin, 1969); that is, the cultural guidelines to inscribe personal memories in the experiences of the past, present and future generations are also passed on to the next generation. In Mapuche words, one belongs to a certain lineage when one inherits its advice: 'however, despite this absolute hypocrisy, our memory is kept intact. Memory is inherited from our ancestors, defended, supported and protected. The advice given by our *Futakecheyen* [ancestors] is never to forget' (Mapuche Community of Santa Rosa, 2007c).

Hence, the importance that social, material and affective bonds slowly emerging in the current processes of reconstitution also derives from the transmission of advice. In February 2008, during the second full moon of the year, the *camaruco* was raised once again in Cushamen. On that occasion, some young Mapuche had arrived from neighbouring towns, looking for their family memories; they knew that there, where their grandparents or parents had once lived, they would meet with them again. They were determined to walk down the road their migrating relatives had, but in the opposite direction. Despite the fact that they could have had other means to access the information they got during those days, they decided to get closer to memory by participating in the ceremony as well as in the informal meetings. They talked about this and explained that 'Mapuche memory' is not a text and value canon that can be learnt from books, but rather – as McCole (1993) suggests – through the varied and contextualized transmissibility of experience. Likewise, the members of the Santa Rosa community arrived there too to get ready for the *camaruco* that they would raise in the recovered lot.

The following month the 'gathering' began on the Santa Rosa lot, and the Mapuche arrived from different parts of Patagonia to take part in this new *camaruco*. Besides the elders of the region that collaborated on the ceremonial task, there was also widespread and active participation of young urban Mapuche. The Santa Rosa *camaruco* assembled more than 80 people whose family history had been similar to that of the members of the host community.

Since every phase of memory transmission becomes part of the context for the following reception, they agreed that being part of the process of transmission is also being part of a network of relations. By the campfires where everyone met for some rest and conversation, they shared the memories that wove together advice and their personal, family and collective bonds.

An old Mapuche woman who had lived most of her life in an urban centre in the province of Chubut finished a narrative on her family history quoting the words that her father had said in his deathbed. He had advised her 'to get together with her people'. She then decided to travel to one of the *camarucos* that, in those days, were advertised on the radio. Though she had never met the hosts before, she was welcomed with affection and, in time, she even took it upon herself to protect their memories:

And that is why families get together; that's nice, maybe you are a stranger, you went of your own accord, and you get in there ... and then it feels like you are staying with family. I feel like their family. I am like family for them. I am not really family, but they think of me like that. (Personal interview, 3 February 2008)

In this sense, the memory anchored in contexts of transmission is part of a dynamic and complex history of relations and constitution of social bonds. With regard to the above-mentioned *camarucos*, I understand that they combined memory and relatedness in a different though juxtaposed way. On the one hand, every time a *camaruco* is raised in some *pampa* or *lelfun*, the memory of the relocations and the re-enactment of alliances are updated. The *camaruco* is a memory place in which a history of itineraries and forced relocations is protected and renewed, and where different families become related. The *camaruco* that was raised in Santa Rosa in 2008 constitutes a new memory place and is thus part of a long-lived historical orientation: 'the reconstitution as a people'. On the other hand, the members of Santa Rosa community, like many other young urban Mapuche, went to their parents and grandparents' *camaruco* in search of their families' memory. These memories exchanged in specific contexts of transmissibility not only update the advice from and the pacts with past generations, but also outline new networks of relations.

## Final Words

we have the spirit of all our ancestors that lived in this place, who demand us, one way or another, to return.  
(Personal interview with Hernán Scandizzo, 22 March 2007)

In the context of the process of the recovery of the Mapuche territory, memory has been the core issue in public statements and in informal reflections alike. The transformation of the relations with the land, with ancestors and with those that partake in the process of the recovery in different ways is transformed in a profound reordering of the subjectivity foldings. Furthermore, new associations between inherited experiences and lived ones have started renewing the political and affective meaning of the images of the past that have been transmitted through dreams (*pewma*), sacred chants (*kempeñ*), true stories (*ngtram*), ritual performances (*nguillatun* and *camarucu*) and conversations (*ngtramkam*).

People are bonded when they feel part of the flow of memories, commitments and emotions. The demands for truth and the autonomy of memory are anchored in the intersection between remembering/forgetting and relatedness. On the one hand, the Mapuche who take part in the process of the 'return to the land' identify some imposed forgetting. They are involved in new contexts of acknowledging the past while they get acquainted with inherited images, though still inaccessible, that they declare to be truthful. On the other hand, they demand the restitution of these images to their own experiences of transmission, where memory is not only the tool to implement the search, but also the means by which lineage relations are created. The latter are the bonds of a shared belonging among ancestors, living persons and non-human forces that can be constituted and reconstituted in the transmission of advice.

If we analyse the way judicial practices have been carried out in Argentina, and the production of indigenous knowledge that helps develop an alternative sense of belonging as a people, the conflict over the Santa Rosa lot acquires further relevance. Like elsewhere, namely Australia, many lawyers and counsellors have taken for granted that the law on aboriginal custom gives rights to 'groups' as long as these prove kinship with a central trunk that traces historical ties to that place. Or, in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, 'the trunk or taproot of the tree, of which all other levels are ramifications' (cited in Rumsey, 2001: 40). In this context, I consider that anthropology may contribute to a more accurate understanding of the aboriginal forms of territoriality. I thus conclude my work by making a brief reference to this subject.

In recovered territory, with more, less or no evidence of kinship to previous inhabitants, it is the process itself that generates the sense of place, hence transforming a stretch of land into 'traditional' territory (Santos Granero, 2006). According to Santos Granero, these generic territories become places of belonging through factors such as space appropriation, tracing individuals and the generation of emotional bonds. Nevertheless, this constitution process is neither an invention nor an exclusively pragmatic decision because it is developed in a framework of inherited memories about territoriality. As previously mentioned, the criteria of shared belonging and its roots in the land acquire sense in the memories of trackway.

With respect to the above-mentioned, and to round off this work, I want to mention some discussions on aboriginal peoples in Australia and Papua New Guinea that other researchers have put forward regarding the memories of displacement. Alan Rumsey (2001) incorporates the distinctions between the tree model and the rhizome model (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) into the discussion, and differentiates between spatiality based on hierarchical and fixed relations, where subunits relate to successive levels of ramification, from which places are interconnected in multiple ways.



The author supports that a tree-like vision – usually the state model – is less appropriate for understanding the social relations among native individuals than the rhizome model. Yet, the memories of trackway the Mapuche have to hand down from generation to generation, namely lineage memories, are usually interpreted as ramifications from a shared trunk, or as groupings based on genealogical memories. The tension does not lie so much on the use of a general kinship framework as on the way kinship or lineage is understood. The native concept of ‘family constitution’ (*familiarización*) seems to show a rhizome pattern in its constituency, at least during the time framed by the memories in question. Through transmission and updating, multiple connections – based on kinship, politics, rituals, alliances, proximity, economy or other shared experiences – participate in the ancestors’ memories of trackway in the same family constitution process. In brief, and in a similar sense to that upheld by Lévi Strauss (1982), we are led to think that the tree may be the way rhizome-like practices are expressed. The challenge for these claims over land does not lie with replacing the legitimacy model with another one, but, rather, on succeeding to explain one model on the basis of the other one.

However, to approach these ways of understanding lineage further, it would be necessary to bring in a second discussion on the memories of trackway and its emphasis on origin and creativity, on fixedness and mobility. Pamela Stewart and Andrew Strathern (2001) differentiate between those memories that focus on ‘origins’ – the events that are the foundation of the permanent state of facts – and those that highlight creations – the events that trigger a new state of facts in historical terms. In the first case, people bond to the earth, or in a broader sense, to nature because ancestral beings or spirits ‘descended’ to fix on and perpetuate in it. In the second, ritualistic sites are connected by the itineraries taken up by an ancestral figure, and by the transference from one place to another to replenish the earth with fertility. If we take into consideration the frames of interpretation updated from Mapuche reflections on their memories, it may seem that the original and creative events are equally constitutive of Mapuche relatedness. The original events account for the identification of the Mapuche to the land through a bond between human beings and ancestral beings (forces). It is with these spirits who lie in places, or have transformed into specific locations in the physical world, that these people communicate through the portals of the earth (or through an ongoing residence there, in the best scenario). Creative events, on the other hand, account for the connection between places by means of the trackway of an ancestor who *finds* a place, *recognizes* it as a significant point of access to his or her forefathers’ power, *holds* on to it, and *names* it for his or her group (or calls out the group’s name at that site) (Stewart and Strathern, 2001: 96).

It is precisely because the forces of origin are perpetually present that their creative forces may repeatedly manifest to the ancestors at different moments of time and at different places. These mandates can be manifested to people through dreams or other signs, and give them guidance when taking their most significant decisions. Likewise, and in accordance with Stewart and Strathern (2001), it does not seem illogical either that a group acknowledges two or more creative places of belonging – that of origin and those where power was newly revealed – or that a claim over land does not need to depend on the evidence of ancestral connection with the origins of ‘that’ place.

The memories of trackway find the people who transmit them and hand them down as a legacy at the site in question at the end of their journey. Often, they also define the places where the individuals who inherit the stories should be at the end of their pilgrimage. They particularly legitimize the people who transmit and inherit them at the final site of their pilgrimage. Otherwise, they often incorporate the places where those who inherit the histories are as a new terminal on the way. Therefore, Santa Rosa becomes a site of attachment as a result of the interplay between movement and fixedness.

Finally, memories become related on the basis of the transmissibility of counselling – the mapping of a unique course through an ancestral frame ('following the ancient rhythms'), of processes of family constitution (*familiarización*) that encompass multiple connections (lineage as a meeting point), and of the creative forms in which displacement is fixed (the memories of trackway).

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