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The quest for territorial autonomy: Mapuche political identities under neoliberal multiculturalism in Argentina

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Political Science

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THE QUEST FOR TERRITORIAL AUTONOMY: MAPUCHE POLITICAL
IDENTITIES UNDER NEOLIBERAL MULTICULTURALISM IN ARGENTINA

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

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Graduate Program in Political Science

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

In the context of neoliberal multiculturalism, indigenous activists face a fundamental dilemma. While they organize as indigenous peoples to negotiate and demand from states new terms of citizenship, activists recognize that new forms of accommodation for such demands exist within state institutions. However, indigenous organizations also discover that certain demands exceed these new spaces of participation. I argue that territorial autonomy is one such demand because it challenges the existing power imbalances between indigenous peoples and the state.

Not surprisingly, territorial autonomy is a common goal of many emerging forms of indigenous activism in contemporary Latin America. Based on new understandings of “indigenous territories” and “autonomy,” indigenous collective action uses the language of territorial autonomy to challenge the framework and functioning of neoliberal multiculturalism at the local level. By studying neoliberal multiculturalism as a form of government over indigenous populations at a local level, this study engages with broader perspectives that address state formation as a cultural process that involves the formation of and control over citizens’ subjectivities through specific forms of citizenship.

This approach to indigenous activism allows me to examine the complexity of ongoing political negotiations between indigenous subjects and the neoliberal state. Compliance with the neoliberal parameters of citizenship continues to be sought by post-Washington Consensus states, however, demands for territorial autonomy and the practices of land reoccupations remind us that indigenous activism offers a legitimate alternative form of politics. This is a politics aimed at taking back what has been lost or perceived as lost by a group via collective action. In this study, I call this form of politics “redemptive.” In exploring redemptive politics, my study privileges the local level of indigenous activism. Through a study of the Mapuche, the indigenous peoples of southern Argentina, I argue that the local level is a fundamental space in which to address the exchanges, negotiations, and conflict between indigenous peoples and the state, especially in cases where they constitute a minority of the national population.

To understand the meaning and impact of new kinds of Mapuche activism and new forms of indigenous collective identity, this dissertation addresses three dimensions of indigenous politics: the configuration of indigenous collective identities and their translation into political organizations; the configuration and consolidation of such identities as the result of ongoing resistance, negotiations, and accommodation with the state; and the conflicts around demands for territorial autonomy that often result in the criminalization and rejection of indigenous demands by the state because they exceed the limits of indigenous citizenship under neoliberal multiculturalism. All three dimensions are studied privileging the local level, which this study argues is fundamental to address in the contexts in which those who self-identify as indigenous peoples are a minority of the national population. Thus, I claim that the study of indigenous politics must privilege the ways in which new forms of activism negotiate and enter into conflict with the state against the background of neoliberal multiculturalism, a cultural project of governing indigenous subjects that is compatible with the expansion of global capitalism and the reach of modern state institutions.

This thesis relies on a field study of contemporary indigenous mobilization in Argentina through which the Mapuche have become politically organized. Through an analysis of the ways in which Mapuche activists organize in a particular locality, the province of Neuquén in southern Argentina, this dissertation contributes to the theoretical understanding of collective identity formation and indigenous activism in contexts where indigenous peoples are a minority of the national population. Building on interdisciplinary contributions on state formation, citizenship, and collective identity formation, I argue that in the context of minority indigenous mobilization, territorial struggles and the importance of the local political level are crucial for understanding how collective identities are configured and how indigenous activists engage with the state in interesting ways to advance their claims. In this study, I look at the formation of collective identities through processes of contestation, struggles and conflict and also of negotiation and accommodation with institutions, discourses, and practices of the state and the forms of citizenship it sustains. Accordingly, this study on contemporary Mapuche activism advances our understanding of how indigenous collective identities are formed as the result of ongoing interactions between indigenous activists and the state.

Keywords

Indigenous politics, Argentina, Mapuche peoples, state formation, citizenship, collective identities, neoliberal multiculturalism

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It is to my daughters, Melina and Emilia, that I dedicate my dissertation.

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Preface

In early October 2009, my plans to start conducting formal interviews with Mapuche activists in Argentina were underway after a long period of planning at a distance of more than 10,000 kilometers from where the fieldwork was to take place. The year before, I had visited the “remote” southern Argentinean province of Neuquén and its capital (that holds the same name) for the first time so that I could begin networking with Mapuche organizations. On that occasion I decided to spend most of my time in this region of Patagonia meeting Mapuche activists and explaining my research project to them to ensure that its objectives were of interest to them. Given that the visit was short, I decided to leave the formal interviewing for a second visit.

When I returned to Neuquén city on the following year, I was determined to begin with the interviews immediately. Returning to the field sites that I had visited the previous year, however, meant being confronted with changes in the lives of people that I had met before. Upon reflection, some of those changes proved to be symptomatic of the processes I aim to address in this thesis. They included, but were not limited to, some Mapuche activists working now with government agencies dealing with indigenous “issues”; the experience by some communities of violent police repression for the first time since their official recognition by the government in the 1960s; and finally, the creation of new networks and organizations within the Mapuche movement to deal with specific concerns, such as human rights abuses and the court system. I also recognized some important continuities. For example, the generation of Mapuche leaders who began their activism in the 1970s were still clashing with traditional authorities in some communities and, most importantly, Mapuche communities under a new leadership remained determined to reoccupy ancestral territories and to continue their struggles for self-representation and control over the territories they already inhabit.

Shortly after my arrival in 2009, I lined up the first interview with activists from the *Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén* (Mapuche Confederation of Neuquén). My excitement about this opportunity to finally interview activists who have been at the forefront of Mapuche mobilization for the last three decades was hard to contain. I arrived at the *ruka*

(community house) early, driving a vehicle borrowed from a family member that helped me to reach Northern Patagonia from my home town located in the *pampas* region of Argentina, more than 1,000 kilometres away. *Mate* tea was prepared and I took it as indication that I was being expected and welcomed. Looking back, however, it is probably true that mate would have been served regardless of the interest my research project was generating but at the time it helped me to gain some confidence in what I was about to embark on: an ethnographic study of Mapuche local activism around claims for territorial autonomy. By mid-morning the *ruka* was in full swing with many activists conducting their day-to-day activities, including making phone calls, updating web sites, reading the local, regional, and national newspapers to find material related to indigenous issues, organizing cultural events, including an upcoming *Mapu-Punk* concert, amongst others.¹ I knew my fieldwork was off to a good start when the person I was to interview joined us at the *ruka*. My first interview went relatively well for at least an hour until all the mobile phones in the *ruka* began to ring.

Many cell phones began to go off at once, and it became evident that something important was happening. When phones had started to ring a few days before that morning of the interview it was to receive the good news that a court order had halted a Chinese-owned gold mining corporation from moving into the territory of a Mapuche community. The court had sided with the Mapuche because the affected community had not been consulted, and thus no informed consent had been given. In fact, when I met many activists at the beginning of my visit in October 2009, they were planning a visit to this community to celebrate the court order. But nothing suggested this time that whoever was making the phone calls was delivering good news. In fact, the calls were from members of *Huenctru Trawel Leufu*, a Mapuche community located 130 kilometres south of Neuquén city. That morning a court order allowed elite police forces to enter this community's territory to end their blockade of a natural gas company operating there without their consent. As tensions between Mapuche and police forces escalated, and in order to prevent the intensification of violence and conflict, activists from the *Confederación Mapuche* were called in to mediate. The urgency and the need for mediation were more immediate after an incident that had ended with a

¹ Weeks later, I attended the Mapu-Punk concert and even though I decided not to include it in more detail in my dissertation, it gave me the opportunity to see first hand some of the ways in which Mapuche identities are continuously changing, particularly for new generations of activists.

police officer thrown from his motocross after an altercation with a Mapuche on horseback. The good news for activists in Neuquén, and for me as an observer that day, was that we had a confirmed ride to *Huenctru Trawel Leufu*.

As we were on our way to *Huenctru Trawel Leufu*, we learned we were soon to face another, unanticipated obstacle. The province of Neuquén had been an epicenter of social protest against neoliberal adjustment policies throughout the 1990s. The privatization of oil and gas companies in the region, coupled with the economic recession, resulted in thousands of workers losing their jobs in the province. It was here that the movement of the unemployed that later expanded throughout Argentina first emerged. While the intensity of social conflict was fading by 2009, many unemployed workers were still using the strategy of road blockades to demand, among other things, unemployment subsidies and severance packages. On the day of the *Huenctru Trawel Leufu* incidents, unemployed workers from a local gas company were blocking the roads. Since the emergence of *piqueteros* (as the movement of the unemployed were known), Mapuche activists have been trying to address the tensions that exist between the claims of both groups. By the time of my visit in October 2009, such tensions had receded as a result of previous networking and negotiations. The temporary alliance between the *Confederación* and *piqueteros* was put to the test on the day we drove to *Huenctru Trawel Leufu*. In less than one hour from our arrival at the site, the blockade was lifted temporarily for us to pass. Negotiations between the two groups had been successful.

What preceded and followed the urgent phone call that day, in October of 2009, is a good illustration of Mapuche struggles and of the political context in Argentina today. These are best characterized as involving: a permanent state of negotiation and engagement with state institutions; discussions amongst indigenous activists and members of local communities over the most appropriate strategies to defend their territories; pressure for activists to defend the interests of the communities they represent and to engage with other popular movements; and efforts to mediate between Mapuche community interests and those of the state, the private sector, and of activists themselves. These are but a few examples of contextual conditions that help to set the stage for contemporary indigenous mobilization. This context is not unique to Southern Argentina but characterizes, in fact, much of today's relationship between states and their indigenous populations throughout Latin America.

After centuries of political invisibility and marginalization, Mapuche communities and other indigenous peoples in Argentina have begun to organize and mobilize in ways that are similar to those of other indigenous movements in Latin America. What makes the case of the Mapuche particularly interesting is that they face specific challenges in organizing politically at the national level because their numbers are low and they are, therefore, a considerable minority in the two countries where they live, Argentina and Chile. The organizational challenges faced by Mapuche activists in a minority context are one dimension this study addresses. Another, equally important dimension, is the cultural and political impact on indigenous activism and collective identity formation of recent transformations of the state and new forms of citizenship.

Chapter 1

1 Introduction

In recent decades, indigenous peoples have demanded more inclusive forms of citizenship from Latin American states. For indigenous organizations, these demands address historical forms of political and social exclusion. In challenging prevailing notions of citizenship, indigenous peoples have also been contesting assimilationist policies of the past and the roles that states have assigned to them. Furthermore, in some areas they have challenged discourses of *mestizaje*. While referring to the racial mix of Spanish descendants and Indians, *mestizaje* has also been used as a political discourse aimed at eroding the uniqueness of indigenous identities. In doing this, indigenous peoples have been challenging existing political institutions through their demands for increasing autonomy, control over the territories they inhabit, self-representation, and the recognition of the multi-ethnic composition of states (Urban and Sherzer 1991; Díaz Polanco 1997; Assies et al. 2000; Warren and Jackson 2002; Langer and Muñoz 2003; Postero and Zamosc 2004; Yashar 2005). Additionally, indigenous peoples have been at the forefront of recent waves of social protest against the implementation of neoliberal policies because, according to indigenous leaders, these have resulted in higher rates of unemployment, poverty, and inequality and they have constituted a direct threat to their possession and control over their territories (Escobar and Alvarez 1992; Alvarez et al. 1998; Stahler-Sholk et al. 2007; Hall and Fenelon 2009; Silva 2009). Yashar (1998), in particular, shows how neoliberal policies have threatened some of the social safety nets acquired by indigenous peoples from welfare states in the past. Mapuche mobilization in contemporary Argentina resonates with this wider re-emergence of indigenous mobilization.

These demands, in turn, have taken place in the context of two important political changes in the region. The first one of these changes is the return to representative rule in Latin American countries and a set of constitutional reforms that included, for the first

time in most cases, the recognition of the multi-ethnic composition of those societies and the incorporation of a new set of rights for citizens as a result of their indigenous condition (Van Cott 2000).² The second change is the recognition of indigenous rights and their incorporation into international law thus influencing indigenous activists at the local level (Brysk 1994). This increasing recognition of indigenous rights at the international level is also a result of the efforts and negotiations of indigenous activists mobilizing beyond the state. Thus, indigenous peoples have been active participants in international forums formerly reserved to governments (Bodley 2008; Blaser et al. 2010). In order to do this, indigenous leaders have relied on broader networks that connect them with other indigenous organizations, environmental and human rights groups, and other non-indigenous supporters (Stavenhagen 2009). For example, indigenous delegates have been active participants in negotiations taking place within the United Nations (UN) during debates in the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and were instrumental in the establishment of the UN Decade of Indigenous Peoples (1995-2004). Furthermore, they pressed states to adopt the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in September 2007, seeing such declaration as a major step in the formal recognition of their rights as part of the fundamental body of international human rights protection. Within the framework of the International Labour Organization, indigenous leaders participated in deliberations on the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention number 169 of 1989 which abandoned earlier assimilationist approaches in order to recognize a series of new rights, including the right of indigenous peoples to be consulted before the execution of development projects in areas they inhabit. Finally, indigenous leaders and their organizations have participated in drafting consultations within the Organization of

² According to Donna Lee Van Cott (2000), the constitutional reforms of the 1990s, which she refers to as “multicultural constitutionalism,” have allowed indigenous peoples to frame their demands in ways that could be included in these legal documents and redefine the terms of their citizenship in order to protect their rights as individuals and as indigenous peoples. Yashar (2005) also argues that the agenda of indigenous claims is usually constructed around the idea that there is a set of special rights given their condition of native peoples, such as the existence of autonomous spheres of jurisdiction under indigenous customary law, or the right to maintain distinct identities within a state, for example.

American States for the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Niezen 2006).³

States have typically responded by recognizing new rights and adopting new mechanisms to accommodate demands for more participation in areas that affect life in indigenous communities. However, a gap between the recognition of new rights and their implementation in practice remains, thus resulting in ongoing conflicts between the state and citizens who self-identify as indigenous (Edelman 1999; Gustafson 2002; Hale 2004; De la Peña 2005; Jackson and Warren 2005; Stavenhagen 2009). This dissertation attempts to address this gap between the collective demands of indigenous peoples and state responses, and to explain why conflicts between indigenous movements and the state persist.

To study these tensions, I place an emphasis on the ways in which indigenous activists construct their political (i.e., collective) identity in their ongoing negotiation and contestation with the state at the local level. I suggest that a focus on essentially local initiatives is significant in order to understand contemporary indigenous political mobilization in contexts where indigenous peoples are a considerable minority of the overall population. I focus on the Mapuche peoples in Neuquén, Argentina, in order to demonstrate how one group, for example, is engaged in an ongoing process of negotiation, accommodation, and resistance with the state and with a dominant form of citizenship that affects indigenous peoples directly: neoliberal multiculturalism. This study will demonstrate that despite the absence of an indigenous movement at the national scale, indigenous groups such as the Mapuche are involved in interesting forms of negotiation, accommodation, and resistance with the state on a daily basis. As anthropologist Gavin Smith (1989) has argued in the case of indigenous peasants in Peru, experiences of political struggle are inseparable from daily struggles for a livelihood. In other words, local historical experiences matter as they inform the characteristics of

³ Some indigenous demands have also been incorporated in the discourses, institutions, and practices of development agencies. Usually framed under “ethnodevelopment” or multiculturalism, international institutions such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank have adopted mechanisms that take into consideration the impact of their policies and programs on indigenous communities.

political mobilization and organization. This approach to the topic of indigenous activism at the local level in contexts where indigenous peoples are a minority allows me to frame some questions that give direction this dissertation. I start by asking *how* collective identities are formed, and what is their impact on and relationship with indigenous activism? Under which circumstances do these identities form? More specifically, what is the relationship between new collective identities and neoliberal multiculturalism? What place do collective identities have in the new forms of indigenous political activism in Northern Patagonia? And finally, how are collective identities formed and expressed at the local level of indigenous activism in minority contexts?

1.1 The case for studying Indigenous Political Identities and Organization in Minority Contexts

The dissertation focuses on contexts where indigenous peoples are a considerable minority of the overall population. This focus, in turn, helps to build the argument that even in contexts where indigenous peoples are a minority, indigenous organizations are able to extract recognition of collective rights from the state and also to resist specific practices they see as detrimental to their political objectives and their new collective identity as peoples. It is important to point out that the increasing body of literature that studies indigenous movements in Latin America tends to privilege the nation-state level of analysis (Postero and Zamosc 2004). While the literature often acknowledges the importance of the local, most studies, particularly in the field of political science, tend to make a strong commitment to the nation-state level as a privileged site at which to study the politics of indigenous mobilization (Yashar 2005; Sieder 2002; Van Cott 2000, 1994; Urban and Sherzer 1991). I argue, however, that in contexts where indigenous peoples are a minority, the bulk of struggles, negotiation, and contestation between indigenous peoples and the state takes place at a local level. This is the case even when the interaction between indigenous activists and state institutions is framed within broader forms of state practices, citizenship, and collective identities that are transnational in

nature (Andolina, Laurie, and Radcliffe 2009; García 2005; Hale 2004). In this regard, one of the main contributions of this dissertation is to address the gap that exists in the literature on indigenous movements in minority contexts. I show that for the Mapuche living in Northern Patagonia the extraction of political gains - in the form of recognition of new rights, for example - and possibilities to resist are within reach. This, I maintain, constitutes a form of indigenous politics in its own right.

1.2 Methodological Approach and Research Questions

The dissertation suggests that the ongoing gap between the official recognition of indigenous rights and their implementation in practice can best be explained through a qualitative approach informed by ethnographic accounts at the local level that places the experience of indigenous peoples and the formation of collective political identities at the centre of analysis. My approach to ethnography shares many of the assumptions of institutional ethnography (Smith 2006). According to sociologist Dorothy Smith, institutional ethnography is committed to “exploration and discovery” (2006, 1). However, this discovery takes place “beyond any one individual’s experience” in order to analyze and place emphasis in the mapping out of the ways in which people’s activities are coordinated (2006, 1). I conduct this type of ethnographic discovery in the context of local organizations, such as the *Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén*, and I take as central the experience of Mapuche activists in coordinating their efforts and political claims vis-à-vis local Mapuche communities and other dimensions of regional and national politics.

Methodologically, my focus begins with the formation of Mapuche political identities as a process of negotiation and contestation with the state. This focus serves, in turn, to explain the characteristics of contemporary forms of Mapuche organizations and their activism. Central to contemporary Mapuche activism is the set of demands around territorial autonomy. It is indeed in such instances that activists confront specific state

practices that contradict the formal recognition of indigenous rights. Claims for territorial autonomy, in other words, combine struggles for self-representation, indigenous control over decisions affecting the places they inhabit, and the recognition of such places as ancestral territories. Defined as such, demands for territorial autonomy are in contradiction with what neoliberal multiculturalism has to offer to indigenous peoples.

Furthermore, the methodological strategy of this dissertation addresses three dimensions of indigenous politics that are important to study but tend to be neglected in political science. These dimensions are: first, the formation of indigenous collective identities and their translation into political organizations; second, the configuration and consolidation of such identities as the result of ongoing resistance, negotiations, and accommodation with the state; and, third, the conflicts around demands for territorial autonomy that often result in the criminalization and rejection of certain type of indigenous claims by the state. All three dimensions are studied privileging the local level. Based on this analysis, my argument is that in the context of indigenous mobilization, collective identities are configured as the result of the ongoing processes of contestation, struggles and conflict but also of negotiation and accommodation with institutions, discourses, and practices of the state.

To carry out an analysis of the three features of identity formation mentioned above requires ethnographically informed fieldwork that includes, above all, an engagement with indigenous activists, their allies, and the communities they aim to represent. I rely on interviews and participant observation I conducted in some Mapuche communities across the province of Neuquén and in Neuquén city during October 2009. Since then, I have maintained a relationship with Mapuche activists and have followed the political process they are engaged in. My most recent visit to the region was in May 2013. My ethnographic study is complemented by documents produced by the organizations and by the reporting of indigenous conflicts in the local media. The interviews and participant observation focused on the process of organization by attending meetings, workshops, and Mapuche Parleys, and also on mobilizations, for example, by observing land re-

occupations and mass protests. The secondary sources complemented the analysis and offered a sense of the reaction of state officials to this Mapuche activism.⁴

1.3 The Case: Mapuche Activism in Neuquén, Argentina

Argentina is a place where increasing contention between the state and indigenous peoples is taking place, and where around 2.4% of the population self identify as indigenous. However, years of indifference, indecision, and failed policies make a realistic estimation of the indigenous population in Argentina difficult. Three aspects contribute to shape the characteristics of indigenous politics in Argentina today, including demographic factors, provincial identities, and the characteristics of natural resource management after the constitutional reform of 1994 that transferred ownership of subsoil resources (e.g., oil, minerals) to the provinces. As Postero and Zamosc suggest, there is always a series of factors that affect the dynamics of indigenous mobilization, including “the demography of the countries or regions in which they act; the history of relations with the state and the assimilation policies the state has implemented; the place indigenousness plays in the imaginary of the nation; and the political system and traditions of the country” (2004, 3). These reforms have made provincial governments the target of many demands for territorial autonomy. The next sections explore in some detail the demographic characteristics of indigenous peoples in Argentina and the relevance of the provincial political context to understand indigenous politics in the country that serve to position Mapuche activism in Northern Patagonia.

⁴ All translations from Spanish to English are mine. This includes interviews, documents, and newspaper articles.

1.3.1 Indigenous peoples in Argentina

As stated above, only around 2.4 per cent of the population in Argentina self-identifies as indigenous.⁵ Furthermore, many indigenous peoples living in Argentina today tend to live in provinces that are located at a considerable distance from Buenos Aires. And although this demographic factor *per se* is not sufficient to understand the complexity of indigenous mobilization, the low numbers often pose additional challenges for indigenous activists to organize across the country. Arguably, this may also affect the kinds of relations and negotiations that indigenous organizations establish with the state. According to the 2010 Census, the provinces with the highest indigenous population are Chubut (8.5% of Argentina's overall indigenous population), Neuquén (7.8%), Jujuy (7.7%), Río Negro (7.1%), Salta (6.5%), and Formosa (6.1%). All these provinces border neighbouring countries. The census also shows that the provinces included in the southern region of Patagonia (Neuquén, La Pampa, Chubut, and Río Negro), where Mapuche communities are located, show a growth of more than 1% in the last ten years of those who self-identify as indigenous.

The “minority” status of indigenous peoples in Argentina is an important feature of indigenous politics as it is also connected to the construction of hegemonic provincial identities. While the endorsement of hegemonic forms of national identities in Argentina by state institutions has tended to ignore ethnic differences, provincial identities have tended to incorporate the presence of indigenous populations in some ways, albeit not in the forms indigenous leaders expected. Although Argentina has been constructed by elite discourses as a country with “no indigenous peoples,” the demographic and cultural

⁵ A group of scientists from the University of Buenos Aires has determined that roughly 60% of the national population has DNA that can be traced to indigenous peoples. This shows the complexity of considering indigenous populations as a “minority.” The issue is clearly more ideological –with its subsequent political ramifications- than purely demographic (Moledo 2005). Martínez Sarasola (2005) puts the number of indigenous peoples *living in communities* at 1.5% of the total population. In 2006, Argentina's National Institute of Statistics and Census (INDEC) published the results of the first count of indigenous population based on self-identification markers: only 402,921 people (1% of the population) perceived themselves as indigenous or first-generation indigenous descendants (INDEC 2006). By 2010, the number of households with at least one person who self-identifies as indigenous or as indigenous descendant was 368,893, accounting for 3.03% of Argentinean households (INDEC 2010). Counting the population and not households brings down the count to almost 2.38 per cent (INDEC 2010).

landscape of some provinces offers a stark contrast to a country “with no Indians.” Certain provinces not only have up to a quarter of their population who self-identify as indigenous but in some instances provincial identity incorporates “markers” of indigenous culture. Neuquén, the focus of this study, is a case in point.

Overall, indigenous politics in Argentina has been characterized by the weakness of organizations or movements on a national scale. Focusing on the level of national mobilization can consequently lead to important analytical blind-spots in the study of indigenous mobilization in contemporary Argentina. In other words, while no strong indigenous organizations representing different ethnicities at the national level exist today, this study of Mapuche activism in Northern Patagonia serves to demonstrate that the local level of analysis is an important dimension of indigenous politics today as it is in this realm that negotiations – including resistance and accommodation – between indigenous organizations and the state are forged. After all, it is at the local level, where many indigenous peoples are currently organizing to defend their territories, demand their right for self-representation, and ensure levels of autonomy to determine how certain affairs within their communities should be addressed.

1.3.2 Neuquén

The province of Neuquén is located in the southwest of Argentina, in the northern end of Patagonia region, bordering Chile to the west.⁶ The city of Neuquén is the provincial

⁶ Patagonia is the Southern region of Argentina and includes five provinces: Neuquén; Río Negro; Chubut; Santa Cruz; and Tierra del Fuego. Some criteria of classification include the province of La Pampa in the region as well. Northern Patagonia is a sub-region of Patagonia that includes the provinces of Neuquén and Río Negro. Other than the Mapuche, the other two indigenous peoples in Patagonia are the Ona and the Tehuelche. Data from the latest Census (INDEC 2010) shows that while 27,813 respondents self-identified as Tehuelche, 2,761 self-identified as Ona. The comparison between the 2004-05 Complementary Survey of Indigenous Peoples and the 2010 Census shows a considerable increase in the number of people who self-identified as indigenous. In the 2004-05 Survey, there were only 4,300 respondents who self-identified as Tehuelche and 505 who self-identified as Ona. The case of the Ona (or Selk’nam) is noticeable as it shows the impact of indigenous activism in contemporary Argentina. Official discourses, for example, have maintained that the Ona had supposedly disappeared. In 1999, for instance, *Clarín*, one of Argentina’s most influential newspapers, reported the death of the “last Ona” (Clarín 1999). Since 2000, however, Ona

capital and largest city in Patagonia and is located in the east of the province, 1,100 kilometres south from Buenos Aires. The province of Neuquén, in fact, is a case of relatively recent institutional consolidation. The (violent) presence of the state started to be felt in the region in the last two decades of the nineteenth century during the self-proclaimed “Conquest of the Desert” conducted by the central government through the national army and resulting in the destruction of indigenous communities inhabiting this territory up to that moment (Díaz and Falaschi 2002). The territory of today’s province of Neuquén was the last region of Northern Patagonia to be occupied by the military expeditions in the late nineteenth century. Before this occupation the area was considered one of the most important points of encounter between populations on both sides of the Andes. In fact, this section of the Andes was considered a space of encounters rather than divisions or boundaries. Furthermore, the paths that connected both sides of the Andes across Neuquén’s territory were usually under the control of indigenous communities. In turn, this control was often a decisive factor in indigenous participation as intermediaries in trading between the Pampas region – mostly under the control of Buenos Aires - and the emerging urban centres in Chile.

1.3.3 Mapuche peoples in contemporary Neuquén

The Mapuche constitutes the largest group amongst those who self-identify as indigenous in Argentina today. Despite this group’s place as a considerable minority in the overall national population, it has been at the centre of social and political conflicts over territorial autonomy in Northern Patagonia. In Neuquén, for example, those who identify as Mapuche constitute 15% of the province’s population. Almost one quarter of the Mapuche living in Argentina today are in this province.

families have been organizing to demand the Tierra del Fuego government the granting of land titles for their communities and to question notions of racial purity (Gordillo and Hirsch 2003, 20).

Since the 1970s, the Mapuche and other indigenous peoples have mobilized politically to voice specific demands to the state (Maybury-Lewis 1991; Carrasco 2002; Briones 2005). To be sure, instances of indigenous resistance existed prior to this decade but the contemporary features of this current mobilization can be found in the process of indigenous political organization that began in the 1970s and early 1980s. Since then, new Mapuche activists have demonstrated a notable capacity to organize and mobilize in order have their demands heard. This dissertation is a testimony to that political process and to the ways in which the state has responded. Moreover, the notoriety of Mapuche mobilization in a country like Argentina has to do with the following factors: the early experiences of Mapuche political organization during the 1970s, particularly under the military dictatorship (1976-1982) and in a wider context of human rights mobilizations; the impact of the return of democracy since 1983; the formal recognition of indigenous rights in provincial legislation and in the national constitution of 1994; the consolidation of neoliberal policies in the 1990s and their effect on regional development; the experience of other forms of social mobilization contesting such policies; and finally, the importance of the regional, provincial political context in which indigenous mobilization takes place. All these characteristics that mark contemporary Mapuche mobilization are discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

The experiences of radical mobilization and military authoritarianism in the late 1960s and early 1970s serve as the background to explain earlier attempts at indigenous organization. In Neuquén, for example, Mapuche activists created the *Confederación Indígena Neuquina* (CIN) in 1971 (today known as the *Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén*) and conducted their first *futa trawun* (parliament) in 1972 with the assistance of members of the Catholic Church in that province (Serbín 1981; Sarasola 2004). The military dictatorship of 1976-1983 forced many activists to retreat and, in the case of Mapuche activists in Neuquén the emphasis during this period was on working internally, within the communities and in alliance with Catholic bishop Jaime de Nevaes and other human rights activists. Present-day Mapuche activism is, in some ways, a direct result of that historical context.

1.4 Neoliberal Multiculturalism and Territorial Autonomy at the Centre of Mapuche Political Identity

Mapuche politics today seems to corroborate the work of scholars who have highlighted the contradictions that are inherent under neoliberal multiculturalism (Hale 2004; García 2005; Postero 2007; Andolina, Laurie, and Radcliffe 2009). The notion of neoliberal multiculturalism is central to my analysis. According to Hale (2006), it refers to a *cultural project* that includes a selective recognition of indigenous rights in order to make such rights and a broader neoliberal order of capitalist accumulation compatible. In a more general sense, neoliberal multiculturalism *disciplines* indigenous subjects and their collective identities while responding to some of their demands (Postero 2007).

Focusing on Mapuche claims for territorial autonomy, this work proposes that the gap between recognition of rights and their implementation is best explained as a result of neoliberal multiculturalism as it works in practice. As such, the notion of neoliberal multiculturalism becomes relevant to make sense of the gap between recognition and implementation but also to understand the process of Mapuche political identity formation. My emphasis is on neoliberal multiculturalism as it works in practice in order to elucidate the ways in which it shapes indigenous collective subjectivities in localized, everyday practices of political mobilization (Andolina, Laurie, and Radcliffe 2009).

I am also suggesting that collective identities are not always the result of articulations of forms of belonging of a group that existed prior to political mobilization and organization, a tendency found in historical institutional approaches (Van Cott 2000; Yashar 2005; Mattiace 2009; Martí i Puig 2010). On the contrary, collective identity formation is the result of a process that involves negotiation, accommodation, and confrontation between indigenous peoples and the state. My study approaches this study by adopting an interdisciplinary framework that helps me understand the constitutive role of culture and collective identities in processes of state formation, citizenship, and neoliberalism. This framework borrows predominantly from anthropological studies and allows me to study indigenous politics in minority contexts by incorporating more clearly

the contingent nature of indigenous mobilization at the local level and the complexity of everyday indigenous organization (García 2005; Escobar 2008; Andolina, Laurie, and Radcliffe 2009).

1.4.1 Neoliberal Multiculturalism

Neoliberal multiculturalism privileges certain forms of collective identity over others, leading to the inclusion of indigenous demands in rather limited ways. In this sense, this dissertation on Mapuche activism builds on Hale's (2004) notion of neoliberal multiculturalism that a selective recognition of indigenous rights is compatible with neoliberalism, while also privileging the study of local practices as a site of negotiation and contestation between indigenous peoples and the state (Escobar 2008; García 2005). According to Hale, when indigenous organizations advance demands that are deemed unacceptable or illegitimate according to the neoliberal logic under which multicultural neoliberalism operates, states often react by criminalizing or deeming such demands inappropriate. In practice, for example, indigenous activists spend most of their time engaging with the judicial system, addressing eviction notices, and contesting official discourses of government officials who ignore their claims. Moreover, during confrontations with security forces, and with tear gas in the air, Mapuche leaders find themselves arguing with state officials about whether their demands are legitimate for "Indians" to address, and whether these make them "good" or "bad" Mapuche.

For indigenous peoples many of the state policies of recognition under neoliberal multiculturalism tend to address some of the historical and legal discrimination that negate their right to exist within the nation-states as distinct groups. However, the work of anthropologist Claudia Briones (1998) on the Mapuche has raised some concerns about the reach of contemporary indigenous rights under state-sponsored multiculturalism. The author suggests that such recognition has made possible the expansion of the state into new areas that indigenous peoples had reserved for themselves. For example, neoliberal multiculturalism increases the chances of state intervention in the internal affairs of indigenous communities as well as the formation of

a new indigenous subject that is constructed as the “expected interlocutor” vis-à-vis the state. Hale (2004) makes a similar point when he illustrates the gap between these expectations that states place on their (native) citizens and the possibilities for indigenous mobilization with the notion of *indio permitido* (permitted Indian). The work of María Elena García (2005) has also emphasized that unequal power relations prevail as they did in previous historical moments despite official multiculturalism. In sum, political and economic inequalities under neoliberal multiculturalism, and their effect on indigenous peoples, tend to remain unchanged despite the recognition of new rights.

1.4.2 Territorial autonomy

The focus of this work on Mapuche demands for territorial autonomy in a context of negotiation between organizations demanding more inclusive forms of citizenship and the state illustrates a contentious process that has at its core the contradiction between neoliberal multiculturalism and the formation of indigenous collective identities. This process shows that indigenous peoples do not always participate willingly in projects of accommodation that states have to offer. The reason for that in Northern Patagonia today is that some Mapuche collective identities and their organizations are incompatible with the aspirations of the state and local versions of neoliberal multiculturalism. By making their demands for territorial autonomy central to their collective identity, the Mapuche become political subjects with the potential to push states for more meaningful changes in their citizenship regimes vis-à-vis their indigenous populations. Their actions bring to the forefront the need for the state to address past abuses, current injustices, and future paths to take to satisfy any aspirations to a more fair intercultural society.

For Mapuche peoples today, control over their territory implies that they will live according to the values and norms of their own worldviews. The notion of territory, in fact, is central for Mapuche activists in Neuquén as control over it reinforces indigenous identity and is considered a place where different indigenous philosophies and worldviews emerge (Surralés and García Hierro 2005). States however often see these territories in different ways, for example, as administrative units with specific regimes of

ownership, or as spaces in the hand of businesses and market forces which have their own ends in relation to local natural resources. Two principles have informed the relationship of states with indigenous peoples: territorial integrity as a sign of state sovereignty; and the protection of some sectors of society which in turn share some of the interests of the state. For indigenous peoples, the combination of these goals has translated into the official non-recognition of, or limitations on, territorial autonomy (Urteaga Crovetto 2000). In some cases, it is difficult to estimate what would happen if and when regimes of territorial autonomy were to be implemented. Still, Mapuche activists argue that this should not be a reason for states to deny the implementation of what they have recognized as legitimate indigenous rights.

Despite some obvious advantages, the use of the concept of territorial autonomy runs the risk of being misrepresented and used against indigenous people. Taken by those opposing indigenous peoples' demands, the term can be interpreted as a claim for political secession. Territorial integrity has been a fundamental dimension of the modern state and as a result any claims that could suggest that this integrity is in peril will encounter open resistance. Throughout Latin America however, indigenous activism has hardly centered on demands to break free from nation-states. On the contrary, territorial autonomy is often the expression of struggles for political self-representation and control over resources. This set of demands includes control over the internal affairs of indigenous communities, control over natural resources and their exploitation, and the possibility of creating institutions of political representation according to the cultural practices of a community. In a nutshell, this is what the notion of autonomy entails for most indigenous movements today (Blaser et al. 2010). The quest for autonomy involves, in other words, the possibility to control the affairs of indigenous communities *in their own terms*. According to anthropologist John Bodley, autonomy should be seen as the possibility of indigenous peoples exercising "control over [their] own affairs, on their own terms, [and] within their own territories" (2008, 185).

The point that my study on Mapuche politics also tries to make is that while there is nothing "natural" or "essential" about placing territorial autonomy at the centre of Mapuche political identity, it is important to emphasize that the notion of a "Mapuche

territory” is key to understand the relationship between Mapuche activists and the state, including the characteristics that the negotiation, tensions, and conflicts between the two adopt. The notion of a territory, however, does not merely consist of a rural space endowed with natural resources that exists in isolation from mainstream society in an idyllic time. As Surralés and García Hierro (2005, 11) point out, there is “a wide range of possibilities in terms of peoples’ material and symbolic ties with their territories.” The notion of indigenous territories, for example, may also include urban spaces, as many Mapuche Youth organizations living in the cities of Northern Patagonia have clearly articulated.

Historically, the meanings attached to territories have not been exempt from conflicts related to processes of state formation (Domínguez 2001). Before and after the political independence of former colonies, for example, white settlers considered the territories under the control of indigenous peoples as “deserts” or *terra nullius*, that is, land belonging to no one. As Briones (1998) suggests, it is also the case that state formation and the importance of certain territories change over time, varying according to different historical contexts (e.g., colonial expansion, early liberal republicanism, modern state-building). Land, for example, constituted the main resource and basis of contention that mediated the social relationships between groups in the early stages of modern state formation in Argentina, particularly since the second half of the 19th century. Since then, land constituted the core of diverse policies of territorialisation that the state has used to deal with the so-called Indian Question, which included the creation of reservations, national parks or Christian “civilizing” missions (Briones 1998, Gordillo 2004). Thus indigenous demands for territorial autonomy cannot be dissociated from historical circumstances of state formation and social change, particularly at those times when states have adopted models of capitalist accumulation that affect some of these territories and the spatial conception one has of them directly.

The neoliberal state, with its emphasis on expanding global capitalist forces, poses a direct threat to many indigenous communities. However, despite their resistance, the consolidation of an approach to development that privileges investment in extractive industries, agro-industrial businesses, and private tourism, to name a few, puts the

possibilities of indigenous communities controlling the fate of the territories they inhabit at risk.

This brief account serves to demonstrate how the centrality of demands for territorial autonomy makes the conflicts between states and indigenous peoples more explicit and sharper. In sum, territorial autonomy today is at the centre of what authors like Arturo Escobar (2001, 2008) have termed “a politics of place.” Place refers to an “anchoring point,” a “source of livelihood and culture,” and a “space where socio-natural worlds are produced.” (Escobar, Rocheleau, and Kothari 2002, 28) In this sense, a “politics of place” has the goal of integrating these dimensions included in the idea of place as well as defending them from the interests of states and/or global capital. For many indigenous peoples, place continues to be important. It is so, Escobar argues, because no matter how unstable, affected by power relations, porous, or socially constructed the experience of being connected with a particular location can be, place still provides a “sense of “groundedness, a sense of boundaries, and connection to everyday life.” (2001, 140) As this dissertation demonstrates, in more detail in the following chapters, Mapuche politics in Neuquén offers an illustration of indigenous politics in contemporary Argentina as place-based in the sense that Escobar and others see it (Radcliffe 2005; Andolina, Laurie, and Radcliffe 2009).

1.5 Theories: State Formation, Collective Identities, and Neoliberal Citizenship

This dissertation builds on the existing literature that explains the formation of indigenous collective identities by focusing on the historical interaction between states and indigenous peoples (Yashar 2005) as well as on those approaches that privilege the socio-economic context in which such relationship takes place (Hale 2002; García 2005). It also relies on the work of authors who have privileged the study of local dynamics to understand global or transnational processes affecting indigenous politics (Andolina,

Laurie, and Radcliffe 2009; Escobar 2008). The dissertation uses this interdisciplinary approach in order to offer insight into the limitations of neoliberal multiculturalism in practice and the ways in which collective identities are a product of localized contestation and negotiation with states. It demonstrates how the quest for territorial autonomy of Mapuche activists today is the result of the ongoing process of negotiation and contestation vis-à-vis state practices and the result of specific historical conjunctures. Moreover, the argument has broader implications for the ways in which one conceptualizes the intersection between state formation, citizenship, and collective action in Latin America. It is also a reminder that this era has been characterized, perhaps too soon for indigenous peoples, as “post-neoliberal.” The following sections expand on the specific contributions that the existing literature provides to this study on Mapuche politics.

1.5.1 Institutions Matter: The contribution of historical institutionalism

The study of institutions has been an important contribution to studies of indigenous politics (Yashar 2005; Sieder 2002; Van Cott 2000, 1994; Urban and Sherzer 1991). This is important because, until recently, mainstream political studies have traditionally ignored the ethnic dimension of Latin American politics. Many studies conducted during the 1980s and 1990s tended to privilege the study of democratization with a particular emphasis on notions such as “transition” or “consolidation” (Huntington 1991). Since then, more nuanced studies have rendered such characterization of politics in the region problematic (O’Donnell 1994; 1996). After the 2000s, the emergence of indigenous organizations and the politicization of indigenous identity of the previous two decades was reflected in studies that privileged the analysis of the institutional transformations that, according to some authors, explain and shape indigenous movements (Van Cott 2000, 2005; Sieder 2002; Stavenhagen 2009). Within the studies that privilege the interaction of identity politics with institutional transformations, the contributions of Deborah Yashar (2005) are central.

As stated above, Yashar identifies a clear connection between the emergence of indigenous movements and institutional changes, particularly of what the author refers to as “regimes of citizenship” (2005, 6). Focusing on the cases of Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, Guatemala, and Mexico, Yashar argues that the emergence of indigenous movements on a national scale is explained as the result of three main factors: changes in citizenship regimes that pose a direct threat to existing de facto local autonomies; the existence of previous trans-community networks that improve the capacity of indigenous organizations to mobilize; and the existence of a “political associational space” that sustains such mobilization.

This dissertation also privileges the intersection between identity politics and the state. As Yashar explains, institutions matter and states in particular have the capacity to privilege certain collective identities over others. Moreover, by opening new spaces of participation, for example, the state also provides incentives to accommodate some political identities (Jackson 1995). I may add that states can also restrict, repress and deem illegitimate certain identities and types of activism that are seen as threatening to their mechanisms of rule and control. In this kind of analysis, the state becomes a point of departure to analyze the ways in which it shapes collective identities in practice. But, as Yashar warns, the study of the state cannot be taken at face value. In order to understand ongoing conflicts between states and indigenous peoples, for example, one needs to move beyond an analysis of institutions. This calls for a closer look at state formation as a cultural process that involves the constitution of collective identities as well as changes in the systems of signification (Melucci 1996; Steinmetz 1999). Furthermore, the analysis must include the ways in which states privilege certain subjectivities, specific forms of knowledge, and some cultural practices over others. And while I agree with Yashar’s point that it is important to consider the actual *reach* of the state and not just its *intentions*, I maintain that the analysis can only be enhanced and made more compelling if one pays closer attention to those cultural, critical approaches to state formation that favour the formation of certain subjectivities over others. Since this understanding of state formation is central to my argument, I elaborate on this approach in the following chapter.

Following Yashar, I also maintain that a careful look at citizenship helps to understand the ways in which states and indigenous peoples interact. But citizenship, I argue, needs to be understood as more than the status of legal subjects belonging to a political community. A more encompassing approach needs to include the possibility of understanding citizenship as a claim – including resistance – as well as a mechanism for governing subjectivities. In short, citizenship is not limited to what states give to their subjects in the form of rights. Citizenship also includes the demands and claims that subjects make to states. Finally, in this process of negotiation over rights and claims, citizenship also becomes a set of mechanisms and discourses that states use to govern the identity and actions of their subjects. This understanding of citizenship as both resistance and government, and its relation to the study of state formation from a cultural perspective is elaborated in the following chapter.

Finally, I adopt Yashar's suggestion that political identities are contingent and open to change. Furthermore, I maintain that such identities have to be explained in relation to institutional as well as cultural changes although they are not always malleable or fixed. As García (2005) points out, collective identities are plural and as markers of political mobilization they are dynamic and change according to different historical contexts. In other words, there is always room for citizens to challenge and resist aspects of any given process of state formation or citizenship, a point that Nancy Postero (2007) also emphasizes in her study of "post-multicultural citizenship" in Bolivia.

1.5.2 Neoliberal citizenship

To understand Mapuche politics in contemporary Argentina, and indigenous politics in minority contexts more generally, we need to recognize that indigenous activism takes place in a context where states offer not only "political associational spaces", as Yashar has suggested, but also opportunities to participate in the design and implementation of programs and policies that affect the livelihoods of indigenous communities: in other words, specific efforts by states to accommodate indigenous peoples through a number of initiatives that go beyond the passive guaranteeing of association spaces in which citizens

can participate. But conflict between indigenous peoples and the state persists despite such accommodations and my study of Mapuche politics suggests that the reasons for such conflict can be found in the neoliberalization of indigenous citizenship that privileges certain types of indigenous identities and demands over others.

Gavin Smith's (1989) classic study of peasant struggles in Peru serves to elucidate some of the points I try to make in this dissertation. Smith argues that there is a clear interconnection between political mobilization, including collective subjectivities, and development strategies. Furthermore, the author demonstrates something that is central to my argument, namely, that local initiatives that manifest themselves as diverse forms of resistance (e.g., land occupations, road blockades) are central to understand contemporary indigenous activism (Smith 1989, 12). In the case of Argentina, this approach is crucial as otherwise the hitherto apparent passivity of indigenous movements on a national scale could suggest that indigenous politics in the country is non-existent. As García points out, "privileging the large-scale politics of protest can often result in missing other equally important but less visible arenas of contention" (2005, 188). Paraphrasing Smith, my goal is not to ask *why* Mapuche communities resist or *which* Mapuche organizations do so more effectively or better than others but rather *how* Mapuche resistance is put together (1989, 25). A closer look at local dynamics in Mapuche communities, for example, can also demonstrate what Smith has shown for the case of Peru: that "intense" political struggles are "inseparable" from daily struggles for a livelihood (1989, 12). As a result, understanding the ways in which collective identities are forged and the role such identities play in political struggles requires a historical analysis of development strategies adopted by states (Smith 1989, 14). The idea of these "cultural" struggles (i.e., identity-based) is that they are also the result of an engagement with the present that is always mediated by history and collective memory (Smith 1989, 25).

Needless to say, this approach does not suggest that local resistance happens all the time, or that all local political initiatives will lead to some final horizon of liberation. The point of focusing on local indigenous activism is to demonstrate how for the most part Mapuche activism today is the result of a negotiation with the state (and amongst activists themselves) that includes resistance and opposition as much as accommodation and

(temporary) alliances. To study the quest for accommodation, I turn to more recent studies of the relationship between neoliberalism, which is understood as a new set of discourses and practices of development, and indigenous politics. I borrow from Charles Hale (2002) the notion of neoliberal multiculturalism to address the tensions that exist between indigenous resistance, neoliberalism, and multicultural citizenship.

Charles Hale (2002) provides a more recent analysis of the ways in which development strategies, states, and indigenous movements are interconnected. According to this author, multicultural policies in Latin America are the cultural manifestation of the dominant neoliberal order. In this context, some indigenous demands are permitted, encouraged, and legitimized as long as they do not enter into conflict with neoliberal projects of capitalist accumulation. The notion of *indio permitido*, or the “permitted Indian”, further illustrates Hale’s point that while certain indigenous identities are tolerated and even encouraged, others are challenged and deemed illegitimate.

María Elena García’s (2005) work on indigenous identity, development, and what she calls “multicultural” activism in Peru, also contributes to my study of contemporary Mapuche politics. Garcia shows, for example, how the local dimension of indigenous activism is relevant to understand the ways in which neoliberal multiculturalism affects indigenous activism and how indigenous leaders respond to the new expectations of indigenous citizenship. In other words, the “political performance” of the state, including its discourses and practices, are often felt at the local level. Moreover, the author’s emphasis on the local serves to give a nuanced view of Mapuche struggles in Argentina over the meaning and content of indigenous citizenship under neoliberal multiculturalism.

The following chapters show in more detail the results of my analysis. By adopting an interdisciplinary framework that renders cultural processes central for our understanding of state formation, citizenship, and collective action, my goal is to demonstrate how collective identity formation matters to understand indigenous politics. Furthermore, my study reveals the results of adopting this interdisciplinary approach ethnographically in order to engage with the local dimension of indigenous activism, especially in those

contexts where indigenous peoples are a minority. By paying close attention to collective identity formation and claims for territorial autonomy at the local level, I show how Mapuche activists are deeply involved in a process that includes new forms of political organization, the creation of new spaces for indigenous participation within the bureaucratic structures of the state, and instances of open conflict that result in the criminalization of Mapuche demands. All these dimensions of Mapuche activism, in turn, are deeply connected to the discourses and practices of neoliberal multiculturalism.

1.6 Plan of the Dissertation

The following chapters expand on the issues discussed in this Introduction. Chapter 2 discusses the theoretical perspectives available to understand the recent transformations in the relationship between states and indigenous peoples, namely the neoliberalization of the state, its forms of citizenship, and the ways in which collective identities are formed.

Chapter 3 addresses the historical process of state formation in Argentina with a particular emphasis on the discourses and policies implemented in order to accommodate the so-called “Indian Question” in Argentina up to the present. This chapter and the ones that follow draw on in-depth interviews, internal documents from Mapuche organizations, and media reports to describe the challenges associated with Mapuche mobilization in Northern Patagonia and the ways in which new political identities are forged and negotiated with the state. Their particular focus is Neuquén and the experience of the *Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén*.

Chapter 4 explores the emergence of a new Mapuche political subjectivity, and it focuses on the work of the *Confederación Mapuche* in order to address three dimensions of this new political subjectivity: first, the quest for self-representation; second, the construction of Mapuche demands through the notion of *interculturalidad*; and finally, the meaning that the work of the CMN has for Mapuche communities defending their territories.

Chapter 5 places Mapuche mobilization in the local political context and examines the experience of Mapuche mobilization that resulted in the formal recognition of indigenous rights at the provincial level, in new projects of accommodation in which Mapuche activists are “invited” to participate, and finally in the strategies of appropriation by activists as new forms of resistance given the specific constraints. In other words, this chapter focuses on instances of Mapuche political mobilization that resulted in the recognition of new rights and on instances of accommodation.

Chapter 6 bring the experiences discussed in the previous two chapters together in order to analyze specific instances of the struggle for territorial autonomy and state responses to it. It does so by focusing on the strategies of *recuperaciones territoriales* (territorial re-occupations), and by exploring the increasing criminalization of Mapuche mobilization as a key element in the state’s response.

The Conclusion summarizes the findings and puts forth a proposal on how the experience of Mapuche mobilization and organization around demands for territorial autonomy serves to illustrate the complex relationship between the state, citizenship and indigenous peoples under neoliberal multiculturalism.

Chapter 2

“[...] There comes a moment when one asks oneself: Is it possible that the quest for the true word compels us to shush so many people? What exactly is the meaning of this evasion that tends to disqualify the verbiage of every proffered message in favour of the mute eloquence of one who is not heard?” (Rancière 1989, 11)

2 Indigenous peoples and the state: Toward a political and conceptual approach

Mapuche activism in contemporary Argentina echoes some of the dynamics of indigenous politics in other parts of Latin America. For example, the Mapuche have adopted new forms of political organization that emphasize ethnic identity and have pressured state officials to recognize new, collective rights. This indigenous group, however, is only a minority of the country's population. In order to understand the ways in which political activism takes place in contexts where indigenous groups are a minority, we need to adopt an interdisciplinary framework that privileges the local dimensions of collective action. As James C. Scott (1990) has forcefully argued, subordinate groups engage with forms of resistance at the local level, even if these are rarely recognized as political by those who study them simply because they do not always adopt overt political action. Such explicit political action is unquestionably important but in contexts where indigenous peoples are a minority, it is often rare. We need a conceptual lens, therefore, that pays closer attention to the cultural dynamics of state formation, citizenship, and collective action as locally situated processes. By adopting such a framework, the local activism of groups such as the Mapuche in contemporary, neoliberal, Argentina can be seen as politically relevant, and not simply as a set of local

and isolated events. Neoliberal multiculturalism entails a superficial form of state recognition of ethnic difference that limits, in practice, certain forms of indigenous activism. In my study, I focus on state-sponsored initiatives and the formation of political collective identities and forms of indigenous activism at the local level that have indigenous rights at their core. It is at the local level, I argue, where state-sponsored neoliberal multiculturalism and indigenous activism interact. I also privilege the local level because it is there where indigenous peoples negotiate with and challenge the state, especially in contexts where indigenous groups are a minority of the national population.

Modern states in Latin America have been forced from the start to address the existence of indigenous populations under their expanding rule. The state's concern with the inclusion of indigenous populations in the emerging nations was often referred to as the "Indian Question" and it has its roots in the colonial period. Since the 19th century, states have attempted to address the Indian Question by designing specific mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion of indigenous peoples. Such mechanisms constitute what Deborah Yashar (2005) and others refer to as citizenship regimes that are designed by states to include and exclude the population within their national territory, including indigenous peoples. In the present context, both the state and citizenship regimes have been transformed as a result of neoliberalism. By defining the goals of the state, for example, these transformations also inform the conditions under which contemporary Mapuche activism takes place.

In this chapter I outline the elements of my framework by engaging with the critical scholarship on state formation, citizenship, and collective identities. I first address the role of institutions in understanding modern state formation and suggest that we need to look at the constitutive role of cultural processes and systems of signification to understand state formation. This focus on cultural processes enables us to see how states and their mechanisms of rule are always open to contestation from below. I then review the concept of citizenship, which I argue is central to understand contemporary indigenous activism and its relationship to the state. Even in contexts where they are a minority, indigenous peoples have been able to secure new spaces of participation within the institutional structure of states as a result of changing forms of citizenship. Such

spaces, however, are not simply about the recognition of new rights. They are also a form of discipline, control, and regulation that provides access to participation but also imposes constraints on political pressure from below. In other words, citizenship operates as a mechanism both of inclusion and exclusion, and it involves a language of discipline *and* resistance.

Understanding state formation and its institutions as *cultural* practices, and citizenship as including *discipline* and *control*, allows me to characterize neoliberalism as a form of state intervention that informs a particular kind of citizenship regime (Foucault 1991). I turn to a discussion of how the state and citizenship regimes have been transformed as a result of neoliberal forms of rule, to establish a connection between these changes and the concept of neoliberal multiculturalism, which I argue is central to understand Mapuche activism in contemporary Argentina. Neoliberal multiculturalism informs the ways in which the present relationship between indigenous peoples and the state is understood. I then engage with the literature on social movements and collective action in order to adopt from these analyses those conceptual tools that help us better understand the relationship between the political context in which they take place and the cultural processes involved in social mobilization. Finally, I turn to anthropological studies on ethnic movements that have privileged the ways in which ethnic identities are socially constructed in a context of ongoing mobilization and interaction with social institutions. These sociological and anthropological debates provide important concepts to understand indigenous politics as local practices of engagement with the neoliberal state and its forms of citizenship. Before turning to a discussion of state formation and citizenship, I offer an overview of the evolving preoccupation of modern Latin American states with their indigenous populations.

2.1 Making citizens: indigenous peoples and the state in Latin America

The contemporary image of indigenous leaders throughout Latin America negotiating with state officials for the recognition and implementation of their *collective* rights signals a changing relationship between Indians and the state in the region, as many observers point out. These forms of indigenous activism are increasingly taking place in countries where indigenous peoples are a considerable minority of the national population. This relationship has deep historical roots that are connected with a process of modern state formation (García 2005; Clark and Becker 2007; Postero 2007). Central to this relationship is the question of the place of indigenous peoples in the state, and citizenship is at the core. Indeed, ongoing tensions between states and their indigenous populations in the region have been central since the colonial period. The label of “Indian,” rooted in a racial classification, has its origins in the colonization of the American continent and has been part of the ongoing process of state formation up to the present.⁷

According to Quijano, the label of “Indians” emerged as the crystallization of “otherness” during colonial America. For him, the idea of race was naturalized and used as a justification for the subordination of Indians to Europeans (Quijano 2000; Mignolo 2005). Following this author, one can identify power exercised along a “racial axis” as a founding product of colonial domination that nonetheless survived the end of colonialism. Indeed, this form of domination based on race did not disappear with the end of colonialism and social hierarchies based on racial principles were perpetuated by newly independent Latin America, where indigenous peoples continued to occupy the lowest rungs of society.

The imposition of colonial rule also inaugurated new forms of domination that varied across the vast geographies conquered due to regional differences in colonial administration and to pre-existing native structures that the conquerors did not always erase. Thus, whereas in some latitudes the Spanish Crown left some pre-existing tribute

⁷ Before the colonial period there were no such identity markers. Thus, the organization of society along the lines of race and racial identity has its origins in the colonization of the American continent. In that context, colonial administrations consolidated their power over society by categorizing colonial subjects as “Indian”, “Black” or “*Mestizo*” (Quijano 2000; Mignolo 2005).

systems, as in Ecuador or Bolivia, in other areas the Crown did not subjugate or conquer territories under the control of indigenous peoples. This gave indigenous communities considerable levels of de facto autonomy. This autonomy, however, was not absolute. It was not until after the revolutionary period of independence in the early nineteenth century that areas such as Patagonia were conquered. During the colonial period, the relationship of particular geographies to the world market limited the extent of indigenous autonomies. In addition, existing forms of racial subordination contributed to the control over labour (in the forms of slavery, serfdom, or albeit rarely, waged labour) and resources by colonial administrations. Thus, under colonialism, race and labour relations reinforced and increasingly became dependent on each other. Since then, Indians have provided the colonizers with two necessary sources for the economic exploitation of their domains, namely their labour and their land, including the resources indigenous peoples previously controlled (Quijano 2000).

Political independence and the republican liberal ideas of the nineteenth century created new means of addressing the existence and location of indigenous populations in the newly formed, independent states. For example, in many parts of Latin America the race and labour relations created after centuries of colonial administration changed as new ideas of nationhood emerged during the revolutionary period. In practice, Indians remained marginalized in the political elites' quest for social modernization and progress (Bodley 2008). At best, Indians as such were expected to disappear and adopt the national identity of a *mestizo* (mixed race), an identity that in the mind of the elites could overcome the colonial racial tensions of the past by guaranteeing some degree of social homogeneity and sentiments of belonging. In Bolivia, Ecuador and Mexico, for example, political elites articulated national ideologies of *mestizaje* according to which the nation was constructed along the lines of a mixed race. The political impact of this decision meant in practice the maintenance of the economic and political status of political elites and the marginalization of contemporary Indians who refused to be incorporated into the nation in terms that negated their pre-Columbian past.

New forms of racism and exclusion emerged with this push by states to create ideas of, or institutions based on, social homogeneity. In fact, as Balibar and Wallerstein (1991)

argue, racism and nationalism go hand in hand with historical processes of state formation. According to Balibar (1991), racism is neither autonomous nor primary but a social relation that goes well beyond the behaviour of “irrational” subjects and is to be found embedded in social and political institutions. Furthermore, racism resides in practices as well as discourses and social representations articulated around the “stigmata of otherness.” In Balibar’s terms, “it is this combination of practices, discourses and representations in a network of affective stereotypes which enables us to give an account of the formation of a racist community [...] and also of the way in which, as a mirror image, individuals and collectivities that are prey to racism [...] find themselves constrained to see themselves as a community” (Balibar 1991, 18).

When national territories were redefined and the need to secure them by force was recognized, the populations living in those areas were immediately placed under the control of central authorities. More specifically, if these populations possessed different political allegiances, had a de facto control over the territories they inhabited, belonged to a cultural group that was considered by the elites to be part of a barbaric past, or if these groups attempted to resist the expansion of central authorities, the result was often their mass-annihilation. Those who were spared were placed under the control of institutions with the goal of assimilating them into the emerging modern nations. At times, the elites also conceived as a natural and inevitable evolutionary process the elimination of those populations that they considered inferior. In practice, uncontrolled frontiers, military force, and the non-violent extension of administrative control explain the loss of autonomy and self-sufficiency of indigenous peoples (Bodley 2008, 37).

In the twentieth century, the consolidation of the welfare-corporatist state and populist discourses of *indigenismo* reframed the so-called Indian Question as a Social Question. In effect, a new citizenship regime was ushered in that integrated indigenous peoples as poor peasants, and as part of an ostensibly non-racialized *pueblo*. The concepts of populism and *indigenismo* are difficult to define. However, they help to explain the relationship between indigenous peoples and the state throughout much of the past century. As a discursive framework and a set of practices, populism links the interests of the state (and often of a ruler) with those of *el pueblo* (the people). In populist discourse,

the nation and “the people” share the same interests, which in turn are often presented against those of the old oligarchies. Under populism, *el pueblo* adopts abstract characteristics in relation to oppositional forces (e.g., landed oligarchies, imperial interests) and appears as a category that includes indigenous peoples, peasants, informal workers, and the urban working class. In general, populism gave collective action a language that frequently moved beyond discourses of class, nationality, or ethnicity (Laclau 1977; Albó 1994; Roberts 1995; Conniff 1999; Cammack 2000; Svampa 2004). One of the main challenges of populism vis-à-vis indigenous peoples was how to create a homogeneous notion of citizenship and nationhood, and *indigenismo* proved to be an attractive approach. The nationalism of the Latin American welfare-corporatist era is often characterized by the attempt of political leaders to reduce the “Indian problem” to its minimal expression through the assimilation of Indians into a homogenous idea of “the nation.” Education systems and the formation of national unions, for example, have been institutional conduits for this incorporation. In general terms, from a top-down perspective it was assumed that the rural Indian would disappear to give way, for instance, to a “Bolivian peasant” or an “Ecuadorian peasant.” Furthermore, the emergence of the peasant as a marker of socio-economic identity has been seen as a sign of the disappearance not only of the “Indian” as a political category but also as the end of ongoing forms of racial discrimination. This was seen as the result of an inexorable process of economic and political – as well as social and cultural - modernization.

If the appeals to *el pueblo* generated new spaces to articulate popular demands that emerged from class, ethnic, and racial tensions, *indigenismo* made an effort to incorporate, specifically, indigenous populations into the nation and to critique the prevalent racism of the liberal republicanism of the nineteenth century. In fact, *indigenismo* consists of an attempt to integrate indigenous issues into prevailing ideas of nationhood. According to Mignolo (2005), *indigenismo* was a category for the manifestation of national ideologies in the hands and minds of the non-indigenous. Giraud and Lewis, have characterized *indigenismo* as a “diverse political, economic, and cultural movement that celebrated indigenous people and their traditions, on the one hand, but usually also called for their modernization, assimilation, and ‘improvement,’ on the other” (2012, 3). With such characteristics, *indigenismo* was adopted as an ideology

of modern state building, both in areas where indigenous populations were large, as in Mexico or Peru, and where the Indian population was small, as in Brazil. As these authors maintain, the outcomes of *indigenismo* varied depending on the political and social contexts in which it became dominant.

Under *indigenismo*, new policies were proposed and implemented. Through these policies, states provided institutional support that celebrated indigenous traditions and provided mechanisms to secure the provision of some government services for indigenous communities. However, Indians themselves “did not have any role to play or anything to say” in these policy decisions, resulting in paternalism and a disregard of indigenous participation in the decisions that affected them directly (Mignolo 2005, 102). *Indigenismo* has been criticized for being ineffective and paternalistic, for its goal of assimilating Indians into mainstream society, and for ignoring the state’s responsibility for genocide and ethnocide (Giraudó and Lewis 2012, 5). *Indigenismo* has also been criticized for not addressing the root cause of unjust political and economic systems that contributed to indigenous exploitation and as such for helping to preserve the status quo (Bonfil Batalla 1977; Díaz Polanco 1997; Giraudó and Lewis 2012).

The dominant place of *indigenismo* in the discourses of nation-building and state-formation during the first half of the twentieth century was largely unchallenged, and it remained so until the 1970s and early 1980s.⁸ During the 1970s, in the context of generalized radical mobilizations throughout Latin America, indigenous activism gained more visibility. By the 1980s, these struggles blended with the resistance to structural adjustment and economic austerity plans that became dominant in the region. During the same period, and in the context of international pressure for the recognition of indigenous rights, Latin American states responded to indigenous demands by granting them new cultural rights and by officially acknowledging the multi-ethnic composition of societies

⁸ While at the ideological level *indigenismo* was put into question and was severely criticized in the 1970s and 1980s, particularly during the VIII Inter-American Indigenist Congress, states in the region continued developing policies under its framework. The VIII Congress, however, pointed to the severe limitations of *indigenista* policies, criticizing their underlying strategies of control of indigenous organizations and struggles across the region (Giraudó and Lewis 2012).

in their constitutions and laws. The notion of “neoliberal multiculturalism” captures the paradoxes that exist between this formal recognition of indigenous rights and the lack of improvement in the living conditions that most indigenous peoples still experience.

2.2 State formation: from “neutral” institutions to the constitutive role of culture

A historical account of Indian-State relations in Latin America highlights the ways in which regimes of citizenship change over time and how these processes are related to modern state formation. In other words, when it comes to understanding the historical relationship between Indians and states, institutions matter. Institutions, for example, frame the spaces within which indigenous demands can be articulated and contested. Moreover, indigenous mobilizations are arguably part of the long history of modern state formation in Latin America. In such ongoing negotiations, which involve accommodation as well as resistance, both indigenous identities and the state are affected. In this section I argue, following Steinmetz (1999), that the study of the state needs to move beyond mainstream institutional analysis and include the constitutive role of cultural processes and systems of signification. This is critical for understanding the relationship of indigenous activism to the state as one involving accommodation *and* resistance. This conceptualization opens new perspectives that privilege, for example, the transformation of state subjects through regimes of citizenship.

There is a vast literature on the state and state formation from an institutional perspective. Mainstream variants of this literature tend to view state institutions as neutral arenas where divergent social interests are represented. Many of these studies, in fact, follow a narrow reading of Max Weber’s work on the modern state. As an ideal type, such a state is characterized by clear territorial boundaries and the legitimate monopoly of coercive power (Weber 1958). Charles Tilly, for example, has defined states as “coercion wielding organizations that are distinct from households and kinship groups and exercise clear

priority in some respects over all other organizations within substantial territories” (quoted in Steinmetz 1999, 8). More recently, some approaches have focused on the state’s reach and functional imperatives to regulate society (Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol 1985; World Bank 1997). The presumed neutrality of state institutions in mainstream analyses, however, has been challenged by pluralist theories (Mann 1984), Marxism (Althusser 1971; Gramsci 1975; Marx 1998), neo-Marxism (Carnoy 1984; Amin 1991), and most eloquently by feminist approaches (Enloe 1989; McKinnon 1989; Brown 1992).

Institutional perspectives typically assume that states have a predetermined set of core functions and historical tasks. This has been challenged by authors who have tried to understand states as state formation and to see them as processes that are purely contingent and characterized as localized historical relations and practices and discourses of political rule that matter (Corrigan and Sayer 1985; Foucault 1991; Corrigan 1994; Rose 1999; Dean 2010; Hansen and Stepputat 2001; Lemke 2001; Abrams 2006). For these authors, state institutions re-produce power relations that are pre-determined by earlier struggles and conflict (Mallon 1994). Making explicit this historicity helps us understand current conflicts, negotiations between states and indigenous peoples, and the possibilities for change.

A growing literature on Latin American indigenous politics that relies on a historical understanding of the state as state formation has rightly emphasized the fundamental role that different patterns of development and capitalist expansion have played in the process of state formation (Cardoso and Faletto 1979; Wade 1997; Clark and Becker 2007). For the case of Argentina, for example, historian Halperin Donghi (2005) has shown how export-oriented models of economic growth, extensive agriculture in *estancias* (large estates), and traditional industries have influenced the distribution of power among elites, the formation of political projects of nation-building, and the decisions that have affected indigenous groups directly.

Recent post-colonial approaches to the state remind us of the importance of colonial legacies in the study of present-day indigenous politics and nation-states. According to

post-colonialism, contemporary transnational capital and forms of state violence interact with colonial legacies underpinning state formation on the periphery of global capitalism (Badie 2000; Young 2001; Asad 2004; Shapiro 2004; Hill 2005). Control, or political sovereignty, over territory has traditionally defined the European-based model of the modern nation-state. This approach assumes that the central institutions of the state exercise assertive physical control over the space defined within internationally recognized boundaries. The consistency and apparent straightforwardness of this notion disappears, however, when non-Western realities are taken into account. In postcolonial societies the “margins” of state control, or those areas where the state does not reach, gain relevance. It is in those spaces where the imagined state and its very real institutions, including those of law and order, attempt to bring those populations that are marginal into the scope of the nation. Das and Poole explain the relevance of these margins in the following terms:

“Located always on the margins of what is accepted as the territory of unquestioned state control (and legitimacy), the margins [...] are simultaneously sites where nature can be imagined as wild and uncontrolled and where the state is constantly refounding its models of order and lawmaking. These sites are not merely territorial: they are also [...] sites of practices on which law and other state practices are colonized by other forms of regulation that emanate from the pressing needs of population to secure political and economic survival.” (2004, 8)

This study relies on critical approaches to the state that highlight cultural processes as foundational – or constitutive – for understanding state formation (Steinmetz 1999). Culture, as Raymond Williams has reminded us, is “one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language.” (Williams 1983, 87 quoted in Steinmetz 1999, 4) However, a conceptual approximation to culture is necessary if it is assumed to be constitutive of social reality. As such, culture can be seen as the “systems of meaning and the practices in which they are embedded.” (Steinmetz 1999, 7) By state formation, critical scholars refer to the creation of “durable states and the transformations of basic structural features of these states – including material practices as well as the

intersubjective understandings in which they are embedded.” (Steinmetz 1999, 8)

According to critical authors, the analysis of state formation should abandon the search for the essence of the state and focus instead on the cultural and material practices that reproduce relations of power (Corrigan 1994; Steinmetz 1999).

My approach builds on five interrelated assumptions that help articulate my argument on the mutual constitutive role of indigenous collective identities and state formation. First, I assume that states are never formed once and for all but are best understood as an “ongoing process of structural change” (Steinmetz 1999, 9), which highlights the *forms* of state rule over its citizens (Corrigan and Sayer 1985). This assumption focuses on *how* rule is accomplished, and on what Philip Corrigan (1994) refers to as a “new grammar of politics.” The obvious is thus problematized and broader frameworks that define the terms in which contestation can occur come into view. My second assumption is that the power of the state *as such* does not decline necessarily with transformations in capitalism. For example, in the context of capitalist globalization, the state has been transformed and has adopted forms of citizenship that rely on new preferred identities (Evans and Ayers 2006; Robinson 2008). These new forms of state have led some authors to refer to the “neoliberalization” of the state (Schild 2000, 2007). My third assumption is that states have the power, through discourses and practices, to shape the framework within which collective action takes place and where collective identities flourish. In sum, state power can organize – and divide – subjectivities (Sayer 1994). In this sense, the projection of state power relies on the construction of hegemony. Following Gramsci, for example, William Roseberry defines hegemony as a “common material and meaningful framework for living through, talking about, and acting upon social orders characterized by domination.” (1994, 361)⁹ In this sense, states play a fundamental role in reproducing

⁹ Echoing the work of Antonio Gramsci, this conceptualization of domination brings into prominence the critical role of civil society in challenging and also consolidating forms of domination. In his concern for emancipatory collective action, Gramsci looks into the capacity of the state to transform the “horizons” of individuals and groups in such a way that particular regimes of domination are the result of an unstable combination of consent and coercion. At the same time, attention is placed on the capacity of collective actors to articulate demands that defy domination. This is what Gramsci conceives as counter-hegemonic movements. A further explanation of the relationship between the state and institutions of civil society that Gramsci suggested was further theorized by Althusser in his notion of the “ideological state apparatus.”

hegemony. The fourth assumption is that ongoing attempts by states to frame collective action and the emergence of new identities encounter efforts at legitimization and contestation “from below” (Corrigan and Sayer 1985; Mallon 1994). This is the result of the ways in which hegemony operates. As Roseberry reminds us, rather than a “finished ideological formation,” hegemony refers to “a problematic, contested, political process of domination and struggles.” (1994, 358) Finally, a fifth assumption is that state formation involves a spatial logic in which states construct spaces through a series of practices that shape the contours of territories with profound implications for those who inhabit them (Radcliffe 2001).¹⁰ Furthermore, the spatial dimension of state formation is based on “specific geographical tools and knowledges” and on “imaginative geographies and images.” (Radcliffe 2001, 124) The state, in other words, is always the result of historically situated practices and ideas.

In conclusion, the study of indigenous activism and its relationship to the state begins by paying some attention to institutions. However, in order to understand the complexities of contemporary indigenous activism under neoliberal multiculturalism, such studies must adopt a framework that privileges a more dynamic analysis of state formation as a cultural process open to transformation and the influence of marginalized groups. Considering the ways in which states implement policies and reproduce dominant discourses is important in shaping the possibilities of contestation. Equally important is to focus on how indigenous peoples, for example, can take advantage of state functions. By adopting a framework that allows us to see the state as a set of heterogeneous, fragmented practices, we have more possibilities for acknowledging the potential influence that indigenous peoples can exert on the institutions of the state. Furthermore, such framework pays close attention to the dominant discourses that the state reproduces.

And even a Weberian notion of “bureaucracy” highlights the rationalization of social life under the modern state in order to legitimate domination and affect the possibilities of social change (Sharma and Gupta 2006).

¹⁰ A certain degree of success in this process is, of course, the accomplishment of undisputed control of a territory by states.

2.3 Citizenship: Spaces of participation and discipline

Central to contemporary indigenous activism and its relationship to the state is the changing nature of citizenship regimes in Latin America. Through different discourses and practices, states are able to recognize subjects as citizens or, as Das and Poole have suggested, to turn them into “lawful subjects of the state.” (2004, 8) In doing this, states have the capacity to define which individuals (or groups) are lawful members of a political community. By converting subjects into citizens, states legitimize not only their actions but also their objectives (Negri 1989). Citizenship, in short, shapes a political community by defining who its members are. If states can define who is a citizen by granting specific legal rights, they can also, directly or indirectly, exclude others who do not fit the established membership criteria (Lister 2003). This politico-legal understanding of citizenship has been central in emphasizing how states can provide entitlements and guarantees to those who are recognized as members of a given political community. Citizenship as a political and civil status continues to be relevant today, especially in contexts where being granted political status as a citizen determines who lives and who dies, or who lives under what conditions. Refugees are a case in point. My approach to citizenship begins with T. H. Marshall’s classic formulation of citizenship as a formal recognition by states of political, civil, and social rights. Given the histories of exclusion of indigenous peoples *as such* by Latin American states, contemporary indigenous activism has focused on the right to participate in politics, to have equal protection under the law, and to be given social protection. Such claims for *equality*, however, have been recently transformed by claims new demands for recognition of collective rights based on cultural *difference*.

Citizenship, however, entails more than legal status and rights granted by states. I argue that citizenship must be understood as a form of *active* political participation. In practice, this form of citizenship refers to different forms of activism that often aim at expanding existing rights or pushing for the recognition of new ones. In other words, citizenship

claims are also important to understand how and why citizenship regimes change over time. This “enlarged” conception of citizenship approaches political participation as encompassing a redefinition and negotiation not only of politics but also of economic, social, *and* cultural practices (Alvarez et al. 1998). The view of citizenship as participation and negotiation, however, is incomplete if it does not include a third dimension that focuses on the ways in which citizenship not only frames recognized rights and the possibilities for their contestation, but also includes the view that citizenship can be equally conceived as a form of government. Relying on Aihwa Ong (2006), I see citizenship fundamentally as a form of governmental discipline, which defines, legitimizes, and protects some subjects and not others. The following subsections examine these views on citizenship in more detail.

2.3.1 Citizenship as membership, status, and rights

In the most conventional sense citizenship is defined as a formal status given to members of a political community usually conceived of as the nation-state (Kymlicka and Norman 1994; Turner 2009). This status is typically defined in terms of rights and obligations thus guaranteeing, in theory, formal equality amongst citizens – or “equality of status,” as Eckert (2011) calls it. The main emphasis of this politico-legal view of citizenship has been on the capacity of the state to grant entitlements and protection to its members. However, as many have argued, the formal recognition of political membership cannot guarantee political participation or equality under the law. This is T. H. Marshall’s point of departure in his classic work on citizenship.

T. H. Marshall (1994) focused on the content of citizenship, that is, on the set of rights that citizenship entails. Marshall’s study began by focusing on the relationship between the formal rights of citizenship and social inequality. Considering the case of Great Britain, Marshall proposed to divide citizenship into three components: civil; political; and social. Civil rights are those that guarantee equal protection under the law. These are the rights “necessary for individual freedom” and include “freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, and the right to

justice” (1994, 173). Such rights are guaranteed by the court system. Political rights guarantee individuals the ability to vote and participate in political life. Social rights are those that provide social protection for those who are marginalized in society. According to Marshall, social rights include “the whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society” (1994, 173). These rights are guaranteed by the educational system and public services.

Marshall’s work is useful because it reminds us that political rights alone, or those which are often associated with mainstream understandings of citizenship, do not guarantee meaningful participation by all citizens, or as full members, of a given political community. Furthermore, Marshall argued that rights also entail a “public duty” to exercise some of those rights (1994, 174). In his discussion on elementary education, for example, Marshall argued that, “the duty to improve and civilize oneself is therefore a social duty, and not merely a personal one, because the social health of a society depends upon the civilization of its members” (1994, 175). He also listed paid work as a central responsibility of citizens. Finally, in contexts of great social inequality, Marshall’s account of citizenship is attractive. He suggested, for example, that the “equality implicit” in the concept of citizenship undermines social inequality (1994, 175).¹¹

Marshall’s work, however, can be criticized on many grounds. Marshall’s notion that social citizenship can diminish inequality and reduce class conflict did not materialize as he initially suggested (Schild 2000). In a recent analysis of T. H. Marshall’s contribution to the study of citizenship, Bryan Turner (2009) highlights four weaknesses. First, Marshall did not provide an account of the mechanisms that permitted the extension of citizenship. Rather, Marshall’s take on citizenship relied on an evolutionary framework. In doing this, Marshall often ignored the role of working-class struggles, for example, in

¹¹ Marshall’s account of citizenship is based on the experience of Great Britain and describes a historical trajectory that evolves from civil (18th century) to political (19th c.) and social (20th c.) rights. In the context of Latin America, some authors have shown that the recognition of social rights has often taken place in the absence of political and civil ones (Jelin 2003). For a critique of Jelin’s take on Marshall’s model, see Schild (2000).

the expansion of social citizenship. The second criticism is that Marshall relied on a “uniform and coherent concept” and ignored different historical contexts outside Europe (2009, 69). Third, Marshall’s account of citizenship did not establish connections between ethnic and racial divisions and national citizenship. As Turner suggests, Marshall’s theory was “as blind to race and ethnicity as it was to culture” (2009, 69). Others have highlighted the gender bias in Marshall’s account of citizenship, particularly as the preferred place to claim entitlements is the “masculine world of work” (Young 1995; Schild 2000; Lister 2003). Finally, Marshall’s approach had “little or nothing to say about duties and obligations” and so it assumed the presence of “relatively passive” citizens protected by the state from the uncertainties of capitalism (Turner 2009, 69).

In the unequal context of Latin America, the debate on citizenship has highlighted the profound gap that exists between formally recognized rights and citizenship in practice (Rosaldo 1990; Alvarez et al. 1998; Schild 2000; Jelin 2003). Corrigan and Sayer (1985), writing about a different context, have reminded us that those who are socially marginalized face additional challenges when it comes to the exercise of citizenship rights in their everyday life:

“For the materially subordinated [...] this is also their limitation: not just in the negative sense of their ideality [of rights], their unrealizability, for most peoples most of the time [...], but in the strongly positive sense that construction of social identity [...] actively denies the possibility of expressing the real experience of difference, of material subordination, politically, as anything other than ‘personal’ and ‘private’ misfortune (Corrigan and Sayer 1985, 187).

Marshall’s trilogy assumes a progressive evolution of one set of rights giving way to the next set and so on. In practice, however, regions like Latin America show that this evolution has not taken place and, in some cases, an “involution” has, in fact, taken place in the recent period producing in practice a regression of rights once acquired by social sectors. Moreover, in other cases there have been recent attempts to recognize collective rights as a means of overcoming the ostensible limitations of individual rights. The wave

of legal recognition of indigenous rights through Latin America since the 1980s discussed above is an illustration. These rights have been granted to groups by virtue of their cultural *difference* (Yashar 2005).

2.3.2 Citizenship as active political participation

Citizenship is also seen as an act of agency that involves a set of struggles for the expansion and/or recognition of social and political rights (Lister 2003; Hordijk 2005; Kabeer 2005; Eckert 2011). This dimension of citizenship refers to specific forms of activism that aim at expanding the rights – and obligations – already in place, or at recognizing new ones. In contrast to Marshall's approach that sees citizenship as the result of what states decide to do with it, the emphasis on political activism highlights the struggles of disadvantaged groups to expand or establish new rights of citizenship. The importance of progressive social movements, for example, lies precisely in their capacity to challenge the boundaries within which states and dominant actors in society define the possibilities of citizenship. Moreover, social movements also have the potential to amplify the contradictions between what citizens and the state expect from each other. In fact, recent notions of citizenship tend to associate the term with those on-going practices in which citizens contest, renegotiate, and reinterpret what is given to them as rights. In their study of democratization in Latin America after years of civil strife and military dictatorships, for example, some scholars have stressed the obstacles that exist when citizens attempt to exercise recognized rights (Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar 1998; Dagnino 2003). In this sense, citizenship becomes a “negotiated relationship” between states and subjects and/or the emergence, or re-constitution, of active social subjects (Dagnino 2005; Pallares 2007).

Other scholars suggest that citizenship consists of enacting a form of active, *collective* politics that, according to its civic republican and communitarian roots, moves beyond the interest of *individual* citizens (Lister 2003, 25). The communitarian ideal of citizenship, however, has been criticized on grounds of its narrow conception of the political, its rigid separation of public and private spheres, its appeal to gender-neutral

universalism and the common good, and the demanding nature of the obligations it entails (Lister 2003). Feminists have been at the vanguard of these critiques of the classic civic republican model of citizenship. Feminist scholars have argued that conventional definitions of active engagement in the formal political process have been formulated with male experiences in mind. By artificially drawing a line between the political and the non-political, citizenship understood as political participation tends to exclude other spheres that can matter more to women, such as working conditions, social and political life, and child-raising, to name a few. Political action, feminists suggest, exceeds the boundaries of institutional channels defined by states. Second, the appeals to universalism and impartiality have been criticized on the grounds that such appeals render invisible the very forms of exclusion that disadvantaged groups attempt to address (Young 1995). Finally, the republican ideal of citizenship as active political participation in pursuit of a common good can reinforce current inequalities favouring only a minority – of men, usually - as few other groups (or, as very few others) would have the time, for example, to engage and fulfil their obligations as citizens. As Lister has pointed out, “*time* is a resource for citizenship, generally skewed in favour of men” (2003, 200). The author refers to the demanding nature of the obligations citizenship entails for women in the following terms:

“Given the sexual division of labour and of time, this minority is likely to be predominately male, as was the ideal citizen of classic republicanism who was largely freed from the necessity to labour and to meet his bodily requirements, facilitated by the ranks of non-citizens – women and slaves” (2003, 34).

Proponents of the republican communitarian view of citizenship expect that through political participation, excluded groups will be transformed into political actors in their own right. Approaching citizenship as active political participation addresses the concern about static conceptualizations of citizenship as a set of civil, political, and social rights granted by states. However, although citizenship understood in the republican sense is valuable in this sense, it is too narrow as it does not contemplate the possibility, or fact, that political participation is itself a form of regulated activity. This regulation, in turn,

comes from specific rules, contents, and expectations of citizenship. To overcome this narrowness I suggest a third dimension to my understanding of citizenship in this study, one that builds on a more recent body of literature that sees citizenship as governing forms of discipline and regulations of the politically possible. Understood as a form of discipline and state regulation, the notion of citizenship becomes central to understand the impact of the neoliberal state and its relationship to indigenous political activism only if it allows us to speak about a neoliberal regime of citizenship which creates spaces for participation which enables certain forms of agency but nevertheless regulated them. In the case of indigenous peoples, for example, indigenous citizenship adopts its forms throughout the ongoing mobilization of indigenous activists within the context of a specific regime of citizenship, a neoliberal citizenship regime. In the sense that citizenship regimes regulate indigenous mobilization, I also conceive citizenship as “technologies of government,” as Aihwa Ong (2006, 16) has argued. By privileging a notion of citizenship as active but governed or regulated participation, my study of indigenous politics emphasizes the ways in which rights, for example, become part of broader governing strategies that define, evaluate, and protect “certain categories of subjects and not others” (Ong 2006, 16). The following section elaborates on the disciplining nature of citizenship in more detail.

2.3.3 Citizenship as discipline and regulation

Citizenship has become a form of discipline in which political claims are addressed by the regulatory practices and discourses of the state, generally in terms of rights (Brown 1994; Schild 2000, 2007; Kim 2010). Aihwa Ong, for example, argues that citizenship is a cultural process of “subjectification” in which political power “produces consent through schemes of surveillance, discipline, control, and administration” (Ong 1996, 737, cited in Lister 2003). Furthermore, Ong (1990) suggests that citizenship also regulates different categories of racialized or “cultural” subjects depending on their location within the nation-state and within the global economy. Following Corrigan and Sayer (1985), Ong defines cultural citizenship as “the cultural practices and beliefs produced out of *negotiating* the often *ambivalent* and *contested* relations with the state and its hegemonic

forms that establish the criteria of belonging within a national population and territory” (1990, 264).

Conceived as a way of governing subjectivities, citizenship has the capacity to set up the framework of expectations for political action (Corrigan and Sayer 1985; Pallares 2007). Citizenship also makes explicit the ways in which states expect their subjects to act and behave (Schild 2000). In this sense, my approach to the notion of citizenship as a form of regulation is broader than Yashar’s definition of a citizenship regime that only includes the questions of access (who?), form (what?), and content of citizenship (which rights?) (Yashar 2005, 47). Eckert (2011), for example, suggests that citizenship implies *practices* that carry out historical expectations about what states ought to do and what kind of relations they should maintain with their subjects. Studying those practices allows us to focus on the limits of citizenship in practice. Seeing citizenship as regulation, I bring attention to those mechanisms of *inclusion* that involve more than simple coercion by states. In a state’s quest for legitimacy, mechanisms of inclusion that aim at eliciting political legitimacy matter and they have profound consequences for citizens. In this context of building legitimacy, states identify those subjects who contest not only their policies and functions but also their very existence, and attempt to transform them into citizens – that is, into members of the political community with some sense of belonging. By engaging in this process of “citizen-making” states reconstitute themselves. Equally important, transformations occur at the level of collective identities and political practices. Studying citizenship with this regulatory dimension in mind allows us to see the transformation of states, citizenship, and subjects as an *active* process that involves negotiation, accommodation, and resistance between states and their citizens.

By taking this approach to citizenship as discipline and regulation, but one that is also open to the influence of those who are the targets of such forms of government, this dissertation proposes that resistance by marginalized groups needs to be understood not only as open confrontation but also as a set of cultural practices that involve negotiation *and* conflict over dominant symbols of meaning (Deleuze 1988; Scott 1990; Foucault 1991). For the case of indigenous peoples in Latin America, it is clear how states can define the terms through which their institutions relate to citizens (Yashar 2005). States

typically articulate policies according to pre-existing relations of power. As for the particularities of different states, regardless of the capacity of their institutions to reach the majority of their population and territory through their policies, they are still able to define who has political membership, which rights are to be included, and what institutional mechanisms will be put in place to grant access to rights, or to make them effective. This set of state abilities, namely to define *who* is a citizen, *what* rights are included, and *which* institutions are in charge of their implementation, define, according to Yashar (2005), a citizenship regime. Keeping this notion of a citizenship regime in mind, I suggest that these three components involve technologies of government and regulation. I now turn to a discussion of the problem of the neoliberalization of the state and citizenship to understand the context in which the contemporary political activism of indigenous peoples takes place.

2.4 The neoliberalization of the state and citizenship

2.4.1 The neoliberal state

In its often-cited definition, neoliberalism refers to a core set of neoclassical economic policies. In the 1990s, this set of policies came to be known as the “Washington Consensus,” a term coined by economist John Williamson. Such policies include but are not limited to: the liberalisation of financial transactions and the emphasis on capital markets; fiscal austerity; cut-backs in social spending and subsidies for public provisions; reform of tax systems; liberation of trade; deregulation of industry; and flexibilization of labour markets (Robinson 2008). In theory, these policies aimed at withering the role of the state in the economy and enhancing that of the market.

In this study, neoliberalism is understood as more than a set of economic policies. I argue that neoliberalism is also a historically specific state form with a specific citizenship regime. In this sense, the notion of neoliberalism that I use in my study does not assume the weakening of state power at the hands of the market. Rather, it sees the neoliberal

state as a process that shifts its attention from some fields and expands and consolidates into *new* fields of citizens' lives (Steinmetz 1999; Brodie 2005; Svampa 2005). My approach to neoliberalism builds on the critical, interdisciplinary literature that sees state formation as a cultural process (Corrigan and Sayer 1985; Steinmetz 1999; Hansen and Stepputat 2001; Lemke 2001). As a specific state form, neoliberalism affects the life of its citizens, not only in material terms – as in impacting the ways in which people subsist – but also in the ways in which collective identities and forms of belonging are configured.¹² As a form of state, neoliberalism frames citizen participation by encouraging some forms of participation and suppressing, marginalizing, eroding, or undermining others. Contestation, in this context, still occurs and studying it allows us to make visible the otherwise supposed neutrality of power relations that states seek to consolidate (Corrigan and Sayer 1985; Foucault 1991; Rose 1999; Dean 2010).

As a form of state, neoliberalism relies on the implementation of public policies that aim to create community consent and support for its market-oriented policies and also for its political project of changing relations between state and society (Rancière 1992a, 1992b). Thus, the transformation of the state under neoliberalism cannot be understood only in opposition to the wishes of those citizens who mobilize against the political transformation that this form entails. Neoliberalism also shapes individual and collective political goals by providing new opportunities for citizen participation within the institutional framework of the state. In the field of poverty reduction through development aid, for example, the “poor” are given new forms of empowerment and responsibility to manage specific programs that target them as the main beneficiaries (Ilcan and Lacey 2011).

Following anthropologist Charles Hale, I suggest that the neoliberal state *is* compatible with multiculturalism, understood as the official recognition of indigenous rights. In this

¹² States have the capacity to govern not only individual behaviour but also the social relationships that shape everyday life and the regulation of subjectivities (e.g., families, education, public health). This is possible because states can “define, in great detail, acceptable forms and images of social activity and individual and collective identity; they regulate, in empirically specifiable ways, much – very much, by the twentieth century – of social life” (Corrigan and Sayer 1985, 3).

sense, he has suggested that state-sponsored multiculturalism entails the “selective recognition” of indigenous rights. Under the wave of recognition of new rights based on *cultural* difference, indigenous peoples are still targets of subject formation (Hale 2006, 35). In Hale’s words:

“The recognition of cultural difference gives states and, equally important, civil society and transnational organizations, greater prerogative to shape the terms of political contestation, to distinguish between authentic and ersatz expressions of identity, between acceptable and disruptive cultural demands. Neoliberal multiculturalism thrives on the recognition of cultural difference, and by extension, on high-stakes distinctions between those cultural rights that deserve recognition and those that do not” (2006, 35).

The study of neoliberalism as a form of state highlights its capacity to shape the possibilities of mobilization and contestation for citizens, and also the outcomes of such mobilization. A closer look at neoliberalism from the perspective of citizenship helps to make this more apparent.

2.4.2 Neoliberal Citizenship as the basis of Neoliberal Multiculturalism

The view of citizen participation and the struggles to make civil, political, and social rights real in contexts of global power and inequality is relevant for the study of collective action (Jelin 2003; Pousadela 2005). In Latin America, indigenous peoples mobilize against the encroachment on their land and the destruction of their livelihoods caused by the expansion of extractive industries, such as oil and mineral extraction. In some cases, indigenous mobilization opposes the expansion of these industries in indigenous territories altogether. In others, indigenous peoples claim a fair share of the resources the exploitation of these global commodities brings. States are often the target of these forms of mobilization because they are seen as the main supporters of the industries or because they often turn a blind eye to the social and environmental effects of

their actions. In this context, indigenous activists often make claims to the state in the belief that conditions of marginality and disenfranchisement will be addressed if they gain recognition of new rights and new identities. This description of indigenous activism, however, misses some important points and it is not sufficient to understand an equally important dimension of indigenous politics today, namely, the new opportunities for participation within the institutional structures of the neoliberal state.

The approach that privileges *only* what movements do is limited because the emergence of the neoliberal state and concomitant forms of citizenship also result in new spaces for citizenship involvement, even for those who are marginalized. These are, of course, always regulated spaces of participation. Under the welfare state and the emphasis on industrialization, for example, labour unions were a privileged space to mediate the interests of workers and the state. With the consolidation of neoliberalism, states have implemented changes in these mechanisms of mediation between society and the state. In the field of social policy, for example, the poor are given new responsibilities to manage the implementation of social assistance. The creation of these new types of opportunities for participating within the institutions of the state has responded, in turn, to some demands made by marginalized groups to the state. Amongst those who are marginalized as a result of pro-market economic reforms in Latin America, sociologist Maristella Svampa includes the poor, the unemployed, and peasants. In short, neoliberalism does not only produce social exclusion via poverty and mass unemployment, it also creates mechanisms for citizen inclusion (Hindess 2002). Following the earlier example, social policies focalized on the poor promote the self-organization of communities so they can manage (ostensibly more effectively than the state) social assistance programs.

The conditions under which new spaces for citizen participation are created and the ways in which these spaces are used by states and citizens must be considered if one wants to have a more nuanced understanding of indigenous activism under neoliberal forms of state and citizenship. I find Verónica Schild's (2000; 2007) concept of "market citizenship" useful in thinking about what the consolidation of these new spaces within the neoliberal state means in practice for social activism. Schild focuses on the effects of neoliberal citizenship for the organization of poor women. However, some of the lessons

she draws are relevant to the study of present-day indigenous activism in Latin America. Anthropologist Charles Hale has recognized the influence of Schild's "fascinating and cogent analysis" of the neoliberal state for his understanding of indigenous politics and neoliberal multiculturalism (2002, 498). Market citizenship, according to Schild, empowers state subjects as individuals who are "viewed as capable of enhancing their lives through judicious, responsible choices as consumers of services or other goods" (2000, 4). In this context, neoliberal, or market, citizens are defined in the following terms:

"These citizens are 'enterprising' agents, consumers and producers, whose aim is to maximize their quality of life as individuals within small communities, for example, neighbourhoods, schools, or health clinics. The thrust of the shift in emphasis, in conceptions of citizenship, from clients of public goods to empowered clients is ostensibly to make citizens responsible –through their own individual choices for themselves" (2000, 4).

This approach to neoliberal citizenship is compatible with the notion of neoliberal multiculturalism proposed by Hale (2002; 2006). Hale (2002) contests what he calls the "conventional wisdom" that views neoliberalism as a formidable threat to indigenous peoples and focuses primarily on the negative effects of neoliberal policies. The author argues instead that neoliberal modernisation and the recognition of indigenous cultural rights *are* compatible. Faced with demands for indigenous rights (based on cultural difference), neoliberal multiculturalism responds by opening new political spaces and offering some accommodation for indigenous participation. In practice, cultural rights may include bilingual education, guarantees for indigenous self-representation and indigenous legal practices. However, there are limits to this recognition because cultural rights may also serve the purposes of fending off "more far-reaching demands" as well as of shaping the boundaries of future claims (Hale 2002, 488). As Hale points out, some rights may be acceptable (i.e., legitimate) while others may not. Furthermore, indigenous identities are also scrutinized as either legitimate or not, depending on the context in which they are formed.

2.5 The central roles of collective identities and ethnicity in social activism

When it comes to indigenous politics, studying the formation of collective identities matters because, as Melucci reminds us, it helps us understand the “symbolic challenge” such identities present to systems of political regulation and social control (Melucci 1996). In the present context, it is through the formation of new collective identities and the contestation of existing ones, that indigenous activists have been able to engage with the neoliberal state in novel and interesting ways. Claims for territorial autonomy are an important case in point. My study of Mapuche activism in Northern Patagonia shows that the formation and articulation of territorial claims are good indications of how indigenous activists engage with the state, negotiating and contesting dominant forms of citizenship. By focusing on the formation of collective identities, I am able to take a more dynamic view of neoliberal multiculturalism than Hale’s. While Hale’s notion of neoliberal multiculturalism is attractive, it runs the risk of approaching the phenomenon in ways that do not allow us to see how, in practice, the boundaries of neoliberal multiculturalism are vigorously challenged. A more flexible take on neoliberal multiculturalism allows me to pay closer attention to the ways in which, in practice, indigenous activism pushes *beyond* the limits of neoliberal citizenship (Postero 2007). According to this view, activists take advantage of the new opportunities for participation offered by states. In this sense, they conform to the expectations of the neoliberal state and its form of citizenship. However, as anthropologist Nancy Postero points out, indigenous citizens also use those spaces “to pose important challenges to the workings of global capitalism” and the state practices that sponsor them (2007, 17). In this sense, the framework of neoliberal multiculturalism is open to the influence of indigenous activism in ways that Hale does not always take into account. In my study of Mapuche activism I show how this framework informs, but does not determine, indigenous politics. In short, indigenous politics has to be understood as a *dynamic* interaction with neoliberal multiculturalism. My analysis suggests that claims for territorial autonomy, for example, are a result of this interaction between

neoliberal multiculturalism and new forms of Mapuche activism and collective identities. In other words, indigenous peoples engage with neoliberal multiculturalism in complex ways. Thus, although a historically subordinated group, indigenous peoples in Argentina continue, nevertheless, to be protagonists of history (Joseph and Nugent 1994).

2.5.1 Collective identities

“The cultural forms may not say what they know, nor know what they say, but they mean what they do – at least in the logic of their praxis” (Paul Willis, quoted by Scott 1990, 183).

Borrowing from Melucci (1989; 1996), I emphasize the point that cultural processes of collective identity formation play a central role in our understanding of collective action and ethnic mobilization. Furthermore, the focus on the formation of collective identities allows us to see an important dimension of indigenous activism that would otherwise remain hidden in studies that only privilege mass-mobilization, direct action, and open confrontation with state forces. My study insists that local activism and low intensity negotiation and engagement with the state matter, and that a study of the formation of collective identities as central for indigenous political activism is crucial. I see social movements as “collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained *interaction* with elites, opponents, and authorities” (Tarrow 1998, 4). Moreover, rather than taking the formation of these “common purposes and social solidarities” for granted, I focus on the ways in which they are created (Melucci 1989). I also emphasize in my definition of social movements those less visible forms of collective action at the local level, such as the interaction between urban indigenous activists and members of rural communities, or meetings to discuss concrete strategies affecting one community. These typically local activities, neglected by Tarrow for instance, contribute to a more nuanced understanding of social mobilization. As Hansen and Stepputat put it, local actions deemed “mundane, unexceptional, and maybe deeply ambivalent” may contain important elements of an ongoing process of *confrontation and adaptation* to the state and political circumstances in general (2001, 33).

The view of the local as a privileged scale for the study of indigenous activism, especially in contexts where indigenous peoples are minorities, also echoes James C. Scott's (1990) notion of infrapolitics. Infrapolitics, according to Scott, is the realm of political struggles that are waged daily by subordinate groups, and the fact that they usually remain "invisible" obeys to strategic choices "born of a prudent awareness of the balance of power" (1990, 183). The importance of this type of politics is that it provides "much of the cultural and structural underpinning of the more visible political action on which our attention has generally been focused" (1990, 184). I consider Scott's take on infrapolitics and "more visible forms of political action" as mutually sustaining to be central for studying indigenous activism at the local level. As Scott reminds us, any "small advantages" subordinate groups may see in their interaction with dominant groups count. In Scott's words:

"Each realm of open resistance to domination is shadowed by an infrapolitical twin sister who aims at the same strategic goals but whose low profile is better adapted to resisting an opponent who could probably win any open confrontation" (1990, 184).

Amongst the available literature on collective action, the tradition consolidated by the "new social movements" (NSM) approach offers useful insights for incorporating the study of cultural processes into the field of social mobilization. Within this tradition, I single out Alberto Melucci's (1989; 1996) work to understand the challenges the formation of collective identities poses to dominant forms of rule. It is important to place Melucci's contributions in the context of the rich ongoing debates on collective action. Broadly speaking, the NSM approach of the 1980s can be seen a response to what many saw as the reductionist tendencies of previous Marxist studies that focused too narrowly on class analysis to explain collective action. In addition, more recent versions of NSM reflect its engagement with other approaches on social movements that have been central

in sociology and political studies: resource mobilization theory (RMT) and political process theories (PPT).¹³

Resource mobilization theory (RMT) has been useful in demonstrating how different elements at the disposal of social movements, such as leadership, organizational structures, and clear strategies, help to explain the emergence and persistence in time of social mobilization (McCarthy and Zald 1977). In this sense, RMT has helped us to understand some of the “strategic dilemmas” social movements face in practice, among them societal support, available resources and linkages to other groups, dependence on support, and relationships between movements and governments. Furthermore, the vast literature on RMT has contributed to our understanding that structural factors, motives alone, or shared grievances and deprivations are *not* enough to understand how social movements emerge. A key limitation of this approach, however, is that RMT overemphasizes the role of movements’ strategies, and minimizes or overlooks the power relationships in which social actors are embedded. Political Process Theories (PPT) have addressed these limitations and demonstrated how movements are more than organizational mechanisms that work for the sole objective of satisfying the preferences of their constituencies. By emphasizing the wider context of political opportunities in which social movements operate, including their relationship with states, PPT gives prominence to existing institutional settings (McAdam 1982; Tilly 1984; Tarrow 1998). In more recent interpretations of collective action which follow this tradition, some authors have studied how processes of meaning and interpretation play a central role in social mobilization (Snow and 2001; Meyer, Whittier, and Robnett 2002). Nancy Whittier, for example, connected direct political action by social movements with a process of collective identity formation in the following terms:

¹³ Resource Mobilization and Political Process Theories are considered to be a response to the earlier collective behaviour paradigm which explained collective action as a result of social deviance, disruption, or social breakdown (Blumer 1951; Kornhauser 1959; Smelser 1962; Gurr 1970). One version of the collective behaviour paradigm was symbolic interactionism, which many recognized had some merit in focusing on the ways in which social actors construct meaning through social interaction (Blumer 1951).

“The paths movements take are shaped by both internal identities, discourses, traditions, and organizations infrastructure, as well as external political opportunities and dominant cultural possibilities and constraints. In short, the interpretative process by which groups construct collective identities and other oppositional meanings are inextricable from public confrontations with authorities” (2002, 291).

It is clear that by taking this “cultural turn” in the study of social movements, the PPT tradition has acknowledged the contribution of authors working within the tradition of “new social movements” (Offe 1985; Touraine 1985; Melucci 1989).¹⁴ In particular, they have engaged with Melucci’s *constructivist* theory of collective identity. According to Melucci, the construction of collective identities poses symbolic challenges to established social and political systems of regulation and control (1989, 19). He argues that this construction takes place using the social networks that exist in everyday life and that it consists in the formation of new ways of knowing, the creation of new social networks, and also an investment of emotions. The discursive practices in which groups in these networks engage explain, according to Melucci, the construction of new political subjects. These discursive practices create new spaces for political participation and new opportunities for challenging dominant systems of rule. I adopt Melucci’s analysis of the constitution of collective identities because it helps to understand *how* political activism, in this case indigenous activism, depends in large part on a broader process of collective self-identification.

In adopting Melucci’s view on the constitutive role of collective identities for studying indigenous activism, I do not lose sight of the importance of broader political processes.

¹⁴ Challenging existing literature on collective action, the study of “new” social movements aimed to understand novel forms of collective action that have been taking place mostly in Western Europe and North America since the late 1960s after a perceived decline of working-class politics. According to Touraine (1985), social movements refer to conflicts “around the social control of the main cultural patterns” of society rather than material aspects of life. For this author, social movements are marked by a central conflict that is no longer marked by “labour and economic problems” but by the “production of symbolic goods”, that is, by culture itself. In post-industrial societies, Touraine adds, the actor is a key subject of social action that tends to change the terms in which a “way of life” is experienced (1985, 749-750).

Indeed, I study the construction of Mapuche collective identities as part of a process of engagement with the neoliberal state, and see the political and cultural aspects of indigenous activism as mutually constitutive. Thus, I disagree with Melucci's claim that "new social movements" do not contest political power. Finally, I do not share Melucci's optimism that new identities *per se* result in the democratization of everyday life. Studies of indigenous activism in contexts characterized by stark social inequalities, for example, suggest that new identities may emerge but that these do not necessarily democratize everyday life.

2.5.2 Ethnic mobilization

Indigenous politics has also been studied by following the ongoing theoretical debates on the factors explaining ethnic mobilization. A central feature of ethnic mobilization, some scholars propose, is that claims are made based upon certain identities and boundaries that are defined by racial or ethnic markers (Olzak 2004, 667). The existence of ethnic mobilization often creates tensions with nation-states given the ways in which it challenges dominant ideas of social homogeneity that states seek to maintain. Ethnic social movements and nation-states, these scholars have suggested, "depend on each other in a delicate balance of self-definition, political claims making, and contests over power, authority, and legitimacy" (Olzak 2004, 668). The emergence, growth, and impact of ethnic-based movements have been studied by several theoretical traditions (Briones 1998; Olzak 2004; Yashar 2005).

Primordialism approaches the study of ethnic identities as the main cause of indigenous political mobilization (Geertz 1973; Horowitz 1992). According to this view, the emergence of indigenous movements is a "natural expression" of ethnic identities (Yashar 2005, 9). Geertz (1973), for example, understands the emergence of ethnic conflict as a result of the politicization of what he calls primordial linkages (e.g., those based on race, language, customs, religion, regional identities) that are *constructed as a given* by a social group. These primordial linkages, however, do not emerge as a consequence of personal affection, practical necessity, common interest, or pre-assumed

obligations; they emerge as a result of the emphasis *attributed* to the linkages themselves (Briones 1998, 57). Primordial arguments assume that ethnic identities are fixed and immutable and, therefore not susceptible to the influence of the state (Yashar 2005, 9; Briones 2005, 58). As Geertz has suggested, however, “dormant” ethnic loyalties can re-emerge as politically salient as states try to “domesticate” them (Briones 2005, 60).

According to this approach, once the many elements that constitute an ethnic identity are taken as a given by a specific group, collective and individual subjectivities can be set in motion and activated for political purposes. This approach is problematic because it does not address why certain identities are formed on the basis of some “primordial elements,” but not others, nor does it address how these other identities are politicized. Critics have questioned the primordialist assumption that ethnic ties, as opposed to other forms of social relations, are naturally depoliticised. For them, this inevitably reduces ethnic conflict to events divorced from their historical context (Briones 1998; 2005). Finally, primordialism has also been criticized for its inability to address the changing nature of ethnic identities and the role of these changed identities in the emergence of indigenous mobilization (Yashar 1998).

Formalism, or competition theories, has paid more attention to the historical context in which ethnic mobilization takes place (Barth 1969). According to this approach, groups experiencing a decline in economic disadvantage are more likely to mobilize to express ethnic claims. In other words, *declining inequality* promotes ethnic conflict (Olzak 2004). Barth (1969), for example, has suggested that declining inequality *and intergroup contact* lead to competitive exclusion and conflict. Challenging primordialism, Barth has argued that ethnic groups should not be seen as social units separated by distinctive cultural marks assumed to be *essential* for the collective identity of such groups (Roosens 1989). On the contrary, ethnic difference is to be understood as the result of the interaction between groups adopting different identities. Furthermore, this approach has focused on explaining how *competition* over similar political, economic, and social resources creates ethnic conflict. For example, by offering new political advantages and access to some of those resources, democracy can provide incentives for ethnic groups to mobilize. Formalist approaches, such as Barth’s, have been challenged on three grounds. First, they emphasize contact among different ethnic groups in society without taking into

consideration the different degrees of power that different groups have. In other words, they tend to ignore how an “us” *versus* “them” has been defined in the first place. Second, the assumption that ethnic identity is preferred over others ignores that by themselves such identities cannot explain the emergence of ethnic conflict. In short, ethnicity is always embedded in specific historical contexts. Finally, formalist approaches give too much credit to subjective factors of ethnic *belonging* without addressing the connection between ethnic identities and the material conditions under which they reproduce (Briones 1998, 72).

Scholars using instrumentalist or rational choice approaches see ethnicity as an instrument for social competition (Hechter 1987; Roosens 1989; Fearon and Laitin 1996). In this view, ethnicity is a purely contingent, circumstantial factor in social mobilization (Briones 1998, 79). Thus, economic and political goals are central to understand *why* collective action takes place. In this context, ethnic groups are considered interest groups with their own set of fixed preferences, goals, intentions and utility-maximizing behaviours (Briones 1998, 80; Yashar 2005, 11). Moreover, ethnic conflict is the result of a calculated effort to maximize goals for a given group. Rather than questioning how the boundaries between ethnic groups are formed, a question raised by formalists for example, instrumentalists are interested in knowing when and why individuals decide to activate political demands along ethnic lines, focusing on the costs and benefits attached to ethnic mobilization (Yashar 2005, 12). Authors working within this paradigm tend to agree that ethnic mobilization often occurs when the costs for mobilizing decrease in relation to the perceived rewards. Instrumentalist approaches, however, are not able to account for the reasons why some groups use ethnicity as a form of group competition while others decide not to compete as “ethnic subjects” but do so as “individuals”, or why ethnicity takes precedence over other forms of identity. Critics have suggested that this approach de-contextualizes the role of ethnicity in indigenous movements thus ignoring how ethnic relations have been formed historically and how they change over time (Briones 1998, 85; Yashar 2005, 12). Furthermore, critics have pointed to the limitations of an approach that conceives of ethnicity mainly as an effect produced by states or ruling elites that are seen as the exclusive “managers” of the ethnic question. The question to ask, according to these critics, is whether such processes of cultural production are

exclusively dependent on state policies or whether they respond to broader processes of collective identity formation in an ongoing process of negotiation, accommodation, and conflict between ethnic movements and other institutions that have the potential to reproduce questions of otherness and social difference (Briones 1998, 96).

A fourth approach to ethnic mobilization privileges structural conditions of poverty and inequality. Given indigenous peoples' experiences of marginalization, racial discrimination, poverty and economic exploitation, the focus on material conditions to understand indigenous activism is important. Poverty amongst indigenous peoples has been a persistent reality since colonialism, particularly in the case of Latin America (Eversole, McNeish, and Cimadamore 2005). These material conditions of poverty, scholars insist, have historically affected indigenous peoples and they inform indigenous activism and conflict (Yashar 2005, 14). Some studies, for example, have shown that the combination of social inequality along racial lines and high levels of ethnic solidarity are a major cause of ethnic conflict (Hechter 1975, cited by Olzak 2004). Other studies have stressed the correlation between indigenous mobilization and/or ethnic fragmentation within nation-states and the insertion of that society into world capitalism (Young 1986, cited by Olzak). In short, poverty and inequality are indeed important aspects in the everyday life of many indigenous peoples today. However, these material conditions alone cannot explain the characteristics of indigenous activism or even its emergence (Yashar 2005).

Each one of the four approaches discussed above offers a lens into indigenous collective action. Each one privileges some aspects of ethnic mobilization based on certain assumptions about identity-formation, individual political behaviour, or society in general. By themselves, these approaches are limited in their ability to explain *why* contemporary indigenous activism takes specific forms and *how* new collective identities are formed. As Yashar has argued, such views on indigenous identity and political organization "are too static and, as such, have a difficult time explaining change over time and variation within and among cases" (2005, 18). Melucci's emphasis on collective identity formation has served to rescue a dimension of social activism that has been otherwise ignored in the study of politics. My insistence on seeing collective identities as

the product of ongoing processes of negotiation, accommodation, and resistance between indigenous activists and states offers a more dynamic approach to indigenous politics.

2.6 Conclusion

My understanding of neoliberal multiculturalism as a form of governing indigenous peoples and political subjectivities provides a framework for understanding indigenous activism at the local level in contexts where the indigenous are a minority. To study the prospects of such minority groups materializing their aspirations for a better life in the face of neoliberal citizenship regimes, we need a critical, interdisciplinary framework that renders state formation, citizenship, and collective action open to transformation when, as Rancière (1990) puts it, those who are “part” of society but have been given “no part” in it rise up and speak. For Rancière, that is the moment when politics happens.

This chapter opened with a brief historical overview of the ways in which Latin American states have regulated indigenous peoples through specific forms of citizenship regimes. Today, it argued, indigenous peoples are regulated through a neoliberal citizenship regime. The main objective of this chapter was to propose an interdisciplinary approach that emphasizes the constitutive role of culture and that privileges the local as a site of dynamic indigenous politics. This approach allows us to connect localized forms of collective actions to broader processes of state formation and citizenship regimes, and to explore how indigenous identities and states, for example, depend on each other in what Susan Olzak calls, “a delicate balance of self-determination, political claims making, and contests over power, authority, and legitimacy” (2004, 667).

In the following chapters I turn to the case of the Mapuche of Neuquen to privilege an instance of indigenous politics that has remained understudied. I show that although Mapuche activism around territorial autonomy is an instance of localized collective action by an indigenous minority, it is nevertheless part of a more generalized struggle to

re-define the boundaries of citizenship under neoliberal multiculturalism (Assies, van der Haar and Hoekema 2000; Garcia 2005; Yashar 2005; Palleares 2007). Chapter 3 sets the context by turning specifically to a historical overview of the relation of indigenous peoples and the Argentinean state.

Chapter 3

3 Of Hopes and Shadows. Indigenous peoples and the State in Argentina (1810-2012)

“There are also groups committed to glorifying our process of national consolidation, who raise fine monuments to The Indian, forgetting that real Indians actually exist, not in the pages of a history book but in grim reality. To say that the natives are the real owners of the land seems to be a platitude that no one disputes, but no one seems to notice that this statement is true, and the aborigines’ territories are in fact regarded as zones freely available for colonization” (Bartolomé 1972, 249).

Modern state formation in Argentina cannot be understood without acknowledging the construction of its Others as those abject subjects that stand in the shadows of pre-conceived ideas of nationhood and its material progress. This construction, I argue, is possible with the articulation of specific forms of citizenship. The construction of national subjectivities often entails that, while dominant groups enjoy the benefits of modern citizenship such as civil, political and social rights, those who are marginalized often must struggle to assert their political spaces and make their collective voices heard. As a result, claiming their existence as political beings, generally through collective action, these Others resist conditions of marginality. In order to understand why current Mapuche communities organize and mobilize around demands for self-representation, autonomy, and territory it is essential to understand the forms in which indigenous alterities were often represented in the past, particularly in the discourses of the educated elites as well as in the legal mechanisms in which the modern state frames indigenous peoples. Moreover, these historical representations of indigenous peoples have framed their possibilities for political activism in the past and current indigenous mobilization emerges as a response to them. This chapter highlights the ways in which the

Argentinean state expands and transforms indigenous communities into state subjects. Starting with dominant discourses on indigenous peoples articulated in the early nineteenth century, the chapter traces the expansion of state presence in formerly recognized indigenous territories and the subsequent legal frameworks established to deal with Argentina's indigenous population.¹⁵

The political organization and mobilization of contemporary Mapuche communities around territorial autonomy are part of long and often contradictory histories of the making of nation, state, and citizens in Argentina. The so-called Indian Question in Argentina does not seem to have the historical centrality it has in debates over nationality and modernity in other corners of Latin America. However, the cultural, economic and political legacies of colonialism in the region as well as the presence of indigenous communities throughout the territories of today's Argentina cannot be ignored. It is often assumed that by the end of the nineteenth century, the Indian Question in was solved in that country. As the rest of this chapter shows, by the mid-twentieth century, the few remaining concerns related to the Indian Question were considered solved.

The so-called Indian Question in Argentina rarely presents itself as such. In the early 1930s, Antonio Gramsci commenting on Argentina argued that it was "the most European and Latin country in America" (Gramsci 1975, 12). This observation made by Gramsci but dominant in society at large in Argentina served to justify and shape the notion of invisibility of indigenous peoples. When questions related to an indigenous group emerged, they were addressed as a set of social or political problems that demanded the implementation of state policies to solve them. The ways in which these policies emerged however, depended on specific historical circumstances, hegemonic forms of conceiving the role of the state, and the relationship between the state and its citizens. For these reasons, the ways in which states approach these socio-political

¹⁵ A detailed historical account of the ways in which indigenous communities have responded to the expansion of state control over their territories exceeds the objectives of this chapter as well as the space available to do justice to this topic. Moreover, such type of historical studies that privilege local accounts of indigenous resistance in modern Argentina, are scant. Notable exceptions are the works by Curruhuinca-Roux (1993) and Walter Delrio (2005).

problems related to indigenous communities necessarily rely on broader economic, socio-political and cultural contexts. Arguably, the characteristics of a state form are given, in great part, by its policies and not necessarily by the group of institutions that represent it. However, state policies are not necessarily the result of autonomous institutions or the direct result of the decision-making process of its agents. As suggested by many, including Gramsci, state policies crystallize processes of political and cultural hegemony of a certain historical period and in a given society. The prevailing attitudes held by economic and political elites towards indigenous populations in Argentina periodically crystallized as a set of legal norms or as the creation of organizations in order to “deal” with the Indian Question. Thus, the language, objectives and the overall effectiveness of such state policies depended on such prevailing attitudes as well as on hegemonic ideologies of nationhood and citizenship.

The characteristics these various periods assumed are not contained by the temporal framework within which we try to encapsulate them. It may well be that certain elements of one historical period permeate other historical moments as political and socio-economic changes can produce interests in promoting some elements over others. However, in order to understand the relationship between indigenous peoples and the state in Argentina one needs to look at the long history of state formation as well as at the making of citizenship and nationhood. In contrast to other countries of the region, Argentina did not openly confront the “Indian problem” as a key component of its consolidation as a modern state. Far from assuming that this “problem” did not exist, however, the power elites articulated different “solutions” to an issue that was hardly recognized as central to the formation of Argentinean citizenship. The small number of indigenous groups self-identifying as such was taken as a sign that the “Indian problem” was either solved in the late nineteenth century with the military campaigns of extermination and occupation of indigenous territory or that the remaining indigenous population would, sooner or later, become part of the Argentinean nation, thus “losing” any distinctive cultural (and political) elements that would keep them on the margins of this historical process.

The Indian Question in Argentina is directly related to the project of modern state formation in the second half of the nineteenth century. This project defined external borders, a strong central bureaucracy, an uncontested national identity and, above all, the monopoly of coercive control in the hands of state institutions over a defined territory and its peoples. As a result, by the end of the nineteenth century the Indian Question was increasingly defined as a matter of internal security and since the remaining autonomous indigenous communities inhabited areas near the borders with neighbouring countries, the matter started to assume geopolitical connotations that led to the military conquest of these territories. Furthermore, this loss of autonomy at the hands of the Argentinean army meant for the indigenous survivors of the military expeditions their forced incorporation in the state as “subordinated ethnic minorities” (Varela and Biset 1993, 66). Immediately after the military expeditions, the indigenous subaltern became increasingly a matter subjected to administration by the central state.

The tragic outcome for indigenous communities living in Northern Patagonia after the military campaigns of 1879-1885 was, however, the result of previous debates that had started to take place earlier in the nineteenth century during the decades marked by the struggles for independence and civil war. Consequently, conflicting views on how to control those spaces under immediate control of indigenous groups at the time of independence from Spain gained prominence as the consolidation of the central state became a priority for the governing elites.

3.1 Roots of the Indian Question, 1810-1880

Before the military campaigns exterminated or decimated the autonomous indigenous communities of Northern Patagonia between 1879 and 1885, these communities were in permanent contact with settler populations in frontier areas and they enjoyed a state of relative autonomy vis-à-vis political authorities. This particularity for indigenous communities in the regions of the Pampas, Patagonia, Great Chaco, and Northwest of what eventually became the new country of Argentina makes it possible to refer to them, following Martínez Sarasola (2005), as “free cultures” that colonial statesmen,

revolutionary leaders and new authorities in government often recognized, explicitly or implicitly.

When the colonial encounter between the natives of Northern Patagonia and the Spanish took place in the sixteenth century, there were three main ethno-linguistic groups: Tehuelches, Poyas, Pehuenches and the Mapuche. The presence of the latter group on the east side of the Andes is still a matter of controversy as some historians have argued that the Mapuche only inhabited in the western areas, in what is today Chilean territory, until the late nineteenth century. However, for the most part historical evidence suggests that their presence on the eastern side of the Andes dates from before the mass movement of Mapuche groups in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Varela and Biset 1993, 69). The adoption of the horse, cow and sheep drastically changed the human topography of the Patagonian landscape, affecting amongst other things, the ways in which natives were incorporated into the colonial systems of economic exchange and more complex forms of organization (Leacock 1982). This new economic context, for example, transformed the socio-political organization of indigenous communities. With time, the livelihood of many of these communities relied less on hunting and gathering and more on commercial exchanges amongst the communities themselves and between some communities and settlers (Gray 1987; Varela and Biset 1993). Thus, a society of hunter-gatherers was transformed into what Varela and Biset (1993) referred to as “horse-riding peasants, cattle owners and merchants” connected more clearly with the economic interests of the new settler societies. These new patterns of commercial exchange alongside the changing relations between indigenous communities and settler societies also resulted, in the case of Patagonia, in mass migration across the Andes. The mass movement of Mapuche groups or “partialities,” as the Mapuche name the different groups inhabiting Patagonia, from the west (present-day Chile) to the east (present-day Argentina) of the Andes during the eighteenth century also meant, on the one hand the initial emergence of a culturally mixed indigenous population but, on the other, a process of homogenization which led to the adoption of Mapudungun as lingua franca (Varela and Biset 1993). The early nineteenth century witnessed as a result of these changes the emergence of partialities with strong leaders with control over independent territories not subordinated to colonial authorities.

Besides the regular contact that occurred between colonial societies and indigenous partialities in the frontier areas, the rest of the territory was defended against any attempts at Spanish intrusion – Crown officials or missionaries -, a situation that persisted for many decades after independence. Needless to say, the influence of European settlements and their economies deeply affected native communities as well as the interaction between the two groups. The resistance of native partialities on both sides of the Andes forced the Spanish crown to hold Parleys with indigenous leaders in which treaties were signed and promises on both sides were made. While the Crown generally recognized the independence of Mapuche territory, as the parliament of Quilín did in 1641, these treaties were usually violated by both sides but a de facto recognition of native autonomy on one side and resistance to missionaries and other Crown officials on the other persisted. Despite these shortcomings, the celebration of Parleys between natives and colonial administrators provided a stable framework of negotiations under which commercial interests could continue operating in those regions of Patagonia.

As mentioned earlier, the new economic reality of the eighteenth century transformed important aspects of the socio-political organization of native communities. Community leaders attained more prestige and power and started to control larger territories, commerce routes and thousands of cattle, and this led to the emergence of new hierarchies within indigenous communities that had not been very common before (Varela and Biset 1993, 86). Thus, the nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of *cacicatos* (chiefdoms) as a new form of Mapuche political organization. This reinforcement of indigenous leadership was the result of internal as well as external factors. An example of the latter was the insistence of Europeans on reinforcing the authority of leaders by providing them with gifts which led to a more centralized form of government authority that was preferred by colonial administrations over decentralized ones which would be more difficult to dominate (Varela and Biset 1993). Internally, these transformations in leadership responded to the need to centralize decision-making in light of the new commercial exchanges that were taking place.

The debates on the place of indigenous communities in what later would become Argentina started to take place as a result of the participation of indigenous leaders in the

revolutionary process. The collaboration between these indigenous and revolutionary leaders was acknowledged when the first *criollo* (American-born) government junta of 1810 granted indigenous military officials the formal recognition by incorporating them into the ranks of the emerging revolutionary armies.¹⁶ In a context of revolution and internal war, republican ideas became dominant and started to be adopted by a new generation of the political elite to organize a crumbling society, although the idea of an emerging Argentinean nation did not yet exist.¹⁷ Furthermore, the goal of the emerging revolutionary governments to incorporate indigenous communities into the revolutionary process was directed exclusively at those groups that were already incorporated or subjugated. This excluded, for example, the remaining indigenous communities in the Chaco region, the southern Pampas, and Patagonia. Given the degree of autonomy these regions had enjoyed under the colonial administration, they were considered a menace (Martinez Sarasola 2005). However, during the decades of independence and civil war the frontier with the Indians was considered real, as it was often assumed and accepted that indigenous communities in those areas free of colonial control were the owners of the territories they inhabited. Indeed, this was even the view of independence leader José de San Martín (Martinez Sarasola 2005).

¹⁶ The decades following the instauration of the first *criollo* junta in 1810 saw attempts to shake off the political links with the Spanish crown, resulting in a period of great instability. The year of 1810 also inaugurated the attempt by Buenos Aires, and its commercial elites, to expand their influence across the territories that once formed part of the Rio de la Plata Viceroyalty since 1776. The resistance encountered in the interior of this territory came not only from local elites – who had good economic reasons to maintain the formal relations with the Spanish Empire and the current commercial routes established during the Viceroyalty years throughout the region - but also from native communities. In practice, a “frontier” between colonial settlers and indigenous populations existed.

¹⁷ Many historians agree that the idea of an Argentinean nation was a result of the events that followed the *criollo* revolution which did not consolidate until the late nineteenth century (Chiaramonte 2005; Myers 2005). Despite the impact that May 25 of 1810 has in Argentina’s history as an inaugural moment of nationhood, the events that led to the *criollo* revolution were unanticipated and linked with the Napoleonic invasions of Spain. These circumstances explain to a certain degree why the intentions for independence from the Spanish crown were not among the most considered options at the time. In fact, the United Provinces of the Rio de la Plata did not declare formal independence until 1816. For an insightful debate on the relevance of the events of May as well as the different meaning of “nation” in the political debates during and on that period, see Nun (2005).

Intense fighting between royalists and criollos followed the establishment of the government junta of 1810. On July 9th 1816, representatives of the former Viceroyalty declared the country's formal independence while Crown armies remained a threat until the mid 1820s. Internal divisions amongst the provinces of what later became Argentina and bloody battles persisted on a large scale until 1862. This violent context and the continuing political disunity between those favouring a strong central government controlled by Buenos Aires and those supporting a confederation of provinces is the scenario in which debates over the political place of indigenous populations took place.

During the decades of civil war (1820s-1850s), there were some attempts by the governments of the provinces, particularly Buenos Aires, and by indigenous chiefs to establish the terms under which the territory of each could be kept from being invaded by the other. Nevertheless, the mutual mistrust and constant attempts by the provincial armies to penetrate native territories and the retaliation of indigenous armies convinced the government authorities and indigenous leaders that any attempt to negotiate was set to fail from the start. Moreover, when negotiation attempts failed, the position supporting a policy of extermination" started to gain momentum amongst the elites. Ownership by indigenous communities of the territories they inhabited was not questioned, however, as evidenced by the practice of signing treaties between government authorities and indigenous chiefs. Having said this, the effectiveness of these documents to end the ongoing occupation of indigenous territories was extremely limited. In practice, the existence of treaties between the authorities of an emergent state and indigenous leaders coexisted with a "complex and infinite network of relationships between indigenous communities and the emerging state via multiple institutional expressions of the latter: frontier state officials, governors, special envoys, translators, and commissioners" (Martinez Sarasola 2005, 198). Furthermore, fighting factions of the civil war constantly used indigenous groups for their own political purposes. During this process, however, indigenous peoples attempted to maintain ownership of their land as well as preserve their economic activities and their ways of life. In sum, this period is often characterized by a reigning pragmatism in the face of quickly changing circumstances, where contending factions defended different interests and forged different alliances.

As a result, the ongoing civil conflict affected indigenous communities directly. In this context, native groups were forced to take sides in the wars of independence. Furthermore, changes in the international economic context also had an impact, as farmers in the *Pampas* regions were pushed to expand their lands in order to allow more space for their cattle. In this sense, the insertion of the economic activities of Buenos Aires into the capitalist world system gave a real impetus for the ongoing process of land grabs. In a few decades, this new reality helps to understand why the Indian Question became a political issue for which solutions in the form of more or less draconian policies followed. For indigenous peoples, these pressures made the defence of their lands more urgent. As cattle farmers expanded their land grabs towards the south, natives of Northern Patagonia reacted organizing *malones* (raids) of *estancias* (large estates), located near the frontier. In this context, the first decades of the nineteenth century witnessed the migration of Mapuche groups from the west to the east mentioned above in search of new lands, a process that was accompanied by the establishment of strong leadership with increasing capacity to control vast territories and commercial circuits. This resulted, in turn, in more stable patterns of settlement for Mapuche communities, now strategically located according to the new emerging trading circuits post-independence. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the military occupation of Northern Patagonia and the emerging conflict over international boundaries between the central governments of Argentina and Chile put a stop to the ongoing political and territorial concentration of indigenous leaders and their communities in the region.

1833 was the year in which the *Pampas* region was conquered by military expeditions sent by the central authorities and commanded by Juan Manuel de Rosas (1793-1877). Rosas became governor of Buenos Aires in charge of the federal government in 1829. The military campaign of 1833 was the first event of magnitude that marks the beginning of the “extermination” approach towards indigenous communities in Argentina. Other historical events added to the complexity of this period in regards to indigenous communities: the determination of Buenos Aires to weaken indigenous groups in order to control their territories; the influence of civil war on intra-indigenous affairs; the expansion of white settlements into indigenous territories; and finally, the inter-ethnic “mixing” and rivalry taking place within indigenous communities (Martínez Sarasola

2005). By the mid-1830s, the “Indian question” was at the forefront of Rosas’s policy of territorial expansion to the south of the province of Buenos Aires. Amid Rosas’ expansionary goals, his government was able nonetheless to maintain a policy of alliances with some indigenous leaders, resulting in relatively calm relations between indigenous communities and the authorities of the emerging state (Martinez Sarasola 2005, 213). Despite the modest territorial gains of Rosas’ expedition, this military incursion of 1833 anticipated how the central government would approach the Indian Question during this period.

The fall of Rosas in 1852 inaugurated another short period of civil war that culminated with the instauration of a federal Constitution in 1853. However, the outcome of the civil war was not definitive as the wealthiest and most influential province of the newly formed Argentina, Buenos Aires, would remain outside of the federation for another ten years until it was formally –and as a result of an armed conflict- incorporated into the federation in 1862. 1852-1862 was a decade of open and fruitful debates on the question on how to organize the modern state in Argentina. It was not until the end of the century, however, that the Indian Question became central to these debates.

The fall of Rosas also created an opportunity for a group of intellectuals to participate in the debates over projects of state building.¹⁸ The achievements of a certain degree of social discipline and insipient institutionalization during the Rosas government proved to be the platform from which many of these projects departed. Moreover, the proximity of these voices to the economic and political elites facilitated the transition between ideas and their implementation. Indeed, during this period many projects for constructing a “new nation” emerged, which shared the conviction that certain socio-cultural elements,

¹⁸ This group of intellectuals, self-proclaimed as the “New Generation” in 1837, included historical figures such as Esteban Echeverría, Juan Bautista Alberdi, Bartolomé Mitre, Vicente Fidel López and Marco Avellaneda, among others. Inspired by European Romanticism, this “New Generation” thought possible the conformation of a new alternative project of state and nation construction via a debate that could only take place within an illustrated elite. They argued, for example, for restricted suffrage over the principle of universality, denoting an underlying assumption of limited political citizenship in the emerging nation. For a more detailed discussion on the “New Generation”, see the work of historian Halperín Donghi (2005, 35-41).

like “barbarism,” had to be eliminated from the nation in order to make way for the global forces of progress. European immigrants and foreign capital were seen as the vehicles for these forces of progress, and “barbarism” was regarded as the exact opposite of “civilization” and progress. The content of what barbarism entailed depended on the author presenting the idea but it was generally associated with local and provincial interests that opposed the centralization of state power in Buenos Aires and the establishment of a modern market linked to European interests (Lewis 2002). Barbarism was also associated to ideas of anarchy and disorder (Halperín Donghi 2005, 123).

It was all too evident even back then that the profound belief of educated elites in what the future held for the emerging nation was limited by a complex reality in relation to which even their good intentions would prove futile. Thus, the assumptions on which the belief in a modern, civilized Argentina were built proved to be more “problematic” than initially thought. Modernization efforts were also supported by the necessity of an expansion of areas apt for agriculture and by the consolidation of an export-led model of economic growth. The presence of the “Indian frontier” was perceived as an obstacle to these ends. The export-based model of development based on agricultural production was, in other words, a set of structural conditions and pressures that affected the plans for modernization. From this perspective, the emphasis on civilizing Argentinean society and addressing its “backwardness” is the ideological justification of an incessant demand for agricultural lands by economic elites.

The Constitution of 1853 merits attention because it framed the relationship between indigenous peoples and the modern state in clear ways. The Constitution gave Congress the power to secure borders (where many indigenous peoples lived), to keep peaceful relations with Indians, and to promote their conversion to Catholicism. Armed with this Constitution in the context of the securitization of its international borders, the state assumed a rather paternalistic approach towards indigenous communities. At the same time, however, the state implicitly acknowledged the *de facto* existence of internal borders. This *de facto* recognition of internal borders would later legitimize the state’s use of violence for dealing with “rebel” communities, particularly those inhabiting areas near the border. Furthermore, state-sponsored Catholicism was given prominence over

the existing spiritual practices of indigenous communities. With this constitutional mandate, Christian missions were deployed to convert indigenous peoples to Catholicism. In this context, only some sectors of the liberal elites trusted the inclusion of Indians as Argentinean citizens, and proposed that public education and labour training programs should eventually “civilize” indigenous populations (Halperín Donghi 2005).

The three decades between the fall of Rosas and the inauguration of Julio A. Roca’s first presidency (1880-1886) witnessed the consolidation and modernization of state institutions. In this sense, following Benedict Anderson (1991), the “imagined reality” of the modern Argentinean state became a blueprint for political action during the presidencies of Bartolomé Mitre (1862-1868), Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1868-1874) and Nicolás Avellaneda (1874-1880).¹⁹ Until then, the ideas articulated in the work of liberal intellectuals were impossible to realize between 1853 and 1862 given the separation of Buenos Aires under the Confederation president mostly by Justo Jose de Urquiza (1854-1860).

Echoing class and racial prejudices from colonial times, the dichotomy between “civilization” and “barbarism” soon gave way to the idea that those areas under the autonomous control of indigenous peoples constituted a desert, a harsh and hostile territory that had to be conquered. Consequently, the fate of the inhabitants from these territories, whose very existence was denied by the notion of the desert, was annihilation. The so-called “Conquest of the Desert” was paramount to this idea and the recently institutionalized national army was given the coercive power to attain the goals of the emerging political order. A combination of small-scale military incursions targeting the more combative indigenous groups and a policy of treaties, which did not take into

¹⁹ The presidencies of Mitre, Sarmiento and Avellaneda, in fact, marked the beginning of the attempts to consolidate state institutions based on the principles of modernization and liberalism, which the educated elites strongly embraced since the second half of the nineteenth century. For decades, however, the role of the state was still in dispute: Mitre thought to transform it as “an agent of a (political) faction”; Sarmiento thought of the state as “independent from these factions;” and Avellaneda, saw the state as an arbiter between factions (Halperín Donghi 2005, 115). Despite these disagreements, the new political context since 1862 guaranteed some of the conditions for the institutionalization of state power, particularly after the consolidation of Buenos Aires and its elites over those of the rest of the provinces when Rosas’s government fell.

consideration indigenous traditions, characterized the presidencies of Mitre and Sarmiento.²⁰ The strategy of treaties, however, was considered a temporary and necessary concession and it was only implemented when internal conflict, for example, shifted the militarized pressure of the central government (Martinez Sarasola 2005, 243). Both Mitre and Sarmiento, for example, faced armed opposition to their governments as well as the war against Paraguay in the north. At the same time, however, it was clear to them that the threat perceived by the landed elites coming from indigenous peoples had to come to an end. The six military campaigns by the central government between 1855 and 1872 against Rankulche communities and Kalfucurá's forces were indeed signs of the commitment by central governments to the interests of such elites.

A more encompassing albeit radical approach took place in 1876. During Avellaneda's presidency (1874-1880), his Minister of War, Adolfo Alsina, projected a new policy of slow advancement towards indigenous-controlled territory. The plan consisted of a ditch along the frontier, three and a half yards wide by two yards deep, and a series of outposts and forts placed along 500 miles. Alsina's plan assumed that these indigenous communities also aspired to advancing civilization and for that reason the plan intended to negotiate with indigenous leaders during the construction of the ditch. Such negotiations did not take place, but Alsina remained convinced that his plan was "against the desert to populate it, [and] not against the Indians to destroy them" (quoted by Curruhuinca-Roux 1993, 106). The plan, however, was short-lived and plans of this sort that started with a timid support for assimilating indigenous peoples to the dominating culture soon gave way to the draconian approach that supported extermination. The death of Alsina in December 1877, and his replacement by General Julio Roca embodied the transition from a mostly defensive strategy to a final solution.²¹ In the project he sent to

²⁰ As part of Sarmiento's program of modernization, for example, the national army acquired Remington rifles, adding precision and reach which were to be crucial in the defeat of indigenous communities in the Pampas and Northern Patagonia a few years later (Curruhuinca-Roux 1993, 104).

²¹ In the two decades before the military expeditions to the Pampas and Northern Patagonia, a similar process of military incursions into indigenous territory took place in Northern areas of Argentina, notably the Chaco region in which the coerced incorporation of indigenous population as labour force into the sugar plantations was seen as an instrument of order and pacification (Martinez Sarasola 2005, 272).

Congress seeking approval for his approach to the Indian question, General Roca articulated his position in these terms:

“Even our own decorum as a virile nation forces us to conquer as soon as possible, by reason or force, a bunch of savages that destroy our wealth and prevent us from definitely occupying, in the name of the law of progress and of our own security, the richest and most fertile territories of our Republic” (Julio A. Roca, Message to the National Congress of August 14, 1878; quoted by Curruhuinca-Roux 1992, 123).

3.2 A Final Solution for the Desert (1880-1916)

The initial military offensive of 1879 did not last more than three months amid the attempts to resist by indigenous communities living in territories that previous governments had recognized as their own.²² There was a second period of military campaigns from 1881 to 1885 in which the remaining communities of Patagonia that had previously resisted ended up surrendering to the authorities of the central government. The forced displacement of Mapuche communities took place immediately after the years of the military conquest and ownership of the land was transferred, as *latifundio* (large estates), to a wide range of recipients: members of the military involved in the military campaign; private holders of public bonds who supported the military expedition financially; pioneers who obtained land as the result of auctions of more than five million hectares, kicking off a cycle of speculation in the land market; and immigrants, priests and others with commercial interests. Some remaining parcels of land of very low soil quality were transferred to indigenous communities without a secure regime of land tenure. Since then, claims for land redistribution have become an important part of

²² Between April and May of 1879, the greatest military expedition under the command of General Roca was predisposed to wipeout the “desert” of North Patagonia and its inhabitants and to that end an army of 6,000 men entered the territories under indigenous control.

Mapuche resistance after the loss of their autonomy (Martinez Sarasola 2005, 331). By 1883 an army commander referred to the conquest in a self-congratulatory mode:

“In the territories located in between the Neuquén and Limay rivers, the Andes mountains, and the Nahuel Huapi Lake there is not a single Indian: they have all been pushed westwards [...] South of the Limay river [...] the only thing left of the savages is their Chief Sayhueque, running away, poor, miserable and without any reputation. Only today can it be said that the Nation has its territories wiped out of Indians. Soon enough, the Nation will receive, in its fertile lands, millions of those who want to extract its richness.” (Walther, quoted by Martinez Sarasola 2005, 262)

The military conquest of territories under indigenous control ended, on a large scale, by 1885 after the intensive military campaigns of the national army and the rendition of the Mapuche leaders such as Sayhueque. Thus, the colonial and post-independence periods in which indigenous peoples were viewed as the “Indian menace” came to an end.²³ The last military campaign, of course, did not result in the disappearance of indigenous peoples in Argentina but rather it entrenched the view in the dominant political and socio-cultural imagination that “Indians” had become a “thing of the past.” The invisibility of indigenous peoples in public policies and discourses thus began with the consolidation of the modern state, and it can be argued that the mass killing of indigenous peoples by the national army “constituted” the modern state in Argentina (Maybury-Lewis 2001).

This period also consolidated the officially held view that the Indian question was increasingly a matter of national security. For the governing elite, in the context of institutional modernisation, the question of international borders became a priority. Furthermore, the territories under indigenous control were often located in areas considered parts of the frontiers with neighbouring countries, a situation that made the

²³ The military conquest of Northern Patagonia left hundreds of indigenous peoples dead. In addition to the massacre, the National Army took many indigenous survivors as prisoners. According to official sources, the period of 1878-1879 alone left near 13,000 Indian prisoners in the hands of the central government (Mases 2002, 50). That number increased after the final military incursions of 1885.

governing elites connect their need to consolidate international borders with the Indian question. The finalization of military campaigns and the extermination of most indigenous communities created conditions for the successive central governments to think about what to do with the “remaining” indigenous populations. A number of colonization policies, for instance, emerged with the goal of moving some indigenous communities to government-owned lands. In turn, these “reductions of Indians” were seen as a vehicle to bring them to “civilized life.” This could be attained, governments argued, if indigenous communities were kept in areas near international borders, in close proximity to military settlements to eventually overcome indigenous ways of living (Martinez Sarasola 2005, 348). In practice, this meant that indigenous communities were re-located to areas far from their previous location, generally on land of poor quality for the continuation of subsistence practices. With time, these relocations also meant the end of indigenous peoples as owners of their own land and their transformation into a waged labour force. Moreover, in this context the military campaigns to Northern Patagonia are endlessly justified in geopolitical terms by public officials, the military and mainstream historians, and to this day it is not uncommon for many in Argentina to regard Roca as the president who “secured” the territories of Patagonia against the expansionist ambitions of Chile.

The geopolitical thinking of a consolidated national army that regarded itself as the moral expression of modern Argentina and the insertion of the country into the world capitalist system via an agro-exporting model, contextualized the mass-killings of indigenous peoples in the late nineteenth century. No one is more appropriate than General Roca himself to articulate the army’s goal:

“[This military campaign] arms itself for something greater and righteous; to combat for the security and enlargement of the Fatherland, for the life and fortune of millions of Argentineans and even for the redemption of those savages who for many years acting under their own instincts have represented a burden to the richness and welfare of the Republic.” (Walther, cited by Martinez Sarasola 2005, 474)

As Halperin Donghi (2005) suggests, by the late nineteenth century, Argentina had a powerful central state that started to become a crucial actor in the political life of the country. This State, or at least the idea of it, that began in Buenos Aires was increasingly capable of reaching almost every corner of the country through its transportation infrastructure (e.g., train system), its market (e.g., foreign capital), its mechanisms of social engineering (e.g., public schools), as well as other institutions and their officials. Still following Halperin Donghi, this “exceptional” condition of the modern state in Argentina meant that that what started as a project on paper of educated elites translated into a reality, as the “body of the nation” that took the form of a centralized State.

General Roca, under whose command the mass killing of indigenous peoples had taken place, became president of Argentina in 1880. At this point the state was in possession of a considerable amount of land for settlement plans and for the expansion of the agricultural frontier. The “arrival” of the national state to its recently conquered territory was further consolidated with the expansion of a railway network which connected remote areas of the country to Buenos Aires, from where raw products were sent to European markets (Lewis 2002). As a result of the territorial conquest and appropriation of lands from indigenous peoples, the modern state faced the task of bringing such territories under its administration and control. Administratively, these territories were divided into new provinces or national territories depending on the level of political autonomy granted to them. In 1884, a federal law created the following National Territories under the direct jurisdiction of the central government: La Pampa; Neuquén; Río Negro; Chubut; Santa Cruz; and Tierra del Fuego in the South; and Misiones, Formosa, and Chaco in the North. One commonality is that, for the most part, indigenous communities inhabited these territories until the National Army removed their effective control over those areas. Economically, these territories were now part of the ongoing transformation of economic activities taking place in the late nineteenth century, including the proletarianization of labour and the transformation of regional economies along the lines of the economic model dictated by Buenos Aires and favoured by regional elites. Finally, the social landscape of these areas was transformed with the arrival of settlers who, for the most part, showed the same disregard towards the remaining indigenous populations than those who came before them had.

By 1885, the central government implemented the first public auction of land. Many reasons explain the speed with which the government decided to put these lands on the market, among them the need to cover the cost of the military expedition. However, the dominant vision in government circles remained committed to the expansion of the agricultural frontier, the consolidation of the central government and the promotion of European immigration. New public auctions took place in the early twentieth century (1904-1905) although most of the auctioned land – nearly ninety-five percent – was never effectively occupied. The need for currency seemed to be so high that the government even considered selling some of the land in Europe. The case of the Neuquén territory is paradigmatic, considering that this is where the last resistance to Roca's military campaigns had taken place. The extension of the railway system into Neuquén's territory in 1902 facilitated the process of colonization, promoted immediately after the military campaigns were over. Since the end of the nineteenth century, at least seventy-five percent of this territory has remained "available" to the government as public land. However, despite provisions to give some remaining indigenous families ownership of parts of the land they inhabited before the military campaigns, these lands were only given in very small quantities to selected chiefs with precarious titles of possession. This situation led some communities to rebel against the government forces, giving the army new reasons to eliminate the "Indian threat" by the use of force (Curruhuinca-Roux 1993).²⁴

²⁴ The fate of indigenous communities in the Northern region of Chaco was no different. After seven military expeditions between 1870 and 1883, the resisting communities were finally pushed towards the Northern part of Chaco region (today's province of Formosa). By 1884, however, the region was subdivided into the National Territories of Chaco and Formosa that later become provinces. Indigenous labour was forced into the sugar plantations as the land they inhabited was distributed among new settlers. The final military expedition in the region took place in 1899, ending the relative autonomy of the Qom and Mocovi communities. In Southern Patagonia, it took settlers almost twenty years to exterminate Ona and Yamana communities (Martinez Sarasola 2005, 287). In Northern parts of Argentina, such as the Puna region, a process of *mestizaje* had taken place for centuries. However, the remaining communities that struggled to keep the ownership of their land at the end of the 19th century saw their efforts coming to an end when provincial governments sent military expeditions to suppress them. In areas where former Catholic Jesuit missions were located, Guaraní communities witnessed the arrival of settlers that in the process of land acquisition pushed their members to become cheap labour in plantations and even soldiers in the army (Martinez Sarasola 2005).

The military conquest of Northern Patagonia meant that a vast amount of land was now available for the expansion of the farming interests of cattle ranchers who desperately sought a way to increase their production of beef and wool for European markets. With the institutional support of the state, principally through its coercive forces, commercial interests were able to find in these lands the conditions for expansion. This process led to a model of “territorial expansion without settlement” in the region of Patagonia and its characteristic *latifundios* (large estates with extensive farming) (Barbieri 1993, 130). As mentioned before, the immediate transfer from public control to private hands, however, took place according to mechanisms established before the military campaigns. First, the central government transferred lands to those who financed the military expeditions as well as those members of the military – according to their rank – who participated in them. Second, parts of the territories were sold, usually through public auctions, in order to cover the emerging costs necessary for the administration of these territories and military defence. And finally, the government kept parts of the territory in order to establish towns either directly or through third parties (Barbieri 1993). Amid these government approaches to the newly conquered territories, the lack of clear settlement and urbanization policies and official mechanisms used to assimilate indigenous survivors of the military conquest left indigenous communities of Northern Patagonia to their own devices with few possibilities for sustaining a decent livelihood.

The central authorities in Buenos Aires also needed to establish the political and administrative control over the territories newly conquered. To that end, the government established in Northern Patagonia the legal figure of National Territories which lasted until the mid-1950s when they became provinces with their own political autonomy and political rights for their inhabitants (Barbieri 1993; Briones and Delrio 2009). One of the first challenges assumed by the political authorities of the Territories – generally belonging to the members of the military - related to the assimilation of the population under their control and the integration of the territory into the national economy. For example, by 1895 62 percent of the population of the national territory of Neuquén was foreign-born – the majority were from Chile and only 1% were Europeans (Barbieri 1993b). In this context, land ownership was seen as the main instrument to make the scant, highly mobile and dispersed population more stable. Such high mobility of the

population persisted for much of the period until the territory became a province in 1955. Even by the 1970s, for instance, at least 50% of the land in Neuquén was publicly owned (Favaro and Morinelli 1993).

Military control over territories such as Neuquén did not alter by much the socio-economic organization of the population inhabiting these areas. For example, it would not be until the 1940s that the commercial dependency on Chile would come to an end when structural changes in the economy were implemented on both sides of the border facilitating the complete integration of Neuquén into the national market. These changes affected the area so profoundly that their social ramifications persist today in the relative peripheral location of the local economies. Small-scale producers were the most affected as their marginal participation in the local economy as well as their dependency on other commercial interests attests (Barbieri 1993b).

The expansion of state control over the conquered territories was accomplished administratively, economically, and socially. As mentioned above, military incursions into indigenous territories in Northern Patagonia also produced survivors. Thus, from that moment, there was a systematic attempt by state institutions to deal with the remaining indigenous groups. The efforts included further military campaigns to curtail all resistance, prison terms, especially for those involved in the combat as an instrument of negotiation, confinement in agricultural “colonies” where Indians would “learn” to work productively. In addition, they forced the transfer of children, pushed women and the elderly to end up as domestic servants in Buenos Aires, and forced people into “new ways of life”, including the national navy or sugar plantations in the North. These deliberate efforts to break indigenous communities apart led to the disintegration of families and further exposure to epidemics (Martinez Sarasola 2005, 267; Curruhuinca-Roux 1993, 161). The brutality of these practices was such that it was even denounced by members of the elite in the local newspaper:

“This was the spectacle: once a carriage arrived in that human market [in Buenos Aires] all those who cried about their captivity shivered in fright [...] All Indians would crowd trying to defend each other. Some covered

their faces, others looked resigned to the ground, a mother strongly held her baby against her chest, a father stepped up to defend his family from the advances of civilization, and all, terrorised by that refined cruelty, that themselves did not conceive in their savage spirit, ceased finally to ask for mercy from those who were not even moved and started asking their god for the salvation of their children” (“El Nacional”, Buenos Aires, March 20th 1885, quoted by Curruhuinca-Roux 1995, 188).

3.3 The “Indian Question” as “Social Question” (1916 – 1983)

Roca’s strategy of war opened up lands and nearly annihilated the indigenous population in those areas where considerable indigenous autonomy existed. Once the military campaigns finished, this strategy was replaced with new programmes aimed at demarcating public lands, the encouragement of European immigration and the design of new forms of control over remaining indigenous communities and the rural poor.²⁵ Agrarian and military “colonies”, for example, were part of the government’s attempts to exercise its tutelage over populations deemed as needing this form of control and who were perceived as needing a transformation of their systems of production and

²⁵ The creation of a *Patronato Nacional de Indios* (National Indian Trust) was proposed in 1904, during General Roca’s second presidency (1898-1904). The paternalist language of this project, justified as being in “defence” of Indians, was mixed with provisions for a gradual “incorporation” of indigenous communities into the nation (Martinez Sarasola 2005). Other provisions included: the creation of an elementary school for both men and women in which the latter would learn “*trabajos manuales*” (manual labour) as well as “*canto escolar*” (school singing); the imposition of Catholicism by “Argentinean priests” who would also convince Indians to go to school and learn the “national language”; and the delimitation of land plots given to settlers that would teach Indians, in a “practical and exemplary” fashion, to operate farming machinery and tools and the “appropriate crops” for the colonies. The project also included the possibility of transferring some land to indigenous communities in order to form a “*colonia de indígenas*” (an indigenous colony) that would be named after its geographical location when possible – otherwise the name of the colony was to follow a “national historical event” of “some national hero” (Bialet-Massé, quoted by Martinez Sarasola 2005, 352). Although this project was never implemented, it became a future point of reference for the further development of policies of the assimilation of indigenous peoples into mainstream society (Martinez Sarasola 2005, 352).

subsistence. By the end of the century, the idea of a homogenous Argentina nation was consolidated. In order to facilitate this consolidation, the state – although not without resistance – put into practice institutional mechanisms, including public education, mandatory military conscription and the obligation to vote (Sábato 2005, 165).²⁶

In terms of the “Indian Question”, the central government made only timid attempts to address it for most of the twentieth century. Furthermore, the state often assumed a somewhat paternalistic role considering it to be its duty to restore some land to remaining indigenous communities identified by the state as such. From a vision that considered the Indian as “lazy” or “unproductive”, the early decades of the century witnessed positions that consecrated indigenous peoples as workers, considering them “apt, docile and affordable” (Mases 2002, 182). The aim of incorporating indigenous communities into Argentinean society within a general framework of national society marks the institutional development of the relationship between state and indigenous peoples in the early decades of the twentieth century. In the words of Martínez Sarasola, “reduction, protection and instruction are part of the euphemistic trilogy on which the ideological framework of the policies implemented in this epoch seem to rest. Reduction meant, in practice confinement, separation, and segregation. Protection implied that indigenous peoples did not possess the conditions to act by themselves. Instruction meant isolation, taking away ancestral cultural practices” (2005, 353). It was not until the rise of Peronism in the 1940s, however, that the status of indigenous peoples as rural workers acquired some degree of centrality in the discourse on nationhood although Peronism was characterized by a lack of clear policies aimed at indigenous peoples.

Years after the violent extermination of indigenous communities, the Indian Question was reframed, increasingly becoming part of the “social question” that marked national policies during the first decades of the twentieth century. In 1904, under the second administration of president Roca, the Ministry of Interior mandated Juan Bialet Massé, a

²⁶ It is important to emphasize, as Hilda Sábato does, that this process was charged with permanent contradictions, internal debates among elite groups and constant confrontation from social groups which suggest that the process of creating a nation cannot be understood monolithically and as one imposed from the top down without contestation.

recognized jurist at the time, to prepare a report on the state of the working classes in the rural areas of the country. Biale Massé published his report three months later. In it, the author offered a deeply concerned view of the social conditions workers faced and of the abuses committed towards rural workers by those running regional industries, including sugar plantations, mining and timber activities (Biale Massé 1904). In describing the social conditions of workers in the Chaco region, for example, Biale Massé prepared a chapter on the indigenous communities living there. This document did not only denounce the poor social conditions and exploitation of Indians but it also contained some of the liberal ideas often found among the ruling elites of the time. Essentially, for Biale Massé, the solution to those conditions was to be found in the incorporation of indigenous communities into the “civilized life” presumably enjoyed by the rest of the nation. Furthermore, the author saw in public education and the learning of Spanish the main vehicles for change, assuming that indigenous communities needed to be incorporated into the Argentinean nation through means similar to those applied to new immigrants.

Biale Massé’s report also had the merit of bringing to the attention of the Buenos Aires elites the harsh conditions of labour in the rest of the country. It also made evident the exploitation and violent treatment of Indians because of their racial condition, cultural practices and religious beliefs. Most importantly, the report voiced the demands of indigenous leaders for their own land. The conclusion of the report highlighted the fact that the ongoing exploitation of rural populations was in large part due to the lack of “instruction” of Indians. Thus, the assumption that at the root of the dire condition of Indians were elements missing from indigenous cultures was reinforced. This view also ignored the fact that the exploitation of Indians and cheap labour were not isolated cases of abuse but rather, they were part of a systemic attempt to build regional economies at their expense in response to the main economic direction taken by the central government.

It is difficult to estimate the impact that Biale Masse’s report had on the central government. The conquest of new territories previously under indigenous control and the continuing presence of indigenous populations, however, ushered in a new historical

period in the relationship between the state and indigenous peoples in Argentina. While there were sporadic attempts by indigenous communities to recover what once belonged to them, the balance of forces had shifted enormously and the state was able to establish the framework of reference for most matters related to indigenous populations. The first decades of the century witnessed attempts to implement policies aimed at assimilating indigenous populations but those were largely ineffective to address indigenous claims. The words of President Figueroa Alcorta, in 1908, illustrate the main approach towards the “Indian Question” that characterized the relationship between state and indigenous peoples for decades:

“[This government’s approach is to] establish a relationship with the Indians, to try to attract them and offer them the protection of the national government in order to facilitate their welfare through their labour. This plan has showed some results; more than 500 Indians have surrendered, and we should expect that the remaining majority will follow their example once civil authorities can start protecting them against any possible exploitation and provide them with land and tools for farming [...]

We can expect that if this is done with justice the problem of Chaco will be solved because it is well known that the majority of Indians lack the willingness to work.

As far as those communities resisting assimilation, they will have to be conquered by force because the Republic needs to eliminate these vestiges of barbarianism that make the two richest territories of the Nation [Chaco and Patagonia], dangerous and impossible to inhabit” (Scunio, quoted by Martinez Sarasola 2005, 304-305).

President Yrigoyen (1916-1922), for example, proposed a “cultural reparation” for indigenous peoples and legislation aimed at protecting their working rights, especially of those in the North of the country where news of their denigrating treatment was

becoming more frequent (Martinez Sarasola 2005, 360). This emphasis on the working conditions and welfare of previously marginalized populations anticipated the political discourse of Peronism (1946-1955). However, the official defense of indigenous communities was timid and it took place within a framework of effective segregation from mainstream society and increasing surveillance of indigenous communities by the police and the army. In 1939, for instance, a project proposed the creation of a National Commission for the Protection of Indians and Colonies. Some of the most relevant dispositions of this project were: the establishment of a census that included indigenous populations; the establishment of a museum to showcase the “art and culture” of Indians that “lived or live in our country;” the distribution of land among indigenous families that “decide to be incorporated into our civilization;” the protection and defense of Indians in general; the supervision of working conditions given that their “incomprehension” made them targets for abuse; and the “stimulation of working habits” through the school system and workshops for “regional adaptation” (Consejo Agrario Nacional, quoted by Martinez Sarasola 2005, 363).

3.3.1 Assimilating Citizens: the impact of *Peronismo*

Under the presidency of Juan D. Perón (1945-1955), the Argentinean state assumed a more active role in the configuration of the worker, generally in the formal sector of the economy, as a main subject of social rights (Grassi 2003, 26). Furthermore, the interventions of the Peronist state were directed towards the national incorporation of the interior, represented by *peones* (rural workers) either working in large estates or migrating to urban spaces to become part of the ascending industrial labour force. The creation of the *Consejo Agrario Nacional* (National Agrarian Council) consolidated the transition from a politics of indigenous segregation towards one of assimilation under Peronism, while the creation of this council established land redistribution for “Argentinean Indians” as an objective, existing forms of paternalism prevailed. By 1943, the government still insisted that indigenous peoples could be incorporated into the

“civilized life of the nation” via elementary education and Catholicism (Martinez Sarasola 2005, 372). Moreover, the incorporation of the council under the umbrella of the Secretary of Labour in 1945 consolidated the “Indian Question” as the “Social Question” under Perón’s populism. Thus the ascension of Perón to the presidency of Argentina in 1946 meant not only the irruption of working-class culture into the political system of the country but it entailed the first attempts to consolidate a corporatist version of the welfare state that was being consolidated in core capitalist countries in the post-war period. In terms of nationhood, the official discourse made visible, for the first time in Argentina’s history, the indigenous roots of the population: the irruption of the “*cabecitas negras*” (literally, “little black heads”) as an expression of the people marked the symbolic beginning of the commitment to the social justice goals of populist politics.²⁷ Indigenous politics under Perón took place under two conditions that informed the boundaries of social change. First, corporativism was seen as the main vehicle for social change. And, second, the prevalence of a strong nationalist rhetoric made it difficult to eliminate the prevailing paternalism, particularly towards indigenous peoples. The combination of corporatism and a strong nationalist discourse proved to be an effective formula to secure social order.

Two main legal frameworks sustained the efforts of the Peronist state to create a space in which both the organized working class and other subaltern sectors, such as indigenous peoples, could be integrated into the notion of nationhood. First, the short-lived Constitution of 1949 eliminated all reference to “indigenous peoples” in an attempt to eliminate any mention of racial distinctions among a population that was seen, in the nationalist discourse of Peronism, as simply “Argentinean.” References to the conversion

²⁷ In other areas of the continent, the first half of the twentieth century also witnesses populist regimes giving central importance to the discourse and ideology of *mestizaje*, according to which the mixing of indigenous and European peoples was sought to have created a new American “race.” In Mexico and Peru, the mestizo race was seen as an expression of modernity. Indians, on the other hand, represented the past and became a symbol of underdevelopment. In practice, however, *mestizaje* was often used as a way to glorify the Indian element of the population as something of the past and populist regimes marginalized contemporary Indian claims. Argentina, however, is one of the exceptions because the notion of *mestizaje* was never significant in the discourse of modern nationhood. The implicit recognition of a mixed or indigenous race or population was contained in the idea of *cabecitas negras* but Peronism did not go further in challenging the powerful ideology that viewed Argentina as a nation of (European) immigrants.

of Indians to Catholicism included in the 1853 Constitution were also eliminated (Martinez Sarasola 2005, 374). Furthermore, in 1949 the National Congress passed a law regulating indigenous labour, effectively framing the “Indian Question” in terms of labour rights and consolidating the expansion of social rights as citizenship rights.

Second, the *Dirección de Protección al Aborigen* (Department of Aboriginal Protection) was created in 1943 under the military government (1943-1946) of which Perón was part as Secretary of Labour and Social Welfare. The Department of Aboriginal Protection was placed under his jurisdiction. Furthermore, the existing *Comisión Honoraria de Reducciones de Indios* (Honorary Commission of Indian Reservations) created in 1916 was replaced by the Department of Aboriginal Protection and also placed under Perón’s leadership. As President, Perón further centralized, under the National Department of Migrations, other agencies in charge of indigenous as well as migration issues. In 1953, for example, Perón created the *Comisión de Rehabilitación* (Restitution Commission) with the stated goal of offering some form of land redistribution to the benefit of indigenous communities in the northern province of Jujuy (Martinez Sarasola 2005, 378). However, other studies suggest that these types of government decisions that aimed at some form of land redistribution for specific indigenous communities were far from addressing the need of most indigenous communities to access productive lands (Lenton 2010).

The limited recognition of indigenous demands by the Peronist state has led some authors, like historian Martínez Sarasola (2005) to conclude that Peronism was particularly concerned with the demands of indigenous communities. Others, however, disagree and use the paradigmatic case of the so-called *Malón de la Paz* (Raid of Peace) to insist that Peronism really lacked a clear approach towards indigenous peoples. What became known as *Malón de la Paz*, an indigenous march from the Northern provinces to the country’s capital, started to take shape in mid-1946 only months after the inauguration of Peron’s presidency (1946-1955). Hundreds of indigenous peoples departed from northern provinces in May and were welcomed along the way by local government officials. They arrived in Buenos Aires on August 3rd. Their demands included land restitution in accordance with historical demands and within the new

political context under Perón's presidency indigenous leaders saw the political situation as positive for this form of massive, public mobilization along 1,700 kilometers. At the end, however, indigenous activists overestimated the willingness of the government to deal with their demands in a supportive way. After a reception at the National Congress and the Presidential palace, most indigenous activists were sent back to their home provinces by train against their will and without a formal explanation. In a peculiar twist of history, some indigenous leaders were sent to the *Hotel de Inmigrantes* (Hotel for Immigrants) and kept there until they were escorted by the federal police and violently forced to board the train that returned them to their province of origin. Indigenous activists resisted but the state repressive apparatus prevailed. This hotel had been built to encourage European immigration as part of the modernization effort and so was the rail system. These "vehicles of progress" were used to push back the "barbarism" from the interior. Thus, Peronism replicated the elitist view on indigenous peoples although this time it was within the discursive framework of populism.²⁸ To be sure, the extension of social rights to previously marginalized groups affected indigenous peoples by granting them some access to welfare provisions. However, as Diana Lenton (2010) explains, despite its "prominent place in the collective memory of indigenous communities" today, Peronism did not effectively address their specific needs and demands.

Clearly, the government's response to the *Malón de la Paz* helps highlights the limitations of populism in addressing indigenous demands.²⁹ First, despite initial support, this particular type of public indigenous mobilization was severely repressed. In fact, the politicization of indigenous demands was deemed too inconvenient for the nationalist discourses prevailing within Peronism. Nevertheless, Lenton (2010) refers to Peronism's general approach to indigenous peoples as "protected incorporation." In other words, indigenous communities were seen as *poor working-class* Argentineans and in need of state protection. A pro-Peronist newspaper put it in the following terms:

²⁸ In its approach to indigenous issues, Peronism was close to the indigenist policies practised other parts of Latin America, most notably in Mexico under President Lázaro Cárdenas (Lenton 2010).

²⁹ For a historical analysis of the *Malón de la Paz*, see Domínguez (2001).

“[...] They are Indians and they represent the noble inhabitant of this American land, with virtues, with industrious spirit, love for the sciences and arts, and with soul. They are Argentineans and the founding Fathers of the nation have put into our hands [...] the obligation to care for them, to protect them from their poverty, to instruct them, to educate them to live in today’s hard world, so different from the one of their ancestors” (El Laborista, July 22, 1946, quoted in Sala 2005, 134).

Second, some indigenous communities were granted, for the first time, easier access to welfare measures and social protection. By making indigenous peoples supporters of Peronism, the state’s aim of assimilation into mainstream society was addressed. Public education under Peron was the preferred vehicle to accomplish this objective.

The support offered to indigenous demands was often seen by the state as a necessary step towards their assimilation into mainstream society. During Peronism, the state’s aim of assimilation translated into the recognition of social rights, with an emphasis on the role of public education. A Peronist deputy expressed this assimilationist perspective in the following terms in 1946:

“[...] Even with our Constitution and democracy, we continue witnessing domination [over indigenous peoples]. We protest against rights given by colonial conquest, but we forget that in our own country we are conquerors. It is very grave and very difficult to deal with the problem of assimilation of Indians but I consider that the best form of inclusion is not only by inspiring trust [...] but, once and for all, by providing them with an education and by facilitating the mixing of races. It is then imperative and urgent to saturate the American continent with people from Europe and the Near East, people with no racial prejudices: Italians and Spaniards, and also Syrians and Lebanese, because the latter ones have an assimilating aptitude that it is almost incomprehensible.” (Federal Deputy Alberto Candiotti 1946, quoted in Salas 2005, 178)

The emergence of new channels, not necessarily institutional, for the articulation of popular demands under Peronism meant that social movements placed outside the scope of discursive and/or political spaces designated by the government or ruling parties could face political exclusion or repression and the persecution of their members. This is a practice that largely prevails to this day. In the case of indigenous peoples, Peronist advocacy for the excluded was part of a nationalist project that identified the values of Peronism with those of the nation. Indeed, the nationalist discourse of Peronism and its assimilationist tendencies brushed aside ethnic tensions. However, Peronism was able to articulate a discourse that, attacking the centrality of class or ethnic divisions, introduced reforms that improved the material conditions of thousands of industrial and rural workers. And while some indigenous communities received some limited social benefits, Peronism did not respond to indigenous claims for land reform.

The project of national incorporation of indigenous peoples ended in 1955 when a military coup ousted Perón. The end of Peronism marked a change in the overall direction of social policy in general, and in policy aimed at indigenous peoples in particular. The military government abolished the *Dirección de Protección del Aborigen* in 1956. It also introduced further limitations on the use of lands by indigenous communities. In practice, the military government abandoned the role of the state as the main coordinator of indigenous policy, leading to what Gordillo and Hirsh (2003) refer to as an “erratic indigenist policy.”

The return of constitutional rule and election of Arturo Frondizi in 1958 inaugurated developmentalism as a strategy of state-led economic and social policy, with an emphasis on industrialism and the urbanization of the capital city (Carrasco and Briones 1996; Gordillo and Hirsh 2003). Under developmentalist guidelines, the state resumed its role as coordinator of indigenous policy. While the overall goal of assimilation did not disappear, new state agencies promoted a more active participation of indigenous communities, particularly through development planning and labour training (Carrasco and Briones 1996; Gordillo and Hirsch 2003). Furthermore, the general approach to indigenous policy-making was to “adapt” indigenous communities to mainstream society.

Typically, questions of collective land titling were excluded (Gordillo and Hirsh 2003; Martinez Sarasola 2005, 381).

The first national census of indigenous populations was conducted between 1966 and 1968, under the presidency of Arturo Illia with the goal of gathering, for the first time in the country's history, data on the demographic composition of indigenous communities. Once again paternalism and progressive social reform characterized the approach taken by the federal government vis-à-vis indigenous peoples. The presidential decree calling for the census incorporated an innovation in its approach to indigenous peoples: it considered indigenous peoples not only as a population with "basic anthropological characteristics" of a determined group but it also left room for self-identification. The partial results of the census estimated an indigenous population of 165,381, corresponding to less than 1% of the total population of 22,800,000.³⁰ The largest groups of indigenous peoples effectively counted were the Mapuche (28,000), Toba-Quom (17,000), Chiriguano (13,000) and Mataco (10,000). Despite the difficulties of this first census – data remained incomplete and final results were never entirely processed – it marked the first attempt in Argentina to think about concrete ways to measure the indigenous population. This new approach by the state was, however, short-lived (Gordillo and Hirsh 2003).

The military coup of 1966, under Juan Carlos Onganía (1966-1970) replaced the Illia government and, amongst other policy measures, cancelled the ongoing census permanently. The military dictatorships that ruled Argentina between 1966 and 1973 established a series of "integrated programs of aboriginal community development" under the umbrella of the State Secretary of Social Assistance. Beyond stated objectives of community development these policies were increasingly considered, once again, to be under the domain of national security. Indigenous mobilizations in regions near international borders, for example, were treated in the context of doctrines of national security, which emphasized the objectives of "internal security" over any other

³⁰ The number of effectively counted people reached to a little more than 75,000. The rest is based on an estimation of communities that were not effectively censused.

consideration (Martinez Sarasola 2005, 394). This period also witnessed the radicalization of leftist groups mobilization against the military dictatorship. This context of radicalization, in turn, had an impact on indigenous activism as many students and workers with an indigenous background began to create new indigenous organizations in the cities to pursue ethnic-based or political-economic demands on the state. The Catholic Church played an important role in working at the grassroots levels with indigenous communities to protect them, for example, from political persecution by the dictatorship (Gordillo and Hirsch 2003).

The return of Peronism in 1973 marked a new short-lived attempt to return to policies aimed at incorporating indigenous communities under the rhetoric and action of the Peronist party and, in this logic, into the nation in general. Under Isabel Perón's presidency (1974-1976), for example, the government tried to suppress Indian organizations that did not follow the desires of the Peronist party. Peronism's attempts to hold on to institutional power came to an end, when the regime was ousted by the most violent and repressive military dictatorship to date in Argentina (1976-1983). The military regime set the bases, amid a climate of political violence, for neoliberal economic policies that aimed to erase the legacies of the welfare state and Peronism and re-structure the economic development strategy of the country.

3.4 From the confines of terror (1976-1983) to the end of invisibility and recognition (1983 to present)

The successive military administrations of the period between 1976-1983 implemented neoliberal policies that affected negatively those of Argentinean society whose power to influence the direction of national politics had increased in the previous decades, notably Peronist labour unions. They also had detrimental effects on the living conditions of already marginalized aboriginal communities. In general, the 1976-1983 period under military dictatorship was marked by an official negation of the existence of indigenous

peoples in the territory of Argentina and by the deliberate repression of indigenous organizations. In its goal to “eliminate politics” generally, the military regime suppressed indigenous organizations which were seen as “too political.” In many ways, the discourse of the governing elites resembled the euphoric voices heard during the extermination of indigenous communities carried out by Roca in the late 19th century.³¹

When military rule came to an end and in 1983 Ricardo Alfonsín was elected, new possibilities for the implementation of policies towards indigenous peoples living in Argentina opened up, as did new opportunities for indigenous communities themselves to demand the implementation of rights and principles that were, by then, being recognized at the international level. Furthermore, this time, the opening of the political system coincided with the pressure indigenous peoples were beginning to exercise through their struggle to end their representation by non-indigenous “experts” and to self-represent within a political context in which their existence and subsequent rights were finally recognized by law.

With the return to democratic rule in 1983, indigenous organizations that had been created in the late 1960s and 1970s began to experience new challenges. Political parties, for example, were now free again to support candidates and run for elections. In this context, indigenous communities became subject to attempted co-optation and manipulation. This greater dependence upon, and influence by, political parties partially explains the absence of indigenous parties in Argentina and the fractured nature of contemporary indigenous movements (Van Cott 2005). As a result, no major indigenous organization at the national level has emerged.

However, the co-optation attempts by political parties are not the only element that characterizes the relationship between state and indigenous peoples in Argentina during

³¹ Gordillo and Hirsh explain the sense of continuity between the military dictatorship of the period 1976-1983 with Roca’s military campaign in the following terms: “In 1979, the military rulers organized large-scale celebrations of the centennial of the campaigns to Pampa-Patagonia and sanctified the civilizing struggle against the *malón*. In official discourses, ‘the Indian’ emerged once again as a savage force that had temporarily precluded the birth of the nation” (2003, 18).

this period. After years of bloody dictatorship and political violence, the newly elected government of Alfonsín (1983 – 1989) made, in its early years, a strong commitment to address the human rights abuses perpetrated by the military dictatorship. The convergence of a new class of young indigenous leaders that emerged in the early 1970s and the government's human rights agenda provided the background for the process of legal recognition of indigenous rights in this period.

The most significant recognition of indigenous rights in Argentina in the 1983-1989 period was the *Ley de Protección y Apoyo a las Comunidades Indígenas* no. 23302 (Law for the Protection and Support of Indigenous Communities). This law, passed by Congress in 1985 and implemented in 1989, constituted a fundamental step in the path towards official recognition of indigenous rights until such rights were recognized almost a decade later in the constitutional reform of 1994. This law created the *Instituto Nacional de Asuntos Indígenas* (National Institute of Indigenous Affairs, INAI) a new institution to deal with indigenous issues. As one of its goals, INAI aimed to encourage active participation and decision-making by indigenous representatives. The law also established some criteria to define who is indigenous and it legally defined “indigenous communities” as civic associations regulated by public law. INAI also maintains, at the federal level, an official registry of indigenous communities, the *Registro Nacional de Comunidades Indígenas*.³² The law established some guidelines for the collective ownership of land for those indigenous communities that were “properly registered” by the state. The state was also in charge of determining whether such lands were “apt and sufficient” for any certain economic activities, such as agriculture, forestry, mining, industrial development, or crafts, depending on the needs of each community. Finally, the law established that, under collective ownership, these lands could not be transferred for at least twenty years (Carrasco and Briones 1996).

³² This registry has been the source of ongoing conflicts between indigenous communities, provincial governments, and the federal government as some communities have been able to register federally but have seen their attempts to register at the provincial level severely limited. Thus, some provinces like Neuquén, have refused to accept the federal registry as “proof” that a community is indeed an indigenous community.

Law 23302 was also significant because it consolidated pre-existing provincial legal reforms on indigenous rights, specifically laws from those provinces with a considerable indigenous population. This legal reform illustrates the centrality of provinces in the process of mediating local and national dimensions of indigenous politics. The 1980s witnessed legal changes recognizing indigenous rights in Formosa (1984), Salta (1986), Jujuy (1986), Chaco (1987), Misiones (1987), Río Negro (1988), Chubut (1991), and Santa Fe (1993) (Carrasco and Briones 1996, 25).

It is clear from the discussion above that, since the return of electoral rule, a policy of official recognition of indigenous rights has replaced and reversed the invisibility of indigenous issues and their relationship to discourses of nationhood. These new policies recognized the multiethnic composition of the country's population, embracing new rights based on cultural differences and echoing multicultural policies in other corners of Latin America. In 1992, Argentina had adopted Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization. Its significance resides in the fact that Convention 169 was the first international document that recognized indigenous populations as "peoples" (Carrasco and Briones 1996). The Convention, however, was not ratified until 2001. In Argentina, the main legal instruments for this recognition derived from the constitutional reform of 1994.³³ In regulating the powers of Congress, its article 75, section 17, stated as one of its main functions:

"To recognize the ethnic and cultural pre-existence of the Argentinean (sic) indigenous peoples. To guarantee respect for their identity and the right to a bilingual and intercultural education; to recognize the legal character of their communities, and the community possession and ownership of the lands they traditionally occupy; and to regulate the granting of other lands adequate and sufficient for human development; none of them shall be sold, transmitted or subject to encumbrances and

³³ In December of 1993, Argentina's Congress passed the law that declares the necessity for a partial constitutional reform. In such law, Congress gave the power to a constitutional convention to redraft the constitutional text in order to guarantee "the ethnic and cultural identity of indigenous peoples" (Carrasco and Briones 1996, 26).

seizures. To assure their participation in issues related to their natural resources and in other interests affecting them. The provinces may jointly exercise these powers” (Political Database of the Americas July 16, 2008).³⁴

This wave of recognition, however, took place in the context of the implementation of new market-based development strategies (i.e., neoliberal economic policies) and the consolidation of new forms of citizenship. In addition, the period saw an increasing indigenous mobilization, especially in those provinces where indigenous populations were considerable (e.g., the Northeast and Northern Patagonia). The history of neoliberalism in Argentina began in the 1970s, when the first set of policies inspired by the monetarism of the “Chicago School” was implemented. In the context of repression and forced disappearances, the military dictatorship applied the first policy measures that opened the country’s economy to the influx of international financial capital. Moreover, the return of an elected government in 1983 did not fundamentally alter some of the economic policies previously adopted by the military Junta. Although Alfonsín tried a more heterodox approach for managing the economy, his government ended in hyperinflation and social chaos.

It was not until 1989 with the election of Carlos Menem (1989-1999) that the neoliberal project was consolidated as a state form. Against a background of hyperinflation, president Menem assembled a team of orthodox economists that applied monetary (i.e., anti-inflationary) policy solutions. The Menem administration managed to stabilize prices eventually, but did so at the expense of increasing public spending deficits, alarming unemployment rates, larger income gaps, and trade deficits. The Menem period was characterized by massive social dislocation. It also ushered in a redefinition of the relationship between state and society, as part of the consolidation of the neoliberal project. In fact, the relationship between state and society came to be mediated by the

³⁴ In 2003, the Supreme Court of Justice determined that the provisions included in this article are applicable and that the rights included in this article are valid even in the absence of specific provincial or federal legislation. This was an important decision as Congress has been painfully slow to adopt new legislation on indigenous issues since the passing of the constitutional reform in 1994.

logic of market relations and this affected state policies and the possibilities for the terms of social mobilization and protest actions.³⁵

The consolidation of neoliberal policies came to an end after Menem's successor, president Fernando De la Rúa (1999-2001), failed to address the social and political crisis that years of "austerity" policies created. Even though the economic policies associated with neoliberalism have been questioned, the cultural-political logic of the neoliberal state (and its rationalities) has been entrenched through the policies and legal reforms implemented by successive governments. In the midst of such crisis, De la Rúa's resignation in December 2001 opened a new period characterized as a post-Washington consensus in which previous policies became increasingly contested. Before leaving office, however, De la Rúa's government saw the International Labour Organization's Convention 169 come into effect as well as other measures of relative importance to indigenous politics.³⁶

Under the transitional government of Eduardo Duhalde (2002-2003), the social landscape of Argentina was characterized by the intensive social mobilization and public demonstrations of organizations of the unemployed and the middle class. Indigenous mobilization during this period needs to be understood in this context as the government shifted towards, what Lenton and Lorenzetti (2005) call a "neo-welfarist" state (*estado*

³⁵ The consolidation of the neoliberal project did not go unchallenged. Public sector workers and the unemployed were at the centre of an increased social mobilization that also included indigenous communities (Svampa and Pereyra 2003; Silva 2009). Indigenous demands and mobilization during this period received scant attention. Svampa (2005, 79), for example, suggests that this can be explained by a predominant view that the "popular" sector in Argentina comprised wage workers, their challenges facing unemployment, their political influence (given the historical alliance between the union leaders of major labour organizations and Peronism), and their mobilization strategies. The recent literature on social movements in Argentina almost exclusively addresses the experiences of the unemployed and the poor.

³⁶ De la Rúa's government was involved in a number of initiatives related to participation in the UN Human Rights Committee in Geneva to address the country's weak implementation of indigenous policies and participation in the World Conference Against Racism, Racial discrimination, Xenophobia and Other forms of intolerance celebrated in Durban, South Africa in September 2001. During this period, chief Panghitruz Guor's body was returned. The National Institute for Indigenous Affairs (INAI) was open, for the first time since its creation, to the participation of indigenous leaders even though such possibility failed as a result of the ongoing economic crisis and lack of government commitment. Finally, the Census conducted in 2001 considered, for the first time, the possibility of indigenous self-identification (Lenton and Lorenzetti 2005, 297).

neoasistencialista) or what many others see as an intensification of neoliberal forms of governing the poor (Schild 2000, Ilcan and Lacey 2011).³⁷ This approach towards social policy endorses certain limited types of self-management and the participation of those who are targeted by such policies. The ultimate goal is to govern well-defined segments of the population (e.g., the poor, indigenous peoples). It does so, however, in ways that do not fundamentally challenge neoliberalism or alter state power but that increase mechanisms of policing and controlling target populations. Thus, “the poor” become responsible for managing their own way out of poverty using the mechanisms available through social programs. It is in this context that the “Indian Question” became, once again, part of the Social Question in the 2000s. In fact, during Duhalde’s government the emphasis was less on the implementation of recognized indigenous rights, or on addressing political conflicts between indigenous communities and provincial or local governments, than on reaching indigenous peoples through social assistance programs (Lenton and Lorenzetti 2005).³⁸

Under the presidencies of Nestor Kirchner (2003-2006) and Cristina Fernandez de Kircher (2006-Present), the state has consolidated this neoliberal-based “neo-welfarist” logic. Under it, the state retains a transformative role over indigenous mobilization with the goal of facilitating control over indigenous issues. In this context, the state has supported new forms of “inclusion” and participation for indigenous peoples within the institutional structures of the state. By taking these initiatives, the Kirchner administrations have further entrenched the neoliberal regime through legal reforms and the creation of spaces for indigenous participation. These reforms have, since their

³⁷ According to Lenton and Lorenzetti (2005), the approach is “neo-welfarist” because it provides welfare services or payments under the conditions of a “payback” in the form of participation and self-management of welfare clients. See Schild (2000, 2007).

³⁸ The *Plan Jefas y Jefes*, as it was known, was implemented in mid-2002. The plan was informed by the principles of decentralization, client participation, and civil society involvement. Although it was considered as a temporary mechanism to address the social crisis and was meant to expire by December 2002, the government decided to extend the program throughout 2003. The World Bank provided funding to cover half of its cost.

implementation, shaped the “*indio permitido*” (permitted Indian), to use Hale’s expression.

Arguably, it is too soon to gain a historical perspective on the impact of the macroeconomic policies of the Kirchner administrations on indigenous peoples. However, the “Indian Question” has gained some visibility during the last decade that is pertinent to briefly describe. In November of 2011, Argentina had, for the first time, an official visit by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, James Amaya. The United Nation’s Report (*Naciones Unidas* 2012) highlights the gap that exists today between the legal framework that recognizes indigenous rights and its implementation in practice. Furthermore, the report emphasizes that the existence of such gap is related to the expansion of extractive industries, the criminalization of social protest and lack of access to the court system, and the socio-economic deterioration of indigenous communities, characterized by the lack of quality in education, health, and development in general.

The Kirchner administrations have also seen the implementation of new spaces of indigenous participation within state institutions. In 2004, for instance, the National Institute for Indigenous Affairs (INAI) created the *Consejo de Participación Indígena* (Indigenous Participation Council) as a mechanism for indigenous collaboration in the implementation of its programs and policies, including the assessment of land ownership and social welfare needs. In 2006, in the context of increasing conflicts over land ownership fuelled in part by the expansion of the soy frontier, Congress passed Law 26160 to suspend all evictions of indigenous peoples for a four-year period. The law also gave the INAI the mandate to conduct a study on the lands occupied by indigenous communities. Furthermore, the new law of National Education (no. 26206), also passed in 2006, included *Educación Intercultural Bilingüe* (bilingual intercultural education) in support of the constitutional right to such education for indigenous peoples. In 2007, Argentina voted in favour of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and in 2009, Law 26554 extended the no-eviction period for four more years, until 2013. Finally, a controversial media law (no. 26522) recognized the right to a “*comunicación con identidad*” (communication with identity) for indigenous peoples by

granting indigenous communities access to media outlets (*Naciones Unidas* 2012, 6).³⁹ These policy measures entrenched new categories of belonging for indigenous peoples. For many indigenous groups, for instance, the state provides ambiguous signals. On the one hand, the state has created new spaces of recognition and some support for indigenous claims. On the other, the administrations of the last ten years have promoted economic development strategies that rely on the expansion of extractive industries, which are increasingly encroaching on indigenous lands.⁴⁰

3.5 Conclusion

Indigenous communities in Argentina have been experiencing the social impacts of neoliberal policies since they were consolidated in the 1990s. These effects, together with new forms of activism and spaces for participation within the state inform the ways in which indigenous mobilization has taken place in recent years. The most recent decades have witnessed the emergence of new types of indigenous mobilization that challenge centuries of official invisibility. In a country that was seen as having “no Indians,” this mobilization caused some initial astonishment. This chapter has shown that throughout its post-colonial history, the Argentinean state has attempted to deal with the “Indian Question” in ways that cannot be disconnected from broader questions of social power, political institutions, and, fundamentally, the insertion of the country into broader processes of modernization and global capitalism. For the last thirty years, successive administrations have tried to insert Argentina in the global economy under new terms, and while the strategies between the Menem and the Kirchner administration vary, they have relied on economic activities that have increasingly taken place on indigenous territories.

³⁹ The media law has been controversial as many opposition leaders and journalists accused the government of using such a law to silence those media outlets that are critical of the Kirchner administration, particularly the *Clarín* media conglomerate, a former supporter of Néstor Kirchner presidency.

⁴⁰ This point is elaborated in more detail in the following chapters.

The centrality of territorial claims has a long history that goes back to colonial and early republican times. By the mid-19th century, the “Indian Question” was bound with the territorial aspirations and expansion project of the modern state. Once those indigenous groups who remained autonomous until the late nineteenth century were militarily subdued, the state changed its approach from one of military conquest over indigenous lands to attempts to assimilate indigenous peoples as Argentinean citizens. Reserves (*reducciones*), labour colonies, and religious missions were put into place by the state with the purpose of “eliminating the Indian within.”⁴¹ In the 1940s, Peronism addressed the problem significantly differently. Informed by *indigenista* discourses, the state emphasized the socio-cultural incorporation of indigenous peoples into Argentinean nationhood. Perón’s populist rhetoric, clientelism, and the provision of concrete material social benefits secured the electoral support of many indigenous peoples. The Peronist political strategy of social and political integration was part of the larger strategy of inward-oriented development through industrialization. The support of “workers” was central to this strategy. Two decades later, the emphasis was placed on the economic “development” of indigenous communities and the identification of a need for technocratic intervention. The Census of 1966 illustrates this effort to identify, count, and assess indigenous “needs.”

Contemporary indigenous mobilization has its most immediate roots in the early 1970s, during the brief period of political openness between two military dictatorships but also in the context of the formation of new political identities, social mobilization, and the internationalization of indigenous rights.⁴² However, these incipient forms of indigenous mobilization in Argentina were suspended for almost a decade as a result of the military dictatorship (1976-1983) and the context of political violence that characterized it. The aftermath of the dictatorship’s violence carried with it the social and political pressure to address past human rights violations. In this context, the increased recognition of

⁴¹ I borrow the expression “to eliminate the Indian within” from the Canadian context of Indian residential schools.

⁴² There are, however, previous experiences of indigenous mobilization and resistance that date back to the 19th century and expand throughout the 20th century, such as the *Malon de la Paz* under Peronism in 1946.

indigenous rights in the 1980s can be seen as a confluence between social mobilization and the result of such pressures to address human rights violations. Finally, the profound transformation of the state in the 1990s, with the consolidation of neoliberal forms of citizenship and the constitutional reform of 1994 recognizing new indigenous rights, created the conditions of the ongoing tensions that exist today between formal recognition of rights and their implementation. In the present period, the dynamic core of the economy includes state support for extractive industries that increasingly rely on the exploitation of indigenous territories. Territorial autonomy has, thus, come to occupy a central place in indigenous activism. It is the critical focus of negotiations, accommodations and contestations that characterize the relations between the Mapuche and the local neoliberal state, through which new collective identities are being shaped.

Chapter 4

4 *Pewmagen*: Towards a new Mapuche political subjectivity in Neuquén⁴³

“What is the basis of bonding in collective action – past or future, memory or project? While communal symbolism may be important, collective symbolism and discourse merging a heterogeneous collectivity in a common project may be more important [...] Generally, emancipations may be thought of in the plural, as a project or ensemble of projects that in itself is diverse, heterogeneous, multivocal.” (Nederveen Pieterse 2009, 80)

Mapuche activism today involves an active process of negotiating with, accommodating to, and contesting the neoliberal state. This activism begins with challenging established identities. The emergence of new collective voices in the political landscape of Argentina’s social movements is not new. In addition, collective voices that may seem “new” are not simply the result of the return to democratic rule in 1983 or specific institutional changes. Instead, these collective identities, including indigenous ones, need to be understood in relation to dominant orders that have been established in the past (Shapiro 2004). Indeed, the emergence of new indigenous identities in Argentina since the late 1970s often reflects “historical processes of subalternity” as well as possible ways “to forward struggles” that have originated in the past (Escobar 2008).

Furthermore, the formation of collective subjectivities, as Negri (1989) reminds us, takes place first and foremost as the result of a relationship between subjects in a context of power inequalities. In time, these relationships tend to manifest themselves in a more

⁴³ *Pewmagen* translates from Mapuzugun as “let our dreams conduct our actions.”

explicit manner as a relationship with the state, on the one hand, and subjects and citizens, on the other.⁴⁴ Thus collective subjectivities, Negri continues, do not obey to what he calls “immutable moments” as they “do not require foundations which go beyond experience.” On the contrary, they are always socially produced and typically in antagonistic ways (1989, 127). Escaping what he calls a structuralist notion that conceives a “process without a subject,” Negri further argues that, “the ontological aspects of subjectivity are established (or rather, produced) through the formulation of points of view, the interlacement of orientations of struggle and the revelation of intentions and desires” (1989, 128).

After introducing the particularities of Mapuche communities in Patagonia and the recent process of political mobilization in the region, this chapter provides an overview of the particularities of Neuquén and the focus of my ethnographic research: the *Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén* (Neuquén’s Mapuche Confederation, CMN). The chapter then focuses on the three elements that Negri (1989) identifies as constitutive of collective identities which serve to analytically examine the production of a new Mapuche political subjectivity through the establishment of the *Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén* (CMN). First, the “formulation of points of view” is explained by looking at the *Confederación*’s politics of self-representation. Second, while the “orientations of struggle” of the *Confederación* can be analysed from many different perspectives, I choose to focus on the politics of *interculturalidad* (interculturality) as an attempt to change the terms in which the political relationship between Mapuche activist and the state is established. Finally, I examine the ways in which Mapuche activists talk about the legacy of their ancestors, new forms of knowledge production, and the importance of a collective memory as an illustration of Negri’s notion of a “revelation of intentions and desires.” These three elements shape contemporary Mapuche demands for territorial autonomy, a process discussed in the following two chapters.

⁴⁴ In addition to the state, one can also include other forms of institutionalized power such as international financial institutions, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, or pan-regional organizations that become targets of social mobilization and demands. As some research included in the introduction to this dissertation shows, the process of transnationalisation is one of the most salient characteristics of contemporary indigenous mobilization around the world and Latin America in particular.

4.1 Mapuche Communities in contemporary Patagonia

Of the three indigenous peoples that inhabit Patagonia today, the Mapuche are the largest group and the most politically active. According to an official survey published in 2004-05 out of a total of nearly 650,000 people who self-identified as indigenous in Argentina, 104,988 (16%) self-identified as Mapuche.⁴⁵ According to the latest 2010 Census, the Mapuche and Toba peoples represent the two largest indigenous groups living in the country, totalling 21.5% (205,009) and 13.3% (126,967) of the indigenous total population, respectively. The results of the 2010 Census provide additional information on the indigenous population (INDEC 2010): 368,893 households (3,03%) and recognize at least one of its members as an indigenous person. In relation to the previous census of 2001, there has been an increase of 0.04% of such households. In Patagonia, however, the increase has been over 1%. If one looks at population numbers, independently from household estimations, the 2010 Census ended with a total of 955,032 people who self-identified as indigenous, representing 2.4% of the population. In the provinces of Neuquén and Río Negro in Northern Patagonia, 8% and 7.2% of their population self-identified as indigenous respectively. Chubut, with 8.7%, is the province with the highest proportion of indigenous population in the country. Neuquén, however, remains the province with the highest Mapuche population in the country.

In addition, the latest census shows that, currently, the Mapuche live primarily in Patagonia (Neuquén, Río Negro, Chubut, and Santa Cruz) and in the provinces of La Pampa and Buenos Aires. While a significant percentage live in rural areas, *most* Mapuche live in cities. The largest Mapuche population, however, lives on the other side of the Andes, in Chile. In both countries, Mapuche communities have been able to adopt

⁴⁵ The 2004-05 survey was conducted to provide additional data on the indigenous population to the 2001 Census. The 104,988 people who self-identified as Mapuche are distributed as follows: 76,606 in the provinces of Chubut, Neuquén, Río Negro, Santa Cruz, and Tierra del Fuego; 19,689 in La Pampa, and rest of Buenos Aires province; and 8,693 in Buenos Aires city and 24 counties of the Greater Buenos Aires.

very different organizational structures and political stances as a result of the particularities of state formation on both sides of the mountains. In Argentina, for example, the federal political system has granted provinces opportunities to retain, gain, or be given a considerable amount of power to deal with indigenous issues (Briones 2005). While the focus of this study is the case of the Mapuche in Neuquén, it is important to provide an overview of the ways in which Mapuche societies have organized in other parts of Patagonia.⁴⁶

While Neuquén recognized the presence of indigenous peoples in its territory in the 1958 provincial Constitution and in the mid 1960s through specific policies, other provinces in Patagonia failed to do so until more recently. Río Negro, for example, started to recognize the presence of indigenous societies living within its boundaries in the 1980s. Chubut, the province with today's largest proportion of indigenous peoples, did not start this process of official recognition until the 1990s. This, in part, helps to explain the different trajectories of contemporary Mapuche organizations in those provinces. The particularities of contemporary Mapuche activism in Neuquén, for example, can be better explained if one begins by providing an overview of such activism in the other two Patagonian provinces where such activism has been taking place.

The province of Río Negro is located, together with Neuquén, at the northern edge of Patagonia.⁴⁷ In contrast to Neuquén, however, the province has not witnessed the influence of one hegemonic political party in charge of creating a strong sense of provincial identity.⁴⁸ The absence of this type of hegemonic political party explains, in part, the lack of initiative by the provincial state in addressing indigenous demands until recently. In 1984, when the demands for indigenous recognition were stronger, the

⁴⁶ For the political organization of Mapuche communities in Chile, see Richards (2004, 2010), Haughney (2006).

⁴⁷ The National Territory of Río Negro became a province in 1957.

⁴⁸ Since it became a province, Río Negro was governed by the *Unión Cívica Radical* (Radical Civic Union, UCR – a moderate, centre party) and by the military, except for the 1973-1976 period under which it was under a Peronist administration. Thus, no significant provincial party emerged as in the case of Neuquén.

provincial government created the *Consejo Asesor Indígena* (Indigenous Advisory Council, CAI).⁴⁹ In 1987, the province recognized for the first time the presence of its indigenous population, which currently forms approximately 125 communities with different legal standings (Cañuqueo 2005, 133).⁵⁰ At that time, the CAI brought together indigenous representatives from the communities across the province as well as non-indigenous peasants and small producers.

Thus “Mapuche” demands in Río Negro are established in relation to the demands of other non-indigenous sectors with a stronger emphasis on class-based interests. Since its inception, the CAI also worked closely with the office of Viedma’s bishop and with provincial authorities.⁵¹ In the meantime, urban Mapuche Centres were formed throughout the province emphasizing demands based on cultural difference as opposed to the CAI’s weight on socio-economic (i.e., class-based) concerns (Kropff 2005). In 1988, the government of Río Negro finally passed legislation facilitating a more autonomous decision-making processes in matters that affected indigenous communities, thereby granting the CAI a considerable level of autonomy and legitimacy as a representative of Mapuche communities.⁵² Since the mid-1990s, a new organization, the *Coordinadora del Parlamento Mapuche de Río Negro* represents the interests of rural communities, urban

⁴⁹ The original purpose for the CAI was to provide council to provincial legislators on indigenous affairs but the organization quickly became the “political arm” of the Mapuche communities once the government lost control over the appointment of its representatives (Gutiérrez 2001).

⁵⁰ The provincial constitution of 1988 consolidated such recognition. The process of provincial recognition can be seen as echoing the national law of 1985 (no. 23302) described in the previous chapter.

⁵¹ Viedma’s bishop, Miguel Hesayne, publicly condemned the military junta’s human rights violations during the military junta (1976-1983). In 1984, a severe winter storm left many rural small producers in dire economic conditions and the event served to put into the public eye the conditions of poverty and marginality of such populations that included indigenous peoples (Gutiérrez 2001, 290). The bishop facilitated not only the visibility of such conditions but it also started a public campaign to address the needs of these rural communities by acquiring sheep to replace those who have died as the result of the harsh weather conditions. In doing so, it included newly formed urban Mapuche organizations for the implementation of the assistance plan that slowly led to the establishment of a rural cooperatives movement (Gutiérrez 2001; Cañuqueo 2005, 134). Viedma is the capital of Río Negro.

⁵² The CAI’s autonomy was facilitated with the establishment of the *Consejo de Desarrollo de las Comunidades Indígenas* (Council for Development of Indigenous Communities, CODECI), which included representatives of both the CAI and the provincial government (Kropff 2005, 111).

Mapuche Centres, and the CAI.⁵³ Since their formation, the *Coordinadora* and the CAI claim the political representation of Mapuche interests in the province.⁵⁴ Since the emergence of these organizations, Mapuche activism has centred not so much on establishing a radically different relationship with the state – as in Neuquén –, but in making sure that the legal framework that guarantees indigenous participation is applied (Kropff 2005, 115). In this context, the CAI, for example, has been accelerating the process by reoccupying lands since it made the decision to adopt such a strategy in 1997.

Chubut, the province located south of Río Negro, presents a different scenario in terms of its relationship with indigenous peoples than Río Negro and Neuquén. Chubut did not pass any legislation on indigenous affairs until 1991.⁵⁵ For example, the provincial government did not create spaces for indigenous participation, such as the *Confederación Mapuche* in Neuquén or the *Coordinadora* in Río Negro, giving later indigenous organizations a much higher degree of initial autonomy (Kropff 2005, 112; Ramos and Delrio 2005). Furthermore, the province that currently claims the highest proportion of indigenous peoples (8% of its population) did not have a public history of visible Mapuche organizations until recently (Ramos and Delrio 2005). By the early 1990s, and in the context of the counter-celebration of the 500th anniversary of Spanish arrival in the American continent, however, some indigenous activists began to organize their demands publicly. They did so, not as Mapuche but as Mapuche-Tehuelche communities and with

⁵³ The *Coordinadora* is divided in regional “zones”: Andean, South, Atlantic, and Valley. In doing so, the *Coordinadora* adopts the official conception of space conceived by the provincial governments (Cañuqueo et al 2005). The establishment of regional sub-organizations echoes the recent modification of the representative structure of the *Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén*.

⁵⁴ In 2001, the CAI ended its relationship with the CODECI due to political differences. Since then, the CAI has increased its public opposition to the provincial state and the CODECI. Thus, unlike Neuquén, Río Negro is characterized by the fragmentation of Mapuche activism. Some argue this fragmentation has led to the lack of concrete results to solve territorial disputes in the province between the state, private interests, and Mapuche communities (Kropff 2005).

⁵⁵ Provincial Law no. 3657 declared the need to improve the living conditions in the province’s “aboriginal communities” and created the *Instituto de Comunidades Indígena* (Institute of Indigenous Communities). The provincial constitution of 1994 officially recognized the presence of an indigenous population in the province. Such recognition, however, only includes indigenous *rural* populations (Ramos and Delrio 2005, 87).

a tendency to work in alliance with other social movements in the province opposed to political authorities (Kropff 2005, 115).⁵⁶ The institutional name given to the first attempt to create a representative framework for indigenous communities is the *Organización de Comunidades Mapuche-Tehuelche 11 de Octubre* (The October 11th Organization of Mapuche-Tehuelche Communities, OCMT). Since its creation in 1992, the OCMT has gained public notoriety after being involved in struggles against the provincial state, *terratenientes* (large landowners), and multinational corporations (Kropff 2005, 113). In Chubut, the main political strategy adopted by the urban OCMT and the communities has been to reoccupy ancestral lands, seen as *lugares de origen* (places of origin) and as a sign of Mapucheness. According to one of the Mapuche communities involved in this type of activism, “the right to self-determination and to a territory is not to be begged; it is to be exercised” (Pillan Mahuiza, quoted in Ramos and Delrio 2005, 97).

4.2 The local state: Neuquén

As the previous chapter has shown, the region of Neuquén was incorporated into Argentina as a national territory in 1884 by the end of the military campaigns conducted against Mapuche societies established in the region at least since the seventeenth century. For many decades, Neuquén remained a National Territory under federal jurisdiction until it became a province in 1955. During the period between the end of the military conquest and the provincialization of Neuquén, Mapuche families came together in the form of *lof* (communities) and negotiated land-related issues with the federal authorities in Buenos Aires.⁵⁷ These negotiations, in turn, took place in a context in which national

⁵⁶ In Chubut, there are approximately 65 indigenous communities.

⁵⁷ A *lof* is usually the term used by the Mapuche to name a community. A *lof* traditionally consists of a group of families living in the same area. These families have been traditionally interrelated by marriage along patrilineal lines (women often left their own communities after marriage). The conformation of *lof* along these lines, however, is more the exception than the rule in contemporary Patagonia.

integration and the delineation of borders were the two key goals of the authorities of the National Territory (Falaschi et al 2005, 180).⁵⁸ Thus, the first half of the twentieth century witnessed attempts by Neuquén to assimilate its population, including Mapuche communities, to the Argentinean nation, granting them some support to establish agricultural colonies of the type described in the previous chapter. Public education, with strong nationalist and religious components, supplemented this mission.

Significant changes in the relationship between indigenous societies and Neuquén took place with the emergence of a new provincial political party shortly after the province adopted its constitution in 1957. With very few exceptions, since its inception in 1962, the *Movimiento Popular Neuquino* (Popular Movement of Neuquén, MPN) has been the hegemonic political party in charge of the provincial government. Adopting a populist rhetoric, the MPN has since its beginnings taken a stance against the federal state to preserve its provincial autonomy. For example, it supported a provincial sense of belonging highlighting a particular identity that, interestingly enough, included aspects of Mapuche culture. This inclusion, in turn, can be explained considering the wider context in which the provincial state (and its hegemonic political party, the MPN) and Mapuche communities have been establishing relationships with each other.

Historically, Neuquén's successive governments have maintained a strong relationship with Mapuche rural communities. They have done so by implementing development strategies that affect the territories where Mapuche communities are located, such as foresting projects and support to handicrafts for the tourism industry, as well as the provision of food, clothing, and other basic necessities. Such relationship, however, has been built on patron-client networks and cooptation of community leaders. In this context and depending on their location, many rural communities still make a living by raising livestock, providing labour for larger estates, or by providing goods and services in the tourism industry (e.g., handicrafts, tourist guides).

⁵⁸ The importance of these goals was the result of a perceived threat to national security coming from Chile.

This relationship between the state of Neuquén and Mapuche communities began in 1964 when the provincial government under the MPN assigned “reserved” lands to 18 indigenous *agrupaciones* (groupings). Since then, the provincial government has created different governmental agencies to deal with the social needs and “development” needs of indigenous communities.⁵⁹ In practice, however, the reach of the provincial state into the internal affairs of Mapuche communities resulted in the consolidation of political patronage and cooptation of its leaders (Falaschi et al 2005). In the early 1970s, other “communities”, the term now preferred by state discourse, were recognized, totalling 37. Since registration of indigenous communities is also possible within the National Institute of Indigenous Affairs (under federal jurisdiction), some of Neuquén’s communities have been registered at the federal level when the province did not grant such recognition.⁶⁰ Thus, the legal status of approximately 15 Mapuche communities in Neuquén is under dispute as they are only recognized by the INAI.⁶¹ Moreover, the official understanding of “communities” as “localised settlements recognized by the state” excludes from the definition both dispersed rural families and Mapuche peoples living in cities (Kradolfer 2011, 46).

In all cases, however, it is the legal ownership of the assigned land that is a matter of legal as well as political controversy. This is often the case as Argentina’s Civil Code, the legal instrument that regulates private property in all provinces, only recognizes individual private property and not collective ownership over lands. As a result, there is a tension between the Constitutional reform of 1994 that recognizes collective ownership of the territories indigenous peoples “traditionally inhabit” and the Civil Code, which

⁵⁹ These agencies changed their names frequently but they were often under the umbrella of the Ministry or Secretary of Social Services or Welfare. Echoing the emergence of a new Mapuche activism in the 1980s, official documents replaced the terminology of “indigenous” or “aboriginal” with “Mapuche.”

⁶⁰ The INAI runs the *Registro Nacional de Comunidades Indígenas* (National Register of Indigenous Communities, RENACI) independently from each provincial registration system for indigenous communities. Thus, despite the weak role of INAI for dealing with indigenous affairs in the provinces, the institute can still influence certain legal boundaries for registering indigenous communities, sometimes in open defiance to the provinces.

⁶¹ Some of these new communities are located in urban areas (Kradolfer 2011, 49).

regulates the procedures on private ownership. In addition, since 2012 the Kirchner administration has been trying to address the reform of the Civil Code but it has encountered the active resistance of many indigenous organizations due to the lack of consultation and the lack of clarity on the matter of indigenous collective ownership.

Most Mapuche peoples today, however, live in cities. It is difficult to assess the living conditions of Mapuche urban dwellers but some studies suggest that for the most part the only available sources of income are in the informal sector or government welfare. In the past, many young Mapuche moved to urban centres to find jobs in some of the new industries related to the energy sector, such as the steel industry, before they entered into a period of crisis in the 1990s. While these precarious labour conditions have forced many Mapuche to live in poor neighbourhoods, it is from these locations that many contemporary organizations have begun their activism. The *Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén* is one of those organizations that began in the city in order to become autonomous from the state's patronage system of control.

4.3 The *Confederación Mapuce de Neuquén*⁶²

Built in 2002, the community centre located in a poor suburb of Neuquén city is the visible “headquarters” of the *Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén*. This *ruka* (house, building), which has been broken into at night, where computers have been stolen, and when the challenges of not being able to pay for its upkeep and utilities have brought considerable levels of stress and desperation for activists, has also become a meeting place for a new generation of Mapuche activists and other organizations. *La ruka*, as it is known in Neuquén city, is where most of the everyday work of the *Confederación* takes

⁶² The spelling of the term *Mapuce* follows the Ragileo graphemic system. For the terms in Mapuzugun, I try to follow this system as close as possible as this is the system that has been approved by the *Confederación*. Thus, documents, words, and phrases written by members of the CMN often follow the Ragileo system. When not citing CMN documents, I use the commonly accepted term Mapuche.

place. It is here where official documents are often drafted, workshops are thought out, and community building is maintained. It is also the place where a new generation of young Mapuche in their early 20s imagine new forms of activism: from multimedia activism to *Mapu Punk* concerts and mass demonstrations. In Neuquén, however, new forms of Mapuche identity and politics are constructed and maintained in a process that involves ongoing negotiations with the state as well as with the rural communities. Using the case of the *Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén*, the rest of this chapter aims at illustrating how the process of identity construction and political negotiation takes place.

One of the methodological dilemmas that occur while studying collective forms of political action is that, on the one hand, collective experiences are always dynamic and they depend on generational, gender, origin, and political outlooks amongst others. On the other, such experiences take place within a context of conflict between subjects and as such these tensions often become a defining feature of collective political action. This is particularly the case in post-colonial contexts such as that of the Mapuche. As Briones (2008) argues, the disagreements on how to organize politically within Mapuche communities are often the result of many years of mobilization that tend to foster diverse positions that are key to understanding the diversity of their political identities in the long-term. In Northern Patagonia, for example, a new Mapuche leadership that began its activism in the early 1970s consolidated a vision of collective action framing the struggle within the confines of such logic of antagonism.⁶³ In this context it is possible to speak of a new political identity, not only to avoid an essentialist view of an immutable Mapuche identity, but also to emphasize that this identity is the product of clear efforts by activists as well as the result of a broader relationship to a dominant order, including the state. As such, the meaning of being Mapuche today is expected to change with time and this is a tension that does not escape most indigenous organizations.

⁶³ The meaning of being “indigenous” or Mapuche, in this case, refers to the construction of aboriginality itself (Beckett 1988): a process that goes beyond discursive practices to include the encounter between “natives” and the institutional settings of political and economic power.

In contemporary Argentina, the logic of antagonism mentioned earlier is placed in the context of the neoliberalization of the state and the relationship of the state with indigenous peoples. Thus, Mapuche organizations such as the *Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén* (CMN) often try to oppose what Shapiro (2004) calls the “hegemonizing practices” of the modern state which usually take the form of a “neoliberal, formal, and juridically-oriented approach to equality” (2004, 22). In order to challenge the dominant order, Mapuche organizations have provided an “instance of subjectivation” for the emergence of indigenous subjects *as such*, that is, activists that claim specific rights – and some times a radical social transformation – based on cultural differences (Shapiro 2004, 22). However, as Marisol de la Cadena and Orin Starn warn, “becoming indigenous is always a possibility negotiated within political fields of culture and history” (2007, 13). In other words, indigenous collective identities are socially constructed and politically negotiated, not discovered.⁶⁴ As explained earlier, the emergence of indigenous collective identities in Argentina, for example, must be framed within the institutional instances of provincial states as well as the predominant social orders that one encounters in them. Historically, as Briones has reminded us, contemporary Mapuche organizations need to be studied in relation to specific provincial formations of alterity, which in turn have translated into “regional geographies of inclusion and exclusion” (2007, 101).

The *Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén* (Mapuche Confederation of Neuquén, CMN) has its origins in the creation of the *Confederación Indígena Neuquina* (Indigenous Confederation of Neuquén, CIN) by the provincial government in 1971.⁶⁵ Until it changed its name to *Confederación Mapuche* in 1990 under a new leadership of young

⁶⁴ For an in-depth analysis of Mapuche “formations of self” and their politicization in the provinces of Río Negro and Chubut, see Briones (2008).

⁶⁵ According to Kradolfer (2011), the creation of the CIN was made during a meeting organized by Neuquen’s governor and the Catholic bishop in 1970 in order to create a structure that would group all the communities to facilitate the emergence of representative leaders vis-à-vis the state. Thus, the CIN was to be headed by one chief, a deputy chief, a treasurer, a secretary, and other members. Kradolfer describes the main objective of the CIN in the following terms: “The principal task of the CIN was to arbitrate problems inside and between communities, as well as to be an intermediate between the Mapuche and the provincial State, for example, in the process of measurement and setting of landmarks in public lands allocated to the communities by the State” (2011, 46).

activists, the CIN served as an the institutional instance in which *all* rural communities were represented by only one headman in negotiating with state officials (Kradolfer 2011). Furthermore, the structure of the CIN reflects the organization structures imposed on each community by the provincial government, namely, one headman or chief, a vice-chief, a treasurer, a secretary, and other members at large. Each community was to elect these authorities for a period of two years during a *fyta trawun* (Parley).

Indeed *fyta trawun* (Parleys) have historically provided Mapuche communities with opportunities to discuss collective issues. Thus, Parleys are until today an instance that facilitates the creation of a common sense of belonging despite the differences that exist amongst and within communities (Briones 2008). As stated earlier, established by the provincial state as *asociaciones* (groupings) or reserves in 1964 – and later identified officially as “communities” – Mapuche societies have always found ways to deal with domestic problems and present them to the provincial authorities. Thus, the creation of the *Confederación Indígena Neuquina* in 1971 as a *civil association* consolidated a form of politics that relied on strong assistentialist practices and patronage networks of Neuquén’s hegemonic political party, the *Movimiento Popular Neuquino* (Neuquén’s Popular Movement, MPN).

While the stated objectives of the *Confederación Indígena* (CIN) were to serve as the intermediary between the communities and the province as well as to solve conflicts within the communities (particularly in relation to the measurement of public lands), by the 1980s a number of urban Mapuche activists began to question the assimilationist and hegemonic tendencies of the *Confederación Indígena* as well as the approach of the provincial state vis-à-vis the communities. Given the hegemony of the *Movimiento Popular Neuquino* and its influence in the functioning of the *Confederación Indígena*, a new generation of urban activists created its own organizations in the mid-1980s, which Briones (2003) refers to as “organizations with Mapuche philosophy and leadership” as they tried to legitimise their actions from a different political standpoint. This process that began in the 1980s and continues today can be understood, following Briones’s work, as a transition from an imposed status of indigenous peoples as “ethnic minorities” to a self-defined identity as a *pueblo-nación originario* (roughly translated as first nation). A

detailed account of this process exceeds the space available here but the major tension between the authorities of the *Confederación Indígena* and this new generation of activists during those years was based on different ways to articulate not only a Mapuche identity but also its relation to the political context of the time. While some groups privileged alliances with the state or the *Movimiento Popular Neuquino* via the CIN in order to secure social welfare programs to address conditions of material deprivation within the communities, the new generation of activists emphasized a relationship “of equals”, from nation-to-nation, with the state. The latter view finally prevailed in 1990, when the CIN became the *Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén* (CMN) under a new leadership.⁶⁶ This perspective, in turn, placed a strong emphasis on gaining autonomy from state institutions rather than on trying to work “from within.” The CMN has thus managed to reframe what it means to be Mapuche today (Briones 2003). The following section focuses on the Statute of Autonomy to illustrate how such a reframing takes place.

The end of military rule and the return to democratic rule certainly provided the context under which political mobilization could take place.⁶⁷ The ongoing mobilization around human rights issues was prevalent by the time the dictatorship ended. Soon, indigenous issues gained public prominence within the broader struggles of social organizations to bring those responsible for torture and other atrocities to justice. In Neuquén, human rights organizations and the Catholic Church – under the leadership of bishop Jaime de Nevares – became important allies for emerging autonomous Mapuche organizations as they provided some protection from military and police harassment as well as some logistical, technical, and financial support during the years under military rule (Kradolfer 2011). One of the most important of these new organizations was *Newen Mapu*, an urban

⁶⁶ While these two perspectives have been prevalent in Neuquén, they do not cover all the choices that Mapuche organizations faced in other provinces. As described earlier, initially the *Consejo Asesor Indígena* in Río Negro, for example, adopted a more class-based and socially broad perspective than the *Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén*.

⁶⁷ During the period of military rule (1976-1993), political and indigenous leaders were persecuted. In this period, the CIN, for example, was only able to insist on cultural claims and they did so only in two Parleys (Briones 2003).

organization of young Mapuche, some of them with previous experience in labour mobilization, which assumed the political goals of “revitalizing Mapuche culture.”⁶⁸

With time, *Newen Mapu* consolidated its leadership within the *Confederación Indígena* (CIN), starting the process that has led to its autonomy from the *Movimiento Popular Neuquino*, the Catholic church, and of other human rights organizations. As a result of this process, the organization changed its name from *Confederación Indígena de Neuquén* to *Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén* in November 1990. The particularity of urban organizations such as *Newen Mapu* is that they have chosen, since their beginnings, to work closely with the rural communities.⁶⁹ They have done so by emphasizing a discourse of cultural authenticity for Mapuche claims with roots in the ways of life of rural communities. As Kradolfer argues, “when the young urban leaders speak, they are doing it in the name of their brothers and sisters from the communities. To challenge the State and to answer it in the same words, they retake the image of the community as being the ‘only and true’ lifestyle of the Mapuche” (2011, 47). While I agree that to a certain extent this strategy can be seen as a form of essentialisation of cultural difference (Kradolfer 2011), I do not think that such approach informs all aspects of contemporary Mapuche struggles in Neuquén. Tensions continually emerge, for example, between community and urban leaders during land reoccupations or when broader alliances with other sectors are established to force political change, as was the case in the mobilization for constitutional reform in Neuquén in 2007. The following two chapters that elaborate on new opportunities for indigenous participation within the state, and the strategies of land reoccupations and criminalization of indigenous mobilization, need to be read with this general strategy of Mapuche political organization in Neuquén in mind as well as

⁶⁸ In my fieldwork, I interviewed some of *Newen Mapu*’s first leaders. This group was created in 1983 and worked closely to the Catholic Church, the sponsor of the “First Indigenous Encounter of Neuquén” that invited these young urban Mapuche (in their early twenties). *Newen Mapu* means “the force of the land.” Another important urban organization in Neuquén that emerged in the 1980s was the *Centro Mapuche de Junin de los Andes* also formed under the sponsorship of the Salesian Order of the Catholic Church.

⁶⁹ Mapuche activists today still recall how the formal authorities within the CIN at that time used to reject their views as being non-Mapuche because they did not live in a rural community.

with the awareness that tensions exist between representative organizations such as the *Confederación* and the communities.

As stated earlier, in November 1990 young activists were able to challenge the traditional role of the *Confederación*, arguing that it was working too closely with the interests of the *Movimiento Popular Neuquino* and the state, and leaders were serving their personal interests instead of the Mapuche people.⁷⁰ As these young activists were elected into leadership positions within the communities, they were able to participate in the *Confederación* even if their urban organizations were not included formally in the *Confederación*.⁷¹ A crucial moment in the political organization of Mapuche communities in Neuquén took place in 1992 in the context of the counter-celebrations of the 500th anniversary of the arrival of the Spanish in the Americas. At the time, the main purpose for the meeting of diverse regional Mapuche organizations was to articulate claims based on cultural difference as indigenous peoples, including demands around regaining, or securing, control over ancestral territories, plus the right of self-representation and autonomy.

The institutional expression of this new phase of Mapuche activism in Neuquén was the creation, in 1992, of the *Coordinadora de Organizaciones Mapuche* (Coordination of Mapuche Organizations, COM), an umbrella organization that included the *Confederación Mapuche*, in representation of the rural communities, and urban organizations, such as *Newen Mapu*.⁷² Thus, the COM became the institutional expression of the activists' goals to blend the interests of urban Mapuche and the "traditional authorities" of the rural communities (Briones 2003, 107). Today, in practice,

⁷⁰ This was evident in the CMN's XII *fvta trawun* (Big Parley) of that year.

⁷¹ The condition for eligibility for a leadership position in the *Confederación* was to be an elected leader of one of the rural communities recognized by the provincial state. Thus, the new generation of activists started to be integrated into newly elected committees of the Mapuche communities that were their place of birth. Each community was, in turn, in control of electing its own authorities, within the framework given to them by the province.

⁷² The name of the organization in Mapuzugun was *Taiñ Kiñe Getuam* (TKG) and it means "to be one again."

Mapuche leaders in Neuquén recognize the *Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén* as the only legitimate political representative of the confederated communities in the province.⁷³ Since then, the *Confederación* has presented its demands and built its political identity based on three principles: Mapuche identity as a *pueblo-nación originario* (aboriginal peoples-as-nation); territory under Mapuche control and administration; and autonomy (self-representation) in order to define its own modes of organization. It is the confluence of these three goals that informs what I call the quest for Mapuche territorial autonomy in this study. The following sections of this chapter elaborate on these principles. Chapter 6 expands on the notion of Mapuche territory.

4.4 *Tayñ Mapuce Normogeal*. Formulating the quest for self-representation as a *pueblo nación originario*

Borrowing from Negri's work, one of the major challenges for the *Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén* (CMN) under its new leadership has been to formulate a "point of view" that can serve as a political statement of a *pueblo nación originario*, according to its own ways of knowing (*kimvn*).⁷⁴ Following Pierre Clastres (1987), one could see the recent attempts of a new generation of Mapuche activists to reclaim a model of organization in which institutional authorities, of the *Confederación*, for example, serve their communities according to the needs of those who inhabit them and not according to an authority whose source is located outside of the community, such as government agencies or hegemonic political parties such as the *Movimiento Popular Neuquino*. In sum, from the perspective of a *pueblo nación originario*, new Mapuche activists have

⁷³ The *Confederación*, for example, has been instrumental in granting federal registration within the INAI as "indigenous communities" to Mapuche rural settlements that were not recognized by the province. Thus, when provincial authorities denied official recognition to a community, the CMN would act to ensure that federal registration takes place, even if provincial state authorities ignore such recognition.

⁷⁴ For an interesting take on the challenges of formulating these "points of view," see the Jean-Luc Nancy's work (2000).

been demanding a new relation vis-à-vis the state (at the provincial or federal level), namely, from nation to nation. As the next two chapters demonstrate, such approach carries its own contradictions as contemporary Mapuche activism in Neuquén, for example, places itself as “against” the state but at the same time demands the implementation of sanctioned legal frameworks – in the form of rights – that have their bases in the juridical apparatus of the state. The rest of this chapter, however, analyses what this new perspective on Mapuche politics means for the new generation of activists within the CMN and understanding how, as Clastres puts it, “the history of people without history” becomes, suddenly, a struggle against the state and the hegemonic notions of it (1987, 218).

Like other documents prepared by the activists within the *Confederación*, the *Tayüñ Mapuce Normogea* or *Estatuto Autonomico Mapuce* (Mapuche Statute for Autonomy), sanctioned in 2008, illustrates one of the most recent attempts to express a political programme of collective action based on cultural difference - that is, the expression of a set of principles informed by the ways in which Mapuche activists think about their own culture, institutions, and political practices (Kradolfer 2011, 49).⁷⁵ One of the main goals of the statute is to replace existing statutes created and used in Neuquén to frame the relationship between the provincial state and Mapuche communities. Furthermore, the statute is important because it establishes the bases for self-representation and territorial autonomy, principles that activists must transmit to the communities and, perhaps more importantly, to the state (CMN 2008).⁷⁶ After a preamble and a “Historical overview”, the *Estatuto* is divided into eleven *títulos* (parts):

I. Denomination, Members, Address, Assets, Objectives

II. Obligations

⁷⁵ The preparation team for the *Estatuto* was designated by the 18th *fyta trawvn* (Great Parley) in 2006.

⁷⁶ All translations from Spanish to English are mine. For the terms in *Mapuzugun*, I use the term in Spanish provided by the document to translate into English.

III. Prohibitions (*zewmanoal*)

IV. Sanctions

V. Institutional Mechanisms of Mapuche Government (*kvme feleal*)

VI. Administration of Justice (*nor feleal*)

VII. Mapuche Civil Registrar (*meli folil kvpan*)

VIII. Territorial Organization (*azkunual* or *azmapun*)

IX. Territorial Councils (*kiñe azmpu*)

X. Election of CMN Authorities

XI. Other Arrangements

The text begins by placing the *pueblo Mapuce* (Mapuche peoples) as a nation and as a *pueblo originario*, with the constitutional powers to determine the terms of its own autonomy:

“The Mapuche peoples have the constitutional power (es primer constituyente) to design and approve a new autonomous statute. We have this right based on our own laws or AZ MAPU, because we are original peoples (pueblo originario) of these lands and territories, according to our values and principles, AZ ka NOR MOGEN, that have guided us for thousands of years. We accomplish our role as peoples, CE, to protect and defend different lives (ixofij mogen) and to develop with identity alongside the protecting spirits of the mountains (gen mawiza), the protecting spirits of the waters (gen ko), the protecting spirits of animals (gen kvrvf), the

*protecting spirits of air, the atmosphere, and all other GEN with whom we inhabit the universe” (CMN 2008, 2).*⁷⁷

The relevance of the statute also rests in the ways in which it establishes the bases for self-representation, independent from the direct influence of the state to determine and authorize the content of this type of statute (CMN 2008).⁷⁸ As stated earlier, the emergence of a new generation of urban Mapuche activists in the 1980s and their engagement in working with the rural communities has served to articulate a critical vision towards the paternalistic ties and patron-client networks that existed between the local state (and its hegemonic political party, the *Movimiento Mapuche Neuquino*) and the *Confederación Indígena* since its creation. The recent drafting of the *Estatuto* can be read as a continuation of such efforts to articulate a new political project for the Mapuche peoples living in Neuquén.

According to its authors, there are three broad themes running through the rest of the statute’s preamble that give the *Confederación* the legitimacy to dictate the *Estatuto Autónomo*. First, the statute recalls historical circumstances under which the Mapuche peoples have lost their autonomy. This section discusses the broken alliance between the pro-independence movement of the early 1800s and Mapuche ancestors (“*nuestros abuelos*”). The end of that alliance took place when the newly independent state applied a system of “usurpation, annihilation, and colonialism” towards its indigenous

⁷⁷ The original preamble reads as follows: “El Pueblo Mapuce, es primer constituyente en la decision de diseñar y aprobar un nuevo Estatuto de carácter Autónomo. Hacemos uso de este Derecho fundamentado en nuestra propia Ley o AZ MAPU, por ser un Pueblo Originario de estas tierras y territorios, según nuestros valores y principios. AZ ka NOR MOGEN que nos han regido por miles de años.

Cumpliendo nuestro rol como Ce para proteger, defender las diversas vidas / Ixofij Mogen y para desarrollarnos con Identidad junto a Gen Mawiza / Espíritus Protectores de las montañas, Gen Ko / Espíritus Protectores de las aguas, Gen Kujiñ / Espíritus protectores de los animals, Gen Kvrvf / Espíritus protectores del Aire, la atmósfera y todos los demás Gen con los que cohabitamos el universo.”

⁷⁸ In order to register, either with the provincial government or with the federal government, each community must have a statute that, in turns, needs the approval of the state. This *Estatuto Autonomo* is clearly a defiance of the state’s paternalistic attitude vis-à-vis Mapuche peoples.

populations. The section also recalls state efforts to eliminate Mapuche institutions of government, their territories, and the assimilationist attempts of the state as well as the Catholic Church. Finally, the section highlights that the constitutional recognition of indigenous rights (at both the federal and provincial levels) is a result of Mapuche mobilization and activism.

Second, the statute considers that the obligation of the *Confederación* is to protect the welfare (“*velar por el bienestar*”) of Mapuche peoples and to ensure the respect of Mapuche rights. Such authority is given by the *fyta gvbamtuwvn* (Big Parley). According to the statute, this authority also comes from a very special set of knowledge and wisdom. In the terms of the statute,

“The Mapuche peoples and other aboriginal peoples in the world have developed knowledges and wisdoms to guarantee our own existence and endurance, in harmony and balance with nature and its spirits. We are guardians of that legacy so we can transfer it to new generations. That is a cultural prerequisite demanded of us by the cycles of life. It is also an obligation given to us by the AZ MAPU, the natural cosmic law” (CMN 2008, 3).

Third, the preamble considers the impact of globalization in the everyday life of Mapuche communities in very specific and illustrative terms,

“1. Transnational corporations, specifically those related to the pharmaceutical and food industries that rely on the use of genetic engineering and the support of the World Trade Organization, are converting the natural reserves of indigenous peoples into genetic banks in situ and ex situ. 2. Globalization is resulting in the plundering of cultural diversity [...] 3. The plundering and expropriation of the wealth of our mountains, lakes, rivers, forests, minerals, and knowledges, is oriented towards gaining control over Mapuche territory – the space and its peoples. It aims at eliminating our authority, autonomy, and self-determination. And it threatens our millenarian cultures. 4. The imposed

concepts [...] such as “biological corridors,” “protected areas,” “sustainable development,” “debt-for-nature swaps,” “environmental services,” “productive chains,” amongst others, hide the interests that hide behind the discourse on conservation. Such discourse entails the commodification of nature, subsumed under the logic of capital. It does so to bring about a legal and material transformation with the aim of installing life as private property.” (CMN 2008, 4)

Thus, on the one hand, Mapuche activists adopt a discourse of “nation-to-nation” (e.g., Mapuche peoples, *pueblo nación originario*) that is based on cultural difference. In the preamble, this is most evident in the second principle: Mapuche knowledges and wisdom. On the other hand, the political identity of the Mapuche peoples, expressed in the *Confederación*’s statute, emerges in new forms that are unique to the historical time in which they take place: globalization as well as a consolidated state that grants “Mapuche rights” (or, more technically, collective rights that apply to indigenous peoples based on their cultural difference).

In short, the statute gives the *Confederación* the political and legal representation of Neuquén’s *lofche* (Mapuche communities), which in turn have the power to designate their local authorities. It also establishes the *wenu foye* (Mapuche flag) as its symbol.⁷⁹ The statute also introduces an important caveat concerning the notion of autonomy, that the autonomy that Mapuche authorities refer to is to be exercised *within* the jurisdictions of Neuquén and Argentina. Thus, this autonomy is understood in relation to the indigenous rights granted in the federal and provincial Constitutions as well as the condition of the Mapuche as a *pueblo nación originario*. In other words, the position of a “nation-to-nation” relationship between the Mapuche and the state does not include the claim to juridically break away from the existing state.

⁷⁹ The decision to approve the flag that is currently in use by Mapuche communities in Chile and Neuquén is the result of the *Primer Reencuentro de la Nación Mapuche* (First Reencounter of the Mapuche Nation) held in May 1992, in Neuquén. Not all Mapuche organizations in Argentina, however, have adopted the same flag.

Another important section of the statute lists the four main components of the government for the Mapuche peoples represented by the *Confederación*. First, the highest authority is established as the *gvbamtuwvn* (Parley), composed by the traditional authorities (“*autoridades originarias*”) from the communities that recognize the authority of the *Confederación*.⁸⁰ Second, the *kvme feleal* (Council of Traditional Authorities), is composed of the following roles:⁸¹

1. The *ñizol logko*, who can be woman or man, is the highest political authority of each community and also for the *Confederación*. The authorities designated by the Territorial Entities elect the *logko* of the *Confederación*.⁸²
2. *Inan logko* is the authority that accompanies the *ñizol logko* and is in charge of communications with other communities as well as state institutions.
3. *Werken* can be a woman or a man and must be “preferably young” (CMN 2008, 8). They have the ability to represent and transmit the *zugu* (word) and *rakizuam* (thinking) to the interior of Mapuche institutions and to the Territorial Entities. They are messengers and representatives of the Mapuche peoples when they interact with state institutions.
4. The *pijañ kuse* is the authority with knowledge of Mapuche traditions, spirituality, biodiversity, and medicine.
5. The *xapvm kujñfe* plays the role of treasurer.

⁸⁰ In Neuquén, some communities have not recognized the authority or legitimacy of the *Confederación*. Some communities, for instance, remain allied to the provincial government and the *Movimiento Popular Neuquino* (MPN). Other communities have aligned themselves with the federal government. These Mapuche communities and other indigenous groups are part of the *Organización Nacional de Pueblos Indígenas de la Argentina* (National Organization of Indigenous Peoples of Argentina, ONPIA).

⁸¹ These authorities are generally found in all Mapuche communities in the province, except those who have not recognized the legitimacy of the *Confederación*.

⁸² The statute recognizes five “Territorial Entities” which represent five different geographical zones. Each Territorial Entity can designate two representatives to the *Confederación*. The five entities are based in San Martín de los Andes (*Sur*), El Huecu (*Norte*), Aluminé (*Aluminé*), Zapala (*Centro*), and Neuquén (*Confluencia*) and they represent the communities located in each one of these regions (CMN 2008, 10).

6. The *pu kona* are the young Mapuche whose responsibility is to keep the Confederation connected with each community).

Third, the *nor feleal* (justice council) is composed of the *inan logko*, *werken*, and two members who are elected depending on the nature of the problem to solve. The main goal of the *nor feleal* is to administer justice and solve disputes within each community. Finally, the statute recognizes the *meli folil kvpan* (civil registry), which registers births respecting the graphemes and phonemes of Mapuche names in *Mapuzugun* (language of the land). The registry also has the power to “rectify” names and last names given in Spanish and to register those children or adults who have “reclaimed” Mapuche names after exercising their right to their own identity. It is also responsible for promoting the inclusion of the indigenous group to which a person belongs in national identity documents. The statute sees this as a way to “visualize” people’s belonging to the Mapuche Nation.

This structure of traditional authorities has been one of the most important changes that the Mapuche activists have been able to re-establish within many of the communities that were under the influence of the provincial state before the *Confederación* became autonomous from government influence. While Neuquén created a structure for the communities that followed the model of civic associations (e.g., a president, a vice-president, a secretary, a treasurer), Mapuche activists have claimed that the government structure of each community must respect Mapuche knowledges and traditions.⁸³ Today, each community has its own mechanisms for electing traditional authorities. Some communities, for example, follow more traditional ceremonies while others are less structured. This makes it difficult to generalize on how *gvbamtuwvn* (Parleys) are conducted but this approach to selecting authorities has certainly increased awareness and perhaps encouraged a more positive look into Mapucheness among those community members who were too afraid, too embarrassed, or too threatened by the prospects of becoming (once again) Mapuche.

⁸³ The Mapuche often refer to knowledge in its plural form.

In addition to the recognition of traditional authorities and the principles of representation assigned to them, the statute also includes provisions for the defence of the environment, its *ixofij mogen* (biodiversity), and the principle of collective sustenance. The inclusion of the protection of biodiversity is appropriate for activists because it secures their “cultural projection” as Mapuche peoples in an autonomous territory (CMN 2008). Simply put, Mapuche activists maintain that their existence as a *pueblo nación originario* is dependent upon their access to a territory. The statute, in fact, lists the four main objectives of the Mapuche peoples represented by the *Confederación*:

“1. To secure the ownership, protection, conservation, and sustainable use of our territory, with all its biodiversity (ixofij mogen), waters, air, minerals, and everything else the territory contains. 2. To consolidate the strengthening of its political, normative, and philosophical Mapuche institutions. 3. To guarantee the “cultural projection” of the Mapuche peoples, protecting and developing all their knowledges and collective wisdom. 4. To develop their intellectual or industrial property rights on any element of our territory and our culture. These are collective knowledges, practices, and innovations from our ancestors and they are not to be appropriated.” (CMN 2008, 6)

Accordingly, one of the main concerns emerging from the statute is the level of exploitation of the environment. From a Mapuche perspective, the statute points out, exploitation of these lands should first and foremost ensure that it supplies all requirements to sustain the life cycle as well as the identity of the Mapuche, according to definite *planes de vida* (life projects) that each community elaborates according to specific needs. In some cases, these requirements include the production of healthy foods for self-consumption in order to achieve higher levels of nutrition, health and well-being. The statute warns that food self-sufficiency should not be replaced with “commercial and industrial crops,” especially in the form of transgenic seeds (CMN 2008, 6). Open-pit mining and oil extraction in indigenous territories should also be excluded along the same principles. Finally, and in order to preserve the communal property of indigenous

territories, the statute prohibits the sale, donation, transfer or lease by communities of any portion of their territories to private interests.

While it is clear for activists within the *Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén* that the statute should establish the guidelines for the political representation of the communities in Neuquén, the preparation and reception of the document has faced some considerable challenges. The first obstacle towards Mapuche self-representation, as understood by the CMN and the statute, is the conflictive relationship with the provincial state. In Neuquén, Mapuche authorities in some communities often respond to the whims of the *Movimiento Popular Neuquino* and to its clientelistic incentives in the form of social assistance and handouts, particularly before elections. Despite the understanding by activists that these practices reflect paternalistic assimilationist policies of the past, they are willing not to intervene when families decide to accept the party's assistance because they consider that they would be victimizing the communities twice. Rather, Mapuche activists often try to reach those members of the communities who believe in the political principles of the *Confederación*. By building new alliances with members of communities they do not currently represent, Mapuche activists hope to influence the change of authorities in those communities in the future.

A second obstacle relates to the legal framework within which the CMN has to operate. Each community has to be registered in Neuquén as a non-for-profit civic association in order to be recognized by the province. Despite the constitutional recognition of “indigenous peoples” as the subject of new rights, the legal notion of “community” imposed by the provincial government in the 1970s is still prevalent. Thus, in practice, “community” comes to entail a traditional group of families or neighbours registered by state officials following constitutional rights granted to all citizens, namely that of free association. Instead, Mapuche activists claim that their constitutional rights grant them the freedom to establish their mechanisms of self-representation as a *pueblo nación originario*.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ The provincial decree no. 1184 of 2002 illustrates the historical approach of the local state vis-à-vis the registration of Mapuche communities. According to international conventions (e.g., ILO no. 169) and the

Finally, the quest for political representation of Mapuche communities adds additional challenges for Mapuche activists and the *Confederación*. One of these challenges is how to relate to those communities and activists who have recognized neither the legitimacy of the new generation of Mapuche activists, nor the new objectives of the *Confederación*. To date, this is an open challenge for activists as alliances and the political context change. While the tensions between the “old” generations of Mapuche leaders who maintained close ties to the provincial state and its hegemonic party (i.e., *Movimiento Popular Neuquino*) and the “new” generation that took control over the *Confederación* in 1990 persist, there are also newer sources of conflict. One of them stems from the relation between the *Confederación*, that maintains a critical stance vis-à-vis the Argentinean state, and former members of the “new generation” who have decided to channel their political demands by working within the institutional framework of the state. These members have done so by accepting low-level positions in the federal bureaucracy and by working closely with the Kirchner administration.⁸⁵

In conclusion, since 1990 the *Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén* has become a strong political voice for the Mapuche communities located in the province. The new generation of urban activists that eventually took control over the *Confederación* has been able to articulate a political project for the Mapuche. The *Estatuto Autónomo* is an illustration of those efforts. The political project consists primarily in presenting the Mapuche as a *pueblo nación originario* with the power to relate to the state on a nation-to-nation basis. However, this approach based on cultural differences also makes claims on the state for the implementation of the rights that have been recognized. While there is a tension between both principles, Mapuche activists can now project themselves from a new political position that is based on their autonomy, which in turn depends on controlling

Constitution, indigenous communities should be approached as a matter of public law (similar to the legal principles regulating municipalities, for example). However, the provincial decree continues framing the question of registration of Mapuche communities as a matter of private law (Falaschi et al 2005, 204).

⁸⁵ Most of these activists now working with the federal government remain critical of the provincial government and the *Movimiento Popular Neuquino*.

their ancestral territories. This new position of the *Confederación* has shifted the discussion on “indigenous politics” in Argentina, a country that until recently concentrated its efforts on invisibilizing its indigenous past and present. While there are many ways in which this new type of Mapuche politics translates into specific demands, I focus here on the demands for *interculturalidad* (interculturality) to illustrate the ways in which Mapuche struggles can be re-oriented and made compatible with the perspective of a *pueblo nación originario*.

4.5 *Interculturalidad*. Orienting Mapuche Struggles

In the previous chapters, I have referred to a series of recent reforms by governments that have recognized the multi-ethnic makeup of Argentinean society as well as set out new collective rights for indigenous peoples. Such reforms have been referred to as “multiculturalism.” As such, multiculturalism usually makes reference to the ways in which (liberal) states adapt ethnic differences in society (Kymlicka and Norman 1994). Some authors have focused on a particular dimension of such efforts and have concentrated on the process of constitutional recognition (Van Cott 2000). Multiculturalism, in sum, implies a recognition and tolerance *on the part of the state* towards cultural difference. This study adopts the term “neoliberal multiculturalism” to address both the fact that multiculturalism is a state project and that, as such, this set of reforms must be understood in relation to neoliberal forms of government and citizenship (García 2005; Postero 2007). As a result of the most recent waves of indigenous mobilization in Latin America, Mapuche activists have adopted an alternative discourse that challenges multiculturalism; numerous organizations now speak of *interculturalidad* (interculturality). Despite it being a contested term (García 2005), activists generally understand *interculturalidad* as a more horizontal form to relate to non-indigenous

peoples and the state.⁸⁶ Rather than relying on a vertical (i.e., top-down) recognition of cultural differences by the state, activists use *interculturalidad* to address social change with the goal of transforming society through very specific projects, such as education reform which in turn may include bilingual or bicultural education from the bottom up. According to Walter Mignolo (2005), indigenous intellectuals and activists introduced *interculturalidad* in projects of bilingual education of the *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador* (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, CONAIE). Mignolo sees *interculturalidad* and bilingual education as attempts made by indigenous peoples to “decolonize knowledge” and as philosophical mechanisms that put into collaboration “two different logics (indigenous and non-indigenous) for the good of all” (2005, 118). In contrast to the hegemonic tendencies of multiculturalism which reduce knowledge, education, political economy and morality to forms of state control, *interculturalidad* means, according to Mignolo, “that there are two distinct cosmologies at work, Western and Indigenous” thus representing a “radical claim” of indigenous “epistemic rights, which are different from cultural rights (2005, 119). While the former challenge our ways of knowing the world, the latter simply addresses tolerance of ethnic difference. The author concludes explaining *interculturalidad* in the following terms:

“Through interculturalidad [...], the claim is made for the right of Indigenous people to co-participate in the making of the state and in education. It is not a claim for simple recognition [...] that begs for acceptance into a nation in which they [...] do not have a place because their position on the margins, precisely, defines the limits of the modern nation. Instead, interculturalidad would lead to a pluri-cultural state with more than one valid cosmology” (Mignolo 2005, 120).

Studying *interculturalidad* in Peru, María Elena García defines the term as “the *practice* of a multiculturalism in which citizens reach across cultural and linguistic differences to

⁸⁶ According to some indigenous activists, “respectful relationships between and among different cultural groups in the country” (quoted in García 2005, 3).

imagine a democratic community. In that vein, bilingual intercultural education is the mechanism par excellence used to foster intercultural unity out of multicultural difference” (2005, 3).⁸⁷ One activist of the *Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén* (CMN) has explained the concept of *interculturalidad* as follows:

“To begin with, the proposal for an intercultural education that we as Mapuche peoples recommend has to do with the recognition that there are different rights (“derechos diferentes”). We cannot speak of intercultural education if we do not admit first that indigenous peoples have rights that have to be respected, recognized, and applied. There are three fundamental rights that provide the basis of interculturalismo: our right as peoples (“el derecho a ser un pueblo”), the right to have a territory, and the right to exercise autonomy within that territory” (quoted in Moyano 2007, 3).

Besides helping to clarify what Mapuche activists understand by *interculturalismo*, this quote serves to show how the concept is also related to the *Confederación*’s focus to present Mapuche demands as a *pueblo nación originario*. Furthermore, activists transform such a political approach to cultural difference in more specific ways. One of such ways is engaging with non-Mapuche society and the state. For this, they adopt the language of *interculturalismo* and a focus on bilingual education. Finally, the understanding of Mapuche demands in this context comes full circle when activists link both their position as a *pueblo nación originario* and *interculturalidad* to their quest for territorial autonomy: as peoples, the Mapuche argue they need to control the territories they inhabit according to their own cultural principles. In the next few paragraphs I outline these three ways in which *interculturalidad* relates to contemporary Mapuche activism in Neuquén.

⁸⁷ For a treatment of interculturality as a site of conflict and contestation in Argentina, see Tamagno (2009).

For Mapuche activists, language has always been a central component of their culture. Indeed, *Mapuzugun* (literally, the language of the land) has been identified as crucial for the survival of Mapuche as a people and the strongest cultural marker of Mapucheness. It also serves to consolidate the nation-to-nation treatment that Mapuche activists envision in their negotiation and interaction with non-Mapuche society as well as the state. In contemporary Neuquén, the area in which the struggles over the use of *Mapuzugun* took place has been public education. Thus, while both the state and Mapuche activists have embraced bilingual education, each one of them sees such approach in very different ways to accomplish very different aims.

The province of Neuquén has been implementing the Mapuche Language and Culture Teaching Program since 2001 in elementary schools with the goal of preserving the “language and culture” of Mapuche communities. The Program, in turn, recognizes that language is the “vehicle for cultural expression” and that the state must assume the “responsibility to preserve indigenous culture” (Mapuche Language and Culture Teaching Program, quoted in Falaschi et al 2005, 211). In the context in which this Program emerged, it can also be seen as the state response to the increasing demands of *interculturalidad* by Mapuche activists within the *Confederación* in 2000 (Falaschi 2005, 211). Since its inception, the Program has received the criticism of Mapuche activists for ignoring the demands of *interculturalism* as well as subverting any attempts by Mapuche leaders to participate in the design and implementation of education reform that have Mapuche communities as their main targets. According to activists, the Program has ignored *interculturalism* altogether and has only included *Mapuzugun* as one more subject with one or two-hours of weekly instruction (Falaschi 2005, 213).

Mapuche organizations have implemented *interculturalism* in educational initiatives outside the school system. The *Centro de Educación Mapuche Norgylamtuleayñ* (Centre of Mapuche Education), established by the *Confederación*, for example, focuses on teaching *Mapuzugun* as part of a broader political strategy in order to “rescue” the language to secure Mapuche self-determination (Falaschi et al 2005, 214). By implementing these strategies, activists counter the hegemonic tendencies of the local state to incorporate Mapuche issues in a “subordinated manner”, ignoring current

conflicts between the state and Mapuche peoples and placing Mapuche culture and identity in a distant past, linked to rural areas and embedded in tradition (Falaschi et al 2005, 215; Szulc 2009).⁸⁸

Finally, by demanding a new framework of negotiation between Mapuche peoples and the state, *interculturalidad* also orients current struggles over territorial autonomy. Thus, activists do not separate their goal of *interculturalidad* from demands of territorial autonomy and self-representation. They claim, for instance, that autonomy can be exercised only under conditions of indigenous control over the territories they inhabit so it is only after such control is guaranteed by the state that they can fully achieve an *intercultural* society in which co-existence and mutual respect overcome simple tolerance of cultural difference, as is the case under state-sponsored multiculturalism. As one activist puts it, “to be able to speak our language, we need a territory; *Mapuzugun* means the ‘language of the land’ after all” (quoted in Arias and Granieri 2007, 8).

In conclusion, *interculturalidad* is one way in which Mapuche activists translate the new approach to negotiating their demands for territorial autonomy with the state, that is, a nation-to-nation approach that is based on the cultural differences between Argentinean society and a *pueblo nación originario*. While *interculturalidad* may often adopt “utopian” overtones in the discourses of indigenous intellectuals and activists, in practice *interculturalidad* serves to orient struggles towards territorial autonomy. In other words, *interculturalidad* has the potential to “prepare” non-Mapuche society to accept that co-existence involves the recognition of Mapuche territories under their own control. In the past few years, Mapuche activists have taken *interculturalidad* outside of the “classic” milieu of public education. Indeed they have started to think about new ways to adopt an

⁸⁸ A key activist of *interculturalidad* within the *Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén* explains the tensions between state-sponsored bilingual education programs and Mapuche conceptions of an intercultural education: “Our children enter the classroom speaking Spanish. Thus, the conditions for the consolidation of an autonomous education and the transformation of the education system must take place if we want to accomplish an intercultural education. As a result, we need to elaborate a new approach to education than the one implemented today by the provincial government. They use the help of Mapuche brothers but they are not changing the structure of the education system. Thus, [the school programs] simply use our language to reinforce the process of colonization in the school system, emphasizing only the folkloric aspects of Mapuche peoples” (quoted in Arias and Granieri 2007, 7).

intercultural approach to new projects, such as the plans to create the first Mapuche Intercultural University or *barrios interculturales* (intercultural neighbourhoods). While both projects initiated by Mapuche activists within the *Confederación* and local leaders from the communities have not been able to “take off” due to lack of state support and lack of funding, they are meant to transform the relationship between Mapuche and non-Mapuche societies from one of limited tolerance at best, and open mistrust and racism at worst, to one of mutual co-existence and acceptance.

4.6 Conclusion: Between carrying the intentions and desires of “*los antiguos*” and being a “bad” Mapuche

Like many other indigenous peoples, the Mapuche have always privileged oral tradition to transmit the wisdom and knowledge(s) acquired throughout the centuries from generation to generation. Thus for contemporary Mapuche activists, interest in the teachings of “*los antiguos* (ancestors) has increased since they began mobilization along the lines of cultural difference. Many activists see contemporary mobilization as the continuation of past struggles in which the ancestors resisted the expansion of colonial forces or of the post-independence state. Moreover, activists have been able to connect the goals of territorial autonomy with the need for Mapuche peoples, for example, to recover the burial grounds where their ancestors rest.

As stated earlier in this chapter, collective identities do not emerge in a vacuum. Since they are the result of shared experiences and mutual negotiation amongst social groups, collective identities mutate and change over time. For the new generation of Mapuche activists, current struggles for territorial autonomy are connected to the resistance of their ancestors more than a century ago against the encroachment of the state on their territories. Thus, contemporary activism is seen as recuperating the “lost” tradition of resistance of past generations. From the perspective of the state, however, the connection that activists make to that historical moment of resistance is misguided and it is indicative

of a “bad Mapuche” that leads to the criminalization of their demands, something that is addressed in some detail in chapter six in the context of territorial re-occupations.

Furthermore, leaders of the *Confederación* today link their model of political representation and organization to the attempts by *longko* (leader) Kalfvcurá to form a confederation of Mapuche societies in the first half of the nineteenth century.⁸⁹ For many activists, Kalfvcurá, seen as a great leader and a hero (also, as the “last Mapuche emperor of Pampa and Patagonia”) from the time when the Mapuche were a free and independent nation, symbolizes the continuity between current and past struggles for territorial autonomy and a nation-to-nation treatment. Kalfvcurá has been praised for his diplomatic skills in negotiating treaties with Argentinean authorities.

Claiming some connection to ancestors like Kalfvcurá, the new generation of leaders, question the practices of some community elders and former leaders of Mapuche communities. According to contemporary activists, these elders and former leaders have until recently allowed too much interference by the state in the internal affairs of the communities, particularly by accepting the patron-client relationship between the communities and political parties, such as the *Movimiento Popular Neuquino*, for example. Despite these tensions between contemporary activists and former authorities, the *Confederación* (CMN) serves as an intermediary between many rural communities and the state. The main difference between this new form of activism and previous forms of political representation is that the relationship between Mapuche political authorities and state officials is currently not taking place within a framework of collaboration, but

⁸⁹ Kalfvcurá (also known as Juan Calfvcurá) was a Mapuche *logko* (chief) in the nineteenth century. In 1830, Kalfvcurá entered into a political alliance with then Buenos Aires governor, Juan Manuel de Rosas, in order to fight other indigenous societies in the Pampas. By 1835, Kalfvcurá was well established in the region of *Salinas Grandes*, located in part today’s provinces of Buenos Aires and La Pampa, and started forming a Confederation of indigenous communities. In the next decade, Kalfvcurá’s influence extended across Northern Patagonia, having control over two key components of nineteenth century economy: salt (used mostly for preserving beef) and trade routes amongst indigenous societies. This influence allowed Kalfvcurá and his allies to resist (and fight against) the attempts of the central government to expand its area of influence and control. The Argentinean army and its indigenous allies defeated Kalfvcurá in 1872, under the presidency of Domingo F. Sarmiento. The *logko* died in 1873 and six years later, during the Conquest of the Desert campaign, his dead body was taken to the National Museum of La Plata. Mapuche activists have claimed, since 2002, the restitution of Kalfvcurá’s remains.

rather under deepening tensions and ongoing conflict. Despite these tensions, however, and as the following chapter shows, activism within the *Confederación* has served to articulate and sometimes solve conflicting claims between Mapuche activists and the local state, as the struggles for the recognition of indigenous rights in the provincial constitution of Neuquén illustrate. Thus, the importance of the CMN as a channel of communication between the communities and state institutions should not be underestimated. At the same time, however, one needs to keep in mind that while the *Confederación* provides the only formal mechanism of representation for Mapuche communities, there are some communities and a minority of Mapuche activists in Neuquén who remain outside the *Confederación*. Those communities, in fact, may continue to work closely with the local state, its *Movimiento Popular Neuquino*, or other organizations.

Chapter 5

5 Accommodated Citizenship. New Spaces for Mapuche activism

Spaces for indigenous participation within the institutional framework of the state are central to neoliberal multiculturalism. Mapuche activism in Neuquén makes clear that such spaces are created through different political strategies. This chapter focuses on the ways in which Mapuche activism in Neuquén has been able to extract a certain degree of recognition from the state. It also addresses the new spaces for participation that have become available for Mapuche peoples within the institutional structure of the state. In Argentina, the recognition of indigenous rights has not been easy for indigenous peoples. Indeed the main approach of the state to indigenous issues has been predominantly one of historical invisibility in public discourse as well as in state policies aimed at assimilation of indigenous populations. While institutions were created to deal with indigenous issues, they have been placed in rather obscure and subordinated levels of the state bureaucracy. Furthermore, such institutionalization has often responded to broader issues of security and defence or they have been part of the social question agenda. In other words, they have hardly been part of an open recognition of specific needs based on cultural diversity. Yet, in the last three decades, indigenous mobilization in Argentina gained increased relevance and visibility.

Indigenous activists and their communities have become political actors in their own right, engaging with the state in new ways and addressing the limitations of existing models of citizenship. The 1994 Constitution, which recognizes the multiethnic composition of the nation and grants new rights to indigenous peoples, represents a considerable departure from the previous politics of invisibility. This recognition, however, took place at a moment in which the Argentinean state was consolidating new forms of citizenship along the lines of the neoliberalism described earlier. Neoliberal

multiculturalism highlights the tensions that exist between a process of formal recognition of indigenous rights and the transformations that occur in the relationship between state and indigenous peoples along the lines of neoliberal citizenship. Furthermore, neoliberal multiculturalism has opened up new possibilities for the exercise of citizenship because it assumes that indigenous subjectivities can be transformed in accordance with the logic of neoliberalism. Finally, as a form of government, neoliberal multiculturalism privileges the capacity of citizens to become responsible for their own social inclusion. In sum, the exercise of citizenship (indigenous or otherwise) reorganizes social responsibility in a manner that is compatible with the status quo and in a way that avoids social conflict. In this context, political demands for redistribution or reallocation of wealth become illegitimate. Thus, states often ignore indigenous activism that focuses on reallocation of resources (e.g., territorial autonomy) while privileging indigenous engagement in specific projects that states often control.

Recognition, accommodation, and also the appropriation of languages of resistance are the result of what anthropologist Charles Hale (2002) has in mind when he describes neoliberal multiculturalism as a cultural project that welcomes indigenous rights *as long as* they do not threaten the authority of the state or its development regime. The key emphasis of neoliberal multiculturalism is on having citizens govern themselves in a “modern” and “rational” way. When indigenous activism creates conflict, neoliberalism offers social and political exclusion. In a study on the ways in which the World Bank language of participation is used as a form of government, Susanne Schech and Sanjutta vas Dev (2007 175), refer to accommodation as those “new spaces” that are embedded in existing power relations. But these authors also argue that these power relations can always be “destabilized by alternative discourses and practices,” even when these alternative discourses and practices run the risk of being incorporated by the institutions that have created such new spaces. In sum, accommodation carries the tensions that exist between being “invited” to participate (or to be “consulted”) and claiming a space to contest the limitations of existing states and forms of citizenship.

Throughout this chapter, I show how Mapuche activists have secured and taken advantage of new spaces of participation that, albeit limited, have provided these activists

and the communities they seek to represent with a new platform to strengthen their claims of territorial autonomy (the focus of the following chapter). Despite the compatibility of neoliberal multiculturalism with new spaces that guarantee the participation of indigenous peoples, however, this chapter also demonstrates how the creation of such spaces is not taken for granted by Mapuche activists as each new opportunity to engage with the state takes place in a wider context of ongoing conflict.

The reform of Neuquén's Constitution, the negotiation between Mapuche communities and the federal government under the incorporation of the former in the management of the Lanín National Park, and the ways in which Mapuche activists used the Programa de Desarrollo de Comunidades Indígenas (Development of Indigenous Communities Programme, DCI in Spanish) to expand the reach of a local radio station to benefit Mapuche communities in the region, serve to illustrate the complex nature of indigenous demands and state responses under multicultural neoliberalism.

5.1 “Indigenous” or “Mapuche”? The politics of recognition in the Neuquén's Constitution

For the most part, indigenous policy-making in Argentina takes place at the provincial level given the constitutional mandate of provinces to legislate on issues of education, health, and land registration. Furthermore, the 1994 Constitution transferred control over natural resources from federal to provincial jurisdiction. Since then, provinces define which kind of use these areas are subjected to. Thus, for example, the province of Neuquén has acquired the power to legislate over natural resources such as minerals, natural gas, and hydrocarbons. The exploitation of these resources, alongside other economic activities such as forestry, water management, and tourism often take place in areas which indigenous peoples either live in or use for their subsistence. Since the second half of the twentieth century, the exploitation of these natural resources has given the province an impressive amount of wealth in comparison to the rest of the country.

This prosperity, however, has not changed the living conditions of Mapuche communities, particularly those located near or within the territories where such resources are located. Indeed, Mapuche activists condemn the provincial state for sanctioning economic activities that do not benefit their communities and also for making such living conditions worse. Thus, this gap between the economic prosperity shown in official statistics and the reality of everyday life in Mapuche communities also serves as the background for Mapuche mobilization surrounding the constitutional reform in 2006.

In Neuquén, Mapuche activism was key for obtaining the recognition of indigenous rights in the provincial constitution in 2006. Neuquén's first constitution was established in 1957, two years after the National Territory of Neuquén was designated as a new province of Argentina. In comparison to its federal counterpart of 1853, the provincial constitution contained articles that included somewhat progressive aims.⁹⁰ These included planning and development institutions under the authority of the governor's office, the inclusion of the text of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the recognition of the "social function" of land, the establishment of economic and social rights, and the possibility of referendums (Bucciarelli et al. 1993). These provisions, in turn, proved to be key for the ongoing support of the *Movimiento Popular Neuquino* (MPN), the political party that has dominated Neuquén's politics since the election of governor Elías Sapag in 1962. An intricate system of patronage established with rural communities and selected families ensured the support of many Mapuche.

When the provincial legislature declared its intention to reform the provincial constitution in October 2004 and called for elections in October 2005 to form the Constitutional Convention, broad sectors of civil society including the unemployed, unions, neighbourhood associations, and Mapuche activists used the opportunity to engage in the process. Such engagement took the form of mobilization in the streets and alliances with opposition parties to counteract the government's official agenda of reform. The outcome

⁹⁰ The constitutional reform of 1949 under Perón's government included many socially progressive articles as well. However, the constitution was abolished in 1955 by the military dictatorship that ousted Perón.

of this mobilization was the reform of the provincial Constitution on February 17, 2006 in terms that did not exactly match the expectations of Neuquén's governor, Jorge Sobisch, and his party, the *Movimiento Popular Neuquino* (MPN), such as the intention to give the province the power to give concessions to the private sector for the exploitation of natural resources or the restrictions of indigenous rights to matters of “respect of ethnic and cultural identity of indigenous peoples of the province within the principle of equality under the law” and the right to a “multicultural and bilingual” education (Rodríguez Duch 2006).

In terms of indigenous recognition, the reform echoes the federal Constitution in its recognition of indigenous peoples “of Neuquén” as a fundamental component of the identity and uniqueness of the province. Arguably, the constitutional recognition of this identity also entails the legal obligation of the state to respect Mapuche forms of government, autonomy, and other institutions of self-representation. Thus, despite the centrality of Mapuche peoples in the province's history, including references to the contributions of the “Mapuche race” in official discourses of regional identity, until 2006 Neuquén did not have an explicit legal framework giving special rights to its indigenous population. However, Mapuche communities have also realized that this recognition does not always translate into effective policies that address their main concerns. In some cases, this lack of support stems from the government's refusal to bring into practice existing legal commitments. By ratifying ILO Convention 169, for example, the state assumed many new responsibilities vis-à-vis indigenous populations. Amongst these, Mapuche activism has centred on demanding from the state the implementation of consultation mechanisms in cases where development projects affect indigenous communities. In other cases, the gap between the recognition of rights and their implementation is clear when governments react to indigenous mobilization by criminalizing their actions. This juridicialization of Mapuche activism is described in more detail in the following chapter as it is often activated in cases of land reoccupations.

The mobilization by the Mapuche to gain the recognition of indigenous rights in the provincial constitution offers a good illustration of the ways in which the *Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén* mobilizes its supporters and articulates its demands for territorial

autonomy. Rather than blunt resistance to the state, Mapuche activists engage in a process of complex negotiations and exchanges, even when conflict and violence persist. In the case of the constitutional reform, activists were quick to propose to the Constitutional Convention in charge of modifying the text that it specifically recognize the presence of “Mapuche peoples”, a move that went beyond the recognition of “indigenous peoples of Neuquén” (*pueblos indígenas neuquinos*). For the Mapuche, the wording was relevant as they try to transform the ways in which the relationship between Mapuche and the state is described. In this sense, contemporary Mapuche activism is projected in terms of the demands of a *pueblo nación originario* and no longer of an “ethnic” minority. Thus, Mapuche activists believe that having the recognition of the state as *pueblo originario Mapuche* can facilitate the establishment of territorial autonomy, including the respect and recognition of the following: a Mapuche ancestral territory (*waj mapu*); Mapuche rural communities as “territorial entities” under the jurisdiction of Mapuche “philosophical” (traditional) authorities; the figure of *logko* as state authority; a Mapuche education system (*nor kimvn*) and interculturality (*interculturalidad*) as a main goal for Neuquén’s education system; the ownership and control of Mapuche peoples over their natural resources; protection of Mapuche medicine (*baweh*) and ancestral knowledges; a Mapuche justice system within its territories (*nor feleal*); the Mapuche flag as a “cultural symbol” (*wenufoye*), an organ of political representation and legislation (*meli wixan mapu*); the free, prior, and informed consent by the Mapuche to all projects involving the exploitation of resources within Mapuche territory; and finally, the recognition of Mapuzugun as official language of Neuquén (CMN 2006b).

Thus, in terms of recognition, the differences in the wordings of the government’s project and the CMN proposal show the tensions and contradictions that exist in Neuquén as a result of the contradictory ways in which the Mapuche have been incorporated into modern Argentina. In its proposal, the provincial government sought to designate Neuquén’s “aboriginal (rural) communities” as symbols of a pre-existing culture *from the past* that contributed to the formation of provincial and regional identities (Briones 2005). In this context, the *Movimiento Popular Neuquino* has been opposed to the inclusion of the terms “Mapuche” and “peoples” in the constitution, arguing that by doing so the state

legitimizes potential claims of territorial secession from present-time activists who are no longer seen as legitimate by the state. Others have claimed that by explicitly recognizing the existence of the Mapuche in Neuquén as the only pre-existing indigenous peoples, the state would give “too much” to an indigenous group that is seen as “Chilean” and foreign in “Argentinean Patagonia.”⁹¹

While in international law (e.g., United Nations Charter) the notion of “peoples” has carried specific connotations such as political sovereignty and state self-determination, other legislation, such as ILO Convention 169 and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of 2007, incorporate indigenous peoples’ right to free determination *within* the framework of the existing states they currently inhabit. Armed with the idea that self-determination (e.g., autonomy within the existing state) is a pre-requisite for exercising self-representation and control over their natural resources located in indigenous territory, Mapuche activists claimed that the government’s proposal did not include the legal basis for such claims that the Mapuche can make as “peoples.” Furthermore, by simply recognizing “aboriginal communities”, activists within the *Confederación* (CMN) fear that the proposed wording would simply serve as a “testimonial element” of Neuquén’s past –that is, a conception of “communities” as survivors of a distant past, with traditions that are worth tolerating as long as they do not interfere with the present. Moreover, according to activists, the official project negated the present condition of Mapuche peoples and their organizations, including their current demands and struggles. In short, by proposing the recognition in the Constitution of a “*pueblo nación originario Mapuche*,” activists within the *Confederación* (CMN) sought to secure a language, and a framework, more conducive to territorial autonomy. With this objective in mind, the CMN went onto the streets of Neuquén city to demand from the elected representatives of the Constitutional Convention that they include the recognition of the pre-existence of Mapuche peoples and their forms of organization in the new Constitution. For that occasion, the CMN presented a counter-proposal of reform to all

⁹¹ This point was elaborated in more detail in Chapter 3 in relation to the “Araucanization of the Pampas” position, which claims that the Mapuche are not a pre-existing indigenous people *of* Argentina but *of* Chile. For an academic rebuttal of this position, see Lazzari and Lenton (2003).

political parties involved in the convention. The *Confederación* proposed that the Constitution recognize the pre-existence of the “*pueblo nación originario Mapuche*”, its right to cultural identity, as well as to political, social, and economic organization through its own institutions of self-representation.

The decision to take to the streets of Neuquén city responded, in part, to the broader context within which the process of constitutional reform was taking place. This process was initiated after the provincial legislature passed the “need for constitutional reform” law in October 2004, and provided an opportunity for the *Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén* (CMN) and other social movements to showcase their demands and oppose the official plans. They did so by public demonstrations and by establishing alliances with opposition parties to work on alternative projects of reform. In alliance with other social movements and political parties, the CMN presented its own project for consideration during the debates about reforms, once the election of delegates for the Constitutional Convention was completed. The decision of the CMN to present its own project concerning the recognition of indigenous peoples and rights in the Constitutional Convention came after long debates given that, initially, opposition parties and other social movements were opposed to the reform. Many of these social movements and opposition parties decided to mobilize later. However, Mapuche activists saw new opportunities for mobilization immediately. In the words of the CMN, “The decision was not simple because the call for reform was a historical opportunity we always demanded. Being part of this reform raised concerns from other social sectors that we were being functional allies to Sobisch’s strategy [Neuquén’s governor] and that we would break the plans of the opposition, which was to oppose the reform. However, the position of the Traditional Mapuche Authorities that met in *gvbamtuwvn* (Parliament) was clear: No to Sobisch’s plans and yes to Mapuche [rights’] incorporation in a new constitution. The outcomes were uncertain but we were going to be protagonists of our own future.” (2006b, 4)

According to Mapuche activists, the debates around the constitutional reform also provided an opportunity to oppose the governor’s neoliberal agenda, particularly in

relation to the privatization of natural resources.⁹² In the words of one of the Mapuche leaders involved in this mobilization, the context of the constitutional reform,

“... Opened a space to question the politics of negation that affect us as peoples in this province and an opportunity to debate the rights of our people and the defencelessness they encounter in relation to, for example, our natural resources. It is not a mistake to assume that this reform is the result of the interest of [governor] Sobisch to bring provincial legislation closer to his interests, especially in those matters related to the exploitation of natural resources and the privatization of energy sources such as oil, in opposition to federal legislation. Sobisch recently extended, until 2027, the concession of oil extraction for REPSOL-YPF, an unconstitutional measure that he seeks to legitimate today by reforming the constitution.” (Jorge Nahuel, quoted in Cayuqueo 2006)

Thus, control over natural resources, and oil in particular, was an important contentious issue during the constitutional reform. In the presentation of the official project of constitutional reform, governor Sobisch introduced oil companies as “strategic allies” for the province. Thus, by modifying the Constitution, Sobisch’s political party sought to give the provincial government the legal power to authorize the exploitation of hydrocarbons or private or mixed (i.e., private/state) corporations, ending the exclusivity that federal authorities have on this matter. Moreover, the official project attempted to limit the legal responsibilities that oil companies had vis-à-vis the local communities where they operate (Cayuqueo 2006). In this context of increasing conflict over government’s proposals, Mapuche activists mobilized to prevent what could constitute, in

⁹² The first Sobisch administration (1991-1995) is often described as a re-alignment of the *Movimiento Popular Neuquino* (MPN) to the ideas of “modernization” embedded in the neoliberal project of the federal government under Carlos Menem (1989-1999). The so-called “white current” within the MPN, under Sobisch’s leadership, sought to create an alternative to the dominance of the Sapag family since the emergence of the party in the 1960s. While the MPN traditionally supported the principles of federalism, provincial autonomy, and the defense the province’s interests in its national resources, Sobisch supported the federal government in its policies, including the privatization of YPF, the national oil company with a strong presence in Neuquén (Mombello 2005).

their view, an attempt by the provincial government to privatize natural resources. Since the discovery of oil in the late 1970s, the provincial government (for the most part under the control of the *Movimiento Popular Neuquino*) has considered hydrocarbons a key source of income and a strategic resource for development efforts and this reform finally gave Neuquén the possibility of re-establishing an alliance between provincial authorities and private oil companies. Mapuche activists, however, saw the government's attempt to modify the Constitution as a way to secure individual or sector-specific gains.

The relative, initial optimism with which the constitutional reform process began in October 2004 soon disappeared when the Constitutional Assembly started deliberations a year later on December 16, 2005. Between that time and January 7, 2006 the Assembly received 141 proposals and declarations and 21 individual (personal) petitions according to the guidelines of the law that passed the need for reform. According to the reform process, for the next 20 days, these proposals could receive treatment in commissions and if approved they would be debated in the plenary sessions. Only then, could it be decided if a project approved by a commission was to be incorporated into the new constitution. Following these procedural rules, on January 5, the *Confederación* (CMN) presented its own project invoking the constitutional right of indigenous peoples to be consulted over all matters pertaining to them. On January 19, a meeting took place for the first time between the leaders of CMN and members of the Constitutional Assembly (CMN 2006; CMN 2006b). This meeting provided a new opportunity for Mapuche activists within the CMN to explain their proposal, which had been elaborated in the previous year in consultation with Mapuche communities in a series of workshops and roundtables. By agreeing to the meeting, Mapuche activists demonstrated once again their capacity to negotiate and demand from the state a new form of relationship towards indigenous peoples. In this case, CMN activists demanded once again the recognition of the Mapuche as a *pueblo nación originario* with its own forms of organization and cosmovisions.

On January 27, the channels of communication finally broke after a violent confrontation between activists and police forces that took place when Mapuche leaders attempted to enter the building where the Constitutional Assembly was in session. First, activists

objected to the fact that the debate was centred on the recognition of “indigenous communities” instead of “Mapuche peoples.” Second, they also argued that the project under consideration did not contemplate Mapuche ownership over their own territories, nor the right to self-representation. During the debates, Mapuche leaders were not allowed to enter the building where the Constitutional Convention was in session. However, some *kona* (warriors) who had press accreditation were able to keep the CMN informed, in real time, about the official plans of the convention. The *Confederación* put it in the these terms:

“Faced with a Convention mired in secrecy, it was necessary to find a way to enter the building where Mapuche rights were threatened. Thus, the kona played a fundamental role. Like in the past when our young warriors infiltrated military posts to study the moves of the enemy, they carried out a similar task today. Except that today bows and arrows are not necessary. Today, they were armed with a voice recorder, a camera, a video recorder, and their accreditation as journalists. They also had the confidence that we could leave in the hands of the winka our rights and existence. It was the result of this infiltration that it was possible to know each intention of the Constitutional Convention.” (CMN 2006b, 8)

Finally, in their view, the emphasis of the reform project on “multiculturalism” negated the existence of the Mapuche as a *pueblo diferente* (different people), and equated them in practice with other instances of social organization in the province. They insisted they be recognized as a people with the right to their own cultural identity, territory, and autonomy (self-representation). Thus, with tensions increasing over the direction of the discussions in the constitutional assembly, the outcome of the reform in relation to the recognition of indigenous rights was uncertain.

If the momentary collapse of talks over the recognition of indigenous peoples was not enough to alter the outcome of the constitutional reform, the Mapuche opposition to the attempted economic reforms, particularly in the area of hydrocarbons, led to the decision by the *Movimiento Popular Neuquino* to drop the debate on the issue even though it was

central to the governor's project. Thus despite the broad goals of the reform project, the final constitutional text was to be much narrower in scope and this was in part the result of the show of force and determination by Mapuche activists. They succeeded in politicizing the process of constitutional reform.

In the end, however, a sort of intermediate route prevailed in terms of the recognition of indigenous rights. In the days prior to the final decision on the inclusion of indigenous rights, the CMN together with other social organizations organized a parallel convention called the Plenary for Excluded Rights to keep the attention on issues that the official convention was not debating behind closed doors. The sessions of the alternative convention took place on the campus of the National University of Comahue, metres away from where the convention was sitting, and it included organizations that were excluded from the ongoing debates. The group included state employees, workers of recuperated factories, university students, human rights groups (e.g., *Asamblea por los Derechos Humanos*), Neuquén's bishop, groups for the rights of persons with disabilities, employees of National Parks, peace Nobel laureate Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, film-maker and presidential candidate Fernando "Pino" Solanas, the president of the National Institute for Indigenous Affairs (Dr. Jorge Rodríguez), and the president of the Commission of Indigenous Jurists (Dr. Eulogio Freites). After learning that the constitutional convention did not include the proposals concerning the recognition of indigenous rights, social movement leaders and their allies marched to the site and were finally allowed to enter the building while the delegates were in session. In this context, delegates decided to postpone the convention one more day in order to debate exclusively the CMN proposal. The final text of article 53, which includes the recognition of indigenous rights in the provincial constitution, was thus the result of hours of intense debate and negotiation in a context of increasing tensions and social mobilization.

Between activists demanding the recognition of "Mapuche peoples" and the official projects supporting the recognition of "indigenous communities", the final constitutional text included the recognition of *pueblos indígenas neuquinos* (indigenous peoples of Neuquén). Despite reservations, CMN activists accepted the outcome, which recognized their pre-existence for the first time in the province's history. The CMN describes the

moment where they learned that the delegates had agreed on a text that included the recognition of indigenous rights:

“It is not possible to describe the emotions, the tears, and the self-contained rage that pu logko and pu werken felt when Oscar Nahuel [a delegate representing the opposition] came to the ruka Newen Mapu [the CMN’s headquarters in Neuquén city] with the final text approved by the convention [...] These days are of joy, of reaffirmation, and of projection in Nvwken Mapu (Neuquén), in Puel Mapu, in Gulu Mapu, in short, in each point of the Wajmapuce where the pride of being a nation (Nación Originaria) that struggles for its liberation emerges.” (CMN 2006b, 9)

In its article 53, the Constitution says that:

“The province recognizes the ethnic and cultural pre-existence of Neuquén’s indigenous peoples as a fundamental part of provincial identity and uniqueness. It guarantees respect of their identity and the right to a bilingual and intercultural education. The province will recognize the legal status (personería jurídica) of its communities and the communitarian property of the lands that they traditionally occupy, and it will regulate the provision of other apt and sufficient land for human development. These lands will be inalienable, non-transferrable and exempt from any tax or injunction. It will also secure their participation in the management of their natural resources and other matters that concern them, and it will promote positive actions in their favour.” (Tribunal Superior de Justicia of Neuquén March 3, 2006)

It serves as more than an anecdote, particularly after the incidents involving police brutality, to note that at the moment of the approval of this reform one of the delegates of the convention invited the *logko* of the *Confederación* to address the convention. The MPN and its allies, however, blocked this possibility, something that illustrates, for the Mapuche, the unwillingness of the provincial government to engage in a debate with them as equal peoples. Despite the obstacles of the process, Mapuche activists claimed

their first political victory since their organization within the CMN. The CMN considers that the provincial constitution improves the recognition of the national constitution in three main areas: first, the articles with the recognition are included in the “Declarations, Rights, and Guarantees” section of the provincial constitution and not as part of the prerogatives of Congress as in the national constitution. This gives article 53 operative powers with immediate legal effect. In other words, there is no need for the Legislature to pass legislation to implement article 53. Second, the provincial constitution includes the promotion of “positive actions” which implies not only the recognition of rights but also the obligation to enforce them. Finally, the recognition of indigenous peoples, which in Neuquén means the Mapuche peoples – the Province can no longer establish who is indigenous and who is not -, as a “fundamental part of provincial identity and uniqueness” gives the CMN the legitimacy to establish guidelines for *interculturalidad* (CMN 2006b). Furthermore, this victory is the outcome of years of organization, a reaffirmation of new forms of cultural identity within the communities and with the rest of the population, the support most communities have given to the political and juridical position of the CMN in numerous workshops, and the alliance established with other social organizations in Neuquén.

5.2 Accommodation: New spaces for participation in National Parks

As the previous section shows, recognition of indigenous rights in the provincial constitution has not been easy for Mapuche activists. Indeed the constitutional recognition of indigenous rights “from above” was, in part, the result of mobilization and struggles “from below.” But the acceptance by the state of Mapuche demands for indigenous rights in constitutional reform can also be seen as the continuation of a tradition that sees the provincial government using Mapucheness as a way of reaffirming a distinct regional identity, a move which in turn has facilitated electoral support for the *Movimiento Popular Neuquino* (Briones 2005). Beyond the intentions behind the

constitutional recognition of indigenous rights, it is important to discuss other venues in which the relationship between indigenous peoples and the state takes shape in order to explore the complexities that still prevail and the tensions that exist when Mapuche activists advance their claims for territorial autonomy in a context of negotiation with and resistance to the state. Two cases illustrate these tensions very clearly: the co-management project of the Lanín National Park; and the appropriation of an official development project, sponsored by the World Bank and supported by the state, for political purposes, namely the redefinition of a community radio station (FM Pochullo) into a powerful communication tool (AM Wajzugun). While the co-management project is the focus of this section, the creation of Wajzugun radio station is explored in the next.

In contemporary Patagonia, conservation areas under the jurisdiction of National Parks have become a complex scenario for indigenous participation. Indeed, many of the territories included in these areas serve today as the main stage where negotiation, exchanges, and conflict between the Mapuche and state institutions take place. Many of these complexities are the result of the historical context within which the National Parks system emerged. In Northern Patagonia, for example, the creation of protected areas is deeply connected to the military expansion over territories under Mapuche control that took place in the late nineteenth century. While one of its most enthusiastic proponents, Francisco Pascasio Moreno, emphasized the need to protect some natural landscapes from human activities, the creation of National Parks responded to geopolitical considerations as well, including the need to exercise direct state control over Mapuche communities. Thus, since their creation, National Parks have restricted the use of those territories under its jurisdiction, leading in many circumstances to the expulsion of Mapuche communities living in those areas.

After the military conquest of Northern Patagonia, the central government carried out a number of initiatives to sell off the newly acquired territories. Besides conducting public auctions, the government also bestowed land on some members of the army that participated in the occupation as a reward for the mission carried out. Federal authorities also assigned lands for future colonization projects, the settlement of religious missions, and the establishment of new townships. In short, the organization of protected areas

provided the central government with an opportunity to have direct control of a vast extension of land where many Mapuche communities were still located at the end of the military conquest of Patagonia.

In the early decades of the twentieth century the state started creating the institutional framework to administer and control these territories directly, particularly those in areas of close proximity to international borders. In 1934, the federal government officially began the institutionalization of conservationist practices in vast territories with the creation of two National Parks: Iguazú in Argentina's northeast and Nahuel Huapi in Northern Patagonia. Thus, the trend of conservationism that started in the second-half of the nineteenth century was given official, institutional status in the 1930s when the state created the National Parks Administration office.⁹³ In 1937, the central government institutionalized four more National Parks in Patagonia: Lanín; Alerces; Perito Moreno; and Glaciers.

The establishment of National Parks had some direct consequences for Mapuche communities located within their jurisdictions. First, these lands became subject to very strict National Parks regulations that privileged conservation, effectively breaking the productive relationship between Mapuche communities and their land. Second, while the property of private large estates was largely unaffected, many Mapuche communities were relocated. In fact, once the National Territories became provinces, large estate owners enjoyed the additional benefit of not having to pay provincial taxes (Bandieri 1993b, 228). Despite increasing claims by the provincial government to have jurisdictional control over the areas of National Parks, the federal government has been reluctant to transfer such control. In practice, the institutionalization of National Parks in the 1930s and 1940s prevented any definitive solution to indigenous demands for ownership of territories they inhabited. This was particularly the case of those

⁹³ Nahuel Huapi National Park began with a modest donation of land to the government in 1904 and it expanded throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Currently, Nahuel Huapi is the largest National Park in the region of Patagonia and consists of 7,050 square kilometres that extend into parts of the provinces of Neuquén and Río Negro. Iguazú National Park, located in the province of Misiones, has an area of 550 square kilometres.

communities that were relocated when the parks were created. The “grey areas” of this legal system were such that the National Parks Administration could make decisions about how land was to be used according to their own provisions without having to consult to its Mapuche inhabitants. Conservation efforts, however, have not been always successful and many areas under the jurisdiction of National Parks have suffered from over-exploitation of resources at the hands of private interests throughout the twentieth century. Despite attempts by the National Parks Administration to limit extractive activities, they continued to be carried out thus challenging the conservationist approach that existed in the administration of protected areas. While large estate owners and private businesses have carried out most of these activities, Mapuche communities have also been accused by National Parks of putting too much environmental pressure on their territories.

The limitations placed on Mapuche communities by National Parks to carry out any meaningful economic activity (e.g., subsistence) often translated into a conflictual relationship between Mapuche activists and the federal government, particularly with the National Parks Administration. In the last three decades, however, National Parks began to acknowledge the importance of establishing an alliance with indigenous communities in order to secure the goal of conservation. Not all working within National Parks are convinced of this paradigm shift, but for now Mapuche communities are starting to be considered key allies in the management and conservation of protected areas. Indeed, under the new paradigm the Mapuche are recognized as having a sort of “special relationship of respect” to the territories they use and inhabit. As indigenous peoples, they are now expected to defend conservation efforts – a role that Mapuche activists are eager to adopt under some conditions. Thus, despite the ethnic essentialism that this view imposes on indigenous communities, the alliance between environmentalism and indigenous movements across the region has served to articulate new types of mobilization and organization. The co-management of protected areas between National Parks and indigenous peoples is a type of project that has given both parties involved the opportunity to negotiate new terms of incorporation within the state. For Mapuche activists in particular, co-management projects provide their communities with opportunities to have some influence over their territories. In turn, supporters of co-

management projects within National Parks see the paradigm shift as an opportunity to bring their institution closer to transnational principles of environmentalism, indigenous rights, and conservation.

5.2.1 Co-management in Lanín National Park

The decision of Mapuche activists to change the historical relationship of conflict with National Parks responds, in part, to the intensification of extractive activities, the privatization of state-owned land, and the public-private partnerships to carry out development projects in protected areas. All these trends were more obvious in Patagonia in the 1990s. These conditions, Mapuche leaders argue, have accelerated the need to urgently secure new spaces of participation where communities can participate in the decision-making process affecting the territories they inhabit. Such spaces of participation and the goals of conservation also give Mapuche communities the opportunity to protect biodiversity and their ways of knowing. Certainly much of today's Mapuche politics translates into participating in these new institutional spaces made available by the state in order to secure their territorial autonomy.

One of the economic activities that was established in the 1990s in the region of Patagonia is tourism. Indeed, Patagonia has been historically promoted as a place where tourists can enjoy pristine mountains, ski resorts, and lakes. Since the 1990s, ethno-tourism has been added to Patagonia's "attractions." Neuquén's Secretary of Tourism, for example, describes the new opportunities that emerge from ethno-tourism in the following terms:

“Currently many Mapuche communities live in Neuquén territory, especially in the Lakes region. Valuing their worldview and customs, they encourage the visitor to see their land and share their traditions. The richness of Mapuche culture is reflected in each manifestation of their daily life. Religion, music, crafts, and food maintain the tradition of these peoples alive. Over time, the Mapuche have maintained the identity of

their products. Currently, weavings and woodwork constitute their main crafts, which are elaborated with techniques inherited from generation to generation (Secretaría de Turismo de Neuquén 2010).

In the context of the ongoing conflicts between the province of Neuquén and Mapuche leaders, this statement by a government's agency may seem contradictory. However, upon closer scrutiny, the provincial government does not oppose all aspects of Mapucheness. Indeed, as the previous chapter shows, Neuquén's dominant political party, the *Movimiento Popular Neuquino*, has maintained close ties with Mapuche communities at least since the 1960s. While these ties between Mapuche communities and the provincial government were severed after the arrival of a new wave of Mapuche activists in the 1980s and 1990s in the *Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén*, successive governments have celebrated certain aspects of Mapuche culture, for example, crafts, music, food, and "worldview," while ignoring and invisibilizing others, including territorial autonomy. Moreover, ongoing conflicts are never mentioned. For Mapuche activities, these silences are insulting and they argue that most philosophical and religious categories of Mapuche cosmology are linked to their relationship to land and the harmony between people (*che*) and the territories they use or inhabit.

The institutionalization in the early 2000s of the co-management project within Lanín National Park presented Mapuche activists with the opportunity to address historical conflicts with National Parks, and also with the central government. This new space for Mapuche participation within the institutional structure of the state, however, was not simply an invitation that responded to policy changes alone. Indeed, the co-management initiative only emerged after Mapuche activists occupied the National Park Administration offices in the town of San Martín de los Andes in 1999. During this occupation, they demanded the approval of a policy resolution regarding a territorial conflict with one of the communities located within the jurisdiction of the Park.⁹⁴ To this end, Mapuche activists proposed to frame the discussion in terms of the notion of

⁹⁴ The area under dispute was located in the region of the Huechulafquen Lake where one of the communities living there faced an eviction order.

“protected indigenous territory,” asking Parks to recognize the rights of Mapuche communities to exercise some measures of control over the territories they inhabit. In May 2000, Mapuche authorities and Park officials agreed on a redefinition of the terms under which the National Park Administration conceived the use of land under its jurisdiction. As a result, they agreed to incorporate the notions of territory, co-management and the connection between protection of biodiversity and cultural difference. In July 2001, the National Parks Administration (NPA) formalized the co-management committee with representatives from the NPA, the *Confederación Mapuche*, and the Mapuche communities within the Lanín National Park.⁹⁵

As Mapuche activists see it, the institutionalization of the co-management initiatives such as the one in Lanín National Park serves to legitimize their struggles around territorial autonomy. In their view, these new spaces of participation created within the structures of the state serve to bring Mapuche communities closer to their goal of exercising effective control over the territories they use and/or inhabit. This is a major reason why it has been important for Mapuche activists that the National Parks Administration recognizes the concept of territory as one embedded in cultural as well as legal elements, thus expanding the narrower notion of land. Furthermore, it has been important for activists and Mapuche communities to have the recognition by National Parks that the Mapuche have a fundamental relationship with their environment in their daily practices and ancestral knowledge. In short, National Parks, activists argue, cannot protect cultural diversity and Mapuche identity without recognizing the centrality of territorial autonomy in order to achieve this.

Co-management provides the opportunity for a new type of relationship between the state and Mapuche activists. It is also a reflection of the complex ways in which contemporary indigenous activism in Argentina takes place. In the case of Mapuche activism in Neuquén, moments of struggle and mobilization go alongside new spaces for participation offered by the state. While activists recognize the limitations of such offers,

⁹⁵ National Parks Administration, Resolution 063 (July 4, 2001). The same resolution establishes local committees and rules for their operation.

they nonetheless often in order accept to challenge colonizing practices (e.g., client-patron relations, cooptation) from within. While these instances of participation within the state are not entirely new, neoliberal multiculturalism has made them the principal mechanism to accommodate indigenous mobilization. For the communities involved, the goal of gaining control over territories they use or inhabit, or those they historically have claimed, becomes a more concrete possibility under co-management. In short, co-management projects appeal to both the state and indigenous activists.

The Co-management project supports the idea of shared jurisdiction over the Lanín National Park, which requires to Mapuche communities and park authorities to agree about rules and other criteria for the administration of these lands. The principles that sustain co-management projects are not exclusive to Lanín National Park. Indeed, the set of agreements that sustain co-management are consolidated as the result of an active transnational development agenda and meetings between indigenous peoples and NGOs. In the case of the Lanín co-management initiative, the work of the International Union for Natural Conservation during its Fourth World Congress held in Barcelona in October 2008 as well as the Second Latin American Congress of Parks and Protected Areas held in Bariloche, Argentina a year earlier played an important role. Moreover, the discussions that took place at these two events coincided with debates taking place at the United Nations that led to the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, approved on September 13, 2007.

Co-management is also regarded by Mapuche activists as an opportunity to overcome the failures of past government initiatives to provide an adequate institutional framework for indigenous participation.⁹⁶ By having the opportunity to have a voice on matters related to the administration of the park, Mapuche communities believe they can exercise their right to define the terms under which development in their territories is conceived. Since the implementation of the Lanín co-management project, for example, Mapuche

⁹⁶ The example of the Pulmarí Corporation, established by the federal state, to address territorial conflicts between the Army and Mapuche communities, is a case in point. Pulmarí is addressed in the following chapter.

communities in the area have been able to participate in managing camping sites, raising funds for the community and giving some of its members new work opportunities among other tourism-related activities. Co-management has also been used as a framework to work towards new intercultural urbanization projects. In one of these projects, as the one in San Martín de los Andes, Congress handed over lands for the construction of the first *barrio intercultural* (intercultural neighbourhood).⁹⁷ The *barrio intercultural* consists of a housing project that includes homeless non-Mapuche families and members of one Mapuche community from the area.

For Mapuche activists, though the experience of participating in the co-management project has been positive, it is also a limited approach to achieve their goal of territorial autonomy. In practice, they argue, co-management does not go beyond a superficial level of participation for Mapuche communities, as it does not secure them collective ownership of their territory. The *Confederación Mapuche* explains these limitations as follows:

“Mapuche communities, their land, territories, resources, and knowledge are not recognized [by National Parks] as an end in themselves but as objects that serve a final end: protected areas and their conservation. In the best of cases, the communities are recognized as co-administrators leaving them without their right to arrange their territory according to their own beliefs. Thus, co-management can only be accepted as a transitional phase in the process of territorial restitution” (CMN 2009).

As stated earlier, under neoliberal multiculturalism these new institutional spaces for participation are implemented by states to advance development goals, including the reduction of public administration, the decentralization of decision-making, and the delegation of responsibilities to civil society (CMN 2009). In this context, Mapuche activists have started to argue that under this paradigm, co-management programs are too

⁹⁷ Congress was able to do this because San Martín de los Andes is located within the area under (federal) National Parks jurisdiction.

limited and not conducive to territorial autonomy because it does not give them tools to consolidate self-representation and control over the territories they inhabit. In a workshop on protected areas held in Buenos Aires in August 2007, the *Confederación Mapuche* and other indigenous leaders highlighted the following additional limitations to co-management strategies:

- “1. Co-management as it is applied today reaffirms the principle of absolute sovereignty of states, particularly over their natural resources. Indigenous peoples around the world question this principle and reaffirm our absolute right to ownership, control, and administration of our natural, genetic, and cultural resources.*
- 2. Co-management does not imply in practice the recognition of our fundamental right to our territory, to autonomy, or our recognition as pre-existing peoples. Co-management is turned into a mechanism of integration into the global market threatening our lives and cultures.*
- 3. Co-management is subject to only one jurisdiction [...], thus contradicting our own normative system and our idea of man-nature relationship.*
- 4. Co-management is subordinated to the absolute legal jurisdiction of the state [...].*
- 5. Finally, co-management is only part of experiments that remain marginal” (CMN 2009, 4).*

Because of these limitations, Mapuche activists have sought to reframe their demands around the notion of “Mapuche governance” of protected areas, including National Parks. Activists bring the ideas of “governance by indigenous peoples and local communities” from the World’s Congress on Nature celebrated in Barcelona in 2008 as a way to move beyond co-management. The idea of Mapuche governance implies the restitution of protected areas created for the purposes of conservation in indigenous territories to the communities that inhabit them and their institutions. In short, this idea of governance is

based on the self-government of indigenous territories, also known as Indigenous Territories for Conservation or ITC, and which are assumed to share the following characteristics:

- “1. Ancestral occupation determines [the boundaries of] the territory.*
- 2. This territory is designated as protected area, totally or partially, as a result of the decision of indigenous peoples that inhabit them thus exercising their right to self-determination, or as a result of a state decision after it has secured the free, prior, and informed consent of the communities involved*
- 3. The ITC is based on the territorial rights of the indigenous community, peoples, or nation.*
- 4. The ITC requires the full recognition of the right of indigenous peoples to land, territory, and resources of traditional use as well as the right to manage and control those areas.*
- 5. The communities that inhabit this territory or the institutions to which they delegate their representation have the right to manage this territory”*
(CMN 2009, 9).

The Confederación Mapuche proposed the transition from co-management to Mapuche governance in May 2009 and it is currently generating increasing debate within the National Parks Administration where the solution, as leaders put it, may ultimately not be technical but political. In other words, it is up to the government’s will to implement this proposal. One of the major difficulties in negotiating with the state about the reach of co-management resides in the uncertainty about implementing this project in the broader context of ongoing conflict between the communities and the provincial and national state. More recently, the future of co-management in Lanín National Park is uncertain. In fact, on January 20, 2012, the National Parks Administration passed a resolution ending Mapuche participation and the co-management activities altogether. This was a unilateral decision that triggered a strong response from Mapuche activists. On January 23, they

occupied the headquarters of Lanín National Park once again to demand that resolution be nullified. The action ended with the ousting of the park's director and the removal of the contested resolution. Under a new administration, the National Parks Administration created a co-management Department with the participation of the nine Mapuche communities that live in the area. Since then, the continuation of co-management gives the communities involved and Mapuche activists the possibility of carrying on economic activities, and other tourism-related projects, such as trekking guides, horse riding lessons, and management of admission tickets to different areas of the park.

In conclusion, co-management has provided a clear opportunity for Mapuche activists to negotiate with the state despite the fact that many challenges remain for its implementation. Aware of these limitations, activists use these new spaces of participation because they provide an opportunity to engage in conversations with the state as a *pueblo nación originario* that claims territorial autonomy. The next chapter will make clear, however, that these opportunities for participation do not translate into a significant change of policy by the state on territorial autonomy or towards indigenous peoples. Hence, indigenous activists also implement strategies of appropriating spaces created with state support for different goals. The transformation of Pocahullo FM radio station to Wajzugun AM is a case in point.

5.3 Appropriation as resistance: From *Pocahullo* to *Wajzugun*

As the struggle for the constitutional recognition of indigenous rights and the pressure to alter the terms under which Mapuche communities participate in the Lanín National Park co-management project show, state initiatives are subject to change as a result of indigenous mobilization and organization. Indeed, this relative openness that state institutions have vis-à-vis some indigenous claims characterizes, in part, neoliberal multiculturalism as a form of governing cultural difference. In turn, these programs or

initiatives of accommodation can be appropriated through resistance and negotiation (Escobar 2008; Blaser et al 2010; Ilcan and Lacey 2011). In this context, the notion of negotiation seems more appropriate than resistance to understand the ways in which indigenous activists deal with the limitations of neoliberal multiculturalism (Hale 2004; 2002). Resistance does not always imply outright opposition or rejection. Instead, it involves an active process of negotiation and contestation, as Gavin Smith (1989) has reminded us.

The participation of Mapuche communities in the World Bank-sponsored Indigenous Communities Development project is a clear example of how state-sanctioned initiatives can be appropriated to strengthen ongoing struggles for territorial autonomy. As stated earlier, in practice, these struggles take the form of negotiation and confrontation with the state. This section explores the transformation of a local community-run FM radio station with limited reach into an intercultural AM station run by Mapuche and non-Mapuche with a wider reach to serve the purpose of Mapuche mobilization in Neuquén. This transformation is the result of the re-appropriation by Mapuche activists of the intended goals of the aforementioned World Bank project. The creation of Wajzugun has also made possible the consolidation of a more autonomous media project that serves to consolidate new forms of mobilization in Neuquén, namely, by connecting remote communities for the first time. Radio Wajzugun, however, is not the only media project in which Mapuche activists are currently involved. In Neuquen city, for example, Mapuche youth groups run news web sites and other media and entertainment projects, such as *Kona Producciones*. According to some authors (Tabobondung 2010; Blaser et al 2010), media production has been serving as a way in which indigenous activists create new, autonomous spaces to share mutual experiences and perspectives with the purpose of connecting communities located at great distances. Media production is also a way for activists to ensure that the ongoing struggles of indigenous peoples are not ignored.

The consolidation of these community-based communication efforts was further entrenched when the *Confederación Mapuche* obtained funding for a new building and equipment to transform FM Pocahullo into AM Wajzugun. These funds, in turn, had their origin in a World Bank-sponsored project, executed by Argentina's Ministry of Social

Development. The *Proyecto de Desarrollo de las Comunidades Indigenas* (Indigenous Communities Development Project or DCI after its Spanish name) has been, in fact, one of the rare opportunities for Mapuche activists to obtain funds channelled via state institutions. This project had its origins in 1997 when the World Bank funded a program aimed at strengthening the “management capacity” of indigenous organizations and peoples in Argentina. The emphasis of this program was on the “comprehension” of World Bank-funded programs, and it was executed from January 1997 to December 1998 (World Bank 2004, 2). Within the framework of this program, indigenous organizations were able to submit proposals for funding initiatives for “sustainable development of communities that owned their land” (World Bank 2004, 2). In October 1998, the World Bank agreed to provide technical and financial support to establish *Áreas Indígenas Piloto* (Pilot Indigenous Areas or AIP for its Spanish name), in order to facilitate the “management capacity, use and control over the territory and natural resources, avoiding capital-intensive activities, and promoting activities based on the ancestral culture, benefiting the indigenous communities that live in these areas” (World Bank 2004, 2). One of the three AIPs selected for funding was the Pulmarí region in Neuquén, where most communities recognized the representative role of the *Confederación Mapuche*.⁹⁸

The relatively vague objectives of this World Bank-funded project perhaps contributed to the ways in which indigenous organizations conducted what Escobar (2008) calls “a creative appropriation” of the program’s goals. In some cases, the author argues, this type of appropriation can lead to subversion in terms of intended goals. Aligned with principles of neoliberal multiculturalism, the DCI project stated as its main goal, “the establishment of the bases for community development, and the protection and management of natural resources in the lands of indigenous communities” (World Bank 2004, 2). Furthermore, the World Bank explained that this main goal includes: “the social and cultural strengthening of indigenous communities; the improvement of indigenous capacities for a sustainable management; and the increase of the management capacity

⁹⁸ The other two communities supported by this Project were the Diaguíta-Calchaquí in Tucumán and Kolla in Salta.

within the communities and in relation to the articulation with all other levels of government and other actors included in the pilot areas (AIPs), and towards [other] indigenous peoples in general. The project will develop ‘models’ from which to extract lessons that could serve the future extension of the program to other indigenous areas.” The three components that the World Bank identified for this project help to further elucidate the content of the stated objectives. The first component is the “social and cultural strengthening of indigenous communities” and includes all those activities that tend to the strengthening of the “capacity of self-development and the promotion of activities closely related to traditional knowledge and cultures” (World Bank 2004, 3). The second component is the “sustainable use of natural resources” in which indigenous communities prepare “Management Plans” via “socio-cultural and environmental assessment; evaluation of resources; planning for the management of soil, water, and forests; and specific mechanisms to reduce environment risks” (World Bank 2004, 4). Finally, the third component is “Project Management” which is established to “guarantee the efficient management of the overall project, at the central and local levels” (World Bank 2004, 4). Thus, the project includes a discourse that sets up some basis for establishing principles for the regulation of indigenous issues. However, there is nothing in the project that supports the politicization of Mapuche activism. While projects such as these leave aside issues of indigenous politicization, ongoing conflicts – including those relating to ownership and control over ancestral territories – have proven to be one of the main obstacles for the implementation of this project as the World Bank document itself suggests.

In Neuquén, the opportunity for Mapuche activists to take part in a project of alternative media is a result of the presence of a community-run local FM station located in San Martín de los Andes and of the central role it played in supporting the mobilization of Mapuche communities in the region. Moreover, the transformation of Pochullo into *Radio Comunitaria Intercultural Wajzugun* has served the ongoing building of alliances and support not only between the Mapuche activists and Mapuche communities but also amongst the communities themselves by giving them a space to share their experience.

Furthermore, this project illustrates well the conditions under which indigenous organizations are sometimes able to alter the ways in which a state-sponsored program with transnational financial support operates.

Initially owned by four members of a local opposition political party, the *Unión Cívica Radical*, Radio Pochullo started transmitting in San Martín de los Andes in 1990.⁹⁹ After the electoral defeat of its owners, Pochullo was put up for sale, but it was finally transformed into a co-operative, owned and operated by its employees and local leaders of social organizations. One hundred and fifty listeners donated funds, thus contributing to buy the equipment from the previous owners. In the 1990s, changes in tax legislation forced Pochullo to register as a not-for-profit civil association to avoid paying what its members identified as excessive amounts of money. Since its transformation into a community-run radio, volunteers, a steering committee of three directors, local residents, and invited guests have been managing Pochullo.¹⁰⁰ The transition of Pochullo from a privately-owned radio station to a community co-operative illustrates the ways in which social activists were willing to defend not only a source of income but also a cultural media project they believed in. This transition, however, was only the first step towards the intercultural media project that the creation of Wajzugun made possible.

Pochullo, in fact, was very popular in working-class and poor neighbourhoods of San Martín de los Andes, a city known for its high-end tourism industry and constant conflicts between private interests related to the industry and the Mapuche communities located in the peripheries of the city. In the 1990s many in San Martín de los Andes started to see Pochullo as a space in which they could participate and mobilize to press the local government for improvements in the provision of public services, such as drinking water, sewers, and natural gas. Furthermore, it was through this presence in the

⁹⁹ The *Unión Cívica Radical* party was the main opposition party to the *Movimiento Popular Neuquino*.

¹⁰⁰ The workers of Pochullo received their income from advertising as well as from fundraising events within the local community. Many of its volunteers also had other more steady sources of income. Some volunteers, for example, were taxi drivers and elementary school teachers. Thus, when funds were scarce Pochullo co-operative members tended to help those who solely depended on the radio for their income. The contributions to those in need were decided in assemblies.

poor neighbourhoods that Pocahullo started assuming a central role in the social organization and mobilization of the urban poor. In time, Mapuche communities in the region started seeing Pocahullo as a powerful communication tool as well, particularly when they faced their own struggles to secure control over the territories they currently use or inhabit.

As mentioned above, San Martin de los Andes is one of the most important centres of tourism in Northern Patagonia. Chapelco, for instance, is one of the well-known ski resorts in the area, attracting thousands of international and national tourists all year long. But Mapuche communities living nearby, in an ancestral territory that includes Chapelco, have hardly benefited from the influx of tourism. On the contrary, some Mapuche families from the Curruhuinca community have been directly affected by contaminants coming from the ski resort. Some of these families live downstream by the Quitrahue Creek that passes through Chapelco and Curruhuinca territory. For many years, these families have been mobilizing to bring awareness to tourists about the high levels of pollutants found in the creek, and the problems these cause to them. Such mobilizations have included mass protests and road blockages, particularly on the way to the ski resort. Pocahullo has served as an important vehicle for social communication and mobilization, amplifying the awareness of such conflicts in other communities, which in turn have learned about and joined the ongoing protest. Thus, small-scale Pocahullo has had an important role in fostering a collective Mapuche identity by serving as a key tool for connecting different communities in the area. In fact, a first step to consolidate the political project of Pocahullo was the installation of the *Red de Comunicación Rural* (Rural Communication Network), which consisted in bringing small radio equipment to each rural community and organizing workshops to show residents how to operate them. Each station, in turn, was connected to Pocahullo and served as an important tool for rural communities to stay informed and reach for help in moments of need, from extreme weather conditions in the winter to road blockages to voice political demands (La Vaca 2005).

Using World Bank and state-sponsored DCI project funds to support the transformation of Pocahullo into Wajzugun, Mapuche activists created a new tool to facilitate their

mobilization and organization around territorial autonomy and also to consolidate the work done by Pochullo to consolidate popular, local networks. Given the historical background of Pochullo, the establishment of Wajzugun also served Mapuche activists to consolidate political alliances with community leaders and other social movements. By facilitating the communication amongst remote Mapuche communities in the region, Wajzugun served the political purpose of activists and facilitated their mobilization. In practice, the establishment of Wajzugun had an impact on three specific areas. The first visible impact, once funds became available, was the construction of a new building to host the new radio station. Located near the city's downtown, a place visited by thousands of tourists every year, Wajzugun's building serves as a reminder of Mapuche presence in the area. More importantly, this new space was constructed not only to hold the new equipment to run the radio station but the building also holds offices and other meeting rooms that serve Mapuche and non-Mapuche activists in the region. On its second floor, the two-story building offers a space to accommodate overnight guests thus facilitating its use as a place of political gathering. In the context of long distances and lack of this type of infrastructure, the availability of a new building as a space for gathering and organizing has served Mapuche activists to coordinate their efforts more effectively. The second major impact of the transformation of Pochullo into Wajzugun relates to the increased in funding for Mapuche activists and Pochullo co-op. Given the financial constraints under which Pochullo operated in the past, the extra funding channelled to Wajzugun served to increase the pay of its workers. Furthermore, the establishment of Wajzugun took place in the context of the passing of Law 26522 by Congress in 2009. While controversial, this media services law has set up the new framework under which audio-visual communication licences are given by the state. In one of its articles, the law establishes the parameters for the granting of new licences to public universities and indigenous peoples. It also establishes new possibilities for public funding. While this law's constitutional standing was challenged in court, Argentina's Supreme Court of Justice dictamined its validity in October 2013. When I interviewed members of Wajzugun in 2009, they linked their efforts to convert Pochullo into Wajzugun with the spirit of this federal media law. Given the shifting political alliances between the Kirchner administration and social movements, by 2013 it is difficult to see

whether continuing financial support to projects like Wajzugun will persist if they do not adopt a pro-government stance. In other words, the future of Wajzugun as a political tool of Mapuche activism is uncertain. The third and final visible impact of Wajzugun relates to the consolidation of the radio station as an intercultural, popular project that serves not only the purpose of advancing Mapuche claims for territorial autonomy but also objectives held by other social groups, such as local unions, the poor, and unemployed. Taken together, these three visible impacts the emergence of Wajzugun created have taught Mapuche activists important lessons in terms of the possibilities that exist when appropriating existing state-supported opportunities for their political claims.

5.4 Conclusions

This chapter has discussed the ways in which Mapuche activists engage with the new opportunities for participation that become available to them. What is clear is that these opportunities are often the result of their own mobilization and work with other social activists. In other words, indigenous activists may be “invited” to participate but only after they mobilize for their own political goal of territorial autonomy, as the case of Neuquén’s constitutional assembly, the Lanin National Park co-management project, and the appropriation of a development project goals illustrate. Mobilization, however, does not always result in accommodation and recognition of indigenous rights.

As the following chapter shows, multicultural citizenship and the recognition of new spaces for indigenous participation do not always entail the decolonization of state practices, resource redistribution, or social justice. Mapuche struggles to secure control over the territories and resources they rely on seem to mark the limits of neoliberal multiculturalism in Northern Patagonia. By demanding collective rights to territory and challenging the state as a *pueblo nación originario*, Mapuche activists attempt to challenge the limitations of neoliberal multiculturalism. The chapter also describes aspects of the strategy of land occupation by Mapuche activists to pressure the state for

further recognition of territorial autonomy as well as the state's reaction and criminalization of indigenous demands. The contradictions of neoliberal multiculturalism thus become evident through the reluctance of state practices to recognize and secure indigenous control over the territories they use or inhabit. In fact, since Mapuche activists have adopted the strategy of supporting *recuperaciones territoriales* (territorial re-occupations), it has become evident that the politics of multicultural tolerance embedded in neoliberalized forms of indigenous citizenship have reached a limit.

Chapter 6

6 Territorial autonomy in times of neoliberal multiculturalism

Throughout this dissertation, I have been arguing that contemporary Mapuche politics in Northern Patagonia must be understood as a process that involves negotiation as well as ongoing conflict with the state. In some contexts, those instances of negotiation and conflict lead to particular forms of accommodation and new spaces for indigenous participation within the institutional structure of the state. Furthermore, territorial autonomy must be seen as a central component of indigenous citizenship claims (Yashar 2005) and the consolidation of neoliberal multiculturalism (Hale 2002). As the previous chapter has shown, there are instances when new spaces of indigenous participation offered by the neoliberal citizenship regime (often as a result of indigenous mobilization) have been relevant for Mapuche activists in their quest for territorial autonomy and cultural recognition. The fact that those spaces are offered as a result of political mobilization makes them an interesting point of departure for analyzing how Mapuche activists respond once they are “invited” to participate. However, Mapuche activism today is not limited to these spaces. In the context of the expansion of extractive industries in Northern Patagonia since the 1990s, Mapuche communities have been involved in defending the territories they use or inhabit and in demanding the recognition by the state of new places as Mapuche territory to secure control over them.

The mobilization around demands and protection of territory is also, as Karen Engle (2010) suggests, a way for indigenous peoples to attach the defence of a territory to their existence as peoples, a connection that neoliberal multiculturalism attempts to break. Engle argues, for example, that legal mechanisms and other attempts to defend indigenous culture often fail to realize that tolerance vis-à-vis cultural heritage does not address, “the underlying economic, social, and political inequalities of which indigenous

peoples generally bear the brunt” (2010, 143). In other words, indigenous culture is often defended, under neoliberal multiculturalism, as what she calls “intangible” heritage, ignoring the fact that land (and the conflicts that surround it) forms the material basis of indigenous cosmologies. Moreover, the author argues that while some indigenous activists have engaged in pursuing the protection of cultural heritage, “they have not acquired the type of self-determination or autonomy that indigenous movements have sought since at least the 1970s” (2010, 148). Furthermore, Engle suggests that, “to the extent that intangible heritage contains a relatively “thin” concept of culture (e.g., dress, festivals, art, and the like), it falls well short of constituting a threat to the neoliberal, multicultural state” (2010, 149). The author concludes that these regimes of protection have a “disciplinary effect” in which, echoing the work of Charles Hale, any attempts to “transgress the boundaries of neoliberal multiculturalism” end with isolation and dismissal provoking a separation of cultural heritage from “the very indigenous peoples from whom it is thought to emanate” (2010, 149).

This chapter elaborates on the political strategy of land reoccupations carried out by Mapuche communities as a way to activate their claims for territorial autonomy. The chapter also focuses on the main state response to this strategy, namely, the criminalization of Mapuche demands, including arrests, imprisonment, and violence. The goal of this chapter is two-fold: first, to show how Mapuche collective identity is shaped in this context of ongoing conflict; and, second, to show how the limitations of neoliberal multiculturalism operate in specific settings. With this discussion I hope to explore how the collective political identity of the Mapuche is embedded in a broader political context of changing citizenship regimes and state forms of government over indigenous peoples. The chapter begins by addressing the centrality of territorial claims for indigenous peoples as well as the significance that Mapuche activists give to the notion of territory.

6.1 The centrality of territorial claims

In Northern Patagonia, struggles over territorial autonomy shape Mapuche collective identity and inform the ways in which political organization takes place. Furthermore, Mapuche activists today see territory as essential for their survival as a *pueblo nación originario*. Their demands for increasing control over the territories they use or inhabit and for recognition of territories they claim as ancestral land place Mapuche activists at odds with state institutions. Nonetheless, they engage with the state in negotiations hoping that the conditions for securing territorial autonomy will be met sooner or later. And this is precisely the tension that exists today between states and Mapuche activists. On the one hand, the state and Mapuche activists create opportunities that build upon notions of indigenous participation, multiculturalism, and *interculturalidad*. On the other, however, when Mapuche activists carry out their claims for territorial autonomy (via land reoccupations) the state reacts by criminalizing the demands and by tightening the boundaries of legitimacy of indigenous claims. Such boundaries of legitimacy or what is and what is not legitimate to claim are compatible with the limitations acknowledged in neoliberal multiculturalism and neoliberal regimes of citizenship. These limitations include the politicization of indigenous peoples that may challenge both state power and its smooth incorporation to global capitalism.

The new generation of Mapuche activists that consolidated their leadership in the 1980s and 1990s has constantly argued that the formation of the modern state in Argentina is a direct result of the dispossession of Mapuche territories and of the genocide of their people in the late nineteenth century. The twentieth century, they argue, witnessed repeated attempts by the state to incorporate their communities as subordinate to other social sectors, and has excluded them from the political order. As one Mapuche activist pointed out, in the 1970s urban Mapuche living in Neuquén city realized that in order to conduct new claims to the state they would need to strengthen their ties with their “territories.” By these territories, activists meant Mapuche rural communities, including, but not limited to, those that were recognized as such by the provincial government.

As explained in previous chapters, indigenous reserves or communities in Neuquén were officially recognized in the 1960s. This recognition came in part as a result of the regrouping of Mapuche families that took place in the first half of the twentieth century.

While in some cases these regroupings were a voluntary act in the aftermath of violent confrontation with the national army, in some cases Mapuche families were forced to live in areas determined by the state. The de-territorialization through military campaigns, and re-territorialization in reservations of Mapuche families always responded to the need of state institutions to govern Mapuche subjects. In the 1960s, for example, the establishment of Mapuche reservations throughout the province responded to the need for the *Movimiento Popular Neuquino* (MPN) to keep direct channels of communication with rural populations to guarantee their ongoing political support, especially during elections. The relationship between Mapuche communities and the MPN, however, also needs to be understood in the wider context of a new relationship between the state and “the people” that was being forged a few years earlier under Peronism. Furthermore, by the late 1970s these communities and other areas of southern Argentina where Mapuche families lived were increasingly exposed to new forms of capital accumulation.

In particular, the impact of the decreasing importance of cattle raising for the regional economy that began in the 1940s – a predominant economic activity for Mapuche families – was mitigated with the discovery of oil wells in 1977. Since then, the government adopted development strategies in the province that included support for mega-development efforts in the form of large dams which attracted labourers from outside the province, the intensification of mining operations, and the expansion of tourism. A few years later, these changes in capitalist accumulation and development programs converged with the new economic strategies that began taking place with the first set of neoliberal policies under the military dictatorship (1976-1983). The privatization of some of these extractive industries, particularly those related to hydrocarbons, mining, and hydro-electricity that took place in the 1990s resulted in a new sense of political urgency for Mapuche activists and their communities. Territories were now conceived as a fundamental part of Mapuche identity. Thus, contemporary claims for territorial autonomy should be understood in light of the intensification of extractive industries in Northern Patagonia as well as the ways in which Mapuche activists engage, resist, and negotiate with the state.

In attempting to look at the ways in which the political organization and mobilization of the Mapuche in Northern Patagonia takes place around the struggle for territorial autonomy, this chapter builds on the examination of the multiple ways in which the neoliberalization of state *expectations* and *practices* towards indigenous activism affects Mapuche communities when they adopt strategies of territorial re-occupation that have become central to Mapuche activism in present-day Neuquén. I begin by briefly outlining the ways in which Mapuche activists have linked a collective political identity with claims for territorial autonomy. The chapter then looks into two interrelated processes that are experienced in the everyday life of Mapuche communities and their leaders: first, I look into the strategy of *recuperaciones* (land re-occupations) carried out by the communities themselves and supported by activists in order to materialise their quest for territorial autonomy. In this section, I provide some details on two cases that gained the attention of Mapuche and non-Mapuche alike not only in Neuquén but at the national level. Second, I explore the criminalization of Mapuche politics, thus illustrating the practical limitations activists, their organizations, and community members face when they attempt to actualise their demands that exceed expected institutional compliance.

6.2 Mapuche claims for territorial autonomy as a new politics of place

Under a new leadership and armed with novel understandings of the political based on Mapuche ways of knowing, activists within the *Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén* have been embarking on a mode of mobilization that privileges the defense of what they call “ancestral territories.” While contemporary Mapuche activism in Northern Patagonia has focused on the recognition of new indigenous, collective rights and an increasing participation within state institutions, mobilization has also entailed a politics of *recuperaciones territoriales* (territorial re-occupations). In the context of resource extractivism, for example, Mapuche activists and communities have adopted re-occupation strategies as a way to secure more meaningful negotiations around territorial

autonomy. In doing this, they are engaged in a new “politics of place” (Escobar, Rocheleau, and Kothari 2002). In *Territories of Difference*, anthropologist Arturo Escobar argues that place is “an important source of culture and identity” (2008, 7) in which most people around the world find a sense of groundedness and boundaries. In doing so, Escobar argues, people give meaning to their everyday lives (2008, 30). Furthermore, places and their defence, are important in the lives of most people today as they face the expansion of globalized forms of capital accumulation and the development of extractivism. In this context, some places become new targets and assume new value under these development strategies. As geographer Sarah Radcliffe has shown, the expansion of neoliberalism throughout Latin America has been marked by the existence of a contradictory tension between recognized collective rights, on the one hand, and “market-based models for resource access and livelihood” on the other (2005, 325). This tension is certainly evident in Northern Patagonia today, where the expansion of “monocultural landscapes” (Escobar 2009) in the form of pine plantations, oil extraction, gas fracking, and high-end tourism are attracting national as well as transnational capital and affecting the resource-rich territories Mapuche communities use or inhabit. The notion of indigenous territories, however, goes beyond a geographical area clearly separated and isolated from others. In practice, indigenous activists conceive their territories as a set of social relations between the different elements of nature and not merely as an area that can be neatly mapped out:

“Territory is a ‘social, cultural, and ecological space’. It does not depend on sketched lines on a map. Therefore, it includes all things that belong to the land: water; sub-soil; air space; its occupants; plants; animals; and all other resources located in it. [The notion of territory] is not limited to lands that are permanently occupied. On the contrary, it includes those lands used for everyday activities. As a ‘habitat,’ it includes all social and cultural aspects. This characteristic, in turn, gives a territory the public (political) dimension of indigenous ownership” (Juan M. Salgado, quoted by CMN 2010, 25).

For activists, defending the territories that are claimed, used, or inhabited by the communities is central to the survival of the Mapuche as a *pueblo nación originario*:

“The authorities of each community and the Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén are the entities that have conducted the process of recognition and defense of those rights that have been silenced and systematically denied by the state, particularly the fundamental right to a territory, which is a central demand of Mapuche peoples. The absence of a territory prevents the practice of other rights related to the life and existence of our peoples” (CMN 2010, 19).

Conceived as such, territories are seen as a source of livelihood and culture. From this conception of territory, Mapuche activists have imagined specific *kvme felen* (life projects), which include self-representation, *interculturalidad*, and a collective identity:

“It is important to explain and understand the meaning of kvme felen for the Mapuche peoples. Guiding principles emerge from this notion so each territorial identity [e.g., communities] can have a framework of reference to design their own [life] plans. As we have argued, our projection as peoples requires the defense of territories that we traditionally inhabit and the exercise of autonomy as nación originaria (indigenous nation). Peoples, territory, and autonomy are the principles that make possible our kvme felen” (CMN 2010, 33).

Furthermore, a territory is a space for consolidating traditional Mapuche *rakizuam* (thinking) and *kimvn* (knowledge) in order to secure *kvme felen* or *buen vivir* (the good life). Thus, Mapuche activism, as carried out by organizations such as the *Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén*, entails what Escobar characterizes as “the defense of place-based conceptions of the world and *practices* or world making” (2008, 67). Nonetheless, this form of activism that defends a particular construction of place (i.e., “Mapuche ancestral territories”) is continuously reorganized, redefined, and framed according to specific power struggles. By organizing around claims for territorial autonomy as a *pueblo nación originario*, Mapuche activists are able to form a politics of place in which they assert a

new logic of difference and possibilities *vis-à-vis* mainstream society and the state that have rendered Mapuche peoples invisible.

The alternatives offered by this form of political activism to legitimize indigenous territories are open-ended. It is also impossible to determine what will occur if and when Mapuche communities reach an acceptable point of control over the territories they use or inhabit. But for now, Mapuche activism is focused on securing higher levels of control over these territories with the hope of recasting the full enjoyment of a *kvme felen*. Therefore, the urgency of land re-occupations, Mapuche activists insist, has to do with the realization that rights recognition and more spaces for participation within state institutions do not guarantee an end to the logic of capital accumulation and extractivism and their impact on natural resources located in their territories. Thus, taking advantage of the offers presented to them under neoliberal multiculturalism does not mean abandoning other forms of activism. The politics of territorial re-occupations is a case in point.

6.3 Testing the limits of neoliberal multiculturalism: the politics of *recuperaciones territoriales*

The further exposure of Northern Patagonia to new forms of capitalist accumulation since the 1990s has affected the ways in which rivers, forests, tourist attractions, and land are conceived in the region. Indeed ownership over some of these resources has become one of the most prominent sources of contestation. Private interests, state institutions, and Mapuche communities often find themselves in permanent conflict over the goals for such places. For Mapuche activists, the need to mobilize to defend, secure access to, and control territories their communities use or inhabit comes from this pressure of capitalist interests in the area. Such pressure manifests itself as the ongoing extension of *latifundios* (large estates), resource extraction (e.g., oil extraction, mining), and high-end tourism. Mobilizing to secure collective ownership and control over these territories under a Mapuche cosmovision (i.e., *kvme felen*) becomes, for activists, the best way to challenge

the advance of capitalist expansion over the places they use and inhabit. In practice, it also entails the building of a new political collective identity as Mapuche mobilization enters into a phase of negotiation, accommodation, and conflict with state institutions (e.g., courts, police, National Parks, Social Development agencies, legislative bodies). For Mapuche activists, territory is an inherent part of their condition as peoples and as such, this notion extends beyond a narrow focus on land. As such, the idea of indigenous territory escapes reductionist appeals to individual or even collective ownership because, under Mapuche understanding, territory challenges the logic of capitalist accumulation and property regimes embedded in it. Furthermore, the right to a territory for the Mapuche cannot be understood in separation from the ways in which they conceive the relationship between nature and *ce* (peoples): human beings are conceived as a fundamental part of nature and are responsible for keeping environmental balance in nature, not above it (CMN 2008). One activist puts it in these terms:

“[Autonomy and control over ancestral territories] is a fundamental question for us because it sustains the political project of the Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén. The key objective is the recognition as peoples. We believe that by securing the recognition of the Confederación as a political and juridical subject we shall be able to claim the implementation of our collective rights by the state [...] Our understanding is that there are no ‘peoples’ if there is no development over a territory. We have to break away from the concept of land. The state reduces the concept of land to the surface and only focuses on the boundaries of a community. The state does not want to recognize the more integral concept of a territory. A territory includes not only the resources of the soil but also all its biodiversity. Today’s dispute and resistance to the political claims of the Mapuche has nothing to do with culture. It is a question of economic interests. At the centre of those interests, we find natural resources” (AZ, Interview 2009).

The mobilization around territorial autonomy is also, according to Mapuche activists, an issue of cultural vindication as well as self-defence against the advance of corporate

private interests over their territories. When the CMN and the communities start to adopt the tactic of *recuperaciones* in the 1990s, they successfully capture the attention of government officials, the local and national media, and society in general. Facing strong opposition from the provincial government, the local media and business groups, a main challenge for the Mapuche is to link these territorial re-occupations to the broader issues affecting everyday life of women and men living in rural communities. Furthermore, while Mapuche struggles were initially framed in terms of human rights and social justice in the 1970s and 1980s, they have been recently reframed as *indigenous* rights, reflecting in part changes in local and international legislation and discourses. Organizing around territorial re-occupation takes a considerable amount of coordinated effort on the part of Mapuche communities and urban activists. Given the structure of an organization like the *Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén* (CMN), activists learn about local and regional historical grievances and circumstances that eventually translate into a decision by a community (or group of communities) to start a process of territorial re-occupation. While generalizations are not always pertinent to understand how the conversation between community representatives and urban activists within the CMN are conducted, activists acknowledge that they often start with a community informing CMN leaders about their decision to re-occupy a given territory. Activists often respond by supporting the community's claims, discuss specific aspects of the strategy (e.g., when to begin the re-occupation, how to mobilize supporters, how to address the media), and link the specific territorial re-occupation with a "global politics of the Mapuche peoples" and with "more structural questions, such as our relationship with the state" (AZ, Interview 2009).

Re-occupations in Northern Patagonia began soon after the reorganization of the CMN under new leadership in the 1990s. An exhaustive overview and study of all territorial re-occupations taking place in Neuquén alone exceeds the objective of this chapter. Indeed, most of the 57 Mapuche communities in Neuquén are involved in one way or another in some territorial dispute. And some communities are involved in more than one dispute. The following section focuses on what Carasco and Briones (1996) called a "paradigmatic" case: Pulmarí. After introducing the conflict of Pulmarí, I link it to one of the more recent cases of territorial reoccupation in the same area of the province, near the town of Aluminé. By focusing on the events that took place in 2009 in the community of

Quillén-Curruvil, my objective is to illustrate the ways in which the strategy of territorial re-occupation takes place in practice.

6.3.1 Pulmarí

The re-occupation of Pulmarí in the mid-1990s was, according to Carrasco and Briones (1996), one of the most “paradigmatic” cases of the new logic of organization and mobilization of Mapuche activists in Neuquén. Similarly, the response by the state (and government officials) also served to illuminate the limitations encountered by indigenous mobilization under multicultural neoliberalism. As territorial re-occupations have become more prevalent in the new century, it is pertinent to reflect on the experience of Pulmarí to understand what adopting a new collective political identity has meant for Mapuche activists in practice.¹⁰¹

The re-occupation of Pulmarí is significant for historical reasons.¹⁰² Indeed, the establishment of Pulmarí illustrates very clearly some of the strategies adopted by the state in relation to the newly conquered territories after the military campaigns in the so-called Conquest of the Desert. For the Mapuche living in this region of Neuquén, Pulmarí has had an important place in collective memory. Before the arrival of the national army, communities in the region used this territory as a transit zone, connecting *lof* (communities) from *puelmapu* (east of the Andes) and *gulumapu* (west of the Andes).

¹⁰¹ Located in the Department of Aluminé in the province of Neuquén, the area of Pulmarí has an extent of approximately 113,000 hectares. 67,9000 hectares are under the jurisdiction of the federal government as these lands have been transferred to the army. The remaining 45,000 hectares are under provincial jurisdiction, forming the Natural Reserve of Ñorquinco. The *Corporación Interestadual Pulmarí* (CIP) currently administers these 45,000 hectares. The CIP, created in the late 1980s, has been the centre of intense negotiation, conflict, and accommodation between the provincial government of Neuquén, the federal government, Mapuche communities (Curruvil, Catalán, Aigo, Plácido Puel, Ñorquinco and Hienguíhual), and activists.

¹⁰² According to Curruhuinca-Roux (1984), the Mapuche living in Pulmarí established sporadic contact with religious missions around 1680. The region remained under Mapuche control until the late nineteenth century, serving as a key area of communication between the *gulumapu* (West of the Andes) and *puelmapu* (east of the Andes). In the 1850s, the region was under the political authority of *longko* Kajfvkura (see Chapter 3).

The Conquest of the Desert ended this use with the usurpation of the land from the Mapuche. Some of the immediate consequences of the military campaigns included the donation of some of these lands to high-rank army officials, their use as a form of payment to British investors who provided loans to carry out the conquest, or selling these lands in public auctions. Most of Pulmarí's territory thus ended up in the hands of the *Compañía Estancia Los Ingleses S.A.*, a British investment group interested in the logging industry. The *estancia* (large estate) remained in private hands until the 1940s, when the federal government under General Perón expropriated and nationalized Pulmarí, transferring it to National Parks jurisdiction before placing it under the control of the national army. The main use of the territory was to raise mules but it also had a strategic location given its proximity to the border with Chile. An additional particularity of Pulmarí has been its status as an area under federal jurisdiction (i.e., national army) in a territory that became the province of Neuquén in 1955. Throughout this process, many Mapuche families were forcefully displaced to other areas nearby thus forming some of the communities that were recognized by Neuquén's government in 1964. Carrasco and Briones (1996) have shown how the lands given to these communities were scarce and of inadequate quality for Mapuche families to sustain their livelihood. Mapuche activists claim that since then, the communities living in the region have held onto the hope of having Pulmarí back. However, as military dictatorships continued to control the political life of Argentina, the hopes of recovering Pulmarí remained only as a distant goal.

As explained earlier, the return to democratic rule in 1983 provided a more adequate context for a new generation of Mapuche leaders to begin a process of re-organization and mobilization. This process culminated in the early 1990s with their control of the *Confederación Mapuche*, an organization created decades earlier with the support of the provincial government, the Catholic Church, and Mapuche families. The Alfonsín administration's (1983-1989) decision to gradually transfer control of Pulmarí to the Mapuche communities living in the region raised expectations. In 1988, the federal and provincial governments ratified the creation of the *Corporación Interestadual Pulmarí* (CIP), a public corporation with provincial and federal representation. According to the Pulmarí Statute, its main goal was,

“... The exploitation of properties located under its jurisdiction or those which are placed under its administration by legal mechanism. This administration can be conducted in activities such as: agro-forestry; cattle; mining; industrial; commercial; and tourism. [Its goal is to facilitate] the development of the province of Neuquén and, fundamentally, the indigenous communities of the area: Catalan; Aigo; Puel; and Currumil. The Corporation, with the specific activities mentioned notwithstanding, will keep under its jurisdiction the necessary spaces to attend to the operational necessities of the Argentinean army and contribute to its logistical supplies” (CIP 1988, quoted in Carrasco and Briones 1996, 165).

In practice, however, activists have noted that the *Corporación Interestadual Pulmarí* simply consolidated the control of the state over these territories, subordinating the needs of Mapuche communities to the imperatives of private interests. In administering Pulmarí, for example, the CIP is entitled to give concessions to private business. Furthermore, a series of fraudulent concessions and the ongoing denial of meaningful benefits to Mapuche communities created the bases for the territorial conflicts in the mid-1990s.

Representation within the CIP also became a contentious issue between the province, federal government, and Mapuche activists. According to the CIP’s statute, a board of eight directors must decide how the Corporation is to make use of the spaces under its jurisdiction. The members of the board represent different jurisdictions: two from the Ministry of Defence; one from the Ministry of Finance; one from the Army, three from the provincial government and one representing Mapuche communities. An issue of contention emerged when the provincial government was, in practice, appointing the Mapuche representative, a clear violation of the CIP’s statute. Indeed, from 1989 to 1995 the provincial government and Mapuche communities were in constant conflict over the selection of a legitimate representative for the Mapuche. The contention also involved allegations of corruption on the part of the government-appointed representative. In addition, more conflicts emerged in relation to the communities that had the right to be

represented in the CIP. While the statute of the CIP considered only four communities (Aigo, Currumil, Catalán and Puel), Mapuche leaders started to demand the recognition of two other communities: Salazar and Ñorquinco (Moyano 2007).

The immediate causes that explain the Mapuche decision to re-occupy territories in Pulmarí can be found in the restrictive criteria used by the *Corporación Interestadual Pulmarí* in granting Mapuche communities access to use Pulmarí lands for grazing. The need to re-occupy Pulmarí seemed more urgent, according to Mapuche activists, given the restrictions under which non-Mapuche residents (and private businesses) were granted such access and given more generous deals (e.g., financial loans). Furthermore, Mapuche communities were often charged a fee to access grazing pastures, to collect wood for stoves, or to gather *piñones* (nuts from the Pewen tree). The latter point is significant because collecting *piñones* constitutes a tradition of community building amongst the Mapuche (Carrasco and Briones 1996).

Facing the lack of access to pasture lands for their cattle, a main source of income for the community, the communities decided to act. Urban Mapuche activists decided to support the re-occupation, reminding all Mapuche and non-Mapuche alike that, as things stand, life in the communities is not ideal. Limited to a scant extension of inadequate land, cattle produce the quick degradation of soil. In the harsh winters of Patagonia, conditions get worse as Mapuche families do not have access to *mallines*, an area of permanent or temporary fertile soil located at lower altitudes. However, *estancieros* (large estate owners) or government corporations often occupy these areas. As a result, cattle owned by the Mapuche often die. To avoid this, Mapuche families are forced to continuously move the cattle back and forth during the summer and winter. Even the Mapuche who carry out this practice, locally known as *trashumancia*, see it as abusive to animals, as it exposes animals to starvation, intense cold, and death. During the summer, for example, cattle must be taken to valleys or lands located in higher altitudes. In the winter, cattle are taken to valleys or lowlands. Mapuche families also talk about the burdens that this practice places on their families. Given the constant need for helping hands, many teenagers, including boys and girls, do not continue with their education beyond primary school.

The conflict in Pulmarí was paradigmatic because despite sporadic episodes of social protest, the federal government under the Carlos Menem administration (1989 – 1999) did not encounter an all-encompassing social mobilization that challenged the legitimacy of the neoliberal policies it was advancing until the second half of the 1990s. Needless to say, Argentinean governments rarely confronted the mobilization of indigenous peoples *as such*. While the global financial crises of the mid-1990s affected the Argentinean version of neoliberalism severely, it was the deterioration of social welfare and the increasing mobilization of the unemployed and other social sectors that helped break the legitimacy of the neoliberal policies governments supported. Thus, Mapuche mobilization in the mid-1990s must be understood in this context of increasing social mobilization, particularly in the provinces where the socio-economic crisis hit the hardest (Salta and Jujuy in the north and Neuquén in the south).

After many requests to meet with representatives of the *Corporación Pulmarí* (CIP) went unanswered and the suspicion of wrongdoing in the allocation of concessions to private interests increased, the Mapuche communities of Aigo and Salazar, supported by CMN activists, occupied CIP headquarters in May 1995. Their immediate demand consisted of the right to access pasture lands in the winter and in its response, the provincial government agreed to grant access to some areas of Pulmarí (Lolen, Chichería, and Piedra Gaucha) for the communities. The occupation of CIP headquarters came to an end. A few months later, with the imminent arrival of winter, the communities of the Pulmarí area decided to re-occupy the areas of Piedra Gaucha, Lolén and Chichería after the CIP's promise to access this zone never materialized (Carrasco and Briones 1996). This time, the communities brought their cattle. Under a new leadership, these communities were able to justify their actions in terms of a “re-occupation of ancestral territories” that have historically belonged to the Mapuche. The *Confederación Mapuche*, now in an open confrontation with the provincial government, was able to provide some of the logistics for the recuperation of Pulmarí and also certain guidelines to conduct the re-occupation according to ceremonial Mapuche practices. The use of the *wenu foye*, the flag used by Mapuche organizations in Chile, was an important example. The flag had been recently adopted by the CMN to emphasize a collective identity of the Mapuche as a *pueblo nación originario* that extends beyond international borders. The re-occupation also

strengthened the Mapuche as a *pueblo nación originario*, according to activists, particularly through the consolidation of *xawvn* (community meetings) and “political/philosophical authorities” (e.g., *logko*, *inan-logko*, *werken*, *kona*).

The events of 1995 were only the initial stages of a conflict over Pulmarí that continues until today. They are significant because Pulmarí was the first case of a territorial re-occupation conducted by Mapuche communities and supported by CMN activists under a new leadership. The Pulmarí conflict has re-emerged ten years later. In 2006, Mapuche communities and the *Confederación Mapuche* decided to re-occupy another area of Pulmarí. In the ten years between the first re-occupation and the events of 2006, Mapuche communities and activists have faced eviction orders, criminal charges for usurpation, and setbacks in negotiating with government authorities the terms under which the re-occupation could come to an end. When eviction orders were carried out, Mapuche communities responded with public demonstrations and more re-occupations (e.g., Pampa India, in 2000, La Cuyana, in 2003). Meanwhile, the conflict of Pulmarí has, since then, been addressed primarily through the courts. This later point, related to the increasing criminalization of Mapuche mobilization, is developed below.

The re-occupation of parts of Pulmarí since 1995 is important in the process of Mapuche organization and mobilization for a number of reasons. First, some Mapuche communities were eventually allowed to stay in some areas, and this relative success of Pulmarí provided some confidence to other communities to continue with the strategy of re-occupations of ancestral territories. Second, many communities started to come together and work with similar goals, realizing, for example, that Pulmarí and re-occupations affected them equally. Thus, as a result of the re-occupations, the communication among communities increased. In some cases, for example, communities decided to boycott local schools by not sending their children. This decision gained the support of the provincial teachers union, which proved to be one of the main allies of Mapuche activists in Neuquén. Finally, Pulmarí has demonstrated how, in practice, the objectives of urban activists and the needs of communities can converge. This convergence has been indeed a main goal of the new generation of activists that emerged in the late 1970s and 1980s. While re-occupations take place in the rural context

involving primarily the communities affected, the process is sustained and supported by the *Confederación Mapuche*, which provides the language of rights to territorial autonomy. Thus, one of the key elements of contemporary Mapuche activists consists in linking the immediate, everyday concerns of the communities with the broader goals and concerns of a *pueblo nación originario*.

6.3.2 Quillén-Currumil

In 2006, Mapuche communities and activists within the *Confederación Mapuche* decided to re-occupy and gain access to over 10,000 hectares of the Pulmarí estates. This time, the re-occupation began the takeover of the *estancia* headquarters used by the army. Once again, the immediate demands included the need of the communities for pasturelands and the request to the Pulmarí Corporation (CIP) to stop granting concessions to private interests. These concessions, given for 99 years, were a source of permanent conflict between the CIP and Mapuche communities. Since the first re-occupations in Pulmarí in the mid-1990s, many areas remained under the use of Mapuche families (while charges for usurpation remained in court). In some cases, the CIP eventually acknowledged the need of some Mapuche communities and established the legitimacy of the occupation. However, this recognition was legally considered *only* as another private concession and not as granting collective ownership for Mapuche communities. The state, in fact, retained its ownership over these lands. Hence, the political source of the Pulmarí conflict never dissipated and by 2006 the communities were ready again to revamp their strategy of territorial re-occupation. With this decision, 54,000 out of the 113,000 hectares that belong to Pulmarí came under Mapuche control. Since then, Mapuche activists and the communities have been struggling to secure the legal recognition to this *de facto* occupation.

For many years, the re-occupations of Pulmarí have placed Mapuche communities in direct confrontation with the Pulmarí Corporation as well the provincial and federal governments over the meaning of Mapuche rights. To some extent, the more recent decision in August 2009 by the Mapuche community of Quillén-Currumil (Currumil, for

short) to re-occupy ancestral territories is another phase of the Pulmarí conflict that began in the mid-1990s. Although the lands under immediate dispute are located outside of the zone of Pulmarí, the connection to the Pulmarí events has to do with the changes that took place within the community as the strategies of re-occupation and a new kind of Mapuche activism, namely the influence of the *Confederación Mapuche*, expanded into this area. *Lof Currumil* is located 10 kilometers southwest of Aluminé and consists of a group of approximately 60 families, living in an area of 2,603 hectares. Just to place this number in perspective, the closest *estancia* (large estate) owned by one family (*Estancia Lagos Mármol*) consists of 14,484 hectares. However, Currumil was not involved in the re-occupations of Pulmarí until the mid-2000s. Currumil, in fact, only adopted the strategy of re-occupations after the community celebrated a *xawvn* (community assembly) where new authorities were elected. After Pulmarí, many members of the communities began to question the authorities for remaining too close to Neuquén's government and the ruling party, the *Movimiento Popular Neuquino* (MPN). The intensification of these criticisms and the division of the community between those who saw a benefit in staying close to the interests of the MPN and those who found in the activism of the *Confederación Mapuche* a more attractive program of action (and discourse) resulted in a change of authorities and political strategies to negotiate and resist the state. In the context of the formation of a new kind of Mapuche political identity, Currumil became one of the most recent examples of what Mapuche families and new leaders are willing to do in their quest for territorial autonomy. One member of Currumil refers to the reasons for the decision to carry out the territorial re-occupation in the following terms:

“If we talk about when the urgency to recuperate our territory emerged, we can say that the need has always been there. The necessity for invernada (grazing lands for the winter) is present since they cornered us here. It is present since the estancieros (large estate owners) have been encroaching on the territory surrounding us. Some of them have moved the wire fencing closer to our community. Our parents and our grandparents also had this urgency. We need pastures for the summer and the winter [...] This feeling of struggle to recuperate our territory has

been transmitted to us. We all have our putakece (ancestors). They have transmitted Mapuce kimvn (wisdom) and they have told us that at some point these territories were free” (AY, Interview 2009).

In June 2009, the immediate motivation behind the decision of the Quillén-Currumil community to re-occupy the 2,500 hectares located nearby was the need to access grazing lands:

“In our meetings, we have been discussing our lack of access to winter pasturelands. We did not know where we would take our cattle. In previous winters, we could bring some animals to lands that were under the control of estancieros and they would charge us a determined amount for each animal. But some families could not afford these fees and this year we decided not to pay. Other families were not granted access. On June 24 we planned for a xawvn (meeting) to celebrate our wüñooy tri pantu. On that day, we celebrate the renewal of life. This term literally means the return of the sun. All nature renews itself. Each newen (force existing within each element of nature, including humans) has a lethargic period but with this renewal, they awaken. For us, June 24 is a very special day. [...] When we met, we exchanged our views about the lack of territory for our community and we heard rumours that estancieros in the area wanted to start selling off parts of these lands. On that day, we decided to start a process of re-occupation” (AY, Interview 2009).

For Mapuche activists, territorial re-occupations have special meaning and they have a place in the ways of knowing the world. This strategy also serves to consolidate ongoing processes of Mapuche identity formation:

“On that morning of the re-occupation I was in the town. Someone called me and told me that there was a surprise and that I should come to Currumil. I never imagined that the community would finally carry out the recuperation. When we arrived at our community ruka we noticed that it was empty. And then we noticed that our flag was in the area under re-

occupation. My friend and I started to cry. We knew what this meant. When we went there, we saw many families of Currumil. [...] We remained in that place for two months. We built a new ruka, which is the first thing a Mapuche does when we recuperate part of our territory. A ruka is an important part of the everyday life of a Mapuche. By building a ruka, we officially recognize an area as Mapuche territory. We recognize that space as our own. This came to an end two months later, on August 25th” (AY, Interview 2009).

Another recent cause of the conflict was the delay in fulfilling national legislation that mandates provincial authorities to closely study the needs for territory of indigenous communities and an examination of all ownership titles of the lands in conflict. The claim for these lands, however, has been historical. Indeed, many families within the community recall the time when they were able to access these lands and use them during the winter for feeding their cattle. The area was also an important meeting space for different Mapuche communities surrounding the region. With nearly 2,500 hectares of breathtaking scenery but poor soil conditions for feeding their cattle, the Quillén-Currumil community could no longer endure the burden of having to pay for the use of lands for pasture to private landowners of the area. Such was the practice before the re-occupation. From their perspective, the right of the Mapuche to territorial autonomy and the lack of response by the state on the matter justify their decision to occupy those lands. But the re-occupation of *Estancia Podestá* was short-lived.

On August 25 2009, for the first time since the self-proclaimed “Conquest of the Desert” in which the national army ended the *de facto* indigenous autonomy in northern Patagonia, elite forces of the provincial police entered the officially recognized territory of a Mapuche community in response to their attempt to re-occupy the adjacent *estancia*, currently under private ownership (*Estancia Podestá*). Members of Currumil argue that parts of the territory under dispute have been illegally taken from the community throughout the years. While evictions took place in the past, Mapuche activists recollect that this was the first time that security forces entered the territory of any community officially recognized by the state. Moreover, it was the first time traditional authorities

(e.g., *logko*, *werken*) were arrested since the Pulmarí events of 1995. For this, the violent reaction by the police and the incursion into community territory was unexpected. From a broader perspective, the events of that day were also the result of the increasing climate of violence that local private interests and their alliance with the government are creating around Mapuche mobilization. *Sociedad Rural de Neuquén* (Neuquén's Rural Society), for example, called on its members (large landowners) to “defend private property with arms” if necessary and accused Mapuche activists of having links to “terrorist” organizations (Pagina/12, 2009). The hiring of former police officials to evict Mapuche communities in other parts of the province, the increasing concerns of a “Mapuche invasion” into private farms, the increasing criticism of Neuquén's governor to the original mandate of the Pulmarí Corporation, and the number of editorials of the main conservative national newspaper *La Nación* legitimizing the use of force and the criminalization of Mapuche occupations have also contributed to shape a tense climate which places Mapuche communities against a plethora of politically and economically powerful actors (Consejo Asesor Indígena 2009). Hours after the violent eviction, the *Confederación Mapuche* denounced the provincial government in these terms:

“It is urgent that governor Sapag understands and takes responsibility for what is happening. He is using the worst of options, police violence and jail, to a rightful and legitimate claim that only has a solution in dialogue. But there is no ‘social dialogue.’ For the Mapuche, there are only sticks and prisoners. Sapag declares himself as a ‘slave of the law’ but he applies the law for one side only, in favour of the Rural Society and land speculators, interested in their personal interests” (CMN 2009b)

For members of Currumil participating in the re-occupation, the events surrounding the violent eviction relate to a long history of racial discrimination as well:

“This is the first time they [the police] enter the territory of a recognized community. It was terrible because they respected no one. When we came running from the reoccupied territory to our houses in the community, we saw that the police shot horses and women. We saw how our friend,

Estela, was shot in the face. And they insulted her. But when we are defending our rights, we are passionate. We felt strongly about defending our rights and we faced them. Estela defied them: 'shoot again, I am not afraid of you.' The cop told her: 'shut up, india de mierda'” (AY, Interview 2009).

In one sense, the Mapuche of Currumil were defeated in their attempt to re-occupy part of a territory they have used in the past and need in the present so the cattle, their main livelihood, do not die. There is nothing glamorous in being brutally repressed, beaten, taken to a police station with no possibility of reaching legal counsel, and being charged with trespassing a territory that is the source of Mapuche identity and livelihood. But the Mapuche I interviewed in Currumil (and other communities as well) often speak of the ways in which these circumstances help them to prioritize their life in the community, their political goals, and their relation with the state. In the words of AY,

“On that day, we organized many small ceremonies; we established contact with our different newen to gather strength. We did this so the kona (warriors) did not think that we have lost or that we were defeated. We wanted to do this to give them hope that we had the hope and the strength to go back (weeping). We fought it hard that day. It was all very spontaneous. We did not plan for every detail. But if someone saw it from the outside, someone could think that terrorists have trained us! We all found our strength that day. We all did our job. I was impressed at the abilities of those kona riding their horses! They grew up riding horses. They were impressive. We had no preparation. It came out that way. It was spontaneous. For one moment, the majority of women had to fight for the safety of our logko. And the kona were always there to lend us a hand. (AY, Interview 2009).

Finally, the decision to re-occupy a territorial space often places the community or communities involved in a position in which this decision has to be defended, even to activists that are not part of the community. Moments of tension between the

communities and activists of the *Confederacion Mapuche* are not new or unexpected. Indeed, they are part of the ways in which a political identity for the Mapuche is formed. There is no collective identity that is pre-defined by Mapuche activists without the participation of the communities and vice-versa. The following episode illustrates the tensions that can emerge when re-occupation and the violent evictions thereafter are taking place:

“Each one of us has a role to play [...] This role cannot be defined from the outside. Each lof (community) has its own way of reaching its goals. Each lof is unique. After all this happened, something ugly happened. I hope to be able to have a conversation with one CMN activist. When we met to discuss how we were brutally repressed, that person came off as trying to impose certain views in an authoritarian manner. We had our meeting to discuss the recuperation with the Confederación Mapuche. Many were saying that it was bad that we responded to the police aggressions by throwing stones. Many people that were not from Currumil were against this. And this activist tried to impose a pre-establish view. We did not interpret this as something coming from the CMN, but from one person. On that occasion, many kona were asking that we say sorry for what they have done (throw stones). But I ask myself: ‘why are we apologizing!?’ What happened to us did not happen to any other community. We did not have an example to follow. At that moment, I thought that we did not have to apologize. We are defending our territory! We have to apologize to no one. If we thought that defending our territory in this way was the right thing to do, so be it. When we speak of autonomy, we are also speaking of the autonomy of each community. To join the Confederation does not entail that we say ‘yes’ to everything the Confederation asks. There has to be disagreement, like in every other organization. The need to defend that space for disagreement is what finally led me to become more involved in the politics of my community” (AY, Interview 2009).

And finally, AY also points out a possible source of these tensions between urban activists and the communities, which are important to mention as another dimension of the politics involved in Mapuche mobilization today:

“I used to think that the main problem is that they [activists] are urban and that we are ‘Mapuche de territorio’ (from territory). I live in the town nearby so I was reluctant to become an authority of my community because I always thought that authorities must live in their territory. But this new reality makes me be more flexible. We are currently trying to create a statute of Mapuche autonomy so the wigka (non-Mapuche) does not have to tell us that because we live in urban spaces we cannot take part in the decision-making process of the communities. We are now saying that even if we live in towns, we are still part of our community. The decision to recuperate territory came from Currumil and that should be respected. Sometimes, one of the mistakes weken from the CMN make is that they do not put themselves in the place of the Mapuche who live in the territories” (AY, Interview 2009).

6.4 Criminalizing Mapuche activism

In Northern Patagonia, contemporary Mapuche mobilization is encountering increasing levels of police repression in the name of “law and order.” While state repression has been more constant and visible against the Mapuche in *gulumapu* (Chile), Neuquén is experiencing an intensification of conflict around the control and use of the region’s vast territories (and resources). The events of 2009 in Currumil serve to remind Mapuche activists that their public demonstrations and re-occupations, even in the context where spaces for indigenous participation are available, can face violent opposition by state forces if (when) their demands are deemed illegitimate. In a context of neoliberal multiculturalism, the analysis of the politics of negotiation, contestation, and

accommodation in which Mapuche activists are involved must include an overview of the ways in which Mapuche mobilization has been criminalized by the state. This is the topic of this sub-section.

The ongoing criminalization of contemporary Mapuche activism can find some of its sources in the past. In some ways, the possibilities for criminalizing Mapuche demands are embedded in the politics of “invisibility” towards indigenous peoples that were so characteristics of the process of state formation in Argentina. In this context, Mapuche activism is often contested on the basis that their demands are “un-authentic” and that, as Mapuche, they do not belong in Argentina but in Chile (Briones and Delrio 2009). In Northern Patagonia, the dichotomy between “authorized” and “unruly” Indians, characteristic of neoliberal multiculturalism, is being recast in novel ways under the Kirchner administration, a point that is addressed in the Concluding chapter. In the words of anthropologist Charles Hale:

“The rise of cultural rights creates a series of authorized spaces, both in civil society and the state itself, which spokespeople and representatives of the broader indigenous population come to occupy. They do not necessarily submit or conform to the state’s purposes; much to the contrary, they are forced to operate within certain constraints, both material and symbolic, associated with the spaces themselves. These spaces carry with them a basic dichotomy between two ways of being Indian. The authorized Indian has passed the test of modernity, substituted ‘proposal’ for ‘protest,’ and has learned to be both authentic and fully conversant with the dominant milieu. Its Other is unruly, vindictive, and prone to conflict” (2006, 220).

For Mapuche activists, the increasing degree of violence coming from state institutions shows a clear contradiction between the recognition of indigenous rights and the ways in which they are treated by the courts system. Furthermore, they believe these conflicts emerge from the tension that exists between Mapuche claims for territorial autonomy and the emphasis development projects place on extractive activities, high-end tourism, and

the preservation of privately owned large estates. Indeed, most territories under dispute in Northern Patagonia have a relation to natural gas reserves, oil extraction, forestry, tourism, or pasture lands, to name a few. The expansion and consolidation of some of these practices have indeed pushed the Mapuche to adopt strategies of territorial re-occupation more often as this is the only way they see to slow down the advance of private interests into territories they claim, use, or inhabit. In other cases, Mapuche communities like Quillén-Currumil have gone further and have been involved in attempts to reoccupy lands in order to secure their main source of income, namely by trying to secure access to pasture land for their cattle.

In the case of Neuquén, the government has responded to Mapuche mobilization under the leadership of the *Confederación Mapuche* in two important ways. On the one hand, it has been using its social policies and the clientelistic networks of its ruling party for delivering subsidies or handing out items to Mapuche families to cover basic needs (e.g., clothing, food items). By doing this, the government has been able to frame Mapuche demands as a socio-economic problem coming from a population in need of social assistance. In doing this, the provincial government attempts to bypass intermediary organizations such as the *Confederación*, dealing directly with Mapuche families living in the communities. Mapuche activists often point to the challenges that the government's strategy presents, namely, the need to become a meaningful representative of Mapuche communities in a context of poverty and deprivation in some of the communities. In other words, Mapuche activists cannot always help Mapuche families to cover their immediate needs and the government's welfare assistance programs are a viable alternative for many. By focusing on social assistance programs, however, the state does not address Mapuche claims for territorial autonomy and self-representation. This approach is unsurprisingly embedded in the ways in which provincial and federal governments government have dealt with social organizations. Indeed, the tendency of populist parties like the *Movimiento Popular Neuquino* at a provincial level and the Peronist Party at the national level to activate the clientelistic apparatus of the state to deal with indigenous people's claims has been a constant feature throughout the years.

What is often open to debate in terms of the populist approach is whether these policies tend to serve a radical purpose of redistribution or if they are practices that ensure the political control of the party in power without going beyond ameliorative forms of social assistance. Within this perspective, governments may respond to Mapuche demands by offering social assistance and state-funded programmes that promote elements of Mapuche culture in the market place, such as ethno-tourism or artisan products but without addressing the claims of territorial autonomy, self-representation, and the existence of a *pueblo nación originario*. While an in-depth discussion about the commodification of Mapuche culture by state-sponsored development projects exceeds the limits of this chapter, it is pertinent to mention that most local governments in Northern Patagonia offer some kind of support in the commercialization and promotion of Mapuche products and have used elements of Mapuche-ness to promote a sense of provincial identity. This approach, Mapuche activists often claim, encourages them to look “folkloric” and to look the other way when it comes to claims for territorial autonomy and self-representation.

The second way in which the state responds to Mapuche claims is by establishing new limits within which indigenous activism may take place. Some of these limits seem clear for Mapuche activists in the experiences of accommodation described in the previous chapter. State institutions offer spaces of participation to Mapuche activists but they are expected to downplay more radical demands such as territorial autonomy. And activists, who behave inappropriately according to the state, see their demands questioned, constrained, and marginalised. In some cases, they face direct coercion from the state apparatus. Divisions amongst Mapuche pursuing different paths of activism are becoming increasingly clear along these lines, especially those who participate in organizations such as the *Confederación Mapuche* that are sceptical of offers of participation made by states but nonetheless take them. In this context, activists walk a fine line between accepting spaces open for their participation within the institutional structure of the state and marginalisation from policy decisions that affect them and their communities. These options, however, are not consolidated and Mapuche activists understand that in the complex scenario of Argentina’s federal politics, their positions have to change according to the ways in which state they believe claims for territorial autonomy can be secured. In

other words, the alliances they establish, the discourses they adopt, the political strategies they carry out, and the institutional spaces they decide to join always depend on the ways in which the state (local, provincial, federal) exercises its prerogatives *vis-à-vis* indigenous peoples.

At a time when the federal government under the Kirchner (2003 – 2007) and Fernández de Kirchner (2007 to present) administrations has avoided large-scale punitive force against social movements and other forms of social protest, Neuquén and other provinces have not followed suit. The judicialization of Mapuche activism has emerged predominantly as a response to territorial re-occupations. In 2012, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples visited Argentina and published a Report on the general situation of indigenous peoples in the country (UN 2012). In it, James Anaya, the author, identifies three major areas of concern facing indigenous peoples: land tenure and natural resources; access to justice system, evictions, and social protest; and social and economic conditions. In its section on land tenure and natural resources, the Report highlights the historical dispossession suffered by indigenous peoples at the hands of *estancieros* (large estate owners) and companies in the farming, oil, and mining sections operating in territories claimed by indigenous communities. It further adds that the majority of indigenous communities have not received appropriate legal recognition of the lands they historically have used or occupied (UN 2012, 7). In terms of access to justice, evictions and social protest, the Report provides an overview of the linguistic, cultural, and economic barriers indigenous communities face in the court system. National and international law concerning indigenous rights often go ignored, especially “in regard to their rights and land and natural resources” (UN 2012, 12).

Furthermore, the Report documents the ways in which the courts have “tended to favour the private property rights of individuals or corporations over collective forms of indigenous ownership” (UN 2012, 12). There are only a few instances where courts have ruled in favour of indigenous communities (e.g., recognition of the right to be consulted for the Wenctru Trawel Leufú Mapuche community in 2011). In general, legal uncertainty has resulted in a high number of evictions from orders issued by provincial courts, “in which members of indigenous communities have been accused of seizing

private land... In some cases, the homes and property of members of indigenous peoples, including their livestock and crops, were destroyed during the eviction operation” (UN 2012, 12). Finally, the Report acknowledges the ways in which indigenous communities have resisted eviction, or used peaceful protest to make their predicaments public. However, it also mentions how governments have responded by criminalizing acts linked to these protests: “many indigenous individuals are prosecuted for alleged offences committed in connection with these protests” (UN 2012, 13). The section on social and economic conditions addresses the “serious marginalization” of many indigenous groups and certain regions (UN 2012, 13).

According to Mapuche activists, state-sponsored violence towards Mapuche communities has been a rarity since the return to democratic rule but the intensification in the last decade has been clear. The criminalization of Mapuche demands also takes place in the context of discursive constructions that see such claims as illegitimate. It is worth noting that these discourses that see Mapuche mobilization as unfounded and illegitimate do not emanate exclusively from state officials. Throughout my fieldwork, for example, I encountered these prejudices coming from many non-Mapuche living near the zones of conflicts. However, while rejection of Mapuche claims is widespread, there are also organizations that support their demands and document them.

As Patricia Richards (2010) demonstrates for the Chilean case, the narratives that construct Mapuche demands as illegitimate include what she calls “the terrorist narrative”, “trivialisation narratives”, and “the assimilation narrative.” The first narrative constructs the Mapuche as terrorists, legitimising the coercive response of the state. In the second set of narratives, the discourses tend to question Mapuche demands as illegitimate. In the Argentinean case, these narratives usually resonate with the argument of *araucanización*, which deems Mapuche populations as Chilean with no legitimate claims as indigenous peoples in Argentina.¹⁰³ In Northern Patagonia, it is also common to have provincial governments questioning whether certain Mapuche communities are

¹⁰³ The Mapuche have also been known as Araucanians.

indeed indigenous to that province. For example, Neuquén's government has dismissed claims for some communities to register as Mapuche on the grounds that some of its members are from other provinces of Patagonia. Finally, the third narrative recognizes the presence of the Mapuche and deems some claims as legitimate. Nonetheless, this view also argues that the Mapuche should scale down their demands for territorial autonomy or self-representation. In Argentina, as in Chile, the solution is seen in the assimilation of Mapuche communities to national institutions. In the Argentinean case, the vehicles for this incorporation have included the Peronist Party (or any of its regional variations, such as the *Movimiento Popular Neuquino*), the school system, and the Catholic Church. This type of discourse entails the view that the Mapuche need to change, in order to assimilate to mainstream culture, if they want to survive. In what follows, I use Richards's categorization to illustrate the narratives that deem Mapuche claims as illegitimate. While the selection of these narratives is arbitrary, they do reflect some of the local attitudes towards Mapuche mobilization.

When I visited the Quillén-Currumil community in October 2009, I was quickly introduced to the women and children who had suffered police brutality a few weeks earlier. Hours later I was given a few samples of the rubber bullets used on the day on which elite police forces put an end to the re-occupation and entered the recognized territory of Currumil. What members of Currumil could not grasp, they mentioned, was the fact that the province recognized their rights in a recent constitutional reform (see previous chapter) but at the same it relied on the court system to criminalize their attempts to make those rights effective. The events of Pulmarí and Quillén-Currumil ended with *logko*, *weken* and other community members facing criminal charges. The new politics of Mapuche organizations such as the *Confederación Mapuche* does not go unchallenged by the state. Despite the formal recognition of their rights, Mapuche activists are often accused of criminal activities, rhetoric of foreign interference is invoked, and local elites express their concerns that private property is under threat. This response by state institutions informs, in part, the ways in which Mapuche activists engage with and resist state institutions. For example, in 2009 the province of Neuquén alone had close to forty-five court cases against Mapuche individuals or families for usurpation and damage to private property (e.g., wire cutting). While many of these cases

end up with the acquittal of the accused, Mapuche activists spend months dealing with the court system. In this context, since 2009 Mapuche communities and activists have teamed-up with human rights organizations to create the Observatory of Human Rights for Indigenous Peoples (*Observatorio de Derechos Humanos de Pueblos Indígenas*, ODHPI).

Since its foundation, the ODHPI has published annual reports documenting the process of legal recognition in Northern Patagonia, the shortcomings in implementing such recognition, and the instances of criminalization conducted by the state against Mapuche communities and activists that claim their rights (ODHIP 2010; 2011; 2012). The last report, for example, provides some figures related to the criminalization of Mapuche demands. In Neuquén, the courts have used three types of criminal charges against Mapuche individuals: usurpation; insubordination to a judicial order; and obstruction of a public act (*impedimento de acto funcional*). The latter two are considered crimes against public administration (ODHIP 2012, 29). In the province, the report accounts for 42 criminal trails involving 241 Mapuche and 83% of current trials involve any one of the three types of criminal charges mentioned above. Since 2005, the report continues, there have been 60 court proceedings against Mapuche individuals as a consequence of their activism for the implementation of constitutionally recognized rights. Since then, 347 Mapuche have been charged (ODHIP 2012, 29).¹⁰⁴ The peak in the number of criminal charges against Mapuche activists took place in 2009, when the bulk of fieldwork for this dissertation was conducted. The ODHIP links the peak of prosecutions against Mapuche activists to the call from large estate owners and private corporations “to defend private property” mentioned earlier. This is also the year of the violence that took place in Currumil. The report denounces reduction of the “Indian question” to an issue of “criminal law” (ODHIP 2012, 31).

¹⁰⁴ From the 347 Mapuche that have been charged, 9 (3%) have been acquitted, 97 (28%) have been dismissed, 177 (51%) are under preliminary proceedings, and 64 are facing trial. Since 2005, no Mapuche has been found guilty on any of these charges (ODHIP 2012, 32).

The Observatory is a result of ongoing efforts by Mapuche leaders in Neuquén to create institutions that represent and address the legal aid needs of the communities. The rights and freedoms of indigenous peoples recognized by national and international legislation as well as the increasing challenge the criminalization of Mapuche protest poses for the communities, have made the Observatory a key institution for Mapuche political organization. One of the challenges that the Observatory tries to address is the fact that when involved in court cases, Mapuche communities or their leaders cannot access the same kind of legal services and expertise that large-landowners or government agencies do. In response to this, Mapuche activism now includes a legal dimension that was not so central in the mobilization of previous years.

6.5 Conclusion

Under the political leadership of the *Confederación*, Mapuche communities have revisited the terms under which they relate to state institutions. Communities have also come to rely less on the clientelistic networks that connected them with government officials in the past and to make political claims in complex ways. Such claims may lead to the creation of new spaces of indigenous participation within the structures of the state but they may also lead to territorial re-occupation in order to secure their goal of territorial autonomy or to simply secure their main sources of livelihoods. These demands on the state for materializing recognized rights remind Mapuche activists of the contradictory nature of state forms under neoliberal multiculturalism: formal recognition of rights and criminalization of indigenous demand are compatible with each other.

The territorial re-occupations of Pulmarí and Quillén-Currumil show that local communities will adopt the strategy of territorial re-occupations if they agree on the immediate need to negotiate with the state in this way. The state's response, however, is not always the expected one. While Pulmarí was fairly successful in terms of the control over grazing lands that local Mapuche communities were able to secure and the

consolidation of the *Confederación Mapuche* as a legitimate political representative of the communities, the recent Quillén-Curruñil episodes demonstrate that territorial re-occupations also lead to a long path of criminalization and time in court defending what should be defended by political means.

While territorial re-occupations may provoke the violent reaction of the state, participation of Mapuche communities in initiatives such as the co-management project of the Lanín National Park shows the other important dimension of the neoliberal state and its understanding of multicultural citizenship and ethnodevelopment. Conceived as an ideal framework to transfer responsibility from state institutions to (a now ethnicized) civil society, the neoliberalization of the state in indigenous matters does not address issues of historical injustices or current inequalities of access to land that would help materialize the Mapuche quest for territorial autonomy. However, without territorial autonomy, the decolonization of the state-Mapuche relationship becomes a distant goal.

Chapter 7

7 Conclusions

“Movements in complex societies are disenchanted prophets [...] Movements are a sign; they are not merely an outcome of the crisis, the last throne of a passing society. They signal a deep transformation in the logic and the process that guides complex societies. Like the prophets, the movements ‘speak before’: they announce what is taking shape even before its direction and context has become clear” (Melucci 1996, 1)

7.1 Indigenous peoples and the state in minority contexts

The intensification of indigenous mobilization throughout Latin America in the last three decades must be understood in the context of changes in state formation and consequently, in the dominant forms of citizenship. Despite the continuities with the past that are often evoked by activists, there is a good deal of recent transformation that explains the resurgence of indigenous peoples as political actors. Indigenous leaders, for example, often recognize that the democratization of the region played an important role in their organizations’ capacity to relate to the state in new ways. They can now do so more openly and directly. Furthermore, the transnationalisation of capital and state functions has also provided indigenous groups with the opportunity to be in contact with allies beyond national boundaries. The formal recognition of the multiethnic character of national societies in state constitutions and new rights recognized in international legislation provide additional forms of legitimacy to indigenous demands, including the rights to a bilingual education and interculturalism, access to and collective ownership of territories indigenous peoples use or inhabit, and the right to determine the development of indigenous communities in their own terms. Indigenous autonomy is recognized at

different levels, in different legal texts. However, a gap between recognition and implementation exists and indigenous peoples have organized to demand states they live up to their commitments. In some cases states have ignored these claims. For the most part, however, states have usually responded by opening new spaces for indigenous participation.

The circumstances under which indigenous peoples mobilize also depend on the ways in which state formation and its relation to indigenous peoples have taken place. In this regard, the literature on indigenous politics has not paid sufficient attention to the dynamics of indigenous activism in contexts where indigenous peoples are a minority. The Southern Cone countries of Chile, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, and, to a certain degree, Brazil, are a case in point.¹⁰⁵ A possible reason that explains this is the inadequacy of mainstream theoretical approaches that privilege open confrontation and public demonstration of indigenous movements at a national scale. These approaches, while valid for other contexts, are of limited value for the study of indigenous activism in minority contexts because they tend to ignore the local dimension of indigenous mobilization and the ways in which such activism involves a complex process of negotiation, accommodation, and confrontation with the state. This study suggests that indigenous organizations and political activism adopt different forms when population numbers are low. Needless to say, numbers do not determine the characteristics of indigenous mobilization but activists understand that in a minority context they must adopt the strategies that are available to them, and these may be different from those available to indigenous organizations in majority or near majority contexts.

One existing limitation in current approaches to indigenous movements lies in their teleological assumptions that place movements in a continuum between “marginality” and “success” in terms of their capacity to influence state policy or government reaction at the national level. In practice, however, as Lucero and García have suggested,

¹⁰⁵ The Brazilian case is interesting because despite its low population numbers, the interest in indigenous peoples has focused on indigenous human rights and environmental issues. For the most part, however, the literature on indigenous issues in Brazil has not addressed the process of indigenous political activism its relation to state formation. A notable exception is the work of Alcida Ramos (2002; 1998).

indigenous activism tends to look more like “palpable networks of association and relations of meaning” which also have the capacity to influence the terms of indigenous citizenship thus engaging with the state in politically meaningful ways (2007, 325). Arguably, the forms these “networks of association” adopt and the “relations of meaning” they produce depend largely on the historical context in which they take form.

In the Argentinean case, and for the Mapuche in particular, the focus on political organization and mobilization needs address more carefully the local context. Furthermore, the study of the local dimension of indigenous activism in Argentina needs to take into consideration the ways in which provincial politics intervene in national and local aspects of indigenous politics (Briones 2005). As this study shows, Mapuche activism in Northern Patagonia adopts different forms depending on the province in which it takes place. The shift from large-scale movements and their impact, or lack thereof, on national politics to small-scale, local processes of negotiation, accommodation, and resistance to state practices serves to weaken the assumption that, in order to be strong or relevant, an indigenous movement needs to articulate a “nationally cohesive political force” (Lucero and García 2007). In minority contexts, indigenous activism engages in national indigenous politics at the local level by negotiating and challenging the terms of indigenous citizenship under neoliberal multiculturalism. In short, locality matters. In contexts such as Northern Patagonia, local dynamics of power have a profound impact on indigenous collective identities and on the ways in which political activism takes place. In short, local circumstances and specific episodes of indigenous activism are the result of broader changes in and engagement with the patterns of state formation (e.g., neoliberalization of the state) and citizenship (e.g., neoliberal multiculturalism).

The analytical shift from analysing indigenous activism at the national scale to paying closer attention to local dynamics of negotiation, accommodation, and contestation highlights an important dimension of neoliberal multiculturalism that is often overlooked: the uneven effects of indigenous citizenship and the multiplicities of ways in which indigenous peoples themselves contest it and/or find accommodation in it. Geographer Sarah Radcliffe (2005), for example, observes that given the uneven impact of

neoliberalism on different localities, resistance to it often takes place alongside “reworkings” and “compromises” on the part of indigenous activism and states. Furthermore, the author suggests that discourses and practices associated to neoliberal multiculturalism have outcomes that go beyond the conditions under which states choose to adopt them (Radcliffe 2005, 328; also Postero 2005, 16-17). In this sense, the contributions of this study to the ongoing debates on multicultural recognition and neoliberalism in Latin America highlight the governmental dimension of neoliberal multiculturalism as a process that entails, not just the possibilities for recognition and redistribution that Donna Van Cott (2006) has studied, but also new opportunities to exercise control over indigenous populations and the political demands of indigenous activists. While my study suggests neoliberal multiculturalism in Argentina has more in common with Charles Hale’s work (2004, 2006, 2011), the ongoing process of accommodation, conflict, and resistance that Mapuche communities in Northern Patagonia experience should warn us that the limitations of neoliberal multiculturalism in one place may have not much in common with the experience of indigenous peoples in other regions. In this sense, the more nuanced argument presented by Lucero (2007), García (2005), Radcliffe (2005), and Postero (2005) seem to be more compatible with my own argument for the Mapuche. While neoliberal multiculturalism may not serve to transform unequal power relations, it may nonetheless open new and empowering opportunities for indigenous activists. In short, its effects are uneven and contradictory. And while Van Cott (2006) argues that multicultural recognition may serve to limit the effects of neoliberal reforms in South America, my study on the Mapuche suggests that such distinction is problematic, particularly in light of the recent transformations of state forms and its regimes of citizenship.

The politics of multiculturalism of the neoliberal state addresses indigenous demands in various ways, for instance, by creating spaces within government bureaucracies that respond to long-term indigenous claims. As Antonio Lucero points out, neoliberal multiculturalism “creates new terrain for state incorporation of and negotiation with indigenous peoples” (2007, 233). Nevertheless, state-sponsored multiculturalism, which is understood as the official albeit limited form of indigenous rights recognition, is a result of dominant power relations. However, despite the unequal relations of power that

inform this type of recognition, multiculturalism is open to some of the historical demands of indigenous peoples. As such, the risk is high for indigenous activists who participate in a process where “reforms soften the harder edges of resistance, all to maintain a status quo where the most vital distributive issues of power and wealth remain largely untouched” (Lucero 2007, 233).

Cultural difference, then, and ethnic pluralism under neoliberal multiculturalism are recognized and welcomed but not always in the terms indigenous activists hope. The historical roots of poverty and racism, for instance, are not confronted (Hale 2002). Territorial autonomy, as a project of indigenous self-determination within the state, is rejected. Seen as a form of government over ethnicized subjects, neoliberal multiculturalism privileges some kinds of indigenous activism and identities over others. In this context, the neoliberalization of multiculturalism implies “an appropriation of indigenous rights” in order to articulate “agendas favouring neoliberal economics, decentralization, and citizen responsibility” (Andolina et al. 2009, 3).¹⁰⁶ Indigenous politics in contemporary Argentina needs to be understood in this context in which neoliberal multiculturalism has transformed the content and reach of citizenship. Thus, by keeping in mind the tensions that exist between indigenous claims and official recognition of collective rights, one can better understand why Mapuche activism in practice adopts the form of accommodation, negotiation, and contestation vis-à-vis state institutions and practices.

¹⁰⁶ The World Bank, for example, is perhaps one of the most visible institutions that devote programs, funds and “know-how” to the idea of “indigenous development.” Considered as part of a broader idea of “development from below”, the notion of indigenous development is not new. In articulating development projects for rural areas, for example, the World Bank often assumes some of the political and social constraints that exist acknowledging that they are related to unequal access to land, an important source of inequality and conflict. One of the main criticisms of this perspective is directed at the notion that development projects can, despite those obstacles, take place in abstraction “from histories of political struggle over rural poverty and land use” (McAllister 2009, 650). This view often leads, in McAllister’s terms, to an inadequate understanding of “the processes governing the lives and hopes of the rural poor in such contexts” (2009, 651).

7.2 Towards a new Mapuche politics

Since the late 1970s, new forms of Mapuche leadership have emerged posing new types of challenges to the state and challenging the historical discourses of invisibility that have characterized modern state formation in Argentina. In Neuquén, a new type of Mapuche leadership and activism was consolidated when a new generation of activists took control of the *Confederación Mapuche de Neuquén*, an organization created with the sponsorship of the provincial government and the Catholic Church in 1971. The initial goal of this organization was to represent the interests of the rural Mapuche communities officially recognized by the province in the 1960s. In practice, however, it also served the electoral needs of the dominant populist political party, the *Movimiento Popular Neuquino* (MPN), connecting Mapuche families to the provincial state via clientelistic relationships. In a practice that still persists, local electoral support to the MPN was rewarded with welfare assistance to the communities that was mediated by selected families, usually those of the *cacique* (chief). The category of chief, however, was contested by the new generation of activists who adopted instead the notion of *logko*, as explained in more detail in chapter 4.

For years, Mapuche families used these mechanisms to access basic needs for their communities, such as clothing, food, and shelter. That form of relating to the state, however, was increasingly questioned by a new generation of urban Mapuche leaders. In Neuquén city, these activists started to build affective relationships with their communities and slowly began demanding a greater leadership role in them. Thus, the capture of the *Confederación* by some of these activists in the early 1990s was the outcome of years of networking and thorough work within their communities. And while the content of their discourse on territorial autonomy has seen changes since then, this generation of Mapuche activists has always privileged the centrality of “ancestral territories” in their struggles. Furthermore, for years, these activists fought against the lack of internal democratization of the *Confederación* and they eventually won. They have also expanded the existing conception of Mapuche territory to include urban spaces and have, thus, promoted a notion that goes well beyond the geographic boundaries of

rural communities. Many of these changes, in turn, have resulted in new demands that I have characterized here as territorial autonomy.

The forms of mobilization and strategies adopted by the “new” *Confederación Mapuche* have played an important role in informing the relationship between the state and Mapuche communities. Not always able to carry out large-scale uprisings, including blockades of main roads that usually gain nation-wide attention through the media, Mapuche activists started to support the decisions of many communities to re-occupy lands considered ancestral Mapuche territory. While these re-occupations are not the only tactics employed, they have turned the Mapuche into visible political actors in their own right.

Contemporary Mapuche activism in Northern Patagonia is also part of more general indigenous struggles for broadening the terms of citizenship by demanding that states incorporate the recognition of cultural difference of a *pueblo nación originario*. Such a demand for recognition is still an incentive for mobilization, although the bulk of Mapuche activism today concentrates on the implementation of concrete measures to secure territorial autonomy and self-representation. Activists recognize, however, that recognition does not necessarily address years of historical subordination and institutionalized racism. In the last three decades, they have been negotiating with state officials and have adopted a rights discourse thus giving the state a privileged role in their claims: rights can only be granted by states. Mapuche activists agree that the language of rights can be patronizing. The way out, they argue, is in decolonizing the state, not in ignoring it. By decolonizing the state, activists seek to radically define their relationship with the state. But in order to decolonize the state and social relations in general, Mapuche communities must secure territorial autonomy, a goal that is beyond the limitations of neoliberal multiculturalism.

7.3 Territorial autonomy: to what end?

“You are a transitional generation, said Aunt Lydia. It is the hardest for you. We know the sacrifices you are being expected to make. It is hard when men revile you. For the ones who come after you, it will be easier. They will accept their duties with willing hearts. She did not say: Because they will have no memories, of any other way. She said: Because they won’t want things they can’t have” (Margaret Atwood 1985, 111).

These words by Canadian author Margaret Atwood from her classic work *The Handmaid’s Tale* serve as a warning for activists about the fate of future generations if the boundaries of neoliberal multiculturalism are not contested. As long as citizenship regimes maintain their capacity to dismiss “inconvenient” demands that are deemed too radical, for example, demands for territorial autonomy, Mapuche activists will need to find new ways to radically alter their relationship with the state that support such regimes. Needless to say, changes in this relationship and struggles for territorial autonomy do not represent a homogeneous and unique position in Mapuche activism. Since the Kirchner administrations came to power in 2003, a number of Mapuche activists have abandoned the ranks of the *Confederación Mapuche* to join the government as they believe that working alongside a government they see as politically progressive and committed to the plight of indigenous peoples will lead to faster and more permanent solutions to their claims. In my last visit to Neuquén in April of 2013, I observed profound divisions amongst Mapuche activists as a consequence of new political alliances between the provincial and federal governments. While political divisions between the province and the federal state had served Mapuche activists in the past, the new alliance put them at odds with all instances of government. Internal divisions, common to all social movements, are also part of the movement of the Mapuche. Despite these divisions that can either strengthen or weaken Mapuche activism in the long-term, Northern Patagonia has seen the rise, strengthening and consolidation of other organizations that advocate for the rights of Mapuche communities. In short, new possibilities in Mapuche activism and new ways of engaging and contesting the state emerge as changes in the political context occur. In practice, claims for territorial autonomy and the strategies adopted to reach this goal are the outcome of productive

tensions that exist within Mapuche communities, between communities and activists, and in the complex interactions between the Mapuche and the state.

It is unclear whether the demands for territorial autonomy and self-representation will ever reach a point when Mapuche organizations determine that it is time to work on what they call “life projects” sustained by Mapuche cosmologies and ways of knowing. In other words, territorial autonomy will not immediately translate into the fulfilment of other Mapuche goals. On the contrary, territorial autonomy will emerge as the result of the complex negotiation, accommodation, and contestation between activists and the state. Furthermore, the question as to whether the political organization of Mapuche communities in its current forms will be effective to secure an eventual radical transformation of the state and dominant social relations under the existing framework of neoliberal multiculturalism and global capitalism remains unanswered. As this dissertation has shown, the process of Mapuche mobilization and organization around claims for territorial autonomy is not independent from the political, historical and ideological context in which it takes place. While Mapuche activism is linked to broader struggles for more inclusive forms of citizenship, democracy, and development, the process cannot be seen or conceptualized as pure resistance. Far from suggesting that Mapuche politics in contemporary Argentina is characterized by passivity, as the idea of accommodation alone may suggest, my argument has been that Mapuche organizations know how to engage with the state in politically significant ways. The emphasis on *kvme felen* (good life), *mapuce kimvn* (wisdom), and *interculturalidad* are simply signs that the path Mapuche activists have decided to take is long but irreversible.

The context within which Mapuche activists in Northern Patagonia mobilize for territorial autonomy differs greatly from Atwood’s near dystopian future. On the one hand, Mapuche activists recognize that current forms of accommodation are part of the ongoing sacrifices many communities “are expected to make.” On the other hand, in their every-day encounters with the state, many Mapuche activists are told to wait and “accept their duties with willing hearts.” In the past few decades, however, Mapuche activists have continued to hope that their defence of territorial autonomy gives future generations the foundations for a more just society.

7.4 The political significance of local indigenous activism

This study, focused on Mapuche activism in Northern Patagonia, provides important lessons for our understanding of indigenous activism in contexts where indigenous peoples are a considerable minority of the national population. I have shown and argued that in these contexts, indigenous peoples engage with the state and its forms of citizenship in complex ways. This engagement involves instances of negotiation, accommodation, and conflict. Furthermore, all these instances are informed by the formation of new collective political identities.

My focus on the local level makes possible a study that privileges the understanding of the concrete ways in which state practices and indigenous activism encounter each other. In this encounter, characterized by unequal power relationships, activists are able, in some cases, to influence state initiatives for their own goals. Neuquén's constitutional convention, the co-management projects within National Parks, and the creation of an intercultural AM radio station are examples of accommodation within state-sponsored initiatives. Control over these spaces by indigenous activists, however, is precarious and contradictory as state priorities and the priorities of activism change. For example, the fate of co-management projects within National Parks is uncertain. In April 2013, the co-management project at the Lanín National Park no longer included the participation of the *Confederación Mapuche* and of many of the communities that had initially been involved. However, as co-management strategies seemed to fail at Lanín National Park, opportunities for a new co-management at the Nahuel Huapi National Park emerged. The significance of this new opportunity is that it has brought Mapuche activists in Neuquén in closer relation with Mapuche organizations in Rio Negro, and their collaboration is challenging the provincial boundaries of indigenous politics in Northern Patagonia.

With very few exceptions, political scientists have, until recently, responded slowly to the significance of emerging indigenous politics in the Americas. Furthermore, studies of the

political significance of localized activism in contexts where indigenous peoples are a minority remain beyond their scope. By adopting an interdisciplinary framework that privileges the political significance of cultural processes and collective identity formation to understand state formation, citizenship, and collective action, and by adopting ethnographic methods that highlight the relevance of the local, I have contributed to closing this gap. This interdisciplinary study of local, everyday processes of negotiation, accommodation, and confrontation places indigenous activists and their ways of knowing at the centre of the analysis. As a Mapuche activist once told me, “I do not know how to explain to you the value that we give to our territory. It is our culture, our identity.”

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2010-2011

Lecturer
Brescia University College (London, ON)
2011

Lecturer (Rank of Assistant Professor)
Huron University College (London, ON)
2011 to Present

Publications and Conference Papers:

“Cultural and Political Struggles: New Social Movements in Latin America” In Political science: New approaches? New realities? Proceedings of the VIIth Student Research Conference on Political Science. Université de Montréal (April 30 – May 1st 2004): 212-224

May 12-14, 2006. “*Social Exclusion and Ethnicity: Politics of Identity and Collective Action in the Andes.*” Conference: “Cultural Policies, Trade Liberalization, and Identity Politics: Testing the Limits of the State.” International Interdisciplinary Conference at the University of Windsor, Canada

October 14-15, 2006. “*Exclusions of Identity: Neoliberalism(s) in Latin America.*” Conference: “Illusions of Identity: resisting (beyond) identity politics.” An interdisciplinary graduate conference hosted by the Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism. University of Western Ontario, London, Canada

February 23-24, 2007. “*Contesting neo-liberal globalization: The emergence of counter-hegemonic movements in the South.*” International conference “Hegemonic Transitions & the State.” Centre for Global Political Economy, Simon Fraser University. Vancouver, Canada

September 5-8, 2007. “*The neoliberalization of identity policies: Indigenous social movements in post-Washington Consensus times.*” XXVII International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association. Montreal, Canada

May 22-24, 2008. “*‘Too weak to fight.’ Hunger, ethnic genocide and mobilization of the pueblo Toba in Argentina.*” First Conference on Ethnicity, Race, and Indigenous Peoples in Latin America and the Caribbean Section (Latin American Studies Association). University of California at San Diego

June 1-3, 2010. “*Reclaiming citizenship: Mapuche Demands for Territorial Autonomy in Argentina.*” The Canadian Association for Latin American and Caribbean Studies. Concordia University, in conjunction with the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences. Montreal, Canada

October 27-19, 2011. “From *‘dueños del país’* to *‘un puñado de salvajes.’* The place of the indigenous subaltern in the independence movements of the Southern Cone.” The Independence Effect Symposium. Department of Spanish and Portuguese. Dartmouth College

May 3 – 5, 2013. “Contemporary Mapuche struggles in Argentina.” Congress of the Canadian Association for Latin American and Caribbean Studies. Ottawa, ON.

May 29 – June 1, 2013. “Autonomy as a form of Government: The experience of Mapuche peoples in Northern Patagonia.” 31st International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association. Washington, DC.