Collaborative Heritage Management

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PRACTICES FOR VISUALIZING THE REGIONAL PAST: ARCHAEOLOGY, SOCIAL COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION IN PUERTO SAN JULIÁN, ARGENTINA

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INTRODUCTION

Many international meetings, academic papers and national laws suggest that cultural heritage comprises both the material and immaterial resources that a society has created to guarantee its existence and social and cultural reproduction.[1] Furthermore, it has been stated that the members of a given ethnic group identify themselves according to their cultural heritage as it gives them a sense of belonging and historical continuity. Cultural heritage de-

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[1] UNESCO, 'Convención sobre la Protección del Patrimonio Cultural y Natural', p. 14; ICOMOS, 'Charter for the Protection and Management of Archaeological Herritage', p. 5; Ley-25.743, 'Protección del patrimonio arqueológico y paleontológico', p. 9; Endere, 'La protección del patrimonio arqueológico en Argentina: dificultades y desafíos', pp. 161–174.

fines a group of ideas and ways of doing which guide the behaviour of societies.[2]

However, that which is defined as the heritage of a community changes throughout time. By thinking of heritage as a process, which is facilitated by discourse, it is possible to understand not only which facts, moments or historical events are remembered and celebrated, but also which ones are being forgotten or neglected and why.[3] In many situations, such as the ones the native groups of Argentina have experienced, historical and social processes have been interrupted or altered by sudden and external factors. These factors limit the cultural transmission throughout generations and trigger the loss and replacement of cultural references. At the same time, the hegemonic groups in western society make the processes which generate these new realities invisible.[4]

In Latin America, these processes have on many occasions taken place within civilising projects, during the construction of national states in the 19th and 20th centuries.[5] In Argentina, hegemonic projects, such as the one conceived by the 'Generation of the 80s'[6] by the end of the 19th century, tried to establish social and economic liberalism, had an idea of progress and development which was linked to foreign powers and were extremely positivist. Among its purposes, the project of the 1880s sought the annexa-

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[2] Barth, *Los grupos étnicos y sus fronteras*, p. 204.

[3] Smith, 'El "espejo patrimonial". ¿Ilusión narcisista o reflexiones múltiples?', pp 39–63; García Canclini, 'Los usos sociales del patrimonio cultural', pp. 16–33; Prats, 'Concepto y gestión del patrimonio local', pp. 17–35.

[4] Lumbreras, 'El patrimonio cultural como concepto económico'; Valko, *Pedagogía de la Desmemoria. Crónicas y estrategias del genocidio invisible*, p. 413.

[5] Funari, 'Public Archaeology from a Latin American Perspective', pp. 239–243; Bonfil Batalla, 'El Concepto de Indio en América: Una Categoría de la Situación Colonial', pp. 105–124; Martínez Sarasola, *Nuestros Paisanos los Indios. Vida, historia y destino de las comunidades indígenas en la Argentina*, p. 582.

[6] Term which is used to define the ruling elite of Argentina between 1880 and 1916.

tion and control of huge territories. Consequently, those in power needed to subdue, reduce and/or eradicate the native groups that inhabited those territories and active policies were implemented to achieve these goals.[7]

These plans were justified by evolutionary discourses. Native groups were regarded as primitive groups which had to be eradicated so that the Nation could be developed.[8] The official discourse was based on a Eurocentric and racist narrative. This was consolidated through the public educational system which crystallized the indigenous peoples as 'wild indians who lived before civilisation' or 'scarcely developed sedentary people'.[9] These policies were kept for many decades in Argentina. They created an hegemonic 'invisibilization' of the indigenous groups in the national imagination.[10] The antinomy 'Civilisation or Barbarism' is a synthesis which describes this historical process. This antinomy was proposed by Domingo Sarmiento (Argentine politician and thinker of the 19th century) and it condenses the cultural and social thought of a whole generation. It became an articulation point for the cultural policies designed by the state and it continues to operate as a residual tradition[11] in social representations. Because of this, successive generations lack many cultural and identity references related to the historical past. The elements which are usually identified as their heritage are in most cases those linked with the dominant historiography. There remain very few channels of dialogue with the social past; people become passive spectators in the production of knowledge with regards to history and heritage.

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[7] Gordillo and Hirsch, 'Indigenous Struggles and Contested Identities in Argentina. Histories of Invisibilization and Reemergence', pp. 4–30.

[8] Valko, *Pedagogía de la Desmemoria. Crónicas y estrategias del genocidio invisible*, p. 413.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Gordillo and Hirsch, 'Indigenous Struggles and Contested Identities in Argentina. Histories of Invisibilization and Reemergence', pp. 4–30.

[11] Williams, *Marxismo y literatura*, p. 250.

In this historical framework, we are developing our research and communication program at Puerto San Julián (Santa Cruz, Argentina). It is a city of around 10,000 inhabitants which is located next to the Atlantic Ocean (Figure 1). The region in which Puerto San Julián is situated was initially colonized around 13,000 years ago. Throughout the millennia, different hunter-gatherer societies lived in the area.[12] Since the 16th century, these groups came into direct contact with explorers, missionaries, traders and officials. These were initially Europeans, but since the 19th century there were also representatives of the National State. One example of this contact is the so-called 'Campaign of the Desert', a military expedition carried out between 1879 and 1885 by the rising Argentine State. The expedition killed thousands of indigenous people from Pampa and Patagonia; many others were forced to abandon their lands and surrender to the national power. The settlement of new productive and extractive enterprises, together with the division of the land into plots and the advancement of a new national border (symbolically marked by wire fences), created a novel social territory.[13]

This process clearly had an impact on the way the city of San Julián evolved. Although local dwellers have often dealt with indigenous archaeological objects, the identity of this community[14] has

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[12] Paunero, *El Arte Rupestre Milenario de Estancia La María, Meseta Central de Santa Cruz*, p. 80.

[13] Páez, *La Conquista del Desierto*, p 116; Balazote and Radovich, 'Indígenas y fronteras: los límites de la nacionalidad', pp. 25–44.

[14] This concept was initially defined by Tonnies in 1887. He referred to little, organic, native rural ensembles and opposed them to societies. By the mid-20th century the relationship between rural communities and cities was described as one of political dependence and economic exploitation, with the underlying idea of class structure (Williams, *Keywords. A vocabulary of culture and society*, p. 349; Villegas Vélez, 'Campesinado y tipologías polares. El concepto de comunidad en la sociología clásica', pp. 1–8; Cardoso de Oliveira, *Etnicidad y estructura social*, p. 259; Guber, *La etnografía, método, campo y reflexividad*, p. 146.). In this article we use the concept of community to define a group of people who share (or imagine that they share) a common geographic and social space, historical experi-

been shaped mainly around two historical milestones: the arrival of Magellan to the area in 1520, and the foundation of the city in 1901 by the so-called 'pioneers', who were mainly Europeans. That is to say, among the ideas about the past there is a hegemonic position which tends to foreground Eurocentric perspectives. At the same time, those discourses which highlight the culture of the native groups seem to be ignored; part of the larger human past as well as the indigenous influence in the region have become invisible.

The idea of 'pioneers' is linked to the European or Western dwellers that arrived to Patagonia by the end of the 19th century. This concept creates in the regional imagination a sense of empty territory (the 'desert') which became inhabited and 'civilised' a little more than one hundred years ago. Pioneers are usually regarded as those who brought life and development to the region and represent the 'national being'. Their arrival is seen as an epic enterprise which enabled the settlement of people in a rough environment. Through this ideology, the humanity of the indigenous groups is being denied.[15] Taking these ideas into consideration, the goal of our project is to problematize notions concerning the first dwellers of the patagonic territory, through archaeology and social communication.

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ences, cultural characteristics and interests. This does not mean we understand communities as homogeneous. On the contrary, it means that the conflicts, inequalities and contrasts which are visible occur within a (at least partially) shared trajectory.

[15] Ramos, 'No reconocemos los límites trazados por las naciones. La construcción del espacio en el Parlamento mapuche-tehuelche', pp. 1–24; Rodríguez, De la "Extinción" a la Autoafirmación: Procesos de Visibilización de la Comunidad Tehuelche Camusu Aike (Provincia de Santa Cruz, Argentina).
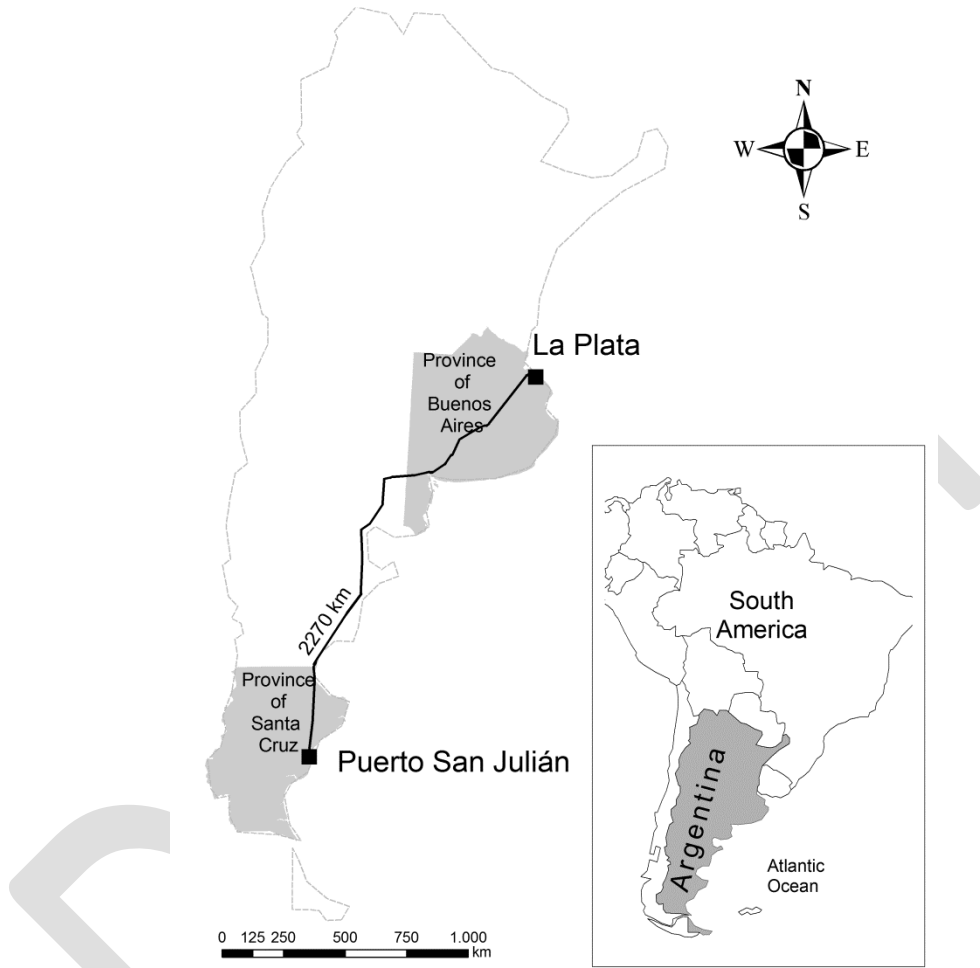
Figure 1. Location of Puerto San Julián and La Plata

ARCHAEOLOGY AND COMMUNICATION

Our work conceives science as a social practice. In it, communication is as important as research,[16] both are essential parts of the same process. Communication is inherent in every human activity and it is constitutive of every social process.[17] Nevertheless, when it is linked to science, communication is generally equated to the dissemination of results, journalism or scientific alphabetization. We try to problematize this patronizing idea which is so deeply rooted in certain scientific traditions, including the archaeological community.

We believe that archaeological practice has a social sense because it generates long-term historical narratives. These stories help to perform critical analyses about 'human nature' and social reality. They highlight that there exists a wide variety of cultural productions, ways of doing, being and seeing the world. Archaeology can also show how cultures change throughout time and tries to explain how this happens.[18] Hence, our discipline enables the problematization of different ways of life and discussion on how people relate to each other, with the landscape and with the historical context. It is then possible to denaturalize ethnocentric, racist or essentialist perspectives. Thus, archaeologists can be important figures in the process of generating inclusive practices, based on a broader view of the social world.

In order to accomplish this, we need to establish dialogues with other stakeholders. Without them, the archaeological practice loses its social meaning. Therefore, it is necessary to acknowledge

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[16] Paunero, Li and Castillo, 'El taller para niños: una forma de hacer Arqueología', pp. 29–34; Freire, *¿Extensión o comunicación? La concientización en el medio rural*, p. 109.

[17] Martín-Barbero, *De los medios a las mediaciones* p. 300; Mattelart, *La comunicación-mundo. Historia de las ideas y de las estrategias*, p. 360. Chomsky, *Reflexiones sobre el lenguaje*, p. 387.

[18] Paunero, Li and Castillo, 'El taller para niños: una forma de hacer Arqueología', pp. 29–34; Lumbreras, *La Arqueología como ciencia social*, p. 293.

the political nature which is inherent in every scientific activity.[19] Through dialogue, archaeologists can reformulate the purely academic meanings which we assign to archaeological productions. We are then able to co-construct – together with other involved groups – socially interpellated[20] narratives about the past. Tightly related to this point is our firm belief that the construction of knowledge is achieved through the act of communication.[21] In other words, the meanings and interests that the communities assign to their past, spring from communicational processes. These ideas can clash with the concepts created through standard archaeological practice. That is why collaboration and dialogue are transformative moments for all the participants.[22]

Taking into account the above, it is necessary as a starting point to reflect upon the construction of the communicational relationship between the archaeologist and the communities where the former develop their field research. In the communicational dimension tensions and asymmetric relationships are created. These are constitutive of social processes.[23] Archaeologists wield academic knowledge, which is institutionalized, hegemonic, and mediated by historical and social processes as well as by specific traditions of the discipline. Their voice becomes the authorized heritage discourse.[24] This is complicated by the fact that researchers do not usually live in the area where they carry out field work but in distant places, most commonly in big urban centres where the universities and investigation laboratories cluster. In our case, we must

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[19] Leone, Potter and Shackel, 'Toward a Critical Archaeology', pp. 283–302.

[20] We use the concept of "interpellation" based on Althusser´s proposal 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', pp. 86–111.

[21] Paunero, Li and Castillo, 'El taller para niños: una forma de hacer Arqueología', pp. 29–34; Freire, *¿Extensión o comunicación? La concientización en el medio rural*, p. 109.

[22] McGuire, 'Critical archaeology and praxis (Kritische Archäologie und Praxis)', pp. 77–89.

[23] Mata, *Nociones para pensar la comunicación y la cultura masivas*, p. 16.

[24] Smith, 'El "espejo patrimonial". ¿Ilusión narcisista o reflexiones múltiples?', pp. 39–63.

travel more than 2000 km from the city of La Plata (where our research institute is situated) to Puerto San Julián. Distance makes the construction of bonds difficult; the arrival of the archaeologists can be irritating and suspicious for the locals. Academic discourses partly oppose those sustained by the communities. They hold a knowledge which is built based on their own meanings, interests and needs. But local discourses are also mediated by the historical and social contexts of production. In this particular case, the context is the construction of an ethnocentric narrative, in which history begins with the arrival of Europeans and in which the history of native groups is 'invisibilized'. The fate of these societies which have been 'erased' physically, culturally and/or symbolically, as well as the struggles, tensions and resistances which were part of this process[25] are not a fundamental part of the historical discourse in Puerto San Julián – nor in the rest of Patagonia.

We should add that even within the community there are a variety of opinions, interests and commitments with regards to heritage. For example, in San Julián there are those who have a specific economic interest, as there are historical sites which have become tourist spots. There are also those who defend a certain social status achieved within the community: they are known as 'descendants of the pioneers'. Finally, there are those who have a leisure perspective and an individual interest in the archaeological artefacts: the collectors.

For all these reasons, we are interested in creating educational moments and spaces which enable the interpellation of the subjects. This approach is a way of problematizing our practices as social beings in order to change them or to support them with a stronger basis.[26] We also search for the articulation between the archaeological tasks and the different views, meanings and uses of the past by the diverse social actors of the present. This approach

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[25] Gordillo and Hirsch, 'Indigenous Struggles and Contested Identities in Argentina. Histories of Invisibilization and Reemergence', pp. 4–30; Quijada, '¿"Hijos de los barcos" o Diversidad Invisibilizada? La Articulación de la Población Indígena en la Construcción Nacional Argentina (Siglo XIX)', pp. 469–510.

[26] Buenfil Burgos, *Análisis de discurso y educación*, p. 32.

to archaeology operates from the inside, with the people leading the course of action and triggering specific measures which are helpful in problematizing and strengthening identity-building processes.[27]

Science can work on the perception and valorisation of the human past and it can become a means of building our heritage jointly. Archaeology is a discipline suited to this task. It can be used as a pedagogical tool which integrates social, historical and environmental aspects.[28] It can problematize stigmatizing perspectives and counter some ideas which describe the Latin-American native groups as primitive, static or passive. It also makes it possible to analyze the temporal depth of human life in the continent and examine the diverse modes in which the social space was/is used. This way of doing archaeology constitutes a complex and dynamic trajectory, full of changes and readjustments. Hence, working with communities cannot be thought of as a goal which has to be reached in a unique, definite or competent strategy. Quite the opposite, it is a multidirectional, open and flexible path.[29] We believe it is not the results which ought to be emphasized but the process itself, and the dialogue that goes with it.

OUR APPROACH TO ARCHAEOLOGY

The investigations we have been carrying out seek to learn about the human past at the Central Plateau and the Atlantic coast of the province of Santa Cruz. Our goal is to understand the different ways in which the societies and the landscape relate to each other, in order to create models regarding socioeconomic structures, be-

[27] Curtoni, 'Acerca de las consecuencias sociales de la arqueología. Epistemología y política de la práctica', pp. 29–45.

[28] Paunero and Martínez, 'La experiencia de leer el pasado remoto. Talleres de arqueología y comunicación en Puerto San Julián', pp. 1–6; Del Giorgio et al., 'Arqueología y Comunicación en la comunidad de Puerto San Julián, Provincia de Santa Cruz', pp. 1–6.

Fernández Ochoa, Gallego Guitian, Domínguez Suárez and Romero Massia, *Arqueología: Enseñar desde las raíces de la Historia*, p. 62.

[29] Curtoni, 'Acerca de las consecuencias sociales de la arqueología. Epistemología y política de la práctica', pp. 29–45.

haviours and constraints. Through research, we intend to achieve a deep understanding about the indigenous groups that inhabited this area throughout time, especially regarding topics such as technology, subsistence, resource exploitation and settlement systems. To achieve this, we analyze the occupational history of the landscape, the transformations it went through together with the changes that the societies experienced. We are interested in recuperating the peculiarities of each moment and of each society that inhabited this territory and in identifying those features which remained unchanged with time.[30]

The results of our research show that this area was systematically inhabited for 13,000 years, although the intensity of occupation fluctuated.[31] Hunter-gatherer groups lived and used different sectors of the landscape.[32] Places near water sources were preferred, as this is the critical resource in the area. Other resources which also influenced the way the space was used were rocks, pigments and shells. The recurrent use of these spaces indicates that early societies in the region had a profound knowledge of the land-

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[30] Cueto et al., 'Prácticas postcolecta y material leñoso: análisis de residuos y huellas microscópicas de origen vegetal, sobre artefactos de roca tallada, utilizados en contextos experimentales', pp. 1205–1210; Paunero, *El Arte Rupestre Milenario de Estancia La María, Meseta Central de Santa Cruz*, p. 80; Skarbun, *La organización tecnológica en grupos cazadores recolectores desde las ocupaciones del Pleistoceno final al Holoceno tardío, en la Meseta Central de Santa Cruz, Patagonia.*, p. 213; Frank, 'Los fogones en la Meseta Central de Santa Cruz durante el Pleistoceno Final', pp. 145–162, among others.

[31] Miotti and Salemme, 'Poblamiento, movilidad y territorios entre las sociedades cazadoras-recolectoras de Patagonia', pp. 177–206; Paunero, 'La colonización humana de la meseta central de Santa Cruz durante el Pleistoceno final: indicadores arqueológicos, referentes estratigráficos y nuevas evidencias', pp. 85–100.

[32] Paunero et al., 'Arte Rupestre en Estancia La María, Meseta Central de Santa Cruz: Sectorización y contextos arqueológicos', pp. 147–168; Paunero and Skarbun, 'Reserva Península de San Julián: estudios arqueológicos distribucionales en una particular geoforma marina', pp 253–264.

scape: the archaeological record from caves and rock shelters suggests redundant periods of occupation throughout time.[33] The excavations showed that both extinct and modern fauna was consumed and that these groups were knowledgeable and skilful with regard to wild resources. Research also suggests that these groups had a broad technological knowledge, as they made a wide variety of tools with different production techniques. These tools were used to fulfil different tasks including processing and consuming prey, the production of leather clothes and the building of shelters. Field surveys and laboratory research has also unravelled a rich symbolic and artistic world, which is expressed mainly in the great variety of cave paintings found in the region.[34]

The traditional practice of archaeology (at least in Argentina) considers the 'field' as the place from which archaeological remains are recovered; it is a sort of source which the scientists only visit when they need to get the objects they are going to study. Therefore, archaeologists have not felt the necessity or the responsibility to create stable and long-lasting bonds with the people who currently live in the territory under study. At the same time, academic institutions do not encourage these kinds of actions, which then depend solely on the ethical and political will of the researchers. Fortunately, we have noticed that in the last few years there are new methods and experiences which are becoming alternatives to traditional archaeological practice.[35] In our case, we want to overcome previous attitudes through collaborative work with the community. We have built a 'non systematic' action research strategy, with a fluctuating degree of formality. We have put into practice a perspective which is both anthropological and communicational.

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[33] Paunero et al., 'Arte Rupestre en Estancia La María, Meseta Central de Santa Cruz: Sectorización y contextos arqueológicos', pp. 147–168.

[34] Ibid. Podestá, Paunero and Rolandi, *El Arte Rupestre de Argentina Indígena: Patagonia*, p. 271.

[35] Curtoni, 'Acerca de las consecuencias sociales de la arqueología. Epistemología y política de la práctica', pp. 29–45; Salerno, 'Trabajo Arqueológico y Representaciones del Pasado Prehispánico en Chascomús', p. 349.

Our theoretical and methodological framework has been influenced by previous projects of public or collaborative archaeology[36] as well as by proposals which have their roots in the Communication Sciences.[37] This approach has enabled us to acquire a deeper understanding of the way the past is regarded and recreated in Puerto San Julián. We are also interested in enquiring how the present community is shaped, in order to know how much previous cultures have influenced it. This latter aspect has usually been silenced/hidden by hegemonic groups both at local and national level across the whole country. At the same time, our practices with the community created a network of acquaintances which supports our research and triggers ideas for more systematic tasks.

We have created bonds with different social actors in Puerto San Julián, each of them presenting specific interests and dynamics. We have sought to promote a long-term perspective in order to discuss issues related to memory, identity and heritage. A long-term approach means that these relationships experience different moments: initial dialogues, mutual acknowledgement, trust, collaboration and joint participation. This trajectory has enabled us to, in a certain way, become *part* of the community.

Thus, our fieldwork involves the participation of local dwellers in many activities. They have helped us to identify archaeological sites and they participate in survey tasks. They decide with us which sites to excavate and collaborate in the digging. Among the stakeholders who have taken part of our field tasks there are ranch

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[36] Moser et al., 'Transforming archaeology through practice: strategies for collaborative archaeology and the Community Archaeology Project at Quseir, Egypt', pp. 220–248; Barceló, 'Arqueologia per a una emergència. Destrucció del passat, destrucció del present a Nicaragua', pp. 113–117; Funari, op. cit. Curtoni, 'Acerca de las consecuencias sociales de la arqueología. Epistemología y política de la práctica', pp. 29–45; Salerno, Trabajo Arqueológico y Representaciones del Pasado Prehispánico en Chascomús; Hart, 'Heritage, Neighborhoods and Cosmopolitan Sensibilities: Poly-Communal Archaeology in Deerfield, Massachusetts', pp. 26–34.

[37] Freire, *Pedagogía del oprimido*, p. 256; Martín-Barbero, De los medios a las mediaciones, p. 300; Hall, 'Codificar/decodificar', pp. 1972–1979.

owners and caretakers, park rangers, collectors and state officials. As these stakeholders are those who have a more direct bond with the field, our link with them has been quite strong. Nevertheless, our goal is to reach, directly or indirectly, the entire community. Our relationship with other social actors (such as municipal employees, shop workers or elderly people) is created during the daily coexistence which takes place when we visit the city. In this context, the informal dialogues allow us to present them with our activities and goals, to nourish ourselves with their ideas and knowledge and, in certain cases, to involve these people in some of our tasks. Furthermore, on many occasions it is the people themselves who come to us with proposals or who are concerned about a specific issue. Hence, we would not say that these contacts are planned or aimed. On the contrary, they are a consequence of our presence in the town and our intention of exchanging ideas whenever it is possible.

These collaborative practices are rich and valuable experiences for all. They enable us to create dialogic relationships in which we can learn from the local community. They favour the exchange of meanings on the social past and history; we achieve a greater understanding from their knowledge, ideas and interests. During these activities locals can also enquire about the archaeological practice, acknowledge the usual procedures of the research and come to better understand the strong and weak points of the discipline. Hence, the community begins to recognize how we build our certainties and why there are also uncertainties within the academic world. During the collaborative work, new research, conservation and exhibition ideas inevitably arise. Through these various activities, the community as well as ourselves assign value to those things and experiences (archaeological objects, cultural practices, life stories) which we gradually realize were part of our own historical path and which helped us to think and understand ourselves in the world. That is to say, values and meanings become a constructed, negotiated corpus.

Our presence in the community involves, necessarily, relationships which go beyond the fieldwork. We articulate duties and activities with local authorities as well as with officials from other state bodies. Organizations focused on rural administration, university education and the promotion of local history (such as museums) also partner with us. Although many of the practices are not

systematic, they have been performed for a long time: our team has been working in the area for more than two decades. We believe this continual presence is a key factor for our current status within the community, as it has made visible our work in local institutions which have educational, communicational and decision-making roles. For example, we have provided counselling to the local government on issues related to archaeological tourism. We have also collaborated in the design and production of didactic scripts and exhibition panels for the history museum. From a constructive point of view, these bonds and activities benefit and support our duties. We have received both material and symbolic support such as funding and lodging in the city, assistance editing books on regional archaeology and history, the facilitation of new contacts with local dwellers, as well as interdisciplinary collaboration with local academics and professionals.

We have also participated in collaborative research in new spaces for dialogue, such as in group activities organized in the local museum, as well as in an annual celebration and exhibition known as 'Expo-San Julián'. Taking part in these sorts of activities enables us to reach a larger spectrum of local society and to show our research/communication program. Other channels between our team and the community are our participation in radio shows, the development of research interviews and traditional visits to close families. Each of these experiences allows the movement and circulation of 'The Word', the mutual understanding of our perspectives and the establishment of agreements, consensus and projects, as well as the identification of possible conflictive issues.

As a part of our work, we have organized a series of workshops on archaeology and communication. Since 2006, they have been both supported and funded by La Plata National University and the Municipality of San Julián. They have become an arena in which we try to systematize all of our previous experiences.

ARCHAEOLOGY WORKSHOPS IN PUERTO SAN JULIÁN

Taking into account our goals and resources (material, logistic, human), we have defined part of the population with which we think it is very important to develop long-term, systematic approaches. Therefore, we have implemented archaeology workshops in every primary school of Puerto San Julián. These are aimed at continuing our survey on community knowledge about the first settlers of Pat-

agonia within the regional imagination; but in this instance focusing solely on school-age children. Within the work we also seek to problematize with the children different topics relating to local, historical and cultural heritage, and to denaturalize perceptions about the human past which are strongly rooted in the community. We believe that working this way with local youngsters could provide a gateway to developing alternative and new ideas about the past which can then be transmitted to the rest of the Puerto San Julián society.

This kind of educational approach is practical and multidirectional. Most importantly, workshops are participative ways of building knowledge.[38] Our epistemological perspective sustains that the social actors should "take on the word". This concept stresses the interpretation of the historical world-view that is made by the subjects. In this context, what the learners say is more important than the ideas proposed or imposed by the educator.[39] In this sense, it is essential that they identify and express which representations of the human past are of significance for them. At the same time, the circulation of 'The Word' between the educators and the learners is inherent in every educational process.[40] The dynamics of the workshops demand the existence of a space for dialogue. The selected topics and the problems that arise must be of interest to everyone; the diverse actors should seek the integration and discussion of issues together. That is why it is necessary to begin activities/discussions from topics related to the here and now that the students recognize. We chose a strategy in which the members of the community take on 'The Word' because we believe in their commitment and self-affirmation as a human group which acts and performs in the world. At the same time, it reveals the way in which we define our social-political-strategic horizon with the local stakeholders and institutional referents from the society.

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[38] González Cuberes, *El Taller de los Talleres*, p. 113; Paunero, Li and Castillo, 'El taller para niños: una forma de hacer Arqueología', pp. 29–34; Harste, 'Prólogo', pp. 164.

[39] Freire, *Pedagogía del oprimido*, p 256.

[40] Ibid.

We have been doing these workshops for a long time, in an uninterrupted mode. Nevertheless, they change yearly as we reflect upon the previous results. Here we will present a brief description of the activities we do with the boys and girls from San Julián. We will introduce the content of the workshops so that we can show the kind of experience that can be achieved when social communication, education and archaeology are linked. We develop the workshops in every fourth grade class of the city, with ten year olds. We seek to problematize with them the indigenous presence in the region, when it began and how these cultures changed throughout time. We also aim to put these ideas into dialogue with prevalent notions within the community which suggest that native groups are not related to local history and identity.

The topics we discuss are: the temporal and spatial location of the first settlers, the different human groups that lived in distinct periods of time in the region, and the identification of relevant events in local history. We also talk about different ways of life and try to evaluate how these generate diverse archaeological contexts. Alongside this, we explore ideas regarding technology, especially the production of tools and rock art. These activities make it possible to achieve a more complex perspective about the knowledge and capabilities of the native groups. Finally, we incorporate hints which are useful to reflect upon the way archaeologists study the past.

The teaching of the topics begins by presenting 'triggering questions' and by letting the children express some of their doubts with regards to archaeological practice. The intention is to create an appropriate atmosphere in which information can be exchanged and in which discussions are generated, so that the students are able to place themselves as active subjects in the constitution of knowledge. This is a rich and rewarding experience both for the students as well as for the members of our project.

In order to explore these topics, we develop group and individual activities, artistic and intellectual exercises, induction and deduction problems, among others[41]. We believe that working with

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[41] Del Giorgio et al., 'Arqueología y Comunicación en la comunidad de Puerto San Julián, Provincia de Santa Cruz', pp. 1–6.

archaeological remains and resources used by the ancient inhabitants of the region holds great heuristic potential in solving some of the problems presented to the children. These objects are useful to create an affective bond between the students and the past.[42] In turn, this has an effect on the way the children represent the past and helps in the process of appropriation. In the following paragraphs we will present some of the conceptual cores and activity units in order to exemplify how the regional past can be visualized. We want to show how it is possible to establish dialogues with the students in order to create shared meanings about the past in the present and for the present.

Figure 2. Timeline: Exploring the antiquity of human settlement in the region

Time line: This activity tries to problematize the antiquity of human settlement in the region. We stick a six meter long paper band

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[42] González Marcén, 'De la investigación a la educación y viceversa', pp. 1–4.

on the classroom wall, with a printed line which simulates a time line. The idea is that the students place in an approximate chronological order certain historical and natural processes and events. This helps to create a general panorama about the human past in the area. We use several images and phrases which are then also stuck on the line. The observation of a group of significant events enables the visualization of different ways of life, the identification of the dynamics of social and cultural change, and above all the recognition of how large a temporal lapse of 13,000 years can be (Figure 2).

Figure 3. Working with archaeological remains

Activities with objects

Some activities involve the use and manipulation of material elements. These are archaeological objects (bone remains, lithic artefacts, pottery and pigments) as well as some items which are used today (forks, batteries, DVDs and so on). Boys and girls gather in teams and are encouraged to try to group the objects in chronological order 'from the very past to the very present'. They also have to search for correlations between different ways of life and mate-

rialities. We also discuss together which steps are involved in the production of a tool and make interpretations about the social dynamics in which these objects intervened. These activities are articulated by triggering questions such as: who made these objects? What for? When did the societies that used these tools live? Through this kind of activity we want to propose alternatives which do not regard the object as a fetish. Instead, we believe cultural items are useful for the visualization of the human groups that made them, of their way of life and history (Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 4. Students work in groups and use archaeological remains to discuss about the life of previous societies from Patagonia

Interpretation of rock manifestations and drawing

We make some activities focused on the artistic expressions which are commonly found in the area. Many of the images are already set in the local imagination because many people have visited rock art sites and also because there are plenty of commercial signs promoting archaeological tourism. We screen some of the motifs, especially those which are abundant in the surroundings. Afterwards, we

talk with the students and make a joint analysis about the possible meanings of the paintings and the way they were produced. Later on, we provide the students with red, yellow and black pigments (the same sort as were used by the first settlers to paint) and they begin to draw (Figure 5). Group and individual drawing encourage creativity, expression, understanding and observation. In this process, the participants make re-significations of the previously observed motifs. New meanings are assigned to the paintings, and these interpretations are mediated by the current symbolic context of the children.

Figure 5. Children drawing with pigments

FINAL REFLECTIONS

The goal of our work with the people of Puerto San Julián is to put value on local social history and to encourage the visualization of

many diverse cultural productions. However, even after many years of collaboration, it still seems like an ambitious project. The hegemonic narratives and representations which are set in the community have been transmitted and reaffirmed for many generations. This was achieved through many channels and mechanisms, including some practices from the formal education system.

The adoption of a collaborative perspective makes us reflect upon the ways knowledge is produced in the social sciences, especially in archaeology. In this scenario scientific knowledge cannot be thought of as the only legitimate or authorized voice. We believe it is very important to give pre-eminence to qualitative perspectives and to have the dialogic work with communities as a horizon. It is necessary to respect the contradictions of the communities and their ways of solving conflicts. Hence, it is essential to emphasise the processes and articulations which each of the involved subjects develop, leaving as of secondary importance the outcomes or the products of the activities. Giving prevalence to the results would imply a crystallization of the significations about the human past that the men, women and children of a community make. It would reduce the potential for creating new meanings on the historical constructions of a given society. In our case, we believe that through a collaborative process it has been possible to reflect upon untold, forgotten or distorted parts of history. This strategy encourages debates; knowledge and experiences are expressed and reconsidered. The relationship of the individuals with the 'ancient men'[43] comes to the surface because these previous societies are part of our history and, to a certain degree, of our present. These practices make visible that which is hidden. They show that there are within the community alternative types of knowledge and discourse regarding the past, although at present they are usually neglected or disregarded because they do not correspond with socially accepted points of view.

Another issue which we would like to discuss is the epistemological dimension of this approach. Our willingness to work aspires to build knowledge and content which should contact and be con-

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[43] "Los antiguos" is the common term which the creole dwellers from Patagonia use to refer to ancient, past native groups.

fronted by other types of knowledge generated by other social actors. The production of knowledge should be put into circulation beyond strictly academic spheres, although this attitude is clearly a more comfortable and safe one. Researchers must be aware that working with communities complements other parts of scientific investigation and that it is a transformative activity for them, as it triggers new questions, doubts and interests. In this sense, collaborative work with the community enables us to question the conditionings and biases which affect our academic practice and in turn to reorient our research. In other words, from our point of view there is a constant back and forth between purely academic tasks and the work with the community. We think of our practice as a singular process and so it is not possible to identify clear limits between both moments.

In this context, working with children is the perfect arena for the discussion of issues related to history and heritage. During the activities, latent realities arise; they are triggered by 'visibilization' mechanisms, by the generation of surprise, curiosity and doubt. This kind of situation activates the exchange of opinions, feeds new questions and makes debates richer. It promotes reflectivity and facilitates a critical position regarding ancient ways of life, productions, symbols and beliefs. This relates to the ethical and political dimension of our practice. If communication turns into a tool for the dispute of significations in the cultural sphere – as we are trying to express here – then there must be a commitment to generating existential horizons so that the whole of society can create its own political interventions and ways of denominating knowledge which can help to understand the causes of oppressive structures and to modify them.

We believe that if we keep to this path we will have new representations of the past. The same will happen to the boys, girls and teachers who participate with us in the workshops every year. In time, these representations will probably reach the rest of the community. Thus, we are sure we are part of a collective construction of meanings, which updates, re-signifies and brings to the present culturally and temporally diverse manifestations of human societies from the region.

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