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## State conceptions of indigenous tourism in Chile<sup>☆</sup>



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### ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the diverse—and often divergent—state conceptions of the role of indigenous tourism at the regional and state levels in the Araucanía Region of Chile, the historical territory of the Mapuche indigenous people. The article presents the context in which indigenous tourism developed, using an ethnographic approach to examine state discourses and analyzing the different positions of key public employees with respect to the development of Mapuche tourism. It seeks to identify the views and to link them to the political context of Mapuche territorial claims in some sectors of the Araucanía Region. The discussion helps to explain the relationship between identity construction processes and the concept of authenticity promoted by the state itself.

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### Introduction

The article's purpose is to analyze and discuss one particular dimension of the relationship between the state and the indigenous peoples, namely the development of indigenous tourism in the Araucanía Region, Chile. The article addresses the tensions and complexities evoked by the promotion and valuation of ethnic differentiation on the part of the state, which provides incentives for indigenous tourism, while at the same time the Mapuche people in the Araucanía Region, and in other parts of the country, struggle to obtain political recognition.

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The Araucanía Region<sup>1</sup> is the geographical and cultural space historically inhabited by the Mapuche indigenous people. The Chilean army occupied this territory by force at the end of the 19th century, and the land was allocated for colonization by Chileans and foreign immigrants. Meanwhile the Mapuche were marginalized to small areas, known as indigenous communities or *reductions*, which were often sub-divided over the years; land was lost in these and other processes.

Since the 1990s, Chile's public policies on indigenous peoples have been developed within the framework of Indigenous Law 19,253, which was passed after the restoration of democracy following 17 years of military dictatorship (1973–1990). These policies have addressed a variety of areas such as education, health and economic development, and have permeated various social programs in regions that contain a large percentage of indigenous inhabitants. These policies were also designed and implemented in a political context of growing ethnic claims and demands, especially in the Araucanía and neighboring regions. This in turn has translated into an increase in the so-called *Mapuche conflict*, which has its origins in the military occupation of the Araucanía Region and is primarily linked to claims for lost territory, economic pressure on land-holding, the presence of mega-projects that affect the quality of life of the communities, and demands for political participation.

At the same time, since 1990, the state and the private sector, especially NGOs, have encouraged indigenous tourism as a strategy for economic development and strengthening Mapuche culture. These actions have grown significantly since 2000, in parallel with the so-called *Mapuche conflict*.

This article does not analyze tourism as a phenomenon in itself, but as a part of the complex relationship between the state and the indigenous people of the Araucanía Region. In particular, it analyzes the development and promotion by the state of indigenous tourism in the Araucanía Region, and the conceptions of the principal state institutions involved in this process, in a context of important demands and conflicts in some parts of the region. It also examines the effects of this process on the construction of ethnic identity.

The first section of the article presents the theoretical and methodological perspective. Next, the results of the ethnographic investigation are presented, describing the context of the development of indigenous tourism in the Araucanía Region and analyzing intra-state discourse and how it relates to the processes of identity construction and conflict in the region. The article ends with conclusions.

## Theoretical and methodological perspective

### *Ethnicity, public policies and tourism*

The concept of ethnicity has been extensively addressed from different angles by various authors (e.g. Banks, 1996; Barth, 1976; Cardoso de Oliveira, 2007 [1976]; Hylland, 2010; Poutignat & Fenart, 1995; Restrepo, 2004). Perspectives vary from a primordialist conception to a constructivist or modernist position. The primordialist, or essentialist, states that otherness depends on cultural factors which are constituent, primordial or natural parts of the formation of subjects. Connor, for example, in the debate on the construction of the nation, attributes it to a group of persons who believe that they share a common descent (1998, p. XIII), and therefore argues that ethnicity is from its origins a word used to designate a group characterized by its common ancestry (1998, p. 68). This approach appeals to the concept of a common bond that unites people to the idea of a nation or ethnic group, based on symbolic, psychological and cultural elements.

These common traits are conceived by essentialists both to be the basis for inclusion in contemporary indigenous groups and to link the members with their ancestors (Sylvain, 2014, p. 252). The conception of culturalism like the primordialism is to understand culture as a kind of package which assumes the cultural homogeneity of people of a particular ethnic or geographical origin. Culturalism emphasizes differences of cultural heritage, and predictive behavior based on that heritage, mysteriously transmitted between the generations (Wessendorf, 2008, p. 188).

<sup>1</sup> Chile is divided for administrative purposes into 15 regions; each region is divided into provinces, and they in turn are divided into *comunas* (municipal districts). The Araucanía Region contains two provinces (Cautín and Malleco) and 32 *comunas*.

These perspectives have been criticized or partially reformulated in consideration of the work of Barth, who indicates that it is the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural content that it encloses (1976, p. 17); he assigns greater importance to social interaction with other groups. As [Poutignat and Fenart \(1995\)](#) state, the concept of ethnicity has to do with the study of variable and unfinished processes in which the actors identify themselves—and are identified by others—on the basis of “them/us” dichotomies, established from cultural features supposedly derived from a common origin and set in relief in social interactions.

The constructivist perspective assumes that the criteria for inclusion in a category of persons are contingent, changeable, and subject to social and political negotiation ([Sylvain, 2014, p. 252](#)). As [Comaroff and Comaroff \(1987\)](#), ethnicity has its origin in specific historical forces—forces which are at once structural and cultural. Yet ethnicity tends to adopt the “natural” aspect of an autonomous force, an objectifiable “principle” capable of determining the course of social life—as defined by the culturalists.

With these works in mind, we understand ethnicity as a socio-historical construction of otherness, transformed in and by processes of the construction of cultural hegemony ([Briones, 1998](#)) in a manner that is not arbitrary; this serves as an analytical tool to give meaning to or explain actions or feelings in the individuals studied ([Banks, 1996](#)).

In terms of public policies, this approach recognizes that the formulation of policies is a socio-cultural activity (governed by laws) that is profoundly immersed in everyday social processes, in the “world of sense” of the humanists, in linguistic protocols and in the cultural practices that create and sustain these worlds ([Shore, 2010, p. 24](#)). As such, it is related to the concept of ethnicity, since the state is just another actor promoting forms of otherness in specific contexts.

Likewise, it is understood that governmental practices are varied and take place in different relationships (teacher–pupil, etc.), of which the national government’s relationship with its people is just one; and that all these types of government are internal to the state or society ([Foucault, 1991](#)). Hence the relevance of analyzing the discourses and practices linked to the implementation of public policy on the basis of ethnographical study.

Tourism as an anthropological problem contributes to this discussion when we incorporate the concept of indigenous tourism as part of a state policy that participates in the construction of ethnicity. For this reason, this article considers aspects related with the design and implementation of public policies on indigenous tourism which promote a kind of differentiation or otherness, which itself contributes to the construction of ethnicity.

When considering the relationship between tourism and ethnicity, the contributions of [Van der Berghe \(1994\)](#), [Picard and Wood \(1997\)](#), [Wood \(1998\)](#) and [Macleod and Carrier \(2010\)](#) are fundamental; they explicitly incorporate the power dimension into studies of tourism and into identity construction processes. [Wood \(1998\)](#) mentions some key elements for understanding the relationship between ethnicity and tourism, including seeing tourism as a form of ethnic relations and the construction of ethnic identity under relationships of domination and power.

There are many definitions of indigenous tourism. They generally emphasize the culture of a community, which is constructed or presented as different from Western or central cultures; alternatively they may commercialize curious customs and exotic people ([Smith, 1989](#)). Indigenous tourism may also be understood not as a cultural attribute but as a form of social organization of difference, encouraging contact between cultures and creating a new brand of ethnicity ([Azeredo de, 2006](#); [Pereiro, 2013](#); [Wood, 1998](#); [Zorn & Farthing, 2007](#)). In these definitions, the image of authenticity is constructed on the basis of both existing relations and representations, and those constructed from interaction with “others”. The tourist emerges as a response of non-indigenous society, but also contributes to the maintenance and preservation of ethnic elements ([Azeredo, 2006](#)).

Authenticity, as [Cohen \(1988\)](#), is a modern value that leads the tourist to seek the pristine, the natural, the untouched by modernity. This type of tourism involves representation of the other or of the past ([Wang, 1999](#)). On the basis of this, and of the conception of ethnicity, we understand that authenticity is a constructed concept and therefore negotiable; and that in the tourism field it is presented as a saleable commodity, whose value lies in its own “unique” characteristics. These characteristics may have various origins, possibly invented, but with the passage of time they come to be accepted as authentic.

It is understood therefore that the concept of authenticity is constructed and thus negotiable, but is also a product that can become authentic over time. Anthropological narratives are important for this construction process because they are used as models for the narratives and practices of tourist guides (Salazar, 2013). This results from anthropology's role in Western constructions of the other, and the interpretation and projection of difference through ethnic and cultural stereotypes and categories throughout the world.

Experts talk of different positions with respect to the role of tourism in local communities: on the one hand there is an optimistic view, in which tourism offers an opportunity for cultural revitalization and economic development; on the other, it is seen to generate a change in the way of life of indigenous communities. This is the view, for example, of Van der Berghe (1994), Pereiro (2013), Comaroff and Comaroff (2011) and Oehmichen (2013), who argue that indigenous tourism can convert the culture and its heritage into a marketable commodity, forcing identities and promotion of the authentic, generating an unstable equilibrium between exoticism and banalization, and serving to deepen the differences in the economic and social conditions of indigenous groups who inhabit tourist areas.

Certainly, the conception of indigenous tourism involves definitions and tensions linked to the construction of ethnicity, authenticity and economic relations. These subjects are present in the discourses of public employees analyzed below.

### *Methodological perspective*

The methodological perspective is based on an ethnographical study of everyday state practices and their representations (Sharma & Gupta, 2006), which in our case are constructed and materialized in public policies linked to the development of indigenous tourism.

From this viewpoint the state is not a universal construction; states have widely differing histories, and internal logics and practices, which need to be understood and studied (Hanssen & Steputtat, 2001, p. 37). The approach that we propose seeks to understand the forms of the state as cultural forms, and cultural forms as forms regulated by the state. The state is therefore defined as a project for total domination, affecting society with different forms and mechanisms of power.

We should perhaps regard the rhetoric of state officials, the nicely crafted white papers and policy documents, the ostensibly scientific forms of governance, the grand schemes and organizational efforts of governments, with all their paraphernalia of vehicles, titles, and rituals, as parts of a continuous spectacle to enhance and affirm the authority of the state. These spectacles only occasionally succeed in producing the specific social effects at which they aim, but always reproduce the idea of the state as the great enframer of our lives (Hanssen & Steputtat, 2001, p. 37).

From this perspective, the task of the anthropologist and the ethnographer is to seek out examples of the state as it exists in the local ambit and then analyze these manifestations of bureaucracy and the law as culturally informed interpretations or appropriations of the practices and forms which constitute the modern liberal state (Das & Poole, 2008). This is the anthropological view of the forms of power in our society, and the value of ethnography as a methodological tool. The state appears as just one more field in which specific cultural phenomena may be observed (Schavelzon, 2010, p. 91).

Such an approach does not separate policy design from implementation. This fact helps with the analysis of the social discourse and practice of public policy, which take the form of negotiation, consensus and conflict.

Considered from this perspective, this study is a work of state ethnography carried out in three districts of the Araucanía Region between 2009 and 2012, during which period tourism was observed to be an element of the various state actions intended to develop rural indigenous productivity. In 2013, over a period of 10 months, we carried out further ethnographical work directed specifically towards indigenous tourism and regional policies to promote this activity. This involved monitoring of the press, interviews with public employees from different institutions, visits and stays in Mapuche tourism experiments, participation in meetings, attendance at seminars on the subject and collection of indigenous tourism promotional materials.

In this article we present a part of the latter work, limiting ourselves to regional state conceptions of indigenous tourism. Certain elements of the first stage of investigation will also be included.

## The construction and promotion of Mapuche tourism in the Araucanía Region

### *The context of the development of indigenous tourism in the Araucanía Region*

The Araucanía Region, like much of southern Chile, has clear potential for the development of specialist tourism, since it still possesses a wide range of original resources from its natural and cultural heritage. Araucanía is the gateway to areas of vast temperate rainforests, with their extraordinary range of endemic species and the unusual origins of their flora and fauna (Gedda, 2011). At the same time, the region possesses a cultural asset in that it is part of the historical territory of the Mapuche people. Despite the processes of state domination, Mapuche culture persists and reconstructs itself dynamically throughout the region, which it shares with people of diverse cultural origins, both Chileans and descendants of colonists from Europe and other parts of the world.

According to the socio-demographic data available, the population of the Araucanía Region is 869,535 (Censo, 2002), representing 5.8% of the population of Chile. The population density is 27.3 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>, mainly distributed in the center of the region—principally in the capital, Temuco. The main urban centers follow the north–south lines of communication, particularly the Pan-American Highway.

Of the total regional population, 23.5% are indigenous; the corresponding figure at the national level is 4.6%. In the Araucanía Region, 29.2% of the indigenous population inhabits urban areas, while the figure for the non-indigenous population is 79.5% (CELADE).

The region has the lowest socio-economic indicators in the country. Total poverty is 22.9%, and 5.3% of this number fall into the extreme poverty bracket, compared to a national average of 17.2% in poverty with only 2.8% in extreme poverty. The unemployment level is also higher than the rest of the country, at 12.1% for the Araucanía Region compared to the national average of 7.7% (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social, 2012).

Existing data for tourism development in the region show a rising trend, with annual growth of 4% during the last 15 years. In 2010, the annual total of arrivals in tourist accommodation establishments was close to 250,000. The main difficulties in this development are the highly seasonal nature of the business and the difficulty of positioning Araucanía as a tourist destination brand. With respect to Mapuche tourism in particular, supply is inadequate in terms of the number of businesses and services. There is also a general lack of knowledge about the Mapuche culture (Gobierno de Chile).

According to official statistical data on tourist flows for 2012, the number of arrivals in tourist accommodation establishments in Araucanía was 282,789 Chilean visitors and 54,065 foreign tourists. The latter equates to 2.6% of the national figure, as compared to 57.2% in the Metropolitan Region of Santiago (INE-SERNATUR, 2013). The number of tourist accommodation establishments registered in the region for the same year was 485.

A large number of tourists visited the region's national parks: the totals were 49,222 foreigners and 322,661 Chileans. The latter figure represents 20.9% of the national total.

These data are indicative of a large and growing interest among both foreigners and Chileans in visiting the region. Regional policy has been to promote its tourism image with the slogan “*original nature*,” a concept that combines its natural attractions with the ethnic distinction “original,” recognizing Mapuche culture as a basic element in its identity and its tourist attractions.

### *Mapuche tourism, a regional commitment*

Actions for tourism development in the Araucanía Region began at the end of the 1990s. In 1993, he had been issued indigenous law (Ley Indígena, 1993). They included initiatives to develop ethno-tourism, eco-tourism, community tourism or ethnic tourism, promoted in part by tourism operators or private initiatives and supported by NGOs and public organizations. In general terms, the objective was to find alternative ways for indigenous communities to break out of poverty. These experiments also proved to be an important mechanism for strengthening indigenous culture (Orígenes, 2003).

Subsequently, in the framework of the Indigenous Communities Integral Development Program “Orígenes” (Origins), a state program implemented between 2001 and 2012 with support from the

Inter-American Development Bank, more effort was put into developing tourism as an economic alternative for indigenous communities. This program included coordination between different state institutions, which meant that ethnic or indigenous tourism was more widely promoted.

Other long-term experiments, with external or state funding, have managed to achieve positioning at a regional and even international level. An example is the Mapuche tourism experiment in the coastal zone of the Araucanía Region around Lake Budi. This has been in place for more than 12 years and is supported by public and private institutions with strong community and family participation.

The types of Mapuche tourism offered in the Araucanía Region and the degrees of development are very diverse and depend on various factors: the organizational and economic processes experienced by the Mapuche individuals and families involved; the degree of formalization of the activity; the availability of sources of financing; and the activity's positioning and visibility at the regional, national and international level.

One of the features of Mapuche tourism is that it is set in the natural, rural surroundings of the Mapuche community. It extends from the Andes to the Pacific coast, with a range of natural attractions such as flora, volcanoes, rivers, lakes and hot springs, offering the visitor a host of activities, such as bird-watching, horse-riding and boat trips. There are also semi-rural villages or areas close to the cities in the Araucanía Region that offer the possibility of experiencing Mapuche culture, by visiting a *ruka*, or traditional Mapuche house.

Today the *ruka* is considered an icon of Mapuche tourism:

*"The ruka is the center of the Mapuche tourism experience (...) it expresses the Mapuche tourism experience as an opportunity for intercultural exchange, displaying or sharing material and immaterial elements of the Mapuche culture; because when ... the Mapuche householder, man or woman, invites you to taste something, the experience starts with the material means but it also contains something of the immaterial ... this is the key element of the exchange ... without the ruka, the Mapuche experience virtually..., well, it doesn't disappear, but it is seriously diminished."*

[Interview with SERNATUR employee, 31/07/2013.]

*"(...) The ruka is clearly defined as the central icon of the tourist service (...) Those of us who live in a ruka continue the old tradition of having long conversations with my friends, my children, my father-in-law, my wife or all together, having a roast meal indoors, socializing with other families (...) from the point of view of our spiritual system, the ruka continues to be constructed according to the old way of building ..."*

[Presentation by a Mapuche entrepreneur in a seminar on Mapuche tourism, 2/07/2013.]

The *ruka*, as a space present in different Mapuche sectors of the Araucanía Region where Mapuche tourism can be experienced, is the privileged place where the tourist can be shown and offered Mapuche culture in a space full of elements of indigenous authenticity and in a number of variants. This is reflected in the following account of an overnight stay in a *ruka* during a community tourism gathering in a Mapuche community:

*"We spent the night in the ruka belonging to Mrs G. The community tourism gathering brought together many people from different parts of the country and all the local businesses were booked out. The ruka was large. The interior was organized into two areas: one was a sort of entrance hall, with an earth floor and a small fire. There was a table, a space to store things, and a sink supplied with well water—which wasn't running. The other section, divided from the hall by a discreet wooden trellis, contained three beds, one double and two single, with spotless mattresses, duvets and blankets, each with a bedside table, lamp and a rug on the floor. When I went in, I thought to myself: I am going to sleep in a ruka."*

[Fieldwork Diary, 29/11/2014.]

Another feature of Mapuche tourism businesses is that they are run by the Mapuche themselves. This encounter between tourist and Mapuche is in itself the essence of this initiative, offering an opportunity for individuals of different cultural origins to share experiences, to discover an often exoticized indigenous world. But it also generates contradictions in the tourist him or herself when he or she questions its authenticity (Theodossopoulos, 2013).

The profundity of this experience may arise from the variety of the activities offered, for example sleeping in a *ruka*, collecting medicinal plants, having a conversation with the elders, taking part in a traditional game, walking in the forest, learning the names and significance of the plants, etc. There are also workshops about the Mapuche worldview, language, traditional metalworking, food and medicinal plants.

The most developed businesses have managed to position tourism as an economic alternative with advanced self-management, but in most cases it is conceived as a complement to productive activities. However, many people in rural sectors see Mapuche tourism as a possibility or a potential for development, which generates high expectations but is heavily dependent on state or private resources. For this reason, state institutions aiming to establish programs for economic development and overcoming poverty offer incentives for families to develop small-scale tourism experiences. Their object is to promote alternatives for economic development, for example by financing the construction of *rukas* and the installation of small camp sites, as was observed in different districts of the Araucanía Region between 2009 and 2012.

### **Development, identity and authenticity: the intra state view of the Mapuche tourism**

We address intra-state conceptions of indigenous tourism in the Araucanía Region first by looking at the official discourse of various public employees responsible for the application of these policies. The step from discourse to practice, or interface, using Long's term (2007), is the key to policy implementation and to the state's construction of ethnicity. Although other players act at the time when the initiative is developed, in this article we are interested in limiting the discussion to the role of the state in promoting indigenous tourism through some of its most prominent institutions, based on the discourse of players with a key role in implementation.

#### *The role of institutions in the promotion of Mapuche tourism*

The institutions analyzed are state entities that specialize in different areas but which are all involved in indigenous tourism, viz.: Indigenous Development Corporation (Corporación de Desarrollo Indígena—CONADI); National Tourism Service (Servicio Nacional de Turismo—SERNATUR); National Institute for Agricultural and Livestock Development (Instituto Nacional de Desarrollo Agropecuario—INDAP); National Council of Culture and the Arts (Consejo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes—CNCA); and Economic Development Corporation (Corporación de Fomento—CORFO).

CONADI falls under the direction of the Social Development Ministry, and its mission is to promote, coordinate and execute state action for autochthonous peoples. Both its National Directorate and its Southern Sub-directorate are located in the city of Temuco, in the Araucanía Region.

The headquarters of the other institutions are all in the capital of Chile, Santiago, with regional directorates. SERNATUR is part of the Economy, Development and Tourism Ministry; its function is to promote and disseminate the development of tourism in Chile.

The function of INDAP, part of the Agriculture Ministry, is to promote and support the productive development of small-scale farming, and it has a significant presence in rural and indigenous sectors. CNCA's main objective is to promote the country's cultural development. Lastly, CORFO implements government policies in the field of entrepreneurship and innovation, providing financing for economic initiatives.

The relations among these institutions are governed by agreements or actions within their fields, as in the case of Mapuche tourism. However, both interviews with public employees and program users (or beneficiaries) and personal observation in the various stages of this research provided evidence of the difficulties in coordination between them.

The provision of financial resources is an important aspect of this coordination, as is the generation of innovative initiatives to supplement existing programs. These resources depend largely on national or regional priorities. CONADI is important because it has access to resources focused on the Mapuche population, aimed at helping to improve living standards in the communities and maintaining control in areas affected by the Mapuche political conflict in the Araucanía Region.

### Visibility and positioning of Mapuche tourism

Since 2007, CONADI has promoted direct support for indigenous tourism in the Araucanía Region through its Development Unit. This action was taken a step further in 2008 with the signing of an agreement with SERNATUR to support Mapuche entrepreneurs. On the basis of this agreement, a public–private round table was formed with representatives of various government bodies to improve the availability of indigenous tourism in the Araucanía Region. The resources for developing the initiative were provided by CONADI, while SERNATUR was responsible for technical support.

SERNATUR took the lead in this inter-institutional work, in which the view that indigenous tourism firstly contributes to preserving culture, and secondly helps to generate complementary or alternative economic earnings, started to gain ground. The object was to bring the supply, i.e. what the Mapuche were offering, closer to tourist demand.

This new space, promoted by the regional government, helped introduce the issue into both government institutions and indigenous organizations. The first action was to hold workshops to get to know the Mapuche entrepreneurs, leading to the preparation of strategic guidelines for developing Mapuche tourism. As of 2009, the Mapuche tourism entrepreneurs requested that the term *Mapuche tourism* be used to describe this kind of tourism.

During the first decade of the century, the *Mapuche conflict* received much attention in the media, which published stories on events and land claims in some parts of the Araucanía Region, involving actions such as road-blocks, burning of forestry machinery, sit-ins on claimed lands, protest marches, etc. This has generated an atmosphere of “threat”, especially for some business and political sectors in the region. Among the measures taken by the central government is the application of the Anti-terrorist Law for members of Mapuche communities alleged to be involved. The application of this special law designed to combat terrorism has been criticized strongly by international human rights organizations, indigenous organizations and civil society.

Early in 2008, a Mapuche student died after being struck by projectiles fired by the police on a piece of land in a *comuna* close to Temuco which was being occupied as part of a territorial claim. This event was widely reported in the media, and strongly criticized by social and human rights organizations. Actions associated with territorial claims continued during 2008 and 2009. The associated confrontations led to the death of another young Mapuche in August 2009, shot in the back by the police.

The government and state institutions acted in this context of confrontation, restricted to certain areas of the region, while at the same time other state actions sought to strengthen and market Mapuche culture as a tourism product.

In other parts of the region, state organizations were participating in the Mapuche tourism round table discussions on how to incorporate Mapuche culture into tourism.

The testimony of different actors who participated in the round table indicates that initially there was strong resistance by the Mapuche tourism entrepreneurs to the use of their culture as a saleable commodity:

*“The perception of tourism among the Mapuche people has changed. They used to see it as something spurious, something that contaminated the claims of the Mapuche; it is no longer seen in this way.”*

[Interview with SERNATUR employee, 31/07/2013.]

The round table’s contribution has been to generate spaces in which Mapuche culture is promoted and strengthened as an *authentic tourism product*, i.e. it is distinguished from others offered in the region and the country by its links with *Mapuche ancestral culture*.

Most of the work done by this round table on Mapuche tourism occurred during President Bachelet’s first administration (2006–2010), but the final document was published at the beginning of Sebastián Piñera’s new center-right administration (2010–2014). This document, called “*Foundations of Mapuche Tourism and Guidelines for its Development, Araucanía Region*,” presents an analysis of Mapuche tourism based on the workshops, and contains a proposal for actions and deadlines for developing Mapuche tourism (SERNATUR, 2011).

The arrival of Piñera’s government brought with it the need to reposition the work of the Mapuche tourism round table with the new regional authorities, leading to its publication in a final document



with the stamp (*language and style*) of the new government. There was a conscious effort by the state to modify its language in order to differentiate itself from previous governments.

This document defines Mapuche tourism as:

*“(an) economically and environmentally sustainable activity, carried out by Mapuche entrepreneurs with extensive knowledge and understanding of their worldview and command of their language, in harmony with the environment, which they value and protect to offer Chilean and foreign tourists a genuine, authentic cultural experience”.*

[SERNATUR, 2011, p. 21.]

This *style* of the Piñera administration is based on the continuation and deepening of the neoliberal model introduced by Pinochet’s military dictatorship (1973–1990), which stayed strong under the subsequent four center-left governments—albeit with a more social stamp—and was intensified under the Piñera government through various public policies.

After the document was published, the public–private round table on Mapuche tourism lost participative space; an attempt was made to coordinate between SERNATUR, CONADI and INDAP, but this did not last long.

In 2011 finance was provided for the publication of a *Manual of Good Practices in Mapuche Tourism*, with the collaboration of the Mapuche tourism round table. It deepens the notion of indigenous tourism, defining it as follows:

*“. . . Indigenous Tourism, which is no more than the self-management of tourism by the communities, without the intervention of external agents in the phases of production and direct commercialization.”*

[InnovaChile, 2011.]

The object of this manual is to support Mapuche families engaged in tourism with technical language and business management, showing the importance attached to the subject by the regional government.

During this period, cyclical manifestations of the Mapuche conflict continued; in mid-2010 a group of Mapuche prisoners, imprisoned in different cities in southern Chile as a preventive measure, went on hunger strike for 83 days to protest against the application of the Anti-terrorist Law. A second hunger strike lasting 72 days occurred at the beginning of the following year. These events were again widely reported in the press and in social and international organizations. The government demonstrated serious concern to find a solution and prevent the problem from escalating.

Subsequently, the round table on Mapuche tourism was dismantled, giving way to a new national government initiative oriented towards *sustainable cultural tourism* and headed by a different institution, CNCA. This institution created regional round tables for cultural tourism under the *National Plan for Sustainable Cultural Tourism* (Plan Nacional de Turismo Cultural Sustentable), with the participation of various public and private institutions. The goal of the plan, which came into operation in 2011, was to identify cultural resources and attractions, generate projects in the different regions, provide training and disseminate tourist activities and their cultural components.

The main activities promoted by this round table were a diagnosis of the cultural attractions of popular festivals, the celebration of cultural heritage and making use of these for tourism. Training, seminars and publicity were later carried out. An attempt was made to continue the work of the round table on Mapuche tourism, but this proved impossible and the new cultural tourism round table was set up in the Araucanía Region. During observation of one of these meetings, the protagonism of a new institution—the Council for Culture—became apparent. The influence of CONADI and Sernatur waned; the participation of the latter became more passive and its earlier leadership was eroded.

This round table took the lead in the development of Mapuche tourism in the region until 2013.

One important difference between the Mapuche tourism round table and the cultural tourism round table is that the former was regional in scope, constructed and promoted for the Araucanía Region and aimed at highlighting its particularities, while the latter was generated at the national level and then adapted to local conditions. However, both incorporate the principle that tourism has a strategic role to play in strengthening culture, as is mentioned in a document for a seminar on Mapuche culture and tourism:

*“...tourism is strategic for the Mapuche communities, since it is an activity that supports the recovery and strengthening of their culture, care and protection of the environment, and economic development of the small areas of land in the hands of rural communities, generating the strength and empowerment which will enable them to act as valid interlocutors in negotiations with the state.”*

[CNCA-Consejo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes, 2013, p. 19.]

This factual account demonstrates the political vacillations evident in the Araucanía Region. The initiative to promote Mapuche tourism passes from one state institution to another according to the interests of the government of the day, generating both forward and backward steps. Mapuche culture is promoted positively as a tourism product, stressing the authenticity of its pristine, autochthonous nature in contrast to other sectors; but at the same time violent actions and confrontations are occurring between some Mapuche communities, the police and landowners in the context of land claims, in which the government reacts by applying the Anti-terrorist Law.

#### *Views/conceptions of public employees on Mapuche tourism*

Among CONADI employees we found two views of Mapuche tourism: one that favored culture and cultural contact as the central element and another that saw tourism as an additional economic instrument. One political employee reiterates the basic principles of indigenous tourism as they have been expressed for nearly a decade, describing it as:

*“the interaction of an indigenous people, or a group of individuals belonging to an indigenous people, with outsiders; an exchange of experiences that involves bringing the visitor to a new life, making it an entertaining experience.”*

[Interview with CONADI employee 1, 7/6/2013.]

From this point of view, Mapuche tourism means:

*“sitting in a ruka, eating home-made bread and drinking mate; the ruka may be of solid materials rather than straw. But it is also about the people who take part in this activity, because these people have their cultural luggage, their own vision of the world, and that experience makes it ethnic tourism. It is an exchange of worldviews, because we also have our own, and it is a mixture, there is a cross-fertilization of things.”*

[Interview with CONADI employee 1, 7/6/2013.]

It is not only seen as a meeting point but also as a means of getting to know indigenous culture. On the other hand, the view of an employee who works in the same institution, but in a technical role, relates Mapuche tourism with economic activity, but as a complement to farming rather than a principal activity. This highlights the difficulties of developing tourism in the communities. There are two main problems: the informal nature of Mapuche tourism enterprises, and the gap between them and tourism companies. His negative view is expressed as follows:

*“Tourism is cruel: tourism is not a sustainable activity, it is not a viable activity; it does not revitalize culture. Tourism is a show; it is almost a fashion. It will benefit people who are prepared to jump onto the bandwagon.”*

[Interview with CONADI employee 2, 13/8/2013.]

This employee voices the difficulties that prevent tourism from overcoming poverty in the communities and generating economic revival. The conclusion of this viewpoint is that Mapuche tourism should be promoted as a function of demand, not of supply, as had been proposed previously.

Under this perspective, the principal actions of CONADI during the Piñera administration were oriented towards formalization and training programs, which sought to introduce good practices and specific management models for indigenous tourism. This was designed to reduce the gap with respect to formal tourism companies and increase investment in human capital.

This indicates a change in the perception of the role of tourism in Mapuche communities, probably related to the change of government and the more “economistic,” entrepreneurial view taken by Piñera’s administration. It encouraged a type of tourism that seeks to overcome the assistentialism

or dependence on state resources that characterized public policies towards the indigenous population under previous governments, and generate specific management models for this activity. Assistentialism is understood as the work done by public or private organizations to provide services at a reduced price, or free, to people or social groups with basic social needs. This implies the conception of the other as inferior, and is an interference in his autonomy (Martínez, 2006, p. 150). Considering the political context of the pressure from certain sectors of the Araucanía Region, this is consistent with the government's need to counter these positions with a more positive view of the region, and the state's assistentialist role in the process.

Meanwhile, the opinion of the employee responsible for this area in the regional SERNATUR office aligns with the principles of the Mapuche tourism round table:

*"Tourism is a decision made by Mapuche communities or tourism entrepreneurs. When you work in cultural tourism there is a subject-subject relation; it is the groups themselves who construct the offer, so it is not really so questionable. But they still meet with resistance. Mapuche tourism is an issue that is here to stay, because people have discovered that tourism is an opportunity."*

[Interview with SERNATUR employee, 31/7/2013.]

Mapuche tourism is viewed as an opportunity to develop Mapuche culture, an economic opportunity for the communities and also a space for a cultural meeting between the Mapuche world and Chilean society. This culturalist view, consisting as we have said of a package of "authentic", "ancestral" cultural elements handed down from one generation to the next, is present in the discourse of the public employee, who identifies "purer" cultural spaces as compared to others which are "more deteriorated;" this contrast is reproduced in the tourism offer and in the projection of the tourist and his or her interests, again positing the issue of authenticity as important in the Mapuche tourism offer.

This employee has been active in proposing solutions or means for progressing the development of indigenous tourism, for example in formalizing tourism services:

*The ruka, the traditional Mapuche house, is viewed as the center of the Mapuche tourism experience, as a space for meeting. This reflection by the public employee allows him to negotiate within the bounds of the state. So instead of selling food (which requires health approval), they sell the experience and in that way combine the two types of regulation – Mapuche and Chilean – from the perspective of the public employee.*

[Extract of interview with SERNATUR employee, 31/7/2013.]

In terms of an interface, this employee plays an important role because he is proactive in seeking solutions to problems that arise. He is not a mere policy operator; rather, because he knows the system from the inside, he can find alternative paths, which in this case strengthen and promote Mapuche tourism in the region, promoting markers of cultural differentiation or ethnicity.

Another institution that, as we have already mentioned, has an important presence in rural and indigenous communities is INDAP, which encourages agricultural development. INDAP's priority in tourism services is rural tourism, without making any distinction between indigenous and non-indigenous users, while the pro-Mapuche viewpoint typical in Araucanía is criticized:

*"a lot of importance is attached to the Mapuche, at the expense of the non-Mapuche people in the region."*

[Interview with INDAP employee, 31/7/2013.]

This opinion is common in medium-level posts, such as in regional offices. In the study carried out in 2009–2012 it was observed that employees at the local or municipal level, where there is a face-to-face relationship in the field with program beneficiaries, tend as a result to be more conscious of the importance of considering cultural diversity.

As expressed by the employee responsible for the regional tourism department, INDAP is interested in working with "people who are getting ahead" and helping "people to work legally." This means supporting as many people as possible in obtaining health approval, and developing the best possible opportunities to commercialize their tourism products.

One of the key points for this employee in developing rural and indigenous tourism is "hygiene" and the "arrival of people":

*“who are prepared to open their doors to strengthen farming activities, working with their farms in good order.”*

[Interview with INDAP employee, 31/7/2013.]

He also has a negative view of the development of tourism. He considers it a new area and thinks that Mapuche culture has been lost:

*“they need an incentive to recover their traditions, their old ways, their lost identity. Because today there is nothing left of Mapuche culture. . .*

*Under previous governments nobody thought about tourism, not even the farmers in the region. You didn't see rural tourism. People said: get into tourism, build cabins, leave the chickens and cows to the “mapuchitos” The Mapuche built their cabins, and there they were, but nobody went, so then they were poorer than before. They didn't offer an attractive product; they weren't given the right advice.”*

[Interview with INDAP employee, 31/7/2013.]

Thus this employee sees promoting tourism as an opportunity to improve families' living conditions. Demand is seen as more critical than supply. In other words, the communities should orient their actions and type of tourism to the tourists' interests, which implies innovating traditional services to meet these requirements.

CNCA links the concept of Mapuche tourism to cultural tourism. It focuses on the theme of culture and cultural heritage as something structured and established, but seen from the angle of practice in the communities and the region, as was promoted previously. In this context, one of its actions was to draw up an *“Intercultural dialogue guide for indigenous tourism”* in 2011, as it did in other parts of the country for other indigenous peoples. This trilingual guide—in Spanish, *Mapudungun* (the Mapuche language) and English—presents features of Mapuche culture, including their worldview, history, sites of cultural significance, social hierarchy, health and traditional medicine, rites, myths, traditional clothing, traditional foods, traditional music, traditional building techniques and handicrafts. It seeks to *“promote respect and good practices between Chilean or foreign tourists and indigenous peoples”* (CNCA-Consejo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes, 2011, p. 6). It is a culturalist description addressed to the visitor, full of anthropological language, as was noted by Salazar (2013).

Although the indigenous issue is not central to CNCA's work, it permeates all areas of the Araucanía Region, and given CNCA's focus on heritage, its work in the region inevitably relates to Mapuche culture. The principal idea is that tourism serves to save culture, and therefore to give value to heritage.

Heritage is understood, in the words of a government employee, as:

*“(that which is) passed down from generation to generation, a practice whose origins lie in time past. Heritage must be recreated constantly by the communities. It must be a practice that interacts with nature and with history, a practice linked with territory. It infuses feelings of identity; personal history is connected with collective history and contributes to respect for cultural and human diversity. It invites us to put ourselves in the place of the other.”*

[Interview with CNCA employee, 17/07/2013.]

It can be seen that the concept of heritage is based on a view of the authenticity of culture, positioned and transformed in association with the construction of ethnicity. This is a key element for promoting cultural and ethnic tourism, and goes hand in hand with a deepening of differences in a political context of ethnic claims and demands.

Another important player is CORFO, whose regional director demonstrates the intention of the neoliberal model in all its glory:

*“(The aim is) to promote entrepreneurship and innovation to improve the country's competitiveness” and “support entrepreneurs in initiatives that arise from civil society: private companies detect an opportunity and do something. We encourage these people in their freedom, their creativity, their ability to carry forward their dreams of what they want to achieve.” Thus CORFO has financed indigenous tourism projects “because there are indigenous people who want to develop tourism.”*

[Interview with CORFO employee, 30/7/2013.]

The key concept in this institution is that of the entrepreneur, who is:

*“a person who sees a situation with a need and constructs a response, who sees it as an opportunity; he has the courage to dream of a way of changing the situation and he has the ability to do so... An entrepreneur is always looking for ways to grow, for opportunities; and they tend to keep getting more training, because entrepreneurship is not just about economics, it is about personal development.”*

[Interview with CORFO employee, 30/7/2013.]

Finally, he presents a typology of Mapuche entrepreneurs:

*“Urban Mapuche entrepreneurs who are well-educated (and there aren't many) seek a solution, they seek to keep growing. There are others who have ideas but link them to state assistance, the ‘eternal leg-up,’ and others again are less ambitious but are prepared to learn and acquire training.”*

[Interview with CORFO employee, 30/7/2013.]

CORFO represents a state space where most weight is given to promoting the notion of the Mapuche entrepreneur. This is similar to the view adopted by INDAP and the CONADI technical employee, and different from that of other employees in institutions for whom the principal value of Mapuche tourism is culture.

#### *Intra-state convergences and divergences on Mapuche tourism*

From these discourses of public employees in the various institutions analyzed, differences can be identified within the state in attitudes to the development of Mapuche tourism. These discourses show the importance that Mapuche tourism has assumed in public policy. Today it is undeniable that tourism is an important economic activity for Mapuche communities, both in terms of the existence of businesses and of its potential projection promoted by public and private actors.

The ideological divergence of the discourses of public employees lies in stressing the value of the culture and the space for cultural meeting, on the one hand, and considering it to be an economic activity with strengths and weaknesses on the other. This generates a difference of opinion within the state on whether supply or demand should take precedence in developing Mapuche tourism.

The discourses of both the SERNATUR and the CNCA employees, as well as documents generated by these institutions, stress culture as the principal distinguishing feature of Mapuche tourism, highlighting its authenticity. They believe that tourism generates a virtuous situation that strengthens the ethnic identity of participating Mapuche by placing value on their culture. This conception focuses on the cultural through its focus on the *ruka*, understanding culture as a list of objective elements underpinned by ancestral and traditional aspects. These principles contrast with the view of other public employees in the productive sector who state that the old—or “the saleable”—no longer exists and that the types of enterprise do not meet the minimum requirements to respond to the demand.

Among the employees interviewed, conceptions of Mapuche culture range from admiration to belittlement. In both cases, the stereotypes of the indigenous as something good or bad, superior or inferior, which permeate Chilean society, are replicated in the language of public employees. These attitudes are exacerbated by the parallel world of the “conflict” in some parts of the region, where the government and its institutions react differently to territorial claims and other associated occurrences.

Despite this, we may say that there is agreement on the value of culture as a tourist attraction, regardless of the existence of the *Mapuche conflict*. Both tourism entrepreneurs and public employees say that these opposing views have a direct impact on tourism. The coexistence of the two images directs attention towards ethnic claims and demands, recalling a history of domination and despoilment which is still present in everyday life in the Araucanía Region.

This tension is also reflected at the national level: the Araucanía Region is recognized as the stage for the *Mapuche conflict*, and it is also the region with the lowest socio-economic indicators in the country, making it a priority for the allocation of funds both to contain the conflict and to promote regional development.

The visibility of Mapuche tourism in the region does not mean that it is consolidated. State practices persist to promote it as a promise of development and of giving the region a distinct identity. The majority of discourses assume that tourism is more a complement than an alternative for

development. If we consider the nature of tourism in the Araucanía Region, with its seasonal constraints due to the cold, wet winters, and the current characteristics of the various businesses, it is not reasonable to suppose, other than in exceptional cases, that tourism is an economic alternative that would enable the Mapuche people to overcome the conditions of economic vulnerability in which they live in some sectors. This discourse is an essential element of the more productive/economic areas of work; as the CORFO employee says, only part of the Mapuche population has been able to achieve development in this way, combining the characteristics of entrepreneur and innovator.

Likewise, the so-called “Mapuche conflict” is far from solved and will probably become more visible as the ethnic differentiators—promoted by indigenous policies and the focus of some policies and programs, including Mapuche tourism—emphasize differences and generate new contexts of intercultural relations and processes to promote Mapuche authenticity, whatever that may be. The search for elements to distinguish Mapuche culture through tourism, and the other more political processes underway in the Mapuche communities, are part of a search to rediscover the authentic, the ancestral.

The construction of ethnicity and authenticity is of key importance in the view of public employees. The promotion and “rescue” of these values through tourism generates new processes of ethnicity and reinforces those which already exist within the communities.

Finally, the central dispute in the discourses of public employees involved in Mapuche tourism in the region is over who defines the type of tourism offered and who writes the rules of the game, considering the difficulties of the context surrounding it.

## Conclusions

The above analysis shows the state to be a divergent, contradictory, diverse actor. This is clear in the discourse of public employees linked with tourism, showing that the design and implementation of public policy depend both on the institutions involved and on the state employees who execute policy at various levels.

State actions involved in developing Mapuche tourism, by placing value on the distinctiveness of Mapuche culture as part of a tourism product, contribute to the ethnicity processes and identity construction occurring in the communities. State agents, with their different actions and views, help accentuate cultural and ethnic differences. This has repercussions not only for the views of employees and for what is projected as a source of regional identity, but also for the indigenous people themselves who reaffirm their difference and seek elements that will distinguish them from others in the search for tradition and authenticity.

The state’s actions to encourage and value Mapuche culture as an economic activity through tourism, positioning it as an element that imparts identity, are contradicted by the region’s *Mapuche conflict*, made visible by different state organs and by the regional and national press.

Nevertheless, a common thread runs through these policies, namely society’s action in pursuit of hegemony and cultural construction. The pristine, static view of Mapuche culture, as conceived by tourism, is related with the value attached to the authentic, based on an ancestral culture. Stronger in some places than others, it stands in contrast to the view of the Mapuche who resort to violence in their territorial claims. In both cases, the actions of the state, and of its institutions and employees, are directed towards generating conditions of greater political control over the ethnicity processes worked out by Mapuche communities and individuals.

We may say therefore, that these divergences within the state with respect to tourism demonstrate that the promotion of Mapuche tourism is not so much a development option as a process for social and political reproduction. Its object is to promote dependence on, and control by, public institutions representing society, strengthening both the negative and the positive stereotypes of otherness. Divergent state actions and views are coordinated in unsystematic actions. They are vulnerable to changes of government, and the indigenous users or beneficiaries are obliged to readjust and adapt to the new contexts while suffering the repercussions affecting the identity processes of the communities involved. State discourse on ethnicity tends to reproduce—with varying slants—the view which prioritizes a traditional culture as a means of achieving economic development, rather than seeing a people with a history and political demands. Nevertheless, these state actions in turn are capable of

generating new spaces for ethnic distinction which can act against this internal divergence of the state, or against the state itself.

We may conclude that the ethnic distinctions found in Mapuche tourism initiatives reinforce identity construction processes, but that they are also associated with ethnic markers generated by the political and territorial demands of certain sectors of the Araucanía Region. These claims are triggered in part by a political aspiration to be recognized as a group distinct from mainstream Chilean society, the same aspiration that underlies tourism.

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