

The peronist incomplete reconstruction of the border: An analysis of the Nahuel Huapi region, Argentina (1946-1955)*

La incompleta *re*-construcción peronista de la frontera: Un análisis desde la region de Nahuel Huapi, Argentina (1946-1955)

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Received July 16, 2013. Accepted March 27, 2014.

Abstract

This paper analyzes the economic impact of Peronism in the Nahuel Huapi region and reviews the material and symbolic aspects of this district, which borders Chile and is associated with both the existing national park in the region and the city of Bariloche. To this end, and in dialogue with the material processes of the period, self-recognition and links to other regions were analyzed. A review of the change in government policy in this geographic area demonstrates a situation with original processes that challenge the strictly national conception of space. The contribution of this manuscript is its recognition that despite Peronism having been experienced as one of the most significant development shifts in the Nahuel Huapi region, and especially in the town of San Carlos de Bariloche, documents both provide evidence of continuity processes and discuss the existing account of a break.

Keywords: Peronism, national parks, tourism, national border.

Abstract

This paper follows the economic impact of Peronism in the Nahuel Huapi region, reviewing material and symbolic aspects associated with the national park and the city of Bariloche from its place on the Chilean frontier. With this objective in mind, I investigate both forms of self-recognition following links to other regions, entering them into dialogue with the material processes of the period. The perspective from this region evidences original processes that interpellate the national idea of this territory. This manuscript shows that despite the fact that Peronism is experienced as one of the biggest development breaks in the Nahuel Huapi region, and especially in the town of San Carlos de Bariloche, documents recognize the existence of a continuous process and discussing the existing narrative of an exclusive rupture.

Key words: Peronism, direction of national parks, tourism, national, border.

* This article summarizes part of the results of the Long-term Research Project (Proyecto de Investigación Plurianual, PIP) Conicet "Northern Patagonia in national planning policies, 1943-1976". Inscription code 0133.

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Introduction

For more than twenty years, Patagonian historiography challenged Argentinian national history, showing how the national process is resignified from the border region. In previous years, being on the border has been established in two ways: on one side, the national border with Chile; and on the other, the limit of development (Navarro Floria, 2011). Argentinian Patagonia, due to its variety, cannot be reduced to processes that have occurred within a specific region. This paper presents a process that begins with Northwestern Patagonia, namely, the town of San Carlos de Bariloche, gateway to the Nahuel Huapi national park that is adjacent to Chile (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Relative Location of Nahuel Huapi National Park



Source: B. Matossian, based on graphical information from PIP 5879 Migrants and urban territories in Argentina (DIGEO-IMHICIHU-CONICET).

This paper covers the symbolic impact of historical Peronism, one of the most iconic political movements of Argentina¹, in the border region of Nahuel Huapi, based on Peronist modifications on the city of Bariloche's economic practices and on the responses generated in the city. To that end, it will characterize how space was conceived in previous years, during which Peronism was presented as a rupture, but which exhibits an important continuity at the edges of what was presented as nature that transcends the political break that overthrew the Perón presidency in 1955.

The notion of tourism, with respect to the use of the natural protected area, is key to the interpretation of Peronism in the light of events at the border. Similarly, the review of the manner and consequences of the expanded social and political rights that characterized the Perón years will also allow for adding complexity to the national process.

The reconstruction of Nahuel Huapi

Since the region of Nahuel Huapi was incorporated in the late nineteenth century, it has been an area of interest for the federal government. By the early twentieth century, it was conceived as a space to create a national park², and the borders were opened to ensure economic growth from bilateral trade (Mendez and Muñoz, 2013). In the 1930s, the state's interest in the space was recognized and as a result, the organization of space adopted a centralized character, installing the federal government as exclusive partner. The institution that builds the image of this region is the National Parks administration (Dirección de Parques Nacionales, or DPN). Broadly speaking, the initial draft of the DPN sought to "Argentinize" the area by taking an "anti-Chilean³" line, taking the historic trans-Andean settlement as a structural weakness arising out of development (Núñez, Matossian and Vejsbjerg, 2011). Eduardo Bessera (2011) indicates that the proposed modernization of this place by the DPN had a conservative stamp, directed and guided by elites. The federal government became the architect of local development, ignoring the advances that had been locally achieved in the building of Bariloche as a tourist destination (Navarro and Vejsbjerg, 2009) and strengthening the link with Buenos Aires through dependent and protected

¹ "Historical Peronism" is the period of Juan Domingo Perón's first two presidencies, that is, from 1946 to 1955 (Carreras, 2010). With respect to the political movement lead by Perón, it is worth mentioning that starting in 1943, social recognition was modified in Argentina, advancing toward a broader integration of the labor sectors. The explicitly fraudulent elections of the previous decade undermined the legitimacy of governments, whose representation of citizens was increasingly questioned. The end of a process of political uncertainty was the military coup, which in 1943 introduced the figure of Colonel Juan Domingo Perón, who was in charge of the Ministry of Labor, to national politics. From that time, and following the idea of strengthening the country's industrialization, labor rights were expanded and the participation of urban sectors, which until then had been outside of politics, was promoted. This was the consolidation base of the Juan Domingo Perón—Hortensio Quijano ticket, which won the elections of 1946, receiving an important stamp of continuity for the changes that were implemented in the de facto government between 1943 and 1945, and materializing the policy that would become known as justicism or Peronism.

² In 1903, F.P. Moreno, an Argentinian expert in charge of the border dispute between Argentina and Chile, donated three leagues to establish a national park to protect the beauty and nature of the area and to serve as a space for leisure and recreation for the world's diplomats "... in that serene magnificence the inhabitants of both sides of the Andes will be able to find a healthy and adequate vision, and contribute together in a community of ideas during the recess and solace, increasingly necessary in active life, being able to solve problems that diplomatic documents would never be able to solve" (Fragment of the Donation Letter by Moreno, cited in Sarobe, 1935, p. 262)

³ The idea of "Argentinianizing" appeals to the projection of the natural spirit in border territories, which are seen as endangered due to their proximity to the adjacent country. Until the 1920s, the Chilean region had been seen, from the perspective of the Argentinian state, as the strategic partner for developing the region (Méndez y Muñoz, 2013)

development, omitting the previous connection to Chile as an opportunity for possible growth (Navarro, 2007).

The Nahuel Huapi region was “discovered” in the DPN speech of 1934. Tourism was presented as its manifest destiny, a proposal that contradicted to the agricultural, livestock and commercial activities developed in previous years. Economic development was determinedly materialized by the national institution. San Carlos de Bariloche, as a city, was tied to the concept of the national park that surrounded it because it was conceived as the gateway to the national park and, thus, assumed a double meaning: on the one hand, representing pristine and untouched nature (Diegues, 2005), and on the other, a symbol of Argentina (Núñez, 2011). The reflections of the first director of the DPN, Exequiel Bustillo, express the link between the national constitution and caring for nature. Therefore, as a starting point, he said that the nation’s welfare would be prioritized over all other interests, including landscape conservation. He indicated that “... to maintain the Argentinian spirit awake and alert, and only for that, God has placed the beauty of our land amidst the great dangers of the border” (Bustillo, 1946, p. 26). Parks, in the eyes of Bustillo and in line with his management, were explicitly spaces to build and consolidate citizenship. As a result, spaces in protected areas acquired a strategic political dimension associated with the changing concepts of nation in Argentina (Fortunato, 2005; Diegues, 2005; Carreras, 2010).

The Argentinian character proposed in the 1930s had an aristocratic nature, given that exercising citizenship seemed restricted to the social circle that influenced fraudulently created governments (Adamovsky, 2009). This understanding and biased evaluation of citizenship was linked, during the construction of the Nahuel Huapi national park, to the valorization of nature, whose recognition was the basis for ignoring population settlements that were present when the DPN was established, for racial, class or xenophobic reasons (Valverde, García and Lara, 2008).

This is a key point related to the modifications incorporated during Perón’s first two presidencies (1946-1952 and 1952-1955). His government sought to revert the denial of popular sectors as social and political actors. For Patagonia, an important precedent is described in the text by José María Sarobe “Patagonia and its problems”, a work that won the 1934 essay competition of the Argentinian Military Circle. This document is key to visualizing the tensions that were the basis for policies subsequent to the “infamous decade”.⁴ Sarobe was one of Juan Domingo Perón’s teachers during his military training and maintained contact and correspondence during the 1930s and 1940s (Barrios, 2008), so this text is a direct precedent to the change of direction investigated in this paper.

Sarobe was part of a group of Argentinian army officials with professional and intellectual concerns—the group included Enrique Mosconi, consultant to the Argentinian Air Force and president of Fiscal Petroleum Wells—who during the interwar period assumed an advisory role with respect to several different national policies (Halperin, 2007) and introduced a nationalistic inclination, an interest in re-evaluating defense in tune with other military nationalists of the time, and economic autarchy.

⁴ The period denominated the “infamous decade” began with the coup d’état of 1930 and ended with the coup d’état of 1943. This name was used due to criticism linked to the legitimacy of the election process during those years.

When Sarobe presented his work and won the Military Circle contest, there was a strong internal division within the military sector (Navarro and Núñez, 2012). Within that framework, both Sarobe's speech and the prize assigned to him can be interpreted as actions taken in a disputed field about the role of the state, the territorial makeup of the country and its economic and social policies. In Sarobe's work, he denounces latifundism and the difficulties faced by small producers in gaining access to land, pointing to various examples of questionable handlings, including the arbitrary manner in which the DPN allowed a privileged sector access to private property, which was allowed to keep what should have been public property. He also denounced the lack of connection with Chile, describing the Pacific Ocean as the "evil of the future" and questioning the Punta de Rieles in San Carlos de Bariloche, indicating that the possibility of autonomous growth would only be possible with a train that traversed the mountain range toward Chilean ports, with a policy of free trade and industrial development based on the power of the rivers. Another iconic author, Aquiles Ygobone, who by 1932 had already begun to analyze the institutional situation of territories that were belatedly incorporated into Argentina (that is, the National Territories⁵), reiterated the prevalence of errors in texts between 1943 and 1945 that again debated the question of Patagonian development, uncovering erratic interests from the federal government that were not based on a sustainable project of economic and population growth in the territory.

The Peronist administration had a strong impact on the DPN and generated the introduction of numerous changes linked to the new social integration perspective. Melina Piglia (2012), in her analysis of the general management of national parks, states that although the administration could consider itself as the first to establish a systematic tourism policy, in 1945 and 1950, the institutional makeup of this organization that centralizes all its initiatives conformed to the framework of the General Management of National Parks and Tourism (AGPNyT, Administración General de Parques Nacionales y Turismo). These changes began in 1943, when the structure of the DPN was transformed into the National Parks and Tourism Administration (DPNyT, Dirección de Parques Nacionales y Turismo). Ximena Carreras Doallo (2010) reviewed the general policy of the period, observing a re-interpretation of nature because it had become one of the basic references to be impressed with respect to national identity⁶. With the broadening of social recognition that resulted from public policies, previous initiatives became stressed, leading the historical director of the space, Exequiel Bustillo, to move out of the leadership position in 1944.

Starting in 1945 with a new directive, the department became part of the Ministry of Public Works, at which time it was renamed the General Administration of National Parks and Tourism (AGPNyT, Administración General de Parques Nacionales y Turismo), giving way to a policy that aimed to link the democratization of leisure with the democratization of national well-being (Pastoriza and Torre, 2002). In this context, a

⁵ Argentina is a country in which two different territorial integration rationalities have occurred. On the one hand, there are provinces that were part of the first process of unification, which have had representatives in legislative areas since the beginning of the state's incorporation. On the other hand, there are the National Territories, which occupied almost half of the national land, were later integrated, whose inhabitants had only a restricted right to representatives and elected authorities, and were affected by presidential tutelage during their development. Reflections on this process can be analyzed in the principal references on the topic, such as the inaugural work by Arias Bucciarrelli (1996) or the text that covers the difficulties facing the country written by Iuorno and Crespo (2008), who have also written other relevant texts.

⁶ It is worth mentioning that this appeal to identity construction associated to some interpretation of the landscape is not exclusive to Perón's government. The sources of Bustillo himself show the political intent in the constitution of the protected areas. Diegues (2005) or Fortunato (2005) are precedents in this line of thought, associated to symbolic construction of national parks in Argentina.

process of tourism reformulation was developed in the Córdoba mountain ranges, and the tenet of the democratization of tourism was proposed in the national parks through broadening of the social hotel industry, which impacted urbanization of the space that is the subject of this study (Piglia, 2012; Lolich, 2007). Beginning in 1951, with the start of Perón's second term, public administration was reorganized. The renamed General Administration of National Parks (AGPN, Administración General de Parques Nacionales) again became a dependent of the Ministry of Agriculture, strengthening the role of that ministry as the protector of natural spaces. Tourism as an economic activity became lost in references to the institution (Núñez and Vejsbjerg, 2010).

One of the key points around which the idea of "Peronist reconstruction" of this border region revolve is the change from the perspective of the 1930s, linked to what Bustillo denominated "eclectic conservation". This 1930s perspective was characterized by a local policy that was subordinate to national policy, which involved urban and economic development of Bariloche as part of its preservation. This perspective began to be pushed aside during Peronism, first because there was less attention on regional development and more privileging of the democratization of well-being (Pastoriza and Torre, 2002) and, second, because the national institution with influence in the region put aside its interest in tourism to turn toward conservation and management of protected ecosystems (Bessera, 2011). As a result, certain urban plans were abandoned because they were considered oppositional to conservation interests. This is a key inflection point in the relationship between the DPN-DPNyT-AGPNyT-AGPN and the town of San Carlos de Bariloche, that is, between the nation and the city. The national administration's adoption of control over urban development faded during Peronism and was never regained. These modifications did not prevent then-Director Exequiel Bustillo, in 1946, from dedicating a paragraph of recognition to the management that succeeded him, stating that the national parks continued to develop their fundamental role of representing national interests (Bustillo, 1946).

Changes in development

The DPN had taken shape, not so much with a vision of natural preservation but as a strategic border, and development for the region was designed from this perspective, until 1934 denying the value of the exchange that existed. This perspective was modified during Peronism, when the trans-Andean space was no longer presented as the enemy. An explanation of this permutation has been attempted by Ernesto Bohoslavsky (2006, pp. 495-498), who differentiates between the character of nationalism in Argentina in the 1930s and the 1940s. This author indicates that the theories most aligned with conspiracy theories, especially regarding the risk of Patagonian vulnerability, were linked in the 1930s to "anti-labor, anti-left and anti-modern" nationalism, defined as "reactionary", "clericalist" and "defenders of the limits of democratic practices". However, especially after 1932, certain nationalist currents began to seek allies outside of the group, becoming increasingly interested in social issues and losing conspiracy theories as their reference. These currents of nationalism arose at the beginning of Peronism.

At this point, the echoes of Sarobe's words can be heard again, as a preamble to the initiatives that followed the 1943 coup. For the military, Chile, far from an enemy, was a strategic domain for Patagonian development. The problem recognized by the military was the asymmetry based on demographic differences favorable to Chile, one fundamental aspect that they were proposing to resolve in the southern territories. The weight of this perspective was reiterated in Peronist speeches and practices.

To differentiate from the most xenophobic conspiracy theories and to create a closer strategic linkage with Chile, or to lead a Latin American movement, the administration of national parks during the Perón government began to abandon the idea of "Chilean danger" as a basis for regional tourism and conservation. There is an aspect that I must highlight, as noted by Eugenia Scarzanella (2002): military control of the areas bordering Chile was never abandoned. What we are indicating is that Chile's symbolic role in the region acquired a different tone and the relevance of "the national" began to gain importance in the integration of national subaltern groups prior to when it began to gain importance in the differentiation between bordering countries.

The valuation of what was indigenous was aligned with the problem of the workers through the creation of the Honorary Commission for the Reduction of Indians, created in 1943, reflecting the complex degree of recognition of social actors that affected northern Patagonia during these years (Lenton, 2010). In 1945, this commission was granted powers to resolve the indigenous problem, interpreted as a social problem, through integration strategies such as education or promoting agricultural training. With Juan Domingo Perón already in the presidency, there was increased potential for finding a consolidated national identity to agglutinate all of these subaltern groups (Delrio, 2005), although these would not lose the associated suspicions of foreign status and the risk of dissidence (Briones and Lenton, 1997). Mistrust did not disappear, but the focus on Indians' links to Chile and the links between imminent risk and that which was Chilean were blurred. Juxtaposed against this northern Patagonian backdrop, risk in central and southern Patagonia became the engine of state intervention for Peronism, recognizing especially an increased military presence that showed an image of a territory that was not only vulnerable but also incapable of making decisions for itself (Barros, 2009).

During Peronism, Argentinian identity was built on the entry of new actors, not on protection of the border. The broadening of social belonging was based on the modification of the "ideal citizen" as recognized by the state, which was no longer the illustrious owner of assets but instead included the most vulnerable sectors, with the figure of the "worker" as its most defined reference.

The complex processes of broadening citizenship in different areas of the Patagonian territory were largely reviewed (Iuorno and Crespo, 2008; Arias, 1996; Ruffini 2005, Favaro and Arias 1995, Masés and Rafart 2003, among others), exhibiting particular methods of citizen incorporation and even "Peronization" in different places. In general, the intent was to achieve the greatest party affiliation with the movement led by Juan Domingo Perón, based on the creation of basic units and other spaces for practicing politics (Iuorno, 2014). In this differentiated manner, areas of political sectors with particular issues added themselves to the historical demand for the broadening of citizen rights classically associated with the labor sectors in large urban centers. Darío Macor and Cesar Tcach (2003) recognize an extracentric character in regional processes, whereas Peronism itself sought re-integrative approaches toward regional particularities, with a clear redistribution argument with respect to the rural regions and their ample geography (Girbal Blacha, 2008).

However, the subjects of this study, the Nahuel Huapi national park and San Carlos de Bariloche, do not correspond to this complex urban-rural differentiation, nor do they contain re-integrative elements clearly framed toward a specific productive sector, nor even closely related to reclaiming broader political rights, which were effectively being demanded in other areas of the national territory (Núñez, 2004; Iuorno, 2007). Perhaps due to this level of particularity, one can explain that the Nahuel Huapi region,

located in a border region of the national territory, was "Peronized" in an ambiguous way, in which incorporation of labor rights such as the right to leisure are remembered as opposed to the economic development established with the promotion of social tourism (Vallmitjana, 1993).

It must be noted that since Nahuel Huapi's inception as a national park, it is debatable that economic organization was a determining factor, even in the beginning. In this regard, references are not accompanied by public policy consistent with the rhetoric (Núñez and Azcoitia, 2011). This way, for example, the perspective that saw anything "Chilean" as the enemy, constitutive of the region in the 1930s, was distanced from the international trade policy proposed during the government that established the Nahuel Huapi national park. In the years in which DPN exacerbated antagonism toward Chile, the national government moved toward trade agreements in energy and raw materials (Lacoste, 2003). From this we can infer that from the beginning, regional development was formulated differently from national development or said in another way, regional development did not follow the same priorities as national development.

Even when the reason for the existence of national parks was modified during Peronism, the lack of commitment regarding local development dates back to considerably earlier times. However, this appears to have become more acute in the Peronist period, when the basis for how the local productive matrix is decided was not based on the economic dimension but, instead, centrally referred to the social aspects of tourism (Núñez and Vejsbjerg, 2010). As mentioned before, during Peronism, tourism became a right, given that leisure was incorporated as a practice of the workday in the labor sectors. Paid vacations and the reduction of the workday were the basis for establishing an element of leisure time that the government was concerned with channeling into strategies that served the country.

The country's conscience seemed to contain a consolidation of the Peronist identity. The two objectives defined by the First Five-Year Plan for the national parks take into account new values, given that the reason of existence of these spaces was based on 1) protecting the natural beauty of the nation and 2) providing leisure and rest for lower-income groups.

This basis justifies the development of "social tourism", which multiplied the number of visitors to Bariloche by five without directly favoring the direct interests of local economic actors, who had grown during the preceding decade (Vallmitjana, 1993). "Mass tourism," developed by Peronism, was managed centrally by unions and the Eva Perón Foundation (Scarzanella, 2002), which were not focused on the interests of either the historical visitors to the Nahuel Huapi national park or the local businesses. Financing was partially geared toward finishing work begun during the previous period, such as the cable car and the cathedral (Bessera, 2011), and partially toward building tourism infrastructure, especially hotel infrastructure that was accessible to low-income budgets (Lolich, 2000).

Claudia Troncoso and Carla Lois (2004) note that Peronism's tourism perspective ignored its antecedents, presenting itself as foundational in its objectives and development methods. This lack of acknowledgement can help explain how increased visitor numbers were subsequently viewed as a structural weakening of the local area and activities.

Arising from a view in opposition to elitist practices, Peronism strengthened the social sentiment of leisure in opposition to the existing economic reasoning in the local

mindset (Núñez and Azcoitia, 2011). This is particularly clear in the Second Five-Year Plan, which states that the purposes of tourism are social tourism, school tourism and international tourism. There is no reference to elite tourism, which had been the basis of previous development in Bariloche. That is, previous development was perceived as ideologically opposed to the objectives of Peronism, but far from stressing previous practices, those practices were simply ignored.

There was a fundamental continuity, however, in this series of changes. Development-related decisions from Buenos Aires continued to be adopted. Paternalistic and tutelary methods continued to operate even while work was conducted to broaden political rights. Peronism did not weaken (in fact, it strengthened) development of the Nahuel Huapi territory as a space dependent on the city, placing limits on its ability to think of and organize itself, while it deepened the distancing of tourism as an economic activity relevant to the national economy, only recognizing the social character of organized leisure.

The lack of consideration of local particularities is recognized in one of the activities with the greatest impact, which focused on the space without taking the city, its history or its activities into account. We are referring to the National Executive Branch's unilateral decision in 1951 to develop a pilot atomic energy plant in the island of Huemul, in Lake Nahuel Huapi, which ultimately represented a failed attempt to obtain unlimited energy from nuclear fusion. This initiative, led by Austrian scientist Ronald Richter, resulted in enormous expenses (Mariscotti, 1996), which were not linked to any local project.

Response strategies to the change

One of the characteristics of the Peronist government was to incorporate subaltern social sectors. This aspect did not exclude Bariloche. The local society, having experienced the hierarchy of the 1930s, was characterized by social inequalities that affected how the city was built (Núñez, 2007). During the Peronist period, inequality, in combination with ethnic issues in the area, found new ways of communication, which resulted, for example, in land allocation (Fuentes and Núñez, 2008). In general, citizen incorporation involved improvements in political rights and in view of the nation being formed, a special concern for educating historically relegated sectors. Accordingly, it is unsurprising that the objectives lost sight of the economic consolidation of privileged sectors while advancing in, e.g., building schools. In 1947, the first secondary school was opened in Bariloche and in 1950, a school inspection office was created, which helped consolidate all of the necessities of the area's schools, avoiding many bureaucratic barriers; simultaneously, a new technical school was formed in the locality (Núñez, 2004). However, there are no major references to the accompanying change or to greater complexity in the productive matrix. On the contrary, alternative production, such as that related to rural activities, weakened in the area adjacent to the Nahuel Huapi throughout the Peronist period (Rey, 2005).

The "Peronization" of the space did not involve changes in the local productive matrix. It was more about achieving the greatest possible party affiliation (Iuorno, 2014). In general, the territorial political practice involved early disciplinary exercises linked to strengthening the centralization of decision making (Hudson, 2007) or strengthening control based on the "mask of tutelage" (Ruffini, 2005); these organizational practices existed in the territory during the preceding period; Peronism gave them new meaning and reproduced in light of new social demands. An element in northern Patagonia, however, ended political affiliations. The agenda of local needs did not comport with

national interests and thus, a distance was created in re-integration exercises resulting in the limited "Peronization" of the area (Arias, 2010). For the municipal elections of other Río Negro towns, Graciela Iuorno (2007) reviews the important degree of affiliation to party proposals as alternatives to justicialism; the newspaper "Río Negro", the central news source with the most economic relevance in the area, repeated criticisms and complaints throughout the Peronist administration.⁷

This tension between the integration of a historically absent population and the consolidation and deepening of inequality with territorial integration (Navarro, 2011) can explain the interesting juxtaposed memories that present Peronism as an improvement and weakening, and which are linked to how the city became part of the Territory of Río Negro. Political debates in San Carlos de Bariloche during the period did not recognize Río Negro demands as their own, developing political practices that linked the Andean town to the national state. In their own ways, they became more linked to changes in the DPN than to what happened in the rest of the Río Negro. Regarding the Peronist process, although some neighbors remember a broadening of rights, others emphasize the prosecutions. Either way, the tourism plan is perceived as foreign to the local region (Núñez, 2007). One colorful anecdote will place us closer to the internal tensions in what were the last years of historical Peronism. In 1954, the municipal government, of justicialist affiliation, decided to immortalize Eva Duarte and Juan Domingo Perón on two of its main streets. "Given that it is the irrevocable duty of the town to pay homage to the iconic creator of justicialism, General Perón and the immortal Spiritual Leader of the Nation, Mrs. Eva Perón, proceeding to honor this city by given their beloved names to two of its streets..."⁸, the town decided to rename its central streets.

The speed and terms under which these streets recovered their original names after the military coup of 1955 clearly show the differences that had been woven into local society. By decree⁹, the streets' name change was repudiated, along with the names of the municipal children's park, the municipal stadium, and the pedestrian shelter, in the following terms "Considering: that the names currently assigned to the streets previously known as Vicealmirante O'Connor and Clemente Onelli lack any significance because they are devoid of the objectivity that involves the judgment of history. That the denominations given to the Municipal Children's Park, the Municipal Stadium and to the Municipal Shelter for Pedestrians are unnecessary and have no value in the tributes that may be distinguished by posterity..." all appellations of the previous government are eliminated. The new documents do not mention Eva or Perón's names in any part of the resolution, finding strategic redaction methods to erase the memory of the events that occurred during the previous ten years. This is not limited to changed names of public areas in a short period but is also related to incomplete party

⁷ Some examples include, but are not limited to, editorials in the Río Negro of March 16, 1949, opining that the "Repair of Route 22 is urgent" with respect to works planned but not completed; May 22, 1949, on "The towns of the Territories", writing about lack of recognition in spite of the laws; January 5, 1954, related to the "use and abuse of propaganda" about publicity that was not completed; January 15, 1954, titled "Before an irritating reality" and discussing the situation in the territories; July 23, 1954, titled "Irregular and insufficient electricity" and discussing public policy that had resulted in a lack of services; September 3, 1954, asking "how many days per year is work being done for schools?" and describing public policy that resulted in a lack of services resulting from public policy.

⁸ Resolution 38-C-54. Municipality of San Carlos de Bariloche. Archive of Municipal Ordinances and Resolutions. Municipal Executive Power.

⁹ Decree 11-955. Municipality of San Carlos de Bariloche. Archive of Municipal Ordinances and Resolutions. Municipal Executive Power.

affiliations or as mentioned by Arias (2010), a local agenda that was not echoed in national policy.

The national and local are modified in the border region of Nahuel Huapi. In the 1930s and 1940s, Bariloche became a tourist destination. Since the mid-20th century, this perception was repeated in municipal ordinances, which repeatedly recognized that tourism activities constitute the economic basis for the locality and based government actions on this idea. The municipal ordinances of 1952 began by referring to the modification introduced in 1951, when the General Administration of National Parks (AGPN) lost its role in tourism and became a dependent of the Ministry of Agriculture. Given those changes, documents show a municipality that recognized itself as responsible for this development, for which it organized a Development Commission that was planned to promote tourism growth.¹⁰

This commission had important capacities given that it was in charge of managing issues related to tourism, promoting progress in building the city, and organizing publicity, among other fundamental initiatives that until then had been developed by the national organization. The Development Commission was formed by representatives of the municipality and of civil society, such as hotel owners, traders, sports leaders, and journalists, and its intent was to build a representative space for consensus. However, the presidency was occupied by officials of the DPN-DPNyT-APN.

That notwithstanding, this space had a considerable weakness related to its financing. An interesting point is the origin of the funds that were the material basis for exercising these functions. In principle, the Commission's activity was formulated based on a tourist tax,¹¹ whose implementation was strongly improvised given that the municipal decree¹² assigned the hotel owners themselves the responsibility of making the necessary collections but imposed little control. During the Peronist years, the municipal organization prioritized everyday matters to the detriment of regional economic planning, which was delegated to the previously mentioned Development Commission due to the recognition that the lack of data prevented any projections, leaving the hotel owners themselves to be responsible for development that remained subordinate to particular interests (Núñez, 2004).

Tourism planning was a problem at levels other than that of the municipality. With respect to the national development scheme, tourism had never been presented as part of the country's strategic development, and this was repeated during Peronism. The fundamental objectives recognized for this activity were as follows: "a) To make it possible for the People to have access to the natural beauties of the country and Argentinian products, simultaneously taking advantage of the benefits of physical and spiritual rest provided by tourism; b) Facilitate access for the greatest possible number of foreigners to get to know the country, through the appropriate tourism organization towards the centers of greatest beauty and attraction" (2nd Five-Year Plan, 1952, p.105). For activities that were considered economic in nature, such as rural or mining development, the fundamental objectives included the goals to "... ensure the elevation of social, material and cultural quality of life for the People..." (2nd Five-Year Plan,

¹⁰ Ordinance 1-C-52. Municipality of San Carlos de Bariloche. Archive Municipal Ordinances and Resolutions. Municipal Executive Power.

¹¹ Decree 1-52. Municipality of San Carlos de Bariloche. Archive of Municipal Ordinances and Resolutions. Municipal Executive Power.

¹² Decree 3-52. Municipality of San Carlos de Bariloche. Archive of Municipal Ordinances and Resolutions. Municipal Executive Power.

1952, p. 111) and "...to ensure the maximum utilization of resources..." (2nd Five-Year Plan, 1952, p. 153).

Tourism was a social right promoted by the public works and transportation ministries, a trend that persisted after the military coup of 1955, which overthrew the government of Juan Domingo Perón and prohibited the justicialist party. Executive Order 6325, ratified on April 11, 1956, demonstrates this continuity when pointing out that "The transfer of functions inherent to development and organization of tourism to the Nation's Ministry of Transportation includes all the services, personnel, goods and credits affected by such functions as they were led by the former General Administration of National Parks and Tourism; for which said dependence... will proceed to transfer those credits, goods and personnel..." (Article 3).

This space was marked by an enormous dependence related to national decisions, where the municipality's autonomy had been removed twenty years before, and the opinions of the people of Bariloche continued to lack relevance in the development proposed for this space. A lack of attention to the local project and the sudden distancing of the enforcing entity had the result of weakening local organizational methods, giving way to erratic and short-sighted planning that repeatedly was confronted by its role in an activity that was not fully considered economically relevant (Núñez, 2004, 2007).

Added to this change in economic organization, deepened by the change in government, is the institutional shift represented in 1955 by the transition from territory to province.¹³ The incorporation of San Carlos de Bariloche to the Río Negro territory exhibited early difficulties. By 1916, neighbors of Bariloche elevated a memorial to the then-president of the Republic, Hipólito Yrigoyen, which supported the need to create three new regional governments in Patagonia, among them the Government of the Lakes, with the capital in San Carlos de Bariloche. Other mentions include the following:

"We cannot continue to depend, Mr. President, without enormous harm to ourselves, on a distance of 200 leagues, which we must travel to for any kind of issue of importance, losing two months time in the process and incurring the corresponding expenses..."

During the Peronist years, and in view of the provincialization increasingly discussed since the second presidency, the possibility of a province separated from the old territory arose again. This idea, however, was not fully consolidated and San Carlos de Bariloche, strongly linked to the central government, found itself at the end of the Peronist government as part of a space to which it did not feel it belonged and with economic activity not perceived as such in the national or provincial legislation, thus preventing the development of legal and financial tools to carry on with a public policy

¹³ Graciela Iuorno (2007) points out that after sixty five years without changes in the political-institutional situation of the territories, the National Convention of 1949 incorporated the population of the national territories into the election mechanism for president and vice president of the nation, with the objective of broadening political rights, in an order that shows that the majority of the population's affiliation with Peronism was an element that was considered (Arias, 2010; Ruffini, 2005). The Territory of The Andes had been dissolved in 1943, becoming part of the provinces adjacent to Catamarca, Jujuy, and Salta. The Territories of Chaco and La Pampa were declared Provinces through Law 14037 of August 8, 1951. On December 10 of 1953, Law No. 14-294 prepared the provincialization of the National Territory of Misiones. On June 15 of 1955, through law 14-408, Formosa, Neuquén, Río Negro, Chubut, and Santa Cruz became provinces. Tierra del Fuego remained a national territory until 1992. On September 16, 1955, three months before ratification of law 14-408, a coup d'état overthrew Juan Domingo Perón.

that rewarded the common good before particular interests. In this process, the national government, both during Peronism from 1943 to 1955 and in the following administration, showed a lack of attention to the particular situation of the region. The construction of margins within the nation could be linked to consolidating power asymmetries in territorial allocation, which remained even with the changes in Argentinian politics.

Final reflections

The manner in which the environment and activity of the region related to the Nahuel Huapi national park were valued allows the national processes to be reviewed from another perspective, where centralism remains in the face of the strongest political changes. At the local scale, even when the Peronist government continued to invest important quantities of funds to develop a tourism infrastructure in the region and the number of visitors acquired an unprecedented scale, the Peronist organization of tourism appears to lose the reference of local development: its improvements were geared toward favoring social rights before improving or consolidating economic structures in the region. The responsibility for economic development was placed on a small and weak municipal scheme, which lacked the necessary funds to impose a common project in a setting with conflicting individual interests.

The changing role of the national parks administration, or the purpose that national parks had for the nation, ignored local development when this dependence changed its organization in 1943. In Bariloche, this distancing was perceived in terms of abandonment, given that there had been no room for independent development methods in previous years, and there were also no strategies devised to strengthen the local organization in subsequent years; the precarious funding strategy of the Development Commission in 1952 is a clear example of this point.

From its status as a "National Territory," this space continued to experience conflict based on its development by the national government, so that the exercise of autonomy was not recovered until the preceding project was abandoned. Local development, which was framed within a subordinate logic, was modified via the central government, repeating the unilateral nature of decisions and without building a new project of social legitimacy that, at least in one sector of the population, had been achieved by the preceding project, in spite of its exclusionary social character.

As a result of this process, the unequal nature of the conservationist government itself became entrenched in local memory as an idea of development, with the prevailing idea of a rupture between the conservationist project and the Peronist project and leaving open, as antagonistic options, two citizenship planning methods that were not completely resolved.

Even when the ruptures between projects were displayed in the symbolic sense before doing so in the material world, the social memory had forgotten the advances of Peronism, blaming this period for the loss of reference in development, without attributing importance to the consequences resulting from the protected development that went to great lengths to limit local initiatives in the 1930s.

The link with Chile, which could have been the foundation for binational development of the tourist region, was reduced to migratory exchanges, without major initiatives to establish shared economic initiatives (Núñez and Almonacid, 2012). This characteristic

could be seen in the northern Patagonian border, given that planning of the binational railway that would pass a few kilometers north of Bariloche was proposed but did not materialize during Peronism, and the project was abandoned by the subsequent administration. The criticism by northern Patagonia inhabitants had an impact on the local media, which echoed their complaints about the lack of regional development policies.¹⁴

One might think that the intent of "Peronizing" was successful in the Andean region, given the results of municipal elections in those years; however, the failure to acknowledge the contributions of Peronism, along with the lack of memory of the ideological conflicts and the lack of a sense of belonging to the Province, clearly show the limits imposed by repeated unilateral decisions unilaterally. These were seen as an attack on regional autonomy, without consolidating an alternative that recognized the distances between local agendas and the national agenda as noted by Arias (2010).

This process can be read as a paradox because while social rights were becoming broader, the recognition of local autonomy in the areas farther away from the central regions was declining, all in the context of increasing political rights. The lack of linearity and coherence surrounding public policies points to the need to review the complexity that surrounds the country's history. In the case we are studying, we can conclude that Peronist reconstruction of the region of Nahuel Huapi, far from having a popular character in terms of regional integration, reproduced centralist structures that caused the subsequent lack of legitimacy.

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¹⁴ Editorials in the Río Negro newspaper included the following: January 20, 1954, "The railway to Chile", which frames the unfulfilled promise of the initiative; September 17, 1954, "Expected works", which lists the problems due to a lack of roads; November 12, 1954, "And the bridge over the Río Negro?", with a similar tone to the preceding note; February 11, 1955, "The roads of the territory"; June 10, 1955 "The southern trans-Andean", discussing a promise to build the train; and November 18, 1955, "The works that never came".

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