Remnants of Colonialist Ideology in Patagonian Tourism Representations and How Collaborative Heritage Tourism Can become Inclusive Heritage

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Abstract. This paper explores the way in which colonial discourse is engaged and represented throughout the Argentinian Patagonian tourism industry and accompanying cultural heritage sites, as a resource from which local cultural communities gain political and social capital. Patagonian history is often associated with the presence of three distinct groups—the early Spanish colonial settlers, the indigenous groups, and the more contemporary Welsh diaspora. However, only the Welsh have been able to capitalize on this history. Regional history now commemorates and values Welsh presence over both predecessor groups. Despite this unequal valuing, however, Welsh heritage could conceivably be positioned as a tool for collaboration with that of indigenous heritage, in order to elevate this marginalized ethnic minority, and create a more inclusive heritage tourism destination. This paper explores the multiple cultural histories of the Patagonian landscape, through the lens of heritage representation, to argue how and why Welsh heritage is privileged, compared to its Patagonian counterparts, and the potential implications of the positioning of Welsh heritage for the Patagonian heritage industry more broadly.

Keywords. Heritage Narratives, Tourism, Cultural Landscapes

Developing a tourism infrastructure is touted as productive and viable economic, and sometimes political, agenda for historically marginalized and disenfranchised communities, often in destination countries, in order to achieve some sort of economic stability and success. In fact, tourism scholarship has shown that, tourism development can lead to increased living standards, as well as increased community political participation. While development agendas are often at the state level, there can also be opportunities for grassroots tourism development (Hall 1994). However, not all communities have the capital (in the
form of social, cultural, economic, political, and so forth) to mobilize in such ways. In fact, in some national contexts, post-colonial national narratives have effectively erased the existence of indigenous groups as part of the contemporary national community, resulting in, for all intents and purposes, an inability to access resources that could otherwise be obtained through tourism development to mobilize group identity and heritage. Such is the case with the remaining indigenous communities, the Mapuche and the Tehuelche, in Argentina. Internal colonial processes, in the form of pervasive subordination of a particular population, have resulted in the indigenous communities experiencing social closure, or limited participation, in the tourism industry in Chubut Province (Pinderhughes 2011). Interestingly, the Welsh diaspora community in the Patagonian province of Chubut has, in stark contrast, been highly successful at mobilizing their heritage for the local and provincial tourism.

It is my intent, throughout this paper to make the argument that as two groups who offer alternatives to Argentine national heritage, primarily recalling Spanish cultural traditions, the Welsh Patagonian community and the indigenous groups could conceivably collaborate to diversify the regional cultural heritage tourism industry in the Chubut province, as a means to further economic and political goals, including increased local representation and recognition in politics as well as other development projects. These processes would, ideally, begin to undermine what has been the continued subordination of the indigenous communities by reworking the dominant tourism narrative toward one of cultural equality in order to enable indigenous access to the tourism industry as a source for capital gains. While the values of inequality as a consequence of internal colonialism within the Argentine nation are implicit in heritage representations, heritage narratives are not static and can therefore be reworked to be more inclusive. I will first provide the theoretical foundations for my claims, as well as a justification for why I think, especially for the two seemingly disparate groups I am highlighting, collaboration would be highly beneficial for both. I will additionally provide a brief historical context to situate my claims, framing the differential historical trajectory and contemporary outcomes of both populations, through the lens of internal colonialism. I will begin by framing this paper with the notion of alterity before moving on to themes of heritage mobilization.

Alterity, or otherness, can signify both similarity and difference
because, while subaltern identities imply difference from more powerful hegemonic identities, they may also be used to create relational ties to other subaltern groups who may have had similar histories/experiences, or been marginalized in comparable ways. However, simply because subaltern identities may relate to one another on some level, in the form of similar past experience, we must be careful not to oversimplify and mistakenly assume sameness (Hoffmann and Peeren 2010). Heritage sites are venues where these identities can be represented, put on display for public consumption, and often given a voice not previously attained. In this way, heritage sites can be sources of legitimation and serve a public educational role (Graham et al. 2000). Lowenthal notes that heritage can be used as a productive resource for marginalized communities, but can also be highly exclusionary depending on which narrative(s) are favored or, conversely, which are ignored (1998).

Landscapes are implicated into these processes because collective activity on, and remembering of, physical space and place creates emblematic and symbolic landscapes, with which we associate certain cultural meanings, ideas of ownership, as well as a location where aspects of group identities have developed (Graham et al. 2000; Hoffmann 2010). As Cosgrove notes, landscapes are “signifiers of the culture of those who have made them” (1998: 8). Linear narratives of place are often used to recount the history of the landscape. However, the unintended consequence of such tactics is that groups and identities are sometimes presented as traditional, historical remnants. A group presented as ‘maintaining tradition’ is then positioned as ‘lost in time’ and having never reached modernity. This is an unfortunate remnant of colonial history that mistakenly ordered social groups based on the cultural evolutionary model (Taylor 2013). Consequently, contemporary popular memory is in many ways still linked to elite historical memory and, therefore, heritage is often still valued hierarchically in many tourism destinations. Thus, so are landscapes and the people and values associated with them.

Anette Hoffmann, however, suggests that heritage narrative can be used to re-signify landscapes and identities (2010). Graham et al. note that landscapes can become places of resistance, or localities to question the dominant narrative (2000). Some groups have effectively rejected former colonial constructions by reworking their heritage in a way that enables these groups to reassert relevance to and representation in national discourses. Therefore, throughout this paper, I would like
to highlight the ways in which the current narrative for the Chubut tourism industry in Patagonia would need to be retooled, not necessarily as a site of resistance, but more so as an inclusive alternative to Argentine national heritage. The contemporary representations of the landscape are the results of the historical maltreatment and unequal valuing of the different ethnic groups in the region. As such, for this paper, the concept or re-signifying the landscape is especially salient considering that the two groups discussed here, the Welsh diaspora and the indigenous Mapuche and Tehuelche communities, share claims to the same landscape and, as a result, to provincial history. Before moving into the specifics of this paper, however, I want to address one other concept that is useful in conceptualizing my claim.

I will continue by discussing Appadurai’s concept of “grassroots globalization” in relation to how I envision this concept can be used within tourism to create more viable, and inclusive, tourism destinations (Appadurai 2006:131-135). Grassroots globalization is, in essence, the idea that marginalized groups can align with one another, in common struggles, as an attempt to gain recognition and representation (state). This has been evidenced in indigenous movements throughout Latin America, beginning in the 1960s where revolutionary movements began to plant the “seeds of indigenous nation-building” (Houghton and Bell 2004:10). That is, when ‘indigeneity’ is left relatively undefined, maximum potential can be reached because the identity can be strategically used and adapted dependent on the context of mobilization (Hoffmann and Peeren 2010: 22). In this way, it is important to make the distinction between globalization, used here to denote the global exchange of resources, ideas, and values, and homogenization, or the flattening of defining and unique characteristics. The intersecting and joining forces, so to speak, of group identities for a larger goal does not inherently equal the flattening, or loss of specificity, of distinct groups, though occasionally it does result in smaller, less powerful groups being absorbed into larger group dialogues, as demonstrated by Huub van Barr in his discussion of Romani holocaust survivors and the presentation of Roma groups within holocaust heritage. In that example, the Roma experience is often overshadowed by the larger group experience of holocaust survivors but, at the same time, having aligned with this larger group has enabled the Roma to achieve a voice, including global recognition that they had not yet attained previously (van Baar 2010: 115-118). Therefore, we see in this example the strategic employment
of a marginal identity as a tool for broader recognition in this example. This can then be broadened out and ideally applied to other groups who have not yet been able to gain the same global recognition. Before delving into the intricacies of the case study on which I wish to elaborate, I will outline my methodology and provide a brief history of the Welsh community in Argentina to provide the context for my argument.

Methodology
The data for this paper comes from ethnographic field research carried out over 12 months, divided between three different trips to Chubut, over three years. I came to study Welsh heritage in Argentina after completing heritage research in Wales and learning about the intricacies and complicated positioning that Welsh heritage holds in the United Kingdom. The prospect of a thriving Welsh community in the middle of Patagonia struck my curiosity, as it did for many, and I sought to understand how Welsh heritage would be practiced in a distinctly different national context. After my first trip to the region, I realized the story of Welsh heritage in Patagonia was much more complex, and inextricably intertwined with indigenous heritage. As part of my project, I sought to determine the ways in which Welsh and indigenous heritages were displayed differentially. Similarly to some of my previous research, I undertook a narrative analysis of museum displays and tourism literature, to better understand the complex relationship the presentation of heritage of each community’s heritage had in Argentina. Though this was not the sole focus of my various trips to the field, I devoted significant time and energy toward visiting cultural and historical museums, regional and town-based tourism offices, heritage festivals, as well as collecting and analyzing physical and web-based tourism literature to determine the stories being told both by and about each community. Due to the ethnographic nature of my project, I was additionally able to contextualize the above noted data based on lived experience in the region. This perspective enabled me to holistically understand the imagery presented through the tourism industry and its relationship to the lived reality of community members of each ancestry group.

The Patagonian Heritage Landscape
The Welsh arrived in Argentina in 1865, in an attempt to escape British hegemonic control over language, tradition, religion, labor, and other ‘cultural givens’ in the nationalist sense (Smith 1998; Williams 1991). Despite disagreements with the
Argentine government for the first several decades of the Welsh presence in Patagonia, including forced assimilation through Argentine schooling, conscripted military service, among other strategies, Welsh identity has been revitalized throughout different periods of the past 150 years and provincial memory, and textbook history, is now strongly linked to Welsh contributions to the region (de Oleaga and Bohoslavsky 2011; Williams 1991). The semi-nomadic Mapuche and Tehuelche lived in the region long before the Welsh arrived, their story tends to be nothing more than a preface to the actual transformation of the Patagonian landscape from an uninhabited, undesirable region into what has become a largely ecotourism destination, characterized by tropes of the untouched wilderness, frontier region of the country (Mendez 2010). In this construction of the landscape, semi-mobility or nomadism that of a liability because it implies a lack of rootedness, or formal engagement with or use of the land. These artificial attributions can, and often do, lead to the recalling of ideas from colonial regimes, and serve as elusive forms of neo-colonialism.

This heavy preferentialism toward Welshness, or Welsh history and heritage, is readily seen throughout the tourism literature and brochures, as well as municipal websites, which boast the continued presence and influence of Welshness throughout the region. The favoritism toward Welsh heritage, over that of indigenous heritage, stems from the values upon which the Argentine nation was developed. Expansionist ideologies predicated on settling undeveloped Patagonian territory, coupled with the desire of the highly centralized Argentine government to whiten the young nation resulted in a persistent proclivity toward European, broadly defined, heritage (Gordillo and Hirsch 2003). As a consequence of the Conquest of the Desert, a targeted campaign throughout the latter part of the Nineteenth Century to remove the indigenous presence from Argentina, the country has not experienced indigenous revitalization in the same way as other South and Central American nations have (Houghton and Bell 2004).

One example of the very literal way in which Welsh heritage is valued more highly, in tourism rhetoric in this example, comes from the City of Esquel’s website, which emphasizes Welsh contributions to the city, as indicated in the following quote directly from the tourism part of the website, under the Welsh Culture tab, “The [Welsh] cultural legacy of the first settlers in the valley endures...” or, “With the arrival of the first immigrants to the area in the late 19th
political processes, are essentially eliminated (2010: 180). The general rhetoric is that no indigenous peoples exist in the contemporary period, within Uruguay’s borders. This has the implicit effect of whitening the population and precludes any possibility of Uruguayan identity that recognizes, even in part, the contribution of indigenous values (Hoffmann and Peeren 2010). Similar outcomes for what was called the Conquest of the Desert in Argentine history have been witnessed in Argentina whereby the Argentine national narrative and identity recalls primarily European heritage (de Oleaga and Bohoslavsky 2011). The indigenous communities do not have access to European heritage claims and thus are constructed through the heritage and tourism industry in a way that contrasts the Welsh narrative significantly. This is a prime example of the way in which heritage has been used to silence the voice of one group, and elevate the visibility of another.

To expand, Anette Hoffmann notes that linking indigenous identities to territory can result in these groups being conceived of as unchanging and “natural”, in an animalistic sense, rather than as adapting to the postcolonial conditions of their current circumstances (2010: 166-5). Vannina Sztainbok goes on to state that, “national realities” are problematic because in both countries, the indigenous groups are, in narrative, but subsequently in economic and
Land, and contemporary claims over the intangible heritage not only by, but more importantly for, the Welsh descendants. This process of rooting a particular group identity to a physical space has enable the Welsh community to capitalize on material benefits of establishing a tourism destination.

Collaboration Through Heritage
Despite the hierarchical valuing of Welsh cultural traditions in Argentina, relative to indigeneity, it is precisely the power that Welshness, and more generally European ties, carry in Argentine national discourse that position the Welsh community as a viable partner to collaborate with local indigenous communities to more effectively mobilize their own heritage and gain legitimacy, recognition, and presence. I claim here that, because the Welsh have been able to harness “firstness” for Patagonia, but at the same time the indigenous could also rightfully possess this claim, collaboration in the form of developing new and reworking extant tourism narratives of these alternatives to Argentine national identity could be economically and politically fruitful for both communities (Hoffmann 2010: 162). Following, I will discuss the politics of heritage in Chubut, as well as the avenue I envision for collaboration between the two communities.
are remnants of a very European tradition to collect and display materials of community significance (Pearce 1999). The Welsh in Argentina have harnessed the ability to document their history, experience, and influence on the region, through the preservation and display of physical documents and artifacts throughout the above-mentioned Welsh community maintained museums (Hoskins 2003). Therefore, Chubut regional tourism plainly favors Welsh cultural heritage. And yet, because both communities have been marginalized by the Argentine state at various periods and, due to this mutually subaltern positioning (though experienced very differently by the indigenous communities relative to the Welsh descendants, especially in the contemporary period due to a longer and more aggressive history of marginalization), this would be the common ground on which to create a collaborative initiative.

Ethnicity is salient to any discussion of the impacts of internal colonialism as it relates to heritage tourism industry because it is through “museumization” that certain identities have been given voice while others have been silenced (MacCannell 1984). In essence, not all groups have had the ability to access a point of productive positioning in the state-level hierarchy of identities. (de Oleaga and Bohoslavsky 2011).
While there are a few museums and monuments commemorating the indigenous experience, these sites are just a small fraction compared to those of the Welsh, and these sites tend to be much less frequently community-organized and are often in the form of stereotyped imagery that reaffirm the Argentine national, power-laden discourse that has kept these communities in a marginal position for centuries. For this reason, it is my claim, then, that the Welsh community could work with the indigenous communities to create joint cultural heritage sites, and re-brand the Patagonian cultural tourism industry as an inclusive and multicultural province that recognizes and presents the multiplicity of histories in the region.

While the move away from a singular heritage and exclusionary landscape representation is generally productive by virtue of inclusivity and accounting for hybridity and generally helping to make the network more productive, multicultural heritage representations for a single place or landscape are not without tensions, of course. Narratives, even when layered, are often still created in a way to fit dominant, power-laden ideologies that undoubtedly result in hierarchical valuing of the multiple identity-narratives in a locality (Graham et al. 2000). Given the historically marginal position of both groups, as far as Argentine history goes, it could prove to be a productive move for the indigenous groups and the Welsh to begin representing history in a mutually respectful, productive manner that tells an alternate story to Argentine national history.

**Discussion**

Recent heritage and tourism scholarship has sought to capture the nature of stakeholder involvement in heritage tourism development, planning, and management. This public interest focus has sought to approach the heritage industry from a bottom-up community engaged approach, as opposed to the traditional top-down commercial approach, to better engage those who are directly affected by and involved in heritage tourism, in destinations all over the world. The intent of such collaborations would be to minimize potential future conflicts arising from mismanagement of heritage resources and misrepresentation of stakeholder groups (Porter and Salazar 2005). Collaboration within the tourism and heritage industry is not unheard of, and in fact, Aas et al. note that, due to the common goals stakeholders often have in creating a viable tourism destination, collaboration is not only possible, but ideal (2005). Collaboration is highly positive, from a human rights
perspective, because opinions from different communities and groups are often heard and accounted for, rather than being overlooked. Additionally, resources are put toward the collective goal, which can help elevate more marginalized groups, and create a more egalitarian destination vis-à-vis capital gains and shared ownership (Aas et al. 2005). This is not to say, however, that equilateral relationships are a direct consequence of collaboration. Rather, this unequal historical balance of power needs to be explicitly addressed, or could lead to continued imbalance. Such would most certainly be the case with the Welsh descendant community, if they were to collaborate with the indigenous groups.

While it is certainly not my intention to make the claim that the Welsh are an indigenous group for the region, so to speak, or that their experience can be truly compared to that of the indigenous communities, their own marginal status at points in their 150 history in the nation [to a different degree] does provide a source of allegiance. In fact, throughout many of the Welsh museums currently, the Welsh highlight a productive and friendly relationship between themselves and the indigenous communities who lived in the region when the Welsh arrived and established their settlements. In some instances, they even include artifacts that would have been used by indigenous groups in an earlier era, though these artifacts are often presented devoid of any context or interpretive description (de Oleaga and Bohoslavsky 2011). While it is not inconceivable that the Welsh could rework their own museum narratives to better recount the indigenous experience, the narratives as they currently stand are problematic because they do not account for the complexity of the relationship between the Welsh settlers, the indigenous groups, and the Argentine government. In fact, as Gonzalez de Oleaga and Bohoslavsky claim, these museums preclude the possibility of any other perspectives, notably those of the indigenous groups, as they currently stand (2011). It is interesting to consider this because, in some ways, the Welsh have been complicit in maintaining the subordination of the indigenous communities within tourism industry narratives, especially considering Wales’ own internal colony status as a member of the ‘Celtic fringe’ (Hechter 1977). Though, this is just indicative of the hierarchical nature of ethnic groups within large nation-states and stratified societies. Another interesting point to consider here is the relative absence or mention of Argentine nationalism and identity throughout the Welsh community museums, which
implicitly demonstrates a lack of direct affiliation/association with this narrative, by the Welsh descendant community. Lack of direct affiliation with the Argentine government, then, could be precisely the commonality between the two groups to begin collaborating and developing a jointly vetted/corroborated heritage.

Creating a mutually inclusive narrative, to be promoted through the tourism and heritage industry in Chubut, by incorporating the indigenous communities into the cultural heritage tourism network in the province (currently Welsh dominated), would bolster the territorial and heritage claims of both groups and could be used to re-construct the historical image of both the Welsh and the indigenous, in order to shape contemporary understanding/experience of the Chubut province (Kelly 2010). While not necessarily with the intent of reclaiming autonomy or liberation for either group, escalating both groups’ heritage would have positive impacts for both communities, if not moreso for the indigenous groups. That is, the indigenous communities have more to gain in the way of both material benefits and elevated status to access basic rights. Accordingly, it would stand to reason that consolidating heritage to create and inclusive historical narrative would enable both communities to re-signify the landscape and productively rework provincial memory.

One foreseeable problem with this strategy could be that, as has been demonstrated by other movements, universalizing discourses, often in the name of human rights or things like indigenous movements, while useful approaches to gain political momentum, this can simultaneously and often mean the loss of specificity within the movement, by particular sub groups (van Baar 2010). However, due to the nature of each respective group’s history, in this case, it is conceivable that these processes would not be as significant of a concern. I would argue that it is still possible to accurately, appropriately, and sensitively represented both groups’ histories, experiences, and perspectives without them being in contrast or contradiction to one another. That is, the intent would by no means be to erase the historical wounds experiences more deeply by the once more prevalent indigenous communities, but rather more equitably move forward, through the strategic harnessing of the heritage tourism industry.

Through this model, both groups would have ownership over self-representation and participate in tourism development/heritage performance/provincial tourism. This would enable both groups to renegotiate their relationships with
the Argentine state, and to potentially gain more recognition in addition to redefining the cultural history of the region in a way that accounts for the multiplicity of groups which lay claim to the region (Graham 2000). According to Mendez, it would beneficial to incorporate the indigenous experience, traditions, and cultural values to the repertoire of that which is disseminated through heritage sites, as these cultural elements are not yet well known, province-wide (2010). Additionally, she notes that this will also contribute to the tourist experience as it would diversify tourist options. Hence, the benefits of incorporating indigenous participation into Chubut regional tourism discourses would provide multi-level benefits for multiple interested groups.

The nature of such a collaboration between two distinctly different cultural heritage communities, to create an inclusive and mutually beneficial heritage industry has yet to be extensively documented in the literature, and perhaps yet to be seen more generally as an anthropological phenomenon. Despite the lack of a well-theorized and practiced model, however, the conditions in Chubut are ripe for such a movement to take place. The role of the anthropologist, then, in this model, could be to serve as the facilitator of the collaboration.

Due to the anthropologist’s likely positioning as an outsider to both groups, their role could potentially be more easily received on either side of the arrangement. This individual would also be in a strategic position to understand the current ways in which heritage for either group is presented, and make recommendations for how to construct new and rework existing heritage sites and accompanying narratives. The possibilities for such a collaboration are extensive, but could ultimately lead to more inclusive understanding of heritage for groups around the globe.

**Conclusion**

While the indigenous groups do not have European ancestry on which to call or garner resources to maintain a heritage network in the same way the Welsh have, resource sharing between the provincial heritage tourism network would ultimately mean increased economic gains for the network. The Welsh, who have already established a local heritage tourism network, could incorporate indigenous groups into the network in order to ensure their participation and mutual gain from the network. For the Province, diversifying the tourist experience would likely mean an increase in tourism dollars. It is for this reason that such a transition could be ‘sold’ to the provincial ministry of tourism. In this way,
the very same globalizing forces that have acted as threats and tools of oppression to many indigenous groups, including those in Argentina, could actually be used to assist these communities in reclaiming access to much needed resources with the development of a lucrative tourism destination, marketable to both domestic and foreign tourists. The grassroots infrastructure is already in existence in many ways, and presents the potential for benefits for all. Promoting a more culturally inclusive tourism destination would align with global trends toward multiculturalism and inclusivity and, again, create a more viable and desirable destination for national and international tourists and begin to plant the seeds of cultural equality in Chubut Province.

References Cited
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