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### Transformation of Frontier National Parks into Tourism Sites. The North Andean Patagonia Experience (1934-1955)<sup>1</sup>

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#### ABSTRACT

Tourism policies for peripheral regions of Argentina reinforced the inner-colonialism of the national territories during the period between the 1930 and the 1950 decades. Two models for tourism development (elite and social tourism) were contrasted in the first national park created in South America, the Nahuel Huapi National Park, and its correlated centre San Carlos de Bariloche.

The main results obtained were: 1) The cultural landscape and the activity linked to the leisure and free time were used strategically for the citizens' education; 2) In its beginnings, nature conservation was associated with the imposition of the frontier itself and; 3) Populating policies constituted a problematic factor for the development of tourism.

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**Keywords:** National Parks, Tourism, Development, Frontier, Inner Colonialism.

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## **Introduction**

During the first half of the twentieth century in Argentina, the tourism management policies in the southern frontier areas were oriented, firstly, towards the elite tourism (1934-1943) and, secondly, towards the social tourism (1944-1955). These two development models introduced material and symbolic practices that contributed to the formation of a cultural landscape in the interior of the Nahuel Huapi National Park, on the eastern slope of the Andes mountain range at the border between Argentina and Chile, and its correlated centre San Carlos de Bariloche (Patagonia, Argentina). The concepts of frontier, inner colonialism and peripheral regions are central to understanding how the population policies and cultural landscape designs accompanied the aforementioned models of tourism in the area of the first national park created in South America.

Girbal-Blanca (2008: 1-27) indicates that Argentina could be divided in three types of areas; the central zone, which included the humid Pampa and the capital of the country Buenos Aires; the provinces, with a political organization inherited from Spain's colony; and the historical National Territories, which were areas outside the Spanish domain, under control of original people that were incorporated to Argentinean State in the late nineteenth century (Figure 1). Patagonia had the widest surface of these national territories, thereby all its development was in service of the central zone. Navarro Floria (2009) studied the territorial relationship between Patagonia and the rest of the country. The author identified as 'inner colonial regions' the areas characterised by a relationship of dependency. This concept implies the persistence of a structural inequality during the colonial period, where the remote and peripheral regions had significant limitations as to the decision-making.



Figure 1: Political and administrative organisation of Argentina – 1934.

One of the most relevant lines of research in Latin America, the de-colonial studies<sup>1</sup>, support the idea that Latin America had a complex and problematic relationship with Europe and this still impacts on the local development. In few words, the modernity appears possible only by the subordination of American regions to the European metropolis. Colonialism and modernity are sides of the same coin, and this logic was replicated in the Latin American countries at a regional level with the national territories such as Patagonia.

Navarro Floria sustained that the knowledge of the historic stages allows nowadays seeing these areas from another point of view, namely as marginalised spaces, which suffered late or deficient integration into the body of the nation, and identified for their structural weaknesses. The weaknesses that for a peripheral region such as North Patagonia and particularly the Nahuel Huapi area refers to a vertical articulation, demonstrating scarce local insertion.

The changes in material and symbolic practices during both tourism development models, were analysed through the perspective of cultural landscape, which integrated historic socio-cultural dimensions and signified subjective components (perceptions and social representations) in a broad context of a territorial organization in a frontier space.

The following objectives were defined in order to approach the issue: (i) identification of the role of tourism and the use of the cultural landscape as a symbolic resource in the process of incorporation of the peripheral areas into the rest of the country; (ii) description of the relationship between nature conservation and the condition of the frontier with nationally protected wild areas; and (iii) explore population policies and the conditionings of the inner colonialism for the development of tourism in peripheral areas.

The methodology consisted in a diachronic analysis of primary and secondary sources. The case study was boarded from a geographic political cultural perspective with contributions from Social History, Geography of Tourism and Demography. The interdisciplinary aspect has given us the possibility to understand the opportunities and drawbacks in the development of the national protected areas and, at the same time, the different historical meanings attributed to tourism as an economic, cultural and social activity. Without leaving behind the material dimension of the space organization we emphasised (i) the symbolic dimension of the region, (ii) its historic invention, (iii) the collective representations and (iv) the relations of power.

## **1. Methodology**

The approach to the theme has a geographic diachronic focus with a systemic vision. A compilation was made classifying and analyzing the edited and unpublished sources from the following archives and libraries: Delegación Regional Patagonia de Parques Nacionales, Museo de la Patagonia, Secretaría de Turismo Municipal and Club Andino Bariloche (located in San Carlos de Bariloche); Ministerio de Agricultura de la Nación Argentina, Ministerio del Interior, Biblioteca del Congreso and Archivo Histórico de la Administración de Parques Nacionales (in Buenos Aires). Furthermore, thorough interviews with relevant and specialised informers were conducted.

## **2. Literature review**

The geographic space, referred to as 'social space', constitutes the physical frame where all behaviours and human relations take place constituting, at the same time, support and resource for, as well as a factor for development and localization of tourism (Vera et al. 1997). The social and territorial *touristification* consists, in terms of tourism and recreation, of introducing changes of meaning and assigning new images, incorporating different actors and reorganising the space and its functions (Callizo Soneiro 1991; Cazes 1992; Hiernaux 2006). This process involves the introduction of

material and symbolic practices (Harvey, 1990) for the development of space with a different than the pre-existing functionality.

Introduction of infrastructure, equipment and amenities which facilitate tourists' experience is one of the material practices associated with tourism. During the 1920's in Argentina, tourism came to be regarded as a matter of public policy as well as private interest (Piglia 2011). The first national parks in North Patagonia had to bare a strong intervention in architectural style (Berjman and Gutiérrez 1988; Lolich 2000) that gave birth to a landscape of high cultural impact both in the interior of the park and the municipalities outside its jurisdiction such as the case of San Carlos de Bariloche. Moreover, ancient inhabitants inside the park were removed from certain areas declared intangible ones or were given an eventual permission of occupancy and pasture. This tendency responded to a world concerned about the demographic control inside the national parks<sup>2</sup>.

In fact, the idea of residents in the national park was a problem, as Diegues (2005) mentions the national parks in Latin America were conceived as empty, and designed as the recreational places for urban societies. John Ise (1961) quoted that early national parks (from 1872 to 1916) in the United States of America also faced with this situation and resettled their native population, regardless their location in national territories or in States. Moreover, the struggle between wilderness and development supporters in the United States National Park Service and the Forest Service also occurred inside the Argentinean Agency of National Parks. Consequently, the pre-existence of population in a town as Bariloche introduced elements of tension in the constitution of the first national park in Argentina.

In terms of symbolism, multiple representations were constructed to endow certain landscapes with attractiveness through ethical and aesthetic valorisation of nature whereby political meanings also converged 'which considered the territory as visible support of the homeland, and the landscape – especially certain natural and sublime landscapes – as its condensation' (Silvestri 1999). This process of creation of a symbolic territory impacted on the introduction of a new function in the material territory. Tourism activity can be seen as that new function in the territory where alternative or contradictory, but hegemonic in their purpose, projects coexist (Bustos Cara 1998) based on different concepts of leisure and free time, and the meaning/s assigned to tourism.

The condition of periphery and frontier is not often recognised explicitly in many tourist areas that base their attraction in nature; however, it has strong sequels in the process of selection and design of tourist natural heritage attractions as the ones located in a protected area. Among the characteristics of these areas that Hall and Boyd (Hall and Boyd 2005) indicate are: (i) increased influence of the State government, (ii) poorer information flow from the periphery towards the centre and vice versa, and (iii) high aesthetic value with which they are often perceived.

Regarding this symbolic change of the notion of periphery from the point of view of tourism development Scott (2000) sustains that this activity builds up an image of periphery as an object of pleasure by the metropolitan imagery. There the fantasy finds

its physical location and, it is claimed, undergoes modification as the market trends change.

Other factors to interpret the definition of these areas not only in terms of their distance from the centre are the following: accessibility (Lew 2000) both physical and social; the visitor's perceptions; the scale of the attractions and the cost of the trip which condition the consumer in the election between substitute attractions (Prideaux 2005). In short, the economic, political-social and symbolic relationships between peripheral and central areas are not fixed but rather dynamic categories which imply alliances of diverse nature. For this reason tourism based in natural peripheral areas needs to be contemplated in the context of objectives and strategies of wider regional development.

The project of integration and consolidation of the boarder limits of Nahuel Huapi (and in the North Patagonia in general) conducted by the National Parks not only looked to promote natural beauties and attract tourists to reactivate the regional economy according to the characteristics of the argentine economy (Bessera 2011), but also to *Argentinean-ise* the frontier territories employing as a strategy the voiced and active opposition to (i) the populating of the areas near the border of the country and (ii) the historical commercial exchange with Chile.

### **3. A never- end debate: inner colonialism, policies of population, and the creation of national parks in the northern Patagonia.**

Nahuel Huapi, as part of Patagonia, belongs to an area that was incorporated into Argentina right after the creation of the national territories in 1884. It was considered empty of people and full of resources because, on the one hand, the social and economic structure of the original settlers had been dismantled<sup>3</sup> and, on the other hand, it had been presented as the motor of the national development (Navarro Floria 2010). Patagonia was included with restricted political rights because governments were elected in Buenos Aires and the inhabitants [of the former territory] had no civic rights (luorno and Crespo 2008). To further exacerbate this situation of inequality in addition to a marked deficit of services, transportation and communication there were shortcomings in the institutional presence of justice, health and education.

The main reason for maintaining the dependence policies was the low number of inhabitants. Nevertheless, the statistic shows that during the decade of 1930, some Patagonian territories had enough population to claim political autonomy (Favaro and Arias 1995). Even so, the central government denied this possibility, and this region remained in its place of disadvantage. The polemic behind the demographic explanation lied in the fact that preventing civic empowerment not all Patagonian inhabitants were recognised as 'legitimate' ones. The central justification for that inhabitants were considered foreigners, squatters who came from the neighbouring country and denounced as a Chilean advance onto the [Argentinean] territory (Cibils 1902). Something similar occurred with Chilean immigrants or other initiatives of populating, hidden by racist and classist principles that characterised the Argentine

government in its origins (Adamovsky 2009). The creation of natural protected areas began in these territories with limited rights.

The national parks of Argentina were not only spaces of nature preservation, their strategic frontier location served as official boarder which increased controls and limits to the Chilean population as well as the indigenous and creole population. These ideas were based on, among other factors, demographic superiority of neighbouring Chilean localities (Núñez et al. 2011).

According to Matossian (2011), on the Argentine side these exchange and migration controls of the Chilean population materialised in different ways, among them, the discriminatory granting of lands to settlers according to their origin, favouring the white and central European settlers (established when an agricultural pastoral colony was created in Nahuel Huapi in 1902).

Until the First World War, the Chilean issue was not a problem because the frontier was assumed by both countries as an integrated area with a common economic activity. But since the 1920s this policy changed as a result of the European navigation restrictions which triggered the falling down of international product trade in the peripheral regions such as Patagonia. Besides, another argument to introduce order and closure of the frontiers in the north Patagonia was the Russian revolution and the occurrence of Argentinean Patagonian strikes in the southern part of this region led the national government to consider the whole region as a land of anarchists and communists (Bohoslavsky 2009).

Three moments are relevant to the production of tourist places in North Patagonia (Scarzanella 2002): a moment of gestation, with the first donation of lands in 1903 for the creation of the National Park; a moment of adoption of a tourist high-impact environmental and cultural policy by means of creation of the DNP (Direction of National Parks) in 1934; and a moment of broadening and re-definition of the tourist policies by the *Peronismo* (political party of *Juan Perón*, firstly as Government Minister, later as President of Argentina) between 1943 to 1955.

When the preliminary South National Park (*Parque Nacional del Sud – PNS*)<sup>4</sup> commission was formed in 1922 and the tourism was suggested as the main activity of the region, the local agriculture model entered into crisis due to various reasons. Two reasons were the closing of the frontier with Chile and the world crisis of 1929 that impacted this region with the suspension of public works (Méndez 2009). In this context the creation of the DNP and the arrival of the railway in 1934 constituted a new opportunity for the locality.

The DNP presented the first initiative on tourism, a plan emanating from the central authority, which was based on organising the tourism activity with exclusive characteristics focused on practicing sports such as mountaineering, hunting and skiing. The authorities' intention was 'to develop Bariloche as a great central frontier city with the necessary magnetism to attract the inland demographic flow that would neutralise the one from Chile' (Bustillo 1999). This national policy lasted until 1944 when a change of model was incorporated giving a leading role to the social tourism instead the elite tourism.

In management terms, the former national parks policy was eclectic (as Bustillo used to name it) due to the priority of regional development through tourism (Bessera 2006:4). For example, the objective of wilderness areas conservation was followed while commercial and private initiatives to introduce exotic species (i.e. rainbow trout, red deer and pheasant) were permitted. Núñez & Núñez (2012) compared this management in Nahuel Huapi with the ecological and environmental researches. They found out that, until the 1970's, the use of scientific knowledge was mediated by the political intentions of National government.

This eclectic conservationism model established during the first ten years of the DNP, received strong critiques at the end of Bustillo's administration. The reforestation with exotic trees and the introduction of not native species was severely rejected, particularly after Pan-Americanist international meetings.

Dennler de la Tour, a zoologist who was an Argentinean delegate to the Pan-Americanist Congress of Geography and History held in Lima (Peru, 1941) pointed out that the aim of the creation of national parks was to preserve the native nature, and it would not be possible to make any difference between useful and harmful animals inside a national park, because both of them should be protected. Moreover, in case of tourists being in danger, their circulation should not be allowed without the necessary caution and follow of the management criteria of United States of America and Africa parks (Dimitri 1954:28). Bustillo, in 1946, wrote on this subject. He indicated that National Parks were 'slightly controlled wilderness' (Bustillo, 1946:4). He, according to the Argentinean Law about National Parks, admitted the use of resources of National Park, because the ending objective was the national interest, against the de la Tour's perspective. In Bustillo's words '...must not forget that our national parks are located in the border, some of whom, if not most or all, include areas that were the subject of lengthy international litigation...' (Bustillo, 1946:8). Bustillo (1946) ties the nationalization of frontiers to colonial policies, especially in Patagonia. In subsequent years, until the 1950's, different National Parks were created along the limits of National Territories.

The forest engineer and president of the directory of National Parks, Lucas Tortorelli, referred to this conflict over the meanings of conservation and the objectives of national parks as follows. He considered that the extension of some national parks as the Nahuel Huapi one (700.000 has), with much of its surface covered by forest mass, represented not only its major ornament but a great wealth. Furthermore, this forest mass could not be maintained without any use (Tortorelli 1995: 245-242). Additionally, in this second period, the organism of national parks also had a strong intervention to regulate architectural style and tourism advertising.

As of 1943 the National Government took conscience of the most vulnerable social sectors, especially the labourers. In this context, the right to leisure turned into a human right. Upon the boom of the social tourism the experts who planned the tourism regarded Patagonia as a region with an undeveloped demographic potential. As the Practical Manual suggests 'Patagonia is a deserted region *per se*, however, due to its enormous natural resources it is qualified to make possible the birth of new centres of material and spiritual importance as soon as the benefits of development



are widespread in this area. It is with this purpose that the internal and external wave of migration will be directed towards the under-populated regions' (Presidencia de la Nación Argentina 1953).

Seeking to take into consideration the role of tourism and the utilization of the cultural landscape as a symbolic resource for the incorporation of peripheral areas into the nation-wide space, further we analyse two models of tourism development as implemented in the area of case-study: the elite tourism and social tourism.

#### **4. A never- end debate: Elite Tourism, 1934 - 1944**

In spite of Ballent and Gorelik (2001) who advert about the existence of policies of recreation as of 1920s encouraged by civil organizations related to automobile and communication infrastructure that had two objectives: de-provincialize the interior [of Argentina] and *Argentinean-ise* the *porteños* (*porteños*: nick-name of the inhabitants of the capital city of the country), in the Nahuel Huapi area the arrival of these organizations was difficult because the paving of the main national route N° 237 was not finished until 1968.

Bariloche attained the rank of Town Council and its communal land was delimited in 1929. Before the institutionalization of the PNNH in 1934, the incipient development of the place was oriented towards an endogenous development (Navarro Floria and Vejsbjerg 2009) although the *touristification* was thought to begin with State policies of the national agencies.

Elite tourism was specially emphasised in the period 1934-1944 due to the conditions of isolation, the offer of exclusive sport activities and the image of a sublime and untouched place that was promoted in the social imagery of the main metropolises.

The supply of 330 hotel-beds in 1930 increased to 1,500 hotel-beds in 1934 (Vallmitjana 1993). This growth was accompanied by the improvement of accessibility through the installation of a train station in the town, and a national policy on mortgage loans for hotel and infrastructure investment within the protected area (in eight years 480 km of internal trails were built). Although the authorities of the Town Council rejected the urban planning proposal they felt frequently overlooked by the national authorities.

Architecture at this stage became an instrument of change as much from its materiality as from its symbolism with an obvious manifestation of power over the territory considered to be peripheral. The installation of a tree nursery in the PNNH supplied wood, which is one of the main materials used in blockhaus building for both a structural and a decorative criterion. The mentor of the new architectonic language was the architect Alejandro Bustillo (Lolich 2005), who was in charge of the technical staff that made the project and directed the construction of a considerable number of buildings to endow the PNNH of the image and infrastructure necessary to transform Bariloche and its area of influence into a tourism resort aimed at the *porteño* elite and the international demand of high purchasing power. The picturesque architectonic style adopted was inspired by Bern with a special concern in the design of surrounding

gardens. Two of these iconic buildings were the Llao-Llao Hotel (a resort with a golf court) and the ski centre of the Cathedral Hill.

Besides, the DNP incorporated an urban planner educated in Europe Architect Estrada, who was responsible of the urban design of San Carlos de Bariloche and the creation of a system of tourist villages inside de jurisdiction of the NHNP. By means of the division of lands into parcels for the construction of luxurious summer residences, the following, among others, were created: Llao-Llao village, Tacul village and Cathedral village (Lolich 2007). This system of tourist accommodation and second-homes was part of a strategy for financing the sizable public works and at the same time, a way of choosing the profile of inhabitant in order to populate the frontier<sup>5</sup> (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Left: Llao-Llao Hotel. Righth: Llao-Llao village.

The condition of national territory allowed the DNP to avoid the local bureaucracy and to practice a strict control of the facades to be built. According to the census of 1940 Bariloche had 6,000 inhabitants and received 6,900 tourists who enjoyed park tours and other activities (Dirección de Parques Nacionales Argentina 1940). The Argentinean Senate approved an increment of the DNP's annual budget, in 1942. This leads to the idea on 'inner colonialism' because even though this national agency had no jurisdiction in the town of Bariloche, its intervention was legitimated in practice. As an example, at least between 1939 and 1956 'a lot of hotels and residential inns that were constructed in wood were replaced, at least their wooden siding, by walls of masonry in an attempt to modernise them altering their cultural significance and affecting their value as historic heritage' (Lolich 1991).

The symbolic practices that were added to the abovementioned material ones generated a great amount of images and performances that strengthened the attractiveness of the place. The image of the beginning of the twentieth century, linked to agriculture and cattle, changed its meaning when it got into crisis and its settlers devoted to tourism as an alternative activity. The chronicles, postcards, tourism guides (local and international) and journalist notes in daily newspapers of national circulation contributed to the establishment of the touristic image of this area as the Argentinean Switzerland<sup>6</sup>.

This evolution in the contents of the social imaginary was not *naïve* since at the beginning of twentieth century the discourse integrated the rural landscape with the

possibility of industrialization, and after the 1930's, it referred only to a pristine landscape of mountains and lakes lacking of human production (Navarro Floria and Williams 2010). Therefore, the cultural landscape was drastically changed during this period, both in urban and in rural environments alike. The regulation related to the creation of the DNP N° 12,103 in 1934 established a strict control on the surface and materials of the buildings, in addition to their gardens<sup>7</sup>.

### **5. A never- end debate: social tourism, 1944-1955**

The social tourism implies a kind of tourism that focuses on the human being and his/her destination in qualitative terms, and not so much on the profits that she/he can supply in the consumer's status (Haulot 1985). However, in different historic and political contexts as in Germany or in the post-war France, this kind of tourism also had strategic objectives for the territorial intervention and organization of the creation of housing development, as well as the improvements in communications and transportation in the regions catalogued as under-populated or marginal (Furlough 2007). As mentioned before, Patagonia was also considered an under-developed region with international attractions.

During this second period the official slogan in Argentina was 'It is your duty to know [your] Homeland', present since 1930, but re-introduced in the vast labour sectors by the *Peronismo* (political movement derived from the president Perón). This demonstrates the role of tourism as integrator of peripheral areas and an explicit intention of using the landscape as a resource for the civic education. Unlike during the previous period (Bustillo's decade) the efforts were not focused on the investment into public infrastructure works but rather in subsidising the transportation, particularly the railway. The connectivity was seen as a structural problem of the entire country characterised by great distances and the difficulties of communication.

When referring to the social tourism in post-war France Furlough (2007) affirms that the social representation (publicity, mass media, etc.) presented vacation as a liberating experience of non-regimented time in a pleasant social space. The notion of leisure and free time takes an aspect of a time of freedom for freedom as the auto-conditioned and tourist-subject free mode defined that way by Munné (1985) from the position of psycho-sociology of free time.

On the contrary, the significance assigned to leisure and free time during the *Peronismo* was associated more to a concept of the spare time as a synonym of non-obliged time, but anyway quantified and controlled by the government superstructure. As an example we can mention a textual quotation of the Practical Manual of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Five-Year Plan 'it is sacred for the Department of Labour and Prevision to preserve the human material capital for work. The worker should enjoy enough rest to recover his energy consumed by fatigue. Right now the work spaces are limited and controlled. We will observe the sabbatical, daily or weekly, semi-annual or yearly spaces of rest. And we think that we have to undertake action for the enjoyment of rest...' (Presidencia de la Nación 1953) (Figure 3).

The tourism as activity organised by the State, depended successively on different departments. In 1944 the DNP became the Direction of National Parks and Tourism (DNPT) and in 1945, it transformed into Administration of National Parks and Tourism (ANPT), and had moved from the Ministry of Agriculture to the Ministry Public Works, in line with the idea that the national parks as recreational areas were destined to serve the urban societies. The agency was re-named as National Park Administration in 1953 and returned to Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (Figure 4). As a result of these institutional changes, the organism responsible for the national park management assumed conservation mission and abandoned its urban initiatives.

PERIOD	DENOMINATION	GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT	MAIN OBJECTIVE
1935-44	Direction of National Parks <i>Dirección de Parques Nacionales</i>  ( DPN)	Department of Agriculture  <i>Ministerio de Agricultura</i>	Strengthening of the frontier - tourist infrastructure - urban infrastructure
1944-45	Direction of National Parks and Tourism  <i>Dirección de Parques Nacionales y Turismo</i>  (DPNT)	Department of Agriculture  <i>Ministerio de Agricultura</i>	Infrastructure of Social Tourism
1945-52	General Administration of National Parks and Tourism  <i>Administración General de Parques Nacionales y Turismo (AGPNT)</i>	Department of Public Works  <i>Ministerio de Obras Públicas</i>	Infrastructure of Social Tourism
1952-56	General Administration of National Parks  <i>Administración General de Parques Nacionales</i>  (AGPN)	Department of Agriculture and Live Stock  <i>Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería de la Nación</i>	Environment Preservation

Figure 3: Institutional changes of the National Parks with respect to tourism

Núñez and Vejsbjerg (2010) show how this redirection impacted the local development. The tourism understood as a social activity covered its association to the economical dimension, and Bariloche lost the national guidance which had put all of its development in order. The Town Council did not have the structure to order the activity around a common plan and Bariloche the head city of the PNNH, between 1946 and 1947, 'doubled the demand from 15,243 to 32,319 tourists maintaining the upper trend in the following years' (Campetella and Farenzana 2005).

Lolich (2010) highlights the diffusion in the documents of urban planning, putting on line the multiplicity of criteria, based in erratic state considerations. The materiality explored by the author allows supposing that the remoteness of the National Government, with the consequent increase in the pressure of private interests, locked the possibility of a public determination of the local development.

During this period, 1944 to 1955, civil associations were set up which joined private initiatives such as hotels and campsites, fishing and hunting. The relationship between authorities of the Town Council and the authorities of the organism responsible for national park management was on good terms. Nevertheless, 'local entrepreneurs continued complaining about the excessive state intervention in urban planning' (Bessera 2008). The public works continued through schools and paving among other initiatives, but with an increasing influence of private interest.

A continuity of the architectonic language imposed by Bustillo was instilled although with more sober lines and without building equivalent monumental works proving a policy for the escort of the process of *touristification*. The rangelands inside the PNNH which had been privatised during the previous government were expropriated and working-class neighbourhoods and holiday camps for employees were constructed maintaining a strong State presence (Figure 4)



Figure 4: Left: First Snow Festival organised by AGPNT (1954). Right: Massive tourism in Mascardi. (Photos: Vallmitjana, 1993. Collection De Pellegrini).

In 1953, with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Five-Year Plan of the *Peronismo* the tourism acquired a political identity of its own, although not centralised in one organization. At the moment, National Parks without the addition of Tourism as far as their designation was

concerned, went back to depend upon the Department of Agriculture emphasising its conservationist role. Tourism in its own right passed to depend on the Department of Transport with the collaboration of other areas such as the National Council of Education (with the program 'Useful Vacations') later upgraded to a Ministry and the National Council of the Technical Affairs, among others. For the first time the tourism was institutionalised through a formal agency and the authorities could work on a preliminary national law.

Social tourism thus depended upon the mentioned departments in addition to the action achieved by the Foundation of Eva Perón headed by the President Perón's wife and the trade unions represented by The General Confederation of Labour, involved in the Advisory Labourer's Council on Social Tourism.

### **Summary and conclusions.**

The process of *touristification* experienced in the Nahuel Huapi National Park and in San Carlos de Bariloche (North Patagonia, Argentina) renders an account of the role of tourism in the integration of the peripheral areas into the organizational structure of the rest of the country. The policies adopted in Buenos Aires [by the central government], capital city of Argentina, influenced prematurely the region through the agency responsible for the national park management. Even though tourism evolved into an administrative area, the decision-making dispersed among several ministries, the Foundation of Eva Perón and the social agencies gave continuity to the dependence upon Buenos Aires and reinforced the inner colonialism. In 1955 the transformation of the national territories in the provinces sanctioned during the *Peronismo* was intended for their political autonomy but the process was violently interrupted by the military coup in the same year that Perón was toppled.

Before the first analysed period (1934-1944) asymmetric links were perpetuated through the centralization and by ignoring the autonomous pre-existing processes along with the interruption of the fluent commercial and tourist exchange with Chile. Settlement policies contemplating the expulsion of indigenous communities, the rejection towards the Chilean-born local population and the opportunity of choosing an ideal citizen constituted a problematic factor for the tourism development because the purpose was to populate the frontier and offer the rural and urban environments capable of attracting an international demand or visitors.

After the institutionalization of the Direction of National Parks in 1934, the augmentation of the protected surface and the creation of new parks, were the actions promoted by the central government to exert sovereignty over frontier areas. Tourism and population policies depended on the national park management agency which during this first period, adopted an eclectic perspective of conservation, i.e. the parcelling and selling of lands inside the protected area, or the implementation of a tree nursery for commercial purposes that would provide the basic material to change and impose an architectonic style.

These material practices also included symbolic ones such as the construction of a particular discourse with the selection of the images of natural surroundings where industrialization and human intervention are absent, except for those related to leisure activities. These social representations responded to a profile of a consumer endowed with high acquisitive power interested in visiting remote destinations and practicing exclusive sports activities.

The model of elite tourism was based on the idealization of a cultural landscape aesthetically similar to the Central European ones, rather than architecture and other cultural manifestations that were considered too Chilean. The DNP was responsible in the practice, for the implementation of a picturesque architectonic style in the interior of the protected area as well as in the San Carlos de Bariloche Town Council, even though the latter was outside its jurisdiction.

During the second period (1945-1955) the choice and promotion of the landscape was done with a different concept of citizenship than the former, and this new perspective was in accordance with the social tourism model. Hence, leisure activities became a tool to educate or *Argentinean-ise* all the inhabitants of the country with the objective to experience its extensiveness, limits and the diversity thereof, but lost the sense of urban and economic guide in the development of San Carlos de Bariloche. The right to paid vacations, transportation subsidies and economical hotel opportunities were part of the strategy that had been destined to incorporate peripheral regions into the body of the nation. The possibility of travelling crystallised also into a modification of the concept of leisure, which was understood as a non-obliged spare time although controlled in qualitative and quantitative terms by the State.

The selection criteria of the destinations and tourist attractions capable of handling this new massive demand, was their equitable distribution across different regions. So, in summary, the objective was to symbolically and materially transmit an image of an integrated country promoting the practice of tourism as a patriotic duty.

Also, the architecture reflected these differences. When the accent was put on social tourism, the priority was given to the technical and engineering works for the mass tourism. Leaving aside the monumental works of great symbolism (Hotel Llao Llao, Civic Centre, Cathedral Church) the hotels of the syndicates, the sports facilities and the houses favoured labourers among others were prioritised.

The process showed that, by the presence, in these territories, of the central nation-state government in the first period, and by the absence in the second one, the local dependence was intensified. This could be seen as a paradox which introduces complexity into the tourism policy analysis.

Due to frequent changes of denomination and institutional dependence of the national agency responsible of the national park management, as well as changes of the organism in charge of the tourism planning, San Carlos de Bariloche finally experienced its autonomy. But while the distance adopted by the nation-state with respect to the local development could be seen as liberating, there were excessive private interests on tourism devolvement that limited the possibility of consolidating an alternative program or plan for the Town Council. In the course of this second period, the political situation had been discussed, in fact the provincial formation that is, the political

autonomy for the territory of Río Negro, was signed off in 1955. Therefore, the over exaggeration of the social aspects disregarded the economic function of tourism activity. Besides the idea of the distance taken by the national park agency in matter of urban planning, led to an absence of the State responsibility on the local development. In terms of environmental aspects, the national agency responsible of the national park management turned to more protected regulations and adopted an ecological perspective to create the forthcoming national parks. These conflicts over the meaning/s of conservation in national parks that were first influenced by Pan-Americanist international meetings, and frequent changes of institutional dependency, lasts until nowadays.

Consequently, the erratic character of natural conservation, tourism and demography policies generated the survival of the logic of dependence in respect of a country that as such proved to be centralist. From a current perspective, economic studies carried out in Bariloche highlighted that during the early 1990s the interference of international capital seemed to have restored the presence of hegemonic powers, therefore, it can be expected that future historic investigations will contribute to understand if this tendency could intensify inner colonialism comparable to the analysed tourism models.

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- (1) Some of the main references to this theory may be found in the writings of Enrique Dusell, Ramón Grosfoguel and Anibal Quijano.
- (2) Two international documents with direct effects on the Argentinean national park management and regulation were the Convention on preservation of *fauna* and *flora* in the natural state (London, 1933) and the Convention on nature protection and wild life preservation in the western hemisphere (Washington, 1940).
- (3) Trough a military campaign to Patagonia known as the ‘Desert Conquest’ during 1878 and 1884.
- (4) This national park was a predecessor of the Nahuel Huapi National Park, created by the President’s decree.
- (5) Urban buildings in addition to gardens and houses in the tourist villages of the National Park had to meet the surface and quality standards, i.e. Traful village (DPN, Exp. 0479, 1935), Llao-Llao village

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- (DPN, Exp. 1045, 1936) and San Carlos de Bariloche Town Hall (Intendencia del PN NHuapi, Exp. 1145, 1943). Repository: Archivo Histórico de la Administración de Parques Nacionales (AHAPN) Buenos Aires.
- (6) Dirección de Parques Nacionales, *Parque Nacional de Nahuel Huapi. Su Historia*. [Nahuel Huapi National Park. Its history.] 3rd Edition (Buenos Aires, 1938). Repository: Archivo Histórico Regional (AHR) San Carlos de Bariloche; *Parque Nacional de Nahuel Huapi. Flora, fauna, geología y morfología, climatología*. [Nahuel Huapi National Park. Flora, fauna, geology and morphology, climatology.] 2nd Edition (Buenos Aires, 1938) AHR San Carlos de Bariloche; *Parque Nacional de Nahuel Huapi. Guía*. (Buenos Aires, 1938) AHR San Carlos de Bariloche; *Parque Nacional del Nahuel Huapi. Historia, tradiciones y etnología* [Nahuel Huapi National Park. History, traditions and ethnology.] (Buenos Aires, 1938) AHR San Carlos de Bariloche; A. Patroni, *Bellezas de los lagos argentinos-chilenos* [Beauties of the Argentine-Chilean lakes.] (Buenos Aires, 1938) Repository: Archivo Vallmitjana (AV) San Carlos de Bariloche; Lotito Hnos & Cía. (Buenos Aires, 1938) AHR San Carlos de Bariloche; A. Venzano, *La guía de turismo de la región de los lagos* [Tourism guide of the Lake Region.] (Buenos Aires, 1944) AV San Carlos de Bariloche; *Parque Nacional de Nahuel Huapi* (Buenos Aires, 1941) AHR San Carlos de Bariloche.
- (7) 'Debe realizarse la limpieza total del lote, dejando los árboles y arbustos más hermosos y reemplazar la vegetación herbácea natural por otra de pastos refinados' [Cleaning up of the [land] plot must be done leaving the most beautiful trees and bushes, and replacing the wild herbaceous vegetation with refined grass] (Dirección de Parques Nacionales, Exp. 1045 (Buenos Aires, 1936) AHAPN Buenos Aires.