

Chapter 4

The Patrimonialization and the Heritage Value of the Archaeological Record.

Tierra del Fuego as a Case Study

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“...deterioration or disappearance of any item of the cultural or natural heritage constitutes a harmful impoverishment of the heritage of all the nations of the world...” (Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, Paris 1972).

Abstract Heritage drives along a path that goes from nowadays toward the past, when somebody starts to recognize it and thus come back to the past looking for references that legitimize interests of the present. Then, heritage constitutes a speech, a narrative that joins values, interests, and ideologies as from concrete elements or goods gain sense. At present, an avoidable topic in those heritage activation processes is tourism. The explosive development of this activity hardly pushed and particularly based these kinds of processes from heritage. The increase in tourism promoted the interest for the voyages looking for the consumption of cultural goods. We present here four examples of archaeological/historical sites from Tierra del Fuego (Argentina), where tourism is one of the main industries. Scientific community, indigenous communities, Government actors, and tourism are presented as the best-involved social agents in heritage enhancements. From these cases, we analyze the limits and difficulties to go ahead with the heritage activation and its feasibility.

Keywords Heritage · Patrimonialization · Archaeological sites · Tourism · Tierra del fuego · Argentina

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53

4.1 Introduction

Preserving the cultural heritage of a society, rescuing it, valuing it, taking care of it, protecting it, transmitting it are all assertions that hardly allow discussion. The agreement is general and nobody would think of denying its importance. The sentence of the Unesco Convention heading this work puts it in clear and dramatic terms: the loss of a heritage item is a loss for all human kind. However, like many sentences that do not usually generate greater contradiction, it presents a process that is not so much transparent as it seems to be. The complexity and difficulties start when we define what heritage is and, consequently, which things are worth valuing and preserving, who provides the impetus to establish it, and which social forces are capable of sustaining and caring for this heritage.

We will start with some general reflections on heritage. In the most classical definitions, heritage is the set of tangible and intangible assets that we have inherited from past generations, which is linked to our identity as a people and that is part of our culture and our history. In this conceptualization, the notion of heritage is a key: heritage would come from the past and we receive it as a legacy from our ancestors. Nevertheless, for some decades now, it has been said that the identity, memory, and traditions of a people have a very strong component of “invention” or “construction” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2002; Anderson 2000). The same applies for heritage, inextricably linked to those. Effectively, it has been pointed out that the valorization and recognition of cultural heritages have been specific historical processes associated with the formation of nation-states during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Within this framework there were, among other things, the creation of museums and large public monuments or compilations of local folklore, with the purpose of consolidating forms and identification symbols for populations that, on one hand, should be amalgamated, and on the other, differentiated themselves from their neighbors (Anderson 2000; Prats 1997).

Those cultural items—tangible or intangible—that were the object of the rescue, preservation, and valorization were selected based on a certain conception of identity and also of certain interests of the groups that could assume the representation of that nation. A process that is never free of conflict and tension. In this selection, only some of the potential elements were enshrined as “heritage” (García Canclini 1999). In that sense, heritage does not follow a path that goes from the past to the present, but it begins at the moment this heritage is intended to be recognized and, from there, it goes to the past in search of that reference that legitimizes the interests of the present. The heritage is, then, a speech, a narrative that articulates values, interests, and ideologies and from which the concrete elements (historic site, old objects, customs, celebrations, etc.) acquire sense (Prats and Santana 2011).

The strong impetus for constituting these heritages was not exhausted in the period of formation of modern nation-states that we have mentioned so succinctly: it continued and reaches the present day. Currently, new values and new social cleavages have been added to the scenery and logic of the formation of nations. To give an example, in the last decades of the twentieth century, the valorization of all

those cultures, customs, and experiences, which capitalist and industrialized Western societies had displaced or subsumed, burst with great force. In some cases, they were incorporated into the background of the “national” heritage, in other cases they are part of the purpose of those who impel it to be recognized as autonomous political entities, or to obtain some kind of right or social recognition. Alternatively, they may eventually be considered as part of such a “transnational” heritage linked to the ecology, environmental care, and new forms of spirituality that are imposed in the world (Herrero Pérez 2011).

In short, heritage is “a set of sacralized symbols” (Prats and Santana 2011), which varies according to historical moments. To reiterate it once again “We are, therefore, facing a social construction and, as such, historically modifiable as a result of the criteria or interests that determine new goals in new circumstances” (Fernández de Paz 2006: 2, our translation).

Now add an essential element in the current patrimonialization processes: tourism. Indeed, a phenomenon of wide ranges as massive tourism development was to give impetus and a special bias to the patrimony formation processes, that is to say, the action of valuing, protecting, and enshrining certain cultural goods. The increasing development of tourism produced a diversification of its products and promoted the interest for new travel proposals aimed at the consumption of cultural goods. Likewise, a number of values associated with sustainability, respect for cultural diversity and ecology have stimulated the consumption of cultural attractions in tourists, whether—or at least proclaimed—authentic expressions of traditional ways of life or the cultural heritage of ethnicity. In this context, the concern of both tourism companies and public administration for developing attractions capable of bringing in more and more tourists was growing, a fact that resulted in an accelerated process of patrimonialization of cultural assets (Urry 2004; Prats and Santana 2011). This new wave is also associated with identity, but now it is no longer attached to political identity, linked to the construction of citizens, but to a “cultural” identity, that emphasizes the peculiar and specific features of each region.

As highlighted by Prats and Santana (2011), the heritage-identity-tourism polynomial has complex and varied manifestations, which are not exhausted in the brief exposition we have done. However, “there is no heritage project that it is not based, to a greater or lesser extent, its sustainability on tourism” (Prats 2011: 250, our translation). The overlay is deep. For many public administrations, whether national, provincial, or municipal, tourism represents a possibility through which they can achieve the economic and social development of their regions. The costs of maintaining and preserving certain heritage elements usually constitute an expense that administrations are unable to afford, so that the association with private agents linked to tourism appears as desirable or, directly, as the only condition of possibility for a heritage activation. This also means that the heritage linked to tourism must have some characteristics to develop it into a “cultural attraction” capable to summon tourists; a certain share of exoticism, aesthetic or spectacular aspects, recreational components, etc. Besides, they will require to be located in an environment of easy access, not away from lodgement and restoration places (Hernández Ramírez 2011). These last considerations are even more relevant when

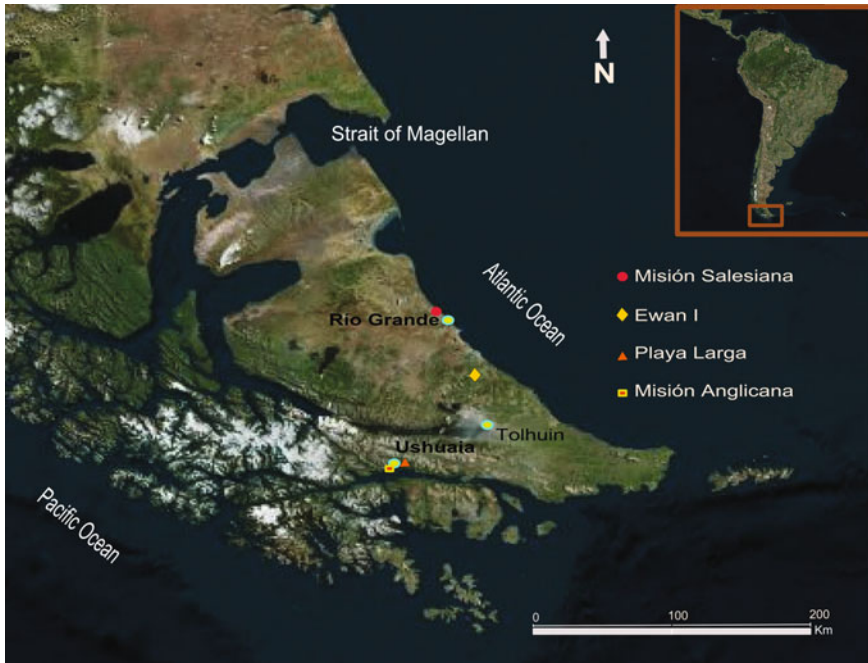


Fig. 4.1 Location map of Tierra del Fuego and the studied sites analyzed in this paper

nonstate sectors or organizations are those that promote a certain patrimonialization. We conclude that heritage activations whose object is not easily transformed into a “cultural attraction” is much less likely to materialize.

These initial comments are intended to locate the context and logic in which a heritage activation process can be thought of. That is the case of Tierra del Fuego (Argentina, Fig. 4.1), a province in which tourism is an important part of its economy. The boundaries and difficulties for certain heritage activation will arise from some examples.

4.2 The Enhancement of the Archaeological Heritage

The archaeological heritage, as part of the cultural heritage, has the particularity of being a non renewable resource like many of the natural resources. It consists of material goods, artistic performances, and spaces that a human society lived in the past, ranging from rock shelters or caves to buildings, monuments, sacred places, cemeteries, or garbage dumps that “tell” us about the use of the landscape of other times (Salemme 2015). It is part of a social heritage that the community itself does not always value properly, although it offers a unique piece of information both

about the region itself in which those goods are inserted and about alternatives for the future of humankind.

Archaeological sites are documents from the past, each of them are unique and unrepeatable, and they provide different quality of information obtained from scientific knowledge. Archaeological assets are part of a human behavior that no longer exists, which was—as it is today—very different and that, therefore, constantly articulates different responses to the challenges posed by the environment and interaction with other human groups (Salemme 2015). This behavior has generated different archaeological manifestations, which may be more or less attractive according to the interest put on them and the impact that “visually” they can cause.

The *value* given to the archaeological record does not belong to a specific element, but on one hand, the current community apprehends and recognizes in the “vestiges” of that past and, on the other hand, to that which is “attractive” in terms of spectacular nature or unique quality.

The challenge of archaeologists is to contribute, from the production of knowledge, to “find a way to involve the social sectors that give meaning to the past” (Gnecco 2007 in Mariano and Conforti 2013: 281). In this sense, it is not always easy for specialists to transmit the knowledge acquired from excavations and archaeological surveys when they should use a language accessible to non-experts on the subject. To value (or patrimonialise) the archaeological resource, to be offered to the public without losing sight of its non renewable resource, is a task that requires addressing situations and elements that do not condemn that effort to failure or the frustration of those who work for it (Prats 1997, 2011).

The actors of possible heritage activation and then some concrete examples in Tierra del Fuego are presented. It should be noted that the possible movers of heritage activation will be overlaying their actions and deploying strategies within an extended period of time. The case of the State is special because it can act as the first instigator in some situations but it is always the instance which other sectors are directed to. Presenting them separately obeys the purpose of clarifying the exposure but it does not account for the dynamics of the process.

Scientific community: This is the group that in the case that concerns us—the archaeological record—constitutes the first interested party in this heritage activation. It develops its work and professional activity linked to these assets capable to be patrimonialized and, therefore, it knows its value. However, the lack of specific training usually undermines the purpose of adequately communicating the information obtained; anyway, with an appropriate way of transmitting knowledge about archaeological assets, “collective identification processes can be generated, as well as the understanding and respect toward a greater plurality of values and meanings” (Mariano and Conforti 2013: 284, our translation).

In the case of Tierra del Fuego, the community of archaeologists has been a very effective engine for some actions such as the approval of protection laws and the dissemination of their activities, although it has not always been easy to transmit the community the value of the archaeological record.

Indigenous communities: They have been formed formally in relatively recent times; they identify themselves with Selk'nam and Yaghan ethnic groups, although there are some other groups that gather different indigenous people not native from Tierra del Fuego, but of other parts of Argentina and South America. The protection of the archaeological record becomes an objective of enormous significance for these communities as it would contribute to an ethnic identity narrative, which can go back thousands of years ago, while contributing to a greater visibility. Communities have initiated some actions to transmit and patrimonialise part of their cultural baggage, such as the recovery of the language, but they are not yet enough strong voices to influence patrimonialization processes of the archaeological record. It is, however, the most recent and innovative actor, whose voice can find echo in the new sensitiveness of this time.

The State: General laws and regulations for protection (local, provincial, and national scope) have been established; provincial museums preserve and exhibit a part of the archaeological record, but there are neither enough active protection programs nor resources applied to their care and dissemination. The reasons can be found in the fact that the social demand is still weak to commit more resources of the State for this purpose. A narrative of identity linked to the “pioneers” and to the act of occupation of these lands by the Argentine State is more sensitive to the protection of the heritage that emerged from colonization, such as Ushuaia prison buildings, Beban House (a prominent dwelling in the city of Ushuaia) and the locations of the two evangelizing missions that acted in Tierra del Fuego: the Salesian Mission and the Anglican Mission.

Tourism: It could be and it has been an engine of heritage activations linked to the indigenous past that characterizes Tierra del Fuego (Horlent and Salemme 2015). Much of the dissemination of ethnographic photography as well as the edition of some testimonial sources (books of memoirs, indigenous dictionaries, etc.) finds sustainability in the market for a mainly tourist public. However, the bias is very clear and the choice is very focused on a particular topic: it is about the most spectacular—or subject to spectacularization—manifestations such as the photo depicting selk'nam body paintings, which can be treated by their aesthetic values and transformed into products (postcards, souvenirs reproduced in ceramics, wood, metal, etc.).

In Tierra del Fuego, the tourism shows limits as an agent to press in face of the archaeological record that is not monumental or attractive itself. However, tourism is—and in that sense, it is similar to many other places in the world—the main force capable of promoting heritage activations, far superior to the scientific community or the aboriginal communities in its ability to convince the State and the rest of the society. The patrimonialization of any element usually seems immediately “useful” and justifiable if it is linked to tourism.

Is it possible to expect, then, a boost from tourism to heritage activation of the archaeological record in Tierra del Fuego? Is it so in all cases? What are the conditions to make it possible? A review by some sites will allow you to analyze more in detail the possible situations.

4.2.1 *Some Examples from Tierra del Fuego*

The archaeological resources in the whole Isla Grande of Tierra del Fuego are numerous, since groups of hunter-gatherers inhabited this territory for more than 10,000 years. This record, generally characterized by its low visibility, is very important given the absence of architectural or monumental structures until the arrival of Europeans at the end of the nineteenth century.

In pre-European times, pedestrian hunter-gatherers inhabited the northern zone of Tierra del Fuego (Borrero 1991; Salemme et al. 2007; Santiago 2013), while other hunter-gatherer groups adapted to coastal environments occupied the coasts of the Beagle Channel and the Magellan Straits (Orquera and Piana 1999; Orquera et al. 2012, Massone 2004; Morello et al. 2009 among many others). In historical times, two ethnic groups occupied the greater part of the Argentine sector of the Island, Yaganes (or Yámanas) (Gusinde 1982; Bridges 1978) and Selk'nam (Gusinde 1982; Gallardo 1910; Chapman 1986).

These people groups living in such a marginal environment aroused curiosity generated in ethnographers, missionaries, soldiers, and adventurers, who have passed through the island since the beginning of the nineteenth century. The presence of native people has resulted in numerous stories of those various types of contacts; they are extensive descriptions about social life, customs, economy, symbolism of these societies, plus a prominent photographic record to illustrate the life of two societies that underwent a rapid process of acculturation (Darwin 2001 [1845]; Gusinde 1982; De Agostini 1956; Gallardo 1910; Bridges 1978; Chapman 1986, among others).

A large diversity of sites was generated by these societies; we highlight, among others: (a) “concheros”¹ or shell middens, (b) a site representative of an initiation ceremony among the Selk'nam, (c) historical sites of coexistence between the evangelizing Anglican mission—in the south of the Isla Grande de Tierra del Fuego—and (d) the Salesian mission—in the north of this island (Fig. 4.1).

Valuing or activating the patrimonialization of this type of archaeological record is a great challenge for professionals and society as a whole. Some steps have been already taken: various legal instruments protect the heritage of the whole society since several laws are available. The first national law on “Ruins and Archaeological and Paleontological Sites of scientific interest” is No. 9080/1911, but a more recent one, No. 27743/2003, updated the regulations to international guidelines, preserving those cultural assets. Provinces and local states through the city counties have generated their own regulations and Tierra del Fuego has not been exempted from this, by enacting, in 1997, the Provincial Law #370, which

¹Archaeological sites consisting basically of malacological, faunal and lithic remains, abandoned by canoing groups that occupied the coasts of the Beagle Channel until historical times. Its ring shaped or domed morphology and its characteristic unctuous creamy black soil is remarkable in the coastal landscape. In the Atlantic coast, its morphological expression is less defined and tends to be less dense and compact.

protects archaeological assets and covers the activity of scientists studying them in this province. Another provincial law—No. 384/97—declares natural and cultural reserve to a particular area (Playa Larga, in the surroundings of Ushuaia), for its archaeological and landscape/scenic value.

Each of the four examples considered above presents—in terms of patrimonialization—a different condition, either because it is legally protected because it has been studied by the community of archaeologists, because there is a social “use” of them or because the local population recognizes it as a “value.” First, we present the most consolidated case.

The Salesian Mission “La Candelaria,” 10 km north of the city of Río Grande, founded in 1897 (Fig. 4.1), is represented by four buildings from the late nineteenth century and a cemetery where both several missionaries and natives are buried. The whole architectural complex (chapel, *casa de las Hermanas* [sisters house], and *casa de Monseñor Fagnano* [mission house], Fig. 4.2) is National Historic Monument (Decree PEN No. 2087/83). A museum that keeps ethnographic and archaeological collections, as well as historical and wildlife elements of the region has been organized in another modern building of the complex. The complex is rooted in the local population (Guerrero Gallardo 2012) since it has maintained continuity in its operation, currently as an educational institution. It is located beside the National Road 3 and is included in the tourist circuit in the surroundings of the city.

The Salesian Mission is a case in which heritage activation is well established. Tourism played no decisive role in it, although in recent years it has been working to establish this linkage. It was an activation related to the conformation of the city of Río Grande, that is to say, to the constitution of a local identity and the



Fig. 4.2 A general view of the Misión Salesiana La Candelaria. Photo by Noelia Locicero (<http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mision>)

recognition of its most emblematic institutions, inscribing it in a city foundation narrative. Within that activation, the archaeological heritage there occupies a subordinate place, since the emphasis is placed in the evangelizing work of the Salesian priests and in their role, later, as an educational center. The fact that it is a well-established place paves the way for proposals to expand this heritage including some indigenous settlement sites—evidence of mission-related camps as well as a diversification of the narratives that give it context.

The second case is of recent patrimonialization and is linked, as above, also to the local community. The *Reserva Cultural-Natural* (Natural-Cultural Protected Area) “Playa Larga” is a peri-urban area in the city of Ushuaia (Figs. 4.1 and 4.3), which is easily accessible from downtown and is protected by the provincial law 384/97. A number of archaeological sites—“concheros” or shell middens—along a marine terrace in the Beagle Channel are visible from a higher elevation (Fig. 4.3) and walking on it. They are ring shaped structures, several of them disturbed by the fossorial activity of rabbits but also by current human action. The legislation that protects this space is an excellent mechanism to activate the patrimonialization, considering that it may become an alternative tourist resource of easy access and without the need for additional infrastructure. However, at present, the local society uses the area as a recreational space, without giving the least care to the archaeological sites; unfortunately, there are no guards/caregivers who control the actions of users.



Fig. 4.3 Playa Larga. A view of shell middens along the Beagle Channel coast, nearby Ushuaia

The following case corresponds to an ongoing process of patrimonialization. It is the “Tushkapalan” Anglican Mission, located downtown Ushuaia (Figs. 4.1 and 4.4), which also has a heritage status (National Historical Place, National Executive Decree 64/99, article 8); it is settled on lands currently administrated by the Argentine Navy, where a small obelisk recalls the first 50 years of installation of this mission. Joint efforts between the *Museo del Fin del Mundo* (End of the World Museum, a provincial institution), the Navy itself, the Yámana Museum (a private museum), aboriginal communities, and various other actors promote the recovery of this space for tourist and educational use, revealing the origins of contact between Yaghan people and European society (Weissel et al. 2015). This process gained momentum from an archaeological project launched recently (year 2013) and still in progress. From the excavations, the mission design was identified and materials and artifacts were recovered from the time of that occupation. The visibility contributed to the discussion about the type of protection that should be received and the possibility of obtaining resources for its valuation. In this activation, the indigenous communities, the scientific community, the national State represented by the Navy, the Provincial State through its Museum, and the local government, each with their interests, particular this last one directly concerned, since the mission would constitute the actual origin of the city, come together. On the other hand, tourism also has a relevant role: all the above-mentioned actors consider that it may be added to the attractions that the city offers visitors since the site is located in the urban area and is easily accessible. In fact, the obelisk that is currently the most visible indicator of this space is a landmark for both locals and tourists (Borla and Vereda 2011).



Fig. 4.4 A view of archaeological excavations (2014) at the Anglican Mission Tushkapalan, downtown Ushuaia. Photo by Enlace CADIC

The last case, located in the central sector of the Island, refers to Ewan I (Fig. 4.1) site located in the forest-steppe ecotone. It has been recently studied from the archaeological record and it is the evidence of a *Hain*, the initiation ceremony of the young men among the Selk'nam (Mansur and Piqué Huerta 2012). This ceremony was the axis of the social structure of this ethnic group and was carried out when several young people in age to begin the adult life had to pass through a series of physical and psychological tests. The *Hain* used to extend for several months and was developed in a natural clear forest where a hut of pyramidal structure was constructed, with a preset pattern (Fig. 4.5), whereas the domestic units were located about 200 m away, in the forest (Gusinde 1982; Chapman 1986). There are numerous photographs and descriptions of the characters, objects and situations involved/occurred in these ceremonies (Gusinde 1982; Chapman 1986), which have circulated from the aesthetic to the scientific, making visible the symbolic world Selk'nam. However, the discovery of a ceremonial hut (Fig. 4.5) and related domestic units allowed discussing the study of materials from an ethnoarchaeological perspective (Mansur and Piqué Huerta 2012). A spectacular find from a visual point of view, which is also unique so far in the light of the archaeological record in Tierra del Fuego.

This site does not have legal protection yet, it is far from the urban centers and several kilometers west of the National Road No. 3, in a private property and it is necessary to request permission to enter.



Fig. 4.5 The ceremonial hut for the *Hain*. Photo by Estela Mansur (CADIC); see Mansur and Piqué Huerta (2012)

It is the most difficult case in terms of valuation; even if a legal protection could be obtained quickly, it is hardly likely that the most interested actors—the scientific community and the Selk'nam community—can allocate funds for more active protection. The difficult access characteristics, the distance from urban places, the lack of nearby infrastructure work against its transformation into a tourist attraction and deprives the demand for patrimonialization.

4.3 The Patrimonialization of the Archaeological Record: More Expectations than Positive Answers

In the light of what we have developed, it is clear that valuing the archaeological heritage is neither a simple process nor much less direct. Accessibility, visibility and the lack of interest on the part of the local population may be among the main obstacles to overcome. The various social actors capable of promoting and channeling the patrimonialization of the archaeological record may have divergent interests and criteria and need, in any case, to build a link with society as a whole in which they can demonstrate that this heritage strengthens its attachment to the territory and has, even potentially, the possibility of establishing an economic resource.

Tourism, indigenous communities and the scientific community emerge, although with uneven force, as the main engines able to articulate the efforts with the final actor that will be the State. Out of all of them, tourism is the one which undoubtedly has more capacity to impose its logic. If tourism becomes a patrimonialization engine, this activity being so important currently in Tierra del Fuego, will contribute to activate various currently neglected assets. The final definition of this activation will be left to the State. Because it is a non renewable resource, the archaeological heritage needs legal protection regardless of the intervention that is thought about it. However, interpretive information that can be provided (posters, leaflets, photographs) and offered will define the main criteria that would support the patrimonialization of the selected asset. What will prevail here? Will it be the tourism with its logic based on the production of “attractions” only? It is a certain heritage resource condemned if it fails as a generator of economic resources through tourism? Can other players enter their own “narratives,” their own activation criteria?

How will the actors play their parts? Strategic partnerships have their advantages and risks: all players have an ambivalent relationship with tourism. We expect from it to provide the force capable of patrimonializing a specific asset, but we are afraid of the bias that this patrimonialization can give to that asset.

The scenario is open: on one hand the circumstances, and on the other hand the strategies that can deploy the various sectors will be added to the force each of them has. The result will be, as it usually happens in social life, something different from what each one intends and imagines at the beginning of the game.

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