



Memories of Search and Reconnection with Indigenous Identity. Dialogues Between Autobiographies and Local History

*Memorias de búsqueda y reconexión con la identidad indígena.
Diálogos entre autobiografías e historia local*

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Abstract

In this paper, we analyze scenes recovered from the autobiographical memories of five indigenous women belonging to the Mapuche people who currently reside in the district of Olavarría (Buenos Aires, Argentina). This cutout accounts for those moments in which the actors have expressed “becoming aware” of their indigenous belonging, and it intends to show the meanings that this process of identification and remembrance entails in the present and at the local level. Articulating the anthropological and historical analysis, we inscribe these narratives in the broader scenarios in which they are inserted, emphasizing the dialogue of these local indigenous memories with the Olavarriense hegemonic imaginary that, even in the present, exalts their European migrant and mining character, while reproducing negationist and racist discourses.

Keywords: indigenous women, memory, identity, history, imaginaries.

Resumen

En este trabajo analizamos escenas recuperadas de las memorias autobiográficas de cinco mujeres indígenas pertenecientes al pueblo mapuche que en la actualidad residen en el partido de Olavarría (Buenos Aires, Argentina). El recorte considerado da cuenta de aquellos momentos en que las actoras han expresado “tomar conciencia” sobre su pertenencia indígena y pretende visibilizar las significaciones que este proceso de identificación y rememoración conllevan en el presente y en el ámbito local. Articulando el análisis antropológico e histórico inscribimos estas narraciones en los escenarios más amplios en los que se insertan, enfatizando en el diálogo de estas memorias indígenas locales con el imaginario hegemónico olavarriense que, aún en el presente, exalta su carácter migrante europeo y minero, a la vez que reproduce discursos negacionistas y racistas.

Palabras clave: mujeres indígenas, memoria, identidad, historia, imaginarios.

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Introduction

Identities and memories are deeply imbricated in our social relations and our histories (Gillis, 1994, p. 5). Learning of the past and remembrance from a point of view anchored in the present speaks of the endurance over time of a diversity of symbolic expressions that are not unrelated to the struggles to construct, impose, and communicate meanings (Trouillot, 1995; Jelin, 2017, 2002).

These debates take on even greater relevance if we analyze them from a territorial perspective, considering the specificity of the Argentinian case. Our country is marked by historical events as cruel as painful, such as those experienced in the successive coups d'état, which have been embodied and made visible by the sustained struggle of human rights organizations and citizens in general. If we critically analyze the process of conformation of our national State, the genocide committed against indigenous peoples, and the systematic nature of these practices of physical and symbolic extermination become evident (Lenton et al., 2015; Lenton and Nagy, 2019). All this allows us to affirm that the practices of cruelty (Segato, 2018) are transversal in the constitution of what we know today as Argentina, and it has been documented as such in historical sources, analyzed in academic research, and made visible from the memories and life trajectories of new generations in the present.

In this context, it should be noted that, in recent decades, there has been great progress in terms of public policies and historical reparation, in pointing out these acts as human rights violations, and judging them as crimes against humanity. Regarding the situation of native peoples, the Trial for Truth carried out in relation to the Napalpí Massacre¹ stands out, whose sentence declared the events that took place there as “crimes against humanity, committed in the framework of a process of genocide of the indigenous peoples” (FRE 9846/2019; see also Lenton, 2022; Nagy, 2022).

1 “The trial for the truth allowed for an unprecedented state recognition of the genocidal policies implemented with the native communities, a situation that marks a before and after in the relationship between peoples and state. The voices, silenced and unheard, regarding the fact that members of the Qom and Moquito communities had suffered a massacre in 1924 emerged with vigor and shattered the civilizing narratives and the denialism that had crystallized for decades. In this sense, the idea of justice, which for survivors and descendants was a chimera, was substantiated and put an end to the contempt and oblivion that crossed several generations. The verdict, then, becomes a milestone for the State and Argentine history as well as for the communities themselves” (Nagy, 2022, p. 37).

However, despite the fact that we are commemorating forty years of democracy, there has been, recently, a re-emergence of negationist discourses aimed at discrediting, trivializing, and questioning the acts of physical and symbolic violence committed during the military dictatorships (Morales, 2022). Even more serious are these types of discursive constructions if we consider the situation of the indigenous peoples that inhabit the Argentinian territory, since the hegemonic narrative has systematically tended to deny their presence, questioning the “authenticity” of their ethnic condition, criminalizing their demands, in order to justify the repressive actions of security forces, issues that have been widely visible in the way that the media approached the cases of Santiago Maldonado and Rafael Nahuel (see Author 1 et al, 2023; Pereyra et al, 2021).

With this brief characterization of the problematic of study, we intend to contextualize the scenario in which the configuration of memories and identities of historically subaltern and altered groups such as indigenous peoples are currently inserted, which put in tension the official discourses and represent other ways of visualizing and configuring history as anchored in the present. The situation of the women of these groups is even more critical, if we analyze their experiences from a gender and intersectional perspective (Viveros Vigoya, 2022; Lamas, 2013; Scott, 2013).

With all this in mind, in this paper, we present the unpublished results of a doctoral research in anthropology in which a situated analysis has been carried out on the processes of identity configuration, memory activation and construction, and valuation of intangible cultural heritage², based on the anthropological analysis of autobiographical narratives of Mapuche women currently residing in the district of Olavarría, province of Buenos Aires (Author 1, 2023). Olavarría is a territory characterized by a productive economic profile (industrial, agricultural, mining) and, although it has an urban population of diverse ethnic origins, it highlights the contribution of European migration in its identity constitution.

In this article, we propose to analyze the articulations between the life trajectories of local indigenous women, and the historical, political, economic, and sociocultural context in which they are inserted, as will be soon seen. In this

2 Although the actors do not explicitly refer to the term “heritage”, from the analytical point of view, we affirm that the autobiographical stories of the indigenous women under consideration constitute, in themselves, a mode of transmission of their culture and history. From our point of view, it is evident that some cultural expressions are perceived as valuable in the present and are re-signified in their very evocation, adopting new meanings in the framework of the scenarios in which they emerge (Lencina, 2023a; see also CITAS).

framework, we hypothesize that, given the scenario in which the experiences of local women actors are situated, they are traversed by practices of silencing and denialism, strategies that represent a reaffirmation (material and symbolic) of the indigenous genocide (Delrío et al., 2018; Nagy, 2018). To account for this, we take up the voices of five indigenous (Mapuche) women, four of whom share kinship ties.

Methodological Considerations

The doctoral research was carried out from a qualitative approach, in particular, from an anthropological perspective (Ingold, 2015:219), which implies: active listening, in order to understand and record the voices of others; adopting a holistic view, inscribing particular scenarios in broader plots intersected by multiple dimensions and power relations (Viveros Vigoya, 2022); making methodological decisions explicit, as it is a flexible and reflexive process of inquiry (Guber, 2011; Castañeda Salgado, 2012); denaturalizing and putting in tension the everyday (Lins Ribeiro, 1989; Rockwell, 2009).

In relation to the research techniques in use, from 2017 to 2022, open and semi-structured interviews were conducted with indigenous women living in the city of Olavarría, in order to record their life trajectories. At the same time, in these interview spaces, the technique of autobiographical stories, or life stories in the context of dialogue, was implemented, enabling the reconstruction of the stages of the life cycle in different ways (Lagnes and Frank, 1981; Linde, 1993; Saltalamacchia, 1992). In this non-linear reconstruction of their own biographies, the actors were marking points of tension with “the past” (as a narrative construction), giving account of instances of re-signification and critical revision of practices, discourses, representations, among other aspects. In ethical and methodological terms, we work with free, previous, and informed consents (written or recorded), with the aim of making explicit the agreement between the parties as to what the meeting will be about, how the information collected will be used, and to anonymize all sensitive and/or personal information. For all these reasons, we have therefore decided to omit specific data in order to preserve their identities and use fictitious first names. In their enunciation they will be called: Nilda (91 years old), Marcela (63 years old), Diana (52 years old), Graciela (37 years old), and Valeria (29 years old) (see Table).

Table. Interviews and meetings held during the 2017-2022 period

Nombre	Edad	Género	Pertenencia étnica	Lugar de residencia	Profesión/Ocupación	Fecha	Vínculos
Nilda	91	Femenino	Indígena (auto-adscripción)	Loma Negra	Jubilada	2017	Madre de Marcela. Abuela de Valeria y Graciela. Suegra de José.
Marcela	63	Femenino	Indígena (auto-adscripción)	Olavarría	Jubilada	2017 y 2021	Hija de Nilda. Madre de Valeria. Tía de Graciela. Casada con José.
Valeria	29	Femenino	Indígena (ascendencia)	Olavarría	Comunicadora social	2017 y 2021	Nieta de Nilda. Hija de Marcela y José. Prima de Graciela.
Graciela	37	Femenino	Indígena (ascendencia)	Loma Negra	Ayudante terapeuta	2021	Nieta de Nilda. Sobrina de Marcela y José. Prima de Valeria.
Diana	52	Femenino	Indígena (auto-adscripción)	Olavarría	Docente y funcionaria pública	2017, 2018, 2021 y 2022	Conoce a las demás por su militancia en una comunidad indígena local

On the other hand, we analyze documentary sources, with the aim of demonstrating and reconstructing general aspects that account for the value of sources as testimony of specific times and contexts, being of utmost importance in the development of social research processes. In addition, we are interested in placing this analysis within the framework of a middle-range city in which social ties can “hinder” and/or “facilitate” access to such sources from both public and private spheres (see Iturralde et al., 2023).

Identity, Memory and Social History

The work of Maurice Halbwachs (2004) [1925] was one of the first to point to memory as a social and interpretative framework produced around people’s memories, which, in turn, are constructed from socialization in different groups of belonging and sources of identification. This author proposed the notion of collective memory to highlight the interactions between individual and social memory. Halbwachs (1950) points out that the ways in which we narrate and reconstruct our own biography is highly dynamic and related to how we have traversed our trajectories, with whom we have interacted, and from which sources we have recovered elements to nourish our memories. In this line, Paul Connerton (1989) conceives memory as the experience and construction of being in the present in

relation to our past. The author points out that memory is transmitted through certain ritualized social practices that are naturalized and part of everyday life. In this way, memory combines those inherited social frameworks with the interpretations made in the present. As Ana Ramos (2011, p. 134) expresses, “the art of memory is, ultimately, that of creatively re-transmitting cultural representations about the experiences inherited from past generations”.

In general terms, the concept of collective memory can refer both to the affirmation of the social character of individual memory and to the existence of shared memories. Halbwachs did not make a more precise analytical distinction, so this notion oscillates between the two interpretations. Research by Elizabeth Jelin (2002) and Marie-Claire Lavabre (2005) point out that this conceptual imprecision opens up the possibility of thinking of collective memory as a reified entity external to individuals. Following these authors, we find it more fruitful to understand memory as a product of social interactions framed in scenarios marked by cultural contexts and power relations.

If we conceive the practice of memory as the re-signification of the past in the present, the intersubjective, emotional, and conjunctural aspects become key elements to favor both remembering and forgetting. In this scenario, Jelin affirms that “the survival, sometimes for decades, of memories silenced in the public world but preserved and transmitted in the private sphere, kept in personal intimacy, ‘forgotten’ in an ‘elusive’ oblivion, provokes great public surprise” (Jelin, 2002, p. 63). For the author, these conjunctures of openings do not imply a binary opposition between an official or dominant narrative and a subaltern or minority narrative. Rather, they are moments where confrontations occur between a diversity of people and/or groups that are structuring narratives of the past, and, in this process, express their visions of the present and political projects for the future (Jelin, 2017).

Numerous studies have analyzed how the construction of a common past that remains and continues over time affects the creation of a sense of belonging and community ties (Alonso, 1988; Briones, 1998; Brow, 2000; Gordillo, 2006; Rappaport, 2000). In this context, the shaping of one’s own identity is established in this continuous recreation of the past, in which some events are commemorated and exalted, while others are overshadowed and silenced (Fentress and Wickham, 1992; Trouillot, 1995). In this process, selections and interpretations of the past and its construction as a narrative are conditioned by the position people occupy within the social structure (Friedman, 1992), the socio-political and economic con-

text of the present, but, also, by inherited schemes of meaning (Ganguly, 1992), and by lived experiences and social relations (Landsman and Ciborski, 1992). These works aim to understand memory as a “strategy in the construction and legitimization of identities” by foregrounding “its political dimension as a performative social practice” (Ramos et al., 2016, p. 26).

These discussions assume other complexities when addressing the processes of remembrance of indigenous peoples. Following Ramos (2017), we state that indigenous memories have been configured and transmitted in contexts of conflict, violence, marginality, and social disarticulation. Official history has created a narrative about interethnic relations in relation to the organization and consolidation of the Argentinian Nation-State, erasing and re-signifying past events, confirming and reproducing dominant epistemologies (Trouillot, 1995; Dwyer, 2009).

These memories are the product of processes of subalternation and otherization, so that, for many communities, groups, and individuals, the re-construction of these truncated links becomes a political-affective work of memory restoration (Ramos, 2017, 2009; Stella, 2020; Crespo, 2020). Valentina Stella (2020) points out the relevance of familiarization processes in the reconstruction of genealogical memories among Mapuche-Tehuelche groups: “reconstructed from their own epistemologies, these genealogical memories were the raw material with which the places of attachment were created that allowed them, among other things, to begin to think of themselves as urban lof” (Stella, 2020, p. 133). In the same line, Ramos (2009) addresses the memory on the lineage trajectories of people of the Mapuche-Tehuelche people: “the historical consciousness of belonging to a people, a fundamental weapon to face their situation of social subordination, is reconstructed from the folds of the lineage where indigenous resistance is the inherited experience of the struggles of ‘the ancients’”. Crespo (2020, p. 79) conceives the processes of restitution of human remains and material objects “as part of a process of suturing trajectories, wounds, genealogies, conceptions, territories, and autonomy as a people”.

In short, official history has created a narrative on interethnic relations, erasing and re-signifying the events of the past, confirming and reproducing the dominant epistemologies. By discussing different research, we are interested in emphasizing the political character of the process of restoring memories, the articulation with the affective-emotional dimension, as well as the importance of relational and collective involvement in this work, aiming to “reconstruct a historical narrative that proposes its truths and challenges the unthinkable”

(Ramos, 2009, p. 32). From this perspective, we take up Jane Carsten's (2000) notion of relationality to allude to how people refer to their significant social ties, and to understand what motivates the configuration of these networks. The relationality perspective places value on the meaning of native categories, and it leads us to ask: "what is it that makes people think of themselves as connected or disconnected from their own cultures-natures [...] or what socio-culturally constructed ties have a particular weight -social, political, material and affective- in this experience of 'being related'?" (Briones and Ramos, 2016, p. 43). In this sense, the processes of familiarization (Ramos, 2009) in relation to indigenous identities and memories allow us to understand the social construction of bonds of belonging intertwined in turn with networks and collective circles product of broader historical, sociocultural, political, economic, and other processes.

From this perspective, we approach the recorded autobiographical narratives, observing the points of continuity, tension, and/or contradiction with the official/hegemonic meanings that cross their life trajectories. At the same time, we intend to analyze the reconstructed scenes in a situated manner, understanding them as a way of making explicit the description of key moments or events recorded in the autobiographical memories, which are intertwined with networks and are intertwined with networks and collective circles resulting from broader historical, socio-cultural, political, economic, and other processes that are linked to the local, regional, and national levels.

The Local Scenario

The district of Olavarría is located in the geographic center of the province of Buenos Aires, Argentina (Figure 1). It has an area of 7,715 square kilometers, and a population of 125,751 inhabitants (INDEC, 2022), distributed between the main city, and different towns and rural areas.³

3 Sierra Chica, Colonia Hinojo, Hinojo, Sierras Bayas, Colonia San Miguel, Colonia Nieves, Cerro Sotuyo, La Providencia, Loma Negra, Espigas, Recalde, Santa Luisa, Durañona, Pourtalé, Rocha, Mapis, Muñoz, Iturregui and Blanca Grande.



Source: Municipality of Olavarría.

Figure 1. Location of Olavarría

Since its beginnings in mining activities, and as part of the industrialization process that the Olavarría district underwent, in the national context, an image that identified it as “the cement city” was created (Gravano, 2005). This is framed within the emergence and consolidation of the cement industry on a national scale, at the beginning of the 20th century, an aspect that, locally, resulted in the creation of three main companies: Compañía Argentina de Cemento Portland en Sierras Bayas (1917) -an investment by English businessmen- which began its production in 1919, when it had its first dispatch; the Loma Negra SA company (1926), owned by the Argentinian businessman Alfredo Fortabat; and, finally, the Calera Avellaneda company (1932) -of German capital-, another important factory that, alongside the previous two, contributed to turn the city of Olavarría into the main cement producer of the country (Belini, 2009).

With the installation of these companies, the incorporation of workers became increasingly necessary due to the growth in demand for cement production, in a particular historical context with a labor market that was not yet consolidated. This generated an increase in the local population, and, with it, the construction of neighborhoods and housing for the workers and their families, which included various services such as clubs, schools, churches, supply stores, and movie theaters, among others, for these communities (Sierra Álvarez, 1990). In these cement

companies, a model called “Factory System with Workers’ Village” was formed, which operated during the 1940-1970 period, where the social and production sphere -and labor reproduction- were closely linked and were governed by paternalistic labor and community relations (Neiburg, 1988).

In this sense, the mining and industrial activity in Olavarría generated a brand of identity for its inhabitants, around which a series of social and festive events were also propitiated. Such is the case of the National Cement Festival, held in the study area for the first time in 1973, with the aim of showing the relevance of cement as an industrial and identity expression. Although it was of particular relevance in the city, it had a strong impact at regional and national level. From a historical analysis and interpretation, we recovered sources such as the Special Supplement of the Tribuna Newspaper to reconstruct these deep senses of identity belonging around the Olavarriense territory, in order to identify the way in which meanings are represented and constructed in relation to the local imaginary. It is in this particular source where it can be seen how different historical moments are narrated, and, at the same time, natural resources are valued. As mentioned therein, before giving rise to the settlement of these large industries, they were used, first, by the “primitive indigenous settlers”, considering among them the use of the mountains as a “refuge for tribes” and the carving of stone for the manufacture of tools, and, second, by immigrants with the work of artisanal stonecutters (Diario Tribuna, February 2, 1974, 2; see also Giacomasso et al., 2020).

It is through the corpus of notes that make up this Supplement, that questions arise to reflect on some elements that allow to put in tension the hegemonic meanings around the indigenous presence in the study area. In one section, for example, we summarize the history of Olavarría linked to the cement industry and its boom at provincial, national, and international level, making reference to the natural resources of the area and the characteristics of productivity. In particular, we are interested in the description of the first attempts to develop the production of Portland Cement in Argentina, dating back to 1872, where the availability of the stone resource is referred to, as it was used by its first settlers, the indigenous peoples:

From its lagoons on whose shores thousands of years ago the primitive indigenous settlers carved their weapons and tools in quartzite stones, its plains where one hundred and fifty years ago rheas and herds of deer and guanacos used to run around, to its mountain ranges, refuge of Auca tribes and nowadays generators of the magnificent economic present (Diario Tribuna, February 2, 1974, p. 1).

Within this framework, through some fragments of this Supplement, we can visualize the ethnocentric character used to refer to indigenous peoples (Briónes, 1998). This contributes to the construction of an otherness thought in evolutionist terms about society and culture (Slavsky, 1992). At the national level, these affirmations are linked to historical-structural conditions within which the life trajectories of indigenous collectives are framed. By this, we refer to the processes of subalternation and otherization which have occurred in an interconnected and articulated manner. We situate the first of these in the framework of the conformation of the Argentinian nation-state (19th century), in which numerous military campaigns were carried out against indigenous peoples in order to destructure, subjugate, and dispossess them of their territories (Ramos, 2017). The process of subalternation of these peoples was also expressed in the construction of differential criteria and “legitimate” conditions for their inclusion as members of national citizenship, enhancing the concealment, marginalization, and denial of indigenous belonging (Alonso, 1994). Simultaneously, within the framework of the otherization process, a series of representations, prejudices, and stereotypes were constructed to demarcate the “degrees of authenticity” of the original populations; that is, to determine the “permitted” ways of being indigenous at this historical moment (Hale, 2004). Between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these groups were observed from an evolutionary scale that placed them in a stage close to “savagery”, as opposed to “civilization”, expressed in the ideal of Argentinian citizenship, which was positively valued for its supposedly Western, white, and European matrix. During this period, indigenous peoples were characterized as “lazy”, “ignorant”, “drunks”, “promiscuous”, among many other labels. At the same time, these populations were observed for their “exotic” character, their value as “objects” for museums, or for “rescue”, because they were groups on the verge of extinction, according to evolutionist perspectives.

Returning to the recovered fragment, the native populations are constructed in this story as “primitive”, in contrast to “civilized white society”, justifying, in some way, the need to “educate” them for their incorporation into the nation (Barabás, 2000). All this allowed the configuration of a historical narrative that exacerbated the figure of heroes such as Colonel Álvaro Barros, founder of Olavarría (1867).

However, despite the negative meanings expressed therein, these fragments allow us to recognize the historical continuity of indigenous populations in the local territory and their capacity for political agency in the framework of border diplomacy prior to the consolidation of the Argentinian State (de Jong, 2016):

The population of the province of Buenos Aires barely reached the Salado River with its scarce 10,000 inhabitants, including the city of Buenos Aires. It was at that time, in 1741, that Cristóbal Cabral expeditioned to the lands of the present party of Olavarría where the Indians had their dens and where they had never reached because of the distance and the peace treaties signed with the Serrano Indians (Diario Tribuna, February 2, 1974, p. 2).

On the other hand, it seems important to emphasize how the contributions of different ethnic groups are characterized in the construction of local identity, that is, the immigrant population and the indigenous population. In relation to immigrants, throughout the source it is possible to recognize how emphasis is placed on the boom of European immigration (especially from Italy) associated with stonework, artisanal at first (in the town of Sierra Chica), and then pre-industrial, with the lime kilns (in Sierras Bayas) (Paz, 2019, 2022). Likewise, the immigrant labor force in the construction of Olavarría is highlighted, obscuring not only the presence, but also the contribution of the indigenous population in this process. This undoubtedly reinforced a positive image of the industry and of this model of economic development, associating its growth to a natural resource (stone) which, hand in hand with human labor, was the foundation that turned Olavarría into a reference party in the province of Buenos Aires and in the country (see Figure 2).



Source: Tribuna Newspaper.

Figure 2. Cover of the Special Supplement of Tribuna Newspaper

In short, from the analysis of a particular source, such as the *Tribuna* newspaper, it can be observed how some symbols are rescued and put in value to reinforce the local identity directly associated with the mining economic activity and with the contribution of European immigrant labor. All this appears as part of a narrative that mainly highlights the natural resource potential of stone, and the role of some social actors in the configuration of the Olavarría district. Once again, the power of the historical narrative to construct, reinforce, and reproduce a hegemonic imaginary that contributes to the construction of Olavarría as a “white” territory, placing the indigenous peoples in that deeper past in which they worked stone for the production of weapons and tools, contributing to deny their historical continuity in the local sphere.

It should be noted that, in the reconstruction of this recent past, autobiographical accounts are fundamental, given the great historiographical vacuum during the twentieth century as a result of the strategies of erasure, silencing, and denial of these populations (Trouillot, 1995) that have decontextualized and discredited the processes of identification, organization, and political participation of the indigenous collective in Olavarría. This has translated into the study area and the region as an area of vacancy for the 1880-1980 period, approximately. In the postdoctoral research in progress, we aim to reconstruct this chronology, because it would allow, on the one hand, to understand how was the process of incorporation of the native populations to the study area after the dissolution of the border, what articulations can be established with the migratory flows, how was their labor and territorial insertion, etc., and, on the other hand, to begin to weave relationships that allow us to make the origins of the 2,376 people who claimed to be indigenous in the last census visible (INDEC, 2024).

Back to the Roots

For the reasons explained in the methodological section, we decided to structure the presentations of these narratives on the basis of the kinship and community ties they share with each other. From an analytical point of view, a central element to understand what it means to become an indigenous woman in the local everyday life is the moment in which the interlocutors perceive this “return to the roots” in their life trajectory.

A common aspect that we should point out regarding all the cases is that the actors “always knew” about their identity, i.e., they had knowledge from an early age about this cultural legacy. However, it is from different emergences that these

experiences are re-read and re-signified, often involving contradictory emotions, as well as the implementation of various modes of action (Ramos et al., 2016). In addition, it is necessary to anticipate that all the actors are migrants, and that, in most cases, the place of origin is located in the Argentinian Patagonia.

In this section, we aim to explain how and when the indigenous women considered themselves connected to their native roots, referring to this instance as “becoming aware” of their ethnic belonging, appealing to the particular contexts in which this visibilization occurs, and to the elements that could be operating in this emergence.

The following is a brief contextualization of each, followed by the reconstruction of these moments of reconnection these moments of recovering the voices of its protagonists.

Nilda

Nilda (92 years old) recognizes herself as “Araucanian” and is a speaker of the language. She began her narration alluding to her childhood, recovering (from her child’s point of view) her experiences in a rural environment within the mountain range, close to the Limay River area.⁴ An issue to which she repeatedly referred during her childhood is the constant mobility of her family, which allows us to characterize migration as a survival strategy. In the period of youth-adulthood, she talked a lot about the situation of raising her sons and daughters in a rural environment, in symbolic (the prohibition of the native language, ceremonies) and material terms (housing, work, access to formal education). Coming closer to the present and residing at the time of the interview in the town of Loma Negra (Olavarría district), she recalled, with great nostalgia, her hometown, and expressed the desire to return to “her land”.

Throughout her life story, she naturalizes her ethnic identity, and it is in the face of disruptive events that it ceases to be conceived as part of an everyday performance and becomes visible and instrumentalized. In particular, during the period of her adulthood (the 1960s, approximately), she points out, as problematic, the schooling process of her sons and daughters, since, during the first years of their childhood, they faced situations of violence and discrimination due to the

4 The place of origin is described in this way. She does not state a clear location at the beginning, given the constant migrations she and her family experienced. At other points in her account, she refers to other specific towns.

fact that they spoke their native language at school. These practices could be understood as vestiges of the indigenism of incorporation (Barabás, 2000) and, in the Argentinian case, of republican indigenism (Slavsky, 1992). In both cases, the main strategies were aimed at: the eradication of native cultures and languages, the denial of their existence as an ethnic group, and the consolidation of a national identity based on the stereotype of “melting pot” (Quijada, 2003, 2004). In this scenario, the school was configured as a central device to stigmatize and “erase” the indigenous (Trouillot, 1995), at the same time that it was constituted as a tool to “civilize barbarism”, according to Sarmiento, one of the promoters of education in our country (see Sarmiento, 1845).

In this context, the plaintiff reaffirms her ascription as “Araucanian”⁵, claiming her language as a way of enunciating and shaping the world, adopting a critical stance against its prohibition. In her words:

I always spoke Spanish... Our language was forbidden when the children went to school... that is why none of them could speak it. When they went to school, they were told that they could not speak Araucanian. And if they didn't listen, they brought the police to talk to the parents, so they wouldn't let them speak anymore. And, so, they never learned again, if it is more difficult. My cousins, my father, my mother spoke Araucanian, many spoke Araucanian... if they lived among the indigenous people... The language was forbidden so that it would no longer be spoken like that, so that it would be spoken in Castilian... so that the language would end... that's why it was forbidden. I think it is wrong because if the English speak, the Turks speak, all with their own language, why not us? There are many people who know how to speak, but they don't want to speak for nothing... The big people know how to speak, but the kids, none (Personal communication. 22/8/2017).

This affirmation is not only nourished by family elements, but also by community elements, given that, in order to argue her position, she compares the situation of the original peoples with other ethnic groups that remained freely practicing their language and embracing their identity, even in Argentinian territory. Following this train of thought, the elements reconstructed in her discourse respond to the configuration of the interethnic border, which is a constitutive aspect in the conformation of identities. In any case, we perceive, in her words, feelings of contradiction when she mentions that her relatives had lived among the “indigenous people” after having referenced themselves as part of these groups.

5 We recovered the term “Araucana” as a native category, since the plaintiff defines herself as such.

From our point of view, we consider it relevant to understand these enunciations in the framework of the processes of subalternation and otherization of the indigenous people that we enunciated in previous sections. The effects of these processes in the construction of subjectivities of the native populations materialized in their transits through educational, healthcare, and bureaucratic institutions, labor and commercial environments, and in countless everyday situations that indigenous people have experienced (and still experience) throughout their lives. These experiences are crossed by traumatic emotions and are configured as “painful memories” (Crespo, 2018), marked by explicit and implicit violence. In this regard, we recover the notion of “critical event” proposed by Veena Das to name those events of violence that “institute a new modality of historical action that was not inscribed in the inventory of that situation” (1995, pp. 5-6). These experiences have begun to become visible towards the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the present century, in the framework of the process of memory restoration (Ramos, 2017).

In relation to the last point, it should be noted that, in their discourse, the “Araucana” category emerges as a way of vindicating their origins and reaffirming their identity, even though they recognize that it is a term that has been impregnated with negative meanings. The official history has strongly installed the imaginary construction of the Mapuche people as “foreigners”, placing their origin in Chile, and denying their existence in Argentina. Thus, the arrival of these groups from Chilean territory between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries has been called the “process of Araucanization of the pampas”, a story that continues to feed these representations and has been put in tension in numerous works (Mandrini and Ortelli 1995; Valverde 2015). In short, although everything indicates that Nilda belongs to the Mapuche people, we believe it is important to respect and make visible the way in which she chooses to enunciate and claim her ethnic identity.

Marcela

Marcela (61 years old) was born in Carmen de Patagones (footnote: Carmen de Patagones is the southernmost city of the province of Buenos Aires (Argentina). It is located on the north bank of the Negro River, the river that separates it from the city of Viedma, capital of the province of Río Negro, constituting both cities the region of Viedma-Carmen de Patagones) and during the first years of her childhood she lived in Aguada de Guerra (province of Río Negro), with her parents and her siblings, in a field given to the family during the “time of Rosas”, an aspect that we will return to later on. In her personal history, this moment is experienced as a

turning point that leads her to question her own identity. When she was 7 or 8 years old, she came to live in Olavarría with a brother and sister who had moved some time ago for work reasons. They lived in a house in the town of Loma Negra, and their jobs were linked to the factory: he worked as a laborer, and she attended the workers' canteen. In Olavarría, Marcela was able to finish primary and secondary school (as an adult). During her adolescence, Marcela worked as a maid on ranches and in private homes. Later, she started working as a pastry cook at the YPF service station, located in a place on the provincial route near Loma Negra. There, she met her husband, of German descent. After several comings and goings, visits, uncertainties, and conflicts with her mother-in-law, they got married a year later and then moved to Mar del Plata, where they had a son and a daughter. For work reasons, they moved to Olavarría again, where they still reside. Marcela is currently retired, and, in her story, she emphasizes her roles as grandmother and mother.

In her narration, she explicitly states that she became aware of her ethnic belonging at the age of thirty-five, at the beginning of the 1990s. She stated that she had a connection with this cultural legacy through the criterion of ancestry, that is, that she was Mapuche because her ancestors were Mapuche. Around this process, Marcela has expressed having felt shame about her identity, which is why she has hidden, denied, and silenced it for a long time. In this regard, she expresses:

Already, as a grown-up. When I was married. That's when I fell... And I think I was 35 or so. That's when we started... we are Mapuches, we actually asked around and in Ingeniero Jacobacci, our history is there. My father's last name was Ramírez, but his father's last name was Curruhuinca/Kuruhuinca. So, we are not Ramírez. When it was the time of Rosas, you saw that they killed the Indians, they changed my great-grandfather's last name. The gringos gave him another surname because they wanted him to help them turn in his own brothers. So, he had to take the last name they gave him... all to find out where the other Mapuches were. My grandfather had to take the other last name so they wouldn't kill his family. And the reward they gave him was some land, which they gave him on loan, some fields in the south, which we still have to this day (Personal communication. 3/18/2021).

Analyzing her life trajectory, when the plaintiff was in her thirties, it was in the early nineties. This period was undoubtedly crucial in the struggle of the indigenous movement, characterized by the conquest of human rights and the design of new public policies based on their demands. In this sense, a global phenomenon (with its particular nuances in Latin America and Argentina), which is not explicitly recognized by the interviewee, could also mean an opening juncture

(Jelin, 2002) that was generating ruptures on official narratives and hegemonic visions, to give rise to the emergence of other narratives and the visibilization of the latent memories of subaltern groups, such as indigenous peoples. Precisely, the dialectic of memory restoration consists in identifying those past experiences that become legible in order to create new meanings from them (Wolin, 1994). In other words, it is not a matter of replicating the facts in literal terms, but of constructing new links in order to orient from there the modes of action towards the future (Todorov, 2000). From this approach, the restoration of memory implies a critical revision of the dominant history, giving rise to unofficial readings that were previously ignored, hidden or silenced (Pollak, 2006). Thus, the beginning of the transformation of her gaze and emotions regarding her own family lineage could be linked to broader factors that go beyond her personal experiences.

On the other hand, Marcela comments on the issue of the change of her great-grandfather's last name as a key element in the reconnection with her origins, since it was "the gringos" who changed her great-grandfather's last name and forced him to "fight for them" against his own people, under the threat of murdering his family and the promise of a portion of the territory. Thus, in addition to addressing personal issues, Marcela's narrative is alluding to elements of the historical context that refer us to border relations during the conformation of the Argentinian State. During the Rosas governments (1829-1832 and 1835-1852), peace treaties were implemented as a strategy of negotiation and "coexistence" with the native populations within the framework of the "Pacific Indian Business". After the end of Rosas's government, in 1852, these tools were used as part of a political project of annihilation, incorporation, and marginalization, given that there was no longer any interest in continuing to "coexist" with the indigenous settlers, the focus was on the appropriation of territories for the development of the agro-export model, and the extermination (physical and cultural) of these groups in order to "populate Argentina" with migrants coming mainly from Europe, as illustrated by the local scenario. In this context, disputes, conflicts, and armed confrontations, combined with the deployment of various strategies by the different indigenous partialities, agents of the Buenos Aires government, and other people involved in border diplomacy, began to take place. Towards the end of the 19th century, there was a gradual dispersion and disarticulation of the native population, the disappearance of some leaders, and the progressive militarization of these groups. Thus, in a context of growing subordination to state society, many indigenous groups and families crossed the end of the frontier with invisible trajectories (Barbutto, 2022). With all this, we aim to point out that, although we do not have historical precision

about the events experienced by Marcela's family, we deduce that there are points of continuity between the memories reconstructed here and the experiences documented in historical sources and in academic research on the frontier period.

Valeria

Valeria (29 years old) was born in Mar del Plata. Shortly after her birth she came to live in Olavarría with her parents and brother, although, in 2000, they returned to Mar del Plata and stayed there for seven more years. They later returned to Olavarría. Throughout the interviews, Nilda's granddaughter makes repeated allusions to the field, which is her family's inheritance, and to the different uses it had had over time, according to the stories she had been told. She got to know this space during family trips to take her grandmother to visit. She recognizes, in her narrative, the important role of her grandmother in her community of origin: not only was she called upon to give talks and share her knowledge when she visited, but she was also remembered as the midwife of the area, and as a member of a network of reciprocity and community assistance. In the present, she highlights the impact of her undergraduate education in the recognition of her native roots and in her connection with the family history of her mother's line. On her father's side (José), Valeria is a descendant of Russian Germans, roots that she has claimed since she was a child through different cultural practices.

In her narration, she emphasizes, on several occasions, that being native, rather than being part of her identity, is part of her family's history. For this reason, we consider that her ethnic identity is recognized by the criterion of ancestry, finding in her grandmother Nilda that source of identification with her native roots. Like her mother (Marcela), Valeria has felt shame, fear of suffering discrimination for being indigenous, and, therefore, the plaintiff does not publicly claim her identity as such. As previously mentioned, Valeria does actively claim her European migrant roots, coming from her paternal line, through teaching traditional cultural practices, both in everyday life and in public events. However, since 2010, she has transformed her view of her mother's legacy by starting a university degree program:

I always knew. And sometimes... I'm going to say it, although it will sound very ugly... and it happened to me when I started to understand it, I felt ashamed. And it happened to me when I had already said "well, why should I be ashamed if it is part of my history" (...) But well, I tell you, college changed my mind a lot to begin to understand these things. And that's when, I think, I began to understand it as

part of my life... yes, when I entered college, it broadened my vision a lot (Personal communication. 3/15/2021).

In Valeria's case, we observe that (at first) the recognition of her ethnic identity seems to be based on the criterion of ancestry, rather than self-ascription. We see this reflected in the feeling of shame she expresses in her account. In this regard, Rolf Foerster and Jorge Vergara (2000) point out that the construction of identity occurs in a dialogic relationship. That is, the "discovery" of one's own identity emerges from the exchange with other people. For the analysis of identity as a psychosocial phenomenon, it is essential to understand the mechanisms of identification in order to account for identity in process: as assumed by individuals and groups in various concrete situations. On this subject, Frederik Barth (1976) explains that identity is the result of a dynamic and changing process, in which the interesting thing is to analyze how people define themselves and are defined by others. From this point of view, we emphasize how self-recognition is produced and how people are perceived by others.

For Valeria, these emotions do not seem to be casual, but rather the result of a political project that motivated many indigenous people to internalize this dimension of their identity as a stigma (Slavsky, 1992; Endere, 1998; Briones, 1998). In relation to the recovered dialogue, we consider that generational belonging could be linked to these contradictory feelings about the appropriation of the cultural legacy. Valeria observes it as "something of her own", but, at the same time as "something foreign", that is, as something linked to her family's history. If we analyze these enunciations in a territorial key, it is possible to recognize that many of her mother's and grandmother's experiences are anchored in rural environments, while her own history was configured from urbanity. This aspect can be read as another factor that influences the construction of her identity in the present, and the recognition (or not) of her indigenous ethnicity in certain spaces. As Laura Weiss, Juan Engelman, and Sebastián Valverde (2013, p. 7) point out, "the indigenous presence in cities is systematically denied, hidden, and stigmatized". Thus, urban indigenous populations are not recognized as such in the daily life of the cities, and their identities are hidden or made invisible under other labels such as "cabecita Negra", "negros", "villeros" (Ratier, 1972, 1988), reproducing discriminatory, stigmatizing, and excluding discourses and practices.

In this regard, it seems striking to us that the actor highlights the role of the faculty in "broadening her vision" of her own history and identity. The transformation in Valeria's view is articulated with learning and reflection

processes in the university context, so that, agreeing with Margot Bigot, Graciela Rodríguez, and Héctor Vásquez (1991, p. 245), we affirm that “the variable ‘schooling’ affects perception in a decisive way”.

We would also like to point out that the plaintiff places this moment of rupture in 2010, an aspect that does not seem minor to us when observing some indicators of the national context. A first indicator is the National Census, carried out that same year, in which almost one million people self-identified themselves as indigenous out of a total of 45 million inhabitants, of which three hundred thousand correspond to the territory of Buenos Aires. A second indicator is Decree No. 1,584, issued by then President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, which established October 12 as “Day of Respect for Cultural Diversity” in Argentina, a date previously conceived as “Day of the Race” in the framework of the presidential decree issued by Hipólito Yrigoyen in 1917. With all this, we do not intend to point out that specifically these factors of the national context influenced the change in Valeria’s positioning in 2010, but rather we aim to illustrate the scenario in which this re-signification of her identity is inscribed. From this logic, these elements would be reflecting a situation of openness (Jelin, 2002), a favorable context for the re-reading of these experiences.

Graciela

Graciela (38 years old), born in Aguada de Guerra (Río Negro province), is a therapeutic companion, and, at the time of the interview, she was working in a vaccination center for COVID-19. Throughout her life trajectory, the image and memories of her grandmother appear as an axis that articulates her own narrative. Her parents are originally from the south: her mother from Maquinchao, and her father, from Los Menucos, (both in the province of Río Negro). The “south” and the “family countryside” are recurrent representations in her narrative. Like Valeria, she critically observes the future projection of that territory and the vindication of the indigenous identity in today’s society. Graciela is the mother of Ludmila (a 12-year-old adolescent), who is a beneficiary of the Scholarship for Indigenous Peoples and a high school student. From Graciela’s point of view, her daughter shares many “ways of being” and knowledge transmitted by her grandmother Nilda and her mother. She currently lives in the town of Loma Negra and participates in a group linked to the Scholarships for Indigenous Peoples, coordinated by Diana.

In 2020, Graciela applied for the Indigenous Peoples Scholarship for her daughter, a procedure in which she must acknowledge that she and her daughter

are indigenous, in order to access the financial aid. We recovered a brief dialogue in which Graciela explains this:

Graciela (hereinafter G): And well, Ludmi has a scholarship due to her [Nilda's] descendants [sic]... they gave her a scholarship for being a descendant last year when she graduated, and this year they are continuing it, as well.

A: That's good...

G: Yes... and it is a scholarship from the State for being a descendant of native peoples. We have a group where we are all there and there are several people. Tomorrow there is a meeting...

(...)

A: And what is the name of the scholarship? To keep looking into that...

G: Beca para Pueblos Originarios, it is called... It is given from the 3rd year of elementary school onwards.

A: And if she continues studying after school, is she also entitled to it?

G: Yes, what happens is that it is a struggle all the time... They don't give you a chance because you have to fill out a lot of papers, something is missing, and they ask for everything back (Personal communication. 3/23/21).

As we can observe in this fragment, the plaintiff recognizes that she and her daughter are indigenous, but she does so from the criterion of ancestry. That is to say, in none of the interactions does she reaffirm her ethnic identity in the first person, but on the contrary, she seems to visualize it as something foreign and distant. The indigenous person is always situated as an external figure, such as grandmother Nilda and the scholarship group. In this scenario, the possibility of accessing these scholarships becomes a relevant element that contributes to making their ethnic condition publicly visible. From their perspective, the connection with their roots seems to become merely bureaucratic ("filling out a pile of papers"). However, in this experience, there are also indications that make it possible to identify another forms of linking with the original. On the one hand, when the plaintiff expresses that "it is a struggle all the time", she is alluding to these rights, achieved in the framework of policies for the recognition of identities and the redistribution of resources (Fraser, 2008), but which are not guaranteed in practice (Endere, 2020; Stavenhagen, 2004).

If we contemplate this scholarship program in a context of openness in relation to multiculturalism, and as part of participatory indigenism, it is necessary to make explicit that, in this period, the native populations “reorganized themselves under organizations of legal ethno-communalization, which allowed them to break into the governmental scenario with the promotion of identity policies” (Manzanelli, 2023, p. 93). However, this participation seems to be merely discursive, in that it does not turn out to be effective in key decision-making spaces, reproducing “consensus and legitimacy with respect to state action and its policies aimed at indigenous peoples” (Manzanelli, 2023, p. 93). In Graciela’s case, the affirmation of her ancestry, in this particular space, constitutes a political-identitarian tool in that it enables access to these rights.

As in the case of Valeria, the original is part of the family narrative, of her lineage, but not of her individual identity. In any case, in spite of not stating “I am Mapuche/Indigenous”, the plaintiff has participated in numerous public events in which she has approached this dimension of her identity, and she has felt part of it. Throughout her narration, grandmother Nilda appears as a protagonist, and she represents a point of anchorage with her original identity. We retake a dialogue from a collective interview with Graciela, Marcela, and Valeria:

G: Grandma was once in a congress that was held here in Barrio CECO... it was like a meeting where an Intercultural Education Law was going to be presented. They came from all over, I remember, and grandma came, spoke, and sang. She had been invited. It was a very big event, and grandmother was there as an exponent.

V: That one! Look at grandma! [She says it with enthusiasm] I didn’t know that...

(...)

G: Grandma sang, brought her things, showed everything she had done [knitting]. She kind of opened the event. That’s really important... As I took her, people came and asked me things and I had no idea. I was really embarrassed...

M: My nephews didn’t know she spoke Mapuche either. Facundo...

G: Of course! Yes, we took her to Facundo, and that’s when she found out that she could talk, sing, everything.

V: Hey, how embarrassing... How can we not know those things about grandma!... I knew that grandma spoke Mapuche...

M: We didn't give it any importance...

G: We didn't give it the importance it had, because for us it was something common. It was an everyday thing. It was visible to us, afterwards, how important it was (Personal communication. 3/23/2021).

In this interaction, Nilda is characterized as a relevant figure, possessor of knowledge, techniques, traditions, and ancestral cultural expressions, of experiences and stories that all the people present there wanted to hear. Likewise, the question of ignorance and disconnection with their origins reappears in this narration, aspects that are transversal to the processes of indigenous identification in the present, and that are a consequence of the reproduction of hegemonic visions of Argentinian history, its population and territories. This memory challenges the interlocutors in their very enunciation, leading them to problematize what is known and to dissociate themselves from their everyday actions and discourses, to look at themselves also as Nilda's descendants, making visible, on this occasion, all that this entails, and revaluating it through the gaze of others. Thus, the representations of the grandmother are a mark that constantly emerge in the narratives of the family and are constructed as a point of anchorage with their original ancestry, and an element that, in certain contexts, enables the vindication of their ethnic identity.

Diana

Diana (52 years old) was born "in Rio Negro, in a very small community" (Personal communication. 13/8/2022), and she is a founding member of a local indigenous community. She defines herself as "an urban woman crossed by the dominant culture, but with her own ontological need to constantly re-question myself who I am, who we are", and, in this context, she recognizes that "I have not stopped being in the territory despite my urbanity and these current feelings" (Personal communication. 5/30/2017). From her role as indigenous referent, she participates in various spaces and activities at the regional and local level. Throughout the different meetings, the actor constantly recovers the voices of her ancestors to question the official narrative. It is important to mention that this is a person with postgraduate academic training, who teaches and that has worked in the public sector.

In her account, she states that she became aware of her native roots when she was twelve or thirteen years old, around 1983.

In fact, we always knew since we were little that there was a reality that was different, but I was not aware of that cultural reality. When I started my adolescence, when I started my crisis, I realized that there was something that was not usual when my grandparents came to visit me, especially my maternal grandmother, I realized that because of her clothes and her way of speaking she was not the typical Italian or migrant nonna that everybody has in mind. Thus, adolescence was a stage with a lot of rupture, a lot of searching for identity, and so on, then I realized that we were Mapuche... I am talking about when I was fifteen years old, more or less (...) At that age, a very crucial fact happened... when we were little we used to go to the country, to my grandparents' house, and it was always "let's go to the country to see our grandparents"... not "let's go to the country to see our Mapuche grandparents". So we thought that the culture of the south was different from that of the province of Buenos Aires, but we did not realize that it was another culture... in terms of the specific Mapuche culture. When we had a very strong loss, which was my mother's brother, who was murdered because of the land... my uncle was the only uncle I knew, my mother had told us a lot about him... but that was when I was twelve or thirteen years old, that is why I say that it was a big crisis, because when he died, my mother had to take charge of the farm he had... it was a beautiful place, but it was left to us. It was a beautiful place, but it was in the Patagonian plateau in Chubut, and we lived in Bahía Blanca, so it was a super complicated situation... but well, we traveled, and we started to relate with the environment, with the place, with another reality, and it really mobilized us (Personal communication. 6/8/2018).

In the words of the plaintiff, we can observe that, as in other cases under consideration, she acknowledges that she "always knew" about her indigenous roots and, at the same time, she emphasizes the importance of "becoming aware" of her ethnicity. In this process of recognizing herself as Mapuche, Diana characterizes her maternal grandmother as opposed to the stereotype of "the Italian nonna", marking in some way these interethnic frictions that take place, not only in the concrete reality, but also in the imaginary plane: "I realize that, by her dress and her way of speaking, she was not the typical Italian or migrant nonna that everyone has in mind". In turn, adolescence, which as such is a complex stage of development, of questioning, searching, and redefinition, in her trajectory, was a turning point that would change her life. After a critical event (Das, 1995), such as the murder of her maternal uncle for some land, she began a process of revision of what she had known up to that moment, of re-signification of her cultural legacy, and reconnection with her origins. In the narration of the plaintiff, territory is conceived not only as a physical or geographical space, but also as a symbolic space of confrontations and negotiations, which is appropriated in the construction of

her identity in a situated manner based on dynamic and mutable processes (Bidasca et al., 2011).

With all the aforementioned, we can see that Diana identifies herself as a Mapuche woman, both from the criterion of self-ascription and from the criterion of ancestry, as she makes visible her personal search about her origins and her present, but also underlines the importance of her genealogy to claim herself as such. From this key moment that we recovered in her discourse, she begins to get involved in the struggle of the indigenous peoples with her family, actively militating for the cause until the present. At the same time, by placing Diana's "awakening" in a broader context, we situate her generational experience within the 1980s. This allows us to recognize that these activisms and militancy occurred simultaneously (or accompanying) extremely relevant events of the indigenous movement that took place during the "Alfonsinist spring" (1985 mobilization for Law No. 23,302) and the first years of Menemism.

As Axel Lázzari, Mariela Eva Rodríguez, and Alexis Papazian (2015) point out, in our country, there is a second wave of indigenous political mobilization driven by the new indigenous rights established in the 1994 National Constitution and the organization of counter celebrations of "the 500 years" of resistance to the invasion and genocide of the Abya Yala peoples in 1992. These events took place in a pluralistic environment, one of recognition of cultural citizenship, but problematically linked to the growing production of individualistic subjectivities as part of neoliberal tendencies.

We believe that all this has influenced the way in which the actor reconstructs her life trajectory: when Diana talks of her personal experiences, she presents them in collective terms, making it clear that they are social problems, and that they are not isolated and disconnected individual situations.

Dialogues Between Memories and Stories: Closings and Openings

If we analyze the context of these moments in which the women actors situate this "awareness" of their indigenous roots, we can recognize some relevant historical processes: the coups d'état of 1962, 1966, and 1976; the return of democracy in 1983; the mobilizations of indigenous peoples and recognition of their rights in Argentina in the 1980s and 1990s; the 2010 National Census; the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. In the life trajectories of the actors, these events are experienced as part of the scenario in which their daily experiences take place which, on some occasions,

is identified as an important factor within the autobiographical narrative and, on others, is considered as a backdrop to personal, family, and community scenes.

After a I've always spoken Spanish analyzing the meaning and character implied by these events, interpretations emerge that enable their classification into two large groups: on the one hand, they are moments (or periods) of conflict, confrontation, uncertainty (1962, 1966, 1976, 2020); on the other hand, they constitute moments of openness, liberation, expansion of rights (1983, 1980-1990, 2010). In the first case, we consider that they have been propitious events to reinforce the sense of belonging to a collective in the face of violence, fear, lack of certainty, redefinition of daily practices (Hernando Gonzalo, 2009). It should be noted that the scenes that are situated in the coup d'état are crossed by indigenist policies of integration implemented by the State expressed in various institutions (such as schools) that quickly became spaces of violence, stigmatization, and discrimination, as indicated by the reconstructed narratives. In the second case, we believe that these favorable events make visible what has been historically denied and hidden, allowing rethinking from another place, enabling new readings of the experiences lived and bequeathed by other generations (Jelin, 2002; Dwyer, 2009; Pollak, 2006). This includes all those instances where ethnic identity is made visible by the actors in diverse scenarios as they constitute practices of restoration of family and collective memory (Ramos, 2017; Crespo, 2018; Stella, 2020).

In both scenarios, these events, in one way or another, have internally resonated in the actors, enabling a re-signification of what it means for them to define themselves as native women. At the same time, we consider that those events where border identity spaces are configured and interethnic frictions occur, enable the emergence of indigenous cultural capitals as tools to build themselves from a collective ethnic belonging (Cardoso de Oliveira, 1976, 1992; Tamagno, 1988, 2009; Briones, 1998). All this leads us to understand ethnic identification as a dynamic, situated, and changing process, in which personal, family, collective, and social context elements are put into dialogue. Although, in all cases, the indigenous is not appropriated at a personal level as a cultural capital to be taken up again in instances of public-political activism and vindication, this does not mean that these cultural capitals are not instrumentalized by the actors in an ethnopolitical key. In this way, we affirm that these women manage to break with the imposed essentialisms that contemporary indigenous policies reproduce in order to reconnect with their origins and ancestry from emotional, spiritual, and ontological points of view, as well as from the recognition and demand for their rights. For all these

reasons, it seems important to us to make visible the multiple ways in which women actors begin to inhabit the indigenous identity from the interstices, the edges, the borders, managing to move not only from the official narrative, but also from the place of victimization, to actively travel this path of reconnection with their roots.

By articulating memory and history from the anthropological analysis, we were able to identify the historical moments in which tensions emerge in the processes of identification of indigenous women, taking the autobiographical memories of these actors as a source. This constitutes a methodological contribution in the non-linear approach to historical memory that allows us to connect the results with the objectives, hypotheses, and main questions.

Finally, it is worth noting that the memories reconstructed by the women actors break with the official Olavarriense memory that considers the study area a territory of migrants, mostly from Europe, a “white” territory with “no Indians”. Although all our actors are migrants, the brief historical reconstruction carried out allows us to affirm that the native populations were present in the study area long before the consolidation of the “town of Olavarría” in 1867. From this place, these processes of identification, reconnection, and recovery of memory narrated in the first person should be valued, given that they constitute counter-hegemonic performative acts insofar as their very expression challenges the genocidal structures and practices that have attempted to “erase” their physical and symbolic presence (Trouillot, 1995; Ramos et al., 2016). By way of closing, we do not want to fail to point out the relevance of making visible this political-affective work of restoring memories from the voices of indigenous women in contexts as adverse as the ones we are going through, in the face of the reemergence of negationist and fascist discourses that call into question the mere existence of these realities.

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