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# Globalisation, indigenous tourism, and the politics of place in Amaicha (NW Argentine Andes)

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## Abstract

*Argentina is a country that has represented itself over centuries as white and European. Over the last decades, however, indigenous movements have increased strongly in visibility and importance. This investigation considers this background in analysing the complex relationship between the growing importance of tourism and indigenous politics for self-determination and autonomy in the Andean village of Amaicha (NW-Argentina). The annual Pachamama celebration held by the indigenous Amaicha community presents the ideal setting for this research as it has simultaneously become a 'national tourist festivity' in the context of recent government efforts to promote a culturally diverse Argentina for tourism development. Through long-term ethnographic field work and by applying a methodological framework that combines the interpretation of visual material with careful empirical research this study presents a differentiated analysis of the political implications of indigenous tourism. The findings show that conflicts between the indigenous community and governmental institutions tend not to be about tourism and place promotion as such, but rather tourism has become a central arena where struggles over political control are manifested and mediated. Furthermore, cultural politics in Amaicha have recently been reassembled through both embodied practices and the use of cultural symbols during the Pachamama festivity. Finally, while relational conceptualisations of place as constituted through wider connections have gained momentum in academia, the results from this investigation show that an essentialised understanding of culture and identity as rooted in place is promoted for tourism, and emphasised by the indigenous community in order to legitimise claims for territorial and political rights. The goal of the paper is thus to contribute to a nuanced picture of emergent indigenous geographies in Argentina.*

## Zusammenfassung

In Argentinien, einem Land, das sich über lange Zeit als weiß und europäisch darzustellen versuchte, haben indigene Bewegungen in den letzten Jahrzehnten enorm an Bedeutung gewonnen. Der nordwest-argentinische Andenraum war über Jahrhunderte durch Aushandlungsprozesse zwischen Politiken der nationalen Assimilation und der lokalen Selbstbestimmung geprägt. Im Kontext der staatlichen Anerkennung besonderer Rechte indigener Völker hat im Ort Amaicha (Provinz Tucumán) ein touristisches Fest an Bedeutung gewonnen, bei dem die andine „Mutter Erde“ (Pachamama), und damit die Verbindung zwischen Natur und indigener Kultur, im Mittelpunkt steht. Der Artikel analysiert das widersprüchliche Verhältnis zwischen der Vermarktung von kultureller Vielfalt für die staatliche Politik der Förderung von privaten Investitionen im Tourismus und der indigenen Politik für

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Selbstbestimmung über Land und Entwicklung. Konflikte konzentrieren sich dabei jedoch nicht auf den Tourismus an sich, sondern vielmehr sind der Tourismus und das Pachamamafest als emblematischer Event zu einer Bühne geworden, auf der Kultur, Identität und politische Ziele neu verhandelt werden. Aus geographischer Perspektive ist hierbei besonders die Konzeptualisierung von Raum und Ort interessant: Ein relationales Raumverständnis hat in der Geographie stark an Bedeutung gewonnen und auch für Amaicha kann gezeigt werden, dass Beziehungen nach „außen“ zentraler Bestandteil der Geschichte des Ortes sind. Die touristische Attraktivität von Amaicha liegt aber in einem Verständnis von Ort als seit jeher abgegrenztem Raum, verwurzelt mit indigener Kultur. Um das Recht auf kollektiven Landbesitz zu sichern muss die indigene Gemeinschaft ein solches Verständnis von Kultur als verwoben mit dem Land artikulieren. Aufbauend auf einer langen ethnographischen Feldarbeit zeigt der Artikel diese komplexen Zusammenhänge und Widersprüche im Kontext aktueller (Re-)Indigenisierungsprozesse in Argentinien.

**Keywords** Indigenous tourism, Pachamama celebration, globalisation, indigenous rights, NW Argentine Andes

## 1. Introduction

“In this territory [Argentina] human expressions, many being pre-Columbian, display through their material and verbal presence the **cultural diversity** that characterises us as an educated people” (emphasis in original) (Secretaría de Turismo de la Argentina 2008: 6<sup>1</sup>).

“We are reconstructing our SELF-DEVELOPMENT under the parameters of our OWN IDENTITY and the way we want it to be. This will be our way of preparing ourselves to counteract the effects of globalisation that will be felt sooner or later” (emphasis in original) (Information Booklet of the Indigenous Community of Amaicha).

Every year during carnival the village of Amaicha, located in the Andean mountain range of northwest Argentina, is attended by thousands of locals as well as national and international tourists who want to experience the national celebration of the Pachamama. The festival, originally established in 1947, is one of the most important elements of touristic place promotion in the NW-Argentine Andes today and has gained considerable importance for the representation of a culturally rich and diverse Argentina worth exploring and investing in (see quote above; Ente Tucumán Turismo 2009; Bertoncello 2006; Troncoso 2012). During the five day celebration the indigenous community organises and carries out a wide array of activities that are attended by TV stations, news media and politicians. However, the increased importance of the Pachamama celebration in Amaicha must be seen in a broader context: i.e. the tremendous growth of tourism activities on a global scale that build on (an imagined) indigenous identity (cultural expressions, rela-

tion to nature, and sense of place) as its main attraction (Hinch 2004; Notzke 2006; Hinch and Butler 2007). In Argentina, as in other Latin American countries, the increased interest in indigenous culture as a tourism attraction goes hand in hand with ground-breaking changes in national politics regarding the recognition of indigenous people’s rights and the appearance of various indigenous movements across the country, whose increased articulation has shifted their organisation from a subnational to an international level (see e.g. Gordillo and Hirsch 2003; Briones 2005). State-led efforts promoting indigenous tourism as a means for attracting capital and development in peripheral regions are paralleled and contested by indigenous politics that mobilise around their “own identity” (see quote above) in order to protect and/or gain collective territorial rights. As a result the Pachamama celebration in Amaicha has become an important element and stage for the performance of indigenous identity and for a cultural politics that focuses on the local control of land and development. While questions of indigenous land and resource rights have long been a focus of geographical research (see Frantz and Howitt 2012), scholarly understanding regarding the implications of tourism for an indigenous politics of place is still limited. Herein lies the contribution of this paper.

### 1.1 Relationality: Globalisation, place, and indigenous movements in academic production

This paper seeks to contribute to an interdisciplinary research field that has analysed the rise of indigenous movements across Latin America and their locally grounded but globally transcending politics of place (Escobar 2001; Perreault 2001, 2003; Bebbington 2004; Valdivia 2005; Andolina et al. 2009; Perreault and Green 2013). One com-

mon theme in this broad body of literature is the intensive engagement with the wider connections that indigenous people actively develop and that simultaneously affect their livelihoods. In the context of the rise of indigenous movements on a global scale and their increasing transnational organisation a deep theoretical as well as empirical discussion of the relation between globalisation and place has been crucial. *Doreen Massey's* writings have been highly influential and have inspired researchers in a wide variety of studies on indigenous politics of place in Latin America and beyond (e.g. *Escobar* 2001; *Andolina* et al. 2009; *Li* 2001; *Agius* et al. 2007). She is one of the precursors advancing a relational understanding of globalisation where places are understood as “[...] criss-crossings in the wider power-geometries that constitute themselves and the ‘global’” (*Massey* 2005: 101).

The application and further development of relational, global understandings of place that challenge the Newtonian concept of places as “locations of distinct coherence” (*Massey* 1999: 14; see also *Moore* 2005: 19) where “local communities had their localities” (*Massey* 2005: 64) has been central to the field. Conceiving of places as relational is of course embedded into broader shifts in social sciences subsumed under the ‘cultural turn’ that have questioned essentialist concepts of culture and identity. In the words of *Stuart Hall*, frequently employed in ethnographic studies of identity formation (see for example *Moore* 1998, 2005; *Li* 2001; *Andolina* et al. 2009), “identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from’, so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves” (*Hall* 1996: 4).

Two key questions for this paper arise from the turn towards relational thinking discussed above. (1) How does this academic move from essentialist conceptualisations of place, culture and identity bear on the ‘real-world’ projects of indigenous people seeking for control over ‘their’ places? (2) What is the relationship between academic representations of places as ‘specific yet globalised sites’ (*Watts* 1991: 10) and representations of place for the promotion of tourism?

## 1.2 Essentialism: Place, indigenous movements and indigenous tourism

Defining indigenous tourism<sup>2</sup> is a complicated matter. In its broadest sense indigenous tourism includes

a) any type of tourism business indigenous people get involved in (including casino gambling, hotels and golf courses), and b) any tourism activity that builds on indigenous culture as its main attraction (without necessarily indigenous people being in control of it) (*Notzke* 2006: xii; *Butler* and *Hinch* 2007: 5). For the case study analysed here, indigenous culture serves as the principal tourist attraction, and it is precisely the issue of control (not just of tourism but well beyond) that stands at the forefront of the discussion. This raises the question as to what constitutes the touristic attractiveness of indigenous cultures and places. *Meethan* et al. (2006: XIV) maintain that: “Although tourism involves spatial and cultural mobility, it is also irreducibly associated with the specificity of places, with the processes by which tourist sights are demarcated and set apart from the mundane”. The importance of this setting apart from the mundane or what *Salazar* (2012: 863) has called “seductive imaginaries about peoples and places” is widely acknowledged in tourism studies (*Urry* 1990; *Crang* 2004; *Salazar* 2009). In the case of indigenous tourism, place promotion is based on the globalised imagination of a natural connection between indigenous people and their land that satisfies a tourist’s search for the cultural ‘other’, the pristine and the natural (see for example *Hiernaux-Nicolas* 2002; *Hinch* 2004; *Notzke* 2006; *Stronza* 2008; *Babb* 2012). Hence, the main attraction of indigenous tourism is an essentialist understanding of place and culture<sup>3</sup> (place understood as the spatial reach of a culture) as bounded and static, opposed to the academic advancement of relational thinking in the last decades. Places understood as “specific yet globalised sites” (*Watts* 1991: 10), as “throwntogetherness” (*Massey* 2005: 140) or as never complete, finished or bounded but always becoming (*Cresswell* 2004: 37) do not fit the tourists search for cultural difference. Neither are indigenous people interested in their place-projects being presented as “a local that is constitutively global” (*Katz* 2001: 1214 in *Andolina* et al. 2009: 19). Political ecological studies have powerfully shown that representing their culture as bounded and directly connected to nature can be an important tool for indigenous people in struggles for control over land (e.g. *Sylvain* 2002, 2005). This employment of an essentialist understanding of culture by indigenous people in order to raise their political agency has been termed “strategic essentialism” (*Sylvain* 2002: 1081; see also *Neumann* 2005: 128).

Hence, even though ‘their’ places – as the substantial body of literature on indigenous politics of place has

convincingly shown – are constructed through trans-local connections, indigenous people have to present them as clearly separable from the ‘outside’ in order to gain differential rights. As *Castree* (2004a: 156) puts it: “Left-wing academics in geography and the social sciences have called into question traditional concepts of place, culture and identity at the very moment when marginal populations worldwide need them more than ever”. I argue that studies on indigenous politics of place in the Andes have rarely engaged with tourism precisely because touristic promotion is based on an essentialist sense of place. In Argentina, for example, the state presents cultural distinctiveness as a potential for touristic development in order to increase capital investment<sup>4</sup> (*Secretaria de Turismo* 2008; *Ente Tucumán Turismo* 2009; see also *Bertoncello* 2006, 2008; *Sosa* 2011; *Troncoso* 2012). As I will show for the case of Amaicha, it is precisely this interplay between touristic place promotion and the mobilisation of an essentialist understanding of place by indigenous people that merits further attention. Before I do so, it is necessary to look at the peculiarity of identity politics in Argentina and its implications for an indigenous politics of place in Amaicha.

## 2. Cultural politics and indigeneity in Argentina

An ethnographic inquiry into an indigenous place project in Argentina can add substantial value to research on the cultural politics of place in the Andes that is advanced mainly through studies in Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Colombia. The neglecting of Argentina comes as no surprise considering that the history of legal recognition of indigenous people in the national constitution does not begin until the 1980s. Argentina has long been considered a Latin American exception, as a ‘white’ country whose culture and traditions were brought by European immigration. This image of a ‘white Argentina’ was actively forced by cultural nationalism and has important implications for the cultural politics of indigenous people on a national and, as will be the focus of this paper, on a local scale (*Briones* 2005; *Chamosa* 2008, 2010; *Warren* 2009). In contrast to most Latin American countries where national identity politics created the ethnic classification ‘mestizo’ with the goal of indigenous assimilation, in Argentina the cultural classification ‘criollo’<sup>5</sup> was established in order to make indigenous people invisible (*Gordillo* and *Hirsch* 2003; *Chamosa* 2008, 2010) and to position them in a nation-building project based on the

myth of a homogeneous European origin. Following *Briones* (2005: 21) this specific Argentinean politics of cultural nationalism intentionally distanced the country from their Latin American neighbours and simultaneously silenced the existence of internal alterity. The specific Argentinean nation-building process thus blurred boundaries of ethnic classification established in colonial times. As *Warren* (2009: 769) stresses, Argentina has a “[...] unique racial classification structure in which indigenous identities are not explicitly defined by the state, by Argentine society, and sometimes by indigenous groups themselves” which leads to “[...] opportunities to define race through interactions and performances of identity”. Hence, while the nation-state created the myth of a homogeneous white Argentina, this simultaneously created room for manoeuvres for indigenous communities concerning their own positioning in different periods of the nation-building process. The current rise of indigenous demands in the context of the proclamation of a pluricultural Argentinean self-understanding must be envisioned while considering the background of this specific Argentinean history of indigenous (in) visibilisation (see also *Manasse* and *Arenas* 2009).

The indigenous community of Amaicha has positioned itself differently in the context of this colonial and (post-)colonial history for centuries. The NW-Argentine Calchaquí Valleys, located in a strategic position between the mining town of Potosí and the harbour of Buenos Aires, were already an important target for colonial control in the 16th century. In the context of colonial efforts of expulsion and later domination of the indios through the *encomienda* system, Amaicheños obtained a royal charter that guaranteed them communal land rights in accordance with the payment of a colonial tribute (*Cruz* 1997). As *Rodríguez* (2009: 142) demonstrates, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century the indigenous community of Amaicha defended its territory against external claims by stressing their consistent colonial tribute payment and keeping the colonial pact. Hence, the reinterpretation of a colonial ethnic classification served to pursue territorial claims in a period of nation-building with strong pressure on indigenous land control.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the rise of the sugar cane production in the lowlands of Tucumán contributed to an increasing demand for a cheap labor force and the Calchaquí people represented a much desired workers pool for the owners of the sugar factories. This resulted in a pattern where an important num-

ber of Amaicheños migrated for several months a year to work in the sugar cane harvest. This integration into the capitalist economy and the resulting intensification of contact with lowland cultural expressions led to important alterations in the Amaicheño way of life (Chamosa 2008: 90). From the 1960s onwards the sugar mills experienced recurring crises causing their demand for low-wage labour to decrease considerably, leading to a strong decline in seasonal migration. In this context of a highly unbalanced capitalist production mode public sector employment in the Comuna Rural de Amaicha del Valle – the national jurisdiction at the local level – gained considerable importance. In Amaicha del Valle the *comuna rural* and the indigenous jurisdiction (*comunidad indígena*) overlap and co-exist. The allocation of distinct responsibilities and rights frequently results in struggles and complex alliances between the two institutions (for a thorough discussion see Isla 2009). In some cases the leader of the indigenous community (*cacique*) has simultaneously been the political representative of the Comuna Rural (*delegado communal*). This demonstrates that the internal process of decision-making is highly complex and conflictive.

During the 19th and 20th century Calchaquí people were presented as either indigenous or criollo with Spanish, European and Catholic roots depending on the differing needs regarding control, domination and cultural nation-building (Chamosa 2008). However, cultural classifications do not work solely for domination but are also used and reinterpreted by the people that are represented (Hall 1996, 1997; Mitchell 2000; Castree 2004b). In Amaicha this century-long colonial/national politics of changing racial/cultural classification of locals and the differentiated sub-altern politics of identity articulation have led to a rather broad range for self-identification in cultural politics (Rodríguez 2008, 2009). Isla (2009: 135) states that behind the filiation '*comunero*' a wide variety of categorisations that reflect a positioning concerning the past and the present are used (interchangeably) by different people and in distinct situations in Amaicha: "Indio", "vallisto", "argentino", "calchaquí", "gaucho", "tucumáno", or "criollo". The current politics of place in Amaicha in the context of indigenous rights recognition and indigenous tourism growth has to be seen in relation to this long history of domination and resistance. The next section presents the methodology, it is followed by an analysis of the different facets of the Pachamama celebration.

### 3. Research methods

The empirical material underlying my arguments draws on twelve months of field research conducted in the Argentinean provinces of Tucumán and Salta along with various stays in Amaicha. The analysis is based on ethnographic fieldwork, mainly participatory observation and semi-structured interviews, complemented with the examination of legal documents and promotional material for tourism. Twelve interviews were conducted with representatives and members of the Amaicha indigenous community and ten interviews with representatives of government institutions at a communal and regional level<sup>6</sup>. Participatory observations as well as a large number of informal conversations with members of the community were conducted during the 2012 Pachamama celebration. As the festival has gained widespread media attention (e.g. national and regional newspapers, TV stations, promotional videos from the regional tourism board, social media) over the last years, this visual material has become an important element for tourism promotion as well as for an indigenous politics of place. Thus, the visual material provides an important source for the application of an "approach that thinks about the visual in terms of the cultural significance, social practices and power relations in which it is embedded [...]"; what Rose (2007: XV) has called a "critical visual methodology". The interpretation of this visual material was grounded through the combination of interviews and participatory observations (Rose 2007: XIV). The application of visual methodologies has been shown to enable researchers to look beyond the verbal text by focusing on embodied practices, body language and performances (Lorimer 2010; Kindon 2003; Garrett 2011; Schurr 2012). In her research on performances of women politicians on political stages in Ecuador Schurr (2012, 2013) shows that an analysis of visual representations in media can provide rich insights into the embodied practices of identity-making (see also Radcliffe 1997). For the analysis of visual representations I used my own pictures and videos as well as photos and videos produced by Tucumán's newspaper La Gaceta. I follow Schurr (2012: 198) when she argues that "[B]y linking self-produced visual data with visual data produced by the media, it is possible for the researcher to relate, compare and contrast his or her own visual data with hegemonic visual representations of certain performances"<sup>7</sup>. In Argentina identities are frequently embodied and defined through their "doing" (Warren 2009), thus making visual ethnography a useful

method to analyse these practices. In this context it is crucial to consider the colonial history of academic use and representation of the visual; especially in the context of tourism research (Crang 2010). However, neglecting visual methodologies would miss a significant opportunity considering the importance of the visual for tourism and the growing pace of media circulation of visual representations (Crang 2010).

#### 4. The cultural politics of the Pachamama celebration

##### 4.1 The festivity and a new, pluri-cultural Argentina

The Pachamama celebration in Amaicha took place for the first time in 1947, four years after the inauguration of the road connecting the provincial capital San Miguel de Tucumán and Amaicha. The new road connection made it possible for visitors to reach the 2000 metre high village by car whereas before the exhausting journey from the lowlands lasted various days. The founding of so called 'summer villages' for Tucumán's regional elite to escape the hot and humid summers in the lowlands was a central reason for the construction of the road. In order to increase the attractiveness of the valley as a summer destination for visitors, provincial and local elites established the Pachamama celebration of Amaicha as an annual event during carnival (*Boullosa-Joly* 2010). As *Chamosa* (2010: 173-175) points out, the Pachamama celebration quickly gained popularity and by the 1950s was already a well-established provincial festivity.

Today the festival has gained the status of a 'national celebration' and is attended by thousands of locals, national and international tourists, as well as TV channels, press reporters and regional politicians. In this context the festivity is presented and promoted not only as a local cultural expression but simultaneously included on the national agenda as one of the most traditional and important festivities of northern Argentina (see for example *Clarín* 11/02/2013). The national promotion of a local cultural expression the central act of which is the performance of what is considered a traditionally indigenous ritual has to be seen in the context of the ground-breaking constitutional changes in Argentina from the mid-1980s onwards. In this context the ratification of the ILO Convention 169 and the resulting enactment of a reformed national constitution in 1994, which contains an article that recognises the pre-existence of indigenous people in Argentina and specific rights such as communal land owner-

ship, become particularly important. The recognition of indigenous pre-existence is paralleled by a new positioning of the country in national and international tourism. In 2004 tourism was declared as a strategic socio-economic activity essential for the country's development and thus a national priority (see Ministerio de Turismo 2011). In this context, the northwest-Argentine Andes and the Calchaquí Valleys in particular have gained priority status for touristic development (Secretaría de Turismo de la Nación 2005: 59, 97) and the opportunities for private investment in the tourism sector have been emphasised (Secretaría de Turismo de la Nación 2008: 62). Consequently, the Pachamama celebration has gained strategic importance as it represents a festivity where this internal cultural distinctiveness, one that is now promoted in Argentina, can be experienced first-hand.

Through the Pachamama celebration Amaicha is promoted as a place that is constituted by internal relations, where time stands still and the connection between people and the environment is still intact: "[...] to participate in the traditional celebration of the election of the Pachamama is like traveling in time: the offerings that are left for Mother Earth, summoning for fertility and successful harvests, are accompanied by canticles that echo in the valley" (Ente Tucumán Turismo 2009: 29). The festivity is thus an important element for the representation and promotion of an essentialist sense of place that appeals to a tourist's search for the cultural 'other', characterised by the intimate connection between people and the natural environment. Paradoxically, this essentialist sense of place is promoted in a folder published by Tucumán's regional tourism ministry (Ente Tucumán Turismo) which carries the title "Guide for investment in Tucumán's tourism" and only a few pages later estimated land prices for Amaicha, an area of "touristic vocation", are published (Ente Tucumán Turismo 2009: 56). This encouragement and endorsement of private investment in a collectively-owned indigenous territory is even more inconsistent when taking into account that the Province of Tucumán recognises in Art. 149 of its recently enacted constitution "[...] the communitarian possession of the lands that [indigenous people] traditionally occupy and [...] of which none will be transmissible [...]" (Provincia de Tucumán 2006). In contrast to this constitutional assurance, the specific situation of land tenure in Amaicha and the legally guaranteed rights of indigenous people are not mentioned in the folder. This is what *Briones* (2005: 11f.) identified as the parallel ad-

vancement of modes of privatisation actively forced by adjustment policies and the reconceptualisation of indigenous people as the holders of a cultural resource whose economic value has to be captured.

“Touristically speaking it is beneficial for us when they [the indigenous community of Amaicha] manage tourism. Nevertheless, we have also developed projects that we want to put into practice; and that is why we are looking for investors. We do not have to look for money for their projects [of the indigenous community]. They work with many organisations and NGOs; it is easier for them to get their projects financed than for us” (interview with a representative of the regional tourism ministry, 17/05/2012). Success for the regional tourism ministry is thus measured mainly through the attraction of private investors and growth rates in number of visitors and touristic infrastructure. Hence, the representation of indigenous ‘otherness’ for tourism promotion represents a threat for the territorial integrity of the indigenous community that has only recently been reassured through the enactment of various provincial and national acts.

#### 4.2 Indigenous politics of place and the Pachamama celebration

The reinscription of cultural difference into the national tourism agenda and the recognition of indigenous people’s pre-existence and specific land rights have provided the foundation for indigenous claims for exclusive control over ‘their’ cultural expressions. In the context of the Pachamama celebration the indigenous community of Amaicha put forward this claim, and the organisation of the cultural acts during the festivity has shifted in the last years from a mixed organisational committee to the indigenous community. As one indigenous representative states: “[...] everything that has to do with culture and identity is the responsibility of the [indigenous] community” (interview, 14/12/2011). This reassertion and stressing of their own identity (Information Booklet of the Indigenous Community of Amaicha) has become a crucial component of a politics of place that focuses on the protection and recovery of differential rights and puts self-development (ibid.) at the core of the political agenda. This attempt of ‘defensive localisation’ (Escobar 2001: 149) is paralleled, as documented, in many other case studies examining indigenous politics of place in the Andes (Escobar 2001; Perreault 2003; Andolina et al. 2009; Valdivia 2005; Perreault and

Green 2013), by a simultaneous effort to actively force wider connections with different actors and institutions (be it considered through the theoretical lens of a politics of scale [jumping scales] or of transnational mobilisation of networks). The current *cacique* of the indigenous community who grew up in Amaicha but later studied law in Buenos Aires and worked in the USA and Switzerland for the advancement of international indigenous rights, has played a key role in the creation of regional and national indigenous organisations such as the Union of the People of the Diaguita Nation (Unión de los Pueblos de la Nación Diaguita). His knowledge of indigenous rights and of current debates in the global indigenous movement has been crucial for the linking with national and transnational institutions. This scaling up has brought the Diaguita’s demands (of which Amaicheños are part) back onto the national and international agenda. This is especially important when taking into account that the Calchaquí Valleys have frequently been pictured home of an exclusively criollo population. In this context, the indigenous community ultimately has to deny this complex history and argue that their “culture sits in place” (Escobar 2001) in order to gain political agency and legitimise their claims (see also Castree 2004a: 156).

This politics of (re-)indigenising social claims, which has gained importance in the last decades, is far from an internally homogenous process. As *Boullosa-Joly* (2010: 109ff.) shows, the Pachamama festivity has become “a vector of identification” in the context of this identity redefinition and as a result has also become an internally conflictive matter. In this context of internal struggles over political control, external politics play a crucial role. Success in gaining outside political support (e.g. through securing control over land, external financing of community projects and study grants for community members) is a critical factor for the internal support of community representatives (see also *Boullosa-Joly* 2010). In the context of this search for outside support, governmental tourism promotion policies based on an essentialist sense of place play into the hands of the indigenous community. Therefore, the community does not contest the government’s effort to stimulate tourism nor deny the promoted image of Amaicha, but rather counteracts the neoliberal logic of private capital attraction that puts the control over territory at risk.

Since the Argentine crisis in 2001 private capital investment in the Calchaquí Valleys has risen significantly. National and transnational wine companies

have strongly invested in quality-wine production for global markets (Paolasso et al. 2013; Rainer and Malizia 2014). At the same time the Calchaquí Valleys (in the respective parts of Salta and Tucumán) have experienced a strong increase in amenity migration (mainly second homes) and hotel trade (Rainer and Malizia 2014; Rainer and Morales 2014). The pace of growth and its predominantly neoliberal logic becomes most visible in neighboring Cafayate (Province of Salta), located just a few kilometers from Amaicha, where between 2003 and 2013 1260 hectares of land have been converted into gated communities for urban dwellers seeking an up-market lifestyle and speculative investment opportunities (Rainer and Malizia 2014). In Amaicha the number of second homes has increased in the last years and various tourism entities have been established by non-community members without previous agreement with the community<sup>8</sup>. The strong growth of demand for land in the region thus represents an increasing threat for territorial integrity of communal lands (see also Sosa 2011). It is important to mention that the territorial politics of the indigenous community does not consist in trying to resist every investment from non-community members. Rather, the goal is for all such initiatives to be made in accordance with the objectives of the community. As a representative of the indigenous community states: “If people enter with us, with the community, with a legal agreement, they are absolutely welcome” (interview, 18/12/2011).

In this context of increasing external pressure on communal land holding, the community has adapted a pro-active politics that tries to contest private capital investment in their territory by developing their own communitarian projects (e.g. communitarian winery, self-sufficient agriculture, implementation of solar panels, fortifying of artisanal manufacturing of textiles). As one representative of the indigenous community states with reference to the construction of the communitarian winery: “We have to act and build up our own projects. There is much pressure from the outside” (interview, 20/12/2011). The winery is part of the broader project of “The Good Living of the Amaichas, a pathway towards a balance with the Pachamama” and was financed by the national ministry of agriculture (Ministerio de Agricultura, Ganadería y Pesca 2012). During interviews and informal talks with community members the importance of financial support by government institutions was frequently mentioned and this is also evident in the folder that presents the self-development model. With reference

to tourism and culture, the self-development model states: “With the presence of Enrique Meyer, national tourism minister, and Bernardo Racedo Aragón, head of the Secretary of Tourism Tucumán in the context of the inauguration of finalised public works [...] the intention of the national and provincial government to accompany the touristic development of the community of Amaicha was demonstrated. [...] The National Celebration of the Pachamama, the celebration of the traditional wine festival, the Inti Raymi [...] identify the way we present ourselves to the world” (Information Booklet of the Indigenous Community of Amaicha).

The complex alliances, tensions and negotiations described above also explain why struggles between the indigenous community and government institutions tend not to be over tourism as such but rather tourism has become an arena where struggles over political control are carried out and mediated. Essentialist representations of place as well as the constant forcing and contesting of particular wider relations have shown to be crucial in the context of these struggles.

#### 4.3 The election of the Pachamama: Embodied practices and ‘doing’ identity

“Good morning Amaicha, good morning my homeland, good morning to the entire world by virtue of the wishes of peace and love that Mother Earth gives us every day, every minute of our life, teaching us to give without receiving anything” (Video 1: 00:32-00:52).

With these words the Pachamama 2013 welcomed the 20,000 tourists and Amaicheños that were present at the most important act of the national Pachamama celebration: the presentation of the new Pachamama. The council of elders (*consejo de ancianos*) elects one of the oldest women of the community who will then represent Mother Earth for a year. Firstly, members of the indigenous community carry the new Pachamama on a sedan chair one loop around the crowded plaza. This chair is decorated with handicrafts invoking the Andean mythology, plants, flowers, fruits and vegetables. By combining emblems of nature and elements of Andean culture the Pachamama is placed in what she stands for: the human representative of Mother Earth (see *Photo 1*).

Secondly, the Pachamama enters a stage where the chief of the community, members of the council of



Photo 1 The elected Pachamama 2012 in a sedan chair on the plaza (Photo: G. Rainer)

elders, local and provincial government representatives as well as the head of the provincial tourism ministry await her. After her welcome speech, representatives from the indigenous community as well as from the local and regional government proceed to a small pile of stones called *Apacheta*, erected in honor of the Pachamama and place a fruit, vegetable or water as an offering for Mother Earth next to it. In doing so, they stress the importance of cultural richness, express their gratitude for the kindness of nature, emphasise the necessity to preserve, strengthen, and win back these values in Amaicha as well as in the entire world (see *Photo 2*).

The main act of the celebration thus appeals to the tourist's desire to engage with the cultural 'other', the pristine and the natural (*Hiernaux-Nicolas 2002; Hinch 2004; Stronza 2008; Babb 2012*) while simultaneously offering a stage for the interaction between representatives from the indigenous community and the government.

The festivity presents a unique possibility for the community to increase their visibility as indigenous people<sup>9</sup>. This identity is embodied through

the use of indigenous clothes and performed during the offerings. In public discourse and even in the provincial constitution of Tucumán "the special relationship that these [indigenous] people have with their Pachamama" (Provincia de Tucumán 2006, Article 149) is one of the most visible characteristics of being indigenous. For the community, the performance of offerings for the Pachamama in the context of a celebration with such a large visibility thus presents an important opportunity to put forward specific demands. Government representatives of the Province of Tucumán are integrated into the ceremony and their responsibility for the preservation of the cultural richness in Amaicha is frequently stressed in speeches by members of the indigenous community. The words of the Pachamama also appeal to the necessity to bring values of the Pachamama worship back into society: "Mankind should care about its Mother Earth and about nature because if she ends mankind will also end" (Video 1: 03:58-04:09). The ceremonial act can thus be considered an important element of an indigenous politics of place that tries to increase its visibility and actively positions itself in a provincial and national context.



Photo 2 Offerings to the Pachamama (Photo: G. Rainer)

In addition, the Pachamama, representative of Mother Earth and simultaneously of the indigenous community, does not only embody the nexus between culture and nature, but also ‘naturalises’ the connection between indigenous community and land. As one regional newspaper titles its video that shows the presentation of the newly elected, embodied Pachamama: “The Pachamama incarnates the love of Mother Earth” (Video 2). It is precisely the symbolisation of this connection that makes the Pachamama an important political representative, even though her official role consists solely in representing Mother Earth for a year<sup>10</sup>. This is also an aspect that the council of elders takes into account when deciding who is going to represent the Pachamama. As one council member in an interview with the regional newspaper *La Gaceta* states with reference to the re-election of the former Pachamama in 2013: “[...] it is alleged that the Pachamama should change every year, but this Pachamama has really been a unique case, a very well prepared woman that knows what she says, a woman that has a very special culture. She retired as a teacher, and with the government and other authorities at the national level she contracted a lot of important things that are related to the chores of the community” (Video 1: 1:10-1:41). The Pachamama is thus not

only the key figure during the touristic festivity but has also attended important official meetings over the last years.

Following *Hall’s* understanding of a relational identity (see also *Moore 1998; Li 2001*) the community has invested into an articulated positioning in the context of a specific place-project. *Photo 3* shows the Pachamama 2013 in a negotiation with authorities from the University of Tucumán for additional university places for students from the Calchaquí Valleys. The traditional indigenous clothes that she uses embody her cultural distinctiveness while her location in front of the Argentine flag simultaneously positions her within the nation<sup>11</sup>. She can thus put forward demands of indigenous people related to cultural distinctiveness that are enshrined in the new national and provincial constitution. This is particularly important when taking into account the history of indigenous invisibilisation in the Calchaquí Valleys. In Argentina, in popular discourse, indigeneity is still frequently considered part of a vanished past and the country is characterised in popular imagination of Westerners through European roots and indigenous absence (*Gordillo and Hirsch 2003*). The political importance of the Pachamama festivity in the context of (re)indigenisation of social



Photo 3 The Pachamama 2013 in a meeting with authorities from the University of Tucumán. Source: Photographer Ines Quinteros Orio, *La Gaceta*; Online available at: <http://www.lagaceta.com.ar/nota/536845/sociedad/pachamama-pide-mas-lugar-unt-para-jovenes-valles.html>, 13/09/2013

demands in Amaicha has to be seen against the background of this specific history that profoundly differs from other Latin American countries.

Even though the presentation of the Pachamama is without doubt the most important act of the celebration, the festivity also incorporates other cultural performances that have been shown to be crucial for a cultural politics in Amaicha. As one member of the indigenous community who simultaneously works in the tourism office of the local municipality (*comuna rural*) states: “After the presentation comes a parade of carriages, processions of folkloric academies, dance schools, gauchos and at the end a criollo marriage that demonstrates how we make weddings here” (interview 12/3/2012). Nevertheless, the relation between criollo/gaicho and indigenous identity has changed profoundly.

*Photo 4* shows a highly symbolic act where a horseman with a traditional gaucho dress and an Argentinean flag in his hand positions himself in front of the stage where the Pachamama and community and government representatives are located. On his left stands a horseman with traditional indigenous clothes and the wiphala flag that represents the native people of the

Andes. In this position the horseman in gaucho dress asks the Pachamama sitting directly in front of him for permission to start the gaucho parade. Hence, different cultural performances form an integral part of the festivity; however indigenous identity is symbolically placed in the most important position.

As part of the particular Argentine nation-building process (*Gordillo and Hirsch 2003; Briones 2005; Chamosa 2008, 2010*), the identity ascribed to Amaicheños in colonial and (post)colonial history has left room for their own interpretation and positioning in the context of an ongoing political struggle. Through embodied practices, the use of cultural symbols and ‘doing’ of identities during the touristic festivity, cultural politics in Amaicha are newly assembled. Consequently, the Pachamama celebration has become a crucial element for a cultural politics of place that focuses on the protection and recovery of differential rights and indigenous self-development. For the indigenous community the political stage that the Pachamama celebration presents might be even more important than its effects for touristic promotion. As one member of the community states: “Actually we want to build up our own communitarian economy and tourism is ac-



Photo 4 A horseman in gaucho clothing asking the Pachamama for permission to start the gaucho parade (Photo: G. Rainer)

cessible for that. It is not that tourism would be our principal objective. The principal objective is to have our own economy, our communitarian economy, and at the same time, in passing, take advantage of tourism. It will strengthen our economy a bit, but it will not be one of our principal pillars in the sense that without tourism we do not live" (interview, 14/12/2011).

## 5. Conclusions

The goal of this paper is to analyse the intertwining relationship between indigenous tourism and politics of place in Amaicha in the context of ground-breaking political changes in Argentina. In doing so, I focused on the annual Pachamama celebration that is organised and carried out today by the indigenous community but simultaneously has gained the status of a national festivity in the context of governmental efforts to promote tourism. Through long-term ethnographic engagement and the application of a methodological framework that combines the interpretation of visual material with empirical research (Rose 2007, Crang 2010) the paper argues for a more differentiated analysis of the political implications of indigenous tourism.

I have shown that while the current academic debate focuses on theorising place as intrinsically constituted

through its wider relations (Watts 1991; Massey 2005; Cresswell 2004; Andolina et al. 2009), the promotion of indigenous tourism forges an understanding of place as constituted through internal relations and as a locus of cultural distinctiveness (Salazar 2009; Babb 2012). In order to gain and secure differential rights indigenous people have to argue that their culture is born out of isolation from external influence and thus "sits in place" (Escobar 2001). This is why conflicts between the indigenous community and government institutions tend not to be over tourism and touristic representations as such but rather tourism has become a stage where struggles over political control of place, and over which translocal relations are to be forged, are carried out and mediated. Governmental efforts to promote private capital attraction for tourism development are contested by an indigenous politics of "defensive localisation" (Escobar 2001: 149) through building up and engaging with particular translocal networks (frequently termed globalisation from below).

In this context and taking into account Argentina's long history of cultural politics that tried to make cultural distinctiveness invisible and negate indigenous rights, the Pachamama festivity has become a unique event to negotiate and perform identity. Through embodied practices, the use of cultural symbols and 'doing' of indigenous as well as criollo/gaucho identities

during the touristic festivity, cultural politics in Amaicha is newly assembled. The performances during the festivity make indigenous demands visible and with the election of the embodied Pachamama the community has gained an important political representative.

Therefore, the Pachamama celebration has become an emblematic event 1) for the governmental promotion of indigenous culture as a resource for development, and 2) for the local renegotiation of indigenous culture and identity with the goal of territorial control and self-development. Consequently, the celebration has become a key arena for the political struggles between interests of the state (national and provincial) and the indigenous community that have long characterised Amaicha.

In a recent review on indigenous geographies *Coombes et al.* criticise a tendency in current literature to frame indigenous people “[...] as either heroes and champions of avant-garde politics or vulnerable casualties of colonial pasts and environmentally destructive futures” (2013: 697). My goal in this ethnographic examination of the implications of tourism for an indigenous politics of place is to give a more nuanced picture of the complexities of emergent indigenous geographies in Argentina. Governmental efforts to promote indigenous tourism have increased significantly across Latin America, and the way in which indigenous groups respond to, construct and appropriate tourism in their politics of place will thus continue to be of crucial importance.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> All citations of public documents and interviews have been translated from Spanish to English by the author.

<sup>2</sup> Other terms applied frequently are ethnic tourism, aboriginal tourism or simply cultural tourism (for a thorough discussion see *Butler and Hinch 2007*).

<sup>3</sup> See *Mitchell (2000)* and *Castree (2004b)* for a discussion on the politics of culture.

<sup>4</sup> This is not a particularity of Argentina or Latin America, as studies from Namibia (*Sylvain 2005*), Canada (*Rossiter and Wood 2005*) or the contribution of *Hall (2007)* on politics, power, and indigenous tourism demonstrate.

<sup>5</sup> Following *Chamosa (2008: 71)* criollo is “[...] a flexible ethnic term that Argentines used to describe both the descendants of colonial Spanish settlers, and people of mixed indigenous and European background, or mestizos.” “After the beginning of the massive European immigration, the use of criollo expanded to include any native Argentine regardless of race (*Chamosa 2008: 79*).” Instead of criollo also

the classification gaucho can be used even though it is generally more associated with the Pampa region and in some cases the cultural connotations might be different. For a thorough discussion on the Argentine folklore movement and the politics of cultural nationalism that reworked the cultural/ethnic classification criollo see *Chamosa 2010*.

<sup>6</sup> This analysis incorporated the snow-ball sampling to select interviewees. Interviewees are not listed and remain anonymous for the sake of privacy and confidentiality.

<sup>7</sup> *Schurr* draws on *Pink 2008*.

<sup>8</sup> In part this is also an internal problem as every community member can request for a plot of communal land for the construction of her/his own house when turning eighteen years old. In some cases members have sold their land (illegally, as selling communal land is forbidden by the indigenous community and the national and regional constitution) to non-community members that are interested in constructing and/or speculating.

<sup>9</sup> *Warren (2009: 781)* in a case study on identify performances of Mapuche people in Argentina also stresses the importance of ceremonies and other public events in order to make identity visible.

<sup>10</sup> Various studies on ethnicity and gender aspects in the Andes have argued that women are frequently perceived as being “more indigenous” (see for example *Babb 2012; Warren 2009*).

<sup>11</sup> The importance of clothes for the embodying of indigenous identities in representational acts has widely been acknowledged (see *Radcliffe 1997; Warren 2009; Schurr 2013*).

## Videos

Video 1: Celia Segura volvió a ser elegida Pachamama en Amaicha. Source: La Gaceta, 11/02/2013. – Online available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1IXa1bRfs4>, 13/09/2013

Video 2: La Pachamama encarna el amor de la Madre Tierra. Source: La Gaceta, 11/02/2013. – Online available at: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2LIWe6\\_qC0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2LIWe6_qC0), 13/09/2013

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