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Yagan Heritage in Tierra del Fuego (Argentina): The Politics of Balance

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Abstract: This paper analyses the tangible and intangible Yagan heritage contents exhibited by the Museo del Fin del Mundo (MFM, Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego, Argentina) and presented during its guided tour led by Yagan Community Counsellor Victor Vargas Filgueira. We show how the critical outlook of Fuegian history offered in the latter challenges the traditional past-only fossilized view of the Yagan, building past–present links and helping to overcome biased hegemonic discourses. We also discuss how employing a member of the Yagan Community at the MFM has been an efficient and low-budget strategy that helps to comply with some Goals of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which are difficult to attain in developing countries. Significant outcomes of this process include: (a) providing a full-time formal job to a member of an Indigenous Community who has been traditionally dispossessed of/in their own territory; (b) acknowledging him as a knowledge holder and valuable member of society; (c) moving the role of Yagan People from subject to agent of the MFM. This process has fostered the dialogue between Yagan voices and academic discourses, challenging traditional Western dichotomies-ecology/economy, natural/cultural heritage, and so forth, and contributing to the discussion of key concepts on sustainability and engagement.

Keywords: Tierra del Fuego; Yagan; heritage; Museo del Fin del Mundo; exhibition; guided tour; UN-SDGS



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1. Introduction. The Challenges of Addressing Heritage with an International Agenda and Local Resources

The aim of this paper is to compare two key dimensions of the contents representing the Indigenous Yagan heritage within the Museo del Fin del Mundo (Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego, Argentina)—the museum's exhibition and the guided tour led by Yagan Community Counsellor Victor Vargas Filgueira. The Yagan society is also named Yamana in numerous historical and ethnographic texts [1]. In Hausikuta (Yagan language), this term designates a male individual, therefore the Communities both in Chile and Argentina have chosen to use Yagan as their ethnonym.

This exhibition—guided tour comparison is discussed under the light of two main questions. The first one focuses on how the concept of heritage is put into practice by state institutions and contested by Indigenous Communities and academics, thus initiating a dialogue with the potential to start overcoming the biased hegemonic discourses that have often permeated the institutional representations of the Indigenous Peoples inhabiting the ancestral territories currently included within Argentina. The second question focuses on to what extent such institutional, Indigenous and academic practices and discourses are consistent with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN-SDGS), and, in turn, to what extent the Goals and Targets proposed by such Agenda are attainable by these agents within a developing country such as Argentina, and, more specifically, within its southernmost province: Tierra del Fuego, Antártida e Islas del Atlántico Sur.

The concept of heritage has had numerous definitions, redefinitions and discussions, which go beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is relevant to mention here that we agree with the notion that cultural heritage includes not only monuments, groups of buildings and sites (as defined by the 1972 UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage) but also single objects or groups of objects, portable or non-portable, that are collectively recognised as evidence of social, cultural and historical memory, and which therefore require protection in order to be preserved for current and future generations [2–5]. The concept of cultural heritage has subsequently been further expanded in order to involve all human-made material culture items—that is, tangible heritage—as well as practices and values—that is, intangible heritage [4,6,7]. In turn, cultural heritage and natural heritage are in many cases inextricably linked, insofar as intangible but socially deep cultural values can be created along the engagement of people with natural features [8]. This ontology of engagement [9] is particularly visible in cases such as the Fuegian Indigenous Peoples, whose way of life and worldviews involved a deep and meaningful relationship with nature, of which, as we will mention below, they consider themselves a part.

However, in many parts of the world, including Southern South America, Indigenous cultural values operate nowadays within wider socioeconomic and cultural contexts, pervaded by capitalism. Given that capitalism is led mainly by a cost–benefit logic oriented to maximizing profits for specific stakeholders at national and international scales, societies have had their economic activities oriented towards the exploitation of resources and human labour [10]. Within this context, there has been a trend to consider heritage as a “resource”, a concept which may have its risks since it can be (and sometimes has been) appropriated by certain stakeholders as an enabler towards its unregulated and unlimited exploitation. Yet, as some authors have clearly argued, the conception of heritage as resource can have a positive bias if we acknowledge that it stems from an ecological framework which points out that resources require responsible management to ensure their protection, particularly when they are non-renewable [5,11]. Thus, “*heritage (natural and cultural) can be viewed as a ‘resource’ if its value points towards the flourishing of human existence in all its forms and as a whole, being this the end, and not if it is seen exclusively as a medium of economic growth. From this point of view, natural and cultural heritage are considered as potential sources for spiritual and material development for local communities, nationally and internationally. Through these criteria, sustainable development projects can be planned. The interpretation of heritage shall incorporate all these aspects of management and presentation heritage to the rest of humanity. Such presentation will be the way towards sustainable development*” [12] (p. 150, our translation). These concepts highlight the crucial importance of managing and presenting heritage as a public good with multidimensional values, all of which should be taken into account if sustainable development is to be achieved.

Some of these concepts have been included within the UN 2030 Agenda For Sustainable Development, which is “*a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity*” that presents 17 global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 Targets (sustainabledevelopment.un.org (accessed on 17 August 2021)), defined by Heads of State and Government and High Representatives in September 2015. Given that Argentina is a UN member since 1945, this Agenda does apply to the definition of its policies. We tackle the analysis of this Agenda and its application to our case study with two key issues in mind. Firstly, what is the place of culture and heritage within the 2030 Agenda. Secondly, how does the application of such an Agenda become possible within a country with a very shaky socioeconomic background, which currently has 42% of its population below the line of poverty according to official data [13]?

2. The UN 2030 Agenda: Addressing Culture as a Fourth Dimension

Out of its 17 SDGs, the UN 2030 Agenda includes only one target within one goal that explicitly deals with cultural and natural heritage: Goal 11 aims to “*Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable*”, and, within it, Target 11.4 proposes to

“Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage”. Given that culture is rooted in practice and memory, that it conveys identity, and constitutes a source of habit and a means to foster and sustain change, cultural practices are unavoidable in the generation of sustainable development. In turn, such practices are unavoidably people-centred and entail a crucial element of people’s existence: human dignity [14].

Thus, the little explicit emphasis on culture and heritage in this Agenda is an important shortcoming for its implementation and has been criticized by a number of international agents and institutions. For example, the Culture 2030 Goal Campaign has provided solid data about this issue via a keyword analysis of the Voluntary National Reports/Reviews (VNRs) issued from 2016 to 2019 as part of countries and cities compliance with the UN 2030 Agenda. These reports show

“a persistent reference to the three main dimensions of sustainability: “society/social”, “economy/economic” and “environment/environmental”, conversely, these reports show a use of only 5% of the term “culture/cultural”, which should be considered as a fundamental fourth dimension in the achievement of sustainable development.” [15]

A similar point was made by the UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments, Barcelona, Spain) in its Manifesto on the Future of Culture, quoting the Statement of the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments issued in the Sustainable Development Goals Summit (New York, NY, USA, 24–25 September 2019), which states:

“We commit to promote culture as the fourth pillar of development and as a core component of local identity, and its role as a strand of global solidarity, and as a vector for peace and human rights. We further commit to foster locally relevant cultural policies and programmes on memory, heritage, creativity, diversity and knowledge which are key for local sustainable development.” [16]

This bias against the cultural dimension in general, and the cultural heritage produced by Indigenous Peoples in particular, is quite visible in the 2017 VNR submitted by Argentina, which only mentions Indigenous communities as one of the country’s sectors with “social vulnerability” [17]. Following this line of reasoning, the report then mentions the aim to *“eliminate gender disparities in education and ensuring the egalitarian access to all levels of education and professional training for all vulnerable persons including disabled persons, Indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations”* [18]. The same aim is expressed in the Local Voluntary Reviews submitted by Buenos Aires City in 2020 and 2021 [19,20]. None of these VNRs refer to archaeological, anthropological/ethnographic or contemporary Indigenous cultural heritage, nor to Indigenous Communities as potential agents of SDGs implementation.

The lack of focus on culture within the SDGs is not just a question of respecting and celebrating human diversity (which indeed is a valid point), but, more importantly, its neglect has a direct impact on SDGs implementation, since, put simply, each goal will be put into practice via the values, means and experiences brought about by local culture. As noted by the Culture 2030 Goal Campaign *“We recognise the importance of cultural contexts in the local implementation of the SDGs and the crucial role played by local cultural actors, institutions and organisations”* [21]. Thus, as it stands, the 2030 Agenda is not tapping into the great potential of local cultures as a means to implement the SDGs, a process that all agents and institutions need to foster, since culture—next to society, economy and environment—is indeed a fourth and crucial dimension in making the Goals viable and feasible. In sum, all SDGs will happen within culture and no Goal can be achieved without it.

Finally, within this debate on culture, another important element is the growing theoretical notion that heritage is an inextricable mixture of cultural and natural factors, which most notably blend in the formation of mixed landscapes [22–25], though such a mixture is also visible in the production of artefacts and even in the creation of intervened human bodies prepared for burial [26]. This theoretical trend has been pervaded by, among other sources, Indigenous ancestral knowledge revealing the crucial ways in which people and nature are linked, the latter being a source of life for the former, and people

being the custodians—not owners—of nature. As will be shown below, such ontology of engagement is visible in the politics of balance advocated by Indigenous Communities in Tierra del Fuego.

Yet, as noted in the introduction, the lack of economic resources is also critical in the discussion of how the SDGs can be implemented in developing countries. Although Goal #8 aims to “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”, Goal #10 aims to “Reduce inequality within and among countries” and Goal #17 Target 17.1 aims to “Strengthen domestic resource mobilization, including through international support to developing countries, to improve domestic capacity for tax and other revenue collection”, putting such Goals and Targets in practice becomes an extremely challenging task in developing countries such as Argentina. The current socioeconomic structures of these countries have colonial roots, and even though they now are formally independent, many still undergo long-term economic crises. For this reason, although we do agree with the importance of addressing culture as a crucial fourth dimension intervening in the implementation of SDGs, we also stress that, without proper funding, such proper implementation is also untenable. Within such context, we have nevertheless identified an event in Tierra del Fuego that, as will be shown below, has opened up room for complying with some of these SDGs. This event involves three sets of agents: the two key ones are the Museo del Fin del Mundo (MFM) and the provincial state institutions from which it depends, and the Indigenous Yagan Community, which has been officially interacting with the MFM since 2017. The third agents within this are two of the authors of this paper (A.B and D.F) ¹ who, as archaeologists and researchers at CONICET (the main state-funded institution dedicated to the promotion of science and technology in Argentina—<https://www.conicet.gov.ar/conicet-descripcion/>, accessed on 18 August 2021), are interested in contributing to the creation of sustainable development strategies that enable and benefit from the participation of the Yagan Community members; such strategies, in turn, should promote their integral wellbeing.

A first step in this process has been (and still is) to produce meaningful and respectful dialogues with the Yagan Community in Argentina regarding their past and present cultural and natural heritage, which have led to the production of some co-authored texts [26,27]. A second step is to acknowledge, research and learn from the actions taken by Yagan Community members in order to protect and share their heritage and to generate a discourse about it in their own voice: such acknowledgement aims to enhance their visibility within the social and academic arena, with the hope that it will help increase their participation in the above mentioned sustainable development strategies. This paper is part of these steps.

3. Archaeology, Ethnography and Self-Identification: Past and Present of the Yagan Society

The Fuegian archipelago—currently divided between Chile and Argentina—is formed by a set of numerous islands separated from mainland Patagonia and located towards the south of *Atelily* (the Selk’nam term for the Magellan Strait) between parallels 52° S and 56° S. The region has abundant archaeological and historical-ethnographic evidence of the long-term existence of Indigenous groups, who developed different modes of life which were sustained during several millennia. The earliest known archaeological evidence attests to an initial hunter-gatherer mode of life both in the north of Isla Grande (e.g., site Tres Arroyos with dates of 10,685 uncal. years BP [28]) and also in the south (e.g., site Imiwaia I with dates of 8500 cal. years BP [29,30]). This entails that Tierra del Fuego—*Karukinka* in Selk’nam terms—was the southernmost region of the planet inhabited by Indigenous Populations.

In southern Isla Grande, specifically along the northern shore of *Onashaga* (the Yagan term for the Beagle Channel) evidence of a hunter-gatherer-fisher mode of life with canoe mobility dates back to 7200 cal. years BP (e.g., site Tunel I) [29,30]. From the 17th century onwards, the Indigenous inhabitants of this portion of the Fuegian archipelago had numerous encounters with Western voyagers, naturalists, military officers, ranchers, entrepreneurs,

religious missionaries and, later, ethnographers: these interactions led to the production of a rich set of historic-ethnographic texts, drawings and photographs which document a number of aspects of the Yagan society [31–39]. Archaeological research started in the early 20th century and increased from the 1970s onwards, contributing to building more academic knowledge on the Indigenous groups inhabiting the region [40,41]. Such knowledge on the Yagan society and its Ancestors showed that their traditional mode of life was based on capturing sea lions and fur seals, hunting guanacos, fishing, gathering shellfish and plants, as well as consuming beached whales. The traditional toolkit produced by these groups and recorded both by archaeology and ethnography includes a number of bone tools—harpoons of different types, wedges, awls, and so forth, some of which were delicately decorated with engravings—lithic tools (scrapers, side scrapers, projectile points, etc.), ornaments (bone beads, animal teeth beads, feather headbands, body paintings) and ceremonial artefacts (e.g., masks, painted tablets, etc.) [39,42,43]. Ethnographic sources also inform that the traditional Yagan society had an egalitarian structure, with different gender-based social roles and divisions of labour based on a deep reciprocity system, as well as an extremely rich worldview involving a great number of myths and stories of Ancestral times, some of which were transmitted and re-enacted during the *chiéjaus* (mixed-gender initiation ceremony) and the *kina* (mainly male initiation ceremony) [35,44].

A key point along the described historical process was the establishment of permanent buildings inhabited by Westerners on the Yagan *Usin*–territory, Ushuaia Bay, which had been inhabited by Indigenous groups for several millennia, was chosen as an appropriate location for settling the Anglican mission buildings, which were occupied from 1869 to 1888 [45]. The Argentinean state was also openly interested in claiming sovereignty over these Yagan territories. Thus, Argentinean President J.A. Roca ² instructed Navy Commander Lasserre to explore the Fuegian region and to found the first permanent towns. As a result of this, the first Coast Guard headquarters were also located in Ushuaia Bay in 1884 [46].

By the end of the 19th century, the traditional Ancestral Yagan way of life had suffered deep and apparently irreversible changes due to the combined impact of: (a) the invasion and occupation of their traditional Ancestral territories and the establishment of missions, state offices and capitalist businesses—which led to the use of their lands and resources as well as to the incorporation of Yagan people as underpaid (or unpaid) workers—and (b) several epidemics—which severely increased mortality rates [47]. The traditional Yagan society was disjointed/unstructured, but Yagan people were resilient: in spite of the harmful effects of the invasive process led by Western occupation and exploitation of their territory, in the 21st century Yagan persons living in the Argentinean side of the *Usin* led a process of self-identification and in 2014 organised the *Comunidad Indígena Yagan Paiakoala de Tierra del Fuego* (CIYPTDF), which is based in Ushuaia. In 2021, the CIYPTDF was recognised by the *Registro Nacional de Comunidades Indígenas* (RENACI), which depends on the *Instituto Nacional de Asuntos Indígenas* (INAI) in Argentina, a process that has provided the Community with full legal status (Resolution 2021-18-APN-INAI). The Yagan Community chose the term *Paiakoala* to complete its formal name since the word refers to those Yagan groups “*who did not want to go to the Anglican Missions and continued living on the beach*” ³. The first and current authorities of the CIYPTDF are: Victor Vargas Filgueira (First Counsellor), Roberto González (Second Counsellor) and Teodosio González (Coordinator). Thus, with the creation and legal recognition of the Community a new and crucial agent emerged within the socio-political arena of Tierra del Fuego. As will be shown below, this agent has started contributing to the creation of new discourses and practices regarding past and present Yagan cultural heritage.

4. Methodology: Exploring the Statics and Dynamics of Yagan Heritage at the Museo del Fin del Mundo

The data, analyses and interpretations presented in this paper were constructed following a twofold set of methods which focused on: (a) the Yagan heritage exhibited at the Museo del Fin del Mundo (MFM), and (b) the guided tours led by Mr. Victor Vargas

Filgueira. The rationale behind this approach is that while the exhibition provides a “hard” set of contents about Yagan history and cultural heritage which are likely to be mostly “static”⁴, the guided tours, which entail an oral presentation given within the exhibition rooms, are likely to provide a “soft” and “dynamic”⁵ set of contents which can reinforce and/or contest specific elements of the exhibition contents. Thus, exploring the interactions between both generates a dialogue and a potential tension of discourses which is worth analysing, insofar as out of such interactions new information can emerge regarding the ways in which Yagan heritage is understood and currently presented to the public. In turn, the analysis of such interaction process can also shed light on the roles performed by different agents in the conservation, display and dissemination of Yagan heritage according to some of the UN-SDGS (the MFM as an institution and Mr. Virctor Vargas Filgueira as a museum-guide and Yagan Community Counsellor).

Regarding the MFM, we carried out an extensive qualitative data collecting process [48,49] about its history, starting from the socio-political context of its foundation, its development as a provincial institution, and the histories of the buildings and collections contained in them (see results in the Section 5). Fieldwork to record the MFM exhibitions was carried out twice, in 2013 and in 2017 (no significant changes were found between both visits, hence all results are condensed within one set of data, making no chronological distinctions). These museum visits were carried out with permission of the MFM director, who also kindly provided information about the institution. The fieldwork was based on site visits and on the collection of data about museum items and interpretation materials, including the study of the selection of artefacts, images and texts and the ways in which these were displayed [50,51]. To this end, our research methods involved the following steps: (a) walking along the museum rooms following the order proposed by the museum script; (b) mapping the museum’s floor plan and rooms spatial connections to identify different potential visiting routes; (c) identifying the rooms where Yagan heritage items are exhibited; (d) documenting the exhibited artefacts, images and texts via photographs and notes. This latter step included: (1) identifying types of exhibited artefacts -archaeological, ethnographic and/or contemporary-, making a complete inventory of these and linking them to the information provided by their captions (if any; e.g., provenance, type of artefact, type of function, date, etc.); (2) recording the information provided in written paragraphs displayed in posters or charts in the glass cabinets or exhibition rooms; (3) recording the images (photos, drawings, maps) displayed in the same cabinets and rooms, the visual information they provide and the accompanying written information about them (if any; e.g., author, date, represented territory or location, names of photographed persons, etc.); (4) recording the type of display in which each set of items was exhibited (glass-cabinet shelves, pedestals, floors, etc.; room walls; pedestals without cabinets, and so forth; position of the glass-cabinet or isolated item within the room; type of lighting used; etc.). After this data-collection process, our analysis focused on how the display and interaction between artefacts, images and texts generated a discourse on Yagan heritage, and what kind of contents—information, concepts and values—are included in such discourse.

In turn, the guided tours led by Mr. Victor Vargas Filgueira were tackled by a qualitative methodology led by two activities. Firstly, one of us (AB) took the guided tour and took written notes about its contents (this fieldwork activity was carried out on 2017). Secondly, in order to complete the research process leading to the preparation of this paper, we carried out an interview with Mr. Vargas Filgueira for which we prepared an open question questionnaire [52–54] that included the following questions:

- (1) When did you start working as an MFM guide?
- (2) Who made you this job proposal?
- (3) Did you previously know this person? If yes, how?
- (4) How was the initial proposal (type of role, responsibilities, workload, work schedule)?
- (5) Who was the MFM director when you started working as a guide?
- (6) Which topics do you tackle in your tour? Are they always the same?
- (7) How did you / do you prepare the contents to address those topics?

- (8) Was there any proposal or requirement from the MFM authorities regarding which topics to tackle or how to present them?
- (9) How do you relate your guided tour with the MFM exhibition?
- (10) Which feedback do you get from the MFM visitors?
- (11) What kind of visitors are mostly engaged with your guided tours? [Though this is an open question questionnaire, we did offer potential replies to help organise the answer to this question: international tourists—national tourists—Tierra del Fuego residents—Ushuaia residents; adults, young people, children.]
- (12) Were you asked and/or have you received any comments on cultural biases brought by the MFM visitors which they bring from their formal education and/or sociocultural background and/or other touristic spaces, which contradict any of the contents of your speech and even your presence as a member of the Yagan Indigenous Community? (e.g., “the Yagan are extinct”; “there are no Indigenous persons in Tierra del Fuego”; “the Yagan want to appropriate foreign lands”; etc.)
- (13) Do you see other areas outside the MFM where the Yagan People can have potential space for action with positive effects for it as Community? In particular, we refer to the application of your Indigenous knowledge and vision on ecological issues and sustainable economic activities which impact land and sea, which are key parts of your heritage.

After carrying out the interview, the replies given by Mr. Vargas Filgueira were discussed by the three of us in order to deepen our mutual understanding of how Yagan viewpoints on heritage affect the way in which the guided tour offers a critical discourse that re-interprets the discourse presented by the MFM exhibition.

5. The Museo del Fin del Mundo: Acknowledging Past Yagan Heritage

The Museo del Fin del Mundo (MFM) was founded in 1979 in Ushuaia, the capital city of the Territorio Nacional de Tierra del Fuego in Argentina (prior to its formal designation as an Argentinean province in 1990, see below). Figure 1. The history of its foundation and the anthropological and archaeological exhibitions have been described and analysed in previous publications [48,55], so in this section we will synthetically present the key elements which refer to the Yagan heritage. We focus here on the material, visual and written discourses they produce, and we highlight which UN-SDGS are met via the exhibition and which ones are still missing from it.

The museum was initially named “Museo Territorial” and renamed “Museo del Fin del Mundo” in 1992, just two years after the *Territorio Nacional de Tierra del Fuego* became the *Provincia de Tierra del Fuego, Antártida e Islas del Atlántico Sur* (TdF-AIAS, the newest province of Argentina proclaimed by national law in 1990). The current governing authority of the MFM is the *Dirección Provincial de Museos y Patrimonio Cultural* (which depends on the *Secretaría de Cultura de la TdF AIAS*). The MFM’s mission and vision includes the protection of natural, historical and anthropological heritage of the region (www.mfm.tierradelfuego.gov.ar, accessed on 18 August 2021). Figure 2.

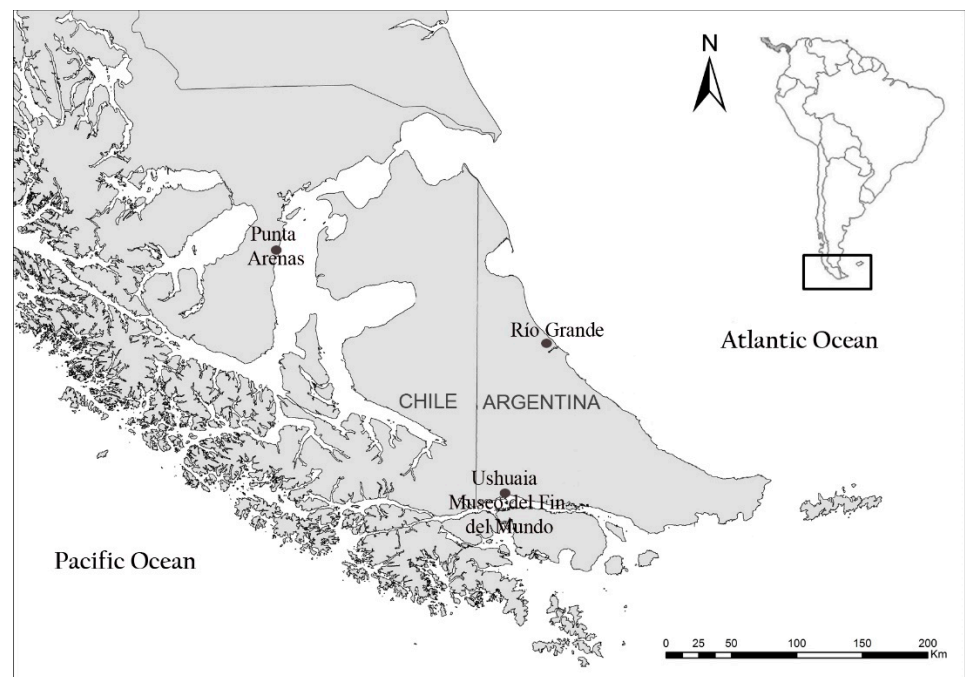


Figure 1. Map of Tierra del Fuego showing its current binational distribution (Chile and Argentina) and the location of the Museo del Fin del Mundo in Ushuaia. Map prepared by the authors.

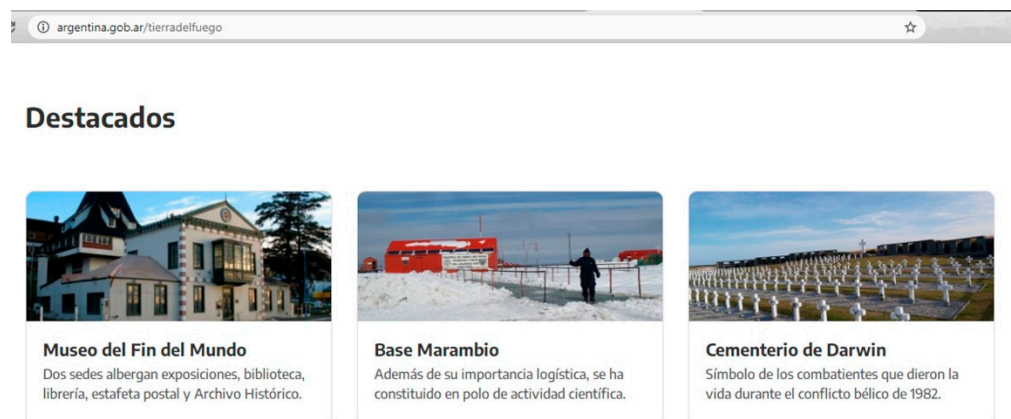


Figure 2. Initial screen of the official webpage www.argentina.gov.ar/tierradelfuego (accessed 4 October 2021). This presents three photos linked to the three main territories included in *TdF AIAS*: Isla Grande de Tierra del Fuego, Antarctica (Base Marambio in the Argentinean sector) and Islas Malvinas (Darwin cemetery of 1982 Argentinean War Heroes). Note that the photo representing Isla Grande is one of the MFM buildings, which shows the great importance given to this institution as an icon of Fuegian identity.

The MFM main building includes a couple of sections with anthropological and archaeological contents, which were designed in 2010. These sections present a number of items and information regarding Yagan⁶ cultural heritage. The first section shows a timeline starting at 8000 BC, a map with the earliest archaeological sites of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego and small glass cabinets with archaeological artefacts. These include harpoon points, which as mentioned above, are a key material culture item and have become an icon of Yagan society and of their early Ancestors. The timeline ends at the moment of contact between the Indigenous populations and the European voyagers: in the Yagan case, the timeline refers to the encounter with the Dutch Hermitte expedition in 1624. The final portion of the timeline includes a map showing the traditional territories—that is,

prior to European contact and settlement—of the four known Indigenous Fuegian societies: Selk’nam, Haush, Kawésqar/Alakaluf and Yagan.

In the following section, the Yagan society is represented by a poster and a collection of artefacts displayed in a glass-case. The poster presents the Fuegian Indigenous societies as “*the heirs of traditions rooted in the depth of time*”, thus linking them to the archaeological materials displayed in the Section 4 and describes their hunter-gatherer-fisher mode of life: nomadism, subsistence, social organization and initiation ceremonies. The texts in the poster are written in past tense verbs, and no references are made to the presence of a Yagan Community as a current part of Fuegian and Argentinean society. Ethnographic photos are used as illustrations, with no captions indicating location, date, photographer, etc. The poster is next to a wooden and glass cabinet containing the following items:

- (a) two embalmed sea lions (*Otaria flavescens*), a species which archaeological data and historical-ethnographic sources indicates as an important part of the Yagan diet. The presence of these two items within this museum exhibition hints towards the notion that cultural and natural heritage are indeed inextricably linked by human agency;
- (b) a photograph of a Yagan canoe in a coastal landscape, with harpoons, paddles and bows (this photo does have a caption which refers to the French Mission Scientifique Du Cap Horn–1882–1883–);
- (c) two harpoons made with bone points and wooden shafts (with labels describing the type of harpoon, mentioning that they are replicas and the name of the person who made them)⁷;
- (d) two rush baskets made with spiral technique (with a label indicating these data but lacking provenance information);
- (e) a small-scale bark and wood canoe—another key material culture item which operates as a Yagan icon—with two miniature harpoons above it and two miniature paddles inside it (with no label).

The exhibition continues with sections dedicated to the Westerners who visited and occupied the region, yet it does not mention any details about the deep negative effects of this occupation on the Yagan territory and population, nor does it present any information about the current situation of the Yagan Community [55]. Thus, the MFM generates an institutional discourse in which the Indigenous Fuegian peoples are characterised via “hard” archaeological and ethnographic materials, images and texts exhibited in a fixed display. The exhibition and its discourse contribute to produce an “official history” consistent with what is mostly taught at schools, in which Yagan material culture—that is, tangible heritage—is celebrated, but only as part of Argentina’s past (see Figure 3).



Figure 3. CAPTION MFM room with part of the exhibition of Indigenous Fuegian heritage. Note the sea lions in the left glass-cabinet, the poster with “Yamana” and “Selk’nam” information, the glass-cabinet with a bow on the right and the miniature canoe in a pedestal right in front of them. Photo: Ana Butto.

Thus, the exhibition script and design are quite traditional, with no interactive displays fostering any kind of participation by the audience see details in [48]. Yet, it is relevant to note that the MFM, with its limited financial resources and few trained staff, has evidently focused on acknowledging the early presence of Fuegian Indigenous populations in the region, and on providing an educational panorama of the diverse cultural heritage these Indigenous groups generated in the remote and recent past. This way, in spite of its very traditional display, this exhibition is consistent with the UN 2030 Agenda, which in its Vision Point #08, declares that “*We envisage a world [. . .] of respect for race, ethnicity and cultural diversity*”. In turn, the educational layout of materials, texts and images is also consistent with Point #25, which declares that “*All people, irrespective of sex, age, race or ethnicity [. . .] indigenous peoples, children and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations, should have access to life-long learning opportunities that help them to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to exploit opportunities and to participate fully in society*”. Providing such an exhibition of Yagan tangible heritage is a step forward towards accomplishing such goals, but it is clearly not enough. Many other Points, Goals and Targets of the UN 2030 Agenda cannot be met via such a traditional exhibition, held by an underfunded museum: lack of economic resources and few opportunities to train the staff are two key elements which hinder the development and modernization of the anthropological and archaeological sections of the MFM. Yet in 2017, the institution found an innovative way to update its discourse without having to redesign its exhibition: hiring Mr. Victor Vargas Filgueira as a tour guide. Since then, things changed.

6. “Uniting Worlds: The Other Gaze”: The Guided Tour

After their self-identification as Yagan Community in 2014, Victor Vargas Filgueira and other Yagan Community members started giving talks and workshops at schools in order to help raise awareness of their existence as Community, and to share some of their Ancestral cultural knowledge with Fuegian pupils and teachers. Mr. Vargas has also been active within the cultural arena regarding the memory and Ancestral knowledge of the Yagan people, and as a result of this he published his first book in 2016 [56]. That same year, Mr. Vargas visited Mr. Hugo Santos, who at the time was the Culture Secretary of TdF AIAS province and asked him whether he could get some school teaching hours in order to teach school pupils Yagan basketry techniques—this would entail having a formal job within the provincial state school system. In turn, Santos and former governor Rosana Bertone, made a job offer to Mr. Vargas as a MFM guide. From January 2017 Mr. Vargas started working as museum guide, and he continues to do so nowadays: the job involves seven daily hours of work as part of the museum’s permanent staff. At that time, the museum’s director was Lic.⁸ Silvia Tale, while museum guide Carina Cuatrocchi, who was in charge of designing the workshops, invited Mr. Vargas to propose the topics for his workshops and guided tour. He thus proposed “Yagan basketry” and “Yagan life” as the two workshops he leads, which are booked by teaching institutions (from kindergarten to university level). In turn, in his guided tour, which he entitled “*Uniting worlds: the other gaze*”, Mr. Vargas aims to “*give a historical panorama from 1492⁹ onwards*”. In this daily tour, he refers to topics such as colonization, conquest, genocide, human zoos, the slaughter of Indigenous persons in Tierra del Fuego, Argentinean identity and Indigenous identity—“*I just cannot talk about the canoe and leave it there*”. The MFM authorities only asked him to outline the workshop and guided tour contents so these could be properly advertised at schools, but they did not condition the topics or the ways to tackle them.

“The topics and length of the tour vary according to what I read and also depend on the questions by the public. I also aim not to repeat myself, so each tour is different from the next one. My Ancestors, my Yagan identity and the long path I have covered help me talk confidently and at length during my tours.” His interaction with the audience led him to understand what they were interested in, and that is why he chose “to read as many books as possible”, thus adding both scientific data and terms in Yagan language. Mr. Vargas states that he always tries “to quote as many sources as I can, so that people

can search for these data afterwards and confirm that what I have stated is true". The open dialogue between Ancestral knowledge and scientific information fostered by Mr. Vargas is present in his guided tour and has also pervaded the relationship with us (A.B. and D.F.) since the first time we met, back in 2015.

Different audiences take this guided tour: international tourists, national tourists, Fuegian inhabitants, students, school pupils. Their reactions to the contents of this tour are also different. International tourists ask about genocide and human zoos: *"it is like they are trying to confirm what happened in America"*¹⁰. In turn *"national tourists come with a clear idea of what hegemonic history says, and they know that another history exists, but they are surprised by the exact data I give them"*. Data about street names and local events are more useful for the local public, because *"they can revisit some places which have names of 'conquistadores', or Yagan names, and find another [historically accurate] meaning for them"*. Given the sensitive contents he presents, after some of the tours some people ended up crying: for this reason, Mr. Vargas states that he has developed his mettle in order to give his talk without weeping himself, so that the tour will not turn too grim. Most feedback from the public is positive and that gives him *"a sensation of being useful"*. With time, he realised that *"this works. It works for the Yagan, we are useful, we are offering something useful and it works for the visitors too, it is a boomerang effect. [. . .] My work here has made me grow as a person, and you take that home"*.

It is clear that the discourse presented by the museum's script and exhibition are completely different from the contents of the guided tour offered by Mr. Vargas. He states that *"previous [non-Indigenous] guides had already said positive things about the Yagan people [. . .] they all showed a critical view of the 'perfumed history'"* offered by the hegemonic view of the past. What is entirely new, however, is that the person leading this tour is a member and leader of the Yagan Community, who brings to the MFM an oral presentation which partly counteracts its static and past-laden discourse. The contents of his guided tour offer a dynamic, counter-hegemonic, critical history based both on Ancestral traditional Yagan knowledge and on scientific sources—the latter chosen by Mr. Vargas as tools to validate part of his speech. In doing so, he builds bridges between Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews, playing with the fact that the public will be open to incorporate more information if they learn that the basis of the guided tour contents are grounded both in academic data and in his own experience as part of the Yagan Community. Thus, material culture heritage and data offered by archaeology, ethnography and history are combined with intangible heritage, oral history and Indigenous technologies offered by Yagan people at present time.

7. Discussion and Concluding Remarks: Moving towards SDGS from a Combined Western & Indigenous Perspective

While the Secretary of Culture had the initiative to generate this new position at the MFM, the museum has shown institutional openness and flexibility by welcoming Mr. Vargas as part of its staff and by giving him freedom to propose and design his guided tour and workshops. We are not certain about whether the museum had redefined any of its aims and views to fit the UN 2030 Agenda, yet, in practice, the innovative events occurring within the MFM have led the institution to be able to comply with some of the Agenda's SDGS and Targets. First, the initiative led by the MFM and activated by the work of Mr. Vargas Filgueira is entirely consistent with the above mentioned Goal 11, which aims to *"Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable"*, and, in particular, with Target 11.4 which proposes to *"Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage"*. The MFM has in its very mission the safeguard of Fuegian cultural and natural heritage and has done so, within its means, ever since its foundation. However, providing a full-time job to a member of the Yagan Community focused on re-interpreting the MFM's sections on Indigenous Fuegian cultural heritage has been a first step towards fostering Indigenous resilience. In turn, this makes the institution—and by extension the city—more inclusive than prior to this decision. Moreover, the contents of the guided tour help construct a critical discourse towards the negative effects of colonization and capitalism over Indigenous people and nature, thus

tackling the issue of sustainability as a core element which necessarily links demographic and ecological debacles with changes in material culture and loss (or deterioration) of cultural and natural heritage.

Second, the museum has become an “inclusive” and “participatory” institution, in accordance with Goal 16. In particular, Target 16.7 intends to “*Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision making at all levels*”, a goal that is partly met by opening the decision making process about the guided tour and workshops to a Yagan person operating as museum worker. This has transformed Yagan people from “museum subjects” to “museum agents”, a transformation which has empowered one person at present, but which has further potential for the Community in the future.

Third, introduction Point 2 of the 2030 Agenda states that “We recognize that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. We are committed to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions—economic, social and environmental—in a balanced and integrated manner”, while Point 23 states that “People who are vulnerable must be empowered [including] indigenous peoples”. These points are then translated into Goal 8, which, as noted above, aims to “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all” and Goal 10, target 10.2: “By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status”. We consider that giving a full-time job to a Yagan person in Tierra del Fuego is a clear way to start accomplishing such goals, starting by providing him with a dignified way of living in his own Usin Ancestral land.

Fourth, the fact that such job is funded by the Provincial state and that it deals with presenting, teaching and raising awareness about Yagan heritage, clearly recognises Mr. Vargas Filgueira as an Indigenous knowledge holder, thus acknowledging him as a respectable and valuable member of society. In turn, it contributes to raise awareness of current Yagan presence in Tierra del Fuego, thus breaking away from the mistaken but usual notion of “extinction”, which has pervaded the hegemonic history and common sense knowledge for a long time. All of this helps deconstruct racist and classist biases against Indigenous Peoples in Argentina in general and in Tierra del Fuego in particular, thus moving towards their true economic, social and political inclusion.

A fifth relevant point is that Goal 8, Target 8.9 proposes “*By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products*”: the contract of a Yagan person as MFM guide is a starting point in the creation of jobs in the tourist industry for Indigenous persons, who therefore are starting to be acknowledged as stakeholders within this kind of business. Yet many more opportunities should follow if this goal and target are to be properly met: such opportunities mostly depend on national, provincial and municipal policies and practices, but also rely on the attitudes of private businesses dealing with cultural tourism. In Ushuaia, such tourist businesses not only profit from selling tours along the Fuegian landscapes of what was formerly the Yagan Usin, but also benefit from retailing postcards with ethnographic photos and souvenirs with Yagan and Selk’nam traditional designs [57]. Such kinds of cultural appropriation need rethinking both in terms of the respect that past and present Yagan cultural heritage, places and landscapes require and deserve, and in terms of the crucial importance of involving Yagan persons in the responsible management of and profit from such cultural and natural resources.

Finally, within the MFM but also outside it, the Yagan Community is leading actions which are consistent with the UN SDGS #14 “*Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development*” and #15 “*Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss*”. In recent years, the CIYPTDF has started to work together with other agents dealing with environmental issues, because, according to Yagan Ancestral worldview “*Yagan people form part [of earth/territory] but are not its owners*”. Thus,

“we have to get involved in all political spaces involving environmental decision-making. Policies must be made from our Community, because our interest as Yagans is that our green remains green. We value balance because we know imbalance. Extreme discourses lead to disinterest and to hate, and for this reason balance is required when fighting for Indigenous [rights].” The Yagan involvement with Ancestors, land and sea within their *Usin* is very apparent, and the deep inextricable links between natural and cultural heritage emerge here again.

In sum, the comparison between the MFM exhibition and the contents of the guided tour led by Mr. Victor Vargas Filgueira shows stark contrasts. The MFM presents “hard” materials which offer a rather static representation of Yagan cultural heritage, characterised not only by the exhibition of a permanent selection of items fixed in the museum’s space (as in most museums), and by its non-interactive displays but also with little diachronic information, which does not address the key changes and injustices suffered by the Yagan People due to the invasion of their territory (land and sea). In turn, the guided tour offers a much more dynamic and interactive discourse, which “softens” the hard material culture items by intertwining these with the stories, values and concepts provided during Mr. Vargas’ oral presentation. This presentation also completes several missing elements from the exhibition, particularly those regarding the effects of Western occupations over Fuegian territories and people, thus providing the public with a critical history based on the experiences and memories of the Yagan Community, which challenges the official history offered by the MFM as a state-funded institution. As discussed above, the guided tour offers not only a counter-hegemonic discourse on the past-present continuities and transformations of Yagan society, but also a wider view of heritage itself: a view that sheds light on the inextricable links between natural and cultural heritage woven by the engagement—not ownership—of people with land and sea. This does not mean that the MFM exhibition did not attempt to shed light on such relations—the exhibition of the two embalmed sea lions is an example of such didactic aim. The MFM also plays a key role in the conservation of early (“prehistoric”) artefacts such as the harpoon points, which are an essential material culture item that has become an iconic metaphor of Yagan cultural heritage. Thus, the MFM has provided an open scenario with a number of material culture items on which new Indigenous interpretations of the past and the present can be built and disseminated. In turn, such interpretations become validated by the institution itself.

This case study shows how Yagan initiative has led to increasing its current visibility in Tierra del Fuego and how the flexibility of an institution such as the MFM has led to updating its exhibition discourse without changing its display. The investment in adding one key guide to the museum staff seems to have been a win-win situation: the MFM has increased the sociocultural value of its guided tours and workshops scheme, adding contents which are in line with the UN 2030 Agenda SDGs, while a member of the CYPTDF has gained a well-deserved source of income, and, by extension, the whole Yagan Community has gained social visibility and increased respect from the national and international public.

It is clear that this is just a spark of hope within a very difficult socioeconomic context, and it needs to be said that a full development of the UN-SDGS in Argentina requires deliberate state policies and solid funding. It is also clear that even actions oriented with very good will cannot comply with the full Agenda: for example, Goal #5, which aims to “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” and Goal #8 Target 8.6 which proposes to “substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training” are practically untenable under the current situation.

Yet what this case study does show is that one small but significant change can be managed with little funding and lots of ingenuity. The participation of a member of the Yagan Community in the MFM shows how Indigenous knowledge and worldviews—their intangible heritage—have been wisely used to create a fruitful dialogue with the museum’s audiences, local authorities and academics. This dialogue has aimed to surpass old biases and grudges created in previous centuries by other agents and has replaced these with fruitful reflections and useful concepts based on Ancestral worldviews but totally in tune

with contemporary problems. In this politics of balance, ecology and economy, Ancestors and present generations, nature and people, natural and cultural heritage and material and intangible heritage can be separated for analytical or strategic purposes but, in practice, they are all bound together if we are to develop sustainable practices based on the ontology of engagement.

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Notes:

1. We stress that many other colleagues who are not co-authors in this particular paper, are also interested in this aim.
2. Prior to being president, J.A. Roca had organised and led the “Desert Conquest” between 1878 and 1885 in order to annihilate the Indigenous populations and annex Patagonia to the Argentinean territory.
3. All quotations with no bibliographical reference are extracts of our interviews and conversations with Victor Vargas Filgueira.
4. By “static” we mean that the exhibition is likely to be characterised by a display of a permanent selection of items which are fixed in space and offer little room for active engagement by the public.
5. By “dynamic” we mean that the guided tour is likely to be characterised by its fluid and performative nature, not being exactly the same each time and probably being partly shaped by the interaction of the tour guide with the public.
6. The MFM written information uses the term “Yamana”, which, as explained above, is not the ethnonym currently chosen by the Indigenous Community.
7. Notably, the person who produced these harpoons is not a Yagan but a Mapuche (Indigenous society of Patagonia), though this is not explained in the caption see discussion in [45].
8. Lic is short for Licenciada, a university degree which often takes around five or six years to get in Argentina.
9. 1492 is the year that Cristobal Colón arrived to America. Even though it is not a strictly relevant date for Fuegian history, it is taken in the Americas as the historical milestone indicating the start of invasion, genocide and exploitation of Indigenous Peoples.
10. The term America is used in Argentina to refer to the whole continent, including North, Central and South America.

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