Public Policy and Rural Mapuche Livelihoods in Chile: Recognition, integration or subordination?

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Abstract

Mapuche indigenous development in Chile is deeply intertwined with state public policy. Based on interviews with Mapuche and state officials, this paper argues that public policy moves between three positions: recognition, integration and subordination. In the areas of identity, health and education, some progress has been made towards intercultural arrangements, building on collective indigenous culture. However, in the sphere of productive activities, the focus is principally based on individual accumulation and transculturation along capitalist lines. This situation reinforces political and social marginalization, state dependency and clientelism, which in turn lead to perpetuation of conflicts between the state and indigenous organizations.

Keywords

Chile, Mapuche, culture, public policy, livelihoods, integration

1. Public policy and the challenges of cultural integration

Indigenous development in the post-colonial period was defined in terms of the relationship between nation-states based on a dominant, hegemonic culture – principally ‘western’ and modern – and indigenous collectivities grounded in another cultural condition (Fanon 1963). The ‘other’ was defined predominantly by the dominant culture, assuming a subaltern condition within this discourse (Said 1979). In the Latin American context, Rodolfo Stavenhagen situated this otherness in terms of the long historical process of insertion of indigenous peoples into colonial and postcolonial systems, defined by two principal forms of exploitation: class exploitation of indigenous people, who are poorly remunerated and without land and resources, and their ethnic condition, leading to discrimination and rejection by national society based on dominant western values. Consequently, Stavenhagen (1988) noted that the response is not only one of material deficits, but something deeper and more complex involving the recognition of these collectivities and their own ethnicity and culture within the framework of national societies. Colombres (2008) suggests that the development of indigenous peoples will not be possible if only added to the projects of other societies and will only be achieved when the indigenous peoples are conscious of their identity and cultural specificity.

In Chile, the forms of engagement between indigenous people and state are constructed on public policy, on the part of the nation-state on the one hand, and also on the part of diverse claims and
positions held by the Mapuche on the other. The return to democracy in the early 1990s provided the context for the signing of the Indigenous Law in 1993, with land claims as a key priority. The situation twenty years later has mutated beyond land claims into stronger identity considerations, such as in the fields of health and education (Tricot 2009; Ruiz 2013). In one hand, public policy construction and execution are permanently being (re)defined, and often generate contradictory interventions and outcomes (Bengoa 2006; Parraguez and Barton 2013). There is also the factor of dynamism and the changes in cultural positions and aspirations. In practice, the process of engagement within the dominant winka culture has led to different positions emerging with respect to the nature of this engagement (Boccara and Bolados 2010).

This relationship between the Chilean nation-state and the Mapuche indigenous people provides a case study of a changing cultural landscape and associated power relations, and the role of public policy in shaping indigenous livelihoods. It is precisely this relationship between cultures and the process of recognition, integration and subordination in a national context that is central to this paper. On both sides of the winka-Mapuche relationship, different actors point to the positive and negative aspects of recognition, integration and subordination. By recognition, we refer to the role of legislation and specific discourses in promoting multiculturalism. By integration, we refer to the design and implementation of specific inter-cultural public policy interventions. By subordination, we refer to the negation of cultural diversity and the promotion of a dominant, western approach in diverse public spheres.

The basic premise of the paper is that, despite attempts by the nation-state to engage with indigenous people and integrate them into the dominant culture (with certain exceptions), the process is preconditioned by the fact that it is, de facto, an integration of the subaltern culture into the hegemonic western cultural model, defined by the latter’s concepts, value systems and practices. It is important to note, however, that the relationship is not one of asymmetry between the state and indigenous people solely at the macro level. There are also asymmetries at regional and local levels, and within and between indigenous communities - between coastal Mapuche and highland Mapuche, between rural and urban Mapuche, for example - principally in terms of the nature of engagement with the state and its systems of benefits and controls. This is due to the institutional and normative structure, which is organized to satisfy the demands of a homogenous society defined by winka legislation.

The paper focuses in particular on public policy developments in the fields of identity and cultural practices (understood as cultural policy), health, education and productive activities. The argument is that, while there remains an interest on the part of the Chilean state to recognize and integrate Mapuche people through multiculturalism, for example in inter-cultural health and education, the dominant form of engagement, in terms of production, employment and income, remains wedded to the dominant, western model of capitalist accumulation (see also Ramos 2009; Martinez 2010; Richards 2010). In this model, economic change is primarily individual, while cultural change is collective. These asymmetries between collective cultural considerations and the individual accumulation dynamic of productive activities are what many Mapuche identify as an important obstacle to their socio-economic and socio-political development. In practice, there has been an erosion of Mapuche livelihoods, affecting traditional production cycles and the transmission of traditional knowledge, leading to transculturation defined by the Chilean state’s development model.
2. Recognition: The construction of a legal framework for state-indigenous engagement

The relationship between Mapuche indigenous people and the Chilean nation-state has been characterized by repression of the former by the latter, in the sense one can define the process of engagement as subjugation rather than recognition. The integration of the territory of Araucania meant the domination of indigenous territory, with the state expropriating 90% of Mapuche land and forcibly dividing communities. In the process, there was active involvement of the \textit{winka} population who, via fraudulent purchases, exercising pressure, or rent transformed to purchase, took over Mapuche land. This process has generated historical claims (CEPI 1990) involving direct action by Mapuche groups, strong police repression, and the use of the anti-terrorist laws by the state. Others were forcibly evicted and their ‘integration’ was part of a more strategic land occupation and domination by national actors and \textit{mestizo} colonizers. However, confronted with this hegemonic state position, many Mapuche chose to identify themselves more closely with mainstream \textit{winka} culture, especially as more and more Mapuche became urban rather than rural inhabitants during the second half of the twentieth century.

Indigenous law was designed and approved in 1993, and this formed the basis for a new period of engagement between the state and the different indigenous peoples within Chile’s national borders. This law established a new institutionality to take the agenda forward. The National Indigenous Development Commission – CONADI – would operate within the Ministry of Planning (MIDEPLAN; renamed Social Planning in 2011) to promote diverse initiatives and represent indigenous interests within the state apparatus. Its principal activity would be to manage land settlement claims. However, it has not been fulfilled its mandate. The persistence of high levels of poverty in indigenous communities, violent conflict, deaths of indigenous activists for policeman repression and on-going difficulties in establishing dialogue and supporting more sustainable indigenous livelihoods remain. To this can be added the gradual change in indigenous demands, not only referring to the land but also to issues of health, education and culture.

The new legal framework did not engage with culture according to the cosmovision of indigenous peoples, but rather revealed an extension of \textit{winka}, cultural patterns of western society. In the Araucania Region, Curilaf identifies the following framework:

“For Chileans and the leadership class, the Araucania Region belongs to Chile and that is all, but in the Araucania Region there are two levels that overlap, but cannot be seen, do not understand each other, there is no understanding of the other and there is no coexistence of the two cultures because they are different”\textsuperscript{vi}.

The existence of these levels has led to discrimination towards the Mapuche people, which has profound long-term implications (Mellor et al. 2009). The lack of satisfaction to date is a consequence of two different processes: on the one hand, the heterogeneity of indigenous territories and their inhabitants, and on the other the absence of a regulatory framework of the Chilean state towards indigenous peoples (Bengoa 2006; Bruckmann 2010).

Institutionally, the implementation of CONADI came to symbolize the weak links between the state and indigenous peoples (Newbold 2004; Carruthers and Rodriguez 2009), and the problems of coordination across state institutions and other agencies. This generated negative externalities for development of Mapuche livelihoods. These included: discontent among indigenous communities.
since their problems were not resolved, a decapitation of indigenous social capital, and a lack of representation of the indigenous population, that began with the lack of fulfillment of indigenous demands by the state, as identified in the Indigenous Law. For example, political rights have remained unaltered over time. On the other hand, there was competition to capture economic benefits, which led to fragmenting of communities and the suppression of social capital. This affected, in a negative way, the use of local resources and the ability to negotiate with external actors to generate improved welfare for the entire community (Bebbington 1999; Durston and Duhart 2003). In practice, there is an emerging legal basis to the conflict between local indigenous actors and the Chilean state, and between local indigenous actors and non-indigenous private landowners.

Implementation from a regional context led to a lack of coordination with other public institutions. This in turn generated a wider offer of projects and resources for the same population. These differences, however, reveal a historical problem since in Chile public interventions fulfill sectorial goals, with minimal or no coordination with other institutions operating at the regional level. From the local context, this lack of coordination is a critical problem, revealing lack of knowledge and experience on the part of political-administrative decision-makers in the country. This limits the return of traditional practices and knowledge and their applications as endogenous potential in indigenous communities, information on productive systems and climatic factors.

Culturally, the implementation of the Indigenous Law implied the subjugation of the Mapuche population to the forms of winka society. The excessive formalism of this law in structuring traditional indigenous community organizations led to a homologation of the two cultures. This affected three key aspects of Mapuche culture: traditional authorities, land ownership, and ‘being’ Mapuche. In practice, the Indigenous Law has been transformed into an issue of economic benefits of an individual nature above and beyond the generation of collective basic rights, for example, healthcare along the lines of Mapuche culture (Newbold 2004). According to Palominos (2011), it is necessary to reactivate mechanisms of territorial organization based on traditional practices and a political agenda to revert the individualism that is rising within the Mapuche population.

The results have had profound effects in the territory, on its inhabitants and on sociopolitical relations. However, the responsibility is shared by the state and the Mapuche associations and leaders. The responsibility of these leaders is not having generated consensus or adequate representation, reducing unity in the face of the Indigenous Law. There is also resistance by other actors in Chilean society to recognize Mapuche social, economic and cultural rights, given that their condition as a minority is synonymous with their integration within winka society (Hopenhayn et al. 2006).

3. Integration: Intercultural aspects of identity, education and health

The mechanisms of intervention used by the Chilean state in Mapuche communities have generally been in opposition to their cosmovision. In practice, Mapuche society is integrated via different instruments offered by public institutions, almost exclusively representative of winka society. What is relevant to this argument is that the practices and traditional knowledge are at the same time diminished by dominant winka, western perspectives. Mapuche knowledge or kimün mapuche, the basis of Mapuche culture, is essential for any discussion of integration. According to Caniullan:

“All words that can be used in mapudungun can only be explained in their essence with Mapuche knowledge and are valid only in a

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determined context, and not even Spanish or indigenous people can explain the essence of this knowledge, since it is part of Mapuche culture.”

The central element of this argument is the context within which traditional knowledge is generated and transmitted. The transmission of traditional knowledge requires direct contact between learning and practice, with the goal of not decontextualizing this from local livelihoods (Gertz 1994), and that it is a distinctive and identity-based element of a specific cultural group. Language associated with these processes reinforces cultural identity by identifying the existence of ancestors, daily activities, and current and future planning. In this way, there is an increased understanding of nature and how to act as a community (Citarella et al. 2000; Westra 2008). What is relevant in this argument is that the distribution of traditional knowledge is not homogenous within communities (Menzies 2006). On the one hand, it represents a cultural dimension within a social context, where all participants are familiar with this knowledge; on the other hand, it is a specific cultural dimension of certain people, for example those with responsibilities for traditional medicine and cultural practices (Shiva 1993). The law recognizes the right of indigenous peoples to maintain and develop their own cultural practices, while the role of the state is to promote and strengthen the indigenous cultures that comprise the heritage of the Chilean nation. The intercultural bilingual educational program is one of the instruments involved in this process that has been managed at different scales. Reulman notes that,

“The Mapuche population, when speaking about education, relates it to school education and does not consider informal education within their own culture. The Mapuche education exists and has its own difficulties, but the people in the communities leave it to one side or ignore it.”

The role of the Chilean state has been contradictory in terms of this process. This emphasis on formal education affects the valuing of traditional knowledge among Mapuche and is influential in the reduction of its use. Within all these programmes at different scales, differences have been principally economic, in terms of focus and in terms of educational practices. Since the intercultural programmes did not link knowledge production with knowledge transmission through practice (since they are classroom-based), there has been a methodological barrier to progressing with interculturality. Duran notes that, “the concept cannot be converted into practice, since the people cannot manage the shift from concept to practice”.

In second place, the situation of indigenous languages in Chile – given that Spanish is the ‘official’ language – is vulnerable and unequal. Compared with the Spanish language, indigenous languages have lacked access to resources and certain benefits, consequently they have been confined to domestic and informal usage and even there, Spanish is displacing them. Araucania is the region with the best distribution of bilingualism (Spanish and mapudungun), with strong variations according to age, social groups and their geographical distribution (CONADI – UTEM 2008a, b). However, according to UNESCO, mapudungun is one of the 3.000 languages in danger of extinction (CONADI 2008). What is relevant in this argument is that, given the high levels of vulnerability in Chile, the recovery of mapudungun is central, and urgent. The recovery and stabilization of mapudungun are included in the Indigenous Law. This recovery requires that the intercultural educational curriculum embrace the different systems and the meanings that are conveyed by each cultural group (Huenchulaf et al. 2004).
The challenge is to transform this generation knowledge of through praxis, according to local context and cultural and geographical diversity.

The situation for intercultural health is even more complex than education. The official health system does not recognize Mapuche medicine and its specialists. Meanwhile, the degradation of ecosystems has led to a loss of native biodiversity, which is the raw material for the production of Mapuche medicines. The principal basis for Mapuche medicine is the balance between forces that interact between individuals, the family and the community, based on values and spiritual elements relating to the environment and norms of social interaction, that emphasize continuities between the natural, social and ‘supernatural’ worlds (Battiste and Henderson 2000; Calluil 2008; Pehrson et al. 2011). Reciprocity is another element that is an essential dimension of Mapuche culture associated with Mapuche medicine. It has, however, been replaced by exchange based on winka society premises, such as monetary transaction. Currently, all Mapuche medical specialists are paid with money, so a lack of money limits access to these specialists, while at the same time leading Mapuche to public health care services rather than Mapuche alternatives.

Indigenous medicine differs from western medicine in three ways: a universal vision that seeks to explain the causes, diagnostic and treatment of the illness; a cultural context within which healthcare is provided; and a repertory of local pharmaceutical products extracted from local ecosystems (Caniullan 2003). This is one of the arguments provided in the final report of the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples of 2000. The central point of this argument is that the proposal of intercultural health requires that public health institutions, including the Ministry of Health, understand health not only as a condition to treat, but also as a relationship between the individual and his or her surroundings, including the social context. The proposals of the public institutions in terms of health promote the idea that areas with high indigenous population concentrations should have different health provision systems, and that the state should generate these. This has been the focus of the Health Ministry. The structure consists of providing an intercultural health facilitator responsible for promoting intercultural health in the municipalities that depend on this health service.

The principal issues that can be drawn from the experiences of education, language and health relate to the ways in which these elements have been ‘added-on’ to dominant, centrally-produced winka systems. There is a perpetuation of the main principles of the western ideas that form the basis of the Chilean state, with little or no regard for the basic values and connections made by Mapuche, in particular in relation to cosmovisions and associations with nature and land. For this reason, progress in terms of the recognition of Mapuche language, education and health alternatives has been slow and stilted. The progress has also done little in terms of promoting the basic ideas of ‘difference’, in favor of integration as a complementary or supplementary element of the dominant winka position. Without a clearer notion that there are more profound links between knowledge, nature and culture, as compared with winka society, it is unlikely that full recognition of Mapuche practices and the implications for land use and community development will take place.

4. Subordination: Productive activity and individual accumulation

From the first attempts at Chilean state land management, the process of ‘individualization’ of land had destabilising effects on the semi-nomadic livelihoods of the Mapuche people (Faron 1969). Firstly, the abandoning of traditional ways of life led to problems in subsequent decades in terms of productivity and the ability to satisfy family and community needs. Sedentarism not only meant that subsistence
activities become agriculture-based, but also increasing poverty as hunter-gatherer practices were restricted (Malon 2004). Secondly, the irreversible modification of the physical environment in the communities gave rise to erosion and the loss of biodiversity (Menard and Pavez 2005). The Mapuche population also began to appropriate foreign cultural elements for their own benefit, for example, the use of the horse, harvesting of wheat, and breeding of cows and sheep (Bengoa 1995). This process led to the adoption of new productive activities that have persisted until today as subsistence activities.

More recently, Indigenous Law signalled the creation of an Indigenous Development Fund with the aim of financing special programmes, administered by CONADI. The investment linked to this fund has led to the generation of demands that were not envisioned in the original law. For example, local development projects, such as special interest tourism, have led to demands for access to state-controlled protected areas, water rights and infrastructure, amongst others. In this sense, the institutional report of 2008: ‘Recognise - a social pact for multiculturality’, understood that the development policies generated by the Chilean state were not compatible with indigenous traditions, customs and expectations. These policies had conventionally considered indigenous people as poor peasants and not as indigenous people in their own lands (MIDEPLAN 2008). This recognition opened up the debate about how suitable the development instruments were, and if there were real links between what was provided by the public institutions and the demands of the indigenous peoples.

Two other factors also explain the reasoning behind the idea that productive activities should be individual and not communitarian. According to Vidal, when the lof operated as the political unit, the productive activities were structured around each individual family: each family received a specific area of land to workxvii. This factor, although refuted by some Mapuche leaders, explains in part why the results of associative projects are not optimal in practice. Individuality in productive activities is linked to cultural patterns that are specific to the Mapuche people. Given this individualisation, it is difficult to conceive of associative projects, and the results have generally not met expectationsxviii. This is especially the case with new machinery, given the costs associated with maintenance and repairxix. Another factor is the process of transculturation, during which money has been transformed into a means of payment, eroding the cultural practices of trafkintu and trueque, both associated with Mapuche reciprocity. Productive individualisation and the accumulation of resources have been evident in the major intervention projects of the Chilean state in the Araucania Region during the twenty-first century, ‘Origins’ (Orígenes) and ‘Araucania Living Land’ (Araucanía Tierra Viva). Thus, state intervention has also led to the individualisation of families in relation to communities.

The third element that explains the individualisation of productive activity relates to development assistance and clientelism. On the one hand there is the integrative, paternalistic, centralist, welfare state, and on the other indigenous people who are vulnerable, dependent, clientelistic and atomized in terms of power. While it is the case that within the traditional lof system there was a high level of family in production, the Chilean state promotion of individualized production systems and benefits is a strong signal of subordination to a dominant set of national productive practices that has little resonance in Mapuche communities (Latta 2009). Money-based transactions now also define production and commercialization, which in turn leads to poverty-based criteria defined by income and the lack of it (Agostini et al. 2009; Calbucura 2009).

In terms of cultural subordination, this strong push towards creating Mapuche ‘farmers’ engaged in conventional agricultural practices, with products and technologies defined by winka agricultural agencies, is a strong example of the lack of recognition of production alternatives. While the Chilean
state has not generated conditions for pertinent participation, the Mapuche population could not decide what type of development they required to improve their quality of life\textsuperscript{xix}. The opportunities require the fusion of three elements - information, training and participation - that create the links between traditional practices and knowledge and new market technologies (Leff 2003). The central point of this argument is the clash of cultures, within which the economic drivers of \textit{winka} society predominate, mediated by money.

5. Transculturation through private accumulation

Despite the Indigenous Law of 1993 and claims of progress towards a more multicultural Chilean state, there is evidence to suggest that the relationship between Mapuche and the \textit{winka} state remain tied to a situation whereby indigenous integration is defined and conditioned by dominant western notions of culture and development. In this paper we discuss three main areas in which this dominance generates the subsequent subaltern condition of Mapuche culture. The first of these is recognition, the second integration, and the third subordination. In all three of these areas, it is possible to find the roots of the unequal engagement between two cultures that cohabit ‘Chilean’ national territory and that has consistently failed to generate more equitable outcomes in terms of the livelihoods of Mapuche people.

In terms of recognition, the 1993 Indigenous Law marked a turning point in engagement between Mapuche and the state. However, the weaknesses of the law itself gave rise to the frustrated ambitions that can be seen in the struggles for Mapuche identity and improved welfare today. The law provided commitments to improvements in welfare; however, it did little to guarantee Mapuche culture and basic rights. The essence of the law was recognition based on western cultural norms, as opposed to a full set of guarantees for Mapuche autonomy and culture. Consequently, erosion of Mapuche culture during the ongoing process of transculturation became inevitable, as the law did little to change the dominant western assumptions about the need to promote private capital accumulation, at household rather than community level. It also linked these accumulation opportunities to state subsidies tied to new local institutional arrangements that would enter into conflict with the traditional structure. This was reinforced by private land ownership within the communities, a condition that was a requisite for accessing public funds.

Integration in health and education systems in order to establish intercultural systems made important strides following the Indigenous Law. However, these systems have significant failings related to basic ontological and epistemological dimensions associated with indigenous livelihoods. Intercultural education and health systems were built on basic western knowledge systems, with complementary elements designed to cater to indigenous needs. However, given the fact that knowledge and health are founded upon cosmovisions that link indigenous peoples to their past, their environments and to each other, based on different cultural precepts, this interculturality effectively became an adapted western provision based on individualized notions of what knowledge is and what it is for, also how ill health emerges and how it can be ‘treated’.

Subordination of Mapuche culture to western, \textit{winka} culture is perhaps best understood in terms of the relationship between community and individual. Private, individual accumulation has been promoted by the Chilean state as the best mechanism for reducing poverty in Mapuche communities. However, this objective is contradictory. On the one hand, these poverty rates compared to national non-Mapuche socio-economic conditions have varied little over time. On the other, the condition of state support has been the promotion of private over collective initiatives. Since collective arrangements lie at the heart
of traditional Mapuche livelihoods and the organization of the *lof* (albeit alongside strong, family autonomy), the state promotion of individual private accumulation sought to offer income and a road out of poverty at the price of eroding traditional cultural arrangements.

These three processes reveal the nature of transculturation in Chile. Despite the Indigenous Law, or as a consequence of it, Mapuche-winka cultural relations are defined by basic western conceptualisations of culture and development. The Indigenous Law did not provide the necessary recognition of Mapuche ‘difference’. Instead, it offered forms of integration and interculturality defined by western views of ‘progress’ mediated by changes in individual accumulation defined by rising incomes. Individual rationality was emphasized over collective traditional culture, giving rise to different strategies within different communities as state funding was offered in exchange for transculturation. This transculturation process would be dominated by western notions of development, in which Mapuche would be subaltern and the Mapuche cosmovision subordinated to a reductionist, rationalist notion of wellbeing and ‘progress’.

Rather than analysis of public policies according to their own criteria of effectiveness and relevance (their own merits), it is at the level of the cultural assumptions that underlie these public policies that the problems in this engagement are to be found, and where possible answers are likely to emerge. At present, public policies based on western cultural hegemony lead to a persistence of political and social marginalization, state dependency and clientelism, and the perpetuation of numerous conflicts. It would appear that only through a profound revision of cultural positions and their co-existence can that new legislative and public policy arrangements flourish that will transcend historical divisions and facilitate different visions of wellbeing and development in a multicultural society defined by all cultures rather than by one alone.

8. Bibliography


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Endnotes

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