



## Heritage and history. Educate in museums and high schools (Bahía Blanca, Argentina)

*Patrimonio e historia. Educar en los museos y en las escuelas secundarias (Bahía Blanca, Argentina)*

**Hernán Perrière<sup>1</sup>**

Universidad Nacional del Sur, Bahía Blanca – Buenos Aires, Argentina

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3984-1379>

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### ORIGINAL ARTICLE

#### KEYWORDS

School, heritage, museums, education, teaching practices

This article presents the results of an educational research on pedagogical use in high schools of the heritage of a history museum of Bahía Blanca city (Buenos Aires, Argentina). The aim is to describe the aulic treatment of three history teachers to address local history and its articulation with the national historical processes of the XIXth century. Methodologically it is framed in an ethnographic approach, whose purpose was to look at the school on the everyday scale, to rescue the production of knowledge and practices. The main theoretical debates related to the relationship between museums and schools, the valuation of heritage in Argentine educational laws and the purpose of history as a school discipline in relation to identity processes are briefly addressed interculturality. Two axes of analysis of aulic practices are described: (a) themes of local or national history to be recovered (frontier, national state formation, military campaigns and indigenous peoples) and (b) the pedagogical resources used by teachers to produce historical knowledge (texts, didactic games and drawings). Finally, the possibilities of school use of museums for the teaching of history and the possibilities of appropriation and resignificance of officialized historical accounts are discussed.

### PALABRAS CLAVE

Escuelas, patrimonio, museos, educación, prácticas docentes

En este artículo se presentan los resultados de una investigación educativa sobre la utilización pedagógica en las escuelas secundarias del patrimonio de un museo de historia de Bahía Blanca (Buenos Aires, Argentina). El objetivo es describir el tratamiento áulico que realizan tres docentes de Historia para abordar la historia local y su articulación con los procesos históricos nacionales del siglo XIX. Metodológicamente se encuadra en un enfoque etnográfico, cuya finalidad fue mirar a la escuela en la escala cotidiana, para rescatar la producción de saberes y prácticas. Se abordan brevemente, los principales debates teóricos vinculados a la relación entre museos y escuelas, a la valoración del patrimonio en las leyes educativas argentinas y la finalidad de la Historia como disciplina escolar en relación con los procesos identitarios nacionales y la interculturalidad. Se describen dos ejes de análisis de las prácticas áulicas: a) que temáticas de la historia local o nacional que se recuperan (frontera, formación del Estado nacional, campañas militares y pueblos originarios) y b) los recursos pedagógicos utilizados por las docentes para producir conocimiento histórico (textos, juegos didácticos y dibujos). Por último, se discuten las posibilidades de uso escolar de los museos para la enseñanza de la historia y las posibilidades de apropiación y resignificación de los relatos históricos oficializados.

<sup>1</sup> Correspondencia: [hernan.perriere@uns.edu.ar](mailto:hernan.perriere@uns.edu.ar)



## 1. INTRODUCTION

This article discusses the aulic treatment of the heritage of a history museum of the party of Bahía Blanca city (Buenos Aires, Argentina) as a pedagogical strategy for the teaching of history. In the visits and when they return to the classrooms, both the teachers and the students appropriate the museum heritage in rereads of the past exhibited.

As mentioned, the objective of this article is to present how three teachers used the heritage of the Museum and Historical Archive (hereinafter MHA) as a pedagogical resource to address issues related to local history in the aulic contexts of two public high schools belonging to the General Direction of Schools and Education of the province of Buenos Aires (School 1 and School 2) and another experience that records an activity in the MHA in order to investigate its heritage on the ground, which a teacher from a national public school (School 3).

### **Educating in museums and schools**

The relationship between museums and schools in Argentina was raised from the disciplinary subfield of the Educational Sciences with the compilation of works carried out by Silvia Alderoqui in the mid-1990s. This book is an important atonement that allows museums to be regarded as an institution that democratizes heritage and, in this sense, proposes to seek a fluid relationship with the school (Alderoqui, 1996, p. 78). In a later work S. Alderoqui with C. Pedersoli (2011) they return to the idea that museums and schools are partners to educate and from a propositive pedagogical point of view invite to recreate shared agreements and responsibilities, a planning visit, a meeting of two institutions where it is taught and known.

From the same disciplinary field, Silvia Tabalkman (2011) proposes that the practice of visiting museums allows students to contact with cultural objects produced and used by different societies of the past, circulating in spaces different from those of the schools linked to beauty, memory and life stories. He points out that the visit to the museum may be an enabling space for questioning, but especially in history museums, students encountered different ways of interpreting the social world in the past, which is an important contribution to their Teaching.

Another background is the work of Graciela Batallán (1993) who from the field of Anthropology raised the patrimonial heritage treatment in the elementary school. Discuss how the processes of patrimonialization referred to the original peoples in the Ethnographic Museum of the University of Buenos Aires (Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, Argentina) contributed to the reproduction of national ideas as the school did. While these advances need to be contextualized

in the early 1990s, where the museum had a different heritage policy than the current one, it is important to mention it because it is a pioneering work in linking museums and schools in Argentina.

From these general ideas, then and in a specific way, two large theoretical nuclei that justify the objective of research and are oriented to think about these practices in the Argentine high school will be addressed. One of them is linked to high school studies. It is considered appropriate to present the tensions generated by the current educational legislation in the province of Buenos Aires (Argentina) which proposes new ways of addressing interculturality, heritage and diversity in the face of the institutional role given to the history and social sciences in general, the purpose of which is the formation of national identity.

The other nucleus, recovers some debates concerning historical museums considered as a collective space where memory materializes in documents and objects, understood as heritage. These spaces, built, as is the case study, from state policies involve different subjects who work in them and are linked to the school audience when they visit them.

The Argentine Education System is crossed by traits associated with the unifying nationalist mandate, a totalizing dimension that has historically nullified the differences between the social groups that inhabit the present Argentine territory. This constitutive structure of the school was associated with the origins of the country model that the dominant groups established as valid at the end of the nineteenth century, but which in many respects still see its continuity traits (Novaro, 2012).

These fundamentals installed in the Argentine Educational System, have their foundations in the strong uniforming content associated with the formation of the nation. Rita Segato (2007) argues that the process of building the Argentine Nation was sustained in a national formation of alterity based on hegemonic representations conceived by the elites and incorporated as a way of life through narratives propagated by the State.

In this context, the school has been a fundamental factor in the construction of images on migration processes, indigenous peoples and distinctions between natives and foreigners (Diez, 2013) as it itself emerges crossed by nationalizing mandates that are updated daily with content, practices, routines and school rituals (Thisted, 2014; Diez, 2011; Puiggrós, 2006). In this sense, the average level of the Argentine Education System, educational policies have to form different

processes of building knowledge about the national, and for this there are school disciplines that take on a prominent role, among them the Social Sciences in general and History in particular.

It is known that at its origin the state school served as a key agent of national identities, which translates into the incorporation of history as mandatory content at all levels of education, however curricular reforms have proposed history takes on the task of forming pluralistic and democratic citizens, as established by the current National Education Law (Kriger and Carretero, 2010, p. 62).

Various positions, analyze how the teaching of history, allows adolescents and schooled young people to incorporate the formation of national identity and nationalism, the subject that has been addressed extensively in the Argentine context (Ruiz Silva, 2011; Carretero, Rosa, González, 2013). For this purpose, the teaching of History articulates a series of stories oriented by negative and positive moral feelings. For Alexander Ruíz Silva and Mario Carretero (2010), official stories are usually effective by awakening and instilling in people feelings of belonging and pride in a national society. It is in the teaching of history and in the official historical accounts of schools that these values are presented that have strong affective ties with the homeland (Ruíz Silva y Carretero, 2010, p. 45).

But, as mentioned, these mandates have been discussed at different historical times and are especially often stressed and challenged by the intercultural perspective that is installed in the Argentine debate in recent decades and is made visible in the normative frameworks with the sanctioning of the National Education Law (2006) which establishes the inclusion of “Bilingual Intercultural Education” and its correlation in the Provincial Education Act (2007) and the General Framework of Curriculum Policy (2007) of the province of Buenos Aires (Hecht, García Palacio, Enriz y Diez, 2015). “Bilingual Intercultural Education” is cross-cutting at most levels, according to the constitutional law of indigenous peoples, with the aim of "receiving an education that contributes to preserving and strengthening their cultural guidelines, their language, their worldview and ethnic identity" (Article 52. Law No. 26206. Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, p. 22).

The cultural heritage is a dynamic and contextualized social construct where different interests are involved that are often put into tension or disputed. Heritage assets are potential carriers of a legitimate message from hegemonic power, but they are also carriers of multiple meanings, many of which remain in the sphere of the individual ability of subjects to experience them (Gorosito Kramer, 2007, p. 209).

History museums and their exhibited heritage are a resource used by some teachers to develop different curriculum themes linked to regional and national historical processes in their classrooms. The National Education Law No. 26206 (2006) gives a privileged place to the heritage in the high school, and while it is a common practice to visit museums, not all teachers use heritage treatment in the same way. With regard to Secondary Education, the National Education Law says in article 30:

"Secondary education in all its modalities and orientations is intended to enable adolescents and young people for the full exercise of citizenship, for work and for the continuation of their studies. Its objectives are: (a) to provide ethical training that allows students to act as subjects aware of their rights and obligations, who practice pluralism, cooperation and solidarity, respect human rights, reject all kinds of discrimination, prepare for the exercise of democratic citizenship and preserve natural and cultural heritage" (Law No. 26206. Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, p. 16)

In the words of Néstor García Canclini (1990), the theatricalization of heritage is the effort to simulate that there is an origin, the historical heritage constituted by the founding events, the heroes who starred them and the fetishized objects that they are evoked, however, by museums as public spaces that exhibit objects, on which ideas about the disputed past are built (Crespo, 2005, 2011; San Martín, 2013; Rodríguez, 2013). In this sense, visits to museums can be seen as an approach to that disputed heritage from schools, which cannot be disassociated from the treatment of heritage in relation to history within the classrooms.

## 2. METHOD AND MATERIALS

As mentioned, this article is methodologically framed in educational research from an ethnographic approach, which allowed me a direct experience with the subjects, their relationships and their contexts through which they are built knowledge. For Rockwell (2009), ethnographic fieldwork is a complex process that includes data collection techniques (participating observation, interviews, field notes, and records) that interrelate with each other based on theoretical frameworks and analytical categories of the researcher. In this sense, ethnography does not usually divide the data collection task with the analysis job.

The starting point of the research was to produce knowledge based on the daily interactions, people and possible between the role of the researcher and the subjects transiting the local spaces such as museums and schools. If, while the look of the ethnographic approach is focused on the

local, it is necessary to articulate it with broader and more global processes. In the educational field, the task of ethnography allows to overcome an individualistic codification of practices, understanding them as a real process of institutional school and museum policies in order to reflect on the formations subjects that populate school establishments, including routines (Díaz de Rada, 2008).

To account for the scope of ethnographic research, is key to refer to the notion of field, which in the case of anthropology was conceptualized from naturalism, associated with the consolidation of discipline in the late nineteenth and early decades of the XXth century (Clifford, 1999). Fieldwork requires the acquisition of data in the field and the transfer involved a professional displacement practice that he found by cabinet anthropologists (Padawer, 2008).

The field of empirical research should not be considered as a closed place, restricted in the case of this research to the high schools and history museums of Bahía Blanca, but as a spatial and temporary framework that allows the deployment of experiences encounter with situations and sometimes very heterogeneous subjects. The MHA is a historical museum belonging to the Cultural Institute of the Municipality of Bahía Blanca. In museums, research focused on the study of secondary-level school visits and in particular to heritage treatment referred to in the XIXth century.

This was also a methodological decision to focus the research on a historical period that began with the founding of the city of Bahía Blanca in 1828 and culminates with the creation of the port of Ingeniero White in 1884 and the arrival of the railway considered the port of the city. The look in this period allows me to stop at a conflicting stage of the nineteenth century in a considered area of dynamic frontier where the society considered creole and the indigenous population coexisted in the southwest of the province of Buenos Aires (Mandrini, 1992, 2007, 2008; Bayón and Pupio, 2003; Ratto, 2004, 2015; Villar, 2012, Villar y Jiménez, 2004).

### 3. RESULTS

In this part of the article, the teaching strategies used by history teachers will be presented to discuss the treatment of some key aspects of Bahia Blanca's history and its approach in the classroom, in direct connection with visits to the museums.

## The topics addressed

Among the themes that teachers link to museums there are a diversity of subjects, although the focus was on the aulic development of local history themes during the nineteenth century (1828-1884), in the observed classes were expanded thematic issues with references to the recent past, to the territorial problems of indigenous peoples today and to human rights.

As mentioned, the topics addressed in the classrooms relate to an individual from the regional past: a chronological axis that begins with the founding of the fort that gives rise to the city of Bahía Blanca in 1828 (Fortaleza Protectora Argentina) and culminates in the arrival of the railway and the creation of the port of Ingeniero White in 1884. Both milestones are considered founders of the city in the narratives built from the official waits, marked as "the first" and "the second" foundation of Bahía Blanca (Ribas and Tolcachier, 2012). However, in aulic treatment there are different references to a conflicting period of inter-ethnic relations that preceded and accompanied this process (1828-1884) that is constitutive of local and national history.

In this way, different themes are addressed in museums and schools. One of them refers to the border and exchange in the southwestern of Buenos Aires province during the nineteenth century. For one of the teachers interviewed, the issue of inter-ethnic relations from a historical perspective was difficult for the approach with adolescents and young people in high school. She emphasized that the students recognized that the current territory of the province of Buenos Aires had been occupied by indigenous peoples at the time of the founding of Bahía Blanca but that for them there was no relationship between the two societies (indigenous and creole) and that therefore the border was a static boundary. In an interview she said, "Look at you! They (students) know that this territory was occupied by Aboriginal people, but they could not think of that area as an interrelationship area" (Interview with Teacher, Bahía Blanca, May 18, 2016).

Other topics that this teacher addressed in her classes at School 1, is that of the formation of the Argentine State. In this sense, the teacher raised in the interview that the visits to the MHA allowed her to work with her students how the foundation of Bahía Blanca (1828) had been one of the ways in which the provincial government exercised power in the region. This was stated in the practical work he worked for his students and read in the interview:

"We will begin by knowing the characteristics of the territory around 1820, because they acted as obstacles and/ or facilitators in the construction of state power. Then we will learn about the political intentions of governments to finally occupy the territories of the southwest of Buenos

Aires province and, finally, how the foundation of the city and life developed during the first years as "Fortaleza Protectora Argentina" (Fragment of Class Plan read by the teacher, Bahía Blanca, May 18, 2016).

Another recurring topic addressed in the classes was the so-called "desert campaigns" that are part of the treatment of the military issue since school history. In this regard, another teacher from School 2, mentioned in the project of educational outing to the MHA that he made with his students, that the treatment of the foundation of Bahía Blanca in 1828 allowed him to address interethnic relations during the first "Campaigns to desert". At this point the teacher differentiates the "first campaigns" of the early nineteenth century, with those that were later undertaken as those of Alsina and Roca during the 1870s and 1880s.

In the interview with this teacher, she emphasized the intention to convey to her students that the Buenos Aires province frontier was not only an area without state control, but there were also constant military interventions throughout the nineteenth century to dominate it by subjugating indigenous peoples. The educational proposal refers to military campaigns, but does not delve into the idea that the army worked on the Buenos Aires campaign as an active agent in the construction of the national state for a full century.

Finally, unlike the above, and in relation to school visits, I am interested in describing an aulic work experience on the MHA facility when it was visited by School 3 during 2015. While this experience departs from the themes related to the period 1828-1884 to which I referred earlier, I rescue it because its purpose was to address the heritage of the museum.

The teacher planned an activity with the aim of enabling students to know the heritage of the museum for research purposes. In the planning of the activity of educational outlet I propose: "To make known the valuable and diverse heritage of MHA to carry out studies and research as part of a methodological reflection to build historical knowledge" proposal: "Detectives of History". Visit to the Historical Museum).

### **The pedagogical strategies used**

In this section will be deployed the different pedagogical strategies that teachers used to teach history in the classrooms and in the museum that emerge from the themes raised in the previous section. While various classes of History and Social Sciences were observed, this section will address only a few pedagogical strategies for analyzing the appropriations that teachers and students made as an exemplification.



After the visit to MHA, one of the teachers was devoted to recovering the experience of the visit at School 1 by presenting students with different excerpts of texts on the Buenos Aires province frontier, so that students can supplement the objects with more information observed in museums. In the interview, he commented that his goal with these texts was to show the dynamism of social relations on the border from a complex network of social subjects, religious beliefs, processes of ethnicity and interbreeding characteristic of the frontier.

While the teacher presented these texts as supplementary information to the visit, she did not stop to analyze them in depth in class; but rather devoted himself to recovering the experience in the MHA from stories and drawings on the objects on display. The slogan consisted of students choosing an image, drawing a picture, writing a short account of the museum visit (Class registration, Bahía Blanca, September 19, 2016).

Faced with this widely presented activity, the students mostly appealed to their free association with creativity. The striking thing about the drawings, and in relation to the topics addressed, is that three students drew weapons. One of them recreated three rifles from the time of the foundation of Bahía Blanca another drew a rifle seen on the side that is painted brown and black on the metal parts. The last is a revolver where the handle is painted gray, the handle brown and the metal black. This drawing has a legend that says "Throw flares". These three drawings referred directly to the objects exhibited in the MHA, however the teacher did not problems these representations, probably for reasons of time, or because they fit the slogan she had raised.

Another teacher who visited with the students of School 2 the MHA, explained to me that his classes, after the visit, usually work with the theme of the original peoples, delving deeper as I mentioned in the "Conquest to the Desert". It does this by presenting news from the Argentine newspaper Page 12 and other alternative media that address the current problems of indigenous peoples, centrally territorial ones. In an interview, she mentioned:

"The idea was for students to compare the advance of the 1828 border (year of the founding of Bahía Blanca) with the logic of advancing the model of the room. Let them see that today with the logic of Benetton, or the cultivation of soybeans, the border continues to advance, even today ravaging many rights that are constitutional. Those rights in 1828 were not constitutional, but today they were! (Interview with the teacher, Bahía Blanca, April 7, 2016).

This historical interpretation of the teacher of School 2, allowed her to problematic the current conflicts that are going through the communities of the original peoples in relation to the

past of the nineteenth century, showing a thread of continuity in the problems of access to land. In this way, it refers to the constitutional rights in force in Argentina since 1994 which incorporates the recognition of the ethnic and cultural pre-existence of indigenous peoples of Argentina and guarantees them the right to identity, access to an education bilingual and intercultural and the possession and ownership of the lands they occupy. The treatment of the current problems experienced by indigenous peoples in the Argentine territory can be interpreted as an intercultural approach that defends their rights.

Finally, as mentioned, the teacher of School 3 planned an activity at MHA in order for students to know and research the museum's heritage. The planned activity consisted of students working with an object of the museum linked to communication with the aim of working the steps of the historical research method. In this sense, the use of the museum's heritage was planned from a playful activity where he proposed to use the exhibits as triggers for research. Inspired by the web game Criminal Case (where hidden objects by which murders must be solved by locating clues at the crime scene), the teacher told them that the objects in the room were part of the "Crime Scene" and that the students should investigate it:

"The scientist created a problem. The first steps of the scientific method are to define the problem: How did we communicate in the past? Now you're the detectives at the crime scene. These tables are for you to work with. There are objects or clues that give us information... so what will be the first activity? One student responds: observe" (MHA Class registration, Bahía Blanca, July 10, 2015).

Once given the slogan, the students rushed through the halls, view objects, take pictures and took note, after a while, the teacher summons them in the center of the museum hall and asks them which clues they found:

Teacher (D): - To see Paula, what is the object you selected?

Student (A): - A phone! (and points it out as displayed)

D: - A phone!!! A cell phone? (question)

A-A: - Is that a cell phone? (...) How strange!...

D: So what is that?... It's not a cell phone... it's a journalist's recorder! (MHA Class registration, Bahía Blanca, July 10, 2015).

This situation makes it possible to appreciate how the students, working at the MHA, build knowledge from the teacher's slogan, according to their reference frameworks to understand the objects they do not know. In this sense, while the students were not sure that the selected object was a telephone, they suspected that it was a means of communication.

The expected result is that participating students substantially improve mastery of their motor skills and academic discourse through the study in action of this ongoing research.

Various humanistic and language studies support this research, theory which bets on the training of tomorrow's professionals. Several observations in the university room move us to contemplate a better student performance, when he is taught with patience and enthusiasm the use of the argumentative essay and the results that he will obtain in his professional growth in his university life use the various strategies of academic discourse and its decoding.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

This article presented the results of the fieldwork carried out in two provincial public high schools (School 1 and 2) and in the MHA during a class at the museum. In these everyday spaces you can observe classes where the unifying mandate of the school, historically legitimized in its functions of strengthening national identity, is at stake. This mandate has been the subject of social and historical debates and renewed with important nuances of the current educational laws.

In this sense, in the observed class teachers recovered with different pedagogical strategies partial aspects of different topics about local history, in general questioning the hegemonic view of the imposition of a national state. Faced with the idea of a hegemonic state, teachers regained the military presence in the region, the frontier as an area of exchange and the presence of indigenous peoples during the XIXth century, even updating their classes with current debates on the demand for land.

The reconstruction of teaching practices makes it possible to question the homogeneous treatment of official history, the construction of nationality and as a consequence the prevalence of a paradigm that excludes the non-indigenous identities of the nation Argentina. This makes it possible to question the role assigned to the teaching of history and its relationship to the construction of nationality.

The pedagogical strategies used by the teachers who visited the MHA were diverse. The preparation of classes is highlighted by the presentation to students of complementary literature

on the frontier in the nineteenth century, with newspaper articles reflecting lines of continuity between the nineteenth century and the present especially to show the progress landowners or soybeans on native communities. In this way, new topics linked to interculturality are incorporated into the classes. Another way to recover the experience was through drawings or writings on the heritage of the museum.

In the aulic experience at the MHA he allowed teachers to appropriate the museum's heritage to reformulate how historians investigate. On the other, consider how students approached that heritage from their everyday knowledge.

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