

NATIONAL IDENTITY AND THE REFERENCE TO INDIGENOUS ISSUE IN ARGENTINA AND MEXICO BY KATARZYNA GÓRSKA

Introduction

Latin America is considered to be a region of coherent culture, although there are certain differences among all countries. Those diversities make every single nation and country special and unique. The existence of culture area is obvious; therefore certain level of generality is possible, however, the particularity of every Latin American country and its culture has to be indicated. A comparison between Argentina and Mexico can serve as a good example here; the dissimilarities that we encounter amid those two nations emphasize existing diversity of region. Cultural and national identity of those countries are being constructed around diverse values, symbols and icons, subjectivity of those nations is represented by different, in some cases even opposed, manifestations.

In contemporary cultural studies identity is considered as a process, constancy and stability that used to characterize it, collapsed in continuously modernizing and globalizing world. Such definition makes it hard to investigate, moreover if we add that identity is an abstraction that is realized only by social and cultural practices. A presumption of identity's existence is crucial and yet we have to stay aware that it is only a theoretical concept. As Chris Barker states, cultural identity is 'a snapshot of unfolding meanings relating to self-determination or ascription by others. (...) Cultural identity relates to the nodal points of culture meaning, most notably class, gender, race, ethnicity, nation and age.'¹ I decided to use the term cultural-national identity because I consider Latin American identities as multilevel phenomena, which can be analyzed on local, national and even civilization level. Moreover, the concept of nation has restricted application in Latin-American context, in the formation of both countries the state preceded the nation and the nation was created by a top-down process. And that is why some of discussed issues surpass frames of national identity; however I still consider them as aspects of cultural subjectivity and consciousness of *mexicanidad* and *argentinidad*. My intention was not to merely describe differences as they are more than obvious, this article is an attempt to reconsider various processes of identity construction and their subsequent far-reaching effects.

Modern times

History process, which is one of the most relevant factors in contemporary identity issues, conditioned both Argentina and Mexico base situation in the moment of independence. All over Latin America region an Independence Revolution was just the first step in the process of state and nation formation. However, what was significant in those days is that several groups of society in Mexico and Argentina understood liberation in different manners. It was a new task for elites – to consolidate the state and create the nation, each of the countries chose its own direction to bring the nation into being.

¹ Chris Barker, *Studia kulturowe Teoria i praktyka*, Translator: Agata Sadza, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2005, p.437 (All translation in the following text from Polish and Spanish into English are done by author).

Official creation of identity – nationalisms

All states of Latin America after the Revolution faced the question of building their own identity. The existence of colonial viceroyalties was in fact the only factor that unified the area; moreover we have to understand cultural and ethnic heterogeneity as a crucial description of the region. In Argentina and Mexico independency process had totally different characteristics, although the significant feature in both cases is that leading functions were performed mainly by Creoles. That is why the appearing vision of the nation also had Creole character – it concerned not numerous but influential social groups. Through the first half of nineteenth century it's difficult to discuss national identity either in Argentina or in Mexico, collective identities oscillated between local identity and Hispano-American (Creole) identity. In that time began the complex process of nation building and formation of national identity, wishfully this process meant to regard all social groups. Nevertheless, today after 200 years of independence of Latin American countries marginalization of certain social groups is still the most vivid problem of the region.

Natividad Gutiérrez Chong writes: 'We then distinguish three types of nationalisms distinctive to Latin American from early nineteenth century up to the present.

1. The wars of independence
2. The nation – building process
3. The construction of the multicultural nation.'²

I am concentrating here on the second type of nationalism (the process controlled by the state in order to create the sense of national identity in the society) as I consider it as still very influential in the identity discourse. One of the elements formed by this superior activity of state and its institutions is national identity – that is a construct related to collective identity of people of same nation, taking into account the specific meaning of a nation in Latin American context. Natividad Gutiérrez Chong appoints such features characteristic for Latin American processes of nation building as tendency to integrate community at the cost of linguistic and ethnic disappearance of native people, attempt of education to large masses, assimilation, introduction of technology and modernization leading to unity and understanding³. Those parameters in greater or lesser extent describe as well Mexico and Argentina, though measures used by each state were essentially different.

In *Cultural Studies* we read that national state, nationalism and national identity are not 'natural' phenomena, but they constitute random historical-cultural formations⁴. What is crucial here is the collective nature of those formations, as they refer to common identification of particular society members. Defining national identity Barker states that it is 'a form of notional identification with the representations of common experiences and histories related in literature, popular culture and by media'⁵. The appearance of national identity is a result of nationalisms by which the state makes upstream choice of values, signs and symbols recognized as common. The vision created by machinery of state not only differs from historical facts, but from reflections of individuals belonging to that society as well. However in general identity discourse that official state's version has an important role, especially in

² Natividad Gutiérrez Chong (ed.), *Women, Ethnicity and Nationalisms in Latin America* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2007), pp.xiii-xiv.

³ Natividad Gutiérrez Chong, 'Women and Nationalisms', in Gutiérrez Chong (ed.), *Women, Ethnicity and Nationalisms in Latin America*, p.11.

⁴ Op.cit., Barker, *Studia kulturowe*, p.288.

⁵ Ibidem, p.288.

countries of Latin America where the formation of state's structure preceded the formation of nation. Furthermore, where primary ethnic divisions were disturbed in colonial era and the age of Latin American independency under the rule of *uti possidetis iuris* inherited borders from Spanish administration. Therefore, in Argentina and Mexico the functioning of nationalisms caused that sense of national community appeared. This sense is based on the identification of society's members with certain components (symbols, rituals, values) that express their nationality. This formation of Argentina and Mexican national identity is related with the activity of several groups of intellectuals that were performing their duty on the political, social and cultural stage. Here I present examples that came from the oppositional political groups that didn't agree with existing vision of the nation. At the beginning it was mainly cultural activity, however gradual politicization of those movements made it able to interpose real changes. I would like to discuss here the substantial content, not the methods of realization of national policy.

Generation 1837 and Generation 1880 were groups formed by Argentine intellectuals that were in those days trying to fulfill revolutionary achievements of independency era, members of those groups are considered as founding fathers of Argentine nation. Individuals such as Bartolomé Mitre, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, Juan Bautista Alberdi, Esteban Echeverría represent *Generación 1837*, while *Generación 1880*'s spokesmen are Julio Argentino Roca and the first president of Argentina – Bernardino Rivadavia. Nineteenth century nationalism was meant to consolidate the success of independency struggle and to establish state and nation. A significant role in this movement was played by Generation 1837 that began the debate over Argentine future. In its roots this intellectual association was organized next to the Literary Salon, a club started by university movement in bookshop of Marcos Sastre during 1837 in Buenos Aires. Meetings of the Salon served a purpose of discussion over European theories of politics and economics or culture issues. Consolidation and politicization of Generation 1837 as the opposition on Argentine political scene caused many of its members to run away from repressions of then governor of Buenos Aires – Juan Manuel de Rosas. Another reason is that group was exhorting to return to the ideals of May Revolution of 1810 and Rosas's regime identified with colonial oppression was its complete antithesis. Comeback of the tyranny disturbed the process of the state's consolidation. The overthrow of a dictator was necessary to create new a Argentina. Finally the authoritarian reigns fall in the middle of the nineteenth century. In the identity discourse founding fathers wanted to answer the question of who are we, although it seems that it was rather the question who do we want to be. Emerging vision of Argentina was referring to patterns from outside; modernization of the country was equivalent with Europeanization, since in the La Plata region it was always Europe that symbolized civilization to be followed. That fascination with an Old Continent was typical for Argentina against all Latin American nations, here locality was associated with provincialism and therefore it's hard to find references to native cultures. Esteban Echeverría, one of 1837 group's founders, expressed it with these words 'Europe is the center of civilization of the centuries and of mankind progress.'⁶ Same author was even claiming that anything in the civilization of that land is European, as America itself was a European discovery, as well he was explaining that Americans are just Europeans born in America. However, the most unjust was the statement that everything in America that is not European is barbaric. Domingo F. Sarmiento pointed it out even stronger as he claimed Indians to be nothing more than rabble that deserves utter extermination. What we have to underline in this case of the nation-building process in Argentina, is that local heritage and regional cultures were equated with savagery. Obviously, native communities never achieved

⁶ Carlos Casavalle (ed.), *Obras completas de E. Esteban Echeverría Edición crítica de Juan Maria Gutiérrez*, 1870-1874, v.4, Buenos Aires; Source: <http://www.biblioteca.clarin.com/pbda/ensayo/dogma>

the high-development level and cultural complexity known from the territory of Mexico or Peru, although still we can experience the presence of Inca, Mapuche and Guaraní cultures in the region of La Plata. As a result, indigenous references in holistic Argentine identity discourse are actually absent as in no other Latin American country.

One of the classic texts of identity debate carried on during the second half of the nineteenth century is *Facundo: Civilization and Barbarism* (*Facundo: Civilización y Barbarie*) by Domingo Faustino Sarmiento. This essay perfectly reflects how Generation 1837 was imagining Argentine society. It was first published in 1845 in Santiago de Chile where Sarmiento was on emigration caused by oppositional activity against Rosas. This book immediately became an integral part of Argentine history, politics and culture and the author himself was elected on presidential functions in years 1868-1874. Sarmiento described certain vision of development and modernization of country and he presented his consideration on politics and culture of Argentine reality. The eponymous is an authentic character – Juan Facundo Quiroga, an Argentine gaucho known from civil wars in the decade 1820-1830. Quiroga as an adherent of federalism proclaimed himself the governor of La Rioja province and was in Rosas's service. He is a typical example of a Latin American caudillo that is a local charismatic leader who puts himself above the law and impose his power on the community. The concept of caudillo is a key-term related to Latin America, it describes the tendency to exercise power in an authoritarian manner by an individual who concentrates significant control. Usually, the basis of this phenomenon is said to have originated in the colonial era, however the Pre-Columbus period also was characterized by the rule of powerful individuals, at least in some cultures where the sovereign had even divine range. The subtitle of the work *Civilization and Barbarism* signifies a polemic carried on by the author, a polemic in which he describes the vision of social, economic and politic development of Argentina. Civilization and barbarism were two possible ways that appeared ahead young country in the moment of independence. According to the Sarmiento model of power represented by Rosas and Quiroga, it is in its essence barbaric and comes out of typical Argentine countryside of pampa – a zone of nature domination and lack of civilization⁷. Sarmiento in opposition to both caudillos represented the perspective of Unitarism, he believed in the idea of one Argentina with the government in Buenos Aires. This centralist conception was progressive and it guaranteed reforms, *Facundo's* author as well as other members of Generation 1837 didn't agree with conservative federal concept mainly declared by local magnates and caciques. However, even with noble aim of country's progress, in the civilizational vision of Argentina local peoples and cultures were identified with primitiveness. Evolutional conceptions of cultural and civilizational progress didn't even suppose local communities to be autonomous groups, which material and intellectual attainments were worth preserving. In that sense Indian Argentina is somehow inevitably lost.

In Mexico, a similar role to Generation 1837 was fulfilled by the Mexican Youth Athenaeum (*Ateneo de la Juventud Mexicana*). This organization was also founded by young intellectuals who opposed to ruling class. History of Mexico after the independence was very different from Argentine, only Mexican Revolution formed fully Mexican nation, because through all nineteenth century the identity inquiries were actually not considered at all. Mexican Youth Athenaeum was created in 1909 in the midst of lasting Revolution and it was functioning until 1914. Although this period is very short, Athenaeum served a significant role in Mexican nation building process. Alfonso Reyes, Antonio Caso, Pedro Henríquez Ureña and José Vasconcelos were among others representatives of that association. Those

⁷ Domingo F. Sarmiento, *Facundo: civilización y barbarie* (selección) (Warszawa: Centro de Estudios Latinoamericanos, 1996)

Mexican intellectuals were opposing the rule of Porfirio Díaz and criticized positivistic conception on which country's development was based. Although ideologically Generation 1837 originated in totally different current than Athenaeum, which is obvious because those two fellowships are divided by almost 100 years period, both of groups were common in rejection of current models of development. The thing that differs members of Athenaeum was the fact that in national discourses on identity they recognized local and Latin American character, values that were forgotten during Porfiriato. Activity of this organization made certain changes in Mexican identity; however influences of Athenaeum concern the whole of Latin America. In the early twenties of the twentieth century an important change in social outlook happened, the result of that process is future development of indigenism and the appearance of Indian renaissance.

A leading masterpiece of Mexican Youth Athenaeum is *Cosmic Race (La Raza Cós mica)* of José Vasconcelos, a Mexican intellectualist, politic and the minister of education in Alvaro Obregon's government (1921-1924). His essay was published in 1925 and presents in it the conception of a new race that will appear in Latin America as a result of *mestizaje* process. The meaning of this is significant as Vasconcelos was the first to revalue previous ideals. The origin complex was transformed into a quality. He disproved the theory of race purity, a 'fifth race' that finally would rule the world would be born out of race mixing. The space in which 'cosmic race' will appear is Latin America, precisely Amazonia, as its tropical climate and warmth will be the best to form the perfect man and because on this continent *mestizaje* achieved the most advanced form. This process of miscegenation began in the colonial period as a result of contact between Spaniards and local Indian communities, although in those times it was mainly in forms of conquest and violation. According to Vasconcelos *mestizaje* of 'fifth race' will be undertaken in the conditions of love and peace and it will complete human history as the most perfect and universal dimension of mankind⁸. *Mestizaje* in this conception became a foundation of Mexico and whole Latin American civilization. Theory of Athenaeum is loaded with the concepts of evolutionism and geographic determinism, and in some parts even racism. Although the important issue here is an innovative glance at the questions of race mixing and superiority of Mestizo race. Those changes supported the development of Mestizo ideology with which many Latin Americans identify and for Mexico itself it was a historic turning point in accepting its society's diverse and multiple ethnic origins.

Another curious phenomenon in Mexican nationalism was *muralismo*, a mural painting movement that started in the first half of twentieth century. In Argentina literature was mainly considered as a measure of nationalist policy, in Mexico murals can be considered as a form of nationalism for illiterate people, as their function was to introduce symbols and events known from the history of the nation. The government's authorities took *muralismo* under their patronage, since they found in it a perfect way to educate new ideals and reach masses with a message that has simple and narrow interpretation. Murals were appearing since the 30's on public buildings of Ciudad de México such as Palacio Nacional or Palacio de Bellas Artes. Political elites precisely described the style of murals as the most important was to propagate Marxist thought, although despite the ideological load *muralismo* is a specific analysis of Mexican social reality after the Revolution. The so-called 'Big Three' of Mexican muralism are Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros and José Clemente Orozco, though it is necessary to mention also Gerardo Murillo known as Doctor Atl as he is considered a mentor of this art movement. Paintings made by those three muralists were similar, because ideology was imposed by the superior power, although each of the artists

⁸ José Vasconcelos, *La raza cósmica* (selección) (Warszawa: Centro de Estudios Latinoamericanos, 1993)

elaborated his own style. Rivera was using many references to native culture and Indian past, but the Mexican Revolution is also a significant element of his art. In turn, for Orozco, the Mexican Revolution and its heroes were major representations of the Mexican nation. For Siqueiros the Marxist ideology (class struggle and critique of capitalism) became the focus point. What is also important is the character of this art movement that turned history and culture to non-educated people. Indian and peasant groups were neglected and had to function apart from Mexican society. In Mexico during the process of national identity building elites referred to native communities of this region, even if they still remained excluded from rightful members of Mexican national society, in contrast to Argentina where local cultures considered as barbaric were degraded and posteriorly destroyed.

The myth of the beginning

In the process of identity formation one of the key questions is the legitimization of national group, the origin rooted in the past has to unify people from one territory. That sense of common descent unites people in genealogy, 'in national narratives there is an emphasis on tradition and continuity of nation (...). Often they are based on the foundation myth of common descent'⁹. The myth of the beginning sanctifies the community usually referring to mythological or legendary events connected with the local tradition, although as we will see it's not a rule. The main difference between Mexican and Argentine myths of origin is the continuity of nation that certain symbols are referring to. Mexican nationality has its roots in Pre-Columbus era, whereas in Argentina nationality was founded upon the historical events of independent country.

Mexicans are descending their origin from one of the Pre-Columbus civilizations – the Aztecs. It is a certain simplification, although this is a code that is commonly accepted. On the area of Mexican Plateau it was the last one of tribes migrating from the north. The mythological fatherland of Aztecs is known as *Aztlán*, 'from there Aztecs set out as it appears in 1111, relatively in 1116 in the direction of Plateau. (...) The peregrination lasted a long time and they were led by different sacerdotess-chiefs. The last one was Tenoch who patronized the foundation of Tenochtitlan that took place in 1325 or according to another version in 1345'¹⁰. As the myth refers Aztecs could settle down in the place where they would find an eagle sitting on nopal and holding a snake in his claws. That sign had to determine the center of future Indian civilization and it was adopted by modern Mexico by placing it on national flag and recognizing as a coat of arms. It's important to notice that in those times Aztecs were not culturally advanced civilization, it was rather a kind of tribe that was building its power gradually upon military conquest. A feature that helped Aztecs in relatively quick development is the ability to adopt different kinds of achievements of various cultural groups. Aztec domination at the moment of the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors is a reason to consider Aztecs as legitimate ancestors of Mexican nation.

The name of Aztec tribe was derived from the land *Aztlán*, although it was not the only designation of this ethnic community. Aztec tradition refers that during the peregrination from the north the name Mexicas [Meshicas] also appeared. Huitzilopotchtli was the tribal god of Aztecs who was also leading the peregrination, 'according to one of the relations this god in certain moment of Aztec peregrination changed the former name of tribe from aztecas to mexicas, that is to Mexicans'¹¹. The etymology of Mexicas used to be derived from word Mexitli – one of the designations of god Huitzilopotchtli. In turn the name of México was referring to Aztec settlement – Tenochtitlán, probably because of the important role that

⁹ Op.cit., Barker, *Studia kulturowe*, p.288.

¹⁰ Maria Frankowska, *Mitologia Azteków* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1987), p.127.

¹¹ Ibidem, p.127.

Huitzilopochtli played in society. Although now the meaning of the name Mexico adopted different signification as the dictionary of náhuatl states México (*Méjico*) literally means ‘place in the moon’s navel’ (*lugar en el ombligo de la luna*)¹². This signification is motivated by the most popular hypothesis on the etymology of the word Mexico, which is derived from náhuatl words: *mētztli* (moon), *xictli* (navel, center) and particle *-co* (suffix of place). Although, it seems that the most correct translation would be ‘place in the center of moon’s lake’ (*lugar en el centro del lago de la luna*), because that is how Aztecs referred to lake Texcoco on the waters of which Tenochtitlán was settled.

The construction of myth of the beginning in Mexico also concerns the figure of the mother of the nation, what is curious here is that it was in the colonial era when two unquestionable Mothers of Mexico were born. One of them is Malinche (*Malintzin*) – the translator and mistress of Cortés and the second is Our Lady of Guadalupe (*Virgen de Guadalupe*). When analyzing the figure of Malinche it has to be underlined that this symbol is far more complex than the icon of Guadalupe. The ambiguity of this personage and mutual exclusion of certain interpretations makes it difficult to be understood fully. The history of Malinche is connected with the Spanish conquest of the New World and the conqueror Hernán Cortés. It was he who received from caciques of Tabasco Malinche as his slave. Her language competence of maya and náhuatl and soon also Castilian caused that Doña Marina (Christian name) was used as a translator. Malintzin played a crucial role in the first period of conquest, not only her translation abilities but also intelligence and wisdom, as well as her knowledge of cultures, beliefs and military practices were extremely useful for Spaniards. A historic testimony claim that Doña Marina gave a birth to the son of Cortés, specifically meaning that figure of Malinche has in Mexico is connected exactly with her offspring. Malintzin is considered as a representative of two cultures of Pre-Columbus America, of Aztecs (from whom she came from) and Mayas (with whom she lived in the servitude) and she is mother of the first Mestizo. Therefore, Doña Marina is treated as the first mother of Mexico, that representation combines maternity (Malinche as mother of all Mexicans) and fatherland (Malinche as nation founder). The growing number of Mestizo people was a consequence of the *mestizaje* process. This race mixing is interestingly presented in Octavio Paz’s *The Labyrinth of the Solitude*, where the author denominates all Mexicans with the name sons of Malinche (*hijos de la chingada* - sons of the violated woman). In this most known work searching for Mexican identity, Paz also wrote that when Malinche stopped being helpful to Cortés, he forgot about her. And according to Paz, the word Mexico does not forgive betrayals, because if Mexican disowns Malinche it is a sign of breaking up with his past, neglecting his origin and losing oneself in the history¹³. Therefore, *la chingada* apart from being defiled symbolizes national identity. In turn, the Virgin of Guadalupe is figure related with the appearance of Christianity, in 1531 Juan Diego, a recently baptized Indian, had a revelation about the Virgin Mary. Not long after bringing Christianity by priesthood and conquerors, in the land of Indians a revelation took place, for the first time it was not ‘pagan’. Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared next to the rock of Tepeyac, by a strange coincidence this rock was formerly devoted to Tonantzin – mother-god of Aztecs. Native people were not expelled from miraculous places of their ancestors, although it is not the only contribution of Mexico’s patron. Madonna didn’t have white skin like the Spaniards and she didn’t hesitate to appear in the land of Indians. The anniversary of her revelation is Mexico’s official holy day. The queen of Mexico perfectly reflects the complexity of Mexican society, as she is a result of confrontation of Indian and Spanish culture she symbolizes national unity over cultural and

¹² Diccionario Náhuatl-Español. Source: <http://aulex.org/nah-es/>

¹³ Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude and Other Writings* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1985)

racial or ethnic heterogeneity. Mexican symbolism has reflected polycultural origin and ethnic complexity of the community set within boundaries of one state.

There is a certain ambiguity also in the name Argentina, just the meaning of the word refers to the Latin word *argentum*, that means silver and obviously is connected with the River of la Plata that determines the geographical space of this region. The name Río de la Plata was used from the beginning of the colonial era commonly. This designation in Argentina was reserved for literary activity (Martín del Barco Centenera – poem *La Argentina*, 1602), although for the first time it was used in Venetian satin in 1536. All those terms are related to silver as they are differentials of legends and beliefs of conquest time, they refer to mythical Sierra de Plata and the land of ‘White King’ (*Rey Blanco*) that were under the search of conquerors. At the beginning the liberated area adopted the name of United Provinces of Río de la Plata (*Provincias Unidas del Río de la Plata*). The separation of the countries of Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay caused as well a change of designation. Already the Constitution had declared in 1853 established the name Argentine Republic (*República Argentina*) as one of the valid terms. Finally on 8 October 1860 president Derqui recognized the name Republic of Argentina on the strength of decree. Article 35 of the Constitution states ‘denominations adopted successively from 1810 until the present, namely: Provincias Unidas del Río de la Plata, República Argentina, Confederación Argentina, will be as from now official names without distinction to designate the government and the territory of provinces, applying the words “Nación Argentina” in forming and sanction of laws.’¹⁴ Nomenclature used by the new emerged country of La Plata was referring to the past in constitution of country’s name likewise Mexico, although no such references appeal to Indian autonomous development period that lasted long before colonial era.

Argentina after gaining independence had to cope with the process of nation building within an existing, though not stable state. In opposition to Mexico there was no legitimate sovereign of the territories liberated from Spain. In case of Argentina, legitimization of the nation is not referring to period before independence of United Provinces of Río de la Plata. ‘Until the end of nineteenth century various intellectuals postulated that Argentinian Nation was born in May 1810’¹⁵. According to that statement proceedings from 1816, mainly the independence declaration, are necessary culmination of 1810’s success. Such vision of the beginning of Argentine nation is common, mainly because of nineteenth century historical elaborations that were glorifying 25 May 1810, the day of establishing junta that was governing the territory of Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata. Contrary to Mexico, Argentina had its origin determined by modern history, moments that were mythologized belong to recent past and there is no reference to legendary events or pre-beginning. What is curious, is that the mythologization of history, typical for the process of creation of origin myth, was in a way a falsification of then reality and then facts. An attempt to report on national symbols will allow noticing that most of Argentine heroes, whose monuments and streets add splendor to contemporary urban spaces, had to fight against people of La Plata as well. What is also crucial in Argentine origin myth is the reference to Europe. Undoubtedly for a great part of society Europe was a fatherland and though with a time that group was a subject to creolisation process, certain affection remained and is still present. Argentina is an immigrants’ country with high percentage of European descent people, therefore in the frames of national identity construct references to European cultures are widespread.

¹⁴ Constitución de la Nación Argentina. Source:

http://www.argentina.gov.ar/argentina/portal/documentos/constitucion_nacional.pdf

¹⁵ Galluci, Lisandro, ‘El mito de origen: 25 de mayo de 1810’ *Diario Rio Negro*, 2007. Source:

<http://www1.rionegro.com.ar/diario/2007/05/25/20075v25s17.php>

People and society

In analyzing the ethnic structure of Latin America we have to consider a specific concept of race that was constructed in that region as a result of complicated processes in the society. Not only is race determined by biological factor of blood, none the less socio-cultural factors also have crucial meaning. Such interpretation of race is influencing the subjective comprehension, as there is no defined racial division. There are about 82 terms referring to mixed racial descent, various skin tones are treated as different racial types, moreover there are several others factors considered, not only skin color. In Latin American region race is subjective, but also unstable, it can be modified in time and in space as a result of alteration of such factors as prestige, education or income. Traditional social structure formed in colonial era is defined by term *pigmentocracy*. That is a structure in which on the top of the social pyramid people of white ancestry are placed and on the bottom – descendants of black slaves. Obviously that division is not absolute, although it was the starting point for modern Latin American states. This race formation is strictly social construction and as Barker cites the words of Robert Miles racialization concerns ‘those cases in which human biological features contribute the meaning and the structure of social relations’¹⁶. In Latin America race is situating an individual within the society, which is why race and ethnic divisions are so important. Biological approach to race does not assume qualitative differences between race categories, only socio-cultural understanding results in race hierarchization.

Investigation of censuses of Latin American countries drives to a conclusion that in the majority of it question about race does not appear at all. Mainly it is caused by difficulties in precisely defining race categories in the region of complex inter-racial relations. Censuses gradually start to recognize group of Indian descent although at the same time most of them don’t distinguish group of African origin. Towards native people censuses use criterion of self-identification and/or linguistic criterion (defined as childhood language, mother tongue or household language). Question about participation in language group is considered as more politically correct and more objective than the question about indigenous identity, although, the precision of that criterion is doubted. The end of twentieth and the beginning of twenty-first century set processes of equal rights of all racial groups in Latin American countries, indisputably this recognition is necessary to form societies without divisions and guarantee equivalent participation in nation for each person.

Race structure and demographics of Argentine Republic

In Argentina race structure in general is more homogenous than ethnic divisions in Mexican society, according to The World Factbook in mayor part it’s formed by white people, mainly of Spanish and Italian origin, they state up to 97 per cent of population, while remaining 3 per cent where classified to joint category of mestizo, Amerindian or other non-white groups¹⁷. Argentine population reached 40 091 359¹⁸, so the number of people of white ancestry makes Argentina a country of highest white group percentage in Latin America. Outstanding white-blood dominance in La Plata society is a result of European immigration at the turn of twentieth century. Although there are regions in which mestizo population makes higher percentage, that is Gran Chaco, northern Argentina or in the area of pampa. The specific structure of Argentine society has its roots in the past circumstances, remote location of the country and climate conditions resulted in development of agriculture based on breeding that did not need man-power. Hence there was no demand on slavery and existing local Indian tribes were scattered and not numerous. Moreover, this native population was

¹⁶ Op.cit., Barker, *Studia kulturowe*, p.284.

¹⁷ CIA – The World Factbook, Source: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>; I use here information gathered in The World Factbook because they are standardized and comparable for countries.

¹⁸ Censo 2010, Source: <http://www.censo2010.indec.gov.ar/>

exterminated and those who survived were also gradually mixing with white settlers. These are the reasons of grave impact of European settlement that developed in eighteenth century and that at the turn of twentieth century became mass immigration process. In racial structure of Argentina an important feature is, apart from not numerous Indian people, lack of black group. 'In several countries of Latin America state was purposely trying to whitewash their population by encouraging European immigration to settle down, although only in Argentina the descendants of Africans actually disappeared as a racial group.'¹⁹ Certain changes has begun in that matter as in Censo 2010 for the first time group of African origin was considered together with INDEC campaign against xenophobia and racism. As we can remark even in mostly white Argentina there are symptoms of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural awareness, though changes of social consciousness and mentality are always long-lasting.

In the article 'Mass Immigration and Modernization in Argentina' Germani underlines the key role of Argentine immigration. Mass immigration, in the opinion of governing elites, was supposed to definitely change social structure. Apart of obligatory education and modernization, European immigration was a factor in constituting new nation²⁰. It is important to remember that liberation of La Plata was performed by mainly white and Creole intellectuals from Buenos Aires, the same group decided to found new country on immigration. Indigenous population was identified with backwardness and primitive life conditions, whereas, following the rule to govern is to populate, people coming from Europe were considered as an instrument to civilize savage territories. In the own words of Juan Bautista Alberdi 'By the customs later communicated to our inhabitants, every European who comes to our shore brings us more civilization than a great many books of philosophy.'²¹ Immigration policy that soon was pursued by Argentina caused ethnic transformation, but also cultural. European immigration increased in second half of nineteenth century and promoting of immigration became an official duty of state according to 1853's Constitution. The core of immigration group was formed by people from Southern Europe and through almost whole process it was Italian group that was the most numerous. Italian influence is visible in contemporary culture and affects various fields from linguistic effects (*cocoliche* dialect), through cuisine to social customs, none of other immigrants group has comparable influence.

Territory is another crucial parameter in immigration process, Argentina has a vast area and in those times there were huge inhabited zones. Though, grave part of immigration concentrated inside urban spaces, mainly in Buenos Aires and other cities of central provinces, strengthening division between capital and periphery. That urban immigration started to form Argentine middle class that was steadily increasing in number and influencing national processes. In case of immigrants' countries appears also a question of cultural assimilation and what is specific for Argentina is that number of incoming group was several times higher than local population, a fact that influenced acculturation process's conditions. The participation in social opportunities was not limited to European immigrants, only the right to vote and the right to candidate in elections were not referring to them. Another factor that helped assimilation was the fact that Argentine immigration was heterogeneous, descending from various nationalities and representing different identities. This multiculturalism saved Argentina, European culture didn't dominate country of La Plata, although it is present there probably most visibly from all Latin American countries. 'After

¹⁹ Helen I. Safa, 'Rasa, pleć i naród: indiańskie i afroamerykańskie ruchy etniczne w Ameryce Łacińskiej', *Ameryka Łacińska* 2 (44) 2004, p.25.

²⁰ Gino Germani 'Mass Immigration and Modernization in Argentina', *Studies in Comparative International Development* (SCID) Volume 2, Number 11, pp.165-182.

²¹ Juan Bautista Alberdi, 'Immigration as a Means of Progress', in: Gabriela Nouzeilles, Graciela R. Montaldo (eds.), *The Argentina Reader History, Culture, Politics*, (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2002), p.95.

the deluge of immigration there was still an Argentina; the country did not lose its identity. (...) A new country emerged, and is still emerging, since the historical process set in motion by mass nineteenth century immigration cannot be considered complete.²²

Today Argentina cannot be definitely categorized as immigrants' country, during the second half of twentieth century immigration process began to lose its intensity. Today the opposite process is more important, in the decade of 60's the emigration of native Argentines began as a result of unstable politic and economic situation. Since then USA, Spain or Italy have been main directions of Argentine emigration. We have to understand that probably certain part of immigration was a translocation, which means that significant part of immigrants either returned to their homeland or migrated to another location. Lately Argentina receives regional economic immigration from other countries of South America (Bolivia, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay), although never at the scale known from previous period.

Race structure and demographics of United States of Mexico

Society of Mexico is divided into more categories, according to The World Factbook Mexican ethnic structure contains four groups, out of which mestizo group is the most numerous – 60 per cent of population, Amerindian or predominantly Amerindian – 30 per cent, white – 9 per cent and group qualified as other – 1 per cent²³. In 2010 total population of Mexico numbered 112 336 538 people²⁴. Mexican race structure cause that it is probably the most metis of all Latin American countries, as this group is the most numerous, although there are countries with higher percentage of mestizo population. Initial situation of Mexico after gaining independence was totally different than in Argentina and later mixing of Indian, European and African races during period of 500 years led to formation of contemporary mainly mestizo Mexico. Mexican nation appeared on the foundation of this intense miscegenation, in which Vasconcelos saw fulfilling of mankind. Another factor of such social structure is that in the moment of independence native people that inhabited Mexico outnumbered radically Argentine Indians. Moreover, regional indigenous cultures achieved higher level of development, which allowed them to keep certain cohesion and cultural identity. In contemporary Mexico this native root is visible in society and indigenous group is estimated even up to 12 million²⁵. Native people generally inhabit southern states, as well as Central Mexico though there percentage is lower. Another difference in comparison with Argentina is presence of black population in Mexico's society. Black community appeared in this region in sixteenth century when slaves were brought down to work mainly in mines, however never at the scale known from Brazil. Culturally people of African descent represented mostly Yoruba and Mandinka ethnic groups, those groups settled down on the coast of south Mexico (states Guerrero and Oaxaca) and on Atlantic coast in Veracruz State. Until today those groups of African origin live there, although against other countries of Caribbean the presence of black community in Mexico is not that significant.

Mexican demography is also significantly marked by emigration process, main destination country is USA where Mexicans were migrating since half of nineteenth century. According to Census of 2010 16.3 per cent of US population is of Hispanic or Latino origin²⁶, however there is no statistic that will capture whole Mexican immigration to US. People of Mexican descent inhabit generally the territory of south-west, actually more than 8 million

²² Op.cit., Germani 'Mass Immigration and Modernization in Argentina', p.173.

²³ CIA – The World Factbook, Source: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

²⁴ Censo de Población y Vivienda 2010, Source: <http://www.censo2010.org.mx/>

²⁵ Social Panorama of Latin America 2006, CEPAL, Source: http://www.eclac.org/publicaciones/xml/4/27484/PSI2006_FullText.pdf

²⁶ 2010 Census data, Source: <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/data/>

live just in California. Since the beginning common reason of emigration was economic one, in the 70's of former century immigration on mass scale began, which is why this issue became one of the determinants of bilateral relations. Immigration to Mexico also influenced social structure as representatives of European, American and Asian nations are present there, although those processes were never as intensive as in Argentina. Until twentieth century it was European immigration that outnumbered other groups, however now it is American immigration, generally from USA, Central America and Caribbean.

Cultural pluralism, one of the main features of Latin America, is applied also at the state's level. Latin American countries are multi-national structures and that ethnic diversity also affects formation of national-cultural identity. From 70's of twentieth century Latin American states started to recognize multiculturalism. In Mexican Constitution this regulation was introduced in 1992, it stated 'Mexican Nation has multi-cultural composition originally supported on its indigenous peoples.'²⁷ In 2002 this regulation was broadened to 'indigenous peoples that are those who descend from populations that inhabited present territory of the country when colonization began and those who preserve their own social, economic, cultural and politic institutions or part of them. Consciousness of indigenous identity should be fundamental criterion to determine to whom the regulations of indigenous peoples are applied.'²⁸ Mexico relatively lately confirmed multiculturalism of its nation, as it was already twenty-first century. Those changes were possible because it became obvious that Latin American nations are not homogenous and cohesive societies. Various ethnic descents could be a social dividing factor, but to build real nation every group has to be recognized. There is no comparable regulation in Argentine constitution, which is probably caused by apparent homogeneity (on occasion equaled with Creole character), although there is a statement in constitution 'to recognize ethnic and cultural pre-existence of Argentine indigenous peoples'²⁹ (Art.75 § 17). This formal law guarantees respect, bilingual education and gives a right to proper jurisdiction and land possession of the communities. Partial incapability of such formal regulations to change the reality can be understood if we consider the first guarantee of mentioned article. Respect is not forced by law.

The indigenous question

In social discourse references to indigenous past are various and national-cultural identity in different degree is concerning native inhabitants of Latin America. Twentieth century began Indian renaissance that claimed rights of autochthonic peoples, although the lack of equal rights and exclusion still concern them. It's important to underline that references to Indian culture and history in national identity discourse, ignoring the fact that they are selective, are not equal with real considering of indigenous population as outright citizens. Indigenous question (*la cuestión indígena*) is long-time problem of Latin America, since coming of Europeans native communities were being dominated and discriminated. Today this Indian root is also forming Latin America, continuity of indigenous culture has been preserved, however it became just one of the components of this cultural mosaic.

Colonial era confronted local tribes with new reality in which they had to find the way to survive. Already at that time first attempts to defend Indians appeared, Spain even established legal protection (*Leyes de Burgos, Leyes Nuevas*), though real life conditions for those people hadn't change. Independence in fact didn't improve anything, only superior

²⁷ Salvador Bartolome Clavero, 'Multiculturalismo constitucional, con perdón, de veras y en frío', *Revista Internacional de los Estudios Vascos* 47, 1, 2002, p.38

²⁸ Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos. Source: <http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/1.pdf>

²⁹ Constitución de la Nación Argentina. Source: <http://www.senado.gov.ar/web/interes/constitucion>

authority changed, moreover residing in the capital, far away from distant indigenous territories. Question of land rights has always been important issue, because of crucial position of land in Indian culture, as it is the base of indigenous world and traditional life is concentrated around this value. One of the problems of contemporary Indian community is also exclusion, not in territorial meaning, but mainly in social as this group still remains outside nation. This situation slowly began to change in twentieth century, when for the first time ideology of indigenism appeared and Latin American states were trying to apply it in their policy to assimilate Indian communities. Indigenism is understood as policy realized by state and concentrated on Indian communities' problems with aim of national integration. Further stage of indigenism development was the appearance of Indian organizations and that activity caused real improvement of life conditions of native people. It was common for all Latin American countries to socially exclude Indian tribes and that discrimination caused the necessity of contestation of national identity by indigenous people, for the first time Indians actively defended their rights. This appearance of Indian identity was possible mainly because of awakening of ethnic consciousness, although democratization and social changes also influenced contemporary position of native tribes. Indian renaissance caused that forming national identities are pervaded by Indian identity that is redefining them.

Indigenous issues of Mexico

Statistics related to native people of Mexico show different numbers, it is estimated that Indian people form up to 10 per cent of society and they are the most numerous native group in Latin America. Racial criterion is not used in Mexican censuses as it was defined as politically incorrect, instead ethnic identity question is asked, though it is based on linguistic divisions. Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas identifies 11 language families, 68 linguistic groups and 364 linguistic variants³⁰, those numbers confirm cultural complexity of native peoples and their variety in contemporary Mexico. However, language criterion does not concern all population of native descent as out of this category remains group that doesn't use/know Indian language. According to 2010 Census out of population of over 104 million, that is population of 3 years old and more, nearly 7 million declare speaking indigenous language³¹.

The politics toward Mexican Indians was different than in other Latin American countries, position of native communities in society was conditioned by *mestizaje* policy. 'As Nash (2001:13) remarks, in Mexico *mestizaje* was represented by indigenous stream, which dominated Mexican policy since the revolution of 1910, and cultivating respect for native ancestry, at the same time denied the right to self-determination of indigenous people by identifying progress with acculturation in European way.'³² Since Mexican Revolution undoubtedly Indian issue was treated differently, as in the past of native communities of Pre-Columbus period Mexico discovered its own history to glorify. Although this reorientation was apparent, since only the past of Indians was recognized by the state and in reality social position of Indian population didn't improve. In Mexico this respect towards Pre-Columbus past was strongly propagated, but it referred only to history and culture of most developed Indian peoples. Since 1940 when First Inter-American Indigenous Conference was held in Pátzcuaro, Mexico, indigenism became one of the determinants of national internal policy. However, the declared goals to integrate Indian people with the society and improvement of their life conditions were not achieved. Only the decade of 60's and 70's of twentieth century

³⁰ C atlogo de las lenguas ind genas nacionales. Source: <http://www.inali.gob.mx>

³¹ Censo de Poblaci n y Vivienda 2010. Source: <http://www.inegi.org.mx>

³² Op.cit., Helen I. Safa, 'Rasa, ple c i nar d', p.42.

began intensive progress of bottom-up approach indigenism and in 80's Indian organizations started to appear on mass scale.

In 2003 during the presidency of Vicente Fox Congress passed a bill of linguistic laws of indigenous peoples (La Ley General de los Derechos Lingüísticos de los Pueblos Indígenas). That law guarantees to all native languages recognized in Mexico a degree of national language, equivalent with Spanish³³. This legal act equaled rights of indigenous communities in social participation, as they had a right to use their native language publicly, not only in national institutions as schools and administrative departments but also in work places. Graph number 1 presents five main languages of Mexican native people.

<Graph nr 1>

On the basis of XII Censo General de Población y Vivienda 2000 and Censo de Población y Vivienda 2010; Source: <http://www.inegi.org.mx>

Numbers related to indigenous group in Mexican society are steadily increasing, which can also be a sign of awakening of ethnic identity. Indian renaissance might be also confirmed by Zapatista insurrection in Chiapas in 1994 and subsequent incidents connected with EZLN (*Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*). Poverty and social inequalities radicalize social activity, 'in reality of Latin America the lack of successful instruments to satisfy social needs may lead as well to radical forms of manifestation of social dissatisfaction and as a result endanger the stability of politic systems.'³⁴ EZLN at the beginning of their struggle was fighting for rights of peasants and gradually was moving its center of gravity towards indigenous issues and protection of rights of native peoples. Chiapas, inhabited mainly by Mayan communities, is culturally distinctive from other regions of Mexico. Insurrection of 1994 didn't end up with a military success, though the Zapatista organization was transformed significantly since that moment, today it can be considered as anti-globalization movement. One of the objectives of EZLN is still question of equal rights of such minorities as indigenous peoples. Demilitarization and peaceful form of manifestation caused popularization of EZLN worldwide, but conflict in Chiapas still exists and divides local community. San Andrés agreements signed in 1996 guaranteed to Indians land laws on the territory inhabited, though government never ratified those agreements. Exclusion of PRI (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*) from power in 2000 was promising solution of Chiapas conflict, but again it didn't fulfill expectations. Armed conflict of 1994 also caused mass expulsion of indigenous population, as about 35 thousand people had to leave their homes. Such evictions were common treatment method of Mexican government towards indigenous people. However, what is the most important is that activity of EZLN made Mexico aware of indigenous issue and resulted in formation of social consciousness of ethnic diversity within Mexican nation.

Indigenous issues of Argentina

Carlos Martínez Sarasola, author of *Nuestros paisanos los indios*, in part related to contemporaneous times remarks defects of statistics determining precise number of Argentine Indians, the most visible is discrepancy between various statistics. According to census of 1967, mentioned as last by Sarasola, native community was estimated to 150,000, in turn

³³ Ley General de Derechos Lingüísticos de los Pueblos Indígenas. Source: <http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/257.pdf>

³⁴ Katarzyna Krzywicka, 'Ameryka Łacińska między integracją a marginalizacją', in Marcin F. Gawrycki (ed.), *Ameryka Łacińska we współczesnym świecie* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2006), p. 186.

Indian organizations in 80's elevated this number to 1.5 million, reliable data gathered for Inter-American Indigenous Conference in 90's indicates nearly 200,000. In Argentina in statistics and in censuses mainly territorial criterion was used, that is to say membership in certain indigenous ethnia is conditioned by inhabitancy within certain community. Restriction of this criterion is exclusion of Indian descent group that lives outside traditional communities, especially when we consider the tendency of contemporary native people to migrate from rural areas to urban zones.

Currently territorial criterion is not used any more, instead of this criterion of self-determination as a member of indigenous community or as a descendant of native people was applied. INDEC in the research of Indian communities in 2004 and 2005 estimated number of this population to 600,329 that is around 1.5 per cent of Argentine society. Census of 2010 is already finished, although publications of definite results do not include any statistic referring to indigenous communities. For what is known in Censo 2010 the question about Indian identity was indicated on one hand as identification of households that express their membership in any of indigenous groups that live on national territory and on the other hand as a recognition of any of this group particularly. Territory of Argentina was inhabited at the end of Pre-Columbus period by 30 native groups and today division of Argentine Indians is estimated around 15 different ethnic groups. Application of self-determination criterion resulted in significant change in native population statistics that are now three times higher, although this criterion is not perfect either. In such country as Argentina Creole ideology was glorifying everything that European and neglecting anything that was native and in the same time caused the appearance of provenience complex. Nowadays with social changes and development of indigenism this complex is not that visible, though in Argentina it is certainly more intense than in other Latin American countries.

As in Mexico language criterion is used it would be useful to compare it with information about Argentinian native communities and their language abilities. Graph number 2 presents most numerous Indian tribes and their percentage using native language.

<Graph nr 2>

On the basis of Encuesta Complementaria de los Pueblos Indígenas (ECPI) 2004-2005; Source: <http://www.indec.gov.ar>

What is significant here in most cases small group within indigenous community speaks native language, only in Wichí group this percentage is extremely high as it concerns 85 per cent of tribe's population, in case of Toba Indians who inhabit Chaco competence in native language refers to more than a half of group, although other communities represent very low level of language skills. Abandonment of ancestors' culture and rejection of traditional model of life in higher degree refers to Argentina than to Mexico, though it is a general sign of contemporary times. Vanishing of indigenous languages is one of the results of that process; moreover none of these native languages in Argentina has equivalent position as Mexican indigenous languages.

Rising state of Argentina refused to native inhabitants of those territories participation in new-born nation. Enormous territory was to become home for European people, but fruits of civilization that they were about to bring to La Plata didn't concern indigenous communities. In Argentina aversion to Indians took probably the most drastic form, mass exterminations conducted by Argentine army and volunteers caused total disappearance of several indigenous groups and radical decrease in population of others. The most known is Desert Conquest (*Campaña del Desierto*), the military expedition leaded by general Julio A.

Roca in the 70's of nineteenth century, its aim was to depopulate area of Pampa and Patagonia. Grave part of Indian population was brutally murdered then, 'but before this dubious victory was achieved, miscegenation between Spaniard and Indian had produced an almost separate breed of people, the Gauchos, who were to play a great part in River Plate history and greater one in legend'³⁵. Policy towards Argentine native people evolved in second half of twentieth century and it was ideology of indigenism that set the course of changes. The relation between state and Indians was characterized by paternalism, moreover in the assimilation process it was assumed that native people were the group that must adapt in new reality. Until the decade of 80's ideological change within indigenism was made and finally it lost its superior attitude, what's more activity of Indian organizations and other native representatives caused the appearance of participant indigenism. Indigenism policy of Argentine state of the end of twentieth century didn't accomplish all expectancies of native people, but it did guarantee them certain rights, inter alia formation of National Institute for Indian Affairs (*Instituto Nacional de Asuntos Indígenas*), elaboration of land grants project and changes within education program including bilingual education and plans of educational support of cultural and historic identity of indigenous peoples.

The attitude towards indigenous issues is reflected by two extreme socio-cultural terms, one of them is *malinchismo* by which degradation of everything that comes from native cultures is understood and second one is *pachamamismo* – in turn it is exaltation of indigenous aspects. Indian identity is undoubtedly part of Mexican cultural-national identity, whereas in Argentina it was not taken into consideration. Society itself prefers to emphasize its European descent, although finally even in La Plata we can notice important changes. Mexican indigenous consciousness is for sure more visible, though Indian group there is more numerous and Pre-Columbus past also influenced the position of native communities. However, it has to be pointed that references to Indian past in consolidation of national myths will not cause actual consolidation of multi-ethnic society. Similarly with acts and laws, formal legal solutions will not change reality, where Indians still have to face social segregation, racism and exclusion. Nevertheless, positive changes connected with indigenous minorities in both countries are certainly the awakening of native consciousness most observable in the activity of Indian organizations and leaders and on the other hand the policy of government favoring real and equal integration of national societies. Lasting social changes concern awareness of Argentines and Mexicans, who finally seem to notice and understand complexity and diversity of their nations.

Conclusion

Latin America is a space of marvelous diversity and that is what makes this region so interesting and absorbing. Complicated history process created an area of uncommon heterogeneity, though in certain moment actors of that stage had to ask a crucial question about owned identity. Mine purpose was to show how differently countries situated on geographical extremes of Latin America decided to answer those subjectivity inquiries. Understanding identity of American states needs a comprehension of multi-ethnic societies and the difference of national identity construction process. Contemporary transformations of national identity are determined by marginalized groups and those demands are more visible in today's Mexico than in Argentina. Obviously, Mexican indigenous group outnumber Argentine Indians that indeed form minority group, besides Mexico is far more eager on referring to its indigenous tradition in national identity process as it reveals its glorious past.

³⁵ John Halcro Ferguson, *The River Plate Republics Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay* (New York: Time Inc., 1965), p.27.

Mexico at the end of XX century had to accept the existence of Indian community. It exposed that besides cultivating the past of indigenous peoples, the recognition as equal member of Mexican nation is crucial. The transformation led from mestizo national consciousness towards multi-cultural Mexico with society that origin from multiple nations. Probably those changes were possible because of former mestizo renaissance initiated by the Mexican Revolution – a phenomenon in whole continent scale. Multiculturalism should have adopted the most developed form in the country of La Plata considering the number of nationalities and ethnicities that contribute to Argentine society. Changes towards multicultural nation are not advanced, neither towards the offspring of immigrants community, nor and much less towards descendants of indigenous peoples. Furthermore, it seems that apparently we experience at least two Argentinas, one called metropolitan Buenos Aires and second covering the rest of country's territory – province. Drastic differences between those areas force to consider two totally distinct realities. Nowadays it is still migration that characterizes the country, though it is emigration and returning process to former father lands that contribute to national consciousness of La Plata. Nonetheless Europe is still present in Argentina and it always will be, as there is no comparable component that would battle the cultural influence of Old Continent. Examining the field of cultural activity we have to underline that it is Argentina that does not refer to its indigenous past and peoples, apart from several examples mainly from independent culture. Gaucho tradition in the country of River Plate could be considered as a specific form of reference to local culture, but Mexican local cultural mosaic is considerably richer. In addition, it was ideological issue that depreciated the native root in Argentina, in opposition to Mexico where autochthonic culture was a fruitful source in identity creation both for national discourse as for popular culture.

Peculiar connections and interdependency between individual identity and collective identity, and the fact that in the end identity is subjective construction that is actualized by individual, prompt to highlight one last matter. Notions of contemporary individual identity want to describe this phenomenon as rather subjective and eligible aspect (e.g. Bauman, Giddens, Peyrefitte). Although modernizing and globalizing world forces such transition, I consider some cultures/regions as more traditional areas in determining people selfhood. If in the Western World we continuously experience the development of self-established identity, it does not concern unambiguously other parts of the world, where tradition and inherited culture are usual benchmarks. Western culture does not recognize nationality or traditional cultural background as a determinant of individual identity any more, in the meantime previous indicators were replaced by arbitrary chosen elements, even such as religion or nationality. Voluntary identity is a concept that does concern limited culture areas, whereas in others identity is still succeeded and oriented on national/cultural/ethnic boundaries.

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