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Who is Afrodescendant?
Classification Struggles and Legal Recognition in Argentina and Chile

By

Antonia Mardones Marshall

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

in the

Graduate Division

Of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Mara Loveman, Chair
Professor Irene Bloemraad
Professor Tianna Paschel
Professor David Cook-Martin
Professor Calvin Morrill

Spring, 2024

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Antonia Mardones Marshall

Abstract

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Why would a country that has erased Blackness from its national history suddenly begin to enact laws and policies targeting Afrodescendants, and what factors impact the approach that such a state takes to institutionalize Afrodescendant subjecthood? Which actors influence debates about how to legally define and delimit Afro-descent in countries where an Afrodescendant category did not exist previously? And what are the stakes of these state definitions for those who are seeking legal recognition as Afrodescendants for the first-time? In this dissertation, I focus on different sets of interactions and relationships to explain why Argentina and Chile – two states that stand out in Latin America for being particularly successful in establishing themselves as White enclaves – have taken different approaches when legally defining and delimiting Afro-descent.

The scope of the legislation and policies targeting Afrodescendants varies greatly between these two countries. While Argentine law has stressed the importance of ancestry and a broad notion of Afrodescendant culture, institutionalizing different types of Afrodescendant subjecthood, Chilean legislation has defined Afro-descent in relation to a particular history, culture, and identity connected to a long-standing presence in the national territory. Each of the empirical chapters of this dissertation contribute to explaining why Afro-descent has been institutionalized differently in Argentina and Chile by focusing on the interactions between distinct sets of actors that have participated in debates around how to recognize Afrodescendants.

My findings draw on research conducted over the course of four years, which included participant observation, archival data analysis, and 105 in-depth interviews with Afrodescendant activists, scholars, NGO representatives, international and multilateral organization agents, and state officials working at different levels of the Argentine and Chilean governments. From a processual perspective, I examine how the interaction between different sets of actors contributed to the formation of a political field – in dispute – around the recognition of Afrodescendant people. I analyze how, in a context of the international rise of multicultural norms and local ethno-racial revitalization, classification struggles over the meanings and boundaries of Afro-descent have evolved in each country. I particularly focus on the stakes and impacts of these political struggles for delimiting who is included or excluded as a subject of rights.

I identify five factors that together explain divergences between how Afro-Argentine and Afro-Chilean activists have framed Afro-descent and how the Argentine and Chilean states have responded to their claims and institutionalized Afrodescendant subjecthood: 1. Local activists' access to and mobilization of transnational networks and international resources that can provide leverage in their negotiations with state officials; 2. Governments' responses to the international commitments they make at intergovernmental forums and ratify through international conventions regarding the adoption of human rights and multicultural norms; 3. Afrodescendant movements' location in relation to national geographies of power and the social relationships they therefore develop that impact how they draw boundaries of belonging; 4. Countries' territorial organization of political power and the constraints and opportunities that different political systems afford for activists to access state officials and public institutions to promote ethno-racial reform; and 5. The role played by immigration in debates *within* Afrodescendant movements and *between* activists and state officials around *who* should be legally recognized as Afrodescendant. Overall, my research reveals how and why different definitions of Afro-descent are legally institutionalized, and how these definitions shape the type, impact, and intended beneficiaries of public policies.

My research has several implications for sociological understandings of how social categories get institutionalized. First, it reveals the central role played by activists in classification struggles around the definition, delimitation, and institutionalization of social categories. It shows how activists delimit boundaries of belonging contextually and strategically, depending on who they interact with and what claims they seek to make. Second, it reaffirms the persistence of the nation-state as the main source of symbolic authority to institutionalize these categories, both by legally defining who gets particular resources and by shaping how society at large perceives and classifies the world and each other. The research demonstrates, however, that the state's symbolic power is not absolute and that there are ongoing struggles to impose new categories both within the state and by civil society actors. Finally, the research shows that the stakes of how social categories are legally defined and delimited are high for those struggling to be recognized, as the institutionalization of social categories reifies distinctions between groups by assigning opportunities and resources to some over others. At the same time, it reveals how hard it is for state policies to disrupt the racial/social hierarchies that activists pushing for them are trying to dispute and dismantle.

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To my son, Lucas Erickson, who arrived in this world in the midst of a pandemic to transform our lives forever and inspire me to imagine other possible worlds, I dedicate this dissertation.

Abbreviations

AECID: Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation
ALARI: Harvard University's Afro-Latin American Research Institute
ALBA-TCP: Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America – Peoples' Trade Treaty
ALDA: Latin American Network for the Afrodescendant Decade
ARAAC: Latin American and Caribbean Regional Afrodescendant Network
CABA: Autonomous City of Buenos Aires
CAJA: Afro-descendant Youth Advisory Committee
CELAC: Community of Latin American and Caribbean States
CELADE: Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Center
CERD: UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
CIDI: Inter-American Convention Against All forms of Discrimination and Intolerance
CIRDI: Inter-American Convention Against Racism, Racial Discrimination and Related Forms of Intolerance
CLACSO: Latin American Council of Social Sciences
CNCA: Culture and Arts National Council (Chile)
CONADI: National Corporation of Indigenous Development (Chile)
DDPA: Durban Declaration and Programme of Action
DFID: Department for International Development (British Government)
ECLAC: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ENCAFRO: Characterization of the Afrodescendant Population of the Arica-Parinacota Region Survey (Chile)
FONDART: National Fund for the Development of Culture and Arts (Chile)
GALCI: Global Afro-Latino and Caribbean Initiative
IAC: Inter-Agency Consultation on Race in Latin America
IACHR: Inter-American Commission of Human Rights
IACtHR: Inter-American Court of Human Rights'
IDB: Inter-American Development Bank
ICERD: International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
ILO: International Labour Organization
INADI: National Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (Argentina)
INAFRO: National Institute for Afro-Argentine, Afrodescendant and African Affairs
INAI: National Institute for Indigenous Affairs (Argentina)
INDEC: National Statistics and Census Institute (Argentina)
INE: National Statistics Institute (Chile)
IOM: International Organization for Migration
ISFA: Superior Institute of Afrodescendant Formation (Uruguay)
MERCOSUR: Southern Common Market
MINCAP: Cultures, Arts and Heritage Ministry (Chile)
NED: National Endowment for Democracy
NGO: non-governmental organizations
OAA: Organization of Africans in the Americas
OAS: Organization of American States

ODAFRO: Afrodescendant Development Office (Chile)
OHCHR: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OJALA: Institute of Justice for Afrodescendants in Latin America
ONECA: Black Central American Organization
ORAPER: Regional Offices of Public Policies for Racial Equity
PAHO: Pan-American Health Organization
REDJUAFRO: Regional Network of Latin American and Caribbean Afrodescendant Youth
RIAFRO: Inter-American Network of High Authorities about Policies for the Afrodescendant
Population
RIVAS: International Network of Afro-Feminist Voices
RMAAD: Network of Afrodescendant Women from Latin America, the Caribbean and the
Diaspora
UN: United Nations
UNASUR: Union of South American Nations
UNDP: UN Development Program
UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund
UNIFEM: UN Development Fund for Women
USAID: United States Agency for International Development

INTRODUCTION

AFRODESCENDANT POLITICS IN ARGENTINA AND CHILE

In the 1980s, nation-states throughout Latin America began to engage in multicultural reforms to address ethno-racial inequality and grant legal recognition to Indigenous and Afrodescendant populations, as well as rights targeting these groups. These reforms were especially significant given elites' and governments' prior efforts to present their national population as culturally and racially homogeneous. Nation-building ideologies in Latin America had relied for over a century on the notion of *mestizaje*¹ to imagine their nations as "racial democracies" (Freyre 1933). From the 1980s, however, criticisms of the ideal of *mestizaje* began to spread throughout Latin America. In a context of increasing democratization after two decades of authoritarianism in the region, different actors began demanding recognition of the existence of ethnic diversity and racial inequality within these nations (Loveman 2014).

Argentina and Chile were late players in these transformations, especially in regards to the recognition of Afrodescendants. This can be partly explained by the fact that, in comparison with other Latin American countries, the Argentine and Chilean states were particularly successful in establishing themselves as European-like enclaves in the region. Argentine and Chilean elites imagined and projected their nations as mostly White, distancing themselves from the myth of *mestizaje* that was predominant in countries such as Mexico, Peru, and Brazil. Long-standing narratives in Argentina and Chile, reproduced in authorities' discourses and everyday life, have represented Indigenous populations as sparse and have excluded African ancestry from these two "imagined communities" (Anderson 1983). Although the exclusion of Blackness in national narratives is not unique to Argentina and Chile, these states stand out in the Latin American region for their resistance to officially recognizing and implementing policies regarding Afrodescendant minorities.

By the first decade of the 21st century, however, an increasing number of Argentines and Chileans were publicly identifying as the descendants of Africans brought to each national territory through the transatlantic slave trade. Following international conventions and based on the experience of Afrodescendant movements in other Latin American countries, these self-identified Afro-Argentines and Afro-Chileans began to organize against their exclusion from national narratives, asking to be properly recognized as Afrodescendant citizens. As a response to their claims and to multicultural norms consolidated in international treaties and agreements, the Argentine and Chilean states began to take steps to grant Afrodescendants legal recognition as subjects of targeted rights. Both states have recently enacted legislation and launched policies and programs addressed towards Afrodescendant populations, but they have defined and delimited Afro-descent in distinct ways. While Argentine law has stressed the importance of ancestry and a broad notion of Afrodescendant culture, Chilean legislation has defined Afro-descent in relation to a particular history, culture, and identity connected to a long-standing presence in the national

¹ In Latin America, the concept of *mestizaje* has been commonly used to refer to miscegenation and cultural intermixing between the descendants of Europeans (mostly Spaniards but also Portuguese in the case of Brazil), Indigenous Peoples, and in some cases, the descendants of Africans.

territory.

My dissertation seeks to explain why the Argentine and Chilean states have taken different approaches to the legal institutionalization of Afrodescendant subjecthood. Through multi-sited ethnography, interviews, and archival research, I analyze how, in a context of the international rise of multicultural norms and local ethno-racial revitalization, Afrodescendant activists engage with state officials, local authorities, scholars, lawyers, and international Afrodescendant and human rights advocates, in political and classification struggles over the legal definition of the Afrodescendant category. I examine how norms and repertoires of action defined in transnational ethno-racial circuits are adopted in these two national contexts by Afrodescendant movements and state officials. I look at how Afrodescendant organizations' geographical location has impacted how they construct and mobilize claims for ethno-racial reform and how state actors respond. Distinct from prior studies on Afrodescendant political claims-making processes, I analyze how changes in immigration flows affect domestic Afrodescendant activism and national ethno-racial politics. I finally identify who is included and excluded as subjects of rights allocation and legal protection in each country.

In short, my dissertation asks: Why have the Argentine and Chilean states taken different approaches to institutionalizing Afrodescendant subjecthood? Which actors participate in and influence debates around how Afro-descent is legally defined in Argentina and Chile, and how do these actors' interactions affect such definitions? What are the stakes of how the Afrodescendant category is defined regarding the inclusion and exclusion of particular groups of people into public policies and programs?

Defining a legal Afrodescendant subject is not as straightforward as it might seem. Like other social categories, race is a historical construction and meanings assigned to racial categories transform through time and vary depending on the social context in which they are mobilized. As shown by Tianna Paschel (2016), there are multiple projects of constructing Black political subjecthood in Latin America, each with their own constraints and opportunities based on the historical and political context. Latin American countries have taken different paths to define who should be the subject of targeted policies due to their identification as Black or Afrodescendant. Previous comparative studies in Afrodescendant legal recognition in Latin America have generally centered on countries where the Black population is both numerous and visible, such as Brazil and Colombia. In contrast, my research uncovers how local, national, and international actors negotiate agendas around Afrodescendant recognition and inclusion in two contexts with strong nationalist ideologies that emphasize Whiteness and where, until recently, the state officially denied the existence of Black citizens. Argentina and Chile provide particularly interesting cases to compare because, despite their similarities, they have taken different approaches to legally institutionalizing Afro-descent. These differences carry significant consequences for the *type* of public policies each state creates and for *who* is defined as a deserving target of these policies.

The legal recognition of Afrodescendants throughout the region opens important debates around who gets to define who can be legally recognized as Afrodescendant and what criteria should be used in such a definition. My research draws inspiration from and contributes to anthropological discussions of the politics of representation and authenticity (Canessa 2007; Farfán-Santos 2015; Hale 2005), asking not only who is and who isn't Afrodescendant but who

gets to define membership and on what basis, and what such membership entails in Argentina and Chile. It analyzes the processes by which the Argentine and Chilean states have constructed legal definitions of Afro-descent, examining which actors participate in and which actors are excluded from debates around these definitions. It shows how official definitions of the Afrodescendant category are shaped by Afrodescendants' demands for recognition, but also by state officials' interests. Overall, my research has theoretical and policy implications for understanding how and under what terms collective actors achieve legal recognition as an ethnoracial minority, how they negotiate with the state the criteria of such membership, and how struggles around state actions and the law can serve to include or exclude certain groups based on who is considered a deserving subject of targeted rights. My research ultimately reveals how and why different definitions of Afro-descent are institutionalized, and how such differences shape the type, impact, and intended beneficiaries of public policies.

Afrodescendant ethnic renewal

International organizations, agencies, and conventions have played an important role in the construction of discourses around ethno-racial rights. Global models define and legitimize agendas for local action within countries where activists are inheritors of different cultural traditions and have access to different types of resources. International actors have been particularly significant for the politicization of Afrodescendant identities in Argentina and Chile, given these states' resistance to recognizing Afrodescendant citizens within their populations. As multiculturalism gained hegemony in international forums and Afrodescendant movements emerged in different countries of the region, many individuals in Argentina and Chile began to identify for the first time as Afrodescendants. Joane Nagel (1995:947) coined the term "ethnic renewal" to refer to the process of identity reconstruction by which individuals reclaim a discarded identity, amend an identity that was already part of an ethnic identity repertoire, or fill a personal ethnic void. Analyzing ethnogenetic processes within Indigenous groups, Andrew Canessa (2007:203) identified how the process of redefining or rediscovering an ethnic identity has been an effective strategy to gain recognition and resources from the state. However, this does not mean that people adopting a new ethno-racial identity are merely using this identity strategically or that their feelings of belonging around it are inauthentic. While processes of ethnic renewal always involve some sort of cultural reconstruction, the ethno-racial identities adopted are not mere inventions but are better understood as ways of reorganizing memories of cultural heritage within new political contexts (Nagel 1994). Similarly, Barbara Voss argues that ethnogenesis is better understood as an ongoing process that "occurs through significations and practices that reference the past and anticipate the future" (Voss 2008:33). The term "ethnogenesis" has been generally used to refer to the emergence of a new ethno-racial identity or the reconstruction of an already existing one. Although not exclusive to marginalized populations, processes of ethnogenesis have been increasingly understood as a means for oppressed groups to resist domination (Hill 1996; Sider 1994). This has often been the case in Latin America, where gradually more people have begun to identify as Afrodescendants and confront official narratives of nationhood that exclude them. Thus, the concept of ethnogenesis enables a focus on the political aspects of identity reconstruction.

People identifying as Afrodescendants did not appear in Argentina and Chile out of thin air. As in the rest of Latin America, the conquest and colonization of what today constitute these

countries' national territories relied on the forced labor of African and Indigenous populations. As early as the 1530s we find evidence of the arrival of enslaved Africans to these two regions. The first expedition to Chile in 1536 already included a number of Black Africans estimated by a chronicler of the time at around 150 (Amunategui 1922; Mellafe 1959). In Argentina, the first royal permit to import slaves to the region was granted in 1534 (Andrews 1980:23). Africans and their descendants became an important part of colonial society, especially in the case of Argentina, where a census conducted in 1810 in the City of Buenos Aires reveals that only a few years before the country's national independence, Black people represented 30 percent of the city's population (Andrews 1980:4). While in Chile the number of Africans and their descendants was never as numerous, a Census conducted in 1778 in what today is Central Chile reveals that Afrodescendants constituted over 10 percent of the total population, a number that surpassed that of individuals classified as Indigenous (Del Río 2013).

By the end of the 19th century, however, official discourses emerged in Argentina and Chile disregarding the relevance of Black populations in each national territory. Historians and politicians played an important role in this national erasure of Blackness (Andrews 1980; Cussen 2006; Del Río 2013; Geler 2006). In both countries, authorized discourses minimized the role that African slavery had played in each national society and constructed myths about the disappearance of the descendants of Africans due to diseases, their participation in wars, their presumed inability to adapt to the weather, and to racial intermixing in which African genes were supposedly lost due to their physical and moral weakness. With the passing of years, these narratives solidified and Blackness was successfully erased from these countries' national imaginaries. In many cases, Black families collaborated in this process of collective forgetting by avoiding talk about their African ancestry with their descendants, to avoid stigmatization (Alarcón, Araya, and Chávez 2017; Baez 2010; Geler 2006).

As a result, in both Argentina and Chile there are individuals who only learned about their African ancestry as a consequence of the emergence of Afrodescendant movements and the politicization of Black identities. While some of the activists I interviewed had grown up in families that talked openly about their Black African origins, many others had never been told about their African heritage and were not aware until recently that they formed part of the African diaspora.² Knowing or discovering the existence of African ancestors, however, does not translate automatically into an Afrodescendant identity. I do not conceive ethno-racial identities as something that people inherit, nor as something acquired at one point in life. Rescuing a Weberian (Weber 1978:389) tradition that moves away from substantive claims of what constitutes ethnicity, I adopt instead an anti-essentialist or constructivist lens, recognizing that identities are multiple, flexible, and contingent, instead of singular, fixed and given. I follow Stuart Hall (1996) in approaching Afrodescendant politics as an ongoing struggle in which Blackness is best conceived not as a fixed referent or something that pre-exists its making, but rather as a state of becoming, a process that, as argued by Paschel (2016:238), is never quite complete.

² A similar unawareness of African roots has been documented in towns and cities of other Latin American countries, such as Peru (Golash-Boza 2011), Mexico (Sue 2013), and Colombia (Restrepo 2004). However, these countries differ from Argentina and Chile in that, despite the exclusion of Blackness from nation-building ideologies, elites constructed national imaginaries around a mestizo figure (in the case of Mexico and Peru) or recognized Black people but circumscribed them to certain regions of the country (in the case of Colombia) (Appelbaum 1997; Wade 2010).

Afrodescendant legal recognition in Latin America in comparative perspective

The emergence of groups in Latin America demanding official recognition and rights as Afrodescendants has driven scholars to examine how Afro-descent is legally defined and the implications of these definitions on the lives of those making claims. While ethno-racial reforms that seek to recognize ethno-racial diversity and reduce inequality have taken different forms around the world, in Latin America they have mostly focused on the recognition and inclusion of Indigenous peoples (Sieder 2002). Some scholars have stressed the difficulties encountered by Afrodescendant activists in Latin America when framing their demands (Hooker 2008; Wade 2010). As argued by Juliet Hooker (2008:280), “the basis of Afro-descendant collective rights remains a highly contested issue throughout Latin America.”

Studies in the region have identified a number of factors that impact when and how Afrodescendant movements successfully achieve legal inclusion. Although Afrodescendant populations’ relative size matters, a numerous population by itself is not enough. Afrodescendants’ level of organization and capacity to mobilize resources, create alliances, and frame their demands such that they can gain support from civil society and state actors are factors that need to be considered. Activists’ ability to navigate transnational networks also matters, since international organizations and agencies can help pressure states to enact reform.

Paschel (2016) argues that ethno-racial reform is more likely to occur when activists mobilize around the alignment of favorable domestic transformations and the consolidation of a global ethno-racial field. Researching Afrodescendant mobilization in Colombia and Brazil, she identified two distinct moments of ethno-racial political field alignment: a “multicultural” moment in which policies focused on collective ethnic rights, and a “racial equality” moment characterized by the advance of affirmative action policies. A vast literature identifies differences between these types of policies as mostly related to the rural or urban character of Afrodescendant movements: while rural Afrodescendant groups are more frequently successful in gaining cultural and territorial rights, urban Afrodescendant organizations tend to focus more strongly on advancing anti-discrimination policies (Hooker 2008; Ng’weno 2007; Paschel 2011, 2016; Rahier 2019). Some studies also stress how states co-opt Afrodescendant movements to establish their desired version of multiculturalism, without challenging the economic structure in which inequality is rooted (Hale 2005; Rahier 2011). Dulitzky (2010) has argued that while multicultural legislation can help minorities gain visibility, it does so at the cost of reifying essentialist ideas of ethnicity and displacing other political demands.

From my perspective, based on the research for this dissertation, the cultural logic that informs recognition policies and the redistribution logic that is often found within racial equality policies are not necessarily in opposition. Both types of policies can promote symbolic identification and at the same time foster structural transformations. Rahier (2019) has recognized how the logics behind anti-discrimination and collective rights legislation are two aspects of a single multicultural project in Latin America. As argued by Nancy Fraser (1995), struggles for recognition can coherently combine with battles for redistribution, and therefore we need to identify how the cultural and economic logics behind policies interrelate and can enhance each other. The legal recognition of ethno-racial groups is not merely symbolic, since it can help

advance policies that reduce inequality. In turn, the implementation of affirmative action policies can have symbolic effects and promote processes of ethnogenesis and cultural revitalization.

Classification struggles around Afro-Descent

My approach to this research is informed by Bourdieu's field theory, as I analyze how actors who hold different locations in social space struggle to influence how the Afrodescendant category is institutionalized in the political field. For Bourdieu (1984), fields are defined by the stakes for which social actors compete. In every field, social actors struggle to transform the relation of forces within it. Classification struggles are the struggles between social groups over the principles of division through which the meaning of the social world – and the groups struggling themselves – are constructed (Bourdieu 1984:479). At stake in these struggles is power over how to classify the social world and construct social boundaries between different groups or, in other words, over who can legitimately define which categories of representation matter within the field. Classification struggles are therefore never innocuous; they serve to include and exclude through the drawing of group boundaries, generally reinforcing previous social divisions. In the case of ethno-racial movements, these struggles are over the legitimate mode of ethno-racial classification.

Ethno-racial categories, however, do not exist in a vacuum. For Bourdieu (1994:13), the basis of categories of thought or cognitive structures are to be found in the actions of the state. Bourdieu defines the state as a field of power defined by its ability to successfully claim “the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical and symbolic violence over a definite territory and over the totality of the corresponding population” (1994:3). The state's accumulation and monopolization of symbolic power translates into its ability to impose in a universal manner a shared “principle of vision and division” or “similar cognitive or evaluative structures” (1994:13) within a national population. In other words, the state produces the categories of thought that people then use as “commonsense” to classify the social world. By inculcating a common principle of vision of division of the world, the state strongly molds mental structures, an approach that resonates with Durkheim's (2011) analysis of the social origin of categories of understanding. Thus, the state decisively contributes to shaping how we perceive and classify the world. From this perspective, the state's legitimacy would lie in our unconscious tacit agreement with state categories (Bourdieu 1994:14).

Ultimately, the state has the symbolic power to define which actors count as legitimate players in the political field. When recognized authorities categorize people, they objectify these categories in discourse, constructing reality. This explains why, in processes of ethnogenesis or ethnic renewal, demands for state recognition are so crucial. Through the universalization of categories of thought, memories of how political struggles resulted in contemporary ethno-racial configuration are erased, given them the appearance of naturalness and rendering alternative forms of classification obsolete. This dual process of monopoly over categorical universalization and exclusion of alternative forms of categorization is what Bourdieu regards as symbolic violence (1994:3-4). The state's aspiration to monopolize the legitimate use of symbolic violence, however, is never completely accomplished. There are competing symbolic agencies that people rely on to challenge state representations. As an example, Latin American states' adoption of color-blind ideologies has not impeded the emergence of groups arguing that ethno-racial diversity and

inequality do exist.

Furthermore, the state is itself a site of struggle, where different actors try to influence how categories are defined and hierarchized. This means that even within an overtly structured space, opportunities exist for challenging established consensus. Activists seek allies within the state who can help them advance their demands for political reform. As argued by Morgan and Orloff (2017:18), the state is not a unitary, coherent whole but has “many hands.” Different state institutions, and different actors within these institutions, operate differently and sometimes contradictorily, according to their positionality in the political field. The state’s authority to define and delimit types of subjecthood “raises the stakes of political struggle,” since obtaining power within state institutions becomes an avenue for groups to define the content and boundaries of their identities and design policies accordingly (Morgan and Orloff 2017:11). As activists seeking ethno-racial reform access state institutions, they can influence how ethno-racial categories are defined, policies are formulated, and resources are distributed (Wimmer 1997), impacting the categories of thought that are legitimized by the state and internalized by society at large.

Theoretical contributions beyond Latin American Afrodescendant politics

Beyond contributing to sociological understandings of Afrodescendant politics in Argentina and Chile, my comparative research makes theoretical contributions to several bodies of scholarship, including interdisciplinary studies of transnational politics, political sociology, the sociology of race and ethnicity, and the sociology of immigration. First, my research contributes to understanding the role of the transnational political field – constituted by international institutions, global norms, and transnational networks – in local politics, examining how a particular language of ethnic rights constructed at intergovernmental forums is vernacularized to pressure states to make reforms. My research builds on and extends arguments about how the alignment of transnational and national political fields can produce new opportunities for local actors to advance their demands. It reaffirms the centrality of domestic political openings for how states take up and follow through on international commitments regarding multicultural and human rights. Additionally, my research brings into focus the critical role of activists themselves in articulating such alignments, as well as the significance of historical timing – given transnational institutions’ shifting priorities and agendas – as a constraint on such articulation work.

Second, my research contributes to political sociology and, particularly, to social movement theory by identifying how political geography shapes the mechanisms through which social actors take advantage of these new political opportunity structures. My research shows how social movements actors’ mobilization of international and local resources and framings, shaped by their location in both geographic-political and social space, can impact how they appeal to different audiences and how the state responds to their demands. Additionally, my research shows how the type and scope of laws and policies recognizing particular types of subjecthood are connected to the opportunities and constraints afforded by the geographic organization of the state’s political system (federalist versus unitary), which also shapes activists’ possibilities to construct alliances with state actors and access public institutions.

Third, my research contributes to theoretical and comparative research in the sociology of

race and ethnicity in several ways. It reveals how the interactions and relationships between different actors – local activists and allies, state officials, and international actors – can produce different dynamics of ethno-racial subjecthood institutionalization. By closely tracing the processes through which these different actors negotiate ethno-racial boundaries, my research exposes the centrality of classification struggles, as these are embedded within the geographic and social location of actors within political fields, to the social and legal delimitation of ethno-racial categories. My research additionally reveals how activists' delimitation of ethno-racial categories are contextual and shift based on who they interact with but can also be strategically deployed to pursue political goals. Distinct from most sociological scholarship on ethno-racial categories and identities in Latin America, my research shows how activists' geographical location in relation to national geographies of power impacts how they construct, frame, and position their claims for ethno-racial reform.

Fourth, my dissertation advances knowledge about how immigration processes influence the framing of public debates surrounding the recognition of racial and ethnic minorities. My analysis shows how the arrival of immigrants can contribute to the foreignization of ethno-racial groups that have been excluded from official narratives of nationhood. My research additionally contributes to understandings of how immigration impacts local social movements' internal dynamics as well as their negotiation processes with the state, structuring the political field and battles for how ethno-racial categories are legally delimited. My comparative analysis shows how both immigrants' arrival and their participation within ethno-racial movements can shape how activists draw boundaries of belonging into their group and frame their claims towards the state, impacting how categories are ultimately institutionalized.

Overall, my research contributes to understanding of the political and legal construction of race and ethnicity by analyzing how access to transnational resources and multicultural frames, movements' political geography in relation to the territorial distribution of power, and histories of immigration, can shape and constrain how the state and other political actors construct and legitimate ethno-racial categories.

Finally, and more broadly, my dissertation contributes to theoretical understandings of 1) the centrality of activists' everyday interactions and strategic adaptations in classification struggles around the definition, delimitation, and institutionalization of social categories; 2) the persistence of the nation-state as the main source of symbolic authority to institutionalize these categories, even as alternative framings that dispute state categories persist; and 3) the high stakes that the categorical distinctions institutionalized by the state have for those struggling to be recognized, even when state policies do not significantly alter prevailing racial/social hierarchies. I develop these arguments and ideas further throughout each individual chapter and in the conclusion.

A note on terminology

There are long-standing academic debates about the differences between race and ethnicity. The general tendency in sociological research has been to use “race” to refer to social constructions based on perceptions of phenotypical differences and “ethnicity” to refer to social meanings associated to cultural differences. I find this distinction problematic since, as argued by Loveman

(2014), notions of biological and cultural differences are often interconnected in everyday life. People think of both culture and phenotype as “inheritable traits built into our genetic makeup” (Richards 2013:15). Racial and ethnic identification overlap both analytically and in practice, since they both “involve a discourse about origins and about the transmission of essences across generations” (Wade 2010:20). Processes of racialization, furthermore, have both physical and cultural roots. Throughout my dissertation, I therefore prioritize the use of the compound term “ethno-racial” to account for the difficulty of making a clear-cut distinction between race and ethnicity. I use the concept as an adjective, talking about ethno-racial identities, ethno-racial policies, ethno-racial categories, and so on, to further emphasize how these distinctions are overall social constructions.

While the term “ethnic” has been generally used in the United States to talk about European immigrants, in Latin America it has been the privileged term to refer to Indigenous peoples. Indigenous communities have usually been regarded as ethnic groups with a distinct cultural identity, expressed through their different customs, languages, and overall distinct cultural systems. As with European immigrants in the United States, these ethnic groups have generally been thought as capable of assimilating into mainstream society. Black people’s experiences, on the other hand, have been both in Latin America and in the United States more commonly thought of as racial (Wade 2010; Telles 2014). Latin American Black people are thought of as divested from their original African culture yet racialized as “Others” (Wade 2010). As argued by Golash-Boza, “discourses of difference for blacks and Indians differ in the extent to which color and cultural differences are made explicit” (2011:61). Because Afrodescendants are generally seen as assimilated into their national communities, their cultural practices are often regarded as part of the national culture and thus not ethnic enough to warrant state protection. In my research, I distance from this tendency and follow Peter Wade’s call to study Indigenous and Black people’s processes of ethno-racial identification and categorization in a common theoretical framework, albeit without losing sight of the different places these groups have occupied in overall “structures of alterity” (2010:37).

Finally, using terms to refer to how people identify without reifying those terms is a difficult endeavor. As argued by Brubaker and Cooper (2000:5), reification is itself a social process that is central in social and political practices related to ethno-racial identification. By centering on classification struggles, my research seeks to account for and distance from these processes of reification, analyzing instead how ethno-racial categories are constructed, negotiated, and institutionalized. However, I frequently reproduce categories of practice in my analysis to allow readers to understand who I am talking about without constantly using complicated phrases such as “people who identify as...”. That said, throughout the dissertation I prioritize the use of the term “Afrodescendant” over other terms to refer to people who identify as having African ancestry, since this is the preferred term used by most of the activists I interviewed. However, I also use at times “Black” and “Blackness” to refer to these individuals. I use these terms mostly interchangeably unless I am referring to distinctions that activists or other actors make between each term. As in other places in Latin America, in Argentina and Chile the word “Black” is often thought of as a phenotypical term, related to skin color, while “Afrodescendant” is regarded as a more political term related to ancestry but also to a shared identity. Some activists with light skin color therefore identify as Afrodescendant but do not think of themselves as Black.

Furthermore, activists sometimes choose to emphasize their national belonging by using the term Afro-Argentine or Afro-Chilean, especially when distinguishing themselves from Black immigrants.³ When that is the case, I explain the meaning associated with choosing one concept over another. When not, I use Afro-Argentine and Afro-Chilean simply to show that I am talking about Argentine and Chilean individuals who identify as Afrodescendant. When talking about immigrants, I use the term “Afrodescendant” to refer to Latin American immigrants, who share with native-born Afrodescendants their descentance from the diaspora originating from the transatlantic slave trade. I refer to recent immigrants from Africa as African immigrants, and I talk about Black immigrants to allude to both African and Afrodescendant immigrants.⁴ Finally, I occasionally use the term “Afro” – largely used by activists and other actors in both countries – to refer to Afrodescendant culture broadly, frequently practiced as well by non-Afrodescendants who are close to the Afrodescendant movement and their cultural practices. I use this term, for example, when talking about *Afro comparsas* - carnival troupes performing Black music and dance.

Selection of research sites

I first got in touch with Afrodescendant activists in Chile in 2010, when I was working on a project for a UNESCO Chair program in which, together with nine other young Latin American female researchers, we mapped organizations in the region that included or worked with young Indigenous or Afrodescendant women. Although I am Chilean and had lived most of my life in Santiago, it was only through this experience that I became aware of the existence of a political movement in Chile’s northern city of Arica and the adjacent Azapa Valley vindicating Afrodescendant rights. I contacted Indigenous and Afrodescendant organizations through email and conducted phone interviews with several Afro-Chilean activists. But I would only meet these activists in person six years later, when before starting my doctoral studies at the University of California, Berkeley, I travelled to Arica, located in the Arica-Parinacota Region, to conduct exploratory research focused on Afrodescendant ethnogenesis. During that trip, I met some of the main movement leaders and decided to focus my Master’s thesis at UC Berkeley on understanding how people who had recently begun to identify as Afrodescendant were making sense of this newly acquired identity. Since then, I have travelled to Arica almost every year, for shorter and longer periods of time, and have constructed a close relationship with several members of the Afrodescendant movement.

For my dissertation, I decided to broaden the scope of my research by including other actors who could account for how an Afrodescendant category was being legally institutionalized. I additionally broadened my research scope by comparing the development of Afrodescendant politics in Chile and Argentina. I knew that an Afrodescendant movement had emerged in Buenos Aires only a few years earlier than in Arica and that a similar process of historical erasure of Blackness had operated in Argentina as in Chile, producing in turn similar obstacles for the recognition of Afrodescendants by society and by the state. Although I had traveled to Buenos Aires many times throughout my life and have family living there, I had no contact with Afro-

³ I discuss how native-born Afrodescendant activists construct boundaries to distance from Black immigrants in Chapter 5.

⁴ These distinctions between types of immigrants are particularly important in the case of Argentina, where both Latin American and African immigrants have played a central role in political debates around the institutionalization of Afro-descent. I discuss immigrants’ participation in Afrodescendant movements in Chapter 5.

Argentine activists prior to my dissertation research. Through my Afro-Chilean acquaintances, a couple of Argentine scholars, and an Afro-Uruguayan activist who had mentored me while working on the UNESCO project in 2010, I gained access to some Afro-Argentine activists and state officials. Through them, I began a process of snowball sampling by which I was able to interview actors who had participated in debates around Afro-descent institutionalization. One of the first activists I contacted, a young Afrodescendant woman from Brazil who had been studying in Buenos Aires and participating in an Afro-Argentine organization for several years, was interested in my research and ended up collaborating with me as a research assistant, helping me to access other relevant actors.

My findings are based on research conducted in Argentina and Chile between 2020 and 2023, which was mostly concentrated between March 2021 and February 2022. In the case of Argentina, I conducted fieldwork in Buenos Aires, where the Afro-Argentine movement emerged and has concentrated and where most African and Afro-Latin American immigrants have arrived. Buenos Aires is where debates around policy implementation for Afrodescendants have mostly unfolded in Argentina. In Chile, I conducted fieldwork both in Arica, a northern city close to the border with Peru where the Afro-Chilean movement has been circumscribed to date, and in Santiago, where Black immigrant organizations began to emerge in the late 2010s and where activists from Arica have needed to travel to present their demands to central state actors.

My original research plan was to live for extended periods in four cities: Santiago and Arica in Chile, and Buenos Aires and Santa Fe – where Afrodescendant activism had also emerged early – in Argentina. However, both Chile and Argentina went through strict lockdowns, mandatory quarantines, curfews, and the closure of national borders due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, periods of time in the field were limited and an important part of my research was conducted online due to mobility restrictions imposed by the Argentine and Chilean states. It was in this context, and after learning that Afro-Argentines were organizing in several provinces of the country, that I decided not to travel to Santa Fe and instead conduct online interviews with Afrodescendant activists in various Argentine cities.

Comparing how Afrodescendant politics have evolved in Argentina and Chile allowed me to identify how the interactions between different actors – local activists and allies, state officials, and international actors – have produced different dynamics of Afrodescendant subjecthood institutionalization. Argentina and Chile are not common countries for researchers to focus on in studying Afrodescendant politics in Latin America. In some sense, these two countries represent exceptional cases given the pervasive erasure of Blackness in their national narratives, the prevalence of discourses around Whiteness instead of *mestizaje*, and the unexpected emergence of Afrodescendant movements in each country claiming recognition and targeted rights. Focusing on these two countries has enabled me to move beyond the comparative case – Brazil – that has shaped so much of sociological thinking and scholarship about “race in Latin America.” Indeed, an important contribution is how my research contributes to dismantling homogenizing ideas about *the* logic of racial domination in Latin America – as if there were only one such logic. In this way, my research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how definitions around Blackness are constructed, negotiated, and transformed in two contexts in which, until recently, most people believed that there were no Black citizens.

Data collection

My research methods included archival data analysis, interviews, and ethnographic participant observation. I travelled to Santiago to begin fieldwork in October 2020, hoping that the mobility restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic would not last long and I would be able to visit archives and conduct in-person interviews and participant observation in that city, to then travel and spend several months in each of my other field sites. However, as the mobility and travel restrictions continued for months, Santiago became my home base while I waited for the end of lockdowns and the opening of the border between Chile and Argentina.

Given that libraries and archives were initially closed, I gathered as much information as I could online during the first months of my research. Since I was more familiar with the Chilean Afrodescendant movement and its different actors and milestones, the collaboration of the Afro-Brazilian activist I hired in Buenos Aires was crucial to gather initial information for Argentina. Together, we reviewed webpages and social media accounts of Afrodescendant organizations in both countries to identify their goals, leaders, and main activities. I additionally reviewed the webpages of United Nations (UN) agencies and of the Organization of American States (OAS), and collected and analyzed international normative and legal instruments, meeting minutes, declarations, resolutions, and follow-up reports by state members. I also searched legal documents from state institutions, including both countries' national statistics institutes and offices in different ministries with programs related to diversity and inclusion. When information was not available online, I requested it through "transparency laws" in each country, meant for the public to access information from state institutions.

With my research assistant, we additionally reviewed newspapers in Argentina and Chile to identify news articles referring to Afrodescendants. This helped me identify significant events and actors that have impacted Afrodescendant politics in each country. For Chile, I gained access to a compilation of news articles about the Afrodescendant movement published in 2020 by the Afrodescendant Municipal Office of Arica, which included articles from 2001 to 2019.⁵ I additionally did an online search in a local digital newspaper, "El Morrocotudo," and in a national online news portal, "EMOL," selecting news from 2001 to 2021 that contained the words "afrodescendiente," "afrochileno," "afrochilena," and "racismo." For the Argentine case, my research assistant did an online search in two of the most important Argentine newspapers, "La Nación" and "Clarín," selecting news articles from 1996 to 2021 that contained the words "afrodescendiente," "afroargentino," "afroargentina," and "racismo."⁶

I triangulated the information gathered through these techniques with secondary sources to create timelines for each country with main events related to Afrodescendant politics, accounting for the actors that participated in them and the stakes involved in each event. I additionally created a database with the different Afrodescendant organizations identified, including information about

⁵ While this compilation included articles from national and local newspapers, it did not result from a systematic and exhaustive search but from the newspaper clippings gathered by the Afro-Chilean NGO "Oro Negro", and the great majority of articles came from the local newspaper "La Estrella de Arica."

⁶ The starting years selected for searches in newspapers from Chile and Argentina was defined based on the emergence of Afrodescendant NGOs in each country, which I describe in Chapter 1.

the years they were active, the geographical space they covered, the most significant activities/events they had been involved in, their main leaders, and their contact information, when available. I finally created a database with the laws, policies and social programs related to Afrodescendant populations I could identify for each country, including different actors and actions that led to their enactment. This organized information was crucial to identify information that I was missing and to explore relationships between different actors, guiding my archival research and the design of my interview schedules, which in turn provided new information to add to my databases.

While still in lockdown, I started doing interviews through Zoom, carefully selecting activists I had already met or who I thought would be more open to connect online without previously meeting me. Since social gatherings were not an option, I decided to conduct participant observation during this first phase by joining meetings that due to the pandemic were held online and webinars that proliferated during this period. I discovered that in some aspects the pandemic benefited my research, as individuals were quite open to Zoom interviews and I could catch events happening in different cities in the same week, which otherwise would not have been conducted online or streamed. I also connected to several meetings organized by international organizations and Afrodescendant networks held virtually between 2020 and 2022. I conducted some initial in-person interviews in Santiago when restrictions became less severe and accompanied Afrodescendant activists from Arica when they travelled to Santiago for political meetings. Particularly important was accompanying them in meetings and public audiences in 2021 at the Constitutional Convention, during the phase that was open for civil society to present their proposals for a new constitution.⁷

When national restrictions in Chile were eased in September 2021, I travelled for a month to Arica, where I conducted in-person interviews with local activists and politicians, reviewed archives from state offices and Afrodescendant organizations, and did participant observation in cultural and political events led by Afro-Chilean activists. In October, Argentina opened the border with Chile and a week later I travelled to Buenos Aires, where I stayed for about two months. In Buenos Aires, I accessed archival material gathered by Afro-Argentine organizations and conducted in-person interviews with activists and state officials. I also participated in state-sponsored and activist-led events organized in the context of commemorating the Day of Afro-Argentines and Afro Culture on November 8th, commemorations that extended throughout November. The archival data I accessed in Arica and Buenos Aires included newspaper clippings, meetings minutes, legal documents, letters between authorities and activists, reports of projects executed by state offices and Afrodescendant organizations, and many other documents related to crucial processes such as the Afrodescendant Pilot Surveys conducted in Arica in 2013 and in Buenos Aires and Santa Fe in 2005.

The most important component of my research was interviewing a wide array of actors involved in debates around laws and policies targeting Afrodescendants. I conducted my first (exploratory) interview in December 2019 and finished conducting interviews in August 2023. In total, I interviewed 105 individuals, 49 located in Chile, 44 in Argentina, and 12 international actors located elsewhere. In the case of Chile, I interviewed Afro-Chilean activists from Arica and Santiago; immigrant activists in Santiago from Uruguay, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and

⁷ I discuss this constitutional process and its impact for Afro-Chilean activists and organizations in Chapter 4.

Haiti; lawyers from local NGOs or foundations that had supported Afrodescendant organizations; and scholars who had researched and supported Afrodescendant communities. I also interviewed state officials, including Congressional representatives and analysts; the Arica mayor and the Director of the Afrodescendant Municipal Office (ODAFRO); central and regional representatives of the Chilean National Statistics Institute (INE); Arica Regional Ministry officials from the Social Development Ministry and from the Cultures, Arts and Heritage Ministry (MINCAP); and central authorities and officials from the General Secretariat of Government Ministry, the Women and Gender Equality Ministry, the Education Ministry, the Cultures, Arts and Heritage Ministry (MINCAP), and the Sociocultural Coordination of the Presidency of the Republic.

In the case of Argentina, I interviewed Afro-Argentine activists from the City of Buenos Aires and from the provinces of Santa Fe, Misiones, Santiago del Estero, and Buenos Aires; immigrant activists in Buenos Aires from Brazil, Uruguay, Cuba, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Senegal; and scholars who had researched and supported Afrodescendant communities. I also interviewed state officials, including federal and provincial senators and House representatives; central authorities and officials from the National Census and Statistics Institute (INDEC); authorities and officials from the National Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (INADI); central authorities and officials from the Human Rights Secretariat, the Women, Gender and Diversity Ministry, the Labor, Employment and Social Security Ministry, and the Culture Ministry; authorities and officials from the Defensor of the Public of the Nation, the Defensor of the People of the City of Buenos Aires, and the General Defensor's Office of the City of Buenos Aires; and an authority from a Provincial Office of Ethno-Racial Diversity.

Finally, the international actors I interviewed were representatives from international organizations, including the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the United National Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), UN Women, the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), and the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR); representatives from multilateral banks, including the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank; a former Southern Cone and Andean Region Representative for the Ford Foundation; and transnational activists who had participated in different Latin American Afrodescendant networks. The following table illustrates the distribution of these interviews:

TABLE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF PROJECT INTERVIEWS⁸

CHILE	ARGENTINA	INTERNATIONAL
13 Afro-Chilean activists	14 Afro-Argentine activists	6 representatives of international organizations (4 Afrodescendants)
5 Afrodescendant immigrants	5 African/Afrodescendant immigrants	2 representatives of Multilateral Bank (2 Afrodescendants)
25 state officials (4 Afrodescendants)	19 state officials (7 Afrodescendants)	A Southern Cone representative of the Ford Foundation
2 scholars	6 scholars (2 Afrodescendants)	3 transnational Afrodescendant activists
4 representatives of local NGOs		
TOTAL: 49	TOTAL : 43	TOTAL: 12

Each actor signed a consent letter to participate in my research, as established in my IRB protocol. I conducted all interviews myself and all but two of them were conducted in Spanish. Interview quotes throughout the dissertation are based on my own translations to English and I use respondents' real names and identifiable information with their authorization. Interviews lasted 1.5 hours on average and were recorded. I interviewed some actors at different points of my research to follow up with earlier questions and new events: eight actors were interviewed twice and four of them were interviewed three times. Given that most laws and policies regarding Afrodescendants in Argentina and Chile were enacted during the decade that preceded my fieldwork, interviews provided a rich source of information to uncover the different roles taken by actors in debates that resulted in policy reform.

Interview Analysis

I transcribed and coded all interviews using the qualitative analysis software Atlas.Ti. After each interview, I wrote a memo describing the atmosphere, the main topics addressed, things that I found particularly interesting, and possible connections to other interviews or to related literature. I included these notes in the coding process. Given the large amount of interview data I produced and my previous experiences coding for big projects, I followed Deterding and Waters' (2021) "flexible coding" method, meant for large-scale interview studies. I started by giving each interview transcript attributes based on the type of actor interviewed (Afrodescendant citizen activist, Afrodescendant immigrant activist, state official, NGO representative, international organization official, or scholar) and where they were located (Argentina, Chile, international). I then defined index codes, based on the questions I asked and the concepts I sought to examine, which I used to code all transcripts. Using the same codes for different types of actors was useful to then draw comparisons and contextualize my data in the Latin American region. While coding, I allowed space for the modification, emergence, and regrouping of the initial codes, but was careful not to end up with an excessive number of codes that would later overcomplicate my analysis process. I ended up with 32 codes, organized through 8 different "code families" or

⁸ Some of these actors played different roles at the same time or at different periods (for example, there were local activists who were also state officials, scholars, or transnational activists). For the purposes of this table, I used as a criterion the role they were currently more engaged in. In the case of activists working in state offices, I classified them as state officials.

groups, as observed in Table 2.

TABLE 2: INDEX CODES USED TO ANALYZE MY DATA

CODE FAMILY	CODE
Role of Different Actors	Afrodescendant civil society Immigrants State actors NGO actors Academic actors International actors
Afrodescendant Networks	National networks International networks
Classification struggles	Classification struggles
Afrodescendant Ethnogenesis	Ethnogenesis
Frames mobilized	Cultural distinctiveness Racism/racial equality Reparation Family roots Phenotype Location/place Citizenship Comparison with Indigenous people Boundaries with immigrants
Policies sought or implemented	Affirmative action Cultural/symbolic Racial justice Recognition Laws Statistical visibilization Creation of institutions Prior consultation/collective rights Intersectional tables Afrodescendant Office/programs
Resources mobilized	Local International Penetration of institutions
State administrative apparatus	State administrative apparatus

This organization allowed me to prioritize the analysis of different codes depending on the focus of each dissertation chapter, to then apply more “fine-grained codes to subsections of the interviews” (Deterding and Waters 2021:715). During this second phase, I developed analytic codes for the specific fragments to which I had applied index codes in the first phase. For example, one of the main index codes I based my analysis on for writing Chapter 5 was the code I labeled “Boundaries with immigrants.” I thus went over all the selected quotes to which I had assigned that index code, and identified different types of boundaries, different reasons to create boundaries, and outlier positions of people that blurred those boundaries. I wrote paragraphs about each of these fine-grained codes, which became the skeleton to later guide the arguments in the chapter. Following this method allowed me to analyze a large amount of interview data, focusing with more

depth on extracts directly related to each chapter's main argument, while making it easy to revisit other index codes in the future to develop additional arguments.

Dissertation overview

The chapters that follow are organized according to the sets of interactions and relations that I found contribute to explaining why Afrodescendant subjecthood has been institutionalized differently in Argentina and Chile. Each chapter focuses primarily on the relations and interactions between two different types of actors that have influenced debates and structured classification struggles over the legal recognition of Afrodescendants. The first two chapters analyze how transnational Afrodescendant networks, intergovernmental organizations, multilateral funding agencies, and international legal instruments have impacted the institutionalization of Afro-descent in each national context. Chapter 1 focuses primarily on the relationship between Afrodescendant activists and international actors. It looks at how Afro-Argentine and Afro-Chilean activists' access to Afrodescendant transnational advocacy networks and their ability to mobilize international resources impact how they influence state actors to enact ethno-racial reform. As an example, I trace the actions taken by Afrodescendant activists to include a question to capture Afro-descent in national censuses. My analysis shows that Afro-Argentine activists were more successful than their Chilean counterparts in leveraging international resources and pressuring the state to adopt international recommendations regarding Afrodescendants' statistical inclusion. As a result, a question about Afro-descent was added to the Argentine National Population Census in 2010 and in 2022, while in Chile such a question was rejected for the 2012 and the 2017 national censuses. I find that differences in the international support mobilized by Afrodescendants in Argentina and Chile are to a large extent the result of the change in international agencies' priorities from the time when the Afro-Argentine movement consolidated to when the Afro-Chilean movement did.

Chapter 2 focuses on the interaction between state actors and international organizations. It identifies how domestic political openings matter for how states take up and follow through with international commitments regarding human rights and multicultural frames. Shifts in the field of domestic politics can produce radical changes in state discourses and policies, which activists can capitalize upon to pressure state actors to implement reforms. The chapter reveals how distinct political histories produced divergences in how the Argentine and Chilean governments implemented international normative and legal instruments related to Afro-descent. I find that after the Argentine dictatorship, a number of authorities positioned the defense of human rights at the center of their national agendas, driving them to enact policies that sought the inclusion of marginalized populations. This was accentuated after the 2001 Argentine political and economic crisis and the election of leftist and progressive governments, which took steps to implement reforms that responded to international commitments regarding Afrodescendant rights. In Chile, in contrast, democratization processes after the dictatorship were slower and there were no drastic political changes between governments that could produce a radical shift in state discourses and policies. In this context, Chilean authorities were more resistant to implementing ethno-racial reforms that would adjust national legislation to international standards regarding racial discrimination and Afrodescendant rights.

The third and fourth chapters shift the focus to the relationships within the national arena,

revealing how political geography has impacted the way Afro-descent is delimited and institutionalized in Argentina and Chile. Chapter 3 focuses on the relationship between Afrodescendant activists and other local actors with whom they share social space. It examines how Afrodescendant movements' location in relation to each country's geographies of power has structured how activists frame and delimit Afro-descent and build their claims. The chapter reveals that Afrodescendant activists dispute dominant narratives and political structures that position them at the margins of national belonging by building their own understandings of Blackness in relation to the geographical space they occupy and the social actors with whom they interact there. I find that Afro-Argentine and Afro-Chilean movements' distinct geographical location afforded different possibilities for disputing hegemonic notions of nationhood. Afro-Argentines' concentration in Argentina's capital city, Buenos Aires, has encouraged framings of Afro-descent that underscore Afro-Argentines' historical contributions to the building of the Argentine nation, disputing narratives that identify Buenos Aires as a White city and erase Blackness from national history. Afro-Chileans' location in the peripheral city of Arica, in contrast, has promoted framings that stress Afro-Chileans' connection to Arica's history and culture to appeal to local supporters and dispute racial hierarchies that place them beyond the boundaries of the nation. Afro-Argentines' and Afro-Chileans' strategies, however, are themselves shaped by the political structures that generated Afrodescendants marginalization in the first place, and thus risk reproducing the power asymmetries they seek to combat. Activists have therefore begun to seek new strategies to overcome these limitations by building coalitions with – or by positioning themselves in relation to – other marginalized groups and expanding the Afrodescendant movement throughout their respective national territories.

Chapter 4 focuses primarily on the interactions and relationships between Afrodescendant activists and state actors. It identifies how the political geography of Afrodescendant movements interacts with each country's territorial organization of political power, impacting activists' ability to position their demands vis-à-vis state actors. While the Argentine state has passed legislative initiatives at the national and provincial levels targeting Afrodescendants and has implemented Afrodescendant programs at various central institutions, the Chilean state has approved one single law targeting Afrodescendants and policies have been mostly focused on Afro-Chileans who live in Arica. The chapter reveals that these differences are the result of the distinct pathways that Argentina's federal and Chile's unitarian political systems afford for ethno-racial reform. I find that in both cases proximity to the capital city matters. In Argentina, even though the federal system encourages activists to present their claims at provincial legislatures and governments, Afrodescendant activists' proximity to national authorities in Buenos Aires enables them to access central institutions, producing diverse laws and public policies at both the provincial and national levels. In contrast, Afro-Chilean activists' location far away from central power structures within a unitarian political system, has limited their possibilities of accessing authorities that can enable ethno-racial reform. They therefore have relied on local political allies to promote their claims with national authorities, and policies have been restricted to the Arica-Parinacota Region.

Chapter 5 focuses primarily on the relationships and interactions between native-born and immigrant Afrodescendant activists. The chapter examines the role of immigration in shaping *who* is legally defined as Afrodescendant in each national context. It analyzes how immigration impacts classification struggles *within* Afrodescendant movements and *between* Afrodescendant activists and the state. My findings show that immigrants' participation in Afrodescendant movements, and

native-born activists' perceptions of immigrants, frame claims and strategies for legal inclusion. Immigrants' early participation within the Afro-Argentine movement promoted heterogeneous political framings, but feelings of threat and competition drove Afro-Argentine activists to emphasize nativist claims. This produced a diversity of legislation and policies for different populations, including immigrants, related to recognition, historical reparation, and anti-discrimination. In Chile, immigrants have not participated in the Afrodescendant movement, but they have been present in the political imagination of activists and state officials debating legislative and policy measures. Although Afro-Chileans do not see immigrants as competition when making claims, they do see them as possible competition for access to future policies, driving them to distance themselves from immigrants. In contrast to Argentina, immigrants' absence within the Afro-Chilean movement has enabled activists to present their claims in restrictive ways. As a result, policies have been focused almost exclusively on the revitalization and promotion of Afro-Chileans' cultural heritage, while excluding immigrants.

In the concluding chapter, I provide an overview of each dissertation chapter's main arguments and contributions. I then focus on three broader implications that cut across the sets of relationships and interactions analyzed throughout the dissertation. First, I focus on how Afro-descent is defined on the ground, arguing that activists delimit the boundaries of Afrodescendant belonging contextually, interactionally, and strategically. I show how activists navigate a diversity of ways of framing Afro-descent and prioritize one over another depending on who they are interacting with and the types of claims they seek to make. Second, I argue that the nation-state continues to be the main source of symbolic authority to institutionalize the categories with which people classify each other. Since the state is a site of dispute where different actors struggle to impose their own state projects, activists strategically seek access to state actors and institutions that can enable them to influence how categories are legally institutionalized. Third, I make the point that for those struggling to be recognized, the stakes of how an Afrodescendant category is institutionalized by the state are high, since the legal definition and delimitation of Afro-descent forces categorical distinctions between those who are and those who are not entitled to opportunities and resources from the state. However, I argue that, so far, the impacts of the policies enacted in Argentina and Chile have not significantly disrupted racial hierarchies in these two countries. While recognition policies have been important for reversing Afrodescendants' historical erasure, stimulating self-recognition and mobilization, and legitimizing Afrodescendants as political actors, more profound transformations are needed to disrupt the racial hierarchies still prevalent in both countries. An important lesson from my research is that both policies focused on the recognition of identities and those focused on the promotion of racial equality can potentially have symbolic effects and foster structural transformations. Furthermore, these two types of policies are not incompatible but, to the contrary, can interrelate and enhance each other and are perceived by activists themselves as part of a singular project to improve the conditions of life of their communities. I conclude the dissertation with brief reflections about how a post-colonial research and political agenda might provide leverage towards overcoming these racial hierarchies.

CHAPTER 1

TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION BY LOCAL AFRODESCENDANT MOVEMENTS

Introduction

Since the 1980s, Latin American states have increasingly engaged in multicultural reforms targeting Indigenous and Afrodescendant groups. While Argentina and Chile took steps in the 1990s to recognize Indigenous peoples, these two states have been particularly resistant to recognize the existence of Afrodescendants within their national populations. Historically identified as countries without Black people, it is only in the last few decades that we find activists in Argentina and Chile mobilizing around an Afrodescendant identity. In each of these countries, activists came together to gradually constitute political movements with defined claims towards each state. In this chapter, I argue that this process of ethnic renewal and identity politization cannot be understood without analyzing the international context in which it emerged, characterized by the rise of multiculturalism as a dominant global paradigm. The main focus of the chapter is therefore on the interactions between Afrodescendant local activists and international actors, including transnational activists, representatives of international human rights organizations, multilateral agencies, and philanthropic foundations.

By favoring the promotion of ethnic identities and their cultures, multiculturalism has provided a structure of political opportunities for Indigenous and Black Latin American movements supported by international organizations. In this context, Indigenous and Afrodescendant movements have arisen to demand “reforms to land rights, political rights, cultural autonomy and, in some cases, simply the right to life itself” (Wade 2010:1). The construction of transnational advocacy networks (Keck and Sikkink 1999) has been crucial for activists to frame their demands and to access valuable resources that can help them gain local support and promote the consolidation and advancement of Afrodescendant movements in the Latin American region. International organizations such as the United Nations have helped disseminate multicultural ideologies and construct discourses around Afrodescendants’ rights, which local activists rely on to make claims towards their states. Multilateral development institutions and philanthropic foundations have provided funding so that Afrodescendant activists can attend international conferences and forums, access technical assistance, and develop projects that fortify Afrodescendant organizations and help them gain leverage when negotiating with their respective states. According to Paschel and Sawyer (2008:201), these networks have helped activists to “overcome resource difficulties and reframe policies,” and “have provided critical resources, legitimacy and pressure, aiding activists in making claims.”

Local activism, in turn, has given life to these transnational advocacy networks and provided international organizations and funding agencies with the necessary legitimacy to position themselves as defenders of the rights of ethno-racial minorities. Tsutsui (2017:1050) has referred to this process as the “mutually constitutive relationship between global institutions and local social movements.” The initial mobilization of few Indigenous rural groups who were able

to secure international support for multicultural reform initiated a process of ethno-racial political mobilization that escalated throughout the entire Latin American region, which Afrodescendants increasingly took as a model. Activists from early Black movements in countries like Brazil or Colombia made tremendous efforts to position their demands within intergovernmental forums and the agendas of multilateral banks and foundations, pressuring these global institutions to adopt policies and programs they would have not adopted otherwise. As argued by Tarrow (2005), locally-based activists who act transnationally have made crucial contributions to the adoption of international human rights instruments.

Argentine and Chilean Afrodescendants began to access these transnational advocacy networks relatively late in comparison to activists from other Latin American countries. They therefore learned from the experiences of other Latin American movements in order to frame their demands in ways that could resonate with international and local actors. They learned how to access funding from multilateral agencies and philanthropic foundations to develop activities that could position them as significant political actors, and how to cite international norms as a way of providing greater legitimacy to their demands. Similar to the case of Indigenous movements, the earlier success of Afrodescendant movements in the region served as “a prototype for *modularity* and a *duplication* of sorts” (Yashar 2005:80, italics in original). Both Afro-Argentine and Afro-Chilean activists frequently invoke the experiences of other Latin American Black movements – in particular the Afro-Uruguayan movement – as models for their own quest for state recognition and social inclusion.

But although both Afro-Argentines and Afro-Chileans have heavily relied on the international arena to advance their demands, they have not been equally successful in mobilizing international financial and human resources to advance ethno-racial reform in their respective national contexts. While Afro-Argentine activists relied on international funding from institutions such as the Kellogg Foundation and the World Bank, and representatives from the latter mediated conversations with state actors to urge them to follow up on commitments agreed on the 2001 Durban World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, Afro-Chilean activists’ attempts to gain similar resources were unsuccessful and they had to rely almost exclusively on local allies to advance their claims towards the state.

In this chapter, I argue that differences in the international support mobilized by Afrodescendants in Argentina and Chile are to a great extent the result of the change in priorities of international agencies from the time when the Afro-Argentine movement consolidated (mid-1990s) to when the Afro-Chilean movement did (mid-2000s).⁹ The period of time between the mid-1990s and mid-2000s was in fact a crucial moment for Afrodescendant mobilization in the region, characterized by the rapid proliferation of Afrodescendant networks and the positioning of an Afrodescendant agenda in major international organizations and funding agencies, resulting in unprecedented attention and resources focused on Latin American Black communities. This turned out to be a limited window, however, and movements that emerged too late lost out on many of the financial and human resources that had been made available for early Latin American Black organizations.

⁹ While there is documentation of the existence of Black organizations in Argentina (Andrews 1980) and Chile (Báez Lazcano 2018) throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, these do not qualify as constituting social movements by any sociological definition.

I start by situating Afrodescendant transnational advocacy networks from the perspective of social movement theory. I then describe the emergence of an Afrodescendant transnational advocacy network in Latin America, identifying how activist networks were consolidated and how various types of resources were made available. I then identify how Afro-Argentine and Afro-Chilean activists came into contact and became connected to these networks at different moments and through different means. I particularly analyze how differences in the historical contexts in which each movement consolidated affected the international resources they could access. Finally, I trace activists' claims-making processes around one of Latin American Afrodescendant organizations' main demands: their statistical inclusion in national surveys and censuses. I analyze how events, debates, and actions taking place in both the international and the national realms impacted Afrodescendant activists' and national statistics institutes' approach to the incorporation of a variable to statistically identify Afrodescendant populations in national censuses.

I find that activists' political leverage to pressure state actors for their inclusion in national censuses was strongly mediated by the international resources they could mobilize in their support. While Afro-Argentine activists were able to secure financial resources and support from powerful international actors that interceded on their behalf in negotiations with state officials, by the time Afro-Chilean activists sought similar resources, these were not available and the activists had to instead construct and mobilize local alliances to support their claims. These differences can help explain why Afro-Argentines were able to push for the inclusion of an Afrodescendant variable in the 2010 national population census, while Afro-Chileans' claims for census inclusion were consistently rejected by state officials during the first two decades of the millennium.

Afrodescendant movements from the lens of transnational advocacy networks

The emergence of groups demanding official recognition and differentiated rights as Afrodescendants in Latin America has driven scholars' attention to understanding how these new identities are being legally defined as well as the implications of these definitions in the lives of Black populations. Comparative research has revealed how changes in national legislation are strongly tied up with normative shifts in international institutions. States are embedded in global networks and need to comply with international norms to preserve their credentials as modern nations (Loveman 2014). Domestic actors take advantage of the political opportunities opened by international institutions by appealing to international normative and legal instruments, mobilizing international human and material resources, and incorporating frames through which they can appeal to local audiences (Tsutsui 2017). In this way, social movements become better equipped to advance their claims locally and to pressure their governments to enact ethno-racial reform.

Afrodescendant activists have relied on transnational advocacy networks to mobilize various types of resources that can help them present their demands in ways that can successfully resonate with local political actors. According to Keck and Sikkink (1999), transnational advocacy networks are political spaces in which states, international organizations, and non-state actors communicate and negotiate the meanings associated with particular causes or propositions they

advocate for, at the same time promoting regional integration.¹⁰ These processes of meaning production and negotiation can produce high levels of isomorphism between nation-states, which theories centered exclusively on internal dynamics cannot account for. For Keck and Sikkink (1999:90), transnational activists strategically participate in an “intersubjectively structured political universe,” which contains both understandings of the world that are stable and shared, and understandings of the world that are contested and in continuous negotiation and, therefore, a site of struggle. The concept of transnational advocacy networks, thus, allows us to bring together structural and actor-centered elements to analyze the emergence and development of Black movements from a regional comparative perspective.

Multicultural norms negotiated by transnational actors, however, require intermediaries who translate them into the vernacular so that local claimants can adapt them to their particular contexts (Merry 2006). According to Merry (2006:3), “intermediaries such as NGO and social movement activists play a critical role in interpreting the cultural world of transnational modernity for local claimants.” Because Afrodescendants in Latin America have generally not been seen as cultural “others,” they have had more difficulties framing their demands for recognition than Indigenous peoples, who tend to be considered the subject of multicultural reforms *par excellence* (Wade 2010). In this context, early Afrodescendant activists have played a crucial role in accessing international human rights and multicultural norms and translating them into frames that make sense to local actors, enabling the formation and fortification of local social movements. In this way, global norms have acquired new meanings in each local context where they are adopted, promoting different responses to international agendas (Liu 2006). As local actors gain new understandings about their problems and their rights, new leaderships emerge that, in turn, learn how to access and mobilize these international resources (Tsutsui 2017). In this way, transnational advocacy networks can promote the political mobilization of groups that were previously inactive.

Activists participating in transnational advocacy networks draw from various resources to influence domestic and international politics, promoting norm convergence as they advance their claims. These resources are not only material but include technical assistance and access to cognitive frames – beliefs, ideologies, values, meanings – that help activists fashion shared understandings of the world that resonate with different political actors and can motivate collective action (Benford and Snow 2000; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996). David Snow and his colleagues (1986) argues that frames can align to help organize experience and guide action, over time becoming part of the political culture of a social movement or, in Tarrow’s words (1992:197), “part of the reservoir of symbols from which future movement entrepreneurs can choose.” The mobilization of these frames can alter the legal consciousness of the public and help the movement gain allies in their quest for legal reform (McCann 1998:97). By mobilizing transnational resources, activists can thus impact the local political opportunity structure and modify the correlation of forces between social movements and state actors. To the extent that movements gain leverage over officials in decision-making positions, they become better positioned to promote normative and legal changes that align with internationally accepted human rights and multicultural frames.

¹⁰ I prioritize conceptualizing Black transnational activism as immersed in transnational advocacy networks over defining it as constituting a transnational social movement (Smith 2013), because this more accurately accounts for how a majority of Latin American Black transnational activists continue to be primarily involved in local struggles focused on making claims to their respective states.

I argue that the consolidation and trajectories of Afrodescendant movements in both Argentina and Chile cannot be explained without considering the role played by these transnational advocacy networks. Following Tilly (2004), I define social movements as a form of contentious politics by which groups of individuals engage in political action and campaigns to make collective claims on others with the goal of creating social change. In this chapter, I look at how access to transnational advocacy networks allowed early Afro-Argentine and Afro-Chilean activists to mobilize resources crucial for both the emergence of an Afrodescendant movement in each country and its maintenance over time. I argue that the different time periods in which activists from each country began to access these networks were marked by changes in the priorities of international organizations and funding agencies, impacting the international resources that activists could access and mobilize to position their demands successfully.

The consolidation of regional Afrodescendant networks

Before the consolidation of a Latin American Afrodescendant transnational advocacy network, there were some early attempts to bring together activists to promote Black culture and identity in the region. In a context in which “whitening” ideologies had historically discouraged people from identifying as Black in order to gain acceptance, early Black organizations in Latin America considered it a priority to promote self-identification among descendants of Africans (Morrison 2012). Three “Congresses on Black Culture in the Americas” were organized between 1977 and 1982 in Cali, Panama City, and São Paulo (Echeverri-Pineda 2020:146).¹¹ The activists promoting these Congresses were inspired by Black struggles in other regions, in particular by the United States’ Civil Rights, Black Power, and Black Art movements; the anti-Apartheid struggles in South Africa; and the struggles for Independence going on in several countries at the time, concentrated particularly in Africa (Valero 2021). While the Congresses mainly focused on culture, racial identity, consciousness, and recognition (Davis, Paschel, and Anderson 2012:22), they also made important political statements of solidarity with the Anti-Apartheid movement and African liberation struggles as well as condemning dictatorships in Latin America and United States imperialism, among other issues.¹² According to Morrison (2012:253), these Congresses “laid the foundation for future grassroots activism across the Americas.” However, it was a shift in attention from culture and identities towards economic and social goals that ultimately facilitated the creation of regional networks focused on specific outcomes (Davis et al. 2012:22-23).

In the mid-1990s, international networks of Black organizations promoting policies addressing recognition, reparation, and affirmative action emerged for the first time in Latin America. The formation of these networks was in large part supported by international organizations, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which initiated in 1994 the “Slave Route” project¹³ (Agudelo 2019; CEPAL 2017:35).

¹¹ A fourth Congress was supposed to take place with the support of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), but despite organizers’ efforts, this never happened (Valero 2021).

¹² More information about these Congresses, including links to Congress calls, participants, and resolutions, is available at: <https://mzo.library.vanderbilt.edu/correspondence/essay.php?topic=congresses>.

¹³ The goal of the UNESCO Slave Route Project is to break the silence surrounding the slave trade and slavery by studying its causes, modalities, and consequences, and to enhance mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue

Among these networks, the most long-standing and consistent one, still very important today, is the Network of Afrodescendant Women from Latin America, the Caribbean and the Diaspora (RMAAD, Spanish acronym),¹⁴ created in 1992 in the Dominican Republic as a result of the First Meeting of Black Latin American and Caribbean Women. Many of the RMAAD founding members had previous experience in international networks of women's organizations, where they had learned how to articulate global movements with local struggles and how to make use of the international human rights lexicon to advance their demands. These women were looking for a platform to raise issues around racial discrimination affecting women (Htun 2004:78), promoting in this way an intersectional approach to inequality. Such experience was crucial for the organization of a Pan-African movement in the Americas, which began to take advantage of the opportunities created by international organizations and forums to position and gain support for their demands. As explained to me by Costa Rica's then-Vice-President Epsy Campbell (Interview, December 2021), one of the founders of the RMAAD:

International networks have been crucial for the women's movement and for the Afrodescendant movement. In the majority of countries, Afrodescendants' work fortifies from the outside towards the inside and not from the inside towards the outside, mainly because of the rejection inside of the countries towards the recognition of Afrodescendant peoples, of female Afrodescendant leaders, of topics related to racism and racial discrimination, which forces activists to search for international networks that allow us to create a collective voice that can then be used internally in each country (...) For our agenda to survive we had to articulate internationally as a way to push local and national claims. Also, you could say that the history of Afrodescendants, being a diaspora, gives us a relative advantage to organize internationally for our rights.

Another early Afrodescendant network in the region, but with a much shorter lifespan, was the Continental Network of Afrodescendant Organizations,¹⁵ created after a meeting hosted in November of 1994 in Montevideo by the Afro-Uruguayan organization Mundo Afro. The meeting, titled "First Continental Seminar about Racism and Xenophobia, Development Program for Afro-Americans," brought together 130 delegates from more than 50 organizations and institutions (CEPAL 2017; Rodríguez 2000). Over time, the Continental Network came to include organizations from Honduras, Costa Rica, Peru, Colombia, Uruguay, Argentina, Paraguay, Brazil, Ecuador, and the United States (García 2001:52) and played a crucial role for the creation, in turn, of the Strategic Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Afrodescendants,¹⁶ established in San José, Costa Rica, in 2000. The Strategic Alliance's primary goal was to organize Latin American delegations that would participate at the 2001 Durban World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. Additionally, it sought to promote projects aimed towards the "full incorporation of black communities in the social and political life of their

about the diverse histories and heritages that resulted from the slave trade. The project focuses mostly on the development of pedagogical initiatives to improve teaching about the slave trade and its consequences, and the creation of historic sites, memorials, and organizations related to the transatlantic slave trade. More information is available at: <https://www.un.org/en/rememberslavery/resources/unesco>.

¹⁴ This Network officially changed its name from *Red de Mujeres Afrolatinoamericanas, Afrocaribeñas y de la Diáspora (RMAAD)* to *Asociación Red de Mujeres Afrolatinoamericanas, Afrocaribeñas y de la Diáspora (ARMAAD)*. However, they continue to use the former name in publications and meetings, so I follow their lead and use this former name in its English translation throughout my dissertation. Information about RMAAD is available on its webpage: <http://www.mujaresafro.org>.

¹⁵ My translation from its Spanish name, *Red Continental de Organizaciones Afroamericanas*.

¹⁶ My translation from its Spanish name, *Alianza Estratégica de Afrodescendientes de América Latina y el Caribe*.

respective countries” (López 2009). The Strategic Alliance brought together organizations from South and Central America, the latter which were, in turn, articulated through the Black Central American Organization (ONECA)¹⁷, created in Belize in 1995 by Afrodescendant organizations from Central American countries, including immigrant organizations in the United States (Losilla 2020:123).

Other early associative initiatives came from the United States. In 1992, the Organization of Africans in the Americas (OAA) was created with Michael Franklin as its executive director. The OAA’s main goal was to influence Latin American governments and multilateral institutions to address the situation of Afrodescendant populations. One of the OAA’s most important achievements was to promote in the early 2000s the establishment of the Inter-Agency Consultation on Race in Latin America (IAC), which – as we will see later – would go on to have an important role in advocating for the statistical inclusion of Afrodescendants in the region. Michael Franklin was also involved in the creation of Afroamerica XXI, a network launched after activists from Latin American countries came together in a meeting titled the “Forum on Poverty Relief for Minorities in Latin America and the Caribbean,” organized by the Inter-American Development Bank in Washington D.C in November of 1996. Afro-America XXI came to include organizations from Peru, Brazil, Honduras, Venezuela, Colombia, Argentina, the United States, Bolivia, Ecuador, Mexico, Uruguay, and Nicaragua, with the goal of connecting Latin American Black activists to collaborate on an agenda focused on development and poverty relief for their communities (Davis et al. 2012:26-27; García 2001:52). In New York, the Global Afro-Latino and Caribbean Initiative (GALCI) was launched in October of 1999, seeking to facilitate contact between the Afro-Latin American movement and multilateral agencies and private foundations, such as the Kellogg, Rockefeller, and Ford Foundations (Echeverri-Pineda 2020:146; Turner 2002:35), with the participation of organizations from Mexico, Honduras, Uruguay, Venezuela, Peru, and the United States (García 2001:52).

According to Romero Rodríguez (Interview, July 2021), an Afro-Uruguayan activist who was one of the founders of both the Continental Network and the Strategic Alliance, Afrodescendant networks created from the United States were funded by American organizations such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and National Endowment for Democracy (NED) as a counterweight to the networks that were articulating from a human rights perspective in Latin America. The emergence of these two types of networks thus signals a geopolitical struggle in the region for the dominance of the Afrodescendant agenda. Afro-Argentine activist Carlos Álvarez (Interview, August 2021) described this tension in the following terms:

...there was a tension originating from the political construction of interests that were being disputed from the north, resulting in networks such as Afroamerica XXI. Although it vindicated the struggle against racism and the protagonist participation of Afrodescendant people, their underlying interests were different than those that we had from the Strategic Alliance of social organizations, where we clearly sought for the positioning of a Latin Americanist discourse, more anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist, but overall, focusing on promoting activists’ own voices.

¹⁷ My translation from its Spanish name, *Organización Negra Centroamericana*. Although ONECA does not have a webpage, it has an active Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/oneca.centroamerica.9>.

Other regional Afrodescendant networks emerged after the 2001 Durban World Conference, disputing the dominance that United States-based agencies and foundations were taking over the Afrodescendant agenda. For example, the Network of Afrodescendant Parliamentarians from the Americas and the Caribbean¹⁸ consolidated as a result of four “Meetings of Afro-descendant Legislators of the Americas” taking place between 2003 and 2008 in Brasília, Bogotá, San José, and Cali (CEPAL 2017:30). The goal of these Congress representatives was to create mechanisms to coordinate their actions related to Afrodescendant rights (Agudelo 2019). In 2004, the Regional Offices of Public Policies for Racial Equity (ORAPER, Spanish acronym)¹⁹ were created under the initiative of Mundo-Afro Uruguay, with offices in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panama, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, Chile, Uruguay, Argentina, Paraguay, and Canada (Agudelo 2019). With the support of the UNESCO and the Ecuadorian government, ORAPER promoted, in turn, the creation of the Latin American and Caribbean Coalition of Cities Against Racism, Discrimination and Xenophobia²⁰ in 2006 (Agudelo 2019), in the context of the First Ibero-American Forum of Local Governments, conducted in Montevideo in 2004 with the assistance of over 100 Municipal authorities (UNESCO 2008).

In 2008, a group of prominent Afro-Latin American activists created the Afrodescendants in Censuses Working Group,²¹ colloquially known as Afro-Census Working Group, with the goal of advocating for the inclusion of an Afrodescendant question or variable in national population censuses throughout the region. This group established in 2011 the Afrodescendant Institute for Studies, Research and Development,²² which continues to date supporting Latin American Afrodescendant organizations in their claims for statistical inclusion, currently under the presidency of Afro-Uruguayan activist Vicenta Camusso. In 2011, the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Afrodescendant Network (ARAAC, Spanish acronym)²³ was founded at the “IV Meeting of Afrodescendants and Revolutionary Transformations in Latin America and the Caribbean,” conducted in Venezuela to position an agenda of ethnic inclusion in south continental integration projects, including the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC, Spanish acronym), the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America – Peoples’ Trade Treaty (ALBA-TCP, Spanish acronym) and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR, Spanish acronym) (ARAAC 2018).

Furthermore, in 2014 the Inter-American Development Bank led the creation of the Somos

¹⁸ My translation from its Spanish name, *Red de Parlamentarios Afrodescendientes de las Américas y el Caribe*.

¹⁹ My translation from its Spanish name, *Oficinas Regionales de Políticas para la Equidad Racial*.

²⁰ My translation from its Spanish name, *Coalición Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Ciudades Contra el Racismo, la Discriminación y la Xenofobia*. Information about this coalition is available on its webpage: <https://coalicionlac.org>.

²¹ My translation from its Spanish name, *Grupo de Trabajo sobre Afrodescendientes en los Censos*. The Afro-Census Working Group had a political-technical character and included prominent activists in the region, including Agustín Lao-Montes, Carlos Álvarez, Chandrai Estevez, Claudia Mosquera, Edna Roland, Epsy Campbell, Guillermo Ponce, Humberto Brown, Jenny de la Torre, John Anton, Marcelo Paixao, Samuel Pozo, Sonia Viveros, and Vicenta Camusso.

²² My translation from its Spanish name, *Instituto Afrodescendiente para el Estudio, la Investigación y el Desarrollo*. Information about this Institute is available on its webpage: <http://institutoafro.org>. The Institute’s directive board for 2022-2024 is integrated by Vicenta Camusso (President), Ana McKinley Meza (Vice-President), Sonia Viveros (Secretary), Shari García (Treasurer), Samuel Pozo Alfaro (Fiscal), John Antón (1st Spokesperson), and Epsy Campbell (2nd Spokesperson).

²³ My translation from its Spanish name, *Articulación Regional Afrodescendiente de América Latina y el Caribe* (ARAAC). While ARAAC is still functioning and has participated in international forums during the past few years, it does not have a webpage.

Afro network,²⁴ which is still active and uses a virtual platform to promote the participation of individuals, collectives, communities, and organizations interested in the development and empowerment of Afrodescendant People of Latin America and the Caribbean. Somos Afro is, in turn, part of the Inter-American Network of High Authorities about Policies for the Afrodescendant Population (RIAFRO), a mechanism created during a meeting that took place in Peru in June of 2018, and is supported by the Inter-American Development Bank's (IDB) Gender and Diversity Division, the Organization of American States (OAS), and Harvard University's Afro-Latin American Research Institute (ALARI). Following the principles of the International Decade for People of African Descent – recognition, justice, and development – RIAFRO facilitates dialogue, coordination, and permanent collaboration between national authorities of the Americas to promote policies addressed towards the Afrodescendant population. Twelve Latin American countries participate in RIAFRO through their state institutions, including Argentina's National Directorate of Ethno-Racial Equity, Migrants, and Refugees.²⁵

Most recently, some United Nations Organizations have facilitated the construction of new networks. On the one hand, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has encouraged the reconfiguration of a network of Afrodescendant youth (Interview with Harold Robinson, February 2022),²⁶ supporting the creation in 2021 of the Regional Network of Latin American and Caribbean Afrodescendant Youth (REDJUAFRO) by Afrodescendant organizations from 15 different countries.²⁷ UNFPA has also implemented leadership schools for young people of African descent in Latin America and the Caribbean, and promoted the formation of the Afro-descendant Youth Advisory Committee (CAJA) in the context of a study conducted between UNFPA and ECLAC about Afrodescendant youth.²⁸ On the other hand, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 75/314 in August of 2021, by which it created the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent.²⁹ The Permanent Forum represents “a consultative mechanism for people of African descent and other relevant stakeholders as a platform for improving the safety and quality of life and livelihoods of people of African descent, as well as an advisory body to the Human Rights Council, in line with the program of activities for the implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent and in close coordination with existing mechanisms” (UN Resolution 75/314, 2021).³⁰ Costa Rica's Vice President and Afrodescendant activist Epsy Campbell has played an important role in the shaping of this Forum, which despite not being a Latin American Afrodescendant network per se, I include here since it is regarded by several

²⁴ Information about Somos Afro is available on its webpage: <https://www.somosafro.org/>.

²⁵ Information about RIOAFRO is available on its webpage: <https://www.somosafro.org/gobiernos/riafro/>.

²⁶ Various sources show that there have been several networks of Afrodescendant youths in the past, but as argued by UNFPA's then-Regional Director for Latin America Harold Robinson (Interview, February 2022), the challenge of maintaining these networks is that young people get older, so the membership is constantly turning over. Some of the past networks I could identify were *Red de Jóvenes Afrodescendientes de América del Sur*, *Red de Jóvenes Afrodescendientes de América Latina y el Caribe*, *Red Iberoamericana de Juventud Indígena y Afrodescendiente* (REJINA), and “*Círculo de Juventudes Afrodescendientes de las Américas* (CJA) (Anton 2009; Anton and Santa Cruz 2023; CEPAL 2017).

²⁷ My translation from its Spanish name, *Red Regional de Juventudes Afrodescendientes de América Latina y el Caribe*. Foundational declaration can be found at: <https://linktr.ee/redjuafro.lac>.

²⁸ Information about these initiatives is available on UNFPA's webpage: <https://www.unfpa.org>.

²⁹ Resolution 75/314 is available at: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n21/213/97/pdf/n2121397.pdf?token=k5PZThd60qwwVNISS6&fe=true>.

³⁰ Information about the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent is available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/es/permanent-forum-people-african-descent>.

Afrodescendant activists as a crucial instrument for Latin American civil society to articulate an agenda to advance Afrodescendant rights.³¹

Other new Afrodescendant networks have responded to Afrodescendant civil society's initiative and aspiration to have a bigger impact in the agendas promoted by international human rights organizations. In 2019, the Latin American Network for the Afrodescendant Decade (ALDA)³² was created in the context of the 49th Session of the General Assembly of the OAS in Medellín. Bringing together Afrodescendant organizations of several Latin American countries, ALDA's main purpose is promoting the participation of civil society in activities related to the International Decade for People of African Descent. In 2021, the Global Coalition Against Systemic Racism and for Reparations³³ was launched in the context of the first celebration of the International Day for People of African Descent on August 31, with the purpose of promoting actions to confront systemic racism and to advocate for reparations for people of African descent. As an initiative of civil society organizations led by Epsy Campbell, the Global Coalition has also received the cooperation of public and private actors. Also in 2021, the Afrodescendant Parliamentary Group of Latin America and the Caribbean³⁴ was launched in the context of a Meeting of Black Parliamentarians in Montevideo, with the goal of ensuring and promoting national congresses' compliance with international, regional, and national regulatory frameworks to promote equality and guarantee the rights of people of African descent.

Finally, there are also networks of Afrodescendant intellectuals that, although they do not necessarily represent organizations, have impacted agendas around Afrodescendant rights throughout the region. These include the Barlovento Group, founded by Sheila Walker and Jesus "Chucho" Valdés at a meeting of researchers conducted in Venezuela in 2003; the Institute of Justice for Afrodescendants in Latin America (OJALA),³⁵ led by Jean Muteba Rahier and founded in 2018 at a meeting focused on doing a comparative assessment of the utility of multicultural legal instruments; and the International Network of Afro-Feminist Voices (RIVAS), founded in 2023 at a meeting in Cuba between female researchers in the context of the Afrodescendants and Counter-hegemonic Proposals Working Group of the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO, Spanish acronym).³⁶

³¹ At a regional level of human rights organizations, there are two civil society coalitions focused on Afrodescendants within the Organization of American States (OAS): the Coalition of Communities of African Descent and the Coalition of Persons of African Descent in the Americas. However, there is little information about them available online, including their members and date of creation.

³² The foundational declaration of ALDA is available at:

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Racism/WGEAPD/Session26/LAC/Cristian-Baez-Lazcano-Perfil-ALDA-UNFPA.pdf>

³³ Although the Global Coalition Against Systemic Racism and for Reparations is in principle not limited to Latin America, its action framework has been so far restricted to this region. Information about the Global Coalition is available on its webpage: <https://contraracismo.org/>.

³⁴ My translation from its Spanish name, *Grupo Parlamentario Afrodescendiente de América Latina y el Caribe*. This group's foundational declaration, under the name of "Agreement of Montevideo" (Acuerdo de Montevideo), is available at: <https://lac.unfpa.org/es/news/parlamentarios-y-parlamentarias-reafirman-su-compromiso-con-los-derechos-y-promoción-de>.

³⁵ Information about OJALA is available on its webpage: <https://ojala.fiu.edu>

³⁶ The foundational declaration of RIVAS is available at: <https://www.clacso.org/en/declaracion-fundacional-de-la-red-internacional-de-vozes-afrofemistas-rivas/>.

TABLE 3: LATIN AMERICAN AFRODESCENDANT NETWORKS³⁷

AFRODESCENDANT NETWORKS	YEAR	TYPE	ACTIVE
Network of Afrodescendant Women from Latin America, the Caribbean and the Diaspora (RMAAD)	1992	Civil Society	YES
Organization of Africans in the Americas (OAA)	1992	Civil Society + Multilateral Agencies	NO
Continental Network of Afrodescendant Organizations	1994	Civil Society	NO
Black Central American Organization (ONECA)	1995	Civil Society	YES
Afroamerica XXI	1996	Civil Society + Multilateral Agencies	NO ³⁸
Global Afro-Latino and Caribbean Initiative (GALCI)	1999	Civil Society + Multilateral Agencies	NO
Strategic Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Afrodescendants	2000	Civil Society	NO
Network of Afrodescendant Parliamentarians from the Americas and the Caribbean	2003	National Authorities	NO
Barlovento Group	2003	Academic + Civil Society	YES
Regional Offices of Public Policies for Racial Equity (ORAPER)	2004	National Authorities + Civil Society	NO ³⁹
Latin American and Caribbean Coalition of Cities Against Racism, Discrimination and Xenophobia	2006	National Authorities, supported by the UNESCO	YES
Afrodescendants in Censuses Working Group	2008	Civil Society	YES
Afrodescendant Institute for Studies, Research and Development	2011	Civil Society	YES
Latin American and Caribbean Regional Afrodescendant Network (ARAAC)	2011	Civil Society	YES
Somos Afro	2014	Civil Society + Multilateral Agencies	YES
Inter-American Network of High Authorities about Policies for the Afrodescendant Population (RIAFRO)	2018	National Authorities + Multilateral Agencies + OEA	YES
Institute of Justice for Afrodescendants in Latin America (OJALA)	2018	Academic	YES
Latin American Network for the Afrodescendant Decade (ALDA)	2019	Civil Society	YES
Regional Network of Latin American and Caribbean Afrodescendant Youth (REDJUA Afro)	2021	Civil Society, supported by UNFPA	YES
Afrodescendant Parliamentarian Group of Latin America and the Caribbean	2021	National authorities	YES
Permanent Forum on People of African Descent	2021	United Nations + Civil Society	YES
Global Coalition Against Systemic Racism and for Reparations	2021	Civil Society	YES
International Network of Afro-Feminist Voices (RIVAS)	2023	Academic, supported by CLACSO	YES

³⁷ Given the dynamic character of Afrodescendant mobilization, it is impossible to construct an exhaustive list of all existing networks of Afrodescendants in the Americas at any point in time. I base this list on my interviews and on the secondary literature reviewed; I base my judgement of whether these networks are currently active on accounts from my informants and on their presence in social media, news, and their own webpages.

³⁸ While there is a non-governmental organization of Afrodescendant women in Guatemala that continues to use the name Afroamerica XXI, the regional network created under this name in the nineties is no longer active.

³⁹ While there are some ORAPER offices still active today, they do not function anymore as a regional network.

While the networks described in this section vary in their longevity and capacity to impact global and national political agendas, they overlap in goals and constituencies, composing a complex map of organizations and activists that re-encounter each other now and then in different platforms. Some are more autonomous, while others function around the agenda or with the support of governments, multilateral agencies, or international organizations. This imbricated panorama is the result of efforts by Afrodescendant activists throughout Latin America, who started to identify in the nineties the need to articulate internationally to gather resources and gain support to advance policies that promote their recognition and inclusion by their respective states. Through these transnational networks, they constituted a continental movement of the African diaspora in the Americas that strengthened national-level organizational processes (Echeverri-Pineda 2020:147).

Ultimately, these networks have been important both for making visible the struggles of the Latin American Afrodescendant population and for generating a common language to talk about them in a consistent way throughout the region. Despite competing perspectives, most Afrodescendant transnational activists participate in several of these networks, drawing various kind of resources from them to advance their claims. As we will see, without these transnational networks it would have been unlikely that Afrodescendants in Argentina and Chile would have been able to consolidate social movements, since, as Paschel (2016:10) argued for Afrodescendants in Brazil and Colombia, Afro-Argentines and Afro-Chileans lacked the “characteristics – resources, organizational strength, mobilizational capacity, elite alliances, or favorable public opinion – that we would have expected them to have” to produce major political changes.

The local mobilization of transnational resources

Both Afrodescendant activists and scholars have frequently stressed the relevance of the Third World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban in September of 2001, for the fortification of Black transnational advocacy networks and for the promotion and adoption of policies for Black populations throughout the Latin American region (Agudelo 2019; Davis et al 2012; Echeverri-Pineda 2020, Greene 2007; Htun 2004; Lennox 2009; Paschel and Sawyer 2008; Turner 2002). According to Michael Turner (2002), an African American historian working at the time as a program officer in Brazil for the Ford Foundation, the activities carried out in the region in preparation for the Durban Conference promoted the consolidation and strengthening of Afrodescendant regional networks and their links with multilateral agencies and foundations. Indeed, Black activists participated in multiple regional meetings preceding Durban, supported by United Nations (UN) organizations and funding agencies.

Particularly significant were the intergovernmental Regional Conference of the Americas in preparation for the World Conference Against Racism, and the parallel Citizen Conference Against Racism, Xenophobia, Intolerance and Discrimination, both conducted in Chile’s capital, Santiago, in December of 2000. These two complementary meetings were promoted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Organization of

American States (OAS), the Ford Foundation, the Interamerican Foundation, and other international development agencies (Echeverri-Pineda 2020:148), bringing together government officials from 35 countries and approximately 6,000 representatives from civil society organizations. In the Santiago Conference final statement, Latin American governments collectively recognized for the first time that “the institution and practice of enslavement in the Americas represented a crime against humanity” and that it “had been a direct cause of the widespread poverty and marginalization of the peoples of African descent” (Turner 2002:31). The Santiago Conference final statement also used explicit language regarding affirmative action, land rights, and reparation, and served “as a blueprint for the Durban Program of Action” (Davis et al 2012:30-31).

Furthermore, it was at the Santiago Conference where the term “Afrodescendant” was coined to refer to the African diaspora in the Americas, a historical landmark exposed by Afro-Uruguayan activist Romero Rodríguez when he famously stated: “we entered as Blacks and left as Afrodescendants.” In the words of Afro-Chilean activist Cristian Báez (Interview, July 2021):

The relevance, not only of Durban but of the Santiago Preparatory Conference for Durban, which we frequently analyze together with comrades from other countries, consists in that 70% of the Durban Declaration and Program of Action emerged in Santiago, which took place in December of 2000, marking an important milestone. I always talk of two important milestones: one for the African diaspora and one for the Afro-Chilean people. The first one relates to the emergence of the self-definition of Afrodescendant, to the arrival of a consensus on how to define ourselves using our own categories, not the ones imposed by the colonizer – black, zambo, mulato [...] In the case of Chile, it is the first recognition of the Afrodescendant presence in the country. Remember that the final document said “in our countries, from colonial times...,” so this would be the first recognition of Afrodescendants in a document signed by the Chilean state. Before that, the map of the Afrodescendant presence in the Americas was incomplete, since Chile was missing, but with the participation of the Afro-Chilean NGO Oro Negro under the leadership of sisters Sonia and Marta Salgado, the Afro-Chileans – who people said didn’t exist, that they had disappeared because of the cold weather – appeared, and after that the Afro-Chilean political movement was born.

Thanks to these previous preparatory conferences, the Durban World Conference received a strong and united Black Latin American delegation, which travelled with the economic support of founders such as the Kellogg and Ford Foundations, and arrived already coordinated in regional networks such as Afroamerica XXI and the Strategic Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Afrodescendants. Under the leadership of Brazilian activists, Afro-Latin Americans occupied a leading role during the Durban Conference (Echeverri-Pineda 2020:152; Sawyer and Paschel 2008:202). Furthermore, during the Conference, the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR), Mary Robinson, became an important ally to Afrodescendant activists.

The Durban conference – and the events around it – also impacted the attention given to Afrodescendants by international organizations, including the United Nations (UN) General Assembly and several of its funds, programs, and other entities; the Organization of American States (OAS); the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR); the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR); the World Bank; the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB); the Kellogg Foundation; the Inter-American Foundation; and the Ford Foundation (Agudelo 2019; Echeverri-Pineda 2020:155). The World Bank and the IDB had already created programs oriented towards

“alleviating poverty” in Latin American countries during the mid-nineties, which made an explicit association between poverty, race, and ethnic origin (López 2006:272-273). However, it was during the Durban preparations that both banks created for the first time an area of focus to specifically address issues related to Afrodescendant populations (Lennox 2009).

After Durban, both banks sponsored – with the collaboration of UN organizations – several other conferences that brought together international agencies, national governments, and local civil society actors. Some of these were follow up-meetings of the Durban Declaration and Program of Action (DDPA), such as the Durban Plus One Forum, convened by the World Bank in 2002 to discuss lessons for bringing excluded people into international organizations’ development agendas; the regional workshop on the Adoption and Implementation of Affirmative Action Policies for People of African Descent in Latin America and the Caribbean, convened in Montevideo by the Uruguayan government and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in May 2003; the 2nd Regional Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (Santiago+5), held in Brazil in July of 2006; and the Review Conference of Durban, conducted in Brasilia in 2008, just to name some of the most salient ones.

Although these meetings have been frequently criticized for merely resulting in statements that did not translate into actual changes in how states approach their Afrodescendant populations, they did provide important opportunities for activists to learn how to engage with international actors, speak the language of international human rights instruments and identify what kind of international resources were available to develop local projects that could help them gain visibility, train future movement leaders, promote their culture, and improve the socioeconomic situation of Black communities in their home countries. Each of these events, furthermore, served Black Latin American activists to deepen transnational dialogue and learn from each other’s experiences, providing them with social capital through which they could increase their negotiation skills in their own national contexts and present their demands successfully to state actors.

Especially significant was the creation of the Inter-Agency Consultation on Race in Latin America (IAC) at the Inter-American Dialogue, integrated by the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Pan-American Health Organization, the British Government’s Department for International Development (DFID),⁴⁰ the Ford Foundation, the Inter-American Foundation, and the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR), with the Inter-American Dialogue serving as the IAC secretariat. The IAC’s first meeting in June of 2000⁴¹ brought together international experts, government representatives, and Afrodescendant civil society activists, to “forge regional cooperation on overcoming discrimination and exclusion faced by Afrodescendants” (Lennox 2009:2010-2011). IAC’s main goal was to “to enable donors to respond to the increasing demands made by civil-society groups in preparation for the UN World Conference Against Racism” (Davis et al. 2012:33-34). As a result, several of these agencies provided funding for Afrodescendant organizations to conduct activities in preparation for the Durban World Conference and to cover travel expenses so that activists could attend the Conference. After Durban, agencies also provided civil society organizations with human capital training for Afrodescendant communities and financial capital to build domestic support, research

⁴⁰ The Department for International Development was replaced in 2020 by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office.

⁴¹ Annual meetings followed up to 2007.

specific problems affecting Black populations, and conduct small local development projects.

By the second decade of the new millennium, however, the interest of multilateral and funding institutions in supporting projects targeting Afrodescendants had substantially decreased. This is especially true for agencies with headquarters in the United States, such as the Ford Foundation. According to Davis et al. (2012:40-41), there were multiple factors that contributed to this decline, including controversies at the Durban Conference that triggered the early departure of the Israel and the United States delegations.⁴² As a consequence, some United States donors withdrew their support for activities and projects associated with Durban's Programme of Action. The 2001 attack on the World Trade Center, just a few days after the Durban Conference was over, also resulted in US-based funders' priorities moving away from Afrodescendants' rights, as explained to me by Francisco Estévez (Interview, January 2020), who at the time was director of Fundación Ideas, a Chilean non-governmental organizations involved in organizing the Santiago Conference:

While Anti-racism was advancing strongly in the global agenda and that was exposed at the Durban World Conference that ended on September 7th, on September 11th the twin towers were targeted, and that produced a brutal shift in the global agenda. Combating racism stopped being a priority, and terrorism appeared as the main issue, which signified a huge backlash against the regions' demands around anti-racism. The ghost of non-whites as dangerous for civilization gained force. There was a brutal shift that had a negative impact on the results of the conference against racism. The international community's priorities shifted, affecting organizations that were struggling against racism, xenophobia and discrimination.

In consequence, several international agencies and funding institutions moved away from Latin America towards other regions considered to be more impoverished and threatened by terrorism, diminishing Latin American Afrodescendant movements' possible sources of international funding. While the organizations that were part of the Inter-Agency Consultation on Race in Latin America (IAC) had been effective in garnering resources for various civil society activities, these resources came mostly from special funds and programs, and were not institutionalized over time. In addition, major restructuring of three of IAC's most active organizations, the British Government's Department for International Development (DFID), the World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank, made it increasingly hard to develop programs related to race and ethnicity (Davis et al. 2012:36). The Ford Foundation, in turn, redirected its funding to more race-neutral topics after receiving strong criticism from the American press due to controversies during the Durban Conference (Davis et al. 2012:37). The Kellogg Foundation, another important sponsor of local civil society local development projects, also began to limit funding in South America after the mid-2000s (Davis et al. 2012:37-38). The IAC itself ceased to function in 2006 due to financial difficulties, and the Inter-American Dialogue lost its leadership role in the promotion of policies for Afrodescendants (Davis et al. 2012:41). Josefina Stubbs (Interview, December 2022), who worked between 2000 and 2006 as a World Bank Sector Leader in Rural, Environment and Social Development, identified changes in

⁴² The main controversies at the conference were related to the demand put forward by African and Afrodescendant activists for the reparations to victims of slavery and their descendants, on the one hand, and the denunciation of racism towards Palestinians in Israel, on the other. The United States and Israel delegations objected to a phrase in the draft of the Durban Declaration – which was excluded from the final declaration – that equated Zionism with racism, for which they accused the conference of promoting antisemitism.

agencies' priorities as the cause of this withdrawal of funding for Afrodescendant grassroots organizations:

In general, neither the World Bank, the IDB, nor UN institutions have been funding civil societies and organizations to continue dialogue, which has produced a pause on the Afrodescendant agenda; there is no funding for civil society organizations [...] I think that it is due to a redefinition of where should cooperation go, and it has gone specially to African countries and countries with conflicts, given the huge crises we have experienced in the world during the past 14 years. As a result, Latin American civil society has been neglected.

Several of the activists and international actors I interviewed stressed that the inclusion of Afrodescendants in the agendas of international organizations and multilateral funding agencies was not an act of benevolence or enlightenment, but a result of the work of civil society organizations that demanded that these agencies take steps to promote Afrodescendant recognition and inclusion, both in the international arena and within their respective states. This inclusion also resulted from the work of individual officials pushing this agenda within each organization, and not necessarily established as institutional priorities. As an example, the role of the Ford Foundation supporting Afrodescendant organizations in preparation for Durban was possible thanks to years of work by Michael Turner, an African American historian who was hired by the Ford Foundation as a program officer in Brazil, who made important efforts to connect the foundation with civil society organizations. Similarly, much of the World Bank's work with Afro-Latin American organizations was a result of the efforts of Afro-Dominican World Bank specialist Josefina Stubbs. As argued by Paschel and Sawyer (2008:201), since policies for ethno-racial minorities "are situated within the banks' broader goal to 'reduce poverty,' such programs are susceptible to changes that result from other bank policies with the same objective."

Although most of this direct funding happened during a short span of time, it had an important impact in the region. These funds empowered local activists, who for the first time had the resources to strengthen their organizations and conduct projects that could provide evidence about the inequality affecting Afrodescendant communities. Many of the Afro-Argentine activists I interviewed acknowledged that these funding agencies had their own political interests and played a role in the international geopolitical struggle over the Afrodescendant agenda. As argued by Paschel and Sawyer (2008:201), while multilateral banks and agencies have supported local movements' struggles, they also pressure nation-states to follow "their general poverty reduction programs, which hinge on aggregate economic growth and structural adjustment," ultimately worsening the life conditions of marginalized populations throughout the Latin American region. However, activists also recognized that cooperation agencies' support for local projects ultimately promoted the creation of public policies in their countries. As argued by Carlos Álvarez (Interview, August 2021), an Afro-Argentine activist who today is in charge of implementing policies for the African, Afro-Argentine, and Afrodescendant community at the Argentine's Human Rights Secretariat:

I believe that beyond the neoliberal and capitalist critique, which we need to have because effectively each one of these agencies have political, economic and social interests behind their support, we still have to vindicate the role of international geopolitics, specially of the United Nations program agencies. The role and participation of cooperation agencies has been very powerful to push public policies, generate projects, and perhaps the critique we can make is about

their long-term projection, in economic terms, towards Afrodescendant communities.

While direct funding for Latin American grassroots organizations has considerably decreased, it is important to acknowledge that United Nations organizations have continued to play an important role in advocating for the rights of Afrodescendants. These organizations provide resources so that Afrodescendant activists can attend international conferences and forums where they can denounce their states when they do not respond to their international commitments. They also provide technical assistance and training to activists which helps them position their demands. In particular, ECLAC and UNFPA are crucial actors in the support of Afrodescendants' demand for statistical inclusion in national surveys and censuses. ECLAC's Population Division, the Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Center (CELADE, Spanish acronym) has continuously promoted the inclusion of an ethnic perspective in national statistics by providing technical assistance to national statistics agencies in the preparation of national censuses, producing information and knowledge related to ethno-racial inequality and the relevance of statistical visibility, and providing training for both state institutions and Indigenous and Afrodescendant activists. This focus can explain why Afrodescendants' claim for statistical inclusion has been particularly successful in the Latin American region, where almost every country has included a variable to identify Afrodescendant populations. While as other UN organizations, CELADE receives funds from multilateral agencies, banks, and foundations to conduct studies, reports, and regional meetings, the era of direct funding for Afrodescendant civil society has mostly come to an end.

Argentine and Chilean activists' incorporation into transnational advocacy networks

The election of leftist and progressive governments throughout Latin America after the turn of the millennium, popularly referred to as the "pink tide," produced an intensification of processes of regional integration, with the strengthening of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and the Andean community, and with the creation of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), all of which collaborated to promote the regionalization of social movements (Rosenzvit 2020:439). Indigenous and Afrodescendant activists throughout Latin America began to increasingly participate in regional forums in which they shared experiences and tactics with other activists and gained allies to position their demands locally and internationally. Montero (2009:26-27) situates the emergence of policies against discrimination in the Southern Cone within a broader context of regional integration through the MERCOSUR after these states reinstated democracy, which produced the resignification of the relationship between state and civil society and the enlargement of the conception of citizenship and rights. As argued by Flavio Rapisardi (Interview, January 2022), who worked between 2006 and 2010 at the Argentine National Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (INADI, Spanish acronym):

I think that this visibilization of Afrodescendant populations, of the history of Afrodescendants and thus of racism in Latin America and specifically in Chile and Argentina, was promoted, of course by social movements but was made possible because of a particular moment in power relations, thanks to the strengthening of progressive, national, popular, and leftist forces in Latin America. The work of Afrodescendant organizations – which at least in Argentina were very testimonial and

funded mainly by international cooperation, never by the nation-state – began to gain force in the meetings between Human Rights and Foreign Relations Ministries of the countries of Mercosur and associates.

The Afrodescendant organizations regarded by activists as initiating an Afrodescendant movement in Argentina and Chile – *África Vive* [Africa Lives] and *Oro Negro* [Black Gold], respectively – were both created after local activists were invited to participate at international meetings, a direct consequence of the regionalization of Latin American Black movements. Leaders from both organizations were advised to obtain juridical status by forming non-governmental organizations (NGOs),⁴³ so they could access direct funding from national agencies and international donors and gain legitimacy to interact with their respective states (Morrison 2012:251). Argentine Afrodescendant organizations that registered as NGOs before the Durban Conference were able to take advantage of the international resources that became increasingly available as the Conference approached. In Chile, in contrast, it was only after the Durban Conference that the first Afro-Chilean NGO was created and several years would still need to pass for other organizations to emerge and a proper Afrodescendant movement to consolidate. By then, however, international funding was already in decline.

Argentina: Successful mobilization of transnational resources

Argentine scholars agree that the consolidation of an Afrodescendant movement in Argentina was the result of the alignment of a local and an international political opportunity structure. The local political opportunity structure was enabled by a new multicultural narrative in the city of Buenos Aires, which favored the expression of ethnic and immigrant identities and the promotion of their cultures. This opening was mostly the result of a change in the legal status of Buenos Aires as an “autonomous city” with a progressive Constitution, which came to be governed in 1999 by a center-left coalition that valued and promoted the expression of ethnic identities (Frigerio and Lamborghini 2009:160).

Before the consolidation of a proper Afrodescendant political movement in Argentina in the mid-1990s, some activists began in the 1980s – in a context of post-dictatorship democratization – positioning the struggle against anti-Black racism, mostly relating it with processes of decolonization in Africa and the struggle for the liberation of oppressed people (López 2005:42). One of the most recognized of these early activists was Enrique Nadal, who founded in 1986 the Argentine and Latin American Committee Against Apartheid. This early organization was mostly focused on forging solidarity with South Africa, but also sought to build connections between Black activists from Latin America and Africa. Enrique Nadal, furthermore, mentored two activists who would later be recognized as prominent Afro-Argentine movement leaders: Miriam Gomes, a first-generation Afro-Argentine woman from the Cape-Verdean community,⁴⁴ and Lucía Molina, a descendant of enslaved Africans and founder of the first organization in the country that began to give visibility to Afro-Argentines, the House of Indo-Afro-American

⁴³ Although strictly speaking any private organization would be a non-governmental organization, the term “NGO” is generally used to identify non-profit organizations that are not political parties nor part of government institutions, and whose fundamental purpose is related to social wellbeing. Throughout my dissertation, the term “NGO” refers specifically to civil society non-profit organizations that have been granted juridical status by the State.

⁴⁴ I discuss in Chapter 5 the role that the Cape-Verdean community has played within the Afro-Argentine movement.

Culture, founded in 1988 in the city of Santa Fe.

In 1990, Nadal, Molina, and Gomes began to construct international connections with Latin American Afrodescendant organizations by participating in the “Meeting of Black Entities of the Southern Cone,” an event organized in Montevideo by the recently created Afro-Uruguayan organization Mundo Afro. The meeting brought together 120 delegates from 25 South American Black organizations (Ferreira 2003). Their participation in this event marked the beginning of a long-standing relationship between Argentine and Uruguayan Black activists. According to Miriam Gomes (Interview, July 2021), Mundo Afro played a crucial role in promoting and supporting the organization of Afro-Argentines throughout the nineties, and in later securing funding for their participation in the Durban World Conference:

Uruguay was the engine: our arrival at Durban was, in great extent, thanks to the work of Mundo Afro, who had well established international connections. The internal work was done by Uruguayan activists, who began to travel to Buenos Aires a year before the conference to conduct meetings, and we created the Afro-Indigenous Roundtable in support of the World Conference Against Racism. We debated and generated documents, but Mundo Afro was in charge of securing funding to assist.

Learning from the Uruguayan experience, Lucía Molina and her husband organized in 1991 the “First Encounter of Black Culture” in Santa Fe, where together with Nadal, Gomes, and other early Black activists, they drafted the Santa Fe Declaration, a first attempt to consolidate an Afrodescendant political agenda at the national level in Argentina. Furthermore, the House of Indo-Afro-American Culture participated in 1994 in the foundation of the Continental Network of Afrodescendant Organizations in Uruguay and in 2001 joined the Strategic Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Afrodescendants. Lucía Molina was also invited at that time to join the Network of Afrodescendant Women from Latin America, the Caribbean and the Diaspora (RMAAD) (Restaldi 2018; Sosa, Larker, and Pisarello 2018). These different networks provided Molina with social capital and organizational experience at a time when Afrodescendants were completely invisible in Argentine society.

Miriam Gomes also learned from the experience of Afro-Uruguayan and other Latin American activists she met at the Meeting of Entities of the Southern Cone. Once she was elected president of the Cape Verdean Union of Dock Sud Mutual Aid Society in 1993, she began positioning the struggle against discrimination and racism within this organization, which until then had mostly functioned as an ethnic solidarity network. By doing so, the Cape Verdean community began to build common demands with other Afro-Argentine activists with whom they had not engaged previously. In 1996, Gomes was contacted by two Black activists and consultants from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Michael Franklin and Margarita Sánchez, who visited Buenos Aires seeking local Black organizations who they could integrate into a poverty alleviation program for minority groups in Latin America (López 2005). Miriam Gomes helped them draft a report on the situation of Black people in Buenos Aires and introduced them to another Black woman who would become a prominent leader of the Afro-Argentine movement, María Magdalena “Pocha” Lamadrid – a fifth generation Argentine descendant of enslaved Africans (Frigerio and Lamborghini 2009:164-165). The IDB consultants invited Gomes and Lamadrid to a meeting taking place in Washington DC that same year, where the network Afroamerica XXI was created to “analyze and propose viable solutions to the poverty, inequality and discrimination

suffered by Afro-Latin American communities” (López 2006). Both Afro-Argentine activists and scholars recognize this event as the seed that would promote the consolidation of an Afrodescendant movement in Argentina. Miriam Gomes (Interview, July 2021) described it in the following terms:

In 1996, the Interamerican Development Bank arrived in Argentina to draft a report they were doing for every country of Latin America, and somebody, an anthropologist or a historian working with the community, told them: “In Argentina there are also Black people.” They arrived in Buenos Aires and somehow found me and we drafted the report together, documenting the situation at that time. They invited me to collaborate in this work and I took them to La Matanza neighborhood to meet other groups that I knew. We wrote up the report, and by the end of 1996, the IDB organized a forum in Washington DC to present these reports, which drove them to contact other leaders in the region and to create alliances.

After returning from Washington DC, Pocha Lamadrid founded the NGO África Vive, with the goal of ending the invisibility of Afrodescendants in Argentina, contributing to their social promotion, and vindicating their role in Argentine history. Activists and scholar in Argentina agree that the foundation of África Vive in 1997 signaled the consolidation of what could properly be called an Afro-Argentine movement (Lamborghini and Frigerio 2010). The emergence of this new organizational form, the NGO, provided Afrodescendants with more legitimacy when interacting with the state, marking a shift in Black activism from the 80s to the 90s (López 2005:116).

Soon enough, the newly created network Afroamerica XXI provided Lamadrid with human capital in the form of technical advice about social assistance for vulnerable groups. Through this technical training, Afroamerica XXI taught Lamadrid and other network members how to present projects to international donors to which it had access, to obtain financial resources that could help them improve the economic situation of their communities (López 2005:127-128). These financial resources were given for projects that aligned with Afro-America’s view of poverty mitigation. For example, one of the projects that África Vive gained funding for focused on building a micro-enterprise of looms for unemployed Black women (López 2005). More generally, the Kellogg Foundation provided three years of economic support to África Vive for training Afrodescendant women who held precarious jobs (Geler 2006; Maffia and Zubrnicki 2014:5). According to Miriam Gomes (Interview July 2021), Lamadrid used part of these funds to rent an office in Buenos Aires. Lamadrid was also invited as the Argentine representative of Afroamerica XXI to meetings in Honduras in 1997 and in Colombia in 1998, where she continued to build her social capital and gain organizational experience from Afrodescendant international networks (Frigerio and Lamborghini 2009:165).

The Cape Verdean Union of Dock Sud Mutual Aid Society, on the other hand, joined in 2001 the Strategic Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Afrodescendants and received funding in 2008 from the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID, Spanish acronym)⁴⁵ for a project centered on fortifying Afrodescendant organizations through the training of their members, with a focus on Afrodescendant women and youth, raising awareness in Argentine society about the Afrodescendant population, and the establishment of statistical

⁴⁵ Information about the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation is available on its webpage: <https://www.aecid.es>.

information about this population (Rodríguez, Surasky, and Maffia 2009).⁴⁶

The participation of Afro-Argentine activists in these transnational networks allowed them to be present in multiple international meetings and forums, both before and after the 2001 Durban World Conference (Tamagno and Maffia 2011:129). Their participation in these conferences and in Durban – where they assisted with the economic support of the Ford and Kellogg foundations (López 2005:134) – promoted in turn the strengthening of their networks with other activists, as they became key actors in the consolidation of an Afrodescendant Latin American advocacy network. These international alliances opened up new opportunities for Afro-Argentine activists to mobilize international funding, where the World Bank's support in 2003 for conducting an Afrodescendant statistical pilot test would be particularly significant.

Overall, Afro-Argentine activists succeeded in channeling international resources offered by international funding agencies in the form of technical assistance, human capital training, invitations to international forums, and financial resources for conducting research projects and hosting public events to visibilize their community. These resources had the effect of empowering the local Afrodescendant community, making their claims more visible to the general public and rendering them legitimate political actors for state officials. The statistical visibility of Afrodescendants quickly became one of Afro-Argentine activists' priorities, and they began to take advantage of these newly constituted networks and resources to participate in international forums and workshops centered in advancing Afrodescendants' inclusion in national censuses.

Chile: Compensating for the lack of international funding by mobilizing local resources

In contrast with Argentina, before the 2001 Durban World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, there were no organizations in Chile claiming rights as Afrodescendants. Latin American Black leaders were both surprised and suspicious when they learned that the Americas Regional Preparatory Conference for Durban, and its parallel Citizen Conference, were going to be held in Santiago instead of Brazil – where it had initially been announced to happen – given that Chile was not known to have any Black populations. The organization of the logistics of the Americas Preparatory Conference and its parallel Citizen Conference was entrusted by the Ford Foundation to the Chilean NGO Fundación Ideas, whose director at the time was Francisco Estévez. Estévez (Interview, January 2020) provided some hints about why the conference was moved to Chile:

This preparatory conference was going to be held in Brazil, and President Cardoso pointed out that the conditions were not optimal for conducting the conference there due to the trouble they had already had in organizing another important conference for the 500-years anniversary of the Discovery of the Americas. That generated some internal tension, so he asked President Lagos if the conference could be held in Chile. And since in Chile there was this idea, certainly a misguided idea, that there was no racism in the country, he agreed to hold the conference in Chile's capital, Santiago. At the time, the treatment of Indigenous communities in Chile was not seen as racism, and Afrodescendants were thought to be very far away, associated with other countries, but not a part of Chile. Afrodescendant activists from other Latin American countries shared the same idea:

⁴⁶ According to Rodríguez, Surasky and Maffia (2009), although the international cooperation was generally withdrawing at that time from middle income countries, Spanish cooperation continued in Argentina due to historical ties, but began to focus in population that were considered particularly vulnerable, including Afrodescendants.

there was in general no knowledge about Afrodescendant populations in Chile.

The Afrodescendant activists I interviewed agreed that the idea of holding the conference in Santiago was related to this notion of a country with no racism – and with no Afrodescendants – which would allegedly allow the conference to unfold without any conflict. At the time, most Chileans did not imagine that there were fellow citizens who were the descendants of Africans who had arrived in that territory through the transatlantic slave trade. Nor did the multiple Latin American Afrodescendant delegations that attended the Citizen Conference suspect that they would find people in Chile claiming to be part of the African diaspora. However, to the surprise of participants, a small delegation of Afro-Chileans travelled from the Arica-Parinacota Region to participate in the United Nations-sponsored Citizen Conference, presenting themselves for the first time publicly as the descendants of enslaved Africans brought during colonial times to what today is Chile's northern region.

According to Estévez (Interview, January 2020), a few months earlier he had met the mayor of Camarones, Sonia Salgado, who told him to his surprise about her African origins and the existence of a Black community in Arica and the adjacent Azapa Valley. He decided to visit her family and invited them to participate in the Santiago Citizen Conference. At that time, although some families in Arica were conscious about their African origins (many others would only become aware of their origins during the following years), they had not taken any steps towards organizing politically. Every Afro-Chilean activist I interviewed agreed that the Santiago Conference marked the beginning of a process of organization that led to the constitution of an Afrodescendant movement in Chile's northern region.

The following year, a delegation of Afro-Chilean activists traveled with the economic support of the Ford Foundation to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Durban in September of 2001. Once back, Sonia Salgado, her sister Marta, and other family members – based on the advice of Francisco Estévez – created the first Afro-Chilean NGO, Oro Negro [Black Gold]. Oro Negro used the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action as a road map for the construction of its political agenda and, accordingly, began to publicly demand their legal recognition by the state, policies to combat racial discrimination, and the inclusion of a variable to count Afrodescendants in the Chilean National Population Census.

By participating at the Santiago and Durban Conferences, these early Afro-Chilean activists were able to consolidate networks with the leaders of Afrodescendant organizations who had been organizing for decades in other countries of the region. In this way, Afro-Chileans quickly learned about the experiences of Black movements in other Latin American countries, which allowed them to adopt different ways to frame their struggles in their own local context. For instance, as early as October of 2002, a group of members of the Afro-Uruguayan organization Mundo Afro, who had created the Superior Institute of Afrodescendant Formation (ISFA, Spanish acronym), travelled to Arica with the support of the Strategic Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Afrodescendants and funds from the Ford Foundation, to conduct a workshop for Afro-Chilean activists. The goal was to train new Afrodescendant leaders in six thematic areas: public policies, institutional strengthening, human rights and racial justice, Afrodescendant women, health, and education (UAHC 2017:38). Most of the Afro-Chilean activists I interviewed recognized Uruguay as their main country of influence. As revealed by Francisco Estévez, who

accompanied Afro-Chilean organizations in these initial steps:

Uruguay's Mundo Afro was determinant, they were the closest organization that supported the creation of Afrodescendant organizations in Arica, particularly the two main ones, Oro Negro, with Sonia and Marta Salgado, and Lumbanga, created a bit later. Despite their differences, they began after some time to work together. [...] They have also engaged with organizations from other countries, but by far the most important support they received came from Mundo Afro.

Afro-Chilean activists also recognized Mundo Afro as the initiators of the Regional Offices of Public Policies for Racial Equity (ORAPER), an initiative created in Uruguay in 2004 to advocate for the opening of offices that could design and implement policies to promote racial equity throughout the Latin American region. Given the difficulties to create a governmental office at the national or even at the regional level in Chile, Afro-Chilean activists adapted the project and promoted the creation in 2010 of a local Afrodescendant Office at the Arica Municipality, one of the most important political accomplishments of the Afro-Chilean movement to date.

By accessing Afrodescendant transnational networks, Afro-Chilean early activists began to receive invitations and funding to participate in various international forums and conferences, gaining social capital and know-how that would allow them to better position their claims in Chile. For instance, two members of Oro Negro participated in 2002 in the First Latin American Conference of Afrodescendant Youth in Santa Fe, Argentina. In October of 2003, Marta Salgado was invited to Atlanta, USA, to participate in a conference titled "The African Diaspora in the Americas: generating knowledge from inside," organized by the recently created Barlovento Group, of which she became a member.

Thus, although Afro-Chilean activists only began to access transnational Afrodescendant networks after participating in the Santiago and Durban Conferences, they were still able to benefit from these networks' organizational experiences and quickly learned how to frame their own struggles locally. Their connection to Afro-Uruguayan activists was particularly productive, since Mundo Afro had taken an important role coordinating the Strategic Alliance and secured financial support for Afro-Chileans to travel to Durban and then conducted workshops to train their new leaders, providing them with both social and human capital.

The Afro-Chilean movement began to consolidate, however, at the same time that international funding targeting Afrodescendants coming from powerful multilateral agencies was starting to diminish. By the time that more Afro-Chilean organizations emerged and a larger and more consistent social base for the Afro-Chilean movement had consolidated, most multilateral funding agencies, banks, and private philanthropical foundations had eliminated their Afrodescendant programs and were focalizing their resources in other regions of the world. While Argentina could retain some financial support at that point from the AECID despite becoming a middle-income country, this was not the case for Chile. Therefore, Afro-Chilean activists quickly realized that they would have to seek support elsewhere, given the impossibility of accessing financial resources from abroad. Marta Salgado (Interview, September 2021) explained the situation in the following terms:

Well, the Durban Declaration establishes commitments that the states need to comply with, but when we returned from Durban, that same month the attack on the Twin Towers occurred, and

therefore, all the money of international agencies that used to collaborate with civil society, with Indigenous and Afrodescendant peoples, was frozen and used instead for the fight against terrorism. This affected us very much because Afrodescendant organizations were forced to work by ourselves, with our own strength, our own resources, to advance the Durban agenda with our states. In Chile, we created the NGO Oro Negro and set as our goals the recognition of Afrodescendants in Chile; the training of public officials and Afrodescendant communities; the struggle against discrimination, racism, and xenophobia; and our inclusion in national censuses. One way or the other, we began to work towards those goals. Then, other organizations began to emerge and collaborate towards these goals.

Differently than in the case of Argentina, where we find some early Black activism mobilizing internationally a decade before the Durban Conference and where the first Afro-Argentine NGO was created in the mid-1990s, the construction of an Afrodescendant movement in Chile was a direct result of the Santiago and Durban Conferences, and there was no prior Black activism that could anticipate its emergence. Given external reasons related to geopolitical events and shifts in international agencies' funding priorities, this difference in timing impacted these movements' development. As Afro-Chilean activists were less successful in securing international resources from multilateral banks and other funding agencies, they had to seek other strategies to develop actions that could promote ethno-racial reform.

The statistical inclusion of Afrodescendants in Argentina and Chile

One of the strategic battlegrounds in which Black movements throughout the Americas first got involved to promote recognition and rights for Afrodescendants was for the disaggregation of ethno-racial data in national statistics and censuses. The demand for disaggregated national statistical data gained momentum during the 2001 Durban World Conference, positioned by Afro-Latin American delegations. Consequently, the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) recommends that Latin American countries create official data to account for the situation of Afrodescendant populations in order to formulate adequate inclusion and reparation policies.

As shown by Mara Loveman (2014), ethno-racial data collection within the Latin American region has been intermittent, and the types of questions that have been asked to capture Indigenous and Afrodescendant populations has varied largely over time and between countries. After several decades in which most states stopped collecting racial data,⁴⁷ by the turn of the millennium one Latin American country after another began to include questions to capture Afro-descent. Although most Latin American countries today have included a question to identify Afrodescendant populations in national censuses, how these questions have been framed has varied enormously, ranging from questions focused on physical appearance to those more centered on ancestry, culture, identity, or group membership (Loveman 2014).

International organizations and cooperation agencies played a particularly important role in the promotion of the statistical inclusion of Afro-descent in the Latin American region, based on the argument that reliable statistics about Afrodescendant populations' numbers and life

⁴⁷ As shown by Mara Loveman, by the 1960s the only countries that continued to ask race or color questions were Brazil, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba (Loveman 2014:209).

conditions were necessary to determine public policies for their social inclusion (Agudelo 2019). One particularly important initiative was conducted by multilateral agencies who were members of the Inter-Agency Consultation on Race in Latin America (IAC): the “Todos Contamos” [Everybody Counts] project. The Todos Contamos project was a collaborative effort led by the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), with the support of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). This project sought to provide analytical tools for studying the relationship between race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic situation, promoting the inclusion of ethno-racial minorities in national censuses throughout the region (Kleidermacher 2011).⁴⁸ The inclusion of a focus on ethno-racial data in multilateral agencies’ agendas, however, did not occur from one day to another but was a response to the pressure of activists and the work of internal allies struggling to position this demand as agencies’ priority. Josefina Stubbs (Interview December, 2022) referred to the obstacles she confronted to position an agenda around data disaggregation when she arrived to work at the World Bank in 2001:

At the beginning it was really hard, because it’s one thing to recognize inequity and another to realize that inequity has a face, that inequity has a gender, that inequity has a skin color. So convincing hard-liner economists at the Bank that we needed to put a name, a skin color to that inequality was a very hard task. But also, rationalist economists do not believe in data disaggregation as a way to guide public policies, the data is the data and averages are aggregated averages, so we had to fight against the concept of aggregated averages. As expressed in the name of the series of publications we launched, “Beyond Averages,” we wanted to reveal what national growth averages, gross domestic product averages, were hiding, where exactly is poverty concentrated, how does it coincide with geographic regions, race, indigeneity, gender, etc. It was solitary work done by myself and a pair of colleagues at the Bank, which made us realize that one of the problems in advancing our argument was that countries did not have disaggregated data, and it was hard to argue with economists without that disaggregated data. That is when, together with the IDB, we launched the Todos Contamos project, which consisted in working with national statistic offices from each country of the region and with Afrodescendant civil society, to define modules of questions that could be included in each country’s censuses [...] I believed this project was, as they say in the private sector, the sweet spot of the Bank.

Here again we can underscore the crucial role played by early activists, such as those who came together in 2008 to form the aforementioned Afro-Census Working Group to position this demand for statistical inclusion in international forums. Mara Loveman claims that domestic activists from a few countries “took the lead and reached out to regional and international development agencies as willing partners in campaigns to reform the census” (2014:251). In most other countries, however, this process was reversed and representatives from international agencies were the ones to encourage domestic activists to become involved in processes of census reform and to pressure states to include questions in censuses to recognize their ethno-racial minorities.

In what follows, I describe how Afrodescendants in Argentina and Chile mobilized transnational networks and resources to position their demand to include a variable to capture Afro-

⁴⁸ Already in 1996, the World Bank, the IDB and ECLAC had developed the Program for the Improvement of Surveys and Measurement of Living Conditions in Latin America and the Caribbean (MECOVI, Spanish acronym), with the goal of strengthening national statistical agencies’ capacities to produce relevant, quality, and timely data that could help improve the living conditions of Latin American and Caribbean people. But as reflected in multiple MECOVI evaluation reports, this program did not consider the disaggregation of data to account for the situation of ethno-racial minorities (BID, Banco Mundial, and CEPAL 2001).

descent in national censuses. The statistical inclusion of Afrodescendants is particularly important in these Southern Cone countries not only because statistical data can document racial inequality, but also because the mere fact of including them in official surveys and censuses certifies their existence in the eyes of the state and society, a crucial advance in contexts where the historical denial of the existence of people of African descent has been so pervasive. In both Argentina and Chile, Afrodescendants were included in some kind of official statistics before any type of legislation was approved specifically targeting them. Thus, statistical inclusion represents Afro-Argentine and Afro-Chilean movements' first big win and is regarded to a large extent as the step that made possible the latter approval of legislation and policies targeting them.

But although statistical inclusion was a priority for both Afro-Argentine and Afro-Chilean movements, in Argentina a question on Afro-descent was included in the 2010 and in the 2022 National Population Censuses, while in Chile authorities rejected including a question to capture Afrodescendant populations in the 2012 and in the 2017 Censuses. In this section, I argue that to explain this difference it is crucial to understand each movement's distinct possibilities for had mobilizing financial and human capital from multilateral agencies in order to pressure state actors to comply with international normative instruments regarding data disaggregation.

Argentina: Afrodescendants' inclusion in National Censuses

The Afro-Argentine movement had identified the importance of gathering statistical information on Afro-descent before the 2001 Durban World Conference. Already in 2000, the Afro-Argentine NGO África Vive conducted a first attempt to characterize and evaluate the living conditions of the Argentine Afrodescendant population, through a study called the Buenos Aires Afrodescendant Residents Census. At that time, África Vive relied on economic support from the Kellogg Foundation, with which its leaders had executed several projects with Afrodescendant women and, at the same time, it had positioned itself as an important political actor among Afrodescendant communities. To conduct a survey to characterize the Afrodescendant population in Buenos Aires, África Vive received logistical advice from the City of Buenos Aires ombudsman, thanks to the close allyship established between adjunct Defensor Diana Maffia and the NGO's leader Pocha Lamadrid. Despite the low number of individuals surveyed for the project (around 200), the participation of a public institution made this study the first official recognition of the existence of Afrodescendants in Argentina and became an important element of symbolic vindication for the Afro-Argentine community (Frigerio and Lamborghini 2011a:28-29). The following year at the Durban Conference, the Afro-Argentine delegation presented the study to the other civil society organizations and international actors present.

After returning from Durban, Afrodescendant movements' demand for statistical inclusion gained momentum, and movement leaders throughout the Latin American region began to increasingly participate in international forums focused on statistical data disaggregation. The Todos Contamos Project was a particularly important international platform, where multilateral agencies, governments, and Indigenous and Afrodescendant activists came together to discuss how to improve tools for the collection of data related to historically excluded groups. According to Lennox (2009:210), the Todos Contamos project was strongly tied to an increased consciousness around racial discrimination in the context of the preparations for the 2001 Durban World Conference. In 2002, Miriam Gomes travelled to Peru to represent Afro-Argentine civil society at

the second meeting of the Todos Contamos project, invited by the Peruvian Statistical Institute and the organizing multilateral agencies – the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank.⁴⁹ At that point, the Argentine State had already incorporated an Indigenous question in the 2001 National Population Census and Afrodescendants were enthusiastic about the possibility of being included in the following census. Meeting World Bank official and future ally Josefina Stubbs created the opportunity for that aspiration to actually concretize.

After familiarizing themselves with the situation of Afrodescendants in Argentina, Josefina Stubbs and other World Bank officials extended in 2003 an open invitation to African and Afro-Argentine organizations to participate in a meeting at the World Bank offices in Buenos Aires. In this meeting, they discussed the need to include an Afrodescendant variable in the next Argentine Census, which would be conducted in 2010. This would be the first time that a question about Afro-descent would be included in a National Population Census in Argentina.⁵⁰ World Bank officials encouraged organizations to legally formalize so they could receive support from a Small Donation Program that could help activists pressure the Argentine government to include them in local social emergency plans (Frigerio and Lamborghini 2011a:30; López 2005: 86-87). These officials also committed to help organizations strengthen dialogue with other actors and to schedule a meeting with representatives from the Argentine National Statistics and Census Institute (INDEC). By June of that year, representatives from INDEC had already begun to work with Afrodescendant organizations and World Bank officials on the design of a Pilot Test to evaluate the pertinence of including an Afrodescendant question in the 2010 National Population Census. INDEC officials communicated in that meeting that, given budget constraints and possible technical difficulties, they could not commit beforehand to including a question to capture Afro-descent in the Census, but they would support the Pilot Test and evaluate the inclusion of the question depending on its results (Lopez 2005).

By 2004, the World Bank had secured funding from a Norwegian-Finnish donor agency to conduct the Afrodescendant Pilot Test. To execute this project, the World Bank hired two prominent Afro-Argentine activists, Miriam Gomes and Lucía Molina, as consultants to work together with INDEC on the Pilot Test technical proposal (Frigerio and Lamborghini 2009:171-172). The Pilot Test was finally conducted in April of 2005 by the National University Tres de Febrero with technical support from INDEC, advice from Afrodescendant organizations, and funding from the World Bank, under the aegis of the Todos Contamos project. By asking if anybody in the household considered themselves to be Afrodescendant, the Pilot Test question aligned with the 2001 Durban Conference DDPA's call to collect disaggregated data based on self-identification. The question also aligned with the new transnational consensus of using the term Afrodescendant to refer to the African diaspora in the Americas.⁵¹ According to INDEC Director

⁴⁹ Two regional meetings were held between various national statistic and census offices and civil society actors in the context of the Todos Contamos Project, the first in Colombia in 2000 and the second in Peru in 2002. From these efforts emerged a series of country-level studies conducted by the World Bank called "Más allá de los Promedios" [Beyond Averages], published in 2006 (Davis et al. 2012:35). One of these publications focuses on the Argentine Pilot Test conducted in 2005 (Stubbs and Reyes 2006).

⁵⁰ In 1887, a racial question was included in the Census of the City of Buenos Aires, with the categories "blanco" (White) and "de color" (of color) as possible response options. But before 2010, no national-level census conducted after Argentina's independence had included a question that could capture Afro-descent.

⁵¹ Although the Pilot Test was positively valued by most activists, there was a shared diagnosis about the need of a campaign to raise awareness about the meaning of the concept "Afrodescendant."

of Social and Population Statistics, Gladys Massé (Interview, May 2021), INDEC's participation as a methodological advisor that supervised the framing of the question and the selection of areas to apply the survey was important so that the Pilot Test could serve as background for the inclusion of the Afro-descent variable in the 2010 Census.

As a direct consequence of the Pilot Test, a question on Afro-descent was included in a small sample of questionnaires for the Argentine National Population Census conducted in October of 2010. The inauguration of progressive governments committed to the expansion of rights with Presidents Nestor Kirchner (2003-2007) and Cristina Fernandez (2007-2015), and Ana María Edwin (2007-2014) as INDEC director, provided a local context open to ethno-racial reform. At the same time, the existence of a Pilot Test promoted and legitimated by a powerful multilateral bank was crucial for the decision to include Afrodescendants in the census.⁵² Likewise, the inclusion of this question responded coherently to the international commitments made by Fernandez' government to implement affirmative recognition and reparation policies for Afrodescendants.

Like the Pilot Test, the Census question included self-identification and ancestry as preferred criteria, asking if the person surveyed or anybody at the household was Afrodescendant or had ancestors of Afrodescendant or African origin, in alignment with international standards defined in Durban and promoted by United Nations agencies such as ECLAC and UNFPA. According to the Census results, 149,493 individuals identified as Afrodescendants, which represented 0.4% of the total Argentine population. This number is far below the 2 million Afrodescendants estimated by activists based on the results of the 2005 Pilot Test. Although Afrodescendant organizations had involved in a state-led awareness campaign to promote identification with the Afrodescendant category – a campaign partially funded by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) – they criticized the fact that the campaign started late and lacked diffusion in mass media.

Furthermore, the question on Afro-descent was only included in a sample of questionnaires, which activists interpreted as a sign of lukewarm commitment by state officials, who had supposedly only done enough to save face in front of international organizations. In 2016, however, several state institutions were summoned by the United Nations Human Rights Committee and INDEC officials were specifically asked why they included the Afrodescendant question in only a sample of the 2010 National Census, and what other steps were they taking for the inclusion of Afrodescendants (interview with Gladys Massé, May 2021). Responding to these criticisms, and as a sign of how the Afrodescendant agenda advanced in Argentina during the last decade, the 2022 Argentine National Population Census included a question about Afro-descent in all questionnaires, which found that 0.7% of the population living in Argentina identified as Afrodescendant (INDEC 2024).⁵³

In conclusion, the fact that Afro-Argentine activists had been organizing for a decade before the Durban Conference and had previously identified the relevance of disaggregated data, was crucial so that in Durban they could position this demand by presenting the results of a survey

⁵² I discuss the role played by these national governments in the implementation of ethno-racial reform in Chapter 2.

⁵³ The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) supported INDEC's communication strategy for the 2022 Census, elaborating communicational pieces focused on specific populations, including Afrodescendants (INDEC 2024).

conducted in Buenos Aires a year earlier. Furthermore, before Durban, Afro-Argentine organizations had already connected to transnational advocacy networks and received funding from philanthropical foundations to participate in international forums and conduct projects targeting their community. Thanks to their early international positioning, an Afro-Argentine activist was invited to the 2002 Todos Contamos meeting conducted in Peru, led by the World Bank. Thus, World Bank officials learned about the situation of Afrodescendants in Argentina and included this country among the five where they funded research to account for the “process of integrating questions of racial self-identification in instruments to recollect population data” (Stubbs and Reyes 2006:8). Thus, the logistic and financial support provided by the Word Bank to conduct a Pilot Test was decisive in pressuring the Argentine state to include a question to capture Afro-descent in the 2010 National Population Census – which had not been previously contemplated in INDEC’s agenda.

Chile: Afrodescendants’ exclusion from National Censuses

In contrast to Afro-Argentines, Afro-Chileans began to organize as a result of the Santiago Regional Preliminary Conference and the Durban World Conference. The Afro-Chilean delegations that attended these meetings learned there about the importance of statistical inclusion for Afrodescendant movements. Thus, when the first Afro-Chilean NGO, Oro Negro, was established in the city of Arica after these conferences, it defined as one of its main goals to promote the inclusion of a variable to capture Afro-descent in the Chilean National Population Census. However, it was not until 2005 that Afro-Chileans in Arica sought international support to promote their inclusion in the census that would be conducted in 2012.

Following the example of Argentina, some Afro-Chilean leaders identified the need to conduct a Pilot Test to test a question to capture Afro-descent, in order to provide greater legitimacy to their demand for census inclusion. By then, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) had already sponsored the two Todos Contamos regional meetings to promote the inclusion of ethno-racial variables in official national statistics. Given that Afrodescendants in Chile were just starting to organize, no Afro-Chilean activist had been present at those meetings. As a consequence of the Todos Contamos project, the World Bank funded statistical studies about Afro-descent in five different countries, including the 2005 Argentine Pilot Test. In this context, there were approximations between Afro-Chilean activists and World Bank officials. President of Afro-Chilean NGO “Lumbanga,” Cristian Báez (Interview, July 2021), met with Josefina Stubbs, who had been coordinating the Todos Contamos project, to explore the possibility of obtaining sponsorship and financial resources to conduct a similar survey in Chile. However, the Bank was at the time decreasing donations for social investment projects and Chile, as a developing country, was not among the places where the Bank could now offer this kind of support, which was now meant for underdeveloped regions.

Additionally, Afro-Chilean activists reached out to the transnational Afrodescendant networks they had begun to access in the context of the Durban Conference, to ask for help to advance their demand for statistical inclusion. Samuel Pozo, an Afro-Chilean activist who at the time was a member of Lumbanga, was invited in 2007 to join the Afro-Census Working Group. According to Pozo (Interview, August 2021), prior to the 2012 Census, the Afro-Census Working Group held several meetings with Chilean National Statistics Institute (INE) officials to advocate

for the inclusion of an Afrodescendant variable, but they were always rejected based on the argument that background studies were needed to include a new variable.

Afro-Chileans also found an international ally in their demand for statistical inclusion in Fabiana Del Popolo, the Chief of Demographic and Information on Population Area of CELADE-Population Division of ECLAC. Del Popolo invited Afro-Chilean movement members to several forums and workshops and provided them with advice about international standards to include a census question about Afro-descent. According to Nancy Yáñez (Interview, May 2021), an expert lawyer in Indigenous rights and former director of the Citizen Observatory, an NGO that has juridically supported Afro-Chileans:

I think that CELADE has been a crucial ally, because without the support of CELADE, the truth is that given the condition of insularity that the Afro-Chilean movement experiences, it would have been very difficult for them to have any impact on the state.

Since international funding from multilateral agencies was unavailable, Afro-Chileans had to appeal to local authorities for financial support to conduct an Afrodescendant Pilot Test. They coordinated meetings with authorities from the Regional Government and from the Regional Offices of the National Statistics Institute (INE) (Espinosa 2013:74). After several failed attempts, INE's National Director offered technical support and collaboration on the actions needed to obtain financial resources for a Pilot Test. Afro-Chilean organizations applied to multiple national funds and in 2008 formed the Chilean Afrodescendant Organizations Alliance – also called Afro-Chilean Alliance – to promote an Afrodescendant Characterization Pilot Test for the Arica-Parinacota Region. Colloquially called *Censo Afro*, this was a non-representative survey conducted in 2009 to estimate, locate, and characterize the Afrodescendant population living in the Region of Arica.

Afro-Chilean activists secured resources for an awareness campaign from AECID and committed several state institutions to collaborate on the implementation of the test.⁵⁴ They also involved ORAPER – the network of Regional Offices for Ethno-Racial Policies – and a number of United Nations agencies, including the UNESCO, ECLAC, the UN Development Program (UNDP), the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) as supervisors during the application the survey (Espinosa 2013:14, Rivera and Rubio 2012:2010-2011). The questionnaire design was the responsibility of INE's Research and Development Department, with the support of Afrodescendant organizations and counseling from ECLAC, which also supported Afrodescendant organizations in the process of tabulating results. According to Cristian Báez (Interview, July 2021), although INE officials initially resisted offering any support, they eventually felt forced to participate in the *Censo Afro* when so many international organizations were invited as supervisors. However, INE rejected the methodological validity of the survey and excluded the possibility of including an Afro-descent variable in the 2012 Census. Afro-Chileans engaged in several actions to advance their inclusion in the 2012 Census, including protests, meetings with authorities and even getting Congress representatives to approve an Agreement Project to request this inclusion to the President. However, once and again they were rejected by government officials, who blamed technical reasons such as the lack of time

⁵⁴ A small fund was also obtained for awareness activities by applying to a competitive fund from the Cultures and Arts National Council, to which I refer in Chapter 4.

and experience to develop a successful question.⁵⁵

INE's national director, however, agreed to carry out a binding representative statistical study that could guide the focalization of public policies for the Afrodescendant population in the Arica-Parinacota Region, under the condition that the Regional Government could provide resources to fund it. Thanks to the support of local political allies, regional funds were secured for the study and a resolution was signed between the Regional Government, INE, and Afrodescendant organizations to implement the survey⁵⁶ (Guerra Schleef and Büchner Ruiz 2019:71). The Characterization of the Afrodescendant Population of the Arica-Parinacota Region Survey (ENCAFRO) began to be designed in 2011, with the active participation of Afro-Chilean organizations, experts from INE, and various regional ministries (Araya 2016:98; UAHC 2017:47). The design of the ENCAFRO followed international standards, as it was based on a participatory process with civil society actors to identify the categories that the Afro-Chilean community used to talk about themselves and the elements that characterized them as a community. CELADE also played an important role in this process, advising INE officials about the international standards used for questions about race and ethnicity.

The ENCAFRO was conducted by the Statistics National Institute (INE) in 2013 using a random sample that covered 5,799 households in urban and rural areas of the Arica-Parinacota Region. The results were published in 2014, and stated that the design and execution of the survey was a collaborative work between Afrodescendant organizations, CELADE, and INE, and complied with the Durban Conference recommendations regarding Afrodescendants' inclusion in states' statistical production. The survey revealed that 5.7% of the region's population identified as Afrodescendants (INE 2014). These results represented the first official disaggregated information to characterize the Chilean Afrodescendant population. But although INE validated and published its results, central authorities undermined its value given its regional character. Thus, when Afro-Chileans used the ENCAFRO to demand their inclusion in the 2017 abbreviated Census, once again they were rejected by INE.⁵⁷ INE's National Director Ximena Clark argued that the new census' goal was to create a minimum statistic framework to execute public policies and that the number of questions needed to be restricted, so there was no time to add the Afrodescendant variable (Campos 2017:22).

⁵⁵ INE also tested the Afrodescendant variable in two general Census pilot tests, and reported that most people did not understand the term "Afrodescendant" and that the question caused bewilderment, inconvenience, rejection, and jokes. In a written response rejecting the inclusion of an Afro-descent variable, INE officials claimed that it was impossible to establish what can be understood as a descendant, that if the Census asked for "descendants" they would be forced to add all the categories of descendancy of other immigrant groups, and that the Afrodescendant population is not considered a first nation by the Chilean Indigenous Law 19.253 so the state was not obligated to include them in national statistics (Rivera and Rubio 2012:2011-2012).

⁵⁶ Exempt Resolution 4737, signed on December 28 of 2011, available at: <https://transparencia.ine.cl/terceros/convenio4737.pdf>.

⁵⁷ Through Ordinance 2455, signed on December 28 of 2015, INE rejected the request for the inclusion of an Afrodescendant category in the 2017 Census, arguing that the existence of ENCAFRO neither created a juridical category for Afrodescendants nor committed INE to consider them in future Census questionnaires. The response added that Afrodescendants could mark the option "other (specify)" in the question about Indigenous identification, and write Afrodescendant (Guerra Schleef and Büchner Ruiz 2019:72-73). In a 2018 report, INE reported that 10.3% of the population that responded "other" wrote an answer that could be associated with having African ancestry, representing a total of 9,919 individuals.

Afro-Chilean activists were less successful than their Argentine counterparts in securing funding from multilateral agencies, banks, and foundations to develop actions to promote ethno-racial reform. At the time when they began organizing and seeking international support, international agencies' funding priorities had shifted, which prevented them from receiving funding to advance actions that could pressure the state to include them in the National Population Census. Afro-Chilean activists instead sought local allies to present their demand for statistical inclusion to state officials, which were resistant to such an inclusion. Despite the fact that Afro-Chileans managed to carry out a regional study to characterize the Afrodescendant population of the Arica-Parinacota Region in 2009, INE rejected their inclusion in the 2012 National Population Census. As a compromise, INE accepted to conduct a statistically representative regional survey – the ENCAFRO – if activists could secure funding from the regional government. But despite the fact that the ENCAFRO was conducted in 2013 by INE itself, Afro-Chileans' demand to be included in the 2017 abbreviated National Population Census was again rejected. The fact that Afro-Chilean organizations did not have financial support, or the negotiation power of a prestigious multilateral agency like the World Bank, to pressure state actors to include an Afrodescendant variable in the Census, can largely explain their exclusion when compared to the statistical inclusion of Afro-Argentines.

Although the statistical inclusion of Afrodescendants had been advancing in the entire Latin American region since the Durban Conference, Chile was the only country – together with the Dominican Republic – to not include a question on Afro-descent in the 2010 census round. The Chilean state has included for the first time a question to capture Afro-descent in the ongoing 2024 National Population Census. The decision to finally include this variable is the result of the approval of Law 21,161, which in 2019 granted legal recognition to the “Chilean Afrodescendant Tribal People.” This law establishes in its sixth article the Chilean state's obligation to include Afro-Chileans in National Population Censuses. Chile is therefore the last country in the region to include an Afrodescendant census variable.

Conclusion

Transnational advocacy networks have played a crucial role both in the consolidation of Afrodescendant movements in Argentina and Chile and in the definition and implementation of their political agendas. Thanks to these networks, Afrodescendant activists throughout Latin America have generated a common language to present their struggles in a consistent way. By connecting to these already established transnational networks, Afro-Argentine and Afro-Chilean early activists were invited to various international forums where they learned from the experience of other Black movements in the region. They channeled international resources, in the form of social capital, multicultural normative frames, organizational experience, technical assistance, and in some cases direct funding from multilateral agencies that helped them face the challenges of trying to consolidate as social movements, advance actions to gain visibility, and gain leverage when making claims towards their respective states. Differences in the time periods in which Afrodescendants in each country began organizing, however, produced unexpected consequences for their possibilities of accessing and mobilizing various types of resources from international organizations, agencies, and foundations. By tracing the processes by which activists positioned their demand for inclusion in national statistics, this chapter reveals that Afrodescendant

movements' leverage to pressure national authorities was strongly impacted by the international support (or lack thereof) they had access to.

For both Afro-Argentines and Afro-Chileans, the 2001 Durban World Conference marked a pivotal moment in which they were able to capitalize on already consolidated transnational networks. However, the fact that they arrived at this conference at very different stages of movement consolidation impacted their ability to access the financial resources that multilateral agencies and philanthropic foundations made available during the years before and after the conference. Afro-Argentines arrived in Durban representing Afrodescendant organizations that had already participated in several international forums and were well-connected to transnational advocacy networks. Therefore, the Durban Conference signified for them a next step in the consolidation of the Afro-Argentine movement, one in which they were able to mobilize international funding from important multilateral agencies and philanthropic foundations, which could alter local power relations so that state officials felt obliged to take their claims seriously. The alliance created between local activists and World Bank officials to conduct an Afrodescendant Pilot Test was crucial for gaining visibility as legitimate political actors. The fact that the World Bank mobilized funding from an international donor to conduct this Pilot Test, and that it was done under the aegis of the Todos Contamos project with the support of other institutions such as the Inter-American Development Bank and various UN agencies, gave it the weight needed so that Argentine state officials would take this demand seriously. World Bank representatives' role as political brokers in meetings with INDEC officials was crucial so that the latter felt obliged to collaborate. It is safe to conclude that without this Pilot Test it is unlikely a question on Afro-descent would have been included in the 2010 Argentine National Population Census.

In the case of Chile, an Afrodescendant movement emerged after a small Afro-Chilean delegation of individuals who were only starting to politically organize around an Afrodescendant identity participated in the Durban Conference. As these new political actors gained access to already consolidated transnational advocacy networks, they gained legitimacy as movement leaders and political actors. Their integration into these networks provided them with organizational experience and international normative frames that helped them consolidate as a social movement and gain local support for their demands. In this process, they learned from other Latin American Black organizations, such as Mundo Afro from Uruguay. But when they were finally ready to take a second step in the consolidation of the movement by mobilizing economic resources from multilateral agencies and philanthropic foundations, the priorities of these institutions had shifted and they had mostly stopped providing direct funding to Latin American civil society organizations. Given these constraints, Afro-Chileans had to seek financial support from national institutions and construct local allyships to help them position their demands. While they managed to conduct a regional study in 2009 – the so-called Censo Afro – INE's support in this process was lukewarm, given the lack of powerful international actors intervening in Afro-Chileans' favor. Expectedly, INE rejected the inclusion of a question on Afro-descent in the 2012 Chilean National Population Census. Instead, INE officials offered to carry out a representative statistical study in Arica – the ENCAFRO – funded by the Arica Regional Government. Despite the fact that this survey had much higher technical standards than the Censo Afro and was designed and conducted with support from the INE, since Afro-Chileans did not have the support of powerful multilateral agencies that could exercise pressure in their behalf, once again INE rejected the inclusion of a question on Afro-descent in the 2017 National Population Census.

By focusing on the interaction between local and international actors, this chapter reveals how Afro-Argentine and Afro-Chilean activists' access to and mobilization of transnational advocacy networks impacted their ability to convince state officials to include Afrodescendant rights in their political agenda. In Chapter 2, I will continue to examine how the international realm impacts national ethno-racial politics in Argentina and Chile, by focusing on the relationship between state actors and international organizations. In particular, the chapter will analyze how states' adoption of human rights and multicultural frames present in international normative and legal instruments is mediated by domestic political openings related to each country's political history.

CHAPTER 2

FROM MULTICULTURAL GLOBAL NORMS TO DOMESTIC REFORMS

Introduction

In Chapter 1, I focused on the interaction between local activists and international actors, to identify how Afrodescendants' access to transnational advocacy networks impacted the consolidation of Afrodescendant movements and their ability to advance political claims in Argentina and Chile. In this chapter, my main focus is on the interaction between state actors and intergovernmental human rights organizations, such as the United Nations system and the Organization of American States. In particular, I look at how human rights and multicultural frames adopted in international normative and legal instruments have impacted how states implement ethno-racial reform. Building on Tsutsui's (2017) definition of "global human rights," I understand these international instruments – including treaties, conventions, resolutions, and other documents promoted by intergovernmental institutions – as the codification of globally agreed-upon principles regarding the treatment states should give to ethno-racial minorities. I analyze how the adherence and ratification of these international instruments by the Argentine and Chilean states translated or not into the implementation of laws, policies, and programs responding to states' international commitments. In doing this, I identify how state officials characterize their governments' progress regarding those commitments through reports and speeches at international forums, analyzing if their accounts represent accurate depictions of state actions.

My approach is informed by "world society" theory, as it identifies how global norms and institutions – and the ratification of international treaties particularly – shape the actions of governments and local movements, leading often to isomorphic political outcomes (Meyer et al. 1997; Soysal 1994; Tsutsui 2017). But at the same time, I acknowledge that national responses to international agendas do not occur in a vacuum and that the historical and political particularities of different countries can explain divergences in the adoption and implementation of these international norms (Liu 2006). To analyze differences in how the Argentine and Chilean governments have responded to commitments acquired through the adherence to and ratification of international instruments, I follow Tianna Paschel's (2016) conceptualization of "political field alignment." According to Paschel, this alignment happens when the "global ethno-racial field" – in which international norms and legal instruments play an important role – converges with changes in power dynamics in the field of domestic politics, producing radical shifts in state discourses and policies. Social movements can strategically capitalize on this convergence to pressure states to implement ethno-racial reform.

I start this chapter by briefly identifying and describing the main international and regional normative and legal instruments that have impacted Afrodescendant politics in Latin America, particularly Argentina and Chile. I describe how each of these instruments was adopted by member states, what their most significant contents are regarding Afrodescendant rights, and what recommendations or obligations they establish for state actors. I then introduce the idea of

“political field alignment” to argue that states’ adoption and ratification of international instruments does not guarantee ethno-racial reforms. To effectively impact national agendas, there must be state actors willing to promote reforms that align with their international commitments – in contrast to doing the minimum to save face at international forums. I therefore analyze how domestic political conditions immediately after the return of democracy in Argentina (1983) and Chile (1990) and in the decades that followed conditioned how each state responded to international commitments regarding the implementation of policies targeting ethno-racial minorities and Afrodescendants particularly.

I find that in Argentina, after the end of the dictatorship in 1983, and even more so after the 2001 political and economic crisis, governments and authorities positioned the defense of human rights at the center of their political agendas and invested themselves in showing to the world the country’s democratic and liberal credentials. In this context, the combat against discrimination has been particularly significant and the state has taken important steps to follow up with international commitments regarding racial discrimination and Afrodescendant rights. In the case of Chile, in contrast, I find that processes of political democratization after the dictatorship were slower and more contentious, and the rights of ethno-racial minorities were not a political priority. Therefore, governments and other state actors in Chile have generally been resistant to implement ethno-racial reform that responds to their international commitments related to racial discrimination and, most particularly, regarding the recognition and inclusion of Afrodescendant populations.

Previous studies focused on the political mobilization of Afrodescendant movements in Latin America have made important contributions to understanding how the interaction of local activists, states, and international actors can promote the advancement of social movements’ claims (Paschel 2016). Some research has identified how the interaction of these different actors have affected international legislation and global human rights norms (Echeverri-Pineda 2020). Other scholars have focused on how the international realm has shaped the development of racial politics in various Latin American countries (Telles 2004; Yashar 2005). Of these last studies, some have put more emphasis on the impact of international and multilateral organizations (Greene 2012; Walsh 2012), while others have focused on the role played by transnational Afrodescendant networks (Lao-Montes 2009; Paschel and Sawyer 2008). Studies that look at how the interaction of domestic, state, and international actors affect national legislation have generally focused exclusively on one country, while the few comparative studies available tend to center on countries in which the Black population is most numerous and visible, such as Colombia and Brazil (Paschel 2016). In this chapter, I look instead at how human rights and multicultural discourses adopted in international normative and legal instruments impact political agendas around Afrodescendant recognition and inclusion, in two countries with strong nationalist ideologies portraying national populations as mostly White.

The multicultural turn and international human rights norms

The establishment of the Afrodescendant transnational advocacy networks described in Chapter 1 occurred in an international context where multiculturalism arose as a global paradigm – the so-called multicultural turn. The multicultural turn is characterized by a shift in states’ approaches to

ethno-racial and cultural diversity, from monocultural mestizaje to the granting of cultural and collective rights to Indigenous peoples, and on some occasions to Afrodescendants (Rahier 2019). In this process, several Latin American countries reformed their Constitutions – or created new ones – to recognize for the first time the ethnic and racial diversity of their populations, breaking with the republican universalism that had been prevalent until then (Rahier 2020:606). This process was initiated in Latin America in the 1980s, mainly as a response to the mobilization of Indigenous peoples – who since the late 1960s began to challenge nation-states throughout the region – and influenced by international organization and multilateral agencies (Agudelo 2019; Zapata 2019). One important way that international organizations and agencies promoted this shift was by adopting and disseminating international normative and legal instruments to which states in the region subscribed and therefore committed to follow. As argued by Greene (2007:330), multiculturalist regimes have been partly constituted through “a series of international legal frameworks and multilateral development policies,” which have, in turn, facilitated claims for collective rights made by Indigenous and Afrodescendant movements.

For Afrodescendants in Latin America, the 2001 United Nations Durban World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance marked an inflection point for the construction of a common political agenda to mobilize in their respective countries. According to Liu (2006:924), World Conferences are “lengthy political consensus-building processes” that mobilize governments and civil society to negotiate around universal agendas to be implemented over years. The events surrounding the Durban Conference not only strengthened Latin American Black transnational advocacy networks, as argued in Chapter 1, but also for the first time provided states with international guidelines regarding the implementation of policies targeting Afrodescendant populations (Lao-Montes 2009). The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) contains a specific section focusing on Africans and people of African descent, which, among other issues, includes a request to states to promote the political, social, economic, and cultural participation of Afrodescendants; take affirmative action initiatives targeting communities of primarily African descent; promote knowledge about their heritage, culture, and contributions; and resolve problems of ownership of ancestral lands inhabited for generations by people of African descent. Although the DDPA is mostly regarded as an instrument for the combat against racial discrimination, it also includes cultural and collective rights generally regarded as multicultural.

After adopting the DDPA in March of 2002,⁵⁸ the United Nations (UN) General Assembly established a number of mechanisms to follow up with the agreements established in Durban, including the creation of an intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the DDPA. Although the DDPA is not a legally binding international treaty, states that endorsed it committed to take concrete steps to advance Afrodescendants’ rights. Various authors have argued that it is in Latin America where these commitments most impacted movements and governments (Echeverri-Pineda 2020; Lao-Montes 2009). Several Latin American countries adopted new legislation and created government agencies to address Afrodescendants’ rights as a response to Durban’s Programme of Action. Lennox (2009:209) identifies four of these policy responses by Latin American states: 1. The creation of new institutions focused on Afrodescendants; 2. the adoption of affirmative action policies; 3. the improvement of disaggregated data collection; and

⁵⁸ The resolution to implement the Durban Conference was adopted by UN General Assembly members states by a vote of 134 states in favor and only 2 against (Israel and the United States), with 2 abstentions (Australia and Canada).

4. an attention to land rights claims. The Brazilian government is recognized for implementing the most comprehensive legislation after Durban, including affirmative action policies at public universities and the creation of the Special Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality, among other reforms (Davis, Paschel, and Anderson 2012:33). Furthermore, most countries in the region began to collect ethno-racial data in their national surveys and censuses as a direct result of agreements reached at Durban. After more than 20 years, the DDPA is still cited by Afrodescendant activists as a main source of legitimacy for their claims. According to Vicenta Camusso (Interview, August 2021), an Afro-Uruguayan activist who for several decades has actively participated in Afrodescendant transnational networks:

Durban's programme of action is still in force, because it is a programme of action that positions civil rights, political rights, and economic rights at the top of the debate and represents a legal frame for all United Nations organisms.

The DDPA has also been used as a reference for the construction of other international norms that have impacted Latin American states and Afrodescendant movements. Three of these are particularly important for the cases I focus on: the UN General Assembly's proclamation of the International Decade for People of African Descent; the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development, resulting from a Regional Conference organized by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); and the Inter-American Human Rights System's qualification of certain Latin American Afrodescendant communities as Tribal Peoples. I will describe each of these briefly before moving on to analyze their impact on Argentine and Chilean ethno-racial politics.

In 2013, the UN General Assembly approved Resolution 68/237, proclaiming 2015-2024 as the International Decade for People of African Descent, with the theme "People of African descent: recognition, justice and development."⁵⁹ The International Decade calls on member states to end racism and the systematic exclusion of Afrodescendants. One of its goals is to "adopt and strengthen national, regional and international legal frameworks according to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) and to ensure their full and effective implementation." This includes promoting the right to equality and non-discrimination, education on equality and awareness-raising, and information gathering. These measures are significant both to combat discrimination and to reverse the historical erasure of Afrodescendant people, as argued by Epsy Campbell (Interview, December 2021), a recognized Afrodescendant activist who at the time of my interview was Costa Rica's Vice-President (2018-2022):

There is a denial, a systemic erasure of Afrodescendants, and that is why the International Decade has as its first cornerstone recognition. If countries do not recognize their own Afrodescendant peoples, imagine how we could possibly think of public policies, of affirmative action.

Thus, in accordance with the DDPA, the International Decade mandates UN member states to collect, compile, analyze, disseminate, and publish reliable statistical data at the national and local levels, and to take all the necessary steps to regularly assess the situation of people of African

⁵⁹ Previously, the General Assembly had proclaimed 2011 as the International Year for People of African Descent (resolution 64/169).

descent who are victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance. Additionally, the International Decade seeks to promote the respect, protection, and fulfillment of Afrodescendants' human rights and to promote a greater knowledge of and respect for their diverse heritages, cultures and contributions. To achieve these goals, the UN General Assembly adopted in 2014 a program of activities for the implementation of the International Decade, inviting states to take concrete steps to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance. While the International Decade Program of Activities does not constitute international law, United Nations members states are annually asked to report on their progress in fulfilling its mandates.

Also in 2013, the first meeting of the Regional Conference of Population and Development took place in Uruguay. This regional conference brought together the thirty-eight Latin American and Caribbean countries that are members of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). At the end of the conference, these countries approved the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development, which constitutes the Latin American and Caribbean regional agenda for the implementation of the 1994 Cairo International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action (CEPAL 2017:26), and represents the most important intergovernmental agreement in the region regarding population and development. Particularly important for Afrodescendants, the Montevideo Consensus was the first regional agreement to include a specific chapter that articulated Afrodescendant rights separated from the Indigenous chapter. Priority measure number 92 of the Montevideo Consensus indicates that signatory countries agreed to "Respect and implement the provisions of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, by adapting the legal frameworks and formulating the policies necessary for their implementation, with the full participation of Afro-descendent persons." Fabiana Del Popolo (Interview, December 2022), the Chief of Demographic and Information on Population Area of CELADE-Population Division of ECLAC, explained to me the origin and relevance of the Montevideo Consensus:

The Population Committee was transformed into a conference, increasing its status as a subsidiary organ of ECLAC. This allowed us to have in 2013 the first meeting of the Regional Conference of Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, which was very important because in 2014 it was going to be the 20-year anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo, so we had to define an agenda post-Cairo for our region. So that is how we arrived at the famous Montevideo Consensus, where there are two explicit chapters, one for Indigenous peoples and one for Afrodescendants, which we were able to separate after some discussions, because it was important to make visible their own demands and specificities, particularly for Afrodescendants. So, well, in 2013 we achieved this intergovernmental agreement which includes a whole set of priority measures in terms of public policies for Afrodescendants, and one of those priority measures is the generation of information.

The Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development reaffirms the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) by adopting a human rights framework that seeks the well-being and development of Afrodescendants as well as to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance. Among many other measures, it mandates signatory countries to develop disaggregated statistics that can guide the implementation of public policies that account for the demographic and sociocultural dynamics of Afrodescendant populations. According to then-Regional Director for Latin America at the United Nations

Population Fund (UNFPA), Harold Robinson (Interview, February 2022), the Montevideo Consensus came to complement the 2030 agenda on sustainable development, which, in contrast to the UN Millenium Development Goals, is not based on averages but incorporates a strong mandate to have an impact on inequalities suffered by underrepresented groups, establishing the goal of “not leaving anybody behind.” While the Montevideo Consensus is not legally binding, it includes a regional monitoring platform to follow up with the agreements established, bringing together the main initiatives reported by signatory states.

Finally, the Interamerican Human Rights System is comprised of two autonomous organs, the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR) and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR), both created within the Organization of American States (OAS) to oversee compliance of the commitments acquired by member states in the American Convention on Human Rights (Medina Quiroga and Nash Rojas 2007), also known as the Pact of San José. This regional treaty is binding for states that have ratified or adhered to it, which includes 25 Latin American and Caribbean nations. The IACHR and the IACtHR have played a crucial role in safeguarding Afrodescendant rights in the region, through the drafting of reports, recommendations, and regulations with which they can pressure member states. The Inter-American Commission established in 2005 a Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons of African Descent and Racial Discrimination, and has elevated the principle of non-discrimination based on race to a special status of international rights. Especially significant is the role that these organs have played for the recognition of some Afrodescendant communities as “Tribal Peoples,” allowing their access to special rights under international human rights law (Echeverri-Pineda 2020:158-159).

In 2007, the Inter-American Court decided that the Saramaka people – a maroon group whose ancestors were Africans forcibly taken as slaves to Suriname – comprised a “tribal community.”⁶⁰ The court justified this decision by arguing that the Saramaka people shared social, cultural, and economic characteristics distinct from the rest of the national community, had a special relationship with their ancestral territory, and regulated themselves at least partially through their own norms, customs, and traditions (Dulitzky 2010:31-32). In this way, the Inter-American Human Rights System set international jurisprudence for applying the International Labour Organization (ILO) Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), also known as Convention 169, to Afrodescendant communities in the Americas. Since then, the IACtHR has been used by Afrodescendants in other territories as an instrument for asserting legal rights and pressuring governments to make concessions they would not otherwise have offered (Morrison 2012:259). According to the IACHR Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons of African Descent and against Racial Discrimination, Margarette May Macaulay (Interview, September 2022):

If your state continues to fail you domestically, you must use the international system, the regional international system, and make sure that the failure is highlighted worldwide, because the UN doesn't have an army, the OAS doesn't have an army to force states to meet their obligations, but the only tool the commission uses is naming and shaming. And it's firstly in its recommendations. Secondly, in its annual report and the placing of states in article four, chapter four B, for failures,

⁶⁰ Saramaka People v. Suriname, IACHR Series No. 172. Judgment of November 28, 2007. The case concerned logging and mining concessions that the Government of Suriname had awarded without a process of prior consultation in the territory claimed by the Saramaka people.

apparent serious failures of human rights conditions. But there;s also this, that you can take the matter and it ends up in the court, the Inter-American Court, and the decisions of that court are binding on the states which have accepted the jurisdiction of the court. So, states have to execute that judgment as if it was a judgment of the highest national court; they are bounded.

Therefore, the IACtHR has provided Afrodescendants with an important legal instrument to defend their collective, territorial, and cultural rights as Tribal Peoples, by proving that, in accordance to ILO Convention 169, they are socially, culturally, and economically distinct from other sections of the national community (Dulitzky 2010). In Latin America, this has been the experience of maroon peoples in Suriname, *quilombos*⁶¹ in Brazil, and some Afrodescendant communities in Ecuador and Colombia, which have developed their identities maintaining themselves ethnically and culturally differentiated from the rest of the population (Guerra Schleeef and Büchner Ruiz 2019:76).

ILO Convention 169 has been generally regarded as a multicultural instrument, as its main focus is on the right of Indigenous peoples to maintain and strengthen their own cultures, ways of life, and institutions, and their right to participate effectively in decisions that affect them (OIT 2014). Its adoption sought to replace the 1957 Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention (No. 107), criticized for its integrationist and assimilationist approach to Indigenous rights. As the American Convention on Human Rights, ILO Convention 169 is a legally binding international instrument. It is noteworthy that it has only been ratified by 24 countries in the world, of which 15 are from Latin America and the Caribbean, accounting for its relevance in the region. ILO Convention 169 has thus become an important instrument for Latin American Afrodescendants to claim rights regarding self-determination and consultation by states when administrative or legislative measures might affect them.

There is an additional regional convention that is important for Latin American Afrodescendants, which has not yet been fully implemented and which I therefore will only mention briefly: the Inter-American Convention Against Racism, Racial Discrimination and Related Forms of Intolerance (CIRDI, Spanish acronym). The Organization of American States (OAS) adopted CIRDI in 2013 as a regional counterpart convention to the United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), adopted in 1965 and ratified by all OAS Member States. CIRDI, however, has only been ratified by 6 of the 35 states that are members of the OAS, while another 7 states have signed the convention but not ratified it. The convention establishes that an Inter-American Committee for the Prevention and Elimination of Racism, Racial Discrimination, and All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance will monitor the commitments undertaken in this convention. This committee will be established only after ten states ratify the convention, which will finally allow for its full implementation. Despite the fact that ratification is still pending in most of the region, CIRDI has created the possibility for international judicial protection for victims of racial discrimination of member states, through the Inter-American Court of Human Rights' consideration of CIRDI in its rulings (Morrison 2012:259).

All of the international normative and legal instruments I have described have strongly

⁶¹ Quilombo is the name given in some regions of Latin America to communities formed by Africans and Afrodescendants who escaped slavery, and their descendants born there.

impacted countries in the Latin American region, which have modified to various extents their national legislation and implemented public policies to respond to the international commitments they have acquired. However, this has not been a homogenous process, and Afrodescendant movements and states in the region have relied on one or another international instrument – depending on their particular characteristics and interests – to frame new legislation and policies.

TABLE 4: INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS ON AFRODESCENDANT RIGHTS

INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENT	YEAR ADOPTED	INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION	TYPE OF INSTRUMENT
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)	1965	United Nations	Binding Human Rights Treaty
Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention 169 (C169)	1989	International Labour Organization	Binding Human Rights Treaty
Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA)	2001	United Nations	Non-binding Resolution
Inter-American Convention Against Racism, Racial Discrimination and Related Forms of Intolerance (CIRDI)	2013	Organization of American States	Binding Human Rights Treaty
Montevideo Consensus	2013	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	Non-binding Regional Agreement
International Decade for People of African Descent	2015	United Nations	Non-binding Resolution

Domestic and global norm alignment in Argentina and Chile

While the adoption and dissemination of international norms and legal instruments that target Afrodescendant communities has been crucial for activists to gain leverage and to position their demands in their national contexts, by itself it is not enough to secure legal and policy reform. To succeed in pushing normative change, activists additionally need national authorities that are sensitive to the international commitments acquired and willing to implement reforms accordingly. As argued by Tianna Paschel (2016:18), being immersed in the “global ethno-racial field” does not guarantee that state actors will adopt ethno-racial policies. Studying the cases of Brazil and Colombia, Paschel concludes that the consolidation of a global ethno-racial field needs to converge with domestic changes in power relations and activists who take advantage of them – what she calls “political field alignment.”

Brazil and Uruguay represent two interesting examples of countries where we can observe how the international and local ethno-racial fields aligned to promote normative changes. In both countries, newly elected progressive governments embraced political reforms targeting Afrodescendants after the Durban Conference. In Brazil, Afrodescendant social mobilization and preparations for the Durban Conference, together with the support of transnational funding

agencies such as the Ford Foundation, served as a catalyst for the government's adoption of affirmative action policies. However, Htun (2004) argues that legislative change would not have been possible without the presidential initiative of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2003). According to Htun, Cardoso was not only sympathetic to the anti-racist agenda but particularly invested in proving the Brazilian government's democratic and liberal credentials to the world, which pushed him to comply with commitments acquired in Durban.

Townsend-Bell (2021) makes a similar argument for Uruguay when she claims that affirmative action legislation passed due to international events such as the Durban Conference and the passing of affirmative action legislation in Brazil, combined with the presidential and parliamentary majority election of the Uruguayan "Frente Amplio" (2005-2020) – a progressive coalition with a commitment to inclusive equality policy. According to Sharnak (2022:141), the combination of grassroot mobilization and the election of a "more progressive left-leaning government that responded to domestic and international pressure," led to the inclusion of Afro-Uruguayans in the country's national population census in 2011. From her perspective, the fact that the Uruguayan government and Congress members were responsive to the "global push for state-sponsored multiculturalism" was a crucial factor that contributed to Afrodescendants' statistical inclusion (Sharnak 2022:142).

To understand how the multicultural turn impacted the Southern Cone of Latin America, we need to account for the political context of democratization in the region throughout the 1980s and 1990s, after two decades of authoritarian dictatorships. This process of democratization promoted the rise of human rights movements and the entrance of new actors into diverse political spaces. In both Argentina and Chile, Indigenous peoples were significant actors with whom the newly elected democratic governments were obliged to negotiate new forms of citizenship, which was not the case for Afrodescendants. After participating in the Durban Conference, however, Afrodescendants in both countries were able to articulate their claims in a coherent way, supported by the political agenda established in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA). But while the Argentine government took concrete actions in the years following Durban that signaled an intention to comply with international commitments regarding Afrodescendant rights, more than a decade passed in Chile before central state authorities took any steps towards the recognition and inclusion of Afrodescendants.⁶² In this section, I use Tianna Paschel's idea of "political field alignment" to explain these differences.

Argentina: Afrodescendant political field alignment in Latin America's "European enclave"

Since the return of democracy in the 1980s we can observe in Argentina a number of state actions that reveal that authorities were concerned with showing internationally that the authoritarian era was in the past, and that the country was now embracing liberal democratic principles.⁶³ In an international context of the rise of multiculturalism, this also meant advancing ethno-racial reform.

⁶² As we will see in Chapter 4, the municipal government in Arica did implement an Afrodescendant agenda earlier.

⁶³ During the 20th century there were six different dictatorships in Argentina, covering part of every decade from the 1930s to the 1980s. The two longest were the most recent ones, the military dictatorship of Juan Carlos Onganía and his successors (1966-1973), denominated as the "Argentine Revolution," and the so-called "National Reorganization Process" (1976-1983), led by Jorge Rafael Videla and his successors.

With the election of President Raúl Alfonsín in 1983, the Argentine dictatorship (1976-1983) came to an end and the country began to transition through a process of rapid democratization. Alfonsín had been an active human rights activist during the dictatorship, and once elected signed a decree to mandate legal proceedings against the military rulers, a process known as the “Trial of the Juntas.” In his attempt to democratize the country, Alfonsín implemented changes that sought to increase the participation of civil society and to promote pluralism, passing laws in favor of women and Indigenous peoples. Law 23,592, better known as Anti-discrimination Law, was passed in 1988 by a unanimous vote of Congress members. The law’s goal was to combat discrimination by sanctioning those who arbitrarily impeded the exercise of others’ constitutional rights. According to Anderson and Gomes (2021:22), however, Law 23,592 was hard to implement, and multiple reform proposals have been presented to add to the law other expressions of discrimination, such as those related to gender identity and sexual orientation, and to create more effective mechanisms to prevent, repair, and reject discriminatory acts. There are several legislative initiatives today in Congress that seek to replace this law with one more aligned with current understandings of what constitutes discrimination and how to prevent it.

Continuing the process of political democratization, Argentina went through a major constitutional reform in 1994 under the neoliberal government of Carlos Menem (1989-1999).⁶⁴ In contrast to other constitutional processes occurring in Latin American during that period, the Argentine constitutional reform did not include the recognition of the nation as multicultural or multi-ethnic. However, the reform did recognize for the first-time the pre-existence and constitutional rights of Indigenous peoples, consolidating a differentiated Indigenous citizenship, albeit at the same time that it facilitated neoliberal policies (Rosenzvit 2020:435). This reform also gave constitutional status to human rights international instruments to which Argentina had previously subscribed, including the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), which had been approved in 1968 through Law 17,722.

Consequently, Argentine legislation was adjusted to international normative frames, embracing generic principles of cultural pluralism, although it did not address Afrodescendants’ situation specifically (Rosenzvit 2020:437). While Argentine authorities showed commitment to international norms during the 1990s, Rosenzvit (2020) argues that this apparent commitment was more for show than based on profound convictions. However, in accordance with the ICERD, in 1995 the Argentine National Congress passed Law 24,515, which mandated the creation of the National Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (INADI). This legislation was also pushed by the Jewish community to combat antisemitism, given that in 1992 there had been a suicide bombing attack on the Israeli embassy and in 1994 a second suicidal attack targeting a Jewish community center, both located in Buenos Aires (Méndez 2009). INADI started to function in 1997 as a decentralized institution under the Interior Ministry,⁶⁵ with the declared goal of developing concrete measures and actions to combat discrimination, xenophobia, and racism. INADI, however, had from the beginning limited attributions, merely receiving complaints from victims of discrimination and giving recommendations to courts without the possibility of creating

⁶⁴ The implementation of the 1994 constitutional reform in Argentina was the result of an agreement between Carlos Menem and Raúl Alfonsín, known as the “Pacto de los Olivos,” where the past and current presidents agreed on a list of issues on which both of their parties would vote favorably in the constitutional assembly. Previously, a project of constitutional reform had been developed during Alfonsín’s presidential term.

⁶⁵ Since 2005, INADI functions under the Justice and Human Rights Ministry.

laws or regulations (Anderson and Gomes 2021:23).

After the 2001 Durban World Conference, the Argentine government again showed a disposition to adopt international standards regarding minorities. According to Rivera Vélez and Maluf (2017:169), the guidelines for the combatting racism in Argentina were established as a result of the commitments acquired by the Argentine state at Durban. Only a month after the Durban Conference, the government signed an “Understanding Memorandum” with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to cooperate in the development of a program against racism in Argentina.⁶⁶ Nonetheless, the eruption in 2001 of the Argentine economic crisis – which put an early end to the government of Fernando de la Rúa (1999-2001) – presented an obstacle to fulfilling these commitments, affecting both the individual situation of activists and the official support and economic resources they had started to receive from abroad. Local conditions drove international agencies to shift their attention towards other social groups affected by the crisis, where the ethno-racial cleavage was not considered as significant (Lopez 2009). As a result, there was a pause in the implementation of state policies for victims of racial discrimination (Rosenvitz 2020:440).

The election of the progressive and popular national governments of Néstor Kirchner (2003-2007) and Cristina Fernández (2007-2015)⁶⁷ provided a local context of openness towards political reforms regarding minority rights. Various authors have identified the kirchnerista governments as a strong break with the neoliberal policies installed by Carlos Menem during the nineties (Ocoró Loango 2018:276; Rosenvit 220:440). Néstor Kirchner’s government presented itself as the government of human rights and created new legislation and institutions associated with cultural pluralism. Although INADI had been created in the nineties, it was with Kirchner that it acquired efficacy (Rosenvitz 2020:441). Kirchner and Fernández opened spaces for the participation of social organizations in political life, and created a context favorable for social movements – including Afrodescendant activism – to present their demands (Ocoró Loango 2018:270). It was after the election of Néstor Kirchner in 2003 that Afrodescendant activists began to reach out to government officials and construct alliances that enabled them to position their demands within public institutions. They first gained political visibility by participating in councils and forums opened for civil society at INADI.⁶⁸ During the kirchnerista era, in particular under the government of Cristina Fernández, Afro-Argentine activists began to be hired in state institutions from where they were able to intervene in the creation and implementation of early programs targeting Afrodescendants.⁶⁹ According to Ocoró Loango (2018:273), there is a

⁶⁶ The memorandum was titled “Acuerdo Mutuo de Cooperación en el Desarrollo y Puesta en Práctica de un Programa contra el Racismo en la Argentina.” A news report about this memorandum was published at the Foreign Affairs webpage: <https://www.cancilleria.gob.ar/es/actualidad/comunicados/la-argentina-firmo-con-la-onu-memorando-de-asistencia-en-iniciativas-de>.

⁶⁷ Since Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández were married, these 12 years of government are known in Argentina as “kirchnerista governments.” While there is no space here to elaborate on the complicated nuances of Argentine politics, the concept of “popular national government” is generally linked today in Argentina to “peronismo” and used by supporters to refer to nationalist left-leaning governments that implement extensive policies targeting the working-class masses. This concept was frequently used by the Afro-Argentine activists I interviewed to refer to the kirchnerista governments.

⁶⁸ There is documentation of collaboration between Afro-Argentine organizations and INADI since 2004 (INADI 2005), which was reported by the Argentine government in a meeting of the sixty-fifth session of the CERD in August 11th of 2004, available in <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/cerd>.

⁶⁹ I discuss these programs in Chapter 4.

consensus among Afrodescendant activists on how hard it would have been to gain any state concessions with governments from other political sectors. This was confirmed in my interviews, with most activists defending the Kirchner and Fernández administrations and regarding them as promoters of human rights policies. As argued by Afro-Argentine activist Carlos Alvarez (Interview, August 2021), in relation to Cristina Fernández' presidential term:

It was a political moment in which, as Melucci [social movement sociologist, Alberto Melucci] would say, a window of political opportunities opened. We had a government that was invested in the extension of rights. Don't forget that in 2010 Argentina approved same-sex marriage. INADI also created a series of actions, an institutional and political vision, that promoted an international articulation, which supported this idea of the extension of rights.

In 2005, the Argentine government passed Decree N° 1086/2005, which approved a document titled "Towards a National Plan Against Discrimination. Discrimination in Argentina. Diagnosis and Proposals."⁷⁰ The decree explicitly linked the creation of this Plan with the commitments acquired by the Argentine state at the 2001 Durban Conference. The Plan had resulted from a technical cooperation project subscribed in 2004 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Argentine Government through INADI and the Foreign Affairs Ministry⁷¹ and was elaborated through a process of consultation with civil society organizations (ADC 2020). The approved document included a section about mechanisms of discrimination and erasure of Afrodescendants, which represented the first time in history that an Argentine government officially recognized the state violence exercised against this population (INADI 2005; Ottenheimer and Zubrzycki 2011). INADI was entrusted with the execution of the proposals designed in the National Plan Against Discrimination. A year later, the Argentine Congress approved Law 26,162,⁷² which recognized the competence of CERD to receive and examine complaints from victims of violations of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), and INADI was put in charge of following communications with the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD).

An analysis of the Bills presented at the Argentine National Congress reveals that national senators and representatives were also attentive to their international commitments regarding racial discrimination.⁷³ A great majority of these bills have been proposed by members of progressive and left-leaning parties. In 2001, one resolution draft and two declaration drafts⁷⁴ were presented in support of Argentina's participation at the Durban Conference, two of which were approved. From the 2000s until today, there have been 68 resolution and declaration drafts presented that seek the state's adhesion to the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, many of them approved. Another two declaration drafts sought the adhesion to the United Nations Week of Solidarity with the Peoples Struggling Against Racism and Racial

⁷⁰ Decree 1086/2005 is available at: <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/normativa/nacional/decreto-1086-2005-109501/texto>.

⁷¹ The Head of the Cabinet of Ministers and the Human Rights Secretariat were also included in the program.

⁷² Law 26,162 is available at: <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/normativa/nacional/ley-26162-122501/texto>.

⁷³ All legislative initiatives of the Argentine National Congress can be found at: <https://www.hcdn.gob.ar/proyectos/>.

⁷⁴ Neither resolution nor declaration drafts lead to the automatic adoption of laws. While resolution drafts refer exclusively to measures that one Congress chamber decides to take regarding their internal functioning, declaration drafts express the opinion of the legislative body about a particular subject or manifests the will for the executive branch to carry out a particular act.

Discrimination, one of them approved. In June of 2013, Argentina endorsed the Inter-American Convention Against Racism, Racial Discrimination and Related Forms of Intolerance (CIRDI), just adopted by the Organization of American States (OAS). During the following decade, 18 bills were presented at the Senate or the House, seeking the approval or ratification of CIRDI, a necessary step for an international instrument to become legally binding being endorsed. However, Argentina has not yet ratified this convention.

After the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2011 the International Year for People of African Descent, for the first time we find bills and resolution and declaration drafts that seek the adhesion to international commemorations related specifically to Afrodescendants.⁷⁵ In 2011, a declaration draft was approved to adhere to the United Nations Commemoration of the International Year for People of African Descent, and two years later another declaration draft was approved to adhere to the International Afrodescendant Women's Day. In 2013, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2015-2024 as the International Decade for People of African Descent. As a response, a declaration draft was approved by the Argentine Senate in 2016 to adhere to the decade and two bills were proposed with the same objective, one in the House of Representatives and the other in the Senate. It was finally in 2017 that president Mauricio Macri (2015-2019) signed Decree 658/2017, by which Argentina recognized and adhered to the International Decade for People of African Descent.⁷⁶ The fact that it was Macri, a hardcore neoliberal right-wing president, who signed this decree, is explained by most activists as a response to both international and internal pressures and as a result of actions that had been in place before his government. Furthermore, it was only after the election of President Alberto Fernández (2019-2023) – elected with Cristina Fernández as his Vice-President – that the government began to implement actions in line with the International Decade Program of Activities. Afro-Argentine activist Patricia Gomes (Interview, November 2021), who worked at the Equality and Diversity Politics Secretariat within the Women, Genders and Diversity Ministry, argued:

Thanks to the pressure of the organized Afrodescendant and Afro-Argentine social movements, the state took the International Decade as an international commitment to implement policies. I think it was also a result of the election of the government of Alberto Fernández that we begin to see progress. Previously, in Mauricio Macri's government, the only thing done was adhering by decree to the International Decade, and putting the Human Rights Secretariat in charge, but nothing else was done. With the change of government, the National Directorate of Ethno-Racial Equity was created, which enabled the creation of a [Inter-ministerial] Roundtable⁷⁷ where I participate as representative of the Women's Ministry. It is only now that public officials are understanding that it is not enough to celebrate a day, that we need profound public policies that can transform the living conditions of the Afrodescendant community.

By adhering to the International Decade, Argentina committed to take action to favor the visibility, recognition, and promotion of the rights of Afrodescendant communities. This adhesion added pressure on state institutions to comply with international obligations through policy reform, and at the same time gave Afrodescendant organizations in Argentina more leverage to present their claims to national authorities. In fact, most of the activists I interviewed framed the need for

⁷⁵ I discuss bills presented and approved in Argentina targeting Afrodescendants in Chapter 4.

⁷⁶ Decree 658/2017 is available at: <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/normativa/nacional/decreto-658-2017-278290>.

⁷⁷ I discuss the creation of the Inter-ministerial Roundtable (Mesa Interministerial) in Chapter 4.

ethno-racial reform to address Afrodescendants' recognition and inclusion by referring to the importance of complying with the International Decade's guidelines. In the words of Afro-Argentine activist Alma Velasquez (Interview, December 2021):

The United Nations declares the International Decade for Peoples of African descent, so we gain an international legal framework that helps us push the national government to commit and fulfill its commitments. By adhering to the International Decade, the national government takes on in 2017 a commitment with Afrodescendants.

The Human Rights Secretariat was put in charge of elaborating a national program to secure the implementation of activities to comply with the United Nations official program for the International Decade. This has had concrete public policy repercussions, as we will see in Chapter 4. An analysis of the annual reports of the Secretary-General on the Programme of activities for the implementation of the International Decade, reveals again the Argentine state's commitment to international human rights instruments: Argentina has responded to the questionnaires circulated by the OHCHR to draft these reports every year except one, making it the country with the highest response level among all United Nations member states.⁷⁸

The Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development, on the other hand, while not mentioned explicitly by activists nor in Congress bills or drafts, is the document by which Latin American states ratified some of the agreements expressed in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. As with other international instruments, the Argentine state has followed up on the commitments that result from adhering to the Montevideo Consensus, elaborating two reports, in 2018 and in 2023.⁷⁹ While the first report, drafted during the government of Mauricio Macri, has only four pages and does not mention Afrodescendants, the second one, drafted during the government of Alberto Fernández, is a 106-page document that includes an entire chapter dedicated to Afrodescendants. This chapter details the actions taken by the Argentine state targeting Afrodescendants and reveals that Argentina has complied with 5 of the 8 indicators enumerated in the Montevideo Consensus regarding Afrodescendant rights. Additionally, the director of the Afrodescendant Program of the Human Rights Secretariat – who is also an Afro-Argentine activist – was part of the Argentine Committee that participated at the Fourth Meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Conference of Population and Development, hosted in Santiago, Chile during June of 2022. In this meeting, member states' progress on the implementation of the Montevideo Consensus was discussed.

Finally, it is important to mention that although Argentina approved ILO Convention 169 through Law 24,071 in 1992 – only three years after the convention was adopted by the International Labour Organization – this convention has not been a relevant instrument for Afrodescendant activists and state actors framing and implementing policies targeting Afrodescendants in Argentina. Instead, ILO Convention 169 has been exclusively used in Argentina to defend the rights of Indigenous communities. While there have been many bills in Congress seeking to give constitutional rank to ILO Convention 169, Afrodescendants have not

⁷⁸ Annual reports on the implementation of the International Decade by UN member states are available at: <https://www.un.org/en/observances/decade-people-african-descent/programme-activities>.

⁷⁹ OAS member States reports regarding the implementation of the Montevideo Consensus are available at: <https://consensomontevideo.cepal.org/es/national-reports>.

been part of the groups pressuring for the approval of these bills, and during my interviews with activists there was no mention of this convention as an instrument used to support their claims.

To conclude, we find that since the end of the dictatorship, Argentine authorities showed an open disposition to respond to commitments acquired through the adhesion to human rights international instruments. This tendency, however, grew deeper after the Argentine crisis of 2001, and the election of left-leaning governments, who opened spaces for the political participation of social movement actors and were sensitive to their demands. The consolidation of an Afrodescendant transnational advocacy network around the Durban Conference empowering Afro-Argentine organizations aligned with an important local change in power dynamics after the Argentine crisis, constituting what Tianna Paschel (2016) refers to as “political field alignment.” In this context, the Argentine state began passing legislation and implementing policies that responded to commitments first acquired at the 2001 Durban Conference – commitments reaffirmed in the 2013 Montevideo Consensus – and later through the adhesion to the International Decade for People of African Descent in 2017. Thus, in only twenty years Argentina transitioned from being a country where Afrodescendants were inexistent in national legislation and policies, to including them in several programs and national plans aimed at combatting racism and responding to Afro-Argentines’ demands for recognition and inclusion.

Chile: state resistance to international guidelines for policy implementation

Chile experienced a slow process of democratization compared to Argentina. The Chilean transition to democracy was characterized by a pact between the political supporters of dictator Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990) and some opposition parties that accepted to respect the institutional frame created in Pinochet’s Constitution (1980). In a context of extreme authoritarianism, the dictatorship had implemented a neoliberal economic doctrine – institutionalized in the 1980s Constitution through the principle of a subsidiary state – that was mostly maintained after the restoration of democracy (Gajardo Falcón 2014; Garretón 2007; Zapata 2019). Furthermore, the full restoration of the democratic system was hampered given the difficulty of reforming the Constitution due to its institutional “locks” and the maintenance of Pinochet and some of his close collaborators in positions of power (Atria 2013; Garretón 2009).

During the 1990s, the democratic governments of Patricio Aylwin (1990-1994) and of Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tale (1994-2000) focused on Chile’s modernization and economic growth, promoting the progressive integration of the country into international markets. While this enabled a substantial reduction in poverty levels, it did not translate into a reduction in economic inequality nor into the democratization of the political system, which continued excluding important sectors of Chilean society from political deliberation (Pizarro 2005). In contrast to Argentina, there was no important crisis in Chile during the decades following the end of the dictatorship, nor any kind of rupture with the neoliberal economic dogma it had installed (Zapata 2019). In a context of ongoing political obstruction to attempts to bring justice to the thousands of victims of human rights violations during the dictatorship (Garcés and Zubicueta 2022; INDH 2018), ethno-racial reform was not seen as a human rights priority by political authorities.

The 1980 Constitution defined Chile as a unitary territory and did not include differentiated rights or recognize cultural diversity throughout the country (Gajardo Falcón 2014:218). After the

transition to democracy, however, Indigenous mobilization intensified, especially in the context of the commemorations of the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' arrival in America. As a response to these mobilizations and to commitments established by President Aylwin during his presidential campaign,⁸⁰ Law 19,253, also known as Indigenous Law, was passed in 1993 by unanimous vote in Congress (Zapata 2019:19-20). This law mandated the creation of the National Corporation of Indigenous Development (CONADI, Spanish acronym), among other significant measures. But the bill presented in 1991 by Aylwin to recognize Indigenous Peoples in the National Constitution was rejected in the Senate, and the bill presented that same year to ratify ILO Convention 169 would have to wait 17 more years to be ratified. Besides Law 19,253, there was no other ethno-racial legal reform enacted during the 1990s. In the following decade, thanks to the pressure of Indigenous activists and international organizations, the recognition of Indigeneity permeated other legislative initiatives to include principles of cultural diversity, in most cases with marginal impact on Indigenous communities (Gajardo Falcón 2014:221-222).⁸¹

In the case of Afrodescendant people, before the formation of the Afro-Chilean movement in Arica in 2001, there was absolutely no knowledge among politicians – nor among most Chileans – of the contemporary existence of descendants of Africans brought to the country through the transatlantic slave trade. Official historical narratives, taught in schools and disseminated through history books and public discourses, alleged that slavery had been insignificant in colonial society and that by the time Chile gained independence from Spain, Black people had mostly disappeared through miscegenation (Ardito 2022; Cussen 2006). A report sent in 1998 by the Chilean state to the United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD),⁸² illuminates how Chilean politicians referred to the subject at international forums:

Historically speaking, the Chilean population was largely formed through cross-breeding between members of various ethnic origins or groups, the main characteristic being cross-breeding between Spaniards and indigenous inhabitants. Because of Chile's economic circumstances, the non-existence of large plantations or factories producing goods for export, possibly the climate and other factors, African immigration was very limited and during the past century the few African immigrants were absorbed in the general miscegenation.

Although a small delegation of Afro-Chileans travelled to Durban in 2001 to participate in its parallel citizen conference, it took several years for the Chilean state to acknowledge their existence. The fact that Afro-Chileans in Arica only began to politically organize after Durban most likely contributed to their invisibility throughout the 2000s.⁸³ Despite the fact that Chile was

⁸⁰ These commitments were established through the Agreement of Nueva Imperial, signed on December 1st of 1989 by presidential candidate Patricio Aylwin and several Indigenous authorities that were part of the Indigenous Peoples National Council. The agreements included the constitutional recognition of Indigenous peoples, the creation of an Indigenous National Development Corporation to coordinate Indigenous policies with participation of Indigenous peoples, and the creation of an Indigenous Peoples Special Commission to draft legislative proposals to be implemented during Aylwin's government, on which experts and Indigenous representatives would sit. The Indigenous organizations, in turn, committed to support the new government if elected (Zapata 2019:37-38).

⁸¹ Some Indigenous intellectuals have criticized these measures, regarding them as an expression of "neoliberal multiculturalism" (Antileo 2012; Pairicán 2018).

⁸² CERD/C/337/Add.2 29 October 1998, corresponding to Chile's eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth periodic report. Member States Reports to CERD are available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/cerd>.

⁸³ As we will see in Chapters 3 and 4, Afro-Chileans' geographic location, Chile's extreme centralist political system, and the racialization of the border region of Arica also contributed to their invisibility to central authorities.

governed during the first decade of the 2000s by socialist presidents Ricardo Lagos (2000-2006) and Michelle Bachelet (2006-2019), who had a greater sensitivity that their predecessors towards social movements' demands and the opening of democratic spaces for civil society participation – especially in the case of President Bachelet – Afro-Chileans would still have to wait until the following decade to be acknowledged by central state authorities.

The lack of knowledge about Afro-Chileans' process of ethnogenesis and political organization in the country's north is revealed, for example, in the proceedings of a meeting held in 2005 by the United Nations General Assembly's Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural).⁸⁴ The goal of the meeting was to discuss the implementation of the Durban Programme of Action regarding the elimination of racism and racial discrimination and the rights of people to self-determination. On this occasion, Chile's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Heraldo Muñoz, reaffirmed the urgency of implementing the Durban Declaration's call to end racial discrimination. Despite the protagonist role that Latin American Afrodescendant organizations had at the 2001 Durban Conference, he made no reference to Afro-Chileans in his speech, focusing mostly on gender equality and the need to counter xenophobia and homophobia. Similarly, Chile's 2008 report to the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)⁸⁵ acknowledges the importance of meetings that happened in Chile around the Durban Conference, such as the Santiago Preparatory Conference of 2000 and the Santiago+5 Pre-Conference of 2005, without any mention to the existence of Afrodescendant people in the country. In the 2009 Durban Review Conference in Geneva, we again find proof of this lack of acknowledgement when Chile's Vice Minister of Planning, Eduardo Abedrapo, talked about the importance of focusing on victims and eradicating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance, without mentioning Afro-Chileans or any concrete action taken by Chile to combat racism.⁸⁶

While the Chilean state participated in the 2001 Durban World Conference and had even chaired the construction of the DDPA, this instrument had few repercussions in the national political agenda during the 2000s. Anti-discrimination legislation in Chile was only approved in 2012 through Law 20,609.⁸⁷ Although this law included an extensive list of suspect classifications⁸⁸ as well as rights established in the international human rights treaties ratified by Chile, its approval was mostly pushed by LGBTQI+ communities⁸⁹ and has rarely been used by victims of racial discrimination (Centro UC de Políticas Públicas and Observatorio de Participación Ciudadana y No Discriminación 2020). Furthermore, in contrast to Argentina, no

⁸⁴ GA/SHC/3836. 9 November 2005. A summary of this meeting's speeches is available at: <https://unis.unvienna.org/unis/en/pressrels/2005/gashc3836.html>.

⁸⁵ CERD/C/CHL/15-18. 13 March 2009, corresponding to Chile's 15th, 16th, 17th, and 18th periodic reports.

⁸⁶ RC/09/6 21 April 2009. Argentina's representative, in contrast, referred to concrete measures taken by the Argentine state, such as the creation of a National Plan against Discrimination, and named Afrodescendants among the civil society groups that were involved in creating this Plan, among other measures to combat discrimination. Meeting summaries of the 2009 Durban Review Conference are available at: <https://www.un.org/en/durbanreview2009/>.

⁸⁷ Law 20,609 is available at: <https://www.bcn.cl/leychile/navegar?idNorma=1042092&idVersion=Diferido>.

⁸⁸ In law, "suspect classification" refers to a class or group of individuals marked by certain characteristics, such as race or national origin, that suggest they are likely the subject of discrimination and are therefore entitled to special judicial protection.

⁸⁹ Although the bill leading to Law 20,609 was originally presented in 2005 by President Ricardo Lagos, it only gained urgency after the heinous murder of Daniel Zamudio – a 24-year-old man identified as homosexual – by a neo-Nazi gang. Law 20,609 is therefore also known as "Zamudio's Law."

state institution has been created in Chile to coordinate policies against discrimination, which has been strongly criticized by civil society actors (Meza-Lopehandía 2019).

In the decade of the 2010s, we slowly begin to observe the installation of a political agenda regarding Afrodescendants' rights in public institutions.⁹⁰ Afro-Chileans experienced some modest gains during the first government of Sebastián Piñera (2010-2014), such as the realization of the Regional Afrodescendant Characterization Survey (ENCAFRO) discussed in Chapter 1, but began to be acknowledged in the agendas of more public institutions during Michelle Bachelet's second government (2014-2018), after new international normative and legal instruments targeting Afrodescendants were adopted. While this progress was reflected in reports and discourses at some international forums, in other forums state representatives showed ignorance of the political gains that Afro-Chileans were gradually obtaining. For example, at the General Assembly High-level Meeting to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the DDPA – which coincided with the creation of the UN Permanent Forum on People of African Descent – the Chilean Permanent Representative to the United Nations merely said generalities about Chile's commitment to the DDPA and only mentioned very briefly the approval in 2019 of Law 21,151 recognizing the Chilean Afrodescendant Tribal People.⁹¹ However, in a context of historical erasure of Afrodescendant people, the mere mention of Afro-Chileans in official reports and discourses signifies progress in the process of being recognized as a group of special concern.

Regarding the international instruments derived from the DDPA, most Afro-Chilean activists did not mention the International Afrodescendant Decade or the Montevideo Consensus during our interviews. However, there are some indications that these instruments had repercussions – albeit modest ones – in the installation of an Afrodescendant agenda in Chilean state institutions. In contrast to Argentina, there has been no bill or declaration presented in Congress nor any Presidential Decree referring to Chile's adherence to the International Decade for People of African Descent. However, there is evidence of an event on October 14th of 2015 to celebrate the inauguration of the International Decade in Chile at the headquarters of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Santiago.⁹² The inauguration was coordinated by the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the Chilean Foreign Affairs Ministry Human Rights Director, and included the presence of Afrodescendant organizations, the Arica Regional Mayor, and Arica Congress Representatives Luis Rocafull and Vlado Mirosevic, among other political and

⁹⁰ As we will see in Chapter 4, there were some isolated initiatives in the 2000s targeting Afrodescendants in Arica by the Regional Branch of the Culture and Arts Council, mostly the funding of commemoration and cultural activities, but these initiatives hardly constituted an agenda.

⁹¹ The Argentine representative, in contrast, gave a detailed description of specific measures taken to secure reparation for Afro-Argentines. This meeting was a result of Resolution 75/237, adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 31 of 2020. The High-Level Meeting was conducted on September 22, 2021, and was titled "Reparations, racial justice and equality for people of African descent." A video of the session of this meeting, in which Argentina's and Chile's representatives participated, is available at: https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k10/k10gzejhnh?_gl=1*v7j418*_ga*ODgwMjg1MzQzLjE3MDc1MTc3Nzk.*_ga_TK9BQL5X7Z*MTcwNzkyNDI5OS4zLjEuMTcwNzkyNTA1MC4wLjAuMA..video.

⁹² There are references to this event in a news article from the local newspaper of Arica, El Morrocotudo, available at: <https://www.elmorrocotudo.cl/noticia/sociedad/intendentia-acuna-y-representantes-afros-de-la-region-participaron-en-el-decenio-int>, and on the blog of Afro-Chilean organization Oro Negro, available at: <http://ong-oronegro.blogspot.com/2016/>. There is also evidence on the National Congress webpage of notices of non-attendance to the Congress Session of October 14th, presented by Rocafull and by Mirosevic, with the excuse that they were invited by the United Nations Resident Coordinator to the launching of the International Decade.

civil society actors.

The annual reports drafted by the Secretary-General on the Programme of activities for the implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent reveal that Chile did follow up with this instrument, by responding on two occasions to the questionnaires circulated by the OHCHR, the first-time during Michelle Bachelet's government in 2016 and the second during Sebastian Piñera's government in 2020. Finally, the Regional Director of the Indigenous Peoples Office at the Arica Branch of the Cultures, Arts and Heritage Ministry, Rodrigo Novoa (Interview, July 2021), also referred to his responsibility in making sure that Ministerial authorities followed up with international commitments associated with the International Decade:

Part of my work has been making the regional and national authorities conscious of our obligations, that we have to respond and also report our progress under the umbrella of the Afrodescendant Decade, and that stands also for the dialogue that they sustain with their different international references.

In relation to the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development, the Chilean state has followed up by elaborating two reports that account for the implementation of policies related to the different populations targeted in this instrument. The first report was sent to ECLAC in 2017, during Bachelet's government, and accounted for the creation of a Montevideo Consensus National Coordination Committee. While the report identifies policies implemented for each chapter of the Montevideo Consensus, it leaves out the Afrodescendant chapter. The fact that the government had presented a report about progress related to the International Decade in 2016 but omitted any policy in relation to Afrodescendants in its report on the Montevideo Consensus in 2017, might be an indication of the lack of communication between different state branches in charge of following up with these international instruments. As argued by Tsutsui (2017), governments are not monolithic rational actors, and the state is not a unitary, homogenous, and coherent entity but is integrated by many hands, with multiple actors and institutions that are not always aligned or coordinated (Morgan and Orloff 2017).

The second report was sent in 2023, during the government of Gabriel Boric (2022-2026), and is a 144-page document with a five-page chapter dedicated to Afrodescendants. This chapter includes various measures taken that respond to the seven agreements related to Afrodescendants in the Montevideo Consensus. However, most of the measures mentioned are quite generic and do not target Afrodescendants specifically, and some information included is openly misleading. For example, in the introduction of the chapter there are references to the statistical inclusion of Afrodescendants, which are phrased in a way that makes the reader think that an Afrodescendant category was included in the 2017 Census, which is not true.⁹³

⁹³ This was not the only time I observed state actors reporting the inclusion of Afrodescendants in the 2017 Census. In May of 2023, I followed the Second Session of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent, which took place at the UN headquarters in New York. During the session, I was surprised to hear the Chilean representative, the director of the Indigenous Affairs Coordination Unit of the Social Development and Family Ministry, report that a question on Afrodescendant self-identification had been included for the first time in the 2017 Chilean National Census. While the Chilean National Statistics Institute did analyze data on spontaneous answers to the category "other" in the question about Indigenous self-identification and reported how many people had written something relatable to Afro-descent, this does not in any way amount to the inclusion of an Afrodescendant category or question.

I identified this tendency to misrepresent state actions in several of the reports I reviewed sent by Chile to international organizations. As an example, the report sent in 2018 to the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) identified the realization of the ENCAFRO as a response to CERD's recommendations, which as we saw in Chapter 1 is, at the least, an overstatement. In fact, state officials rejected Afro-Chileans' request to incorporate an Afrodescendant variable in both the 2012 and the 2017 National Censuses – which was actually CERD's recommendation – and accepted to support the ENCAFRO as a response to intense and continuing lobbying by activists and allies, and only if Afrodescendant organizations could secure funds from the regional government for its implementation. It is safe to affirm that legislative and policy measures targeting Afrodescendants in Chile have resulted from the untiring efforts of Afro-Chilean activists, and have in most cases been gained *despite* national authorities' lack of support.

In October of 2015, Michelle Bachelet's government endorsed the Inter-American Convention Against Racism, Racial Discrimination and Related Forms of Intolerance (CIRDI) and the Inter-American Convention Against All forms of Discrimination and Intolerance (CIDI, Spanish Acronym). These conventions were endorsed following a commitment of the Foreign Affairs Minister, Heraldo Muñoz, with representatives of MOVILH, a Chilean LGBTQI+ organization. While these conventions have not yet been ratified, in September of 2023 the National Congress approved Resolution N. 545 requesting the President to send the ratification of CIRDI and CIDI to Congress. Resolution 545 was presented by Emilia Schneider, a transgender representative, supported by other representatives from left-wing parties. While another four initiatives had been presented before to ratify CIDI, there is no other Congress initiative to ratify CIRDI nor to adhere to other international instruments focused on racial discrimination, which shows how that initiative was mostly driven by lobbying around the LGBTQI+ rights.⁹⁴

While Chilean authorities seemed to be more concerned with saving face at international forums than actually implementing Afrodescendant-focused policies adjusted to international standards, Afro-Chilean activists were taking important steps to position themselves as political actors at the local level. They were also increasingly connected with transnational advocacy networks from which they were learning how to position their demands effectively. During the 2010s, Afro-Chilean organizations began to progressively adopt ILO Convention 169 to present their claims as Tribal People. Chile had ratified the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention 169 in 2008. One year later, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights' (IACtHR) decided that the Saramaka people comprised a Tribal group, setting international jurisprudence to apply Convention 169 to Afrodescendant communities. In this way, Convention 169 became an important legal instrument for Afro-Chilean activists to defend their collective, territorial, and cultural rights. In words of Nancy Yañez (Interview, May 2021), an expert lawyer in Indigenous rights who has supported Afro-Chileans' political processes:

As collective rights of Afrodescendant peoples in the Americas are being expanded, this permeates local movements. Since the Saramaka against Suriname case, you can observe a tendency in the Inter-American system of associating debates on Indigenous territorial rights to Afrodescendant peoples' demands. That spills over into local debates, as Afro-Chilean activists have been attentive to the development of international debates about Afrodescendant peoples' rights.

⁹⁴ CIDI is the first binding international juridical instrument that recognizes sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression as suspect classifications for discrimination.

According to several of the activists I interviewed, international networks with other Afro-Latin American activists were crucial in their decision to frame themselves as Tribal People. According to Milene Molina (Interview, September 2021), a local activist who was also the Southern Cone coordinator for the Network of Afrodescendant Women from Latin America, the Caribbean and the Diaspora (RMAAD):

It has to do with our maturity as leaders of the Afrodescendant people, and with our networks with Afrodescendants from other places, with Afrodescendant scholars, with people who had been advancing Afrodescendants' political demands in other countries. The concept of "tribal" was debated at some point between John Anton [an Afro-Colombian scholar and activist] and Cristian Baez [an Afro-Chilean activist], and Cristian thought it made sense, because it allowed us to rely on Convention 169, so that is when we started to integrate the concept of "tribal."

As a binding juridical instrument, ILO Convention 169 has been specially invoked by Indigenous Peoples throughout the Americas to demand their right to be consulted when decisions might affect them. In its sixth article, Convention 169 establishes that governments must "consult the peoples concerned, through appropriate procedures and in particular through their representative institutions, whenever consideration is being given to legislative or administrative measures which may affect them directly." In 2014, Bachelet's government initiated a process of Indigenous prior consultation for the creation of the Cultures, Arts and Heritage Ministry, which was one of the first times the Chilean state implemented this right at the national level. Surprisingly, Afrodescendants from Arica were included in this process as special guests, despite the fact they had not yet been legally recognized by the state.⁹⁵ By incorporating Afrodescendants in this process, the Chilean state took an important step in validating Afro-Chileans' claim of comprising a Tribal People.

Furthermore, Afro-Chileans claimed to be a Tribal People when they presented in 2016 a complaint to the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR) against the Chilean state. Afro-Chileans based the claim in ILO Convention 169 definition of Tribal People and in the jurisprudence created by previous rulings of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR). The complaint held the National Statistics Institute (INE) and the Supreme Court of Justice responsible for the exclusion of an "Afrodescendant/Black" category in the 2017 National Population Census. Although Afro-Chileans presented a protection appeal to the Court of Appeals and to the Supreme Court alleging discrimination from INE, their claim was dismissed under the argument that no constitutionally guaranteed right had been violated since Afrodescendants were not legally recognized by the Chilean state.⁹⁶ In the claim, Afro-Chileans argued that by ratifying ILO Convention 169, states were obliged to treat Tribal People as subjects of collective rights. Including an Afrodescendant variable in national censuses was therefore crucial, since the

⁹⁵ Various actors affirm that this was a decision made by President Bachelet, taken after a visit to Arica, where Afro-Chilean activists expressed to her their interest in being part of this process (de Cea and Peralta 2018:30). As we will see in Chapter 4, the appointment of an Indigenous intellectual and activist to lead this consultation process was also key for the incorporation of Afrodescendants.

⁹⁶ Both national and international legal actions were presented by Afro-Chilean activist Cristian Baez, representing Afrodescendant organizations, with the support of lawyers José Aylwin, Felipe Guerra, and Nancy Yáñez from the Citizen Observatory, an NGO dedicated to the defense of human rights and, most particularly, of Indigenous Peoples. More information about this NGO can be found at: <https://observatorio.cl/>.

planification and implementation of targeted public policies required the existence of disaggregated data. The claim also pointed out that IACHR has called OAS member states to include a question to capture Afro-descent in national censuses. It additionally cited CERD's observations to Chile's 2012 report, which included a call to "include an Afro-descendant variable in population and housing censuses" (Observatorio Ciudadano 2016). In words of Felipe Guerra (Interview, March 2020), one of the lawyers who filed the complaint:

We looked at the case and identified a discriminatory conduct, but knew that it is unlikely for a Chilean court to oblige a state organism to adopt a public policy and that we would probably lose the case. But we decided to still litigate internally, and if we were rejected, to go to the Inter-American system to pressure the state to incorporate Afrodescendants in the following census that was going to be in 2022. [...] By that time, the committee that supervises the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination had already made observations about the lack of an Afrodescendant variable in Chile, and different international organisms had also raised their concern about this lack of statistical inclusion. So, our idea was to use that observation to construct a legal action and support Afro-Chileans' political-institutional strategies with an international action. [...] We put in a complaint at the Inter-American Commission, which is the first step before getting to the Inter-American Court. You denounce to the commission and the commission investigates the case, and calls the different parties involved to try to generate a conciliation agreement between the claimant and the state. Our intention was to explore the possibility to arrive at a friendly solution or a commitment from the state to incorporate Afrodescendants in the following census, and to adopt a recognition law to guarantee that they would not be excluded again from any relevant statistical instrument.

As revealed by Guerra, given the Chilean state's lack of response, Afro-Chileans were left with no option but to use the Inter-American Human Rights System to pressure the state to comply with international commitments. In December of 2020, in the context of discussing a bill in Congress to include reserved seats for Indigenous Peoples in the Constitutional Convention that functioned between July of 2021 and June of 2022, Congressional representatives rejected the possibility of adding a reserved seat for Afrodescendants (Mardones Marshall, Amigo, and Cortés 2024). By that time, Afro-Chileans had already been legally recognized so Afrodescendant organizations accused arbitrary exclusion due to racism, and added information about this new exclusion to their complaint to the IACHR. The case is still open and recently passed from the IACHR to the IACtHR (Interview with Cristian Báez, August 2021).

Afro-Chileans were at last legally recognized as "Chilean Afrodescendant Tribal People" with the approval of Law 21,151 in April of 2019.⁹⁷ Afro-Chileans strategically framed Law 21,151 so that their recognition in Chile would be bonded to ILO Convention 169, reinforcing their claims in both international and national law. Afro-Chilean activist Carolina Cortés (Interview, July 2021) referred to their recognition as a Tribal People in the following terms:

It has to do with Convention 169, which recognizes Indigenous and Tribal Peoples. So, the juridical strategy that we found to be internationally recognized was relying on Convention 169. It was a very strategic move, and that is why we adopted the concept of Tribal People, to be subjects of Convention 169, by which Indigenous and Tribal Peoples are both subjects of collective rights.

⁹⁷ The approval of the law was the result of a long process of organization and lobbying, which I describe in Chapter 4.

In a context in which state actors have not implemented ethno-racial reforms that adequately align with their international commitments, activists identified the opening of a political opportunity structure thanks to jurisprudence set by the Inter-American Human Rights System regarding a binding international instrument that Chile had recently ratified.

In general terms, we observe that in Chile the process of democratization after Pinochet's military dictatorship was slower than in Argentina and did not translate into a significant opening of spaces for the political participation of civil society. Chile didn't suffer a profound crisis like Argentina did during the post-dictatorial decades,⁹⁸ and there was overall continuity between governments regarding their political and economic agenda. Although the Durban conference and the consolidation of an Afrodescendant movement in Chile had little political impact in the 2000s, from the 2010s some legislation and policies began to be implemented regarding Afrodescendant rights. However, this progress has been inconsistent and not coordinated between different state branches. Even after the approval of a law recognizing Afro-Chileans as a Tribal People, Afrodescendants have been excluded from major political events, such as the drafting of a new Constitution for the country between 2021 and 2022, which activists interpret as an expression of the institutional racism still very present in Chilean society. In this context of "lack of political field-alignment," Afro-Chileans have relied on a range of strategies to position their demands at the local level, which I discuss in Chapter 4.

Conclusion

After two centuries of positioning themselves as racially and culturally homogenous nations, both the Argentine and Chilean states have begun to adapt their legislation and public policies to account for the persistence of racial discrimination and the existence of Afrodescendant populations within their countries. In the context of the rise of multiculturalism as a global paradigm, international organizations such as the United Nations and the Organization of American States have played an important role in pressuring state actors to comply with commitments acquired at international forums and human rights conventions regarding ethno-racial minorities. Afrodescendant activists have taken advantage of these human rights instruments to frame their demands and denounce states when they do not implement reforms that adjust to international standards. The Argentine and Chilean states, however, have responded differently to internal and international pressure regarding Afrodescendant rights. These differences can be partly explained by the intrinsic characteristics of the governments and political agendas that have dominated in each country in the last three decades.

After the dictatorship, Argentina experienced a significant democratizing process with the progressive opening of spaces for the political participation of civil society, which was deepened after an important political and economic crisis that gave rise to the election of the popular national kirchnerista governments. These governments showed at different moments their political will to

⁹⁸ There was, however, a major crisis in Chile in October of 2019, but it did not result in the implementation of significant political or economic transformations. In Chapter 4, I describe how this crisis, and the subsequent failed process of drafting a new Constitution through an elected assembly, impacted Afro-Chileans' claims-making processes.

follow international standards related to ethno-racial inequality and inclusion, which activists could draw on to advance their claims, producing what Tianna Paschel (2016) refers to as “political field alignment.” The Argentine state’s official adhesion to the International Decade for People of African descent in 2017 reaffirmed and solidified these commitments, promoting the participation and appointment of Afro-Argentine activists at various public institutions and the adoption of policies and programs targeting Afrodescendants within these institutions. While there is still a long way to go for the implementation of legislation and policies that can effectively impact the lives of Afro-Argentines, the institutionalization of diverse measures at state ministries represents important steps towards recognition, inclusion, and reparations for Afrodescendants in Argentina.

The process of political democratization was slower in Chile, where consensus around the prioritization of governmentality and economic growth trumped the possibility of profound transformations to the political and economic model inherited from the dictatorship. Thus, in Chile there has been a greater continuity than in Argentina in governments’ political and economic agenda. Furthermore, Chilean state actors have shown less commitment than Argentine ones to implement reforms that adjust national legislation to international human rights standards regarding ethno-racial inequality and discrimination. In this context, ethno-racial reform has not been prioritized by national authorities and Afrodescendant activists have not been able to position themselves as significant political actors vis-à-vis central state institutions. Therefore, Afro-Chileans have sought new strategies to advance their demands, and found an opportunity in the International Court of Human Rights’ (IACtHR) rulings that defined certain Afrodescendant communities as Tribal Peoples. By mobilizing the category of Tribal People, in 2019 Afro-Chileans were legally recognized in terms that aligned with ILO Convention 169, ratified by Chile a decade earlier. While Afro-Chileans’ recognition has resulted in the recent incorporation of Afrodescendants in some state ministries’ plans and programs, this has not been consistent and there are still important signs of institutional exclusion. Afro-Chileans have relied therefore on local allies from the Arica-Parinacota Region to continue to position their demands at the national level, a process I discuss in Chapter 4.

Together, Chapters 1 and 2 demonstrate that the political changes experienced in Argentina and Chile regarding Afrodescendant rights cannot be explained without taking into account the role played by international actors, organizations, foundations, and agencies. Local activists take advantage of transnational networks that provide different types of resources, and they learn from the experiences of movements in other countries to advance their claims. States are embedded in global relations and adapt to international consensus regarding how modern nations are supposed to behave to secure the respect of human rights and the inclusion of ethno-racial minorities. While my research confirms that changes in national legislations are tied up with international shifts in consensus around human rights and diversity, it also reveals that states react differently to these shifts depending on internal political struggles. Most importantly, states would not implement changes if it wasn’t for the existence and perseverance of local activists who can call them out when they are not doing what they tell international organizations they are doing. As argued by Morgan and Orloff (2017), there are always gaps between rules and their implementation by states. Research in other locations has shown that civil society activism can amplify the impact of international human rights treaties on states’ actions (Liu 2006; Tsutsui 2017). In the next chapters, I focus precisely on the role that Afro-Argentine and Afro-Chilean activists have played in positioning their demands locally and advancing ethno-racial reform.

CHAPTER 3

THE POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY OF AFRODESCENDANT MOVEMENTS

Introduction

Chapters 1 and 2 uncovered the role played by the international arena – actors, resources, legal instruments – for the consolidation of Afrodescendant movements and the institutionalization of Afro-descent in Argentina and Chile. In Chapters 3 and 4, I shift the focus to the national arena, looking at how the political geography of Afrodescendant movements impact how activists frame and position their demands for legal recognition and ethno-racial reform. The main focus in these two chapters is therefore on domestic actors, particularly on the interaction between Afrodescendant activists and state officials. In this chapter particularly, I argue that how activists define Afro-descent and build their claims is closely connected to the geographical position they occupy in relation to each nation's political geography and with whom they share social space within it. More specifically, this chapter shows how Afro-Argentines' and Afro-Chilean's strategies to combat their exclusion and marginalization are molded themselves by the political structures they seek to challenge, in ways that risk reproducing those same power asymmetries they are challenging.

National imaginaries around ethno-racial homogeneity in Argentina and Chile have been built from the center through the racialization of interior or marginal territories that do not fit with hegemonic definitions of nationhood. Exclusion has taken different forms for Afro-Argentines and Afro-Chileans in accordance with how geographical differences have been historically racialized in distinct ways in each country. Afro-Argentines and Afro-Chileans have developed different strategies to dispute narratives and political structures that exclude them; these strategies reflect and are shaped by their respective locations within each country's political and social geographies of race and nation. The different political geographies of Afrodescendant activism in Argentina and Chile helps explain differences in their political strategies and claims, as well as differences in how state actors have responded to their demands.

In Argentina, the emergence of the Afrodescendant movement in the capital city has threatened the construction of Buenos Aires as White, generating resistance from Argentine society. To gain support, Afro-Argentine activists have framed Afro-descent in ways that align with the city's multicultural narratives that foreground the celebration of a territorially detached cultural difference – on occasion stressing a diasporic identity – while emphasizing their contributions to Argentine national history and heritage. Some activists, however, have recognized how this approach risks relegating Afro-descent to the past and reinforcing hegemonic ideas about what constitutes Argentine identity. To overcome these limitations, activists have constructed alliances with other marginalized groups emphasizing their common contemporary struggles, and have supported the organization of activists outside of Buenos Aires who dispute meanings of Afro-descent constructed from the center.

The emergence of the Afro-Chilean movement in the peripheral Arica-Parinacota region, in contrast, has reinforced national narratives that position this northern region of the country – and the ethno-racial diversity associated with it – at the margins of nationhood. Identifying the difficulties of appealing to centralized state officials, Afro-Chileans have framed Afro-descent stressing their connection to a territorially bounded culture and history, seeking support from local authorities and society. Over time, however, activists have recognized the limitations of this approach to make claims beyond cultural recognition, and have sought to position themselves in relation to Indigenous peoples to make collective claims such as those related to territorial rights. They have also taken steps to expand the movement to other regions of the country to dispute racial/spatial hierarchies that position them in the margins of the nation.

Overall, my findings reveal how Afro-Argentines' and Afro-Chileans' efforts to dispute dominant narratives are themselves shaped by the political structures constructed from the center, and risk reproducing the power asymmetries they are trying to combat. As activists become aware of these risks, however, they seek new strategies to overcome these limitations, expanding the movement to other territories and building coalitions with – or positioning themselves vis a vis – other subaltern actors.

I start this chapter by discussing literature related to the place assigned to Blackness in the construction of geographies of race throughout the Latin American region, and the spatial dimensions of Afrodescendants' claims-making processes. I continue by describing the different geographical contexts in which Afrodescendant movements emerged in Argentina and Chile, and analyze the top-down – or center-periphery – processes by which each state has historically racialized geographical differences as a way to reconcile Afrodescendants' presence within the nation with national discourses sustaining racial and cultural homogeneity. Finally, I analyze the bottom-up processes – mostly from the center in Argentina, and from the periphery in Chile – by which Afrodescendants construct and mobilize spatialized ways of framing their identities to assert ethno-racial authenticity and make claims to the state. I end by reflecting on how political geography constrains Afrodescendants' possibilities for challenging hegemonic narratives of nationhood, and the possibilities that are opened when activists become aware and seek to overcome these constraints.

Spatial ordering and the racialization of national geography

Studies focused on Afrodescendant legal recognition in Latin America have rarely approached questions related to space and place, even when there is a general understanding that Black populations are not homogeneously distributed across national territories. Already in 1964, Marvin Harris identified that Latin American states had geographically divided population, with Indigenous groups more frequently located in highlands, the descendants of Europeans in the temperate regions, and the descendants of Africans in the tropical and semi-tropical coastal lowlands where plantation economies used to be concentrated. Despite the fact that in most countries there are certain territories that are commonly associated with Blackness, we still find seminal books, like Livio Sansone's (2003) thorough research on Blackness and race relations in Brazil, just to name one example, that barely acknowledge the impact that the geographical distribution of Afro-descent within a country has in how people think about ethno-racial

differences and classify each other.

Some scholars have identified how certain regions where Afrodescendant populations have historically been concentrated are racialized within nation-states, as is the case, for example, of some coastal areas in Peru (de la Cadena 2000), the port of Veracruz in Mexico (Sue 2013), or the Northeast region of Brazil (Weinstein 2015). Research in Colombia has tended to problematize the relationship between race and place more consistently, in particular the work of Peter Wade and of Nancy Appelbaum. When distinguishing between the concepts of ethnicity and race, Wade refers to ethnicity as the “language of cultural geography,” recognizing that ethnicity is generally understood as related to place, given that “cultural difference is spread over geographical space by virtue of the fact that social relations become concrete in spatialized form” (Wade 2010:16). Wade recognizes, however, that phenotypical traits that justify racial discourses follow a similar geographical distribution as these cultural differences (Wade 2010). His research reveals that in the case of Colombia, social relations are both spatialized and racialized in a hierarchical order in which Blackness, in particular, has been historically ascribed to the coastal regions, which are thought of as more backward (Wade 1993). Thus, the position of Black people in Colombia is one circumscribed at the same time in racial, class, and regional relations of inequality, with consequences for how racial inequality and racism are perpetuated as well as for the possibilities of overcoming it (Wade 1991).

Similarly, Appelbaum argues that the concept of “race” has been often used to refer to identities based on place of origin within a nation. She defines racialization as a process that divides society into groups defined by traits that are assumed to be inherited, be they biological or cultural (Appelbaum 2003:11). Understanding both race and place as social constructions that manifest and reinforce power relations, Appelbaum’s research shows how Colombians have racialized their national geography by attributing racial patterns to specific regions and localities within the nation, with the consequent inscription of racial prejudices and inequalities in the nation’s spatial ordering. However, she argues that regionalism was not simply imposed from the center but was built from the raw material provided by cultural variation within the country and further reinforced by the continued performance of regionalism. Through this process, some regions in Colombia came to be considered White and modern, while others were constructed as Black, Indigenous, and backwards. Overall, Wade and Appelbaum show how the racialization of regional differences allowed Colombian elites and politicians to reconcile the nation’s factual ethno-racial heterogeneity with their own ideal of national homogeneity.

While these studies are useful for understanding how people came to be ethno-racially classified according to their spatialized differences, they mostly assume a top-down approach to ethno-racial categorization, revealing only one aspect of how ethno-racial categories are socially defined. It is true that Latin American White elites have constructed narratives of nationhood that tend to exclude minority groups or position them both geographically and symbolically in marginal spaces. This is reinforced by governmental social practices that aim to describe – and therefore represent – the nation in particular ways, such as conducting censuses, drawing maps, and exhibiting artifacts in museums (Anderson 1983). But ethno-racial categorization also occurs in everyday interactions between those who navigate particular ethno-racial identities and others with whom they share social space. As argued by Frederick Barth (1969), it is through social interactions that people construct the social boundaries upon which ethnic identities and

categorical differences are based. Moreover, the institutionalization of ethno-racial categories in laws, public policies, and social programs, are generally the result of debates and negotiations between activists, state officials, and other actors, negotiations which I argue in this chapter are mediated by the spatial location of those making claims as ethno-racial minorities and those in decision-making positions.

Recent literature has identified a spatial aspect of Afrodescendant claims-making processes, by discussing how some Black communities have framed their identities by emphasizing their cultural differences in connection to the territories where they have historically lived (Farfán-Santos 2015; Ng'weno 2007; Paschel 2011; Restrepo 2004). These communities are commonly represented as the descendants of maroons who were able to maintain their cultural specificity because they established settlements that were long isolated from national society. However, these studies have generally been limited to establishing the existence of a rural-urban divide, where rural Black communities would engage in struggles more aligned with multicultural ideas around the “right to difference,” while urban activists would engage in struggles mostly related to combating racism and inequality, in alignment with framings associated with the “right to equality” (Greene 2007; Hooker 2008; Paschel 2016). My research, however, shows that Afrodescendants make claims navigating and mobilizing these different types of framings depending on the shifting contexts in which they situate themselves. Afrodescendant movements are rarely isolated, but instead construct their claims in interaction with other groups with which they engage in strategic alliances or from which they distance themselves through the construction of symbolic boundaries.

In the last few years, we find a novel focus on the relationship between Blackness and space through the emergence of a body of scholarship, mostly produced by Black geographers in the United States, under the name of “Black Geographies.” This scholarship has sought to center the Black experience as tied to place, not simply noting the erasure of Black spatial thought in geographies of domination, but relating it to the spatial knowledge, agency, and resistance of Black people (Hawthorne 2019; Noxolo 2022). According to Hawthorne (2019:4), this perspective highlights both how “Blackness has been central to the production of space and to the formation of Western, Eurocentric forms of geographic knowledge,” providing at the same time new ways of understanding space that resist racial domination and center Black epistemologies. This chapter takes inspiration from Black Geographies scholars’ focus on Black agency, to look at how Afrodescendant activists in two nations that have been overtly imagined as White, construct and negotiate spatialized ideas of Blackness in interaction with other social actors.

The racialization of national geography: constructing the racial/spatial order from the center

Both Argentina and Chile can be characterized as countries where economic and political power is strongly concentrated in their capital cities, Buenos Aires and Santiago respectively. National identities in both countries have been historically constructed from these neuralgic centers, frequently disregarding the ethno-racial and cultural diversity that can be found throughout each national territory. Regions and provinces that do not fit with these centralized ideas of what constitutes the national ethos have been commonly racialized and positioned symbolically outside

of the boundaries of nationhood. As both Wade (2010) and Appelbaum (2003) have argued for Colombia, the racialization of regional differences in Argentina and Chile has served to mediate between discourses of national homogeneity and the evident heterogeneity present within each country. Thus, constructions of Afro-descent by central power structures are mediated in these countries by political geography.

As we have seen, Afrodescendant organizations emerged and have developed in quite different geographical contexts in Argentina and in Chile. The Afro-Argentine movement emerged and developed first in Buenos Aires and most of its political activity has been concentrated there. The political actions of the Afro-Chilean movement, in contrast, have been almost exclusively restricted to Arica, close to the borderland with Peru and very far away from Chile's capital city, Santiago. Although Afrodescendants have been frequently thought of as outside the boundaries of what is national in Argentina and Chile, their symbolic (and material) exclusion has taken different forms due to Afro-Argentine and Afro-Chilean movements' distinct locations and to how geographical differences have been historically racialized in each country.

Argentina: the racialization of peripheral space within Buenos Aires

Afro-Argentines are commonly regarded as foreigners in Buenos Aires, a city whose residents think of themselves as predominantly European. The presence of Black people in Buenos Aires during colonial times and throughout the 19th century, however, has been largely documented in historical studies. A census conducted in 1810 in the city of Buenos Aires reveals that approximately one-third of the city's population that year was classified as Black (Andrews 1980:4). This significant presence opens the question of how Blackness has been so radically erased from Argentina's narratives of nationhood.

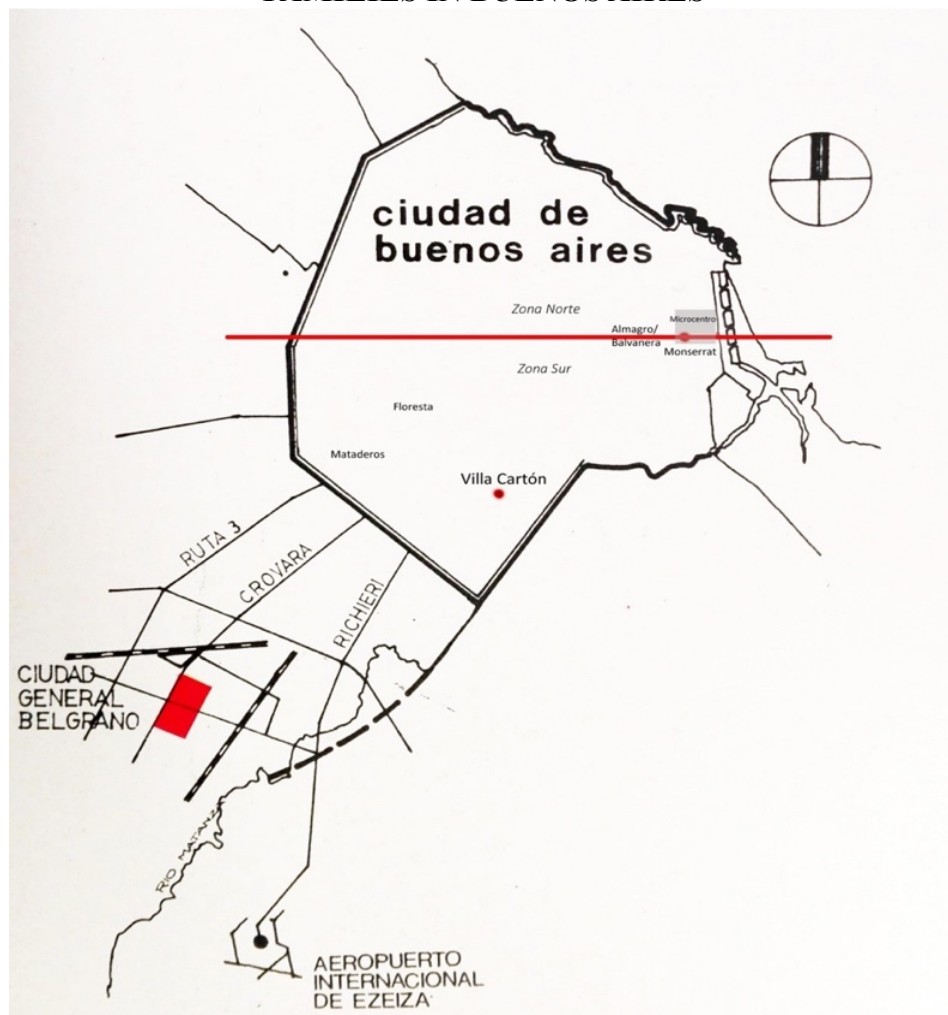
In Argentina, it is commonly argued that Afrodescendants disappeared from the nation as a result of their participation in wars – particularly in the deadly war against Paraguay from 1865 to 1870 – and because of epidemics – specifically due to the onset of yellow fever in Buenos Aires in 1871. According to these accounts, the Black survivors of these unfortunate events would have ended up “diluting” through intermixing with a White population that grew rapidly due to massive European immigration that arrived between the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. These events would explain why in the 1887 Census of Buenos Aires, the last census to ask about African ancestry until 2010, the percentage of black people had decreased to 2% of the city's residents.

George Reid Andrews, however, has refuted these explanations. In his indispensable study about the presence of Afrodescendants in Argentina during the 19th century, Andrews (1980) hypothesized that Black people were underrepresented in the 1887 Buenos Aires Census because descendants of Africans with light skin color were classified as “trigueños,” a category that did not necessarily signal the existence of an African ancestor. People ascribed by census-takers to this category could have been later tabulated as Whites, since the census results were presented with the dichotomic categories of “blanco” (White) and “de color” (of color) (Andrews 1980:87), creating the fiction of a mostly-White country. Lea Geler (2006) adds some other factors that can explain the exclusion of Blackness from the construction of an Argentine collective memory,

including the elimination of a question about ethnicity in national censuses,⁹⁹ the creation of school curricula in which they were not taken into account, historians' avoidance of treating them as a subject of study, and Black families' own avoidance of talking about their origins to escape stigmatization.

An alternative explanation for the decreasing visibility of Afrodescendants in Buenos Aires centers on their geographical displacement. Geler, Yannone, and Egido (2020) identified a process of suburbanization of Black families throughout the 20th century from central neighborhoods like Montserrat and San Telmo to others located outside or at the outskirts of the city, like Floresta, Mataderos and Villa Cartón (See figure 1).

FIGURE 1: TRAJECTORIES OF AFRO-ARGENTINE FAMILIES IN BUENOS AIRES



Source: “Afroargentinos de Buenos Aires en el siglo XX. El proceso de suburbanización,” by Geler, Yannone, and Egido (2020).

⁹⁹ Hernán Otero (2011) identifies the elimination of a race/color question in the first national census conducted in Argentina in 1887 as an ideological operation resulting from the conviction that non-Whites – who were quite numerous at the time – would disappear due to their constitutive physical weakness and intermixing with the superior White race.

After Buenos Aires became the federal capital of the Argentine republic in the 1880s, the state began a process of modernization of the city, characterized by the direct disciplining of public space (Frigerio and Lamborghini 2011a). The goal was to achieve an image of modernity and progress, which in this context was linked to ideas around ethno-racial and sociocultural homogeneity and Europeanness. There was a state-led project to repopulate Argentina through the promotion of European immigration, which also exercised urban pressure and the displacement of poor Black families (Andrews 1980; Fitzgerald and Cook-Martin 2014; Frigerio and Lamborghini 2011a). Urban space was structured through governmental policies that included urban modifications and forced transfers, pushing subaltern groups away from the neighborhoods assigned to the middle and upper classes.¹⁰⁰ This process of geographical displacement from center to periphery is recognized by Afro-Argentine activists today, as expressed by Sandra Chagas (Interview, October 2021):

Today we see how the Blackness that occupied the neighborhoods of La Boca, San Telmo, Barracas, during the time of the Viceroyalty, was displaced towards the periphery of the city, towards Flores, Floresta, Palermo, and then further away. Today you find Afro-Argentines in Moreno, outside of the city, this is people that used to live in the center of the city.

The displacement of Afrodescendant families and other subaltern groups lent itself to a process of racialization of the city's peripheral neighborhoods and of other nearby cities, creating what Rahier (1998) has called a racial/spatial order, which determines who can occupy different social and geographic spaces. While Blackness was hidden from the view of the middle and upper classes, the peripheral geographies that Afrodescendants began to occupy became racialized and othered, a process with consequences up to the present date. Gladys Flores (Interview, October 2021), an Afro-indigenous Argentine activist who lives in Lomas de Zamora, 17 kilometers south from the center of Buenos Aires, referred to this process of geographic racialization in the following terms:

I always lived in the suburbs, and there is something stigmatizing there. If you are from the suburbs, you are Black, and if you are Black, you are poor. In this country, at least, that is how it is. If you hear how they refer to people that receive social welfare, the first thing they say is “these fucking ‘negros’ [Blacks],” the color, the pigment, is somehow associated to your class position, that way of thinking of otherness is unavoidable.

The geographical displacement of poor, racialized, subaltern groups thus enabled the maintenance of the myth of a White Buenos Aires. This pattern of displacement of subaltern groups was also reproduced in other cities of the country imagined as White by their inhabitants in relation to their own peripheries. Such is the case of the cities of Paraná in the Province of Entre Rios and Santa Fe in the Province of Santa Fe. According to Broguet (2021), Blackness has been displaced from these two cities and geographically inscribed in their outskirts, producing the racialization and stigmatization of peripheral neighborhoods by those who live in central areas. Similarly, Fernández Bravo (2014) has identified how rural areas have been historically racialized by those

¹⁰⁰ Together with the City of Buenos Aires, the production of European-like places included cities in the provinces of Santa Fe, Entre Rios, the south of Cordoba, the north and center of the Province of Buenos Aires, and in the Patagonia – particularly the city of Bariloche – where high numbers of European immigrants established themselves and “... and erased Indigenous cultures through displacement and forced assimilation (Gordillo 2020:13).

who live in urban centers of the Province of Santiago del Estero. Thus, we can observe the reproduction of the racial/spatial order at different scales throughout Argentina.

The myth of a White Argentina has been maintained through the association of place, race, and class to which Gladys Flores referred in the quote above. This association has concealed the racial connotations of the word “negro,” displacing its original colonial meaning to become first and foremost a class signifier. Indeed, Argentines commonly maintain that the word “negro” is not used in that country as a racial term but to denote instead belonging to the lower class, tied at the same time to notions of amorality and criminal behavior. The residents of Buenos Aires have historically distinguished themselves from those of other provinces in the country, particularly of provinces with large numbers of rural and Indigenous populations, such as Jujuy and Tucumán. By identifying people from inland provinces as uncivilized, backwards, ignorant, and “less White,” Buenos Aires residents have in contrast positioned themselves as European, modern, educated, and White (Briones 2008; Grimson 2017). This differentiation became particularly significant starting in the 1940s, when rural poor immigrants from the northern provinces of Argentina began to arrive en masse to Buenos Aires seeking jobs in an industrializing city. It was in this context that the upper- and middle-class residents of Buenos Aires coined the term “cabecitas negras” [little black heads] to refer to these rural immigrants, in a process that Frigerio (2006) identifies as the displacement of race and color by a discourse anchored in social class.

With the arrival of the “cabecitas negras,” the construction of a White Buenos Aires was again challenged. While the term “cabecita negra” has a strong class dimension, it is not free of racial connotations, which explains its effect as a stigmatizing weapon. The term supposedly alludes to black hair color and dark skin, which in Argentina are mostly associated with indigeneity. But the term in fact speaks to all types of cultural as well as physical characteristics viewed as “somatotype inadequacies” by White Argentines, including Indigenous or African physical attributes inherited from populations that in the hegemonic ethno-racial imaginary of Buenos Aires are supposed to be extinguished (Briones 2008:28). The term also has political connotations, as middle and upper-classes used it pejoratively to racialize working-class supporters of Juan Domingo Perón,¹⁰¹ while at the same time positioning themselves, Perón detractors, as White (Grimson 2017). According to Claudia Briones (2008), the subalternity represented in the “cabecitas negras” has enabled the reproduction of a vision of the Argentine class structure that derives from the social configuration of power that founded the nation – the Buenos Aires White middle- and upper-classes versus the interior provinces dark-skinned populations – without calling into question the nation’s Whiteness. Frigerio (2006:88) argues that the cultural and psychological characteristics associated with “cabecitas negras” in the forties and fifties were comparable to those assigned to the descendants of Africans thirty or forty years earlier. The category of “cabecita negra” would thus be a re-elaboration of a cognitive scheme used to categorize subaltern population in Buenos Aires from the end of the 19th century.

We observe here a process of racialization of place-based differences by which Buenos

¹⁰¹ Juan Domingo Perón was an Argentine military and politician who was three times president in Argentina, first elected in 1946 and reelected in 1951, and then elected in 1973 serving until his death 8 months after. He is the founder of “peronismo,” a political movement that has marked a divisor line in Argentine politics during the last 70 years – in contrast with the classical left v/s right. Perón had the support of vast sectors of the working class and called for rejection of Argentine the oligarchy.

Aires is constructed as White in opposition to both inland provinces, from where the “cabecitas negras” come, and to the city’s peripheries where subaltern groups have been historically displaced out of elites’ sight. This history helps explain why it is so hard for people in Buenos Aires to accept the existence of Afro-Argentines. They have been cognitively and materially conditioned to believe that dark-skinned people in the city are either rural internal migrants with no connection to Africa or, when their African ancestry cannot be negated, foreigners recently arrived to the country.¹⁰²

Chile: the racialization of the peripheral Arica-Parinacota region

In Chile, the Afrodescendant movement emerged in Arica, the regional capital and only urban center of the Arica-Parinacota Region. Arica is the northernmost city in the country, located only 20 kilometers south of the border with Peru and approximately 190 kilometers from the border with Bolivia. Arica was originally a Peruvian city and only came under Chilean control after the defeat of Peru and Bolivia in the War of the Pacific (1879-1883). As a result of the war, Chile gained vast Peruvian and Bolivian territories, and the conquered cities of Arica and Tacna were held under Chilean control under the agreement that a plebiscite would take place after 10 years so each city’s population could decide if they should remain Peruvians or become Chileans. The plebiscite was never held and it was only in 1929, almost 50 years after the war had ended, that Chile and Peru signed a treaty by which Tacna was returned to Peru while Arica was officially annexed to Chile (see figure 2).

During the period that followed the War of the Pacific, the Chilean state initiated an intense campaign to forcefully disseminate Chilean culture and inculcate a feeling of patriotism in the new annexed territories. Through public education and mandatory military service, the state sought to eliminate the Indigenous culture of the significant Aymara population who lived in the region (González Miranda 2002). By the beginning of the 20th century, the Chilean state began promoting the migration of families from central and southern Chile towards Arica and Tacna, to secure a Chilean majority in the plebiscite that was supposed to take place. In 1910, illegal ultra-nationalist paramilitary associations called Patriotic Leagues began to emerge in these northern regions with the complicity of civil society and state authorities (González Miranda 2004). Their explicit goal was to persecute Peruvian and Bolivian residents so they would exile themselves, including through the murder and disappearance of those who would not leave (González Miranda, Maldonado Priego, and McGee Deutsch 1993). In this context, Blackness was strongly associated with Peru, and Black families had to hide or leave the country to escape persecution. After this traumatic experience, Afrodescendants in Arica learned to “deny their race” and assimilated to the Chilean culture to escape stigmatization (Báez 2010 Lazcano; Alarcón, Araya, and Chávez 2017).

¹⁰² I discuss the process of the foreignization of Blackness in Argentina in Chapter 5.

FIGURE 2: MAPS OF BORDERS BETWEEN CHILE, BOLIVIA, AND PERU IN 1879 VERSUS IN 1929



Source: “Colección del Bicentenario 200 años de economía en el Perú: ‘La guerra con Chile, la devastación y lo que perdimos’,” available at: www.peru21.pe.

Given its particular history, Arica has been commonly thought of as culturally and racially closer to Peru and Bolivia than to central Chile, which has made it an easy target of racialization dynamics. Thus, when by the beginning of the new millennium people in Arica began to publicly identify as Afrodescendant, it was easy to disregard the Afro-Chilean movement as not authentically Chilean. Vlado Mirosevic (Interview, September 2021), a Congress representative for District 1, corresponding to the Arica-Parinacota Region, referred to how Arica continues today to be thought of as outside the margins of the nation:

In general, Arica is seen as too far away for the rest of Chileans. I even have been told in Congress, “You are Peruvians,” and I respond “Yes, a little bit Peruvian, a little bit Bolivian also, we are everything at the same time.” Arica is too far away and it’s the most recently annexed territory, we do not have yet 100 years as part of Chile, so we are far, right? It’s something very distant for the imaginary of people in Santiago, and if you add to that the existence of an Afrodescendant movement in Arica, it is something too strange, they cannot understand it and it is even a little bit violent for the image that we have constructed of Chile.

The racialization of the Arica-Parinacota Region has worked to maintain the widespread idea of Chile as a homogeneous country, where slavery was rare and the few descendants of Africans disappeared due to their supposed inability to adapt to the Chilean weather and to racial intermixing. But against this widespread idea, analyses of colonial censuses show that the Black population was not insignificant in Chilean territory. Celia Cussen (2006:53) finds that for the

1777-1778 census, Black people and Mulatos¹⁰³ represented 18% of Santiago's population, a percentage that increased to over 23% in the region of Coquimbo (Arre 2008:7). In colonial Arica, Black people were even more numerous: for the 1813 Census, 17.1% of the population of Arica was classified as "Black," while another 6.7% was classified as "Mulato," and 39.6% as "Zambo,"¹⁰⁴ accounting together for close to two-thirds of the city's total population (Díaz Araya, Muñoz Henríquez, and Lanas Castillo 2019). In the last census conducted in Arica as a Peruvian territory in 1871 – a decade before the War of the Pacific – the percentage of Black people had decreased, but still represented a significant 19% of the total population, while another 16% were classified as "mestizos" or mixed-race (Díaz et al. 2019).

As a result of the War of the Pacific, Peruvian and Bolivian nationalities were strongly racialized, with repercussions on how people thought of the new annexed territories. The cultural and ethnic diversity present in these territories did not match the image promoted by the Chilean State of an ethno-racially homogeneous country. Ruiz and his colleagues (2013) have shown how cartoons in magazines circulated in Chile's central zone between 1910 and 1930 were used as post-war propaganda, reaffirming negative stereotypes of Blackness in which Peruvians were portrayed as Black, effeminate, cowardly, and untrustworthy (see figure 3).

The images that appeared in the *Corre-Vuela* magazine reflect stereotypes constructed in the central region of the country, from where the space of the border became exotified. These depictions are representative of a period in which a particular national imaginary of Chilean identity, in contrast to Peru and Bolivia, was constructed, assimilated, and installed in the recently annexed regions. Although a century has passed since the Arica-Parinacota region was annexed to Chile, the exotification of this border region has continued to operate until present times. While Afro-Chileans are generally recognized as Chilean citizens in Arica, that is not the case in the rest of the country, where ignorance about their existence and the erasure of Blackness from Chileans' understanding of nationhood still prevails, even in more educated political circles (Mardones Marshall, Amigo, and Cortés, 2024).

¹⁰³ Mulato was the colonial term used throughout Latin America to refer to people of mixed African and European descent.

¹⁰⁴ Zambo was the colonial term used throughout Latin America to refer to people of mixed African and Indigenous descent.

FIGURE 3: CORRE VUELA MAGAZINE N° 741, 1922



Source: “Alterización del Perú negro en magazines chilenos: Corre-Vuela 1910-1930,” by Ruz Zagal, Galdames Rosas, and Díaz Araya (2015).

Thus, both in Argentina and Chile, Afrodescendants have been historically excluded from national narratives, and the territories where they are visible have been racialized such that Blackness is allocated to the margins of the nation and national myths of racial homogeneity can be maintained. Within these racialized geographies, the fact that in Argentina the Afrodescendant movement emerged in the neuralgic center of Buenos Aires while in Chile it emerged at the peripheral city of Arica, has impacted how these new movements are seen by their respective national societies. Buenos Aires has been historically constructed as White in opposition to other provinces, and the displacement of Blackness has also occurred within the city itself. Urban space in Buenos Aires has been structured through the association of class, race and place, making Blackness invisible for middle and upper classes while simultaneously occluding the racial dimensions of social inequality. The word “negro” has mostly become a class term, related to poverty, rural origins, and indecency. Only when African features cannot be ignored, “Black” becomes explicitly a racial

term; when it does, it is used as a synonym for “foreigner.”

The Arica-Parinacota Region, on the other hand, has been positioned at the margins of what was perceived as constituting Chilean nationhood. The location of Arica as a borderland region, and its historical connections to Peru and Bolivia, have made it since its annexation a target for racialization dynamics. The political geography of nationhood has been structured in this case through the association of place, race, and nationality, where the presence of an Afrodescendant movement in Arica signals the region’s lack of Chilean authenticity when compared to the rest of the country. Arica becomes in this way not only a geographically peripheral city but also a symbolically marginal space in the Chilean imaginary.

The political geography of Afrodescendant claims-making: remaking the racial/spatial order from the margins

In both Argentina and Chile, we observe processes of racialization towards individuals and communities that do not fit hegemonic ideas of nationhood constructed by centralized elites and politicians. In both countries, these racialization processes have a spatial component, by which territories thought of as non-White are excluded from national narratives of belonging, as constructed from the center. The very distinct characteristics of the places where Afrodescendant movements first emerged in Argentina and Chile allow us to identify different ways in which racialization dynamics have operated in these two countries.

In this section, I shift the focus to Afrodescendant agency by analyzing how activists build spatialized ideas of Blackness that dispute dominant narratives that deny their national belonging. Individuals who have begun to politically mobilize as Afrodescendants in Argentina and Chile have constructed understandings of their ethno-racial identities in relation to the geographical space they occupy. Given the widespread denial of the existence of Afrodescendant citizens within Argentine and Chilean societies, Afrodescendant activists in both countries have invested time and energy in proving their existence as a distinct group within the nation and, at the same time, as an integral part of each nation. Afro-Argentine and Afro-Chilean movements’ distinct geographical locations, however, have afforded different possibilities for disputing hegemonic notions of nationhood.

Identities do not emerge in isolation, but result from interaction with “others” who are identified as outsiders by the group of reference (Barth 1969). Identification and differentiation are two faces of a singular process of boundary-construction. Since social relations develop in social space, Afrodescendants’ geographical location significantly determines who they interact with and, in consequence, how they frame and define the boundaries of Afro-descent. Afrodescendant activists’ spatialized understandings of their identities, in turn, impacts how they construct and position their political demands. Thus, Afrodescendants’ geographical location, and the characteristics of the social space in which they interact with others, are central for how they frame their identities and claims.

Afro-Argentine activists’ concentration in the capital city of Buenos Aires has encouraged framings that, on the one hand, seek to reverse the erasure of Blackness in Argentine history and

underscore the Black elements of Argentine cultural heritage, while on the other, expand to include diasporic constructions of Afro-descent that transcend the national territory. In contrast, the location of the Afro-Chilean movement in the peripheral city of Arica has promoted framings that stress their connection to Arica's local history and identity and underscore their strong territorial attachment – particularly in the Azapa Valley. Activists in both countries, however, have begun to expand these definitions as they identify how they might be reproducing the hegemonic construction of nationhood they are seeking to disrupt. Differences in how Afrodescendants frame Afro-descent matter because, as we will see in the next chapter, how claims for ethno-racial reform are justified impacts debates around the scope and type of policies to which Afrodescendants should be entitled.

Framing Afro-descent as cultural heritage

Culture is one of the main terrains in which Afrodescendants in Argentina and Chile have engaged for the symbolic constitution of their identities (Ardito 2008; Frigerio and Lamborghini 2011b). Through the display of their cultural heritage, Afrodescendants can simultaneously revitalize their identity, assert their ethno-racial authenticity, and gain visibility to conquer institutional spaces (León Villagra 2014). Afro-Argentines and Afro-Chileans often present themselves as inheritors of cultural traditions passed within their families and communities through generations. But how Afrodescendant culture is thought of and its relationship with national identity has not been equal in Argentina and Chile, given the distinct proximity that Afrodescendants in each country have to hegemonic cultural expressions presented by each state as constituting the official national culture.

Afro-Argentines began to formally organize in the mid-1990s, coinciding with the emergence of a new multicultural narrative in Buenos Aires that encouraged the symbolic expression of ethnic and immigrant minorities as a way of presenting the city as a modern and globalized metropolis (Lamborghini and Frigerio 2010:141). Lacarrieu has identified this new narrative as a form of “light multiculturalism” where immigrants’ culture “is exalted and exhibited (at the same time as commercialized) but in limited spaces” (Lacarrieu 2001 cited in Kleidermacher 2011). In this context, Afrodescendants in Buenos Aires began to make claims for recognition by emphasizing their cultural heritage.

Afro-Argentine activists in Buenos Aires, however, do not generally frame their cultural heritage as totally distinct from the national culture, but as a constitutive part of it. This has been facilitated by the fact that Buenos Aires is a very big and diverse city, which can hardly be signified as a territory where Afrodescendants developed cultural practices in isolation from the rest of society. Although there are some places in Buenos Aires recognized as historical Afro-Argentine neighborhoods, the racial structuring of urban space referred to in the previous section produced a discontinuity between past inhabitants and present activists, who today are dispersed throughout the city and its suburbs.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, Afro-Argentines mostly think of their cultural heritage as

¹⁰⁵ There are, however, towns in the Province of Buenos Aires where there has been a continuous presence of Afrodescendants, such as the city of Chascomús, where there is a small Afrodescendant community that recognizes their history inscribed in places like the “Capilla de Negros” (Anecchiario 2014). Some studies have also revealed that the arrival of Afro-Uruguayan immigrants since the 1970s to neighborhoods in Buenos Aires once characterized by an important presence of Afro-Argentines, such as San Telmo, Montserrat, Barracas, and La Boca, has promoted the

present in cultural expressions broadly practiced by the Argentine people as a whole.¹⁰⁶ Alma Velasquez (Interview, December 2021) criticized the lack of knowledge about the Black influences in Argentine cultural heritage:

Nobody talks about which were the important contributions, not only for the construction of the nation-state, but for the cultural construction of Argentina, nobody talks about it. Everyone talks about *tango*, people talk about folklore, people talk about *malambo*, everyone talks about the Argentine *empanadas*, everyone eats *pastelitos*. These are all Black inheritances! And nobody knows that they are Black inheritances.

Academic research has played an important role in revealing how prominent Black influences are in Argentine culture. A significant example is that of Argentina's most emblematic music-dance, *tango*, which has been generally regarded as a prominently European-inspired musical genre. However, there is today extensive research identifying the African origins of tango, which despite whitening attempts, is traceable in its rhythm, lyrics, and even in the etymology of the word "tango" itself (Anecchiarico 2014; Anecchiarico, Martín and Mercado 2017; Cirio 2006). These studies have contributed to challenging official narratives that have erased Blackness from Argentine history and cultural production. In this way, Afro-Argentines have been able to frame their claims for recognition as a national debt resulting from the erasure of Afrodescendants' historical contributions to the development of Argentine society. Thus, the state would need to repair this situation by recognizing these contributions and promoting Afrodescendant cultural heritage.

The Arica-Parinacota Region of Chile presents very different characteristics from Buenos Aires. Arica is a relatively small port city where close to 98% of the region's total population is concentrated (INE 2019). While Arica is in no sense a globalized metropolis, its proximity to border crossings with Peru and with Bolivia, and its high percentage of Indigenous population – over one-third of the region's population (INE 2019) – makes it quite a diverse and multicultural territory, which some authors have characterized as a space of "super-diversity," as conceptualized by Vertovec (De la Maza and Campos 2021:442). Given Arica's peripheral location in an extremely centralized country, residents often feel isolated from the nation and abandoned by the state. These feelings have promoted a very strong regional identity in Arica, also shared by Afro-Chileans. In this context, local culture has played an important role for how Afro-Chileans signify Blackness.

In contrast to Afro-Argentines, Afro-Chilean activists do not commonly refer to their cultural heritage as a fundamental part of the national culture, but link it specifically to the Arica-Parinacota Region. Afro-Chileans' process of ethnic renewal has been mostly based on the resignification of certain cultural expressions that constitute part of Arica's cultural diversity, with important Peruvian influences (Mardones Marshall 2021). By identifying the African roots of these

relocalization of Black cultural expressions through the contemporary practice of candombe music (Laborde 2021; Parody 2016).

¹⁰⁶ An exception could be the practice of Argentine candombe, a music-dance that has been more broadly recognized as originally practiced by Afro-Argentines. Some scholars have identified the practice of Argentine candombe in Afro-Argentine dance parties in Buenos Aires until at least the 1970s (Frigerio 1993) and in religious rites such as the cult to Baltazar, celebrated contemporaneously in different geographical contexts and by ethnically diverse practitioners (Cirio 2003). Since the emergence of the Afro-Argentine movement, there has been a revitalization of the practice of Afro-Argentine candombe. However, Uruguayan candombe continues to be more popularly practiced in Argentina.

shared cultural practices, Afro-Chileans re-appropriate them as part of their cultural heritage. Some examples are the “picante de mondongo,” a dish based on cow belly that resulted from the fusion of African and Andean cuisine, and the celebration of the “Crosses of May,” a Catholic-syncretic religious ceremony also celebrated – with local variations – by Indigenous communities throughout the Andean region (Mardones 2023). While most people in Arica are familiar with these cultural expressions, they are mostly unknown for Chileans from other regions of the country. By reclaiming these local cultural practices, Afro-Chileans have been able to frame their demands as guardians of a locally valued cultural heritage, which the state needs to recognize, protect, and promote.

Additionally, Afro-Chileans have reconstructed cultural practices they identified as part of their lost Black cultural heritage. The most salient example has been the cultural reconstruction of *tumbe*, a music and dance practice that, according to the accounts of Afro-Chileans’ elderly family members, used to be performed in family gatherings and celebrations (Báez 2010 Lazcano; Del Canto Larios 2003; Salgado 2013). In contrast to the shared regional cultural expressions described earlier, *tumbe* has been signified as an exclusively Afro-Chilean music-dance and has served as a powerful tool for strengthening Afro-Chilean identity. While the reconstruction of *tumbe* has involved the use of diasporic resources aligned with transnational ideas of Blackness (León Villagra 2014; Wolfe 2019:79-80) and has been associated by different authors with Afro-Peruvian music and dance “festejo” (Carrasco Meza 2019; Carrasco Meza and Domingo Gómez 2022; León Villagra 2020), it has remained distinct enough to become a symbol of Afro-Chilean culture. Carolina Letelier (Interview, September 2021) referred to the relevance of the practice of *tumbe* for the Afrodescendant movement:

I always say that the *tumbe* troupes did an incredible job, because they promoted visibility and were the movement’s banner of struggle; a lot of people came to learn and understand what the Arica Afrodescendant culture was because they saw a troupe.

The popularization of the practice of *tumbe* among Arica youth has served as a political strategy to give visibility to Afro-Chileans’ political demands (Amigo 2022; Domingo Gómez 2020; Espinosa 2015). *Tumbe* has accompanied Afro-Chilean activists in countless political actions and legitimized them in the eyes of others as an authentic ethno-racial group (Mardones Marshall 2021). In this way, Afro-Chileans have been able to position themselves as a culturally distinct group when presenting their claims for legal recognition.

Framing Afro-descent as a shared history

Afrodescendants in Argentina and Chile have also framed Afro-descent by alluding to a transgenerational history of enslavement, persecution, and marginalization in which the state has been complicit, if not responsible. In general terms, activists in both countries refer to the wrongdoings towards their enslaved ancestors, who were displaced from their communities in Africa and forcefully brought to the Americas. They also stress how they continued to be marginalized after the independence of each nation-state and criticize the erasure of their ancestors from each country’s national history. However, there are important nuances between how Afro-Argentine and Afro-Chilean activists reconstruct their histories, differences that are closely connected to the territories where each Afrodescendant movement has developed.

In Buenos Aires, activists have reconstructed Afrodescendant history in two different ways. On one side, some activists have stressed the particular history of those Afrodescendants who arrived in colonial times to what today constitutes Argentine territory. These activists stress the wrongdoings against their African ancestors and their descendants who, despite their important contributions in crucial events such as the wars of independence, were marginalized by Argentine society and erased from Argentine history. They highlight the important contributions that Afrodescendants have historically made to Argentine society and refer to prominent Afro-Argentine politicians, soldiers, writers, and artists to position themselves as inheritors of their legacy, which they claim needs to be officially recognized by the state. In this way, they frame their claims as a need for reparation towards their families who continue to suffer the consequences of this marginalization. This reparation is thought of as both affirmative action policies that can promote the inclusion of Afro-Argentines in educational institutions and work spaces, and as educational policies that can reverse Afrodescendants' erasure from Argentine history, such as the modification of educational curricula and the commemoration of historical events related to Afro-Argentine history. Overall, it is a demand for inclusion in a city that continues to imagine itself as overtly White.

On the other side, some activists have developed a more diasporic understanding of Afrodescendant history, which transcends the territoriality of the Argentine state. This type of framing has been fueled by the involvement of Afro-Argentine activists in the transnational Afrodescendant networks described in Chapter 1 and by the arrival of Latin American Afrodescendant immigrants to Argentina. These immigrants have popularized Afro-Latin American cultural expressions such as Uruguayan candombe and Afro-Brazilian religions (Frigerio and Lamborghini 2009), promoting a sense of shared diasporic culture arising from a common past in Africa and a shared history of displacement, slavery, and resistance. According to Argentine anthropologist Nicolás Fernández Bravo (Interview, December 2021),

There has been a tendency to adopt perspectives from other contexts that have created an imaginary about what it means to be Afrodescendant that is somehow distant from the particularities of the processes that were going on in Argentina (...) for a long time, Afro-Caribbean music has been imagined as the Afrodescendant music, instead of other cultural expressions closer to the Río de la Plata or the Argentine inlands.

The reconstruction of an Afrodescendant identity in Buenos Aires has therefore linked the diverse cultural expressions of Latin American Afrodescendants with an ancestral common past related to a shared diasporic experience. In this way, some Afro-Argentines have framed their demands for recognition as transcending the territorial boundaries of the nation-state, while claiming reparation and inclusion for all the descendants of enslaved Africans who live in Buenos Aires.¹⁰⁷

In the case of Afro-Chileans, history has been reconstructed in a much more localized way. While Afro-Chilean activists also refer to the wrongdoings against their ancestors and to a shared diasporic condition with other Afrodescendants from the Americas, they generally construct their claims by stressing a particular history related not only to the experience of slavery but mostly to

¹⁰⁷ Chapter 5 focuses on the interactions of native-born and immigrant Afrodescendants in Argentina and Chile, and on how these interactions affect how activists frame their identities, make claims and are responded to by the state.

their geographical displacement by the Chilean state after the War of the Pacific. As discussed earlier, the War of the Pacific was followed by a period in which everything considered Peruvian in the territories annexed by Chile was persecuted. In this context, many Afrodescendant people who lived in the Arica-Parinacota Region had to escape to Peru, and Black families and communities were dramatically fractured. Afro-Chileans identify as descendants of these fractured families and vindicate certain last names identified with Black families in the region as a signifier of being an authentically local Afrodescendant (UAHC 2017).

By reconstructing their identity in connection to regional history, Afro-Chileans vindicate their historical connection to the Arica-Parinacota Region. They identify several places where their ancestors would gather that are still significant for the development of their collective identity, including the neighborhoods of La Chimba, Lumbanga, and Esmeralda, in the city of Arica, and the sectors of Pago de Gomes, Las Maitas, and San Miguel, in the Azapa Valley (Ministerio de Bienes Nacionales 2020). This sense of territorial attachment is particularly poignant in the rural Azapa Valley, seen by many Afrodescendant families in Arica as their ancestral territory. According to Araya (2023), the history of Black populations in the Azapa Valley is intimately connected with the use of natural resources present in the territory, configuring a particular rural and ethnicized Black identity distinguishable from that in Arica. While comparing Afrodescendant identity in Arica and the Azapa Valley, Espinosa (2015) argues that Afro-Chileans' process of ethnogenesis in the Azapa Valle has been facilitated by their strong connection to territory and family heritage. As expressed by Afro-Chilean activist Marco Llerena:

One feels part of a territory, you identify, I mean, when I go to Azapa I get emotional, because it is the land of my grandparents. I see the guavas that my grandfather cultivated, the sugar cane not there anymore, and I feel part of a people, I feel that there is my land, my origins, my identity.

Afro-Chileans have identified different expressions of their material, immaterial, and natural heritage in the Azapa Valley, which they connect to Afro-Chileans' traditional economic activities and cultural practices (Báez Lazcano 2018). To bring back the example of the "Crosses of May," many Afro-Chilean families have a cross localized at the top of a hill of the Azapa Valley demarcating the spatial boundaries of their ancestral territory, which they bring once a year to venerate in the ceremonial celebration (Báez Lazcano 2018:49). By framing their identity in relation to a spatialized history, Afro-Chileans have been able to construct claims related to their territorial rights over these ancestral lands.

Framing Afro-descent in relation to other social actors

Processes of Afrodescendant ethnic renewal do not happen in a vacuum but are immersed in social contexts in which diverse actors interact and negotiate meanings assigned to ethno-racial categories. Identifying as Afrodescendant also means identifying who is not Afrodescendant through the construction of symbolic boundaries between those who can and who cannot be ascribed to this category. Activists defending different causes can compete over resources perceived as scarce or can construct alliances around common issues that mutually reinforce their claims-making processes. Here, I focus on how Afrodescendants frame their identities in relation to other groups making identity-based claims with whom they share social space. The characteristics of these reference groups, as we will see, depends to a great extent on spatial factors.

In the case of Buenos Aires, a very big and cosmopolitan capital city, Afro-Argentines share social space with diverse social actors, many of whom share with them a subaltern position within Argentine society. In this context, Afro-Argentines have increasingly begun to frame their identity in relation to the struggles of other marginalized groups in the city, promoting intersectional ways of positioning themselves as victims of discrimination. Many Afro-Argentine activists initiated their political trajectories as leaders of other social movements, including the feminist and the LGBTQI+ movements. The participation of Afrodescendant civil society in debates at the National Institute Against Xenophobia and Discrimination (INADI, Spanish acronym) has stimulated relationships with other subaltern groups and promoted the construction of discourses that put at the center the combat against discrimination and exclusion. María José Lubertino (Interview, January 2022), who was the director of INADI between 2006 and 2009, narrated how different stigmatized groups were approached during her administration:

We then created these mega events in the streets called “Argentina también es Afro” [Argentina is also Afro] and marched in the historical Black neighborhood of San Telmo, where all the Afro groups participated. I had the chance of enjoying activities like this with the most diverse diversities that you can imagine. They used to tell me, when Martians come to earth, you will do the march of the Martians. Any diversity that was used to stigmatize somebody, we took it and we showed it publicly, and “Argentina también es Afro” was one of these expressions.

This public display of diversity allowed Afro-Argentines to celebrate their Blackness while foregrounding an experience of discrimination and exclusion shared with other “diverse groups” who are similarly marginalized within Argentine society. Afro-Argentines’ relationship with these other groups has promoted claims around the need for state intervention as a form of reparative justice, with the goal to end discrimination and achieve equality of treatment at the same time as the recognition and respect of every group’s differences. By building alliances with other marginalized groups, Afro-Argentines are able to transcend notions of Afro-descent as located in the past, revealing the contemporary and persistent exclusion of Blackness in Argentina.

Arica, in turn, can be characterized by another type of diversity, related to the prominent historical presence of Indigenous – and Afrodescendant – groups who are recognized as culturally distinct from mainstream society. Afrodescendants in Arica are thus inscribed in a broader cultural area, categorized by Mariana León Villagra (2014:164) as Afro-Andean, where indigenous and Afrodescendant communities have historically related, adapted, and re-formulated their cultural identities. Therefore, Blackness has also been constructed in Arica in relation to these Andean Indigenous communities, in particular to the Aymara people, with whom Afro-Chileans share a long-standing history of biological intermixing and cultural syncretism. Ignacio Carrasco (Interview, February 2020), an Afro-Argentine activist, musician, and researcher, referred to Afrodescendant and Indigenous cultural connection:

I research *tumbe*, which has so many parallels with the Indigenous traditions, because it is a carnival rhythm, and the carnival occurs in a period of the year where you celebrate the rain, the crops, and the year actualizes. The *tumbe* is danced originally in a circle, which, if you go to Indigenous towns during carnival, they all dance in circle and recite verses that they repeat, which is practically the same as with *tumbe*. [...] The point is that before the Afrodescendant people was recognized as a people, or before a consciousness arose around Afro-descent, there were many practices that speak to the existence of differentiated cultural communities [...] there was a common tradition with a common language and common history.

Afro-Chileans commonly talk about their culture by comparing it to Indigenous cultural practices. As argued by Anderson (2007:405), to acknowledge these similarities is not to suggest that Afrodescendant movements simply derive from Indigenous movements. But it does reveal how Afro-Chileans are aware of the tendency for states and international actors to identify Indigenous peoples as the authentic subject of collective rights. Since Indigenous peoples in Chile were in fact legal subjects of collective rights decades before the recognition of Afro-Chileans, activists have often taken them as a model to frame their own demands for legal recognition and differentiated rights. In this way, Afro-Chileans seek not only to reverse their erasure from national history but also to provide proof of their contemporary existence. The relationship between Afro-Chileans and Aymaras, however, is complex, since the latter have often felt threatened by the advance of Afro-Chileans' claims, especially in the case of their aspirations for territorial rights (Campos 2017:443).

In this context, to present themselves as deserving similar rights as the Aymara people, Afro-Chileans have constructed symbolic boundaries to distance themselves from the rest of Chilean society, while emphasizing the economic, social, and cultural traditions they have developed in connection to Arica and the Azapa Valley (Mardones Marshall 2021). In this way, Afro-Chileans have pronouncedly “ethnicized Blackness,” establishing a “specific relationship between territory, identity, cultural tradition, nature and otherness” (Restrepo 2004:699). By claiming an ethnic status that is distinct yet parallel to that of Indigenous peoples, Afro-Chileans have constructed demands for collective rights regarding the protection of their culture and their right to self-determination in the territories where they have historically lived, while legitimizing their territorial claims.

Whereas emphasizing their cultural heritage and shared history has allowed Argentine and Chilean Afrodescendants to gain visibility and dispute narratives that have historically excluded them, these framings risk positioning Afro-descent as a historical curiosity whose role in national – or regional – history needs to be recognized while allowing the dismissal of Afrodescendants' struggles today. By positioning themselves in relation to other movements with which they share social space, Afro-Argentines and Afro-Chileans can foreground their contemporary claims, be they related to social inclusion or to collective rights.

Framing Afro-descent beyond Buenos Aires and Arica

In both Argentina and Chile, activists began at one point to identify the downsides of the concentration of the Afrodescendant movement in one region of the country and the necessity of expanding each movement beyond the geographies where it first emerged. Recognizing that slavery was a reality throughout the Argentine and the Chilean national territories, Afrodescendants activists have sought in other latitudes of each country communities of people that recognize themselves as descendants of Africans and can engage in the political mobilization of this identity. For both Afro-Argentines and Afro-Chileans, expanding the movement appears as an opportunity to position their claims at a national level.

Since the emergence of the Afro-Argentine movement in the City of Buenos Aires, some activists involved in the movement lived outside the city, mostly throughout the neighboring

Province of Buenos Aires. Additionally, some Afro-Argentines had gathered since the early 1990s in the Province of Santa Fe around the “House of Indo-Afro-American Culture,” founded by Afro-Argentine activist Lucía Molina in 1988. But only in the second decade of the 2010s, we begin to observe the emergence of Afro-Argentine organizations in other provinces of the country, promoted to a great extent by activists from Buenos Aires, who travelled to meet potential Afro-Argentine leaders and talk to them about the existence of an Afro-Argentine movement they could join. This was the case, for example, during the preparations of the 2010 National Population Census, when activists from Buenos Aires sought allies in inland provinces who could help them raise awareness about the meaning of Afro-descent so that more people would identify as Afrodescendant in the census. Afro-Argentine activist Federico Pita (Interview, November 2021) was one of those who travelled during this process, which he described in the following way:

We told the authorities, look, we want to visit the northern provinces, where in truth there was no record [of Afrodescendants], other than the historical records that showed that there were 30% of Black people in one place, 40% in another, but there were no Afro-Argentine organizations in those provinces. [...] We visited 10 provinces, where we met with the provincial statistical department officials and a press conference was held and we appeared on TV, so some people would see us on TV. It was a very artisanal, a very activist thing, which promoted a whole process of mobilization during the following 10 years.

Santiago del Estero was one of the provinces to which Buenos Aires activists travelled prior to the 2010 National Population Census, given that historical records revealed that more than half of its population was Afrodescendant by the end of the colony in the early 19th century. Eleuterio Melián (Interview, January 2022), an activist from the Afrodescendant community of San Félix in Santiago del Estero¹⁰⁸, saw Federico Pita and Carlos Alvarez in the news, episode that promoted the political organization of this community for the census. Melián narrated this episode:

I was watching the provincial news from Santiago del Estero and it showed that people from the census were visiting Santiago del Estero and explaining that the Afro question had been incorporated. There were a few days left for the census, so when I saw the news I called the TV network and told them that I am Afrodescendant, that I am from San Félix, and that I would like to connect with those people, and they responded to me that they would ask if I could go the network, and there was Federico Pita, who is today a national movement leader working in INADI, and Carlos Álvarez, who works in the National Human Rights Ministry, and I communicated with them. Federico Pita cancelled his flight to Córdoba since he wanted to visit San Félix, so I took him there. After that, the provincial secretary appointed me as census coordinator for the Jiménez Department.

Today, we can find Afro-Argentine political mobilization in several provinces of the country, including Buenos Aires, Chaco, Córdoba, Corrientes, Entre Ríos, Mendoza, Misiones, Salta, Santa Fe, Santiago del Estero, and San Luis. The organizational development and cohesiveness of Afrodescendant activism varies from province to province, as does the degree of articulation with Afrodescendants in Buenos Aires and elsewhere. Some provincial activists, for example Nélica Wisneke (Interview, October 2021), have begun to dispute meanings assigned to Afro-descent in Buenos Aires by, for example, problematizing the situation of poverty, illiteracy,

¹⁰⁸ San Félix is a community of approximately 800 Afrodescendants. The history of this community can be seen in the documentary “El último Quilombo” (2012), directed by Alberto Masliah. A teaser of the documentary is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UbedAJUHb8s&t=2s>

lack of education, and lack of access to public services that Afrodescendant rural communities suffer, a reality somehow distant for many activists in the capital city (INADI 2021:79). Activists from Buenos Aires have tried to articulate a movement at the national level, creating federal networks that include organizations from different provinces. However, the Afrodescendant activists I interviewed from outside of Buenos Aires frequently referred to the obstacles they have encountered to participating in political debates around Afro-descent, due to the extreme centralization and the unequal hierarchies of power that continue to operate within the movement, where at the end of the day everything is decided from the capital city.

In contrast to Argentina, the Afrodescendant movement in Chile continues to be restricted to Arica. In the last few years, however, Afro-Chileans have slowly come to realize the limits of framing their identity bounded to the Arica-Parinacota Region's history, culture, and territory. They have identified that the pronounced emphasis on their cultural distinctiveness has promoted a sort of folklorization of the movement, by which claims for cultural recognition have ended up occluding other political demands that could have more substantial consequences in improving their life conditions (Duconge and Lube Guizardi 2014:143). While emphasizing their cultural practices have served to gain visibility and recognition by the state, it has been less useful when trying to make claims related to discrimination and inequality. It also produced the effect of encapsulating the movement in Arica, at the cost of the continuing racialization of the region and foreignization of Blackness in the rest of the country. As argued by Afro-Chilean activist Oriana Estay (Interview, April 2022):

I believe that Afrodescendant history has been biased to appear as only from Arica, which I believe is also a way of foreignizing the movement, due to Arica's proximity to the border and the fact that it was a territory that was annexed later. It is different to say that in Santiago or Valparaíso there has always been Afrodescendant presence than to say that in Arica there has, because a lot of people then say, "But they are Peruvians," "They are Bolivians," you hear that a lot.

Some activists have therefore begun to create strategies to expand the Afro-Chilean movement beyond Arica, encouraging processes of Afrodescendant ethnogenesis or identity reconstruction in other regions of the country. So far, however, this expansion has been limited to the formation of *tumbe* music-dance troupes or *comparsas*, and there are no Afro-Chilean political organizations outside of Arica.¹⁰⁹ These *tumbe* troupes, however, have on occasion supported activists travelling from Arica to meet with authorities in Santiago and Valparaíso, performing in public spaces before or after their meetings to give visibility to Afro-Chileans' political demands, signaling the possibility of future political mobilization.

Activists in Argentina and Chile have begun to recognize the limits and risks that their geographical location entail for their claims-making processes. In Buenos Aires, Afro-Argentines have framed Afro-descent in relation to national culture and history in ways that end up reproducing hegemonic ideas of nationhood built from the center. Afro-Chileans' emphasis on their cultural particularities and identity as territorially bounded to the Arica-Parinacota Region reinforces ideas of nationhood that relegate Blackness to the margins of the nation. Activists, however, have become aware of these limitations and sought to overcome them by expanding

¹⁰⁹ However, Afrodescendant immigrants have recently begun to form organizations identified as Black in Santiago, which I discuss in Chapter 5.

Afrodescendant activism to other regions of each national territory, which could potentially disrupt the racial/spatial hierarchies that continue to be dominant within both countries.

Focusing on how Afrodescendants signify and delimit Afro-descent has foregrounded the relevance of political geography. My analysis, furthermore, breaks with dichotomic understandings of Afrodescendant claims-making processes that situate a clear division between the types of demands advanced by rural and urban movements. It shows that Afrodescendants frame their identities contextually, varying through time and depending on with whom they interact in claims-making processes. Afrodescendants, furthermore, are not a monolithic group, and within each movement there are multiple disputed ways of framing Afro-descent, which can often create tensions between different activists.¹¹⁰ Overall, my analysis stresses the dynamic aspect of classification struggles as activists creatively seek ways to dispute the racial/spatial order.

Conclusion

This chapter has analyzed how constructions of Afro-descent are mediated by political geography. On the one hand, it showed how governments and elites maintain myths of national homogeneity through the racialization of geographies that do not fit constructions of nationhood constructed from the center connecting whiteness to modernity. In both Argentina and Chile, geographies of Blackness have been allocated to the margins of the nation, excluding Afrodescendants from national narratives of belonging. Within these racialized geographies, the distinct locations in which Afrodescendant movements have emerged in Argentina and Chile has impacted how these movements are perceived within each national society. On the other hand, the chapter has revealed how activists dispute these dominant narratives by building their own spatialized definitions of Afro-descent. Activists frame Afro-descent in various ways that allow them to reverse their historical erasure and contemporary marginalization. Their ways of framing Afro-descent are connected to the geographical space that each movement occupies and the social relations that activists there develop. Afrodescendants' spatialized understandings of their identities impact, in turn, how they construct and frame their political demands.

In Argentina, Buenos Aires has been historically constructed as White in opposition to inland provinces – from where racialized rural migrants have arrived – and to the city's peripheries – where subaltern groups have been displaced. Urban space has been structured to make Blackness invisible while occluding the racial dimensions of inequality, producing racialization dynamics that connect place, race, and class. The emergence of an Afrodescendant movement in Buenos Aires has threatened this myth of White racial homogeneity, generating resistance from Argentine society. In this context, Afro-Argentines have mobilized framings of Afro-descent that seek to reverse the erasure of Blackness from national history, underscoring the role that Black people have historically played in Argentine society and the Black cultural components present in the nation's cultural heritage, and on occasion, that connect Afro-Argentines to a more expansive history connected to the African diaspora.

In Chile, Arica has been historically positioned by central authorities and elites at the

¹¹⁰ I discuss some of these differences and disputes in Chapter 5.

margins of what constitutes the nation. Arica's borderland location and history connected to Peru and Bolivia has produced racialization dynamics from the center to the margins of the country, which connect place, race, and nationality. From this perspective, the emergence of an Afrodescendant movement in Arica represents just one more sign of the region's lack of Chilean authenticity. In this context, Afro-Chileans have framed Afro-descent stressing their connection to the history, territory, and identity of the Arica-Parinacota Region, to gain local acceptance and support as an ethno-racial distinct group while resisting hegemonic constructions of nationhood that positions them beyond the boundaries of the nation.

My analysis has also shown how activists' efforts to dispute dominant narratives of nationhood are themselves shaped and constrained by narratives and political structures constructed from the center. These strategies risk reproducing the political geographic power asymmetries that generated their marginalization and erasure in the first place. By emphasizing their contributions to national culture and their role in Argentine – and even diasporic – history, Afro-Argentines risk on the one hand relegating Afro-descent to a historical curiosity, while on the other reproducing hegemonic ideas of nationhood constructed from Buenos Aires, excluding other expressions of Afro-descent present throughout the national territory. By emphasizing their cultural difference and connection to local history as territorially bounded, Afro-Chileans risk reproducing centralist ideas of nationhood that position Arica – and Blackness – at the margins of the nation while limit their possibilities of making claims beyond the recognition of their cultural heritage. Both operations, one from the center and the other from the periphery, carry the risk of reproducing the geographically structured racial/social order.

Recognizing the existence of these risks, however, does not imply that I believe that activists are merely reproducing the same ideas that put them in the margins of nationhood. These strategies were a necessary step for Afrodescendants to gain visibility as an ethno-racial group and legitimacy as political actors. My analysis shows that, over time, activists in Argentina and Chile have become aware of these risks and begun to mobilize new strategies to overcome these limitations and challenge the structuring constraints of political geography on the racial/social order. This would open the possibility of transforming the political field itself, thus disrupting and transcending the principles of vision and division that today structure Argentine and Chilean national societies and position Afro-descent at the margins of nationhood.

In Argentina, Afrodescendant activists have built coalitions with other “diverse” subaltern populations with whom they share experiences of marginalization, breaking in this way with narratives that situate Blackness as a historical curiosity and stressing instead their contemporary struggles for social inclusion. Activists in Buenos Aires, furthermore, have taken steps to decentralize the movement and extend it – from center to periphery – to other provinces of the country as a way to expose the presence of Afrodescendants throughout the Argentine territory and disrupt the reproduction of power dynamics that prioritize the realities of those in the capital city over internal provinces.

Afro-Chilean activists, in turn, have positioned their ethno-racial identity as parallel yet distinct from Aymara Indigenous communities in Arica, as a way to overcome the limited cultural recognition they have achieved and to legitimize their claims for more expansive collective rights. But at the same time, Afro-Chileans have identified the limitations of framing Afro-descent as

exclusively connected to a history and culture bounded to a region seen from the center as a marginal geography, and have sought to expand the movement – from periphery to center – by identifying communities in other regions of the country who can recognize and politically mobilize as Afrodescendants. In their case, expanding the movement represents an opportunity to dispute the marginal space to which they have been assigned by central power, and promote new narratives in which Afro-descent is recognized as an integral part of the Chilean nation.

Afrodescendants have proposed and advanced legislative and policy reforms that align with the different framings of Afro-descent I have described, some more successfully than others in stimulating state responses. In the next chapter, I describe the main laws and policies advanced in each country, analyzing both the strategies mobilized by activists and the state responses to them. I focus, therefore, more closely on the relationships and interactions between Afrodescendant activists and state officials. These different strategies and state responses, as we will see, are shaped and constrained both by the geographical location of Afrodescendant movements and by the very different structure of each country's state administrative apparatus.

CHAPTER 4

THE TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION OF POLITICAL POWER AND THE LEGALIZATION OF AFRO-DESCENT

Introduction

Chapter 3 revealed how the geographical location of Afrodescendant movements in Argentina and Chile has impacted how activists frame Afro-descent and construct claims for legal recognition and ethno-racial reform. In this chapter, I analyze how Afro-Argentine and Afro-Chilean activists engage with public officials to advance their goals and how state actors respond to their demands. My focus here is therefore on the interaction between Afrodescendant activists and state actors, including congressional representatives, central state officials, and local authorities.

In both Argentina and Chile, the state has passed legislation and developed actions to respond to activists' demands, in alignment with multicultural global norms related to Afrodescendant rights. However, the type and scope of the legislation and policies enacted in each country vary greatly. The Argentine state has passed several legislative initiatives and created programs focused on Afrodescendants within different ministries and state institutions, both at the federal and provincial levels. In Chile, in contrast, there has been one single law approved recognizing Afro-Chileans, and the only institutional space created exclusively to deal with Afrodescendants' demands is at the municipal level in the northern city of Arica.

I argue that these differences are to a great extent the result of Afrodescendants' geographical location in relation to the territorial organization of each state's administrative apparatus. I find that activists' strategies to position their demands vis-à-vis state actors result from the interaction between the political geography of Afrodescendant activism – described in Chapter 3 – and the pathways available for ethno-racial reform within each country's political system. These two combined factors have structured activists' prospects of accessing state institutions and constructing alliances with state officials that can enable political reform.

Ultimately, the chapter shows how, despite differences in each country's political system, proximity to the capital city matters in both countries. In Argentina, even though the federal system encourages activists to present their claims at provincial legislatures and governments, the proximity of Afrodescendant activists to federal government authorities in Buenos Aires has enabled them to gain powerful political allies and access central institutions, promoting the implementation of an Afrodescendant agenda at the federal level. Activists outside of Buenos Aires, on the other hand, have sought the support of local authorities and advanced some initiatives in the provinces and municipalities where they have reached higher levels of political organization. Thus, there are multiple pathways through which Afro-Argentines can promote ethno-racial reform. However, the combination of a federal system with the centralization of the Afrodescendant movement and of political power in Buenos Aires, has translated into an unequal distribution of the impact of these reforms. The implementation of federally approved legislation and policies outside of Buenos Aires has been challenging given provinces' political autonomy and their very unequal responses to federal legislation. Thus, despite significant advances in

Buenos Aires and a few other provinces, in most of Argentina's territory there are still no policies targeting Afrodescendants.

In Chile, Afrodescendant activists have gained recognition as subjects of differentiated rights by some regional state institutions in Arica. But given their peripheral location in relation to the capital city, activists have encountered obstacles in positioning their demands at the national level. In the Chilean unitary political system, political power and decision-making derives mostly from the central state and there are no competing legislatures within regional governments. Pathways for ethno-racial reform are thus more limited in Chile than in Argentina. Afro-Chileans' localization in a single region of the country, far away from central power, has prevented activists' access to central authorities that can pass laws and enact policies that address their claims. Therefore, Afro-Chileans have relied mostly on local political allies who have played the role of political brokers, amplifying their claims with national authorities. Yet, the Chilean state has been generally unresponsive to Afro-Chileans' demands, and policies enacted so far have mostly been restricted to the promotion of their culture and have exclusively impacted Afrodescendants who live in the Arica-Parinacota Region.

By focusing on the territorial organization of political power, this chapter contributes to explaining differences in the type and scope of the legislation and policies targeting Afrodescendants in Argentina and Chile. After describing how the state administrative apparatus is territorially organized in each country, this chapter is divided in two main sections. The first section examines the types of legislation addressing Afrodescendant rights discussed and approved in Argentina and Chile. The second section analyses a variety of policies that have included or targeted Afrodescendants in each country. In each section, I focus on the processes by which these laws and policies came to be passed, including the strategies activists have used in order to be taken into account by state authorities and the political actors who have intervened in their favor. I examine the types of alliances activists have constructed and how they have accessed public institutions to advance ethno-racial reform from within. Finally, I analyze the contents of each country's laws and policies, identifying how these align with different ways of understanding Afro-descent and discussing their potential impact on the lives of Afrodescendant communities.

Territorial organization of the state administrative apparatus

Argentina and Chile have developed distinct ways of organizing the state, particularly in relation to the territorial distribution of power. These differences are a result of each country's particular history of nation-building and state formation after gaining independence from Spain in the early 19th century. In Argentina, there is a federal system where political authority is divided between the national and provincial governments, which hold their own legislatures and exercise expansive independent authority within their territories. In Chile, in contrast, there is a unitary system, where political authority spans from the central government, there are no legislatures that compete with the National Congress, and regional governments enforce decisions taken at the central level. These differences have consequences for the pathways that Afrodescendant activists can take in each country to promote ethno-racial reform. In this section, I characterize these two administrative apparatuses to analyze how legal and policy reform can be achieved in each country.

Argentina: multiple pathways for political reform within an asymmetric federal system

The Argentine state can be characterized as an “asymmetric federalism” (Caamaño 1999) or a “political federalism” (Granato 2015), where the relative autonomy of the country’s provinces combines with a centralized presidential regime and the concentration of federal institutions, population, and productive resources in the nation’s capital city, the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (CABA, Spanish acronym).¹¹¹ Argentina is today divided into twenty-three provinces and the CABA, each with their own Constitutions and with autonomous governments, judicial powers, and legislators elected directly by the people and without intervention of the federal government (Bazan 2013). Provinces can thus approve their own laws and implement public policies in their territories as long as they are not in contradiction with the national Constitution and laws. Municipalities, in turn, are third-order administrative bodies generally associated with a city. Municipalities also hold their own Constitutions and elected councils who can approve municipal ordinances as long as they do not contradict provincial law.

The Argentine nation was initially formed by the federal unification of provinces following the dissolution of the Spanish Río de la Plata Viceroyalty. According to Andrews (1980:12), after independence from Spain, Argentina was extremely divided, each province forming a separate entity. At the basis of the conflict was the superior economic position of Buenos Aires in relation to the other provinces, due to its favorable geographical location as the country’s only ocean port, in contrast to the isolation of the country’s inland provinces. In this context, two factions came into conflict, the *unitarios*, who supported a strong central government that meant in practice the promotion of Buenos Aires’ hegemony over the rest of the country, and the *federales*, who opposed the growing power of Buenos Aires and defended a confederated system with much more autonomy granted to the provinces (Andrews 1980:14).

Several centralized governments existed in Buenos Aires between 1810 and 1830, but were not able to maintain power (Granato 2015). In a context of ongoing struggles between federalists and unitarians, the 1853 Argentine Constitution finally defined Argentina as a federal state. Buenos Aires, however, refused to join the Argentine Confederation until 1862, when the country was at last unified and the Argentine capital was moved from Entre Ríos to the City of Buenos Aires (Andrews 1980:19). The 1853 Constitution went through important reforms in 1866, 1898, 1957, and 1994, but maintained the federal configuration of the Argentine state in combination with a strong presidential system. The Constitutional reform of 1994 clarified the position of the municipalities, which participate in this federal system holding relative autonomy from their respective provinces, replicating the relationship between provinces and the federal government. With this reform, the capital city of Buenos Aires gained political autonomy and the official name of Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (CABA).

According to Granato (2015), Argentine federalism is characterized by the decentralization of political power through the coexistence of a federal state with provincial and municipal autonomies, in a model partly inspired by the United States’ Constitution but economically more centralized. In this federal system, while autonomous provinces can elect their own governors and

¹¹¹ CABA is one of Argentina’s first-level administrative divisions, equivalent to the other twenty-three provinces, and holds its own executive, legislative, and judicial powers. CABA borders the Province of Buenos Aires – which is a separate jurisdiction – to the south, west, and north, and the Río de la Plata to the east.

rule their particular institutions, the concentration of tax revenues by the federal government keeps the central state powerful enough to impose the most important legislation and conduct national and international life. Despite the superior status of federal legislation, national laws must be first approved by provincial legislatures before they can be applied at the provincial level. The implementation of national public policies in Argentina therefore relies on inter-provincial alliances constructed by presidents who transfer financial resources to provinces in exchange for electoral and legislative support (Leiras 2013 cited in Granato 2015:129). This results in very unequal levels of implementation of federal laws between Argentine provinces.

Understanding how federal and provincial law function is important for identifying how legal reforms addressing Afrodescendant rights have developed throughout the Argentine national territory. Afro-Argentines have followed two different pathways to promote ethno-racial reform: on the one hand, activists have sought political allies at local legislatures who have promoted the passing of provincial laws and municipal ordinances. On the other hand, coalitions of activists in the City of Buenos Aires have sought support from national senators and House representatives to present bills at the National Congress, a strategy that resulted in the approval of Law 26,852 in 2013, recognizing Afro-Argentines and Afro Culture. When a federal law is passed, provincial legislatures need to approve their own bills adhering to this law before it applies at the provincial level, which has happened in a few provinces for Law 26,852. While the approval of these federal and provincial laws has led to some policies, federal and provincial governments have also implemented policies that consider or target Afrodescendants without the need for legislative reform. The impact of these policies has varied depending on their design and the resources made available for their implementation. Overall, policies have been more impactful when Afrodescendants have been hired in state institutions, which has happened almost exclusively in Buenos Aires.

Chile: a single pathway for political reform within a centralized unitary system

Chile is a unitary state, where the central government is the sole source of political authority. In this system, policies are defined and resources are distributed exclusively from central institutions. The country is divided in 16 regions, each led by an elected Regional Governor and elected Regional Councilors. Chile's capital city, Santiago, is located in the Metropolitan Region, where most central state offices are located. Local governments, generally at the city level, are constituted by municipalities – autonomous corporations with legal personality, their own patrimony, and administrative faculties, in charge of providing the basic services of education and health. Municipalities are led by an elected mayor and an elected municipal council.

Like Argentina, Chile also experienced struggles after independence between those proposing the formation of a unitary state, represented mostly by elites from the capital city of Santiago, and those who supported a federalist state, a popular position in most provinces of the country. There were some early attempts to create a federal state, reflected in the 1828 National Constitution, which divided the country into eight provinces, each with its own legislative assembly of representatives elected by their provincial constituencies (Soto Martínez 2020:21). This regime, however, only endured for a short span of time, and by 1833 a new Constitution was approved that imposed a unitary and centralist state. Although some sectors of Chilean society continued to support the federalization of the republic, the political structure of the Chilean state

up until today has not been significantly modified, beyond some reforms that have enabled a greater administrative decentralization.

With the enactment of the 1925 Constitution, the governmental and administrative functions of the Chilean state were separated, promoting the administrative decentralization of the state without increasing the political power of provinces and municipalities (Soto Martínez 2020:23). During Pinochet's dictatorship (1973-1990), the 1980 Constitution was approved, which divided the political administration of the country into regions and created the figure of the Regional Ministry Secretariat, with the role of collaborating on the coordination of regional public services according to the guidelines defined at central ministries. With the return of democracy in 1990, several reforms were made to the political system, creating the figure of the Regional Government with designated councilors who hold normative, resolute, and supervisory functions. Since then, various reforms have decentralized regional governments by creating the figure of an elected Regional Governor and elected Regional Councilors.

Although Chile has progressively decentralized power through the creation of regional administrative bodies, it continues to be considered a centralized unitary state, since its regions do not hold legislative autonomy. Instead, all legislation in Chile is approved by a bicameral National Congress. This means that to promote legal reform, Afrodescendant activists in Chile must find support from a diverse array of Congress representatives and senators willing to vote in their favor. Afro-Chileans' geographical location in Arica,¹¹² very far away from Congressional headquarters in Valparaíso – a city close to Santiago – makes it hard for activists to influence national legislators, who generally know little about Afro-Chileans' struggles. However, in 2019, Congress members almost unanimously approved Law 21,151 recognizing the Chilean Afrodescendant Tribal People. To get this law passed, Afro-Chileans relied on local politicians who played the role of political brokers to gather support from parliamentarians. But five years since its approval, policies deriving from Law 21,151 are still pending, signaling central authorities' lack of commitment to materializing the law's mandates. Despite the obstacles that Afro-Chileans have encountered in promoting legal reform, they have found some limited opportunities to advance policies to address their claims locally. By reaching out to regional and municipal authorities, Afro-Chileans have been included in various local programs, gaining in this way institutional recognition as an ethno-racial minority.

Overall, differences in the type and scope of laws and policies related to Afrodescendant rights in Argentina and Chile are strongly connected to the opportunities and constraints of each country's political system in relation to the political geography of Afrodescendant movements. Governmental priorities and who occupies key positions at state institutions matter, but so does activists' capacity to build alliances and access those institutions, which is mediated by their geographical location and the territorial organization of political power. In the next two sections, I analyze a diversity of strategies that Afrodescendant activists have used to advance their claims, given their geographical location and the pathways available in each country to promote legislative and policy reform.

¹¹² Arica is the capital of the Arica-Parinacota Region, one of the 16 regions that comprise Chile's first-level administrative division. Arica borders Peru to the north, Bolivia to the east, the Tarapacá Region to the south, and the Pacific Ocean to the west.

The legal recognition of Afrodescendants

The geographical location of Afrodescendant movements matters for their political success both symbolically and materially. It matters symbolically because the way that the emergence of Afrodescendant movements challenges national ideologies of racial and cultural homogeneity varies according to their location. How society at large responds to Afrodescendants' claims to be legally recognized and included in narratives of nationhood is not the same if they are perceived as located in the center or at the margins of the nation-state. And it matters materially because Afrodescendant activists' possibilities of accessing political allies and state institutions differ depending on where they are located in relation to the territorial organization of political power. The political geography of Afrodescendant movements thus affects both how activists frame their demands to appeal to society at large – as analyzed in Chapter 3 – and how they construct alliances and relate to state institutions in order to advance their claims – the focus of this chapter.

In this section, I analyze how the Argentine federal system and the Chilean unitary system have created distinct political opportunities and constraints for ethno-racial legal reform in relation to the political geography of Afrodescendant movements. I look at how Afrodescendants' geographical location interacts with the state's territorial organization of political power to determine the pathways available for them to position their demands for legal recognition and ethno-racial legal reform. I examine the strategies activists have used to advance legislative initiatives, including how they have approached and been responded to by state actors and institutions. I finally analyze the contents of the laws that have been presented and passed in each country, identifying how they align with the ways in which Afro-Argentines and Afro-Chileans have framed their identities and claims for recognition and inclusion.

Argentina: diversifying political alliances to achieve multi-level recognition

The existence of a hierarchical system of federal, provincial, and municipal legislatures in Argentina means that Afro-Argentine activists can push for legal reform at any of these levels of government. To do so, they need to find political allies in the targeted legislative body who are willing to present bills that align with their claims.¹¹³ Therefore, only activists with certain levels of social capital to mobilize (Bourdieu 1986) will be able to advance legislative initiatives. As argued by Afro-Argentine activist Miriam Gomes (Interview, July 2021):

...here in Argentina, we can make proposals as civil society, but we need an elected representative to present them in Congress, so it has to do with political alliances, with how many people you know at the level of the House or the Senate.

Living in Buenos Aires provides activists with good chances to access members of the Argentine National Congress. But they can also opt to push for legal reform at the legislatures of the City of Buenos Aires or of the neighboring Province of Buenos Aires. Afro-Argentine activists

¹¹³ The Argentine Constitutional reform of 1994 introduced the "Popular Bill initiative," by which citizens can present a bill to be discussed in Congress without the sponsorship of a congressman. However, to present a bill, citizens need to gather signatures from at least 1.5% of the total number of people who voted in the last election for House representatives. Thus, it is generally easier to convince a House representative or senator to present a bill than to present a popular bill initiative.

in Buenos Aires have in fact been able to gain allies and present bills at each of these legislatures. These allies have generally been members of leftist and progressive parties who, as we will see, have also supported other historically discriminated groups, such as Indigenous peoples, women, and LGBTQI+ communities.

In Chapter 2, I described some bills presented at the National Congress related to international commitments acquired by the state regarding Afrodescendant rights. These bills signaled Congress members' concern with following up with those commitments by adapting national legislation in accordance with the international normative and legal instruments that the Argentine state has endorsed. These included a bill approved in 2006 recognizing the jurisdiction of the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in Argentina, eighteen bills presented between 2016 and 2023 – none of them approved to date – seeking the ratification of the Inter-American Convention Against Racism, Racial Discrimination and Related Forms of Intolerance (CIRDI), and two bills presented in 2016 seeking the country's adhesion to the International Decade for People of African Descent, in addition to many other similarly oriented resolution and declaration drafts.¹¹⁴ Activists have drawn on these bills and on the international instruments they are built on to make claims to the state as descendants of the African diaspora who share a history of marginalization and therefore are entitled to policies that can address discrimination and inequality.

In addition to these internationally-oriented bills, another ten bills have been presented at the Argentine National Congress directly targeting Afrodescendants (See Table 5). These bills were all presented between 2012 and 2023, and only one of them has been approved to date.¹¹⁵ Most of these bills align with understandings of Afro-descent that underscore Afrodescendants' cultural heritage and seek to give visibility to their historical contributions to the building of Argentine national society. They propose the creation of national days to commemorate Afro-Argentines, the recognition of prominent Afro-Argentine historical figures, and the promotion of Afro-Argentine culture.

The idea of establishing a date to commemorate Afro-Argentines began to be debated by Afrodescendant activists in 2011, resulting in various provincial laws and of the only federal law approved to date directly addressing Afro-Argentines' recognition. Approved in 2013, Law 26,852 institutes November 8th as the National Day of Afro-Argentines and Afro Culture, in commemoration of María Remedios del Valle, an Afrodescendant soldier who was named captain due to her bravery on the battlefield during the Argentine independence battles. The law additionally orders the incorporation of November 8th in the school calendar, entrusts to the Education Ministry the incorporation of curricula in the educational system to promote "Afro culture," and entrusts to the Culture Secretariat the commemoration of November 8th and the promotion of public policies that visibilize and support Afro culture. While the law's main goal is to recognize Afro-Argentines as a constitutive part of the Argentine nation, the use of the expression "Afro culture" signals a more expansive understanding of Afro-descent that can

¹¹⁴ Congress members also presented several bills to give constitutional rank to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169, but, differently than in the case of Afro-Chileans, this convention has not been a significant legal instrument for Afro-Argentines' claims-making processes.

¹¹⁵ I do not consider in this count bills that reproduce previous ones that have expired.

incorporate diverse diasporic cultural expressions.¹¹⁶

Before the publication of Law 26,852, three other similar laws were enacted at the provincial level. The first one was approved in 2011 by the legislature of the Province of Buenos Aires, establishing October 11 as the “Day of African-Argentine Culture in the Province of Buenos Aires.” The other two were passed by the legislature of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (CABA). One of these, approved in 2012, declared July 25 as “Afro Women Day in the City of Buenos Aires.” The other, also approved in 2013, had almost the exact same wording as the Federal Law, establishing November 8th as the “Day of Afro-Argentines and Afro Culture in the City of Buenos Aires.” For each of these laws to be approved, activists had to find legislators willing to present each bill at their respective legislatures and gather support for it from other legislators. The fact that these provincial – and CABA – laws were enacted a couple of years earlier than Law 26,852 might speak to the easier access that activists had at the time to provincial legislators, and the more favorable disposition they might have found for the passing of legislation of these characteristics in provincial legislatures.

These provincial laws marked a precedent for future laws and provided Afrodescendant activists with legislative experience and social capital in the form of political allies, which they relied on when they decided to present a bill at the federal level. Building on this experience, activists sought support from national legislators with a certain level of influence. Several Afro-Argentines I interviewed recognized in House Representative Horacio Pietragalla their main ally in this process, confirming that he played a crucial role presenting the bill and gathering support from other congressional representatives for its approval. Afro-Argentine activist Carlos Álvarez (Interview, August 2021) narrated the process by which, after internally discussing and drafting the bill, Afro-Argentine leaders presented it to several legislators:

We first organized. Some of our civil society organizations, including Xangó, Movimiento Afrocultural, Organización ONIRA, Jóvenes Afroargentinos Caboverdianos, coordinated to take this bill to different politicians. That is how I met the current National Human Rights Secretary [Horacio Pietragalla], and from that moment in which he helped us get the bill approved, we have seen a very positive impact for our movement.

Horacio Pietragalla is a leftist politician whose parents were killed during the Argentine military dictatorship, and who in 2003 became grandchild number 75 when he was “recovered” by the grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo.¹¹⁷ His particular life story might help to explain his empathy for the causes of marginalized groups. After the election in 2019 of the left-wing President Alberto Fernández, Pietragalla was named National Human Rights Secretary. As we will see, the relationship that Carlos Álvarez constructed with Pietragalla during the presentation, discussion, and approval of Law 26,852, would be crucial for the incorporation of an Afrodescendant agenda and the appointment of Afro-Argentines in the Human Rights Secretariat years later.

¹¹⁶ I discuss debates between activists regarding this law’s framing in Chapter 5, focused on *who* the law should consider as subjects of rights.

¹¹⁷ The Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo is a human rights organization whose goal is to find the grandchildren – babies and young children at the time – stolen and illegally given up for adoption during the Argentine military dictatorship (1976-1983). These stolen minors were mostly the children of leftist activists killed and disappeared by the militaries. Each identified child is assigned a number, corresponding to the total children “recovered” (recuperados) at that point. Up until today, the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo have reunited 137 grandchildren with their biological families.

Although the approval of Law 26,852 marks a very important milestone for Afro-Argentines, consolidating them as a political force capable of promoting ethno-racial reform, there have been several obstacles preventing the creation of public policies throughout the country to respond to this law. As explained earlier, in Argentina's federal system each province's legislature has to pass a law to adhere to federal laws before these can rule at the provincial level. Mérida Dossou Sekel (Interview, January 2022), an Afro-Argentine activist from the Province of Santa Fe, spoke to me about the obstacles inherent in the federal system for enacting reform:

I think that what is most interesting about the law is that it urges the Education Ministry to incorporate Afrodescendants in curricular content. The problem is that education is federalized, so each province has its own educational laws and its own ways of defining curricula, so every province needs to adhere to the national law first in order to see any change, and here, for example, the Province of Santa Fe, where the city of Rosario is located, has not yet adhered to the law.¹¹⁸

Therefore, who is in government in each province and their relationship with the national government is significant for the provincial adherence to federal legislation. Of the twenty-three Argentine provinces, I have identified four where legislatures have approved laws stating that the province adheres to Law 26,852, or creating a provincial Afrodescendant day: the provinces of Misiones,¹¹⁹ El Chaco, Entre Rios, and Santa Fe (see Table 6). Similar bills were presented in the legislatures of the provinces of Corrientes, Córdoba, Mendoza, and Buenos Aires, but I could not find any proof of their approval. In addition, the legislatures of at least eight municipalities have approved ordinances either adhering to Law 26,852, adhering to other provincial laws related to Afrodescendants, or creating their own municipal Afrodescendant days (see Table 7).¹²⁰ In each of these provinces and municipalities, there are organized Afrodescendant activists who have pressured their legislators to advance Afrodescendants' legal recognition.

Additionally, two bills have been presented at the National Congress proposing affirmative-action measures for Afrodescendants, in line with other laws in the country that seek to address inequalities that have affected historically marginalized peoples. These bills are justified by legislators by alluding to the history of exclusion suffered by Afro-Argentines and to the existence of similar measures targeting other marginalized groups in the country. One of these bills seeks to modify the Higher Education Law, to promote the inclusion of Indigenous and Afrodescendant peoples in educational institutions, and was drafted by Indigenous rights lawyers in the context of the UNESCO Chair on Higher Education and Indigenous and Afrodescendant Peoples, with no participation of Afro-Argentine activists to my knowledge.

The second of these bills was promoted by Mónica Macha, a congressional representative who has presided over the House of Representatives' Women and Diversity Commission between

¹¹⁸ In 2022, some months after I interviewed Mérida Dossou Sekel, Santa Fe adhered to Law 26,852 through provincial Law 14,103.

¹¹⁹ For the case of Misiones, Néilda Wisneke (Interview, October 2021) narrated how Marta Ferreira, a representative in the Misiones legislature, decided to present the bill drafted by the Afro-Argentine community of Misiones seeking the provincial adherence to Law 26,952.

¹²⁰ It is quite possible that more municipal legislatures have passed similar ordinances, but given the existence of 1,298 municipalities in Argentina, I had to rely on news available on the internet to identify which have done so and then visit their webpages, where only some municipalities have accessible information about approved ordinances.

2020 and 2024 and has been an important ally to Afro-Argentine activists. Presented at the House in 2023, this bill seeks to establish a quota of 2% for hiring Afrodescendants in jobs at public institutions. The bill, however, has not yet been discussed in Congress. Macha had already presented a similar bill to create hiring quotas for transgender people, approved in 2021,¹²¹ and had sponsored a bill presented by Afrodescendant civil society to institute July 25 as the “National day of Afrodescendant, Afro-Latin, Afro-Caribbean, and diasporic lesbians, bisexuals, travesties, trans, non-binary, intersex and other identities and gender expressions,” bringing under a common intersectional frame the recognition of LGBTQI+ and Afrodescendant communities.

Finally, in 2018, national senator Sigrid Kunath presented, together with other two leftist senators, a bill to create the National Institute for Afro-Argentine, Afrodescendant and African Affairs (INAFRO). The project had been created by Afrodescendant organizations that participated in the November 8th Commission – one of the main networks of Afrodescendant organizations in Argentina, created in 2015 to follow up with political actions after the approval of Law 26,852. The bill to create INAFRO was inspired by the National Institute for Indigenous Affairs (INAI), established by the government of Raúl Alfonsín in 1985, after the restoration of democracy in Argentina. According to Kunath (Interview, January 2022), it was Afro-Argentine activists who in 2018 contacted her advisors. Kunath believes they approached her due to her trajectory advocating for diversities and minorities – particularly in relation to gender violence. Although she didn’t have previous experience advocating for Afrodescendant rights, she decided to support them and presented the bill in the Senate, but unfortunately it was never given priority to be discussed in a commission. From Kunath’s perspective, there were two main problems that prevented the bill’s discussion and approval. First, the institution that the bill proposed to create was quite voluminous and would have required considerable economic resources, in a context in which President Mauricio Macri had promised to diminish the number of public employees. Second, Afro-Argentine activists didn’t approach other senators to build a broader consensus about the need for this institution. Several Afro-Argentines I interviewed told me that they were trying to reposition the bill and present it this time in the House, with the support of Representative Mónica Macha, mentioned earlier as an ally to the movement. Afro-Argentine activist Patricia Gomes (Interview, November 2021) referred to the importance of the INAFRO bill and Afrodescendant’ expectations of getting it approved:

Well, this bill is a project worked on by all the organizations and individuals that conform the November 8th Commission. The goal of INAFRO is to be an institutionalized body operating at the national level that can respond to the demands of the Afro community. In the same way that the National Institute for Indigenous Affairs, the INAI, we want to have our own institute that can carry out focalized work for the Afro-Argentine and Afrodescendant community. The bill is in the National Congress since 2018, I think it is still in effect, you know that bills lose parliamentary status after a couple of years and you have to present them again [...] We have also been coordinating with the Inter-ministerial Roundtable¹²² and the House’s Women and Diversity Commission, led by Representative Mónica Macha, to propel the discussion of INAFRO. We have expectations for it to be approved at some moment, maybe not immediately, but next year.

In contrast to the other bills targeting Afrodescendants, the INAFRO bill is the only one

¹²¹ Macha was also one of the promoters of the law that in 2020 decriminalized abortion in Argentina, illustrating her commitment to progressive and human rights legislation regarding minority rights.

¹²² I discuss the creation of the Inter-ministerial Roundtable (Mesa Interministerial) in the next section.

proposing the creation of a specific institution, with assigned human and financial resources, to take charge of the needs of Afrodescendants in Argentina. In this sense, it could potentially respond to the diversity of claims made by the Afrodescendant community. However, it seems unlikely for this bill – or the hiring quotas bill – to be prioritized in the upcoming years given the current political climate in Argentina after the election in December 2023 of the extreme-right-wing libertarian president, Javier Milei.¹²³

TABLE 5: BILLS PRESENTED AT THE ARGENTINE NATIONAL CONGRESS¹²⁴

YEAR	CHAMBER	BILL CONTENT	State
2012	House	Institutes April 17 of every year as the Day of Afro-Argentines from the Colonial Line	Expired
2012	Senate	Declares October 11th of every year as the National Day of Afro-Argentines and Argentine-African Culture	Expired
2013	House	Law N° 26,852 - Institutes November 8th as the National Day of Afro-Argentines and Afro Culture	Approved
2013	House	Recognizes María Remedios del Valle, named captain and “Mother of the homeland” by General Manuel Belgrano	Expired
2016	House	Institutes July 25th of every year as National Day of Afrodescendant Women	Expired
2016	House	Promotes the respect and promotion of African-Argentine culture	Expired
2018	Senate	Creates the National Institute for Afro-Argentine, Afrodescendant and African Affairs (INAFRO)	Expired
2021	House	Updates the Higher Education Law to include education inclusion policies for Indigenous and Afrodescendant peoples	Expired
2021	House	Institute July 25th as the National day of Afrodescendant, Afro-Latin, Afro-Caribbean, and diasporic lesbians, bisexuals, travesties, trans, non-binary, intersex and other identities and gender expressions	Pending
2023	House	Establishes a hiring quota for Afro-Argentine and Afrodescendant people	Pending

Some legislative initiatives – in addition to those adhering to National Law 26,852 – have been presented at provincial and municipal legislatures. At the provincial level, a bill was presented in 2020 by the legislature of the Province of Santiago del Estero to declare the town of San Félix’s “Historical, Cultural, Educational and Touristic Heritage.”¹²⁵ At the Municipal level, we find as early as 2011 the approval of Ordinance 11,649 at the Municipality of Santa Fe de la Veracruz, which changes the name of a street called “Walk of the two cultures” to “Walk of the three cultures,” recognizing in this way that in addition to the European and Indigenous cultures, the Afrodescendant culture is also constitutive of the Argentine nation. The date of the approval of this ordinance, April 17th, has been since used by some activists to refer to it as the “Day of the Afro-Argentines from the Colonial Line.”¹²⁶ Additionally, according to Lucía Molina (Interview, October 2021), another initiative was presented at that same municipality to create a Human Rights

¹²³ Javier Milei was elected promising to close ministries and other public institutions – such as INADI – which he regards as useless and as merely a source of employment for leftist party “parasites,” who only signify expenses for taxpayers.

¹²⁴ This table excludes bills related to the adherence or ratification of international normative and legal instruments.

¹²⁵ While I could not find information to confirm this provincial bill’s approval, a homologous declaration draft recognizing San Félix’s heritage was approved at the National House of Representatives in 2021.

¹²⁶ I discuss the concept of “colonial line” in Chapter 5.

Commission for Afrodescendants to promote the creation of local public policies. However, the provincial legislation approved so far has been restricted to giving visibility to the cultural heritage of Afro-Argentine communities.

TABLE 6: BILLS PRESENTED AT ARGENTINE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURES

PROVINCE	YEAR	BILL CONTENT	STATE
Buenos Aires	2011	Law N° 14,276 - Institutes October 11th as the Day of African-Argentine Culture in the Province of Buenos Aires	Approved
		Declares the Provincial Day of Afro-Argentines from the Colonial Line	Expired
	2023	Adheres to the dispositions of National Law N° 26.852 that institutes November 8th as the National Day of Afro-Argentines and Afro Culture	Pending
CABA	2012	Law N° 4,355 - Declares July 25th as the Day of Afro Women in the City of Buenos Aires.	Approved
	2013	Law N° 4,503 - Declares the Day of the Afro-Argentine and Afro Culture to be commemorated on November 8th.	Approved
Misiones	2014	Declaration Draft that adheres to the National Day of Afro-Argentines and Afro Culture, as mandated by Law 26,852	Approved
Corrientes	2014	Adheres to national Law N 26,852 that institutes November 8th as the National Day of Afro-Argentines and Afro Culture	Expired
El Chaco	2015	Law N° 2,381 - Declares January 6th as the “Day of the Chaco Afrodescendant and the Afro-literoño Culture”	Approved
Santiago del Estero	2015	Declares the town of San Félix as Historical, Cultural, Educational and Touristic Heritage	Expired
Córdoba	2015	Creates the Day of Cordoba Afrodescendants and of the Afro-Cordobés Culture, and provincial adhesion to the terms of National Law 26,852	Expired
Entre Ríos	2019	Law N° 10,667 Provincial Adhesion to National Law 26,852	Approved
	2021	Law N° 10,884 - Establishes May 21st as the Day of Afro-Entreterrianos/as and the Afro-litoreña Culture	Approved
Santa Fe	2016	Declares April 17th as the Provincial Day of Afro-Argentines from the Colonial Line	Expired
	2022	Law° 14,103 - 2022 - Adheres to National Law N° 26,852 and establishes November 8th as the National Day of Afro-American Peoples and of the Afro Culture	Approved
Mendoza	2022	Institutes June 15th as the Day of Afro-Mendocinos/as	Pending

TABLE 7: BILLS PRESENTED AT ARGENTINE MUNICIPAL LEGISLATURES¹²⁷

PROVINCE	MUNICIPALITY	YEAR	ORDINANCE CONTENT	STATE
Santa Fe	Santa Fe de la Veracruz	2011	Ordinance N° 11649 - Names “Paseo de las Tres Culturas” a street previously called “Paseo de las Dos Culturas”	Approved
	Rosario	2022	Ordinance N° 10433 - Adheres to National Law N° 26,852, and to Provincial Law N° 14,103	Approved
Buenos Aires	Avellaneda	2016	Ordinance N° 27298 - Institutes in the City of Avellaneda July 25th as the Municipal Day of Afro Women	Approved
	Chascomús	2017	Ordinance N° 5096 - Declares June 25th as the Day of the Afro-Chascomunense	Approved
	Lomas de Zamora	2019	Ordinance N° 16926 - Declares July 25th as the Day of Afro Women in Lomas de Zamora	Approved
Córdoba	Córdoba	2017	Ordinance N° 12735 - Institutes April 27th as the Day of Afro-Cordobesa Culture	Approved
El Chaco	Resistencia	2022	Ordinance N° 13870 - Adheres to Provincial Law N° 2.38, which institutes January 6th as the Day of the Chaco Afrodescendant and the Afro-litoreño Culture	Approved
Río Negro	Bariloche	2023	Ordinance N° 3408 - Establishes the Day of Afrodescendants and Afro Culture	Approved
San Luis	Villa de Merlo	2023	Ordinance N° III-1110-C.D. - Institutes November 8th as the Municipal Day of Afro-Argentines and Afro Culture in the community of Villa Merlo	Approved

Summing up, we find in Argentina a diversity of legislative initiatives regarding Afrodescendant rights. Argentine’s federal system provides Afro-Argentines with two possible pathways to legal reform: they can seek local political allies and present initiatives at provincial or municipal legislatures, or they can seek centralized political allies to present initiatives at the National Congress, which provincial legislatures must then approve before they apply at the provincial level. The movement’s concentration in Buenos Aires has allowed them to gain allies both at the National Congress and at the legislatures of CABA and of the Province of Buenos Aires. With the exception of one municipal ordinance in the city of Santa Fe, all Afrodescendant legislative initiatives were first presented at these three legislatures located in Buenos Aires and its surroundings. After the approval of Law 26,852 in 2013, some provinces and municipalities have passed initiatives to adhere to this federal law, which thus far has had little impact outside of Buenos Aires.

While legislators have presented a variety of bills responding to the diversity of demands of Afrodescendants in Argentina, the few initiatives approved so far have been limited to the creation of commemoration dates to celebrate Afrodescendants’ contributions to national society, promote their cultural heritage, and include their history in educational curricula. While these initiatives are important to begin to reverse the erasure of Afrodescendants from Argentine history,

¹²⁷ I have excluded from this table ordinances that approved naming buildings, streets, or infrastructure after Afro-Argentine historical figures. The only exception is Santa Fe’s Ordinance N° 11,649, which I have included given its importance as the first legislation approved associated with Afro-Argentines.

the implementation of corresponding policies, such as curricula modification in educational establishments, has been rather slow and only impacted a few provinces of the country. However, throughout these legislative processes Afro-Argentine activists have gained experience, constructed political alliances, and made themselves visible to state authorities, overall empowering the Afrodescendant movement.

Chile: gaining local political allies to achieve national recognition

Chile's legislative history related to Afrodescendants rights is much simpler given that in Chile, only the National Congress has legislative power. Furthermore, given the Afro-Chilean movements' location in Arica, very far away from Congress headquarters in Valparaíso, activists' chances of influencing national legislators – who generally know and care little about the existence of Afro-Chileans – are minimal. Arica, however, is a small city with tight networks, where it is relatively easy to access political authorities. Thus, Afro-Chileans have relied on the senators and House representatives elected in Arica to play the role of political brokers and position their claims at the National Congress.

Between 2008 and 2020, five bills were presented in the Chilean Congress related to Afro-descent. Two of them proposed the erection of monuments in Arica, one in 2008 proposing a monument to Afrodescendants, and the other in 2013 proposing a monument to Nelson Mandela. These two bills were never discussed nor voted in Congress and I have not found any indication so far of Afro-Chileans' participation in their presentation. The other three bills, in contrast, were initiatives of Afro-Chilean activists.

In 2009, Afro-Chileans attempted for the first time to be legally recognized by the Chilean state. To do so, they allied with House Representative Antonio Leal – who had been elected in a district of the Atacama Region – to present a bill in Congress. According to the activists and local politicians I interviewed, Leal had the aspiration of running in the following elections as a Senate candidate for the recently created Arica-Parinacota Region.¹²⁸ Thus, he was looking for causes to represent that could help him gain visibility in Arica, which made him prone to support Afro-Chileans' claims. The bill was constructed by Afrodescendant activists from organizations that had come together in 2008 to form the Chilean Afrodescendant Organizations Alliance. Leal persuaded four other House representatives to present the bill with him in Congress. The signatories were members of left-, center- and right-wing parties and, with the exception of one of them, they all had re-election aspirations in Arica, accounting for the role of electoral politics in the transversal support for Afro-Chileans' demands in Arica.

The bill established “the recognition of Afrodescendant ethnicity in Chile” and “the right of Afrodescendant communities to preserve, develop and fortify their identity, institutions and social and cultural traditions.” It additionally established the inclusion of an Afrodescendant variable in national population censuses, the incorporation of Afrodescendant history and culture in national educational curricula, and the state's obligation to hear Afrodescendant organizations' opinions about projects that might affect them. Differently than Argentine Law 26,852, this bill not only sought to create awareness about Afrodescendants' historical contributions to the nation

¹²⁸ The provinces of Arica and Parinacota were part of the Tarapacá Region until 2007, when a law approved the creation of the Arica-Parinacota Region, dividing Tarapacá into two regions.

but also emphasized the protection and fortification of their collective institutions and traditions, as well as of their right to be consulted about measures that might affect them. This protection of collective rights aligns with constructions of Afro-descent in relation to Indigenous peoples' rights, an ethnicization of Blackness (Restrepo 2004) that a number of authors have identified for Black rural communities, but that is less common for Afrodescendant groups that, like those of the Arica-Parinacota region, are predominantly urban. Recognizing "Afrodescendant ethnicity," furthermore, is consistent with the Indigenous Law approved in Chile in 1993,¹²⁹ which recognized the existence of "indigenous ethnic groups."

While the presentation of this bill marked an important milestone for the Afro-Chilean movement's political mobilization, the bill was never discussed in Congress and was finally archived. Afro-Chilean activists, however, did not give up and sought new allies who could help them gain their longed-for recognition by the state. In 2016, they found this ally in Luis Rocafull, a socialist House representative elected in the Arica-Parinacota Region. Rocafull had been a House representative for Arica since 2014. Earlier in 2007, he had been appointed as the Arica-Parinacota Region's first Intendant,¹³⁰ role he held until 2010 and in which he had supported Afro-Chileans in their first attempt to conduct a local survey – the "Censo Afro" discussed in Chapter 1. He was therefore familiar with the struggles of Afro-Chileans and had become close with some movement leaders.

The bill was again drafted by Afro-Chilean activists and then amended by Rocafull's legislative advisor, who simplified it by eliminating articles that involved economic resources, given that in Chile only presidential initiatives can require a budget for their execution. Like Leal, Rocafull persuaded another nine House representatives to sign the bill for its presentation. He sought representatives from the entire political spectrum – ranging from the Communist Party to the right-wing Independent Democratic Union Party – in a deliberate attempt to secure transversal support. Rocafull didn't stop there, but took several steps to make sure that the bill could move forward (Interview, August 2021):

To get bills discussed and approved, you need to ruffle them in the House, talk to people, put some pressure. I took several steps for this to come to fruition; one has to carry out several strategies to succeed. (...) First, I got Vlado Mirosevic, the other representative for Arica, to sign the bill, to convey cohesion. Then, we started to request signatures from representatives from the different parties in the House, to project transversal support. After that, I talked to each member of the Culture Commission¹³¹ and invited them to hold a session in Arica. In this way, we managed to get the bill discussed in the Commission, despite the fact that it was a bill without urgency and commissions always prioritize bills coming from the executive. We asked Afro-Chilean activists to do a presentation for the commission. Commission members began to commit, and we then pressured them over those commitments. Finally, the bill was voted on at the House of Representatives, where it was approved, and moved on to the Senate.

¹²⁹ Law 19,253, popularly known as "Indigenous Law," is available at: <https://www.bcn.cl/leychile/navegar?idNorma=30620>.

¹³⁰ Before the constitutional reform that created in 2017 the figure of elected regional governors, the intendant – a position appointed by the president of the Republic – was the regional executive authority and presided over the regional government.

¹³¹ In my review of the history of the bill, I found out that Rocafull misremembered and the Commission that discussed the Bill was the Human Rights Commission.

Rocaful's description reveals how he engaged in various actions to secure the advancement of the bill through the legislative process. His first ally was Vlado Mirosevic, another House Representative for Arica and member of the center-left wing Liberal Party. Mirosevic actively supported Leal's initiative and helped him gather the necessary votes so that the bill could be approved at the House. When I asked Mirosevic how they managed to secure votes from right-wing party representatives, he answered (Interview, September 2021):

Since there were also parliament members in the [Arica-Parinacota] Region that were from right-wing parties, they did their part of the job with the [political] sectors that have been historically more resistant to recognize diversity in the [national] territory. They had their own internal agenda to explain to their party comrades that this was an important bill that represented an important group of people in Arica, so they did their own job internally.

Mirosevic's answer exposes how in Arica, regional identity and loyalties can trump ideological positions. It also shows how politicians from different parties saw Afro-Chileans as possible voters with whom it was convenient to secure allegiances. Thus, Afro-Chileans were able to mobilize support from local authorities across the political spectrum. In fact, once the bill went to the Senate, both of the senators representing Arica – who belonged to opposite political parties – came together to defend it. After three years of discussion, the bill was finally approved in both chambers, with no votes against and only one vote of abstention in each chamber.

On April 2019, Law 21,151 was published “granting legal recognition to the Chilean Afro-descendant Tribal People and their cultural identity, language, historical tradition, culture, institutions, and worldview.” The shift from identifying Afrodescendants as an ethnicity – in the 2009 bill – to recognizing them now as a Tribal People responds to the influence of international legal instruments, in particular ILO Convention 169 and the jurisprudence established by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights – already discussed in Chapter 2. But here it is important to emphasize how this new category of recognition is concordant with debates on the recognition of Indigenous communities, who have progressively shifted from being identified as “ethnic groups” to “Indigenous peoples.” As argued by Afro-Chilean activist Camila Rivera (Interview, July 2021):

In 2009, when we constructed the bill with Representative Leal, we based ourself in what existed at the time, that was the Indigenous Law that recognized them [Indigenous people] as an ethnic group. When we constructed this other law, Chile had already ratified Convention 169, we had conducted a survey in the region, we had anthropological studies that showed that we share common elements as a people, we had been included in the Indigenous previous consultation process, and the international jurisprudence had already recognized the Saramaka Afrodescendant Tribal People in Suriname. All of this allowed us to move from ethnic group to Tribal People.

The rest of the articles of the law are similar to those in the 2009 bill, related to Afrodescendants' inclusion in educational curricula and national censuses and to their right to be consulted when legislative or administrative measures might affect them. On this last point, however, it is relevant that Law 21,151 establishes their right to be *consulted* through ILO Convention 169, instead of just being asked their opinion, as was worded in the 2009 bill. Again, the approval of this law reveals Afro-Chileans' reliance on mechanisms established for Indigenous recognition to position their own agenda.

It is important to mention that although Law 21,151 is not restricted to the Arica-Parinacota

Region, during congressional debates representatives constantly connected it to Arica's local history and cultural traditions, which might explain why it was so easily backed by politicians who otherwise are generally against granting differentiated rights. The bill, furthermore, appeared innocuous since it did not include measures that could affect other groups' interests – such as the establishment of quotas, reserved seats, or territorial rights – although Afrodescendants' inclusion in national censuses and previous consultation processes could eventually serve to advance those types of claims.

The fifth bill targeting Afrodescendants was presented in the Chilean Congress in 2020, again by Luis Rocaful. The bill, most likely inspired in Argentine Law 26,852, seeks to “declare December 3rd of every year as the National Day of the Chilean Afrodescendant Tribal People.” In a very similar manner to the Argentine initiatives I previously described, this bill states that in the context of this commemoration, actions can be carried out to promote the Afrodescendant Tribal People's traditional knowledge, rituals, symbology, and clothing. The bill's justification is framed as a way to materialize the third article of Law 21,151, related to the respect and promotion of Afro-Chilean's' culture. However, there was no mention of this bill by the people I interviewed.

Finally, Afro-Chileans have also made claims to be constitutionally recognized in Chile. In October 2019, only some months after the approval of Law 21,151, Chile experienced the largest protests it has had since the return of democracy, fueled by people's feelings of distrust towards the political class and overall discontent with a socioeconomic model that had made their lives increasingly precarious (Mardones Marshall 2023). After a month of continuous social unrest, Chilean parties from across the political spectrum agreed on having a plebiscite so the people could decide whether to change the Pinochet-era Constitution. In October 2020, a vast majority of the population voted in favor of engaging in a process of constitutional reform, and in May 2021 elections were held to choose the 155 members of the Constitutional Convention in charge of drafting the new Constitution.

Afro-Chilean activists actively engaged in this constitutional process: they campaigned in favor of constitutional reform, debated how to be included in a new Constitution, presented candidates for the Constitutional Convention, and – after their candidates were not elected – travelled regularly to Santiago to meet with Convention members and position their constitutional demands. Their main strategy, however, was to seek support from members of the Convention elected for the Arica-Parinacota Region, who could lobby in favor of their demands with other Convention members. Among Afro-Chileans' main claims were the inclusion of Afrodescendants in the recognition of Chile as a pluri-national state, the constitutional recognition of the Chilean Afrodescendant Tribal People, the creation of mechanisms such as reserved seats or quotas to secure Afrodescendants' political participation in every state branch, the adjustment of the national legal system to international standards, the recognition of Afrodescendants' ancestral territories, the consideration of their differentiated legal status for the exercise of their fundamental rights, and the inclusion of the principles of equality and non-discrimination (Colectiva de Mujeres Afrodescendientes Luanda 2021; Mesa Técnico Política del Pueblo Tribal Afrodescendiente 2021).

While there were norms proposed and debated in the Constitutional Convention related to each of these demands, the only articles that were approved and included in the constitutional draft

presented by Convention members were related to the principle of pluri-nationality – albeit with no explicit mention of Afrodescendants – and the principle of equality and non-discrimination – with a generic mention of “Tribal Peoples” among other suspect classifications. The only norm included specifically targeting the Afro-Chilean Tribal People recognized their cultural rights and established that the state would secure their exercise, development, promotion, conservation, and protection. This article, however, was below the threshold established by Law 21,151 (Mardones Marshall, Amigo and Cortés 2024).¹³²

To conclude, Afro-Chileans’ peripheral location in an extremely centralized country has represented an obstacle to positioning their demands for legal recognition and ethno-racial legal reform. Since there are no regional legislatures in Chile, activists have relied on local political allies from across the political spectrum to present and defend bills at the National Congress. So far, the only law that has passed targeting Afrodescendants is Law 21,151, which grants them legal recognition as Tribal People and establishes certain obligations from the state to ensure their development and inclusion. Despite its national character, Law 21,151 was strongly connected to the Arica-Parinacota Region in congressional debates, aligning with framings of Afro-descent that emphasize local history and cultural heritage. This law signals a process of ethnicization of Afro-descent in Arica, where activists have constructed their claims in relation to Aymara Indigenous people. The regulation of this law and its translation into specific public policies, however, is still pending, and the existing policies that have included Afrodescendants have so far mostly been restricted to the promotion of their cultural practices in Arica.

The institutionalization of Afro-descent

While achieving legal recognition was one of the main goals that Afrodescendants established when they began to politically organize in Argentina and Chile, laws do not mean much if they are not accompanied by policies that give materiality to what is written on paper. The institutionalization of Afro-descent goes beyond the approval of a law and requires states to develop actions, programs, and institutions that impact in one way or another the lives of Afrodescendants. Public institutions do not function homogeneously, and who is appointed to decision-making positions matters for the advancement of policies given that state officials have different approaches to addressing civil society’s claims, depending on their distinct sensitivities and interests. Activists can gain allies in key institutions or themselves become state officials, in order to design and implement policies that respond to their groups’ demands (Morgan and Orloff 2017:11).

As with laws, differences in the policies that the Argentine and Chilean states have developed are connected to the opportunities and constraints of each country’s political system. How activists navigate each system, influencing state actors and accessing institutions to advance ethno-racial policies, is mediated by the political geography of Afrodescendant movements. Depending on activists’ geographical location vis-à-vis the territorial organization of political

¹³² The constitutional draft presented by the Constitutional Convention was rejected in a national plebiscite that took place on October 25, 2022. A second constitutional process followed in 2023 and again the constitutional draft presented by the elected council – which this time did not include any mention of Afrodescendants – was rejected in the plebiscite that took place on September 4, 2023. The Chilean Constitution of 1980 thus remains in place.

power, activists will develop different strategies to gain support and position their demands successfully.

In this section, I identify a variety of policies that have addressed Afrodescendant rights in each country. I analyze how these policies have come to include Afrodescendants or have been created to address their claims, and their overall impacts so far. In both Argentina and Chile, some state institutions have included Afrodescendants in actions or programs preceding the passage of recognition laws. These actions constitute forms of state recognition that have paved the way for Afrodescendants to position themselves as legitimate political actors and continue making claims. They represent early forms of institutionalization of Afro-descent. The passage of recognition laws carries the promise of more direct policies to address Afrodescendant rights. But while in Argentina programs have been created in a number of ministries and public institutions focusing on diverse aspects of Afrodescendants' claims, Afro-Chileans have struggled to secure policies that go beyond the promotion of their cultural practices. By focusing on the interaction between Afrodescendant activists and state officials, this section analyzes how activists create strategies to overcome structural constraints and advance policies that, although insufficient, represent small steps towards Afrodescendants' recognition as deserving subjects of political rights.

Argentina: Installing an Afrodescendant agenda from within

Programs and policies addressing Afrodescendant rights in Argentina preceded the passage of the national law that recognized Afro-Argentines and Afro culture in 2013. Following Ocoró Loango (2018), it was during the kirchnerista governments (2003-2015) that the state's rhetoric shifted to include Afrodescendants. During this period, Afrodescendant activists in Buenos Aires reached out to national government officials, constructing alliances that enabled them to gain influence in order to position their demands within state institutions. In this way, activists played an important role in the design and implementation of policies targeting Afrodescendants, which over time became institutionalized in more permanent programs. Thus, the institutionalization of Afrodescendant rights in Argentina did not respond to a centralized or coordinated public policy but resulted from fragmented initiatives in the state institutions to which activists had access (Ocoró Loango 2018:276). Given the pronounced centralism of Argentine federal administrative bodies and the scarce resources these programs have relied on, most of them have hardly been implemented outside of Buenos Aires.

Early policies did not target Afrodescendants specifically but sought to combat the broad racial discrimination that the Argentine state was beginning to acknowledge, breaking at last with the long-standing narrative that positioned Argentina as a country without racism. The first state institution to address racial discrimination was the National Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (INADI), which, as we saw in Chapter 2, started to function in 1997 but truly acquired efficacy after the election of Nestor Kirchner in 2003 (Ottenheimer 2017; Rosenvitz 2020:41). INADI was created with the mission of developing and proposing actions to combat discrimination in accordance with the Anti-discrimination Law passed in 1988. Its main functions included receiving, centralizing, and recording complaints about discriminatory, xenophobic, and racist practices; giving free advice to discriminated individuals and groups; and training state officials from the Public Ministry and judicial courts, among others.

INADI was the first state institution to implement an Afrodescendant agenda in Argentina, almost a decade before other public institutions began to respond to Afro-Argentine activists' demands. In 2005, INADI began to function as an autonomous body under the Justice and Human Rights Ministry and was entrusted with the execution of the National Plan Against Discrimination, which had been approved that same year after a participatory process with representatives of civil society organizations. As a result of the involvement of Afrodescendant activists in this participatory process, the National Plan included Afrodescendants as one of several discriminated groups, and acknowledged – for the first time in Argentine history – the state violence historically exercised against Afrodescendants (INADI 2005). Through the National Plan, Afrodescendants became one of INADI's groups of concern and were included for the first time in the public agenda (García 2017; Lamborghini and Frigerio 2010; Ottenheimer 2017; Ottenheimer and Zubrzycki 2011). In 2006, under the initiative of María José Lubertino – who presided over the institution between 2006 and 2009 – INADI created civil society forums for the participation of various vulnerable groups. According to Lubertino herself (Interview, January 2022), she installed participatory budgets so that the various civil society forums could receive financial resources to carry out priority activities. In this context, INADI included Afrodescendants in its Civil Society Consultative Council and created the Forum of Afrodescendants and Africans, opening an institutional space where activists could come together for the first time to debate public policies with state officials, influencing their design and implementation (INADI 2021; García 2017).

By bringing together diverse discriminated groups, INADI promoted building broad coalitions between different groups that shared a condition of marginalization and exclusion, while simultaneously fostering activists' early identification of the intersection of various types of oppression. But at the same time, INADI identified the erasure of Afrodescendants in Argentine history as one of the strongest expressions of anti-Black racism, and over the years launched actions to reverse this erasure, such as curricula modification and the diffusion of Black cultural practices, identified as a valuable heritage that Argentine society needed to acknowledge (García 2017). The Afrodescendant activists I interviewed in Argentina valued INADI's actions to educate society about discriminatory practices against Afrodescendants as well as the cultural events launched during Lubertino's presidency to promote Afrodescendant culture. In contrast, INADI's supervisory role regarding discriminatory practices was frequently criticized, given the institution's powerlessness and inefficacy in taking action against discrimination. INADI can receive complaints, carry out investigations, and hand down verdicts, but these do not have a binding character and cases must be taken to a court of justice for the application of a penalty for discrimination.

There is a level of consensus around the smaller impact INADI has had at the provincial level, when compared to Buenos Aires. Authors have identified how INADI's lack of national reach has been one of its main weaknesses (Ottenheimer and Zubrzycki 2011; Rivera Vélez and Maluf 2017). Although Lubertino created INADI delegations in every province of the country,¹³³ Afro-Argentine activists outside of Buenos Aires have been critical of the role of the institution, which they have generally perceived as mostly a symbolic presence. In Misiones, for example, Afro-Argentine leader Nélica Wisneke (Interview, October, 2021) narrated how a INADI delegate told a group of Afro-Argentine activists that the only people who were discriminated against were

¹³³ The creation of delegations in every province – and in every city of the country with more than 100,000 inhabitants – was one of the proposals included in the National Plan Against Discrimination (INADI 2005).

trans people. Juan Carlos Rodríguez (Interview, January 2022), an Afro-Argentine activist from San Vicente, also in the province of Misiones, expressed how INADI is seen by many activists who live in provinces:

INADI does little to help issues related to discrimination, although it is its mission. Here in the municipality, we even have an INADI office, but I do not know why it was created because up until now it doesn't work as it should. I don't know if we lack information, but they created that delegation and nothing else; I do not see any benefits.

The characteristics of the Argentine federal system has represented an obstacle for the implementation of policies throughout the country's provinces. Provincial adhesion to the National Plan Against Discrimination has been unequal throughout the country. The implementation of adequate policies responding to the Anti-discrimination Law has been hindered due to coordination difficulties between national and provincial authorities, intrinsic to the Argentine federal system (Rivera Vélez and Maluf 2017:177). One element preventing a more efficient coordination between national and provincial authorities relates to authorities' political allegiances at different levels of government. Flavio Rapisardi (Interview, January 2022), who worked at INADI under Lubertino's direction, recognized the political complexities involved in naming INADI provincial delegates within the Argentine federal system, where the chosen delegates must have a connection to the provincial government, which in turn can be from a political party opposite to the national government. This complexity accentuates if we consider the supervisory role of INADI in a context where, as argued by Lubertino (Interview, January 2022), the main sources of discrimination are within state institutions. To approach this complexity, Lubertino was thoughtful about who to name in each provincial delegation she opened:

I tried to put in every place people who were from the place, people who came from civil society, from working on some related thematic, and I tried to balance it so there were people who had a critical spirit, so if they needed to question the provincial governor, they could do it, given that most situations of discrimination, the structural ones, are generated by governments themselves. Discrimination in education, discrimination in health, comes from the state, and public policies on education, health, and security, are the responsibility of provincial governments.

Despite criticism towards the role that INADI has played for Afrodescendants outside of Buenos Aires, there is agreement among Afro-Argentines about the importance of the creation of civil society forums to open an institutional space from which Afrodescendant activists could influence public debates and policies. These forums, however, did not form part of INADI's organizational structure. It was under Claudio Morgado – who presided over INADI between 2009 and 2011 – that these forums were institutionalized as programs, each with an assigned budget and hired officials. An Afrodescendant Program was created in February 2011, providing an institutional space from which to design and implement policies for Afrodescendants (Ottenheimer 2017), albeit at the cost of granting less space for civil society participation (Garcia 2017:165).

Representatives of the Afrodescendant community were hired to manage INADI's new Afrodescendant Program, which was crucial so that Afrodescendant civil society could still access and influence policies. Despite the relevance of finally having a program for Afrodescendants within a public institution, the activists and state officials I interviewed agreed that the budget assigned to the program was insufficient. INADI continued to carry out educational activities about

the Afrodescendant presence in Argentina, and to conduct research and publish reports and pedagogical materials about racism and Afro-descent, but progressively lost its leading role regarding Afrodescendant rights. According to Afro-Argentine activist Patricia Gomes (Interview, November 2021):

There was a decline of the institution that has destroyed its policies, at least in relation to the Afro community, the Afro program began to look increasingly weakened, with less budget, doing fewer things [...] even the mechanisms to present discrimination complaints have weakened, they are very inefficient. [...] with the change of government from Cristina Kirchner to Macri, the ruptures within the institution accentuated, because the budget for the anti-discrimination policy diminished, the directives appointed at INADI didn't come from the Human Rights area, so it was very hard to do things with a certain level of consciousness inside of the institution.

Right-wing politicians in Argentina have usually been critical of INADI, which they consider to be an over-ideologized cultural bastion of progressives that does not fulfill any important governmental function. Several of the activists I interviewed referred to how Mauricio Macri's government (2015-2019) intended to close INADI, but since its dissolution requires congressional approval, defunded it instead. In this context, many provincial delegations were closed, weakening even more the work of the institution outside of Buenos Aires. Moreover, INADI was restructured and the Afrodescendant Program was dismantled (Garcia 2017). It was only after the election of Alberto Fernández in 2019 that INADI reclaimed some agency.

During Alberto Fernández' government, INADI's Afrodescendant agenda took force again, although with a different approach to Afrodescendant communities than in the past. Fernández appointed Victoria Donda¹³⁴ – a well-known leftist politician who had been a national Chamber representative from 2007 to 2019 – as head of the Institute. In turn, Donda hired Afro-Argentine activist Federico Pita as advisor on racism and Afro-descent. In 2020, Pita launched the Commission for the Historical Recognition of the Afro-Argentine Community¹³⁵ to attend to the demands of the Argentine descendants of enslaved Africans in Argentine territory, emphasizing the history of marginalization and exclusion shared by this population. The commission was presided over by Pita¹³⁶ with the assistance of the Federal Advisory Council of the Afro-Argentine Community, which was made up of ten leaders of Afro-Argentine non-governmental organizations. In order to assess the different needs and demands of these diverse Afro-Argentine communities, and to connect Afro-Argentine activists from different provinces, Federico Pita organized two national encounters, in 2021 and in 2022, where activists came together to debate and define a list of priority demands. Pita also created a registry of Afro-Argentine organizations to facilitate their access to juridical technical assistance and training, institutional sponsorship, and participation at INADI's activities. In this way, the Afrodescendant agenda became less centered around its supervisory role and more focused on creating awareness about Afro-Argentines'

¹³⁴ Like Horacio Pietragalla, Victoria Donda is also a granddaughter "recovered" by the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo– the 76th grandchild. She was the youngest woman to become a National Representative and the first daughter of a "disappeared" person born in captivity to become a member of the Argentine National Congress.

¹³⁵ The Commission for the Historical Recognition of the Afro-Argentine Community was created through Resolution 230/2020, available at: <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/normativa/nacional/resolución-230-2020-345529/texto>.

¹³⁶ In July 2023, months after Victoria Donda left office, María Gabriela Pérez, an Afro-Argentine activist who had worked at INADI since the creation of the Afrodescendant program in 2011, was appointed as director of the Commission for the Historical Recognition of the Afro-Argentine Community.

history, the safeguarding of their heritage, and the fortification of Afro-Argentine civil society.

As at INADI, the appointment of Afrodescendants to public offices was also crucial for the installation of an Afrodescendant agenda in other state institutions. One of these was the National Culture Secretariat,¹³⁷ where the presence of Afro-Argentines was probably decisive for the inclusion in 2012 of Afrodescendants among the groups of interest of the Secretariat's Collectivities Program. In 2013, the Afrodescendants Program was created within the Secretariat's National Directorate of Promotion of Cultural Rights and Cultural Diversity, gaining administrative and budget autonomy.¹³⁸ The goal of the program was to visibilize the history of Afrodescendants in Argentina and to create awareness so that more Argentines would recognize their African ancestry. Javier Ortuño, an Afro-Argentine activist who already worked at the Secretariat, was put in charge of the program, which would be decisive for the program's connection to civil society organizations (Escribal 2021:102). The Afrodescendants Program conducted workshops to educate the public about Afrodescendant history, organized cultural events, and supported religious celebrations, among other activities. Its impact outside of Buenos Aires, however, was restricted to some isolated activities, such as a workshop in Cordoba and a training program for the San Félix community in Santiago del Estero (Escribal 2021:103). After Law 26,852 was passed in 2013, the Afrodescendants Program became responsible for the annual commemoration of the Day of Afro-Argentines, and at the request of Afrodescendant organizations, created a working group to plan activities, mostly centered on Afrodescendant arts and culture (Escribal 2021:113).

While we can observe in Argentina important advances in the institutionalization of Afrodescendant programs within state institutions, the Argentine case also reveals the fragility of these policies, which can be easily dismantled from one government to the next. In 2015, Macri's government closed the Afrodescendant Program. Afrodescendant issues were lumped together with those of many other communities in the National Directorate of Diversities and Communitarian Culture, a new department created within the Culture Secretariat (Ocoró Loango 2018:279). As a response to Afrodescendants' complaints, the new ministerial authorities reopened in 2016 an area of focus on Afrodescendants. Afro-Argentine organizations were able to get Emanuel Ntaka – a well-known Afro-Argentine musician – appointed to lead that work. Ntaka (Interview, December 2021) described how he came to work at the Culture Secretariat:

I came to the Culture Ministry in 2016. The new government tried to close all the programs that attended to minority communities, and one of those was the Afro Program. But the community began to complain since that program had been an achievement of the organized movement. They had meetings with the new ministerial authorities and they asked the community to present profiles of people who could lead that area of focus, not as a program anymore, but as a line of work to

¹³⁷ A Culture Secretariat was created for the first time in 1981 within the national presidency. During the following three decades, it gained and lost ministerial rank – as Ministry of Education and Culture – several times. In 2014, President Cristina Fernández created the Culture Ministry, which in 2018 was demoted by President Mauricio Macri to the rank of secretariat under the Education Ministry. In 2019, President Alberto Fernández elevated it again to the category of Ministry, but after Javier Milei became president in December 2023, he demoted it once again to a secretariat under the newly created Human Capital Ministry. Since it was created in 2012, the Afrodescendant Program has remained under the Culture Secretariat/Ministry, with the exception of a short period in which Macri's government closed the program.

¹³⁸ The Afrodescendant Program was created through Resolution N. 6675/13.

continue within the ministry. The community presented different CVs and they proposed my name to lead the space.

With the election of President Alberto Fernández in 2019, the Afrodescendant Program was reinstated under the name of Afro Culture Program, becoming a crucial institutional space for the Afrodescendant community in Buenos Aires. After a consultative process with civil society, the program defined a number of cultural policies to develop, with a particular focus on funding projects that could increase the visibility of Afro-Argentines and raise awareness about “Afro culture” in Argentina. One of its most significant actions was holding the “María Remedios del Valle” National Poetry Contest in 2020, where 619 works were presented from all the country (Vieira da Silva 2021). Something that was particularly valued by the Afrodescendant community was how, when the Culture Ministry gave subsidies for artists during the COVID-19 pandemic, it considered the particular situation of vulnerability of Afrodescendant communities when selecting beneficiaries.

In Argentina, it has clearly been with leftist governments that Afrodescendants have been able to advance their demands for policies. Only a month after Alberto Fernández took office, a group of Afrodescendant woman from the November 8th Commission approached the authorities of the newly created Women, Genders and Diversities Ministry¹³⁹ to propose the inclusion of the ethno-racial variable in femicide registries. They also requested the incorporation of an area of focus on Afrodescendant women within the ministry’s organizational structure, and the appointment of an Afrodescendant woman to lead it. Cecilia Merchán, who had previously supported Afro-Argentine organizations, had been appointed as the Equality and Diversity Politics Secretary in this ministry and was receptive to these requests. In October 2020, Afro-Argentine activist Patricia Gomes (Interview, November 2021) was hired to lead this initiative in the ministry, work she described in the following terms:

I was hired in the ministry and we began to work on issues significant for Afro women. However, we have not yet been formalized in a program. We are a working team within the Equality and Diversity Politics Secretariat. Our goal is that this line of work gets at some point institutionalized, as it has happened with other themes – Indigenous women have a department of violence against Indigenous women and diversities, there is also a department of violence against immigrant women and diversities, there is an area of rurality, but there is no formal area for Afrodescendant women and diversities and that is what we aim to push. [...] We have a working group of three Afrodescendant women, they come from feminist activism but they are Afrodescendants, so we are trying to install the theme of racism, of intersectionality, of understanding that racism is a particular way in which violence is exercised towards the bodies of Black and Afrodescendant women and diversities.¹⁴⁰ [...] We recently opened a training course for public administration employees about the rights of Afro-Argentine, Afrodescendant, and African women and diversities; we were able to hire two tutors to implement this course online and it is imparted with a diversity and intersectional perspective.

¹³⁹ The Women, Genders and Diversities Ministry was created in December 2019 after the election of President Alberto Fernández. It was eliminated through Decree 8/2023 in December 2023 after the election of President Javier Milei.

¹⁴⁰ A 2023 report of the Women, Genders and Diversities Ministry reveals that Afrodescendants are particularly exposed to gender violence in Argentina. One of Afrodescendant women’s main demands is the reform of the Law of Integral Protection to prevent, sanction and eradicate violence against women – Law 26,585 – to include the ethno-racial variable and a higher penalization for hate crimes.

A couple of years earlier, during Macri's presidency and in an attempt by the government to defund and empty INADI, Macri enabled the Human Rights and Cultural Pluralism Secretariat¹⁴¹ to take charge of several of the themes that until then had been concentrated in INADI. After adhering in 2017 to the International Decade for People of African Descent, the Justice and Human Rights Minister signed Decree 658/2017,¹⁴² designating the Human Rights and Cultural Pluralism Secretariat as the coordinator of actions to implement the International Decade (Ocoró Loango 2018:279-280). However, it was not until October 2019, only two months before leaving office, that the Justice and Human Rights Minister signed Resolution 1055/2019 to create the National Program for the Application of the International Decade for People of African Descent.¹⁴³ This last-minute signature signals how these actions might have been more for show and saving face at international forums than due to a profound conviction regarding Afrodescendant rights.

Despite this lack of commitment, the adhesion to the International Decade opened a new opportunity to advance an Afrodescendant agenda once Alberto Fernandez became president in December 2019. The new Human Rights Secretary, Horacio Pietragalla, appointed Carlos Alvarez – the Afro-Argentine activist who had approached him in 2013 to ask him to sponsor the bill that became Law 26,852 – as Director of Cultural Pluralism and Interculturality.¹⁴⁴ We see here again the relevance of Afrodescendant activists accessing public offices for the advancement of the Afrodescendant agenda. Álvarez restructured this office and renamed it National Directorate of Ethno-Racial Equity, Immigrants and Refugees, signaling the new emphasis he was bringing to the space. Álvarez' first action in 2020 was to create an Inter-ministerial Roundtable of Public Policies for the Afro Community in Argentina (Mesa Interministerial de Políticas Públicas para la Comunidad Afro en Argentina), bringing together representatives of different ministries and public institutions to trace and promote public policies with a racial perspective and gather input for the creation of a National Afro Plan. He also secured funding from the World Bank to hire seven Afrodescendant interns to help in the implementation of the National Afro Plan. Álvarez (Interview, August 2021) explained his goal with the creation of this roundtable:

As Human Rights Secretariat, we are the institution in charge of coordinating the actions of the International Decade and therefore we have created the Inter-ministerial Roundtable to trace public policies with racial perspective. The main goal is to break with the idea that we only need to dialogue with basic ministries, such as the Culture, Education, Social Development Ministries, which respond to the common places that the capitalist and racist system always makes us discuss: culture, labor, education. It is a reality that we need to improve access to these areas, but we also need to take into account other places where we can contribute.

The Human Rights Secretariat, furthermore, launched in 2022 the Afrodescendants and

¹⁴¹ The Human Rights and Cultural Pluralism Secretariat was under the National Justice and Human Rights Ministry. During Alberto Fernández Government it was renamed Human Rights Secretariat, restoring the original name it had held since 2002 until Macri came to power in December 2015.

¹⁴² Decree 658/2017 is available at: <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/normativa/nacional/decreto-658-2017-278290>

¹⁴³ Information about the National Program for the Implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent is available at: <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/justicia/plan-nacional-afro/programa-nacional-para-la-aplicacion-del-decenio-internacional-de-los>

¹⁴⁴ This directorate had been created under Macri's government to overview some of the topics that had earlier been concentrated in INADI.

Human Rights National Program,¹⁴⁵ in charge of securing the implementation, promotion, and access to human rights and public policies for the Afro-Argentine, Afrodescendant, and African population in the country, from an ethno-racial equity perspective. Álvarez was appointed as head of the program, which took charge of coordinating the aforementioned Inter-ministerial Roundtable for the implementation of the National Afro Plan, with the goal of advancing affirmative action policies for people of African descent throughout the different state agencies, and to make sure that the state carried out the necessary activities to celebrate the Afrodescendant International Decade in accordance with the United Nations' official program. The Human Rights Secretariat thus became the main institutional space for the implementation of Afrodescendant rights.

Who is appointed into public positions has mattered greatly for the Argentine Afrodescendant agenda. The fact that Horacio Pietragalla – who had already gained awareness of Afrodescendants' struggles – was appointed by President Alberto Fernandez as Human Rights Secretary was crucial for the installation of an Afrodescendant agenda within the Human Rights Secretariat. But the fact that Pietragalla appointed Carlos Alvarez to implement the National Afro Program was what made this agenda advance more decisively. As argued by Miriam Gomes (Interview, July 2021):

The change has been radical. With the new government the Directorate of Ethno-Racial Equity was created, under the Human Rights Secretariat, and it is an Afrodescendant who leads it. This president also named a Black ambassador in the Vatican. There is a Plan to implement the International Decade coordinated with the Afrodescendant community, there are a series of actions that the government is advancing.

Thanks to the creation of Inter-ministerial Roundtable, different state agencies began implementing policies and programs targeting Afrodescendant populations. But it was in those state institutions where Afrodescendants were hired where most progress was made during this period. Although there are some signs of Álvarez' attempts to federalize the Secretariat's actions, it remains to be seen whether the National Afro Plan – if it isn't dismantled with the change of government – can break with the political centralism that has characterized Argentina's Afrodescendant political agenda.

In Argentina, it was under the Kirchnerista and Alberto Fernández governments that programs and policies targeting Afrodescendants were created and institutionalized. In addition to the policies already mentioned, Rosenvitz (2020:442) identifies the inclusion of issues related to Afro-descent in the Labor, Employment and Social Security Ministry;¹⁴⁶ Education Ministry;¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ The Afrodescendants and Human Rights National Program was created through Resolution 682/2022 of the Justice and Human Rights Ministry, available at: <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/normativa/nacional/resolución-682-2022-366697>.

¹⁴⁶ The Labor, Employment and Social Security Ministry,¹⁴⁶ for instance, published in 2011 a book titled *Work and Afro culture*, which encouraged reflections about the association of “black” with illegality, with the goal of overcoming negative assumptions about Black people (Anderson and Gomes 2021:21).

¹⁴⁷ In 2019, Afrodescendants were included in the “Program for the Improvement of Educational Inclusion,” whose goal was to favor vulnerable groups' permanence and completion of the compulsory and higher educational cycle (Vieira da Silva 2021). Information about this program is available at: https://www.argentina.gob.ar/sites/default/files/marco_ambiental_y_social-programa_para_la_mejora_de_la_inclusion_educativa.pdf.

Interior and Transportation Ministry; and the Argentine Chancellery.¹⁴⁸ However, with the election of Mauricio Macri in 2015 – and of Milei in 2023 – several of these initiatives were weakened and, as INADI was, deprived of financial resources to carry out activities (Ocoró Loango 2018). But given that Argentina is a federal state where provinces hold relative political autonomy, while changes in the national government affect the budget for implementing national policies throughout the country, provincial initiatives can advance regardless of these governmental changes.

At the provincial level, who is elected to the regional government has also mattered for the advancement of the Afrodescendant agenda. For example, activities to commemorate the day of Afro-Argentines and Afro Culture will depend on the support of authorities from provincial or municipal governments. The case of the Province of Santiago del Estero provides a good example of the relevance of provincial political support for Afrodescendants. In Santiago del Estero, the provincial government has taken actions to promote, fortify, and develop public policies for Afrodescendant communities as early as in 2013, including carrying out seminars about the Afrodescendant roots of Argentina and the province, and the construction of infrastructure in the Afrodescendant community of San Félix. Most importantly, in 2019, the provincial government approved the incorporation of Afro-Argentine and Afro-American contents in secondary educational curricula, to promote the formation, recognition, and promotion of minority groups' human rights. These actions were a response to an alliance created between the provincial governor and Afrodescendant communities, who strategically named the governor as protector of the Afrodescendant communities of Santiago del Estero (Interview with Eleuterio Melián, January 2022). The National House of Representative has recognized and expressed approval for these actions,¹⁴⁹ while United Nations delegates have regarded Santiago del Estero as one of the few provinces committed to the International Decade for People of African Descent after a visit to the province in 2019.

In 2022, Santiago del Estero's governor created the Provincial Directorate of Ethno-Racial Diversity under the jurisdiction of the Provincial Justice and Human Rights Ministry, and appointed Eleuterio Melián – an Afro-Argentine leader of the Afrodescendant community of San Felix – as Provincial Director of Ethno-Racial Diversity. This directorate – probably inspired by the Directorate of Ethno-Racial Equity within the National Human Rights Secretariat – represents the first institution created at a provincial level to deal with Afrodescendant issues. In the words of Eleuterio Melián (Interview, January 2022):

First, he [the governor] made a decree creating a directorate within the state called Ethno-Racial Diversity, which was a dream, for which we had struggled; we were convinced that the state had to create an institutional space for Afrodescendants from Santiago – I am talking about the provincial state, but the governor not only created this space but he did a second decree appointing me as the

¹⁴⁸ In 2008, a group of Afrodescendants gained a space within the Argentina Chancellery Civil Society Consultative Council (CCSC, Spanish acronym), from where they organized the Afrodescendants and Africans Commission. The Commission organized in 2008 working sessions about affirmative actions for Afro women and for Immigrants and refugees, and in 2009 conducted the “First Encounter of Human Rights and Afro Culture in Argentina” (Frigerio and Lamborghini 2011a:35).

¹⁴⁹ A declaration draft expressing the House of Representatives' approval for the incorporation of Afrodescendant contents can be found at: <https://www4.hcdn.gob.ar/dependencias/dsecretaria/Periodo2021/PDF2021/TP2021/2889-D-2021.pdf>

director.

Again, we see here how activists from Santiago del Estero strategically sought an alliance with the provincial governor, which has been productive for the advancement of Afrodescendant rights in the province. Afrodescendant movements in other provinces have also sought support from provincial authorities to advance policies, as in the case of the Province of Santa Fe, where Afrodescendant history has been included in museums, a touristic route through Afrodescendant historical places was created, and the names of schools and plazas have been changed to recognize Afrodescendant historical figures (Interview with Mirta Alzaguray, October 2021). In Misiones, a ministerial resolution was approved after the province adhered to Law 26,852, indicating that schools had to commemorate María Remedios del Valle every November 8th (Interview with Nélida Wisneke, October 2021). The provincial government of Entre Ríos, in turn, implemented a project in 2021 to rescue and patrimonialize the “Cemetery of the Blacks,” reclaiming the history of a small community of Afrodescendants who arrived in the 19th century escaping slavery from Brazil. These isolated initiatives reveal how, in provinces where Afro-Argentines have achieved higher levels of organization, they have been able to advance policies by reaching state authorities who are empathetic to their struggles.

This section has revealed how the installation of an Afrodescendant agenda in Argentina has been strongly conditioned by which government is in power and who is appointed at key state institutions. But overall, this agenda has advanced most when it has been Afrodescendants themselves who have led state initiatives for their communities. While there have been important gains for the Afro-Argentine movement in the past two decades, Argentina’s centralized federal system has prevented national policies from spreading throughout the country. The centralization of policies in the national government, furthermore, represents a permanent risk given the volatility of Argentine politics, where shifts in national governments have tended to create significant transformations in the state administrative apparatus. Such is the case in the present moment, where the new Argentine President, Javier Milei, has eliminated half of the nation’s ministries, and has threatened to discontinue most programs related to minority rights. In this context, the provincial autonomy granted by the Argentine federal system might represent an opportunity for Afrodescendants to overcome this political moment. By seeking provincial and municipal allies who can promote ethno-racial reform, Afro-Argentines might be able to continue advancing their agenda despite the probable setbacks that the national government will produce.

Chile: Geographically bounded policies for a nationally recognized people

Compared to Argentina, public policies targeting Afrodescendants in Chile have been rare, and only a few of them have been institutionalized in the organizational structure of public offices. These policies, furthermore, have been almost exclusively restricted to the Arica-Parinacota Region. In Chile’s unitary political system, public policies are designed by centralized authorities – most of them located in Santiago – who provide guidelines for their implementation throughout the state administrative apparatus. Regional authorities, however, hold a variable level of discretion to influence how these policies are locally applied (Olavarría Gambi 2007). Therefore, when Afro-Chileans began to politically organize in Arica, they sought political allies at regional and municipal governments who could use their discretionary power to include them in a number of local programs. In this way, despite the lack of targeted policies, Afro-Chilean activists were

able to take advantage of policies not specifically designed for them.

The first state institution that Afro-Chileans approached was the Tarapacá Regional Office of the Culture and Arts National Council (CNCA, Spanish acronym).¹⁵⁰ Just a year after a handful of activists created the Afro-Chilean NGO Oro Negro, some of this organization's youngest members applied to the National Fund for the Development of Culture and Arts (FONDART) – a competitive fund annually granted by the CNCA for civil society initiatives focused on the promotion of culture, arts, and heritage.¹⁵¹ The project for which they requested funding was titled “Black Dance and Music Group” and aimed to rescue the cultural traditions of Arica's Afrodescendant population through artistic recreation, emphasizing Afro-Chileans' shared history and cultural heritage. It consisted in recreating the *tumbe* music-dance tradition – which had not been practiced for many decades – through the oral history of senior Afro-Chileans who had childhood memories of their parents and grandparents dancing and playing *tumbe*, while creating new dance steps alluding to economic activities associated with Afro-Chileans' history in the region (Del Canto 2003:157-158). In 2002, the project was awarded the requested funds and in January 2003 – in the context of the commemoration of “Pascua de negros”¹⁵² – a music-dance troupe or *comparsa* of about 20 musicians and dancers took to the streets of Arica and for the first time publicly performed *tumbe*. As argued in Chapter 3, *tumbe* has been crucial for the consolidation of an Afro-Chilean movement, promoting a process of Afrodescendant ethnic renewal in which many of those who joined *comparsas* in the following years would begin to identify as Afro-Chileans (León Villagra 2017). *Tumbe* also gave Afro-Chileans visibility and legitimated them as political actors in the eyes of regional state officials (Domingo Gómez 2021), who would thereafter invite *comparsas* to perform at official state events as a way to show the region's cultural diversity.

In this way, a competitive state fund that does not in any way constitute a public policy addressed towards Afrodescendants enabled the establishment of a long-standing relationship between Afro-Chileans and state officials. During the first decade of the 2000s, Afro-Chileans' connection to the state was mostly restricted to applying to this competitive fund.¹⁵³ In 2006, Lumbanga – an Afro-Chilean NGO that was formed from a split with Oro Negro – was granted a FONDART to carry out campaign to raise awareness about African roots in the region, so that people would identify as Afrodescendant in a regional study to be conducted in 2009, the “Censo Afro.”¹⁵⁴ That same year, Sabor Moreno – the *comparsa* formed by Oro Negro members – won a

¹⁵⁰ The Culture and Arts National Council was created by President Ricardo Lagos in 2003 through Law 19,891, to promote artistic and cultural creation. It functioned until the creation in 2018 of the Cultures, Arts, and Heritage Ministry. Its national headquarters were in Valparaíso while it had regional offices in every region's capital city. Until the creation of the Arica-Parinacota Region in 2007, Arica was under the jurisdiction of governmental regional offices, including the Regional Office of the CNCA, in the Tarapacá Region.

¹⁵¹ The FONDART represents the main public policy for cultural and artistic promotion in post-dictatorial Chile (Amigo 2022). It allocates funding to two different awards every year, a national fund and a regional fund. The initiatives presented by Afro-Chileans I identify here were all presented to the regional fund.

¹⁵² Translated as the “Holy Day of the Black men,” Pascua de Negros is an Afro-Andean syncretized version of the Catholic celebration of Epiphany or Three Kings Day.

¹⁵³ Afro-Chilean leader Marta Salgado was also appointed in 2004 and reappointed in 2006 as a member of the Tarapacá Regional CNCA Consultive Committee, which had the role of advising the Regional Council about cultural policies. However, this appointment seems to have been more connected to her own professional trajectory as a functionary at the Tarapacá University, than to her activism in the Afrodescendant movement.

¹⁵⁴ I discuss the “Censo Afro” when analyzing Afro-Chileans' statistical inclusion/exclusion in Chapter 1.

FONDART to carry out workshops to teach community members how to construct and play drums. In 2008, one of Lumbanga's founders, Cristian Báez, was awarded a FONDART to write a book about Afro-Chileans' oral memories, clothing, and traditions. A FONDART was also awarded to an initiative presented by Cristian Báez to create a "Slave Route" in the Arica-Parinacota Region, consisting of a cultural tour through different sites associated with Afro-Chileans' presence in the region.¹⁵⁵ All of these projects contributed to making Afro-Chileans visible and valued in the region, both by the community and by state officials.

Thanks to the projects funded by the FONDART, officials from the CNCA progressively identified Afrodescendants as one of Arica's "cultural groups" and began to include them in the institution's official activities. As argued by Amigo (2022), Afro-Chileans' connection to cultural policy initiatives served as a tacit recognition, within a framework of a multiculturalist valuation of diversity, before the legal institutionalization of Afro-descent. Although each of these activities served to empower, give visibility, and bring the Afro-Chilean movement closer to the state, they did not translate into any official recognition of Afro-Chileans as an ethno-racial group in the country. Therefore, during those early years of the movement, Afro-Chileans sought recognition by presenting a bill in Congress in 2009 – discussed in the last section – and by lobbying for the inclusion of a question about Afro-descent in the 2012 National Population Census – discussed in Chapter 1. Both attempts, however, were unsuccessful.

The first state action to institutionalize an Afrodescendant agenda was the creation of an Afrodescendant Development Office (ODAFRO, Spanish acronym) – also called Afrodescendant Municipal Office and better known as "Afro Office" – within the Community Development Directorate of the Municipality of Arica.¹⁵⁶ Although the creation of the office was a civil society initiative, it was supported by local politicians across the political spectrum. Afro-Chilean activists had been playing with the idea of an Afrodescendant Office since at least 2004.¹⁵⁷ A right-wing Afrodescendant member of the Municipal Council arranged for Samuel Pozo and Laura Pérez Cegarra – representing the Afro-Chilean organization Lumbanga – to present the project to create ODAFRO to the Municipal Council, which approved it unanimously in 2009.¹⁵⁸ The project presented to the council justified the office as a way to combat the racial discrimination and exclusion historically suffered by Afrodescendants, alluding to the agreements arrived at by UN member states at the 2001 Durban World Conference. A second stated goal was to strengthen Afro-Chilean organizations so that they could accomplish their diverse demands. Interestingly, the revitalization and promotion of Afro-Chileans' cultural practices – which had been at the center of

¹⁵⁵ Báez' Slave Route project had already obtained funding from a state competitive fund to promote small businesses, and would later obtain sponsorship from the UNESCO "Slave Route" Project and be included in the National Assets Ministry's Heritage Routes Program (Amigo 2022).

¹⁵⁶ In Chile, it is common for offices to be created within municipalities to address specific issues. These offices generally consist of a physical space within the municipal premises with a work team and an approved budget (de la Maza and Campos 2021:445-446)

¹⁵⁷ In 2024, Afro-Argentine activist Cristian Báez sent a letter to the *Estrella de Arica* newspaper proposing the creation of an Afrodescendant Development Office "that could serve as a link between the municipality, the government, and civil society, and respond to the needs of Afrodescendants in Arica, in order to meet the needs of a large sector of society" (ODAFRO 2019:117).

¹⁵⁸ However, the office would take over a year to be created after the Municipal Council's approval. According to activists, it was only after the Chief of the Municipality Cabinet – Yanet Gallardo, also an Afrodescendant – travelled in May 2010 to a meeting of mayors in Tumaco, Colombia, where she was inspired by the experiences of other Afrodescendant offices, that, on her return, Lumbanga's project was finally concretized and ODAFRO was created.

Afro-Chileans' initiatives until that date – was only mentioned briefly in the document presented to the council.

Despite originally presenting ODAFRO as an initiative to promote racial equity policies, its initial work was mostly focused on supporting the cultural and artistic activities carried out by the Afro-Chilean community in Arica, with a particular emphasis on their religious and festive commemorations. This disconnection between the office's stated goals and what it actually ended up doing is likely a result of the disconnection between where the idea of the office came from and the local reality of Chile and Arica. ODAFRO was inspired by the Regional Offices of Public Policies for Racial Equity (ORAPER), an initiative of the Afro-Uruguayan organization Mundo Afro.¹⁵⁹ According to Cristian Báez (Interview, August 2021), Latin American Afrodescendant activists began discussing the need for racial equity offices at the Durban Conference, but these were then thought of as central government offices. However, given how unlikely it was that the Chilean state would consider the creation of such an office in a central governmental institution, in addition to the prior existence of an Indigenous Office within the Arica Municipality, Lumbanga members decided to propose its implementation at the municipal level. The local reality of an Afrodescendant movement that was only starting to make political claims, and the office's tight budget, drove office directors to prioritize activities that would increase the Afro-Chilean community's visibility and empower its civil society organizations.

As in Argentina, the Afrodescendant agenda in Chile is more likely to advance when it is Afro-Chileans themselves who lead these initiatives. This has been the case of ODAFRO, which since its creation in 2010 has been under the direction of recognized leaders of the Afro-Chilean movement. The first ODAFRO director was Cristian Báez, one of the founders of Lumbanga and the person who first proposed the creation of this office. During the couple of years in which he was in charge, however, the office was not assigned any financial or human resources, hindering his capacity of significantly impacting Afrodescendant communities. Without previous experience in public service, Báez figured out ways to promote initiatives to support Afrodescendants' cultural expressions, such as the celebration of the "Crosses of May"¹⁶⁰ and "Afro Carnival,"¹⁶¹ among others. Although several years would pass before ODAFRO was institutionalized in the municipality's organizational structure and assigned a permanent budget,¹⁶² its creation in 2010 signified the first recognition of Afrodescendants by the state and was crucial for Afro-Chileans' processes of ethnic renewal and politization.

It was only in January 2017, with the arrival of Milene Molina – leader of the Afro-Chilean

¹⁵⁹ I briefly discuss the origins of ORAPER in Chapter 1.

¹⁶⁰ I describe the celebration of the "Crosses of May" in Chapter 3.

¹⁶¹ The Afro Carnival is a festivity celebrated by Afro-Chileans in Arica during February or March, aligned with the traditional dates of carnival, immediately before the Christian religious observance of Lent. It comes from an old tradition that was practiced by Afrodescendant families in the Azapa Valley and recovered in 2004. It has two components: a festive ceremony in the Azapa Valley, centered around the unearthing of the grandparent Ño Carnavalón, a real-size figure of a man representing Afrodescendant ancestors who is then carried around the valley accompanied by *tumbe* performers before being buried again until the following year, a rite that puts an end to the week of carnival; and the "carnival descent," consisting of a street parade or *pasacalle* through downtown Arica, a tradition that was initiated as a way to give Afrodescendants an exclusive space within the week of the traditional Andean carnival (Ardito 2014; Carrasco Meza 2019).

¹⁶² By 2015, the office already appears, with an assigned budget, in the organizational structure of the Municipality of Arica (Reglamento N° 15/2015).

Women's organization Luanda – to lead the office, that ODAFRO began to shift its orientation from a focus on Afro-Chileans' cultural expressions towards the promotion and advancement of public policies that could respond to Afro-Chileans' demands. Molina was appointed to the office by the new elected center-left Mayor of Arica, Gerardo Espíndola. Espíndola (Interview, September 2021) had a different vision from his predecessors of the role of municipal offices, which he communicated to Molina after he hired her:

One of the fears I had, and I expressed them to the office director, Milene Molina, when I hired her: I don't want the Afrodescendant Tribal People to be folklorized, that every activity including them means that they have to dance, almost as for the tourist coming to Arica, it cannot become that. The same for the Indigenous Office, it cannot be like a museum piece, no! These are communities that have political, economic, cultural, social impact, that is the work that we have been developing, and the Afro Office has achieved some of that but it has cost a lot of time and the unification of different organizations that did not get along.

One of Molina's most impactful achievements was getting Afro-Chilean organizations to work together despite their internal conflicts. In March 2018 she led a participatory process inviting all the region's Afro-Chilean organizations to create an agenda for the following years: one of their most significant agreements was the creation of a technical-political roundtable for the coordination of the Afrodescendant movement, which included the diverse types of Afrodescendant organizations in the region – political, cultural, religious – and could serve as a mediator between public agencies and civil society.¹⁶³ Two months later, the Technical-Political Roundtable of the Afrodescendant Tribal People (Mesa Técnico Política del Pueblo Tribal Afrodescendiente) had been formed. From this point on, ODAFRO began to allocate some of its funds so that activists could travel more often to Santiago to meet with national authorities as a way of advancing their claims, a process that intensified during the congressional discussions of Law 21,151 and during the 2021-2022 Chilean Constitutional Process. ODAFRO also hired a historian to conduct research so the office could publish and distribute these studies' results among the Afrodescendant community.¹⁶⁴

Overall, the Afrodescendant Development Office constitutes the first institutionalized program specifically addressing the Afro-Chilean population. It has also served as an important training space for Afro-Chilean activists to learn how to work within the state. It has positioned Afro-Chileans as legitimate political actors in the region, becoming one of the regional governments' communities of interest.¹⁶⁵ As a Municipal Office, however, ODAFRO's impacts have been restricted to the city of Arica and neighboring rural sectors – including the Azapa Valley – and no similar initiative can be found elsewhere in the country.

¹⁶³ For a list of the diverse Afrodescendant organizations registered in ODAFRO's database, see Cortés and Rivera (2019).

¹⁶⁴ Four studies were published during this period: *Las cruces de Mayo Afrodescendientes* (2018), *Fuentes para la historia política del pueblo tribal Afrodescendiente Chileno Siglo XXI* (2019); *Proceso político del pueblo tribal afrodescendiente chileno Siglo XXI* (2020), *Tenencia de Tierra y Despojos. El territorio Afrodescendiente en el extremo norte de Chile* (2021).

¹⁶⁵ For example, starting in 2014, Afro-Chilean organizations began to organize in alliance with the Municipality and the Regional CNCA a cycle of activities displaying different expressions of Afro-Chilean culture known as "AfroArica" (Amigo 2022).

The first recognition of Afrodescendants in Chile coming from a central governmental office happened a year after the creation of ODAFRO, when in 2011 the “Julia Corvacho” Afrodescendant Senior Club – formed in 2005 by older adults – was granted an award by the CNCA as “Living Human Treasures.”¹⁶⁶ Although the Living Human Treasures program was not a policy addressed towards Afrodescendants specifically, the recognition of an Afro-Chilean organization as “the descendants of enslaved Africans who had preserved and transmitted their traditions to new generations, enabling the rebirth of Afro-Chilean culture in Arica” represented an undebatable recognition of Afro-Chileans as an existing ethno-racial minority in Chile. Being recognized as such by the central government was considered crucial and was strategically alluded to by activists thereafter to claim inclusion in state initiatives.¹⁶⁷

After the creation of ODAFRO and the official recognition of Afro-Chileans’ existence by the central government, the regional office of the CNCA began for the first time to allocate resources to support the organization of festivals and other cultural and artistic activities of the Afro-Chilean community, as was the case of the series of events organized in October 2011 to commemorate the International Year of People of African Descent. In 2015, José Barraza was appointed as Regional Director of the CNCA, after 15 years of working within the institution. Barraza identified as Afro-Chilean, and although he was not an active member of any Afro-Chilean organization, he was sensitive to the communities’ needs and claims. Thus, his appointment opened new opportunities for the institutionalization of the Afrodescendant agenda within the CNCA.

Another important movement achievement that followed the creation of ODAFRO and the recognition of Afro-Chileans by the CNCA, was getting the National Statistics Institute (INE) to conduct a Afrodescendant regional survey in 2013 – the ENCAFRO¹⁶⁸ – after their exclusion from the 2012 Census. Afro-Chileans had begun to realize that although the CNCA’s support had been important to gain visibility and recognition, the pronounced emphasis on their cultural practices had produced a sort of reduction of their demands to the cultural realm and had hindered the possibility of advancing rights in other areas needed for the social development and political empowerment of the community. They therefore began to discuss other strategies to promote policies that could favor them, and the production of statistical data identifying who they are and in what conditions they live became a movement priority. As explained in Chapter 1, the ENCAFRO was conducted by the National Statistics Institute (INE), making it an official form of recognition of Afro-Chileans’ existence as an ethno-racial group. It was also supported by the regional government, the regions’ congressional representatives, and other local political authorities from across the political spectrum. While the ENCAFRO was important for Afro-Chileans to make future demands, no policies followed from its results in the short term, and Afro-

¹⁶⁶ The Living Human Treasures program is a former initiative of the UNESCO, implemented in Chile by the Culture and Arts National Council – and then by the Cultures, Arts and Heritage Ministry (MINCAP) – by which the state recognizes communities, groups, and persons that are distinguished for their significant contributions to the safeguarding and cultivation of part of Chile’s intangible cultural heritage.

¹⁶⁷ In 2017, Afro-Chileans received a second recognition as “Living Human Treasures,” awarded to three “Morenos de Paso” Societies – religious dance confraternities from the Arica-Parinacota Region, performed predominantly by Afrodescendants (Amigo 2022).

¹⁶⁸ The process by which Afro-Chilean activists and state officials negotiated and implemented the ENCAFRO is analyzed in Chapter 1. The content of the ENCAFRO and how it delimits Afrodescendant subjecthood is discussed in Chapter 5.

Chileans were soon after told that they would be, again, excluded from the 2017 national census.¹⁶⁹

A second strategy of Afro-Chileans to promote a broader diversity of public policies was through the creation of an Intersectoral Roundtable of Afrodescendants (Mesa Intersectorial de Afrodescendientes) within the Social Development Ministry's Regional Secretariat. They requested the creation of this roundtable directly to the Social Development Minister, Fernanda Villegas, during a visit she made to Arica in 2014. Pressured by movement leaders, Villegas agreed and ordered the Ministry's Regional Secretary to implement the roundtable. The Intersectoral Roundtable brought together authorities from a number of state regional offices in meetings that resulted in a matrix identifying goals and associated actions for each regional institution. The matrix then led to an Action Plan for the 2015-2018 period, which promoted policies related to health, support for entrepreneurs, and early education targeting Afrodescendants within the Arica-Parinacota Region. One of the most significant actions associated with the Intersectoral Roundtable was the creation of the Nodo Afro Program, which promoted Afrodescendant cultural expressions from an ethno-touristic perspective. However, these were still isolated policies that did not get institutionalized and had little continuity through time, to the disappointment of those activists who actively participated in the roundtable.

The most significant action that followed from the recognition of Afrodescendants by the central office of the CNCA – and from the close relationship that the Afro-Chilean community had developed over the years with the CNCA Regional Office in Arica – was Afro-Chileans' inclusion as “special guests” in the process of prior consultation¹⁷⁰ initiated in 2014 by the Education Ministry for the creation of the Cultures, Arts, and Heritage Ministry (MINCAP, Spanish acronym). Until then, prior consultation processes in Chile had been exclusively conducted with Indigenous peoples, and Afrodescendants' inclusion in this process created a precedent for their consideration as Tribal Peoples under ILO's Convention 169.¹⁷¹ In fact, only Afrodescendants from Arica were included in this prior consultation process, reinforcing a way of understanding Afro-descent as linked to a particular territory and culture.¹⁷²

The inclusion of Afro-Chileans in this prior consultation process was largely the decision of José Ancán, who had been in charge of implementing the process, illustrating the relevance of who is appointed in public positions for the advancement of an Afrodescendant agenda. José Ancán was an Indigenous intellectual with profound knowledge about international law and sensitivity towards Afrodescendants' claims. When assigned this task, Ancán quickly realized that to comply with ILO Convention 169, Afrodescendants could not be excluded. Given that the regulation of

¹⁶⁹ Afro-Chileans' exclusion from national censuses is discussed in Chapter 1.

¹⁷⁰ Prior consultation is a fundamental right of ethnic groups to decide on legislative and administrative measures or projects to be conducted in their territories that might affect them. The right to prior consultation is included in several international instruments, including ILO Convention 169, ratified by Chile in 2008.

¹⁷¹ A parallel prior consultation process was conducted by the Social Development Ministry for the creation of the Indigenous Ministry (still pending), in which Afrodescendants requested to be included but their request was rejected.

¹⁷² Since then, Afro-Chileans have been included in two other prior consultation processes, one initiated in 2022 for the construction of the regulation derived from Law 21,151, and the second initiated in 2023 for the approval of the Cultural Heritage Law. Both of these processes only included Afrodescendants from Arica, although activists requested the extension of the latter process to Afro-Chileans across the national territory.

Convention 169 in Chilean law established an “Indigenous Consultation procedure,”¹⁷³ and that Afrodescendants are not Indigenous people according to the Chilean Indigenous Law, Ancán included Afrodescendants in the prior consultation process as “special guests.” However, they participated in most of the process in equal conditions to Indigenous peoples. Their inclusion marked a crucial precedent for their later legal recognition as Afrodescendant Tribal People, as argued by Rodrigo Novoa (Interview, July 2021), a public official who led the prior consultation process in the Arica-Parinacota Region:

The fact that today the Afrodescendant Tribal People are recognized by law is a result of the actions taken when they were invited as special guests to the prior consultation process for the creation of the Cultures Ministry. Since Convention 169 refers to Indigenous and Tribal peoples in independent countries, the Afro-Chilean organizations followed that strategy. This prior consultation process was also used in the reports that the National Human Rights Institute wrote in favor of Afro-Chileans’ recognition, when Law 21,151 was discussed in the Congress.

Overall, Afro-Chileans’ participation in this process enabled their inclusion in the framework of public policies of the new ministry, crystalizing the institutionalization of an Afro-Chilean agenda (CNCA 2016). Although Afrodescendants’ inclusion in this process was not without conflict – particularly due to Aymara people’s strong opposition to their participation, which they saw as a threat to their territorial claims – Afro-Chilean activists were able to add to the consultation’s final agreements the state’s commitment to promote Afrodescendants’ legal recognition as a Tribal group, in addition to securing their participation in the future ministry’s councils. As a result, even before the MINCAP was officially operating, the CNCA created the AfroArica Project of Regional Cultural Identity and the FONDART opened a modality of funding for the cultural safeguarding of the Afrodescendant Tribal People, both policies specifically addressing Afro-Chileans.

Despite the fact that Afrodescendants were included for the first time within a ministerial program, policies addressing them continued to be restricted to the Arica-Parinacota Region, with no impact for Afrodescendants in the rest of the country. The Cultures, Arts, and Heritage Ministry (MINCAP) was created in 2017 through Law 21,045¹⁷⁴ and began to officially function on March 1st of 2018, including the Afrodescendant Tribal People in the National Sub-directorate of Native Peoples, under the National Service of Cultural Heritage. Afro-Chileans’ incorporation in the organizational structure of the MINCAP side by side with Indigenous peoples further fostered the ethnicization of Afro-descent, and policies thereafter have emphasized their ancestral practices, beliefs, and worldviews.¹⁷⁵ This process of ethnicization, however, has not implied debates or actions addressing territorial rights (Araya 2023).

Summing up, Afro-Chileans’ location in Arica, a small city with tight networks, enabled them to gain local political allies that promoted their local recognition as an ethno-racial group, legitimizing them as political actors. Afro-Chileans have gained support from authorities in Arica across the political spectrum, who identify them as representative of the region’s cultural identity

¹⁷³ The Indigenous consultation procedure in Chile is regulated through Decree 66 of the Social Development Ministry (2013), available at: <https://www.bcn.cl/leychile/navegar?idNorma=1059961>.

¹⁷⁴ Law 21,045 is available at: <https://www.bcn.cl/leychile/navegar?idNorma=1110097&idVersion=Diferido>.

¹⁷⁵ As an example, the MINCAP implemented the Indigenous and Afro-descendant Cultural Revitalization Program, which contributes to combating the loss of their knowledge, crafts, and cultural and artistic expressions.

as well as a valuable constituency. As argued by José Barraza (Interview, September 2021), an Afro-Chilean was the regional director of the CNCA between 2015 and 2018:

We can ask the question, would Afrodescendants have had success if they were in another region than Arica-Parinacota? If they had organized in a bigger city, such as Valparaíso, Concepción, or even Santiago? I think there is a characteristic interesting to analyze regarding the territory, more than the administration of space. Here, you can be from the right wing or the left wing, but overall, you are a friend of [someone known], and political will is determined by these networks [...] These interactions enable you to reach certain goals that in other cities might be much harder, given the larger population. In this region, because of its smaller dimension, people are closer, it is easier to reach authorities, this does not happen just anywhere.

According to Barraza, Afro-Chileans' location in Arica has represented an advantage, since as a small city, networks in Arica are tight and political favors are defined more by social connections than by political allegiances. But regional authorities in Chile also hold less political power than central ones, and can only do so much to advance an Afrodescendant agenda. With the exception of the Afrodescendant Development Office, Afro-Chilean activists have been less successful than their Argentine counterparts in being appointed to state institutions, and when they have reached public offices, it has been exclusively within the Arica regional government and in positions not directly related to an Afrodescendant agenda. Chile's centralized unitary political system, moreover, has represented an obstacle for activists to reach central authorities, who in Chile are responsible for the creation of public policies. Even after a political agenda addressing Afrodescendants was institutionalized within the MINCAP, policies have continued to be designed as territorially bounded, hindering the possibility of expanding the Afrodescendant movement beyond the frontiers of the Arica-Parinacota Region.

Finally, differently than in Argentina, where shifts in national governments have profoundly impacted the continuity of state programs and policies, Chile's politics have been generally more stable, without big transformations in the state administrative structure from one government to the next. But while local authorities across the political spectrum have generally been supportive of Afro-Chileans' claims, who is in power in central institutions has mattered more, as is revealed by the role played by José Ancán during the prior consultation process. As in Argentina, left-wing political parties in Chile have historically shown a stronger commitment to minority rights, as we saw in Chapter 2 was the case of Michelle Bachelet's government. While after the election of President Gabriel Boric (2022-2026) some steps have been taken at last to regulate Law 21,151, it is still to be seen if policies will expand beyond understandings of Afro-descent as a territorially bounded cultural heritage.¹⁷⁶

Conclusion

In the last two decades, the Argentine and Chilean states have passed legislation and enacted

¹⁷⁶ On March 21st of 2024, in the context of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Human Rights Secretary launched a virtual course on the rights of the Chilean Afrodescendant Tribal People, which represents the first public policy of Gabriel Boric's administration to target this population. Information about the launching of this policy is available at: <https://observatorio.msgg.gob.cl/2024/03/21/gobierno-lanza-curso-virtual-sobre-derechos-del-pueblo-tribal-afrodescendiente-chileno/>.

policies to address Afrodescendants' claims for legal recognition and inclusion. The character and scope of these laws and policies, however, vary significantly between both countries. This chapter has revealed how each country's political system has created different opportunities and constraints for activists, in relation to the particular geography of each Afrodescendant movement. By focusing on how Afrodescendants interact with state officials at different levels of government, I identified activists' political strategies to overcome the challenges inherent to their respective political systems and to position their demands successfully. By analyzing the types of laws and policies discussed and approved in each country, I exposed how state responses to Afrodescendant claims are mediated by Afrodescendants' geographical location and the place assigned to them within each country's social structure.

The Argentine federal state provides varied pathways for Afrodescendants to seek ethno-racial reform. The concentration of the Afro-Argentine movement in Buenos Aires has allowed activists to access federal government authorities, gaining powerful political allies who have supported them by presenting multiple bills at the National Congress and opening institutional spaces at ministries and other central institutions to install an Afrodescendant agenda at the federal level. Activists have reached positions in public offices where they have developed policies for their community. However, given provincial government's political autonomy and the centralization of federal institutions, national legislation and policies have had little impact outside of Buenos Aires. Activists outside of Buenos Aires have sought support from provincial and municipal authorities, both to adhere to and implement federal legislation and policies as well as to promote other measures more adjusted to their local reality. In most provinces, however, there are no organized Afrodescendant groups to promote such changes. Thus, progress in the implementation of an Afrodescendant agenda in Argentina has had a very unequal geographical distribution. Furthermore, despite activists' efforts to position diverse demands, most laws approved have been restricted to the creation of commemoration days recognizing Afro-Argentine history and cultural heritage. While activists have been more successful in promoting a diversified Afrodescendant agenda when they have been appointed to positions at public offices, changes between governments have time and again put these agendas at risk and there is currently uncertainty about the continuity of most existing policies.

The Chilean unitary state provides Afrodescendants with a single pathway for ethno-racial reform. Afro-Chileans' location in Arica, far away from where central authorities design public policies, has represented an obstacle to positioning their demands and institutionalizing an Afrodescendant agenda. However, activists have been able to position themselves as important actors in Arica, gaining support from local authorities who have used their discretionary power to include Afrodescendants in policies and state actions, where the creation of an Afrodescendant Development Office in the Municipality of Arica was particularly significant. Local allies have also played the role of political brokers to amplify their demands, which enabled the approval of a law recognizing the Afro-Chilean Tribal People at the National Congress. But policy-wise, Afro-Chileans have been less successful, and although they were included within the organizational structure of the recently created Cultures, Arts, and Heritage Ministry (MINCAP), policies continue to be mostly restricted to the promotion of territorially bounded cultural practices in the Arica-Parinacota Region. While governmental alternation in Chile has not translated into a significant transformation of the state's administrative structure and, on paper, there has been continuity in the Afrodescendant agenda – where it has existed – between governments, the

advancement of significant actions that can impact the structural position of Afrodescendants does depend on governors' political convictions regarding minority groups. Therefore, it is to be expected that Gabriel Boric's government will finally take steps towards the amplification and diversification of Afrodescendants' rights.

There is no question that there has been progress towards the institutionalization of an Afrodescendant agenda in Argentina and Chile. However, activists in both countries regard this progress as insufficient and continue to struggle to be considered deserving subjects of rights. Most importantly, this chapter reveals how conjunctural any given political configuration is. Political advances are not written in stone, and rights gained today can be lost tomorrow. Activists must constantly adapt to ever-changing political contexts. Therefore, the meaning activists attribute to Afro-descent and the political claims they prioritize are constantly transforming. This is what I believe Stuart Hall (1996) meant when he argued that Blackness is best conceived as a state of becoming, not pre-existing its making not ever definitively crystallized. The current context of political polarization in Argentina and Chile – as in many places across the world – might represent both a danger and an opportunity for Afrodescendant movements, as we might be at a moment – a conjuncture – in which established consensus, lines of vision and divisions, and the hegemonic construction of nationhood can be broken apart and rearranged.

CHAPTER 5

WHO IS AFRODESCENDANT? IMMIGRATION AND THE BOUNDARIES OF BLACK POLITICAL SUBJECTHOOD

Introduction

In the first two chapters, I identified the crucial role played by international actors for the consolidation of Afrodescendant movements and for the institutionalization of Afro-descent in Argentina and Chile. In Chapters 3 and 4, I shifted the focus towards the relationship between activists and the state, examining how the political geography of Afrodescendant movements and the state's territorial distribution of power has impacted how definitions of Afro-descent and claims for legal recognition are constructed and responded to in each country. In this last empirical chapter, my main focus is on classification struggles *within* Afrodescendant movements and *between* Afrodescendant activists and the state to define the *boundaries* of Afro-descent. How Afro-descent is delimited in Argentina and Chile impacts who can make claims and be considered a deserving subject of public policies. Ultimately, the chapter focuses on how Afrodescendant activists and state actors define *who* should be legally recognized as Afrodescendant in each country. More specifically, the chapter examines the role that immigration has played in each country for how the Afrodescendant category has been delimited and institutionalized.

The erasure of Blackness in Argentina and Chile has not only been enabled by the racialization of territories that do not fit hegemonic narratives of nationhood. It has also been facilitated by the relegation of Blackness outside the boundaries of the nation-state. Blackness has been constructed in these two countries as foreign and incompatible with the national body. Because national narratives around the absence of Black people have been so pervasive, Argentines and Chileans identifying as Afrodescendants must consistently reaffirm their belonging to their respective national communities.

The arrival of Black immigrants in the past few decades has further reinforced notions of Blackness as exclusively attributed to foreign “others” in each national context (Gayles 2021; Tijoux 2014). The presence of Black immigrants has enabled the reaffirmation – by distinction – of each national population's Whiteness. Immigrants – especially but not exclusively those coming from Africa or Haiti – are frequently regarded by Argentine and Chilean society as “authentically Black,” while Afro-Argentines and Afro-Chileans have struggled to have their Blackness recognized. Centuries of racial mixing between Afrodescendants, Indigenous peoples, and European descendants in Argentina and Chile “has produced racially ambiguous bodies that are not easily perceived as Blacks by others” (Mardones Marshall 2021:2688), despite individuals' self-identification. The assignment of Blackness to immigrants' bodies has therefore complicated local activists' attempts to be recognized as authentically Black. Afro-Argentines and Afro-Chileans have thus struggled against both the erasure of their African ancestry in narratives of nationhood and the everyday foreignization of Blackness.

Scholars who have drawn attention to the interplay of international migration and ethno-

racial movements in Latin America focus on how the arrival of immigrants allows native-born individuals to distance themselves from Blackness (Sawyer and Paschel 2007). Building and extending on this prior work, in this chapter I examine how immigration affects how native-born activists frame their claims as Afrodescendants. I address two specific questions: what role has immigration played in Afrodescendant movements in Argentina and Chile, and in turn, how has this role impacted how the boundaries of Afro-descent are negotiated *within* each Afrodescendant movement and *between* activists and state actors? I argue that together, the answers to these questions contribute to explaining why Afro-descent has been institutionalized differently in Argentina and Chile.

In answer to the first question, my research shows that immigrants' participation in Afrodescendant movements affects both these movements' internal dynamics and their negotiation processes with the state. In Argentina, immigrant communities played an important role in the consolidation of an Afrodescendant movement in the mid-1990s. Together with native-born activists, they built a heterogeneous movement with both shared and conflicting interests and demands. While some Afro-Argentines have responded positively to the arrival of Black immigrants, valuing their contributions to strengthening the Afro-Argentine movement and stressing Black people's common struggles, others perceive them as competition in claims-making processes and distance themselves from immigrants by constructing boundaries in which they emphasize a common experience shared by those with a long-standing in the national territory, from which immigrants are excluded. The Afro-Argentine movements' internal heterogeneity has thus produced a broad diversity of ways of framing Afro-descent and presenting claims to state actors.

In the case of Chile, Black immigrants have not been significant actors within the Afrodescendant movement, which has resulted in a considerably homogenous Afro-Chilean movement. However, some Afro-Chileans perceive immigrants as a threat given Chilean society's strong rejection of immigration, which they believe can make state officials less receptive to their demands if these include immigrants. Given immigrants' absence from political debates around ethno-racial reform, Afro-Chileans do not perceive them as competition in claims-making processes but do see them as possible competition for access to future public policies. These feelings of threat have driven Afro-Chileans to distance themselves from immigrants by stressing their distinct Afro-Chilean culture, shared history, and national belonging. While some Afro-Chileans have advocated for a more inclusive framing of Afro-descent, immigrants' absence within the movement has enabled the prevalence of more restrictive definitions, and activists have presented unified claims towards the state as Afrodescendant citizens.

To answer the second question, I find that immigration plays a role in structuring the political field and the battle for how the Afrodescendant category is legally delimited in these two countries. In Argentina, the presence of diverse Black actors during political debates *within* the Afrodescendant movement and *between* activists and state actors has resulted in public policies that target diverse Afrodescendant populations. The heterogeneity and contentiousness within the Afro-Argentine movement has produced two different dynamics of Black subjecthood institutionalization: one appealing to the past, focused on the recognition of Afro-Argentines' historical contributions to the country and the need for reparations towards the descendants of enslaved Africans, in which Black immigrant communities are excluded; and another dynamic

appealing to the future, which focuses on the recognition of cultural diversity and combats racial discrimination, which includes Black immigrants and their descendants.

In the case of Chile, the absence of immigrants in debates *within* the Afrodescendant movement and *between* Afro-Chilean activists and state officials has resulted in policies designed and implemented to specifically target Afro-Chileans who share a common culture and history. The homogeneity of the Afro-Chilean movement has promoted a single dynamic of Black subjecthood institutionalization, focused on the recognition of Afro-Chileans' long-standing presence in the country and on the protection, revitalization, and promotion of their cultural heritage, from which immigrants are inescapably excluded. In contrast, racial inequality and anti-Black discrimination – affecting all Afrodescendant people independent of their nationality – has hardly been addressed by the Chilean state.

I begin the chapter with a brief summary of how previous scholarship has analyzed the interaction between immigration and ethno-racial politics, both in the United States and Latin America, stating how my research contributes to this literature. I then describe the different Black immigrant communities that have arrived in Argentina and Chile, examining if and how they have interacted with and contributed to local Afrodescendant activists in claims-making processes. I follow by analyzing how native-born Afrodescendant activists have reacted in each country to the arrival of Black immigrants, and to what degree they have included or excluded them when making claims for recognition and inclusion. I continue by examining how immigration has impacted how census questions to capture Afro-descent as well as laws to recognize Afrodescendants have been framed in each national context to include or exclude different populations. I finally analyze the role of immigration in how Afro-descent has been delimited in public policies that include or address Afrodescendants, identifying who can and who cannot access these policies in Argentina and Chile.

I conclude that the distinct role played by immigration within the Afro-Argentine and the Afro-Chilean movements has impacted how activists frame and present their demands, and, ultimately, how each state delimits Afro-descent. By tracing the processes by which different groups are included in and excluded from policies targeting Afrodescendants, this chapter exposes how immigration impacts classification struggles around the legal definition and institutionalization of Afro-descent. Ultimately, the chapter underscores the importance of paying attention to immigration and immigrants in cross-national research on Afrodescendant politics in the Americas.

Immigration and ethno-racial politics

The impact of immigration on struggles for ethno-racial recognition in Latin America remains largely unexplored. Lee (2008) suggests that native-born and immigrant populations who share a common ancestry do not necessarily share a common identity and much less political goals. While the arrival of immigrants might help ethno-racial movements gain strength by providing them with bigger numbers and new organizational experiences, immigrants can also represent a threat for native-born activists if they are perceived as competition for limited state resources. Understanding when and how immigrants become political actors within ethno-racial movements represents a

first step in identifying how they impact the institutionalization of ethno-racial categories.

Research in the United States has identified various ways in which immigration affects ethno-racial classification in receiving societies. Most studies that have looked at the impact of immigration on legal systems take a historical approach, focusing on how the law racializes different immigrant groups, including some and excluding others from acquiring political membership in the host society (Haney López 2006; Motomura 2006). More contemporary research has generally taken an interactionist approach. Some studies show that immigrants distance themselves from racialized groups to avoid stigmatization and discrimination (Tesfai 2016; Waters 1999). Others have focused on how immigrants affect understandings of racial groupness within the receiving society, producing changes in local racial hierarchies (Bonilla-Silva 2004; Jiménez and Horowitz 2013; Roth 2012). For example, Jiménez (2008) finds that ethno-racial boundaries between Mexican-Americans and Mexican immigrants are sharpened when the immigrant population becomes sizable. Gutiérrez' work (1995), in contrast, reveals that when Mexican-Americans perceive that the fate of Mexican immigrants is tied to their own, they include them in their political agenda.

In Latin America, there are important seminal works by historians and historical sociologists on late 19th- and early 20th-century immigrants and ethnic identities (Casey 2017; Chomsky 2000; Fitzgerald and Cook-Martin 2014; Lesser 1999; Moya 1998; Putnam 2013). Latin American scholars have paid less attention to how contemporary migration flows within the Global South affect ethno-racial boundaries, movements, and politics. An exception is Sawyer and Paschel's multi-nation study, which concluded that the arrival of Black immigrants becomes "a key site for national processes of racialization, the construction of racial identities, and the maintenance of and contestation over racial boundaries" (2007:303). In their study, they find that the presence of Black immigrants allows native-born individuals to *opt out* from the "Black" category and escape stigmatization on account of their national identity. This chapter builds on these findings about the complex ways in which the interaction between phenotype and perceptions of nationality marks some people as outside of the nation, but I focus on how immigration affects how native-born activists frame their claims *as* Afrodescendants.

Previous studies have revealed how Afrodescendant groups who frame their identities in ethnic terms have more often succeeded in achieving recognition and targeted rights (Anderson 2007; Farfán-Santos 2015; Ng'weno 2007; Paschel 2011; Restrepo 2004). By claiming to possess a distinctive culture linked to the territory where they have historically lived, Black communities have been granted cultural rights and, on occasion, rights related to collective land ownership. Black movements concentrated in urban spaces, in contrast, have had a harder time achieving recognition. The most successful cases, such as the case of urban Afro-Brazilians, have secured the implementation of policies designed to combat racial discrimination through affirmative action measures such as, for example, university quotas in higher education (Htun 2004; Paschel 2016).

In contexts in which activists' ethno-racial authenticity is constantly questioned, the stakes of how movements frame their claims are high. While communities engaging with an ethnic frame have generally been more successful at achieving targeted rights, this frame tends to restrict who is eligible for those rights (Paschel 2016). Within the ethnic frame, only those who share a common culture linked to a particular history and territory are seen as legitimate members of the community.

Claims that are framed as seeking racial equality tend to be more inclusive. However, discussions about who is eligible for targeted policies have also arisen in the context of anti-discrimination legislation. Schwartzman and da Silva's (2012) study on the implementation of affirmative action in university admissions in Brazil reveals the tensions between understandings of racial inequality as reducible to socioeconomic inequality and understandings that stress the specificity of the Black experience of discrimination. Batista and Figueredo (2020), in turn, show how the implementation since 2018 of "racial heteroidentification committees" to verify the authenticity of individuals applying to quotas in a Brazilian federal university has significantly reduced the number of people willing to check the "Brown" or "Black" box. By looking at the understudied role of immigration in Afrodescendant politics in Latin America, this chapter uncovers how different ways of framing Afrodescendant subjecthood are tied to ideas of who is a deserving subject of public policies.

Immigrant participation in Afrodescendant movements

As we saw in Chapter 1, the consolidation of Afrodescendant movements in Argentina and Chile occurred late in comparison to other Latin American countries. It was not until the 1990s and 2000s, respectively, that Afro-Argentines and Afro-Chileans began to organize and make collective claims to the state. In Argentina, Black immigrants played a key role in the emergence and development of the Afro-Argentine movement. That was not the case in Chile, where the movement was initiated and has been exclusively led by Afro-Chileans. This difference is crucial to understanding why the Argentine and Chilean states constructed different definitions of who is subject to public policies targeting Afrodescendants.

Both Argentina and Chile received significant numbers of Africans through the transatlantic slave trade during the colonial period, and their descendants became citizens after these nations gained independence from Spain. In both countries, there was also a significant Indigenous population, especially in the southern areas of each national territory, where the Mapuche people were the vast majority. Throughout the 19th century, we can trace in each country's public debates an increasing concern about the racial composition of their national populations. In these debates, the idea of promoting European immigration gained prominence by the end of the 19th century, strongly influenced by the rise of scientific racism and "the premise that eugenics could improve the biological constitution of national populations" (FitzGerald and Cook-Martin 2014:16). European immigration also came to be seen as a way of populating and consolidating each nation through the protection of borderlands and the creation of a national ethos (Solberg 1973).

In contrast with other countries of the Americas, Argentina and Chile maintained an open immigration policy that didn't significantly restrict the arrival of any particular racial, ethnic, or national group. Instead, ethnic selection in these two countries was based on the promotion of European immigration (Fitzgerald and Cook-Martin 2014). Argentina was particularly successful in attracting immigrants, receiving 6.5 million Europeans between 1850 and 1930, more than any other country in Latin America (Barbero 2020:4090). Chile's laws to promote immigration, in contrast, only attracted a modest number of Germans to the south of the country (Camus Argaluz 1991). Despite these differences, elites in both countries were successful in constructing imaginaries that represented their national populations as both homogenous and fundamentally

European (Barbero 2020; Walsh 2019). By the second half of the twentieth century, the idea of an absence of Black people had solidified in both countries, in an exercise of collective imagination that successfully excluded Blackness from the national imaginary.

In this context, the recent arrival of Black immigrants in Argentina and Chile has played an important role in making Blackness visible in each country. These immigrants have been perceived differently depending on where they come from and how they integrate into local society. In particular, when and where Black immigrants have arrived has impacted how they interact with local Afrodescendant movements and how they position themselves vis-à-vis the state. In this section, I characterize the distinct Black immigrant groups that have arrived to in Argentina and Chile, examining how they have politically organized and connected with native-born Afrodescendant activists.

Argentina: Immigrant mobilization and the diversification of the Afro-Argentine movement

Immigrants perceived as Black in Argentina have arrived at different time periods and from diverse regions of the world. In addition to the numerous African populations forcefully brought to the country through the transatlantic slave trade, Cape Verdean immigrants began to arrive in Argentina by the end of the 19th century – an ethnic community today estimated to comprise over 12,000 individuals (La Nación 2006). While Cape Verdeans arrived in Argentina as free immigrants, many of them – in particular those who arrived during the 1940s – were escaping a famine crisis produced by prolonged droughts in the Cape Verde Island, at the time a Portuguese colony that had been sustained until the 19th century by slave labor (Maffia 2011). These immigrants created mutual aid societies and sport clubs with the goal of promoting intragroup solidarity and strengthening ethnic neighborhoods. While many of them hid their African ancestry by emphasizing their Portuguese nationality, some of their Argentine descendants began in the 1990s to associate with Afro-Argentines and to position themselves as Black Cape Verdeans born in Argentina (Maffia 2016:62). By constructing alliances with other Black activists, these Argentine-Cape Verdeans became crucial actors for the consolidation and development of an Afrodescendant movement in Buenos Aires. As an ethnic community with several generations in the country, they have additionally played an important role mediating between Afro-Argentines and more recent Afrodescendant and African immigrants.

With the end of the Argentine dictatorship (1976-1983), the arrival of immigrants from Latin American countries increased, including a significant number of Black immigrants from Uruguay and Brazil, where dictatorships continued to rule a couple of years after Argentina restored its democracy. While South Americans today represent 87% of the total immigrant population in Argentina (DNP 2022), there is no reliable statistical data accounting for how many of them are Afrodescendants, although the numbers are considered to be low.¹⁷⁷ These immigrants,

¹⁷⁷ In the 2010 Argentine National Population Census, 149,493 individuals identified as Afrodescendants, of which 8% were foreign-born (INDEC 2012). These results, however, are considered to underestimate the Black population in the country given that the Afro-descent question was only included in a small sample of questionnaires. In 2022, the Argentine National Statistics and Census Institute included for the first time a question on Afro-descent in all census questionnaires. Preliminary results published, however, have not yet included information about Afrodescendants' place of birth.

however, became quite visible by the mid-1980s, as they created organizations that disseminated Black cultural and artistic expressions, producing a strong impact on Argentine youth culture (Frigerio and Lamborghini 2011a). Bringing diverse histories of organization and struggles from their home countries, some of these immigrants associated with Afro-Argentine activists who, after the return of Argentine democracy, were linking human rights discourses with processes of decolonization in Africa and struggles for the liberation of oppressed peoples around the world (Anderson and Gomes 2021; López 2009; Sutton 2008:114). In the 1990s, the arrival of Afro-Latin American immigrants intensified and diversified, including countries of origin such as Peru, Cuba, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and Honduras (INADI 2005:123). Some of these immigrants began to politically organize, creating their own ethnic organizations or joining organizations with activists from different national origins.

African immigrants also began to arrive in Argentina in the 1990s, a majority of them West Africans from Senegal, Nigeria, and Ghana (Anderson 2015:72), in addition to others coming from countries such as Mali, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (INADI 2005:123). Although Africans today represent less than 1% of the immigrant population in the country, they became particularly visible in Buenos Aires by the 2000s due to their concentration in certain neighborhoods and their work as street vendors (Kleidermacher 2021; 2013). Africans also created organizations, some of them formed by co-nationals and others bringing together members from different African countries (Anderson and Gomes 2021:9). Over time, these African immigrants began to increasingly interact with Afro-Argentine activists, constructing alliances and participating in debates with state officials at critical moments, such as leading up to the inclusion of a question on African descent in the 2010 National Population Census. By allying with African embassies, these African organizations were crucial for the Argentine Afrodescendant movement to access local resources when international funding for civil society organizations began to diminish or be withdrawn (Frigerio and Lamborghini 2011a:32).

By the time that the first Afro-Argentine NGO, *África Vive*, was formed in 1997, there were already several Black immigrant communities in the country that had begun organizing politically. As discussed in Chapter 1, the creation of this NGO signaled a shift in Black activism and the consolidation of an Afro-Argentine movement more determinedly focused on vindicating the historical and contemporary existence of Black Argentines. *África Vive* leaders, however, began early on constructing alliances with Cape Verdean and immigrant activists,¹⁷⁸ who were fundamental for the consolidation of the Afrodescendant movement. As argued by Anderson (2015:75), mobilization around a Black identity in Argentina “is partially a response to pressure from non-Argentine blacks residing in the country who have strong historical ties to blackness.”

Many other Black organizations were created after the turn of the millennium. Some of these organizations were formed exclusively by Afro-Argentine members, while others were formed by immigrants and some brought together immigrant and native-born activists. These organizations have come together in different alliances, sometimes including immigrants and Afro-

¹⁷⁸ One expression of these early alliances was the organization, in June of 1999 and October of 2000, of two seminars in Buenos Aires titled “Seminar of First Nations, Afro-Argentines, and New Immigrants: Justice for Discrimination, Inferiorization, and Exclusion, Yesterday and Today.” In 2004, furthermore, African and Afrodescendant organizations began organizing in Buenos Aires a yearly event called African Week, which included artistic presentations, sporting events, talks, and debates (Anderson and Gomes 2021:15-16).

Argentine organizations – such as the November 8th Commission, created in 2015 – and others bringing together exclusively Afro-Argentine organizations – such as the Network of Colonial Line Afrodescendants, created in 2013.

Despite the existence of internal struggles, immigrant and native-born Afrodescendant activists constituted an ethno-political movement that progressively gained force and visibility in the public arena (Anderson 2015). Given the movement's internal heterogeneity, Black activists and organizations in Argentina generally had to negotiate to arrive at an agreement on what to prioritize when presenting their demands to the state. Thus, state officials became used to interacting both with Afro-Argentine and Black immigrant activists when discussing policies targeting Afrodescendant, Afro-Argentine, and African communities.¹⁷⁹

Chile: A homogenous Afrodescendant movement without immigrants

In contrast to Argentina, there were very few Black immigrants in Chile before the 2010s. While the end of the Chilean dictatorship (1973-1990) led to a period characterized by a slow increase in immigration, these flows were dominated in the 1990s and 2000s by non-Black immigrants from neighboring countries, such as Peru, Bolivia, and Argentina, and were relatively low in numbers. These immigrants initially formed organizations based on their national groups, mostly focused on the promotion of their cultures, the creation of solidarity networks, and the distribution of information. With time, immigrants from different countries began to connect and organize, creating networks to position their claims with greater strength. It is not until recently, however, that immigrants in Chile have begun to politically organize around a Black identity.

There is no documentation of Black activism that could anticipate the rise of an Afrodescendant movement in Chile before the creation of the Afro-Chilean NGO Oro Negro in 2001. Both scholars and Afro-Chileans agree on the relevance of a single event that triggered the emergence of an organized Afrodescendant movement in Chile: the 2000 Americas Regional Conference – better known as the Santiago Conference – in preparation for the Durban World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. It is safe to affirm that at the moment of the Santiago Conference, most people in Chile and Latin America did not imagine that there existed Chilean citizens who were the descendants of enslaved Africans. This explains the strong reactions provoked when Marta and Sonia Salgado, the two Afrodescendant sisters regarded as the founders of the Afro-Chilean movement, stood up in front of a multinational crowd at the Santiago Citizen Conference – the civil society event organized in parallel to the intergovernmental Regional Conference – and presented themselves: “Here we are,

¹⁷⁹ Given the participation of diverse Black actors in the Afro-Argentine movement, distinctions between the terms used to talk about each group have become significant. For example, African immigrants – including Cape Verdeans – and their descendants are not strictly speaking Afrodescendants, a term that alludes to the African diaspora arriving through the transatlantic slave trade. Although the term “Afrodescendant” is often used more loosely to include African immigrants, in other cases it is used purposely to exclude them. Black Latin American immigrants, in turn, are identified as Afrodescendants – since they share the diasporic experience – but are not Afro-Argentines. While the native-born descendants of all Black immigrants are Afro-Argentines – given that Argentina has birthright citizenship – some activists have coined the term “Afro-Argentines from the colonial line” [Afroargentinos del tronco colonial] to distinguish themselves from the descendants of free immigrants, including Cape Verdeans, who arrived after slavery was abolished in Argentina in 1853. This is why activists and state officials in Argentina often use the three terms – Afrodescendants, Afro-Argentines, and Africans – when referring to groups making claims around Afro-descent.

we are Black, and we are certainly Chileans.”

The consciousness of being part of a diasporic “imagined community” (Anderson 1983), however, had not been present for long in Chile, at least not at a collective level that transcended a few specific families. The Santiago Conference marked the pivotal moment in which individuals who regarded themselves and their family members in Arica colloquially as “*negros*” began to organize and construct a sense of group membership. A small delegation of them traveled in 2001 from Arica to the Durban World Conference, where they solidified this diasporic Afrodescendant consciousness. On their return to Arica, they created Oro Negro with the goal of demanding the official recognition of Afro-Chilean people by the Chilean state. The creation of other Afro-Chilean organizations followed, some politically oriented and others focused on the reclamation, reconstruction, and promotion of Afro-Chilean cultural and artistic expressions. Notably, all these organizations were located in Arica and – with the rare exception of one or another immigrant joining a given organization – all of the members were Chilean. Despite disputes between these Afro-Chilean organizations, activists quickly realized that they needed to present themselves as united in order to present their claims effectively to the state. For this purpose, in 2008 they created the Chilean Afrodescendant Organizations Alliance, the first of several networks between Afro-Chilean organizations in Arica. Since 2018, Afro-Chilean organizations in Arica coordinate through the Technical-Political Roundtable of the Afrodescendant Tribal People.

It is only from the 2010s and onward that we find a significant increase in the immigrant population living in Chile, reaching over 7% of the total population by 2019. Immigrants’ national origins also diversified due to the arrival of increasing numbers of Colombians, Haitians, and Venezuelans, groups that in 2021 represented 11.7%, 12.2% and 30% of the total immigrant population, respectively. Although there is no statistical data on Afro-descent in Chile, it was with this latter flow that Afrodescendant immigrants began to gain visibility in Chile. In 2017, Black immigrant organizations began to emerge in Santiago, mostly formed by Latin American Black women and focused on the struggle against racism.¹⁸⁰ However, with a few exceptions, these organizations have not constructed alliances with the Afro-Chilean movement in Arica¹⁸¹ nor significantly interacted with state officials in debates around ethno-racial reform.¹⁸²

Given that the Afro-Chilean movement was formed before the arrival of a significant number of Black immigrants, the question about including or excluding immigrants when making claims was not as relevant as in Argentina, where immigrants were important political actors even before the consolidation of the Afro-Argentine movement. In Chile, the geographical distance between Afro-Chilean and immigrant organizations, on the one hand, and the inexistence of a

¹⁸⁰ While most Black immigrant organizations in Santiago have been formed by Afro-Latin Americans, some also include Afro-Chilean women whose African ancestry comes from a foreign or immigrant parent. There is also one African organization, the NGO Ubuntu Africa Chile, presided over by an African immigrant from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The African population in Chile, however, is extremely small: the 2017 National Census identified a total of 1,722 individuals born in Africa, equivalent to 0.01% of the total population in Chile (INE 2017).

¹⁸¹ There have been a few shared initiatives between Black immigrant organizations in Santiago and the Afro-Chilean Women’s Organization Luanda in Arica, mostly focused on the promotion of anti-racism from a feminist and decolonial perspective. For more information about these associations, see Parra Aravena et al. 2023.

¹⁸² Immigrant organizations have generally interacted with the state separately from Afro-Chilean organizations. While meetings between immigrants and state officials have not centered on ethno-racial reform, some of them have touched on the theme of racism, especially when debating the implementation of intercultural policies.

group that could mediate between these two populations – like Cape Verdeans in Argentina – contributed to preventing their unification in a single Afrodescendant movement. It has only been since the inauguration of the current government, led by President Gabriel Boric, that Afrodescendant immigrants have been invited together with Afro-Chilean activists to a couple of meetings with state officials in Santiago.¹⁸³

Afrodescendant activists' responses to Black immigration

The increasing arrival of Black immigrants has become a source of tension and debate in both Argentina and Chile, awakening feelings of threat among the local population. For Afrodescendant activists, these feelings of threat are exacerbated because the presence of immigrants reaffirm longstanding ideas in each country, reinforced by public discourses and the media, that position Blackness as foreign. Some Afro-Argentine and Afro-Chilean activists have responded by reaffirming their national belonging and authenticity as Afrodescendant citizens. They do this by constructing symbolic boundaries to distance themselves from immigrants when making claims towards the state. They distinguish their struggles from those of immigrants by foregrounding demands for recognition and racial justice that are strongly related to national history, local culture, and territorial attachment. In this way, they build a feeling of group membership by reconstructing a common history that situates them as worthy members of the national community. The stakes involved in this boundary work, however, are not equivalent for both movements. While Afro-Chileans mostly fear that if state officials confuse them with immigrants their chances of promoting ethno-racial legal reforms will be at risk, Afro-Argentines feel threatened by immigrants' participation in claims-making processes because they perceive that the state has often prioritized immigrants over them.

Not all activists, however, feel threatened by the arrival of Black immigrants. Particularly in Argentina, where many Afrodescendant organizations and networks have historically included immigrants, Afro-Argentines tend to value the alliances created with these immigrant organizations and believe that Black people share a common struggle against discrimination and exclusion regardless of their nationality, therefore rejecting framings of Afro-descent that divide the Black movement. In Chile, there are also activists who believe they share a common struggle with Black immigrants, but these voices have been less powerful given the absence of immigrants within the Afro-Chilean movement with whom to build a common ground of demands. These differences are significant because the ways that activists construct the boundaries of Afro-descent impact how they present their demands and are responded to by the state.

Argentina: Afrodescendant subjecthood as a site of dispute

The foreignization of Blackness is a problem recognized in Argentina by both native-born and

¹⁸³ Since 2022, Black immigrant and Afro-Chilean organizations have been invited to “La Moneda” (the seat of government) for the commemoration of the Day of Afrodescendant Women on July 25th. After the commemoration in 2022, the Coordination of the Presidency of the Republic and the Human Rights Secretariat of the Justice and Human Rights Ministry held a meeting in October of that year with Black immigrant and Afro-Chilean organizations, where the new Human Rights National Plan was presented and the construction of an Afrodescendant working agenda was debated. However, there was no follow-up to this meeting.

immigrant Afrodescendants. Among the Afro-Argentine activists I interviewed, several experienced being confused for immigrants in social situations. These interactions made them feel rejected, as they acknowledged that most of their fellow nationals could not conceive that people who looked like them could actually be Argentine citizens. One Afro-Argentine activist, who traced her African ancestry to Argentina's colonial period, explained this process of foreignization (Interview, November 2021):

In Argentina, if you look like me, they always ask you where you are from. If they think you are Afro, you necessarily have to be from Brazil or Uruguay. They ask you where you are from and if you respond that you are Argentine, they ask intrusive questions, like where are your parents from, where are your grandparents from, things that they would never ask a White person.

The Black immigrants I interviewed in Argentina also perceived that, no matter how long they were in the country, Argentines would never accept them as part of the national community. Even the Argentine children of Black immigrants reported that they were constantly treated as foreigners in Argentina, regardless of their Argentine nationality and perfect Argentine accent. They claimed that Argentines often felt entitled to ask them where they were from, even without knowing whether they had been born in Argentina or not. Sandra Chagas (Interview, October 2021), a Black activist born in Uruguay but nationalized Argentine many years ago, criticized such racialized perceptions of who can or cannot belong to the nation:

That question, "Where are you from," they don't ask White people that. Black people can always be questioned about where they are from because you cannot belong to this territory if you are Black, you have to be from somewhere else and that is what is terrible about a society that treats as foreign everything that it believes should not be in their territory.

This profoundly engrained idea within Argentine society, about Blacks not belonging within the national ethos, is clearly illustrated by an incident that occurred in 2002 – and reported by the Argentine national newspaper *Clarín* (2002) – to "Pocha" Lamadrid, a fifth-generation Argentine descendant of enslaved Africans and founder of NGO *África Vive*. Lamadrid had been invited to a meeting in Panama with other Black activists to discuss the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., where she would represent the Afro-Argentine community. But after arriving at the airport in Buenos Aires to begin her trip, the immigration officer claimed that her Argentine passport was falsified and called the police, who detained her for over six hours at the airport. Besides missing the opportunity to participate in the meeting, what hurt Lamadrid the most about this episode was that the police officer told her that she could not be Argentine if she was Black.

Paradoxically, most White Argentines in Buenos Aires are the descendants of immigrants who arrived in Argentina from Italy and Spain during the last half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. However, in Argentina nobody questions the national belonging of these second-, third-, or fourth-generation immigrants; European origins – even recent ones – have been integrated into the Argentine national identity. Federico Pita (Interview, November 2021), an Afro-Argentine who has actively combatted the foreignization of Blackness in the country, cited Argentina's ex-president Mauricio Macri – a second-generation Italian – as an example of how easily European descendants are exempted from this foreignization dynamic from which Black people cannot escape:

Afro-Argentines, especially those who are phenotypically Afrodescendant, externalized in their Black skin color, are denied the possibility of being treated as Argentines. They always ask them, where are you from? But nobody questions the Argentine-ness of Mauricio Macri, whose father is Italian. Nobody calls him “Italian” or “Macri, go back to your country.” Nobody would imagine such a situation. And his father, who died recently, spoke very broken Spanish because he was a foreigner. But nobody thinks of Macri as a foreigner.

Some of the Afro-Argentine activists I interviewed claimed that the association of Blackness with foreignness had increased with the recent arrival of Black immigrants to the country, particularly in Buenos Aires. As explained to me by Jeremías Pérez (Interview, December 2021), an Afro-Argentine scholar: “the hyper-visibility of Africans has contributed to the foreignization of Blackness.” This hyper-visibility relates to several factors, including Black immigrants’ geographical concentration in a few neighborhoods in Buenos Aires, their prominent use of public spaces, and their darker skin color when compared to native Afrodescendants, most of whom have mixed ancestry. Black immigrants have also gained visibility in Argentina since many of them have been active in cultural circuits, which according to some Afro-Argentine activists, has contributed to the exotification of Black culture. For example, a number of activists recalled that when the National Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (INADI) organized in 2008 and 2009 the Cultural Conferences “Argentina is also Afro,” which included “roundtable discussions, percussion workshops, and dance performances” (Anderson and Gomes 2021:16), most of the artistic presentations represented Black cultural expressions from other countries and were performed by immigrants. From their perspective, the distinct Afro-Argentine experience had gotten muddled with cultural expressions from other countries.

Additionally, immigrants’ prominent role in anti-racist political struggles would have contributed, in the eyes of these Afro-Argentine leaders, to the imaginary of Blackness as an immigrant issue. As argued in the last section, Black immigrants played an important role in the consolidation of the Afrodescendant movement in Buenos Aires and have interacted with state actors since the early movement days. For example, Black immigrants were appointed together with Afro-Argentine leaders to the spaces opened to civil society by INADI in 2006: the Civil Society Consultative Council and the Forum of Afrodescendants and Africans. Cape Verdean descendants, second-generation immigrants, and foreign-born nationalized Afrodescendants have also come to be employed within the state, which has produced mixed reactions from Afro-Argentine activists.

On the one hand, many Afro-Argentine activists valued that immigrants have made Blackness visible in Argentina and celebrated that for the first time Afrodescendants occupied important public positions in the country. Some of the activists I interviewed valued the organizational experiences and professional background brought by these immigrants to Argentina, recognizing that a majority of Afro-Argentines did not have the required training to access those kinds of positions.

Other Afro-Argentine activists, however, felt that the presence of Black immigrants in Buenos Aires had reinforced the common perception of Blackness as foreign and that hiring immigrants in state positions contributed to this process of foreignization. During my fieldwork, the case of Carlos Álvarez was mentioned regularly, both by supporters and detractors. Álvarez had been appointed in December of 2019 – when President Alberto Fernández took office – as

National Director of Pluralism and Interculturality at the National Human Rights Secretariat, an appointment that produced tensions within the Afro-Argentine community. Although Álvarez – who was born in Uruguay – had been living in Argentina for several decades and had acquired Argentine nationality many years prior, he was still considered by some as an outsider to the Afro-Argentine community, which shows how some Afro-Argentine movement leaders construct ideas of national belonging that go beyond formal citizenship. One Afro-Argentine organization even published a complaint letter denouncing the appointment of Álvarez as an act of foreignization and erasure of Afro-Argentines. In the letter, they positioned their organization’s members as “the descendants of Africans who were enslaved, kidnapped, and brought during the transatlantic slave-trade”; “the direct descendants of those who fought and gave their lives for the nation, active members of the independentist armies, fighters for the sovereignty of our nation”; “descendants of those who were the workforce that built the Republic itself”; and “founding members of the mutual aid organizations that kicked off the fight for the expansion of rights.” Public policies for Afrodescendants, these activists argued in the letter, should be addressed to those who share this history.¹⁸⁴ The pressure applied by critical Afro-Argentines resulted in the removal and demotion of Álvarez to the position of Coordinator of the Afro Program,¹⁸⁵ while a non-Afrodescendant person was appointed as the new National Director of Ethno-Racial Equity, Immigrants and Refugees.¹⁸⁶

As a response to the feelings of threat produced by the arrival and political participation of Black immigrants, some Afro-Argentines constructed symbolic boundaries to distance themselves from these immigrants. These boundaries were strongly centered on who should have access to different types of state policies. Several of the Afro-Argentine activists I interviewed stressed that immigrants’ participation in the Afrodescendant movement had displaced their own political agenda. Although they admitted to sharing common goals with immigrants, like combating racism, they found it problematic that the state prioritized these common issues over the recognition of its debt towards the descendants of enslaved Africans who had been in the country for several generations. Even the Cape Verdean community, with several generations of members born in Argentina, were considered outsiders by some Afro-Argentine activists. Although citizenship in Argentina is given to any person born in the country, these activists displayed an ethno-cultural understanding of nationhood (Brubaker 1992), attached to the idea of the possession of a particular culture resulting from a long-standing multigenerational common history.

While these tensions had existed between native-born and immigrant activists since the early days of the movement,¹⁸⁷ they became more acute in 2007 when some activists coined the

¹⁸⁴ The letter referenced is available at:

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Racism/WGEAPD/Session26/LAC/Nikolas-Parodi-DIAFAR.pdf>.

¹⁸⁵ Months later, with the creation of the Afrodescendants and Human Rights National Program in June of 2022, Álvarez was appointed as its director.

¹⁸⁶ As stated in Chapter 4, Álvarez restructured the National Directorate of Cultural Pluralism and Interculturality and changed its name to the National Directorate of Ethno-Racial Equity, Immigrants and Refugees, which was also criticized by some Afro-Argentine activists, who considered that mixing immigrants with Afrodescendants was another way of contributing to Afro-Argentines’ foreignization.

¹⁸⁷ Already in 2000, there were strong confrontations between Black immigrants and Afro-Argentine activists in relation to the use of what would be “La casa del Negro.” África Vive had gain support from the adjunct Ombudsman of the city of Buenos Aires, Diana Maffia, to obtain a center for the Afro-Argentine community, but other Black activists – led by an African and a Uruguayan immigrant – claimed that they also needed the space. While Afro-

term “Afro-Argentines from the colonial line” (Afroargentinos del tronco colonial). This term enabled these activists to distance themselves not only from immigrants but also from the native-born descendants of immigrants, including the Cape Verdean community (Cirio 2010). This moment marked a shift away from shared struggles towards a more exclusive focus on breaking with the erasure of Afrodescendants in Argentine history. According to Afro-Argentines from the colonial line, this new term situated their cultural legacy in a specific historical period, while enabling them to distinguish themselves both from White Argentines and from Black immigrants (Cirio 2015:1-2). Mirta Alzugaray (Interview, October 2021), an Afro-Argentine activist from Santa Fe who identified as part of the “colonial line” category, described its meaning:

The denomination “colonial line” includes those who descend from enslaved Africans in the colonial period in Argentina. Afro-Argentines, in contrast, can descend from Africans that migrated to Argentina after the end of slavery. That is why the denomination “colonial line” was added, to refer to the Africans from which we descend, who pre-existed the Argentine nation.

By coining this new term, Afro-Argentines from the colonial line sought to ensure the recognition of their pre-existence to the nation-state, equating themselves juridically to Indigenous peoples (Cirio 2015). Their condition of pre-existence also signaled the role played by their ancestors in the construction of the Argentine nation. From their perspective, the state had a specific debt towards their families because of the wrongdoings against their ancestors and the lack of recognition of their historical contributions to their country. Therefore, Afro-Argentines from the colonial line should be prioritized in any future state policies.

A majority of the Afro-Argentines I interviewed, however, did not share the position of Afro-Argentines from the colonial line. Even among those Afro-Argentines who could trace their African ancestry to the colonial period in Argentina, there were many who were against the division of the Argentine Black movement according to periods of arrival in the country. Many of these Afro-Argentine activists worked closely with Black immigrants and their descendants, either by forming organizations with them, by coordinating with them through Afrodescendant networks, or by simply participating with them in meetings and discussions. From their perspective, the “colonial line” category was not only divisive but also selfish, since it would be used by some activists as a strategy to put themselves at front of the line for state policies, disregarding not only the needs but also all the work that Cape Verdeans, recent immigrants, and their descendants had done for their movement. Miriam Gomes (Interview, July 2021), a historical leader of the Cape Verdean community, analyzed this division:

It has to do with reparations, economic or symbolic reparations. By positioning themselves in that place, they put themselves first in the list if anything is distributed, as the true Afro-Argentines. As if the rest of us came as visitors or, as they call it, voluntary diaspora, when we also suffered from the slave trade. Of course, those Cape Verdeans who arrived in Argentina in the 19th century arrived as free citizens, but we were escaping a terrible reality of oppression, of starvation. When my grandmother arrived in Argentina, 10% of the [Cape Verdean] population had died of starvation.

Argentines alleged that the house should be used as a symbol of reparations for the state’s debt towards the Argentine descendants of enslaved people, immigrants claimed that it should be used to defend human rights, combat racism, promote Afro culture, and assist various Black communities, regardless of their nationality (López 2005). Diana Maffia (Interview, February 2022) recalled how she organized activities to mediate between these groups’ interests, but the mediation failed and the project was never completed.

We didn't come to have a picnic! But they ignore this reality and think we came here because we wanted to, and therefore, since they were brought against their will, their suffering is bigger and thus deserve more reparations and recognition from the Argentine State than other Afrodescendants. I believe it to be a contradiction.

Opposition to this category was especially strong within the Cape Verdean community, who claimed that they had been working towards the recognition of Afro-Argentines before many of these Afro-Argentines who claimed to be from the colonial line appeared in the picture. Cape Verdeans had in fact played an important role making claims as Afro-Argentines while including more recent immigrants to the movement's political debates. They therefore perceived this distinction as counterproductive for the movement's goals. Patricia Gomes (Interview, November 2021), another Cape Verdean-Argentine activist, alleged that the Afro-Argentines from the colonial line had created a rupture within the movement that ultimately debilitated them when presenting demands to the Argentine state:

I believe that it has to do with separating, dividing, and putting themselves in a position of, I do not want to say of superiority, but of saying "I have more rights." For example, in my case I do not consider myself Afro-Argentine from the colonial line because I am a descendant of Africans, born in Argentina, but I am not the descendant of enslaved people. They question whether Cape Verdeans are Afro-Argentines, they tell us "No, you are immigrants that by chance were born here." There is a whole series of questioning that comes with this idea of the colonial line, that from my perspective, divides and debilitates the movement.

To recapitulate, there is consensus among Black activists in Buenos Aires about Blackness being commonly perceived as foreign within Argentine society. A number of Afro-Argentine activists claim that these foreignization processes have been reinforced with the arrival of Black immigrants, who have become particularly visible in Buenos Aires. Afro-Argentine activists have responded to the arrival of these Black immigrants in two distinct ways. On the one hand, a group of Afro-Argentines have emphasized their national belonging and constructed bright boundaries to distance themselves from immigrants. These processes of boundary-making have mostly been driven by a feeling of threat resulting from a perception of immigrants as competition in claims-making processes. Some activists coined the term "Afro-Argentine from the colonial line" to extend this boundary so as to distance themselves from the native-born descendants of immigrants, including Cape Verdean communities that have been in Argentina for several generations. By emphasizing a common history associated with both their ancestors' experience of slavery and their contributions to the Argentine nation, these Afro-Argentines have presented themselves as more deserving of state policies.

However, there are also Afro-Argentines who have responded more positively to the arrival of Black immigrants, valuing how they have made Blackness visible and contributed to strengthening the Afro-Argentine political movement. From their perspective, a unified movement is in a better position to be successful when making claims to the state. These Afro-Argentines have challenged the distinctions that other activists make between categories of Afrodescendant subjecthood, disregarding it as a strategy to position themselves as more deserving of public policies. From their perspective, it is Afro-Argentines from the colonial line who are foreignizing Blackness by not recognizing more recent Afro-Argentines as equally legitimate members of the national community. Cape Verdeans have played a particularly important role within this second

group, incorporating immigrants into their common struggles while making claims as Afro-Argentines.

Chile: Delimiting Afrodescendant subjecthood by distancing from immigrants

Like Afro-Argentines, Afro-Chileans recognize that Chilean society perceives Blackness as foreign. They also related their everyday experience of being treated as foreigners to the increasing arrival of Black immigrants in the country. Most of the Afro-Chileans I interviewed had some kind of anecdote related to an episode in which they were confused for an immigrant. This experience was particularly common when they travelled to Santiago, where the Black immigrant population is most numerous and visible and where people are not as used as in Arica to seeing dark-skinned Chileans. Previous work (Mardones Marshall 2021) has shown that Afro-Chileans experience being confused with Black immigrants by compatriots who cannot conceive that a Black person can in fact be Chilean. Rejection of immigration has markedly increased in Chile during the past decade, and has been frequently addressed towards Black immigrants. Some Afro-Chileans reproduced negative ideas about these immigrants – who have often been depicted as criminals in the media and public discourses – and worried about being associated with them.

To distance themselves from these negative associations, Afro-Chileans frequently constructed boundaries that stressed the insurmountable cultural differences between immigrants and themselves. Conscious of the anxieties that immigration produces among the Chilean population, Afro-Chileans also distanced themselves from immigrants by emphasizing their national belonging and the long-standing contributions they have made to the country. Ignacio Carrasco (Interview, February 2020), an Afro-Chilean anthropologist and musician from Arica, described how Afro-Chileans have responded to being treated as immigrants:

From the central power, in Santiago, in Valparaíso, they frequently consider “Afrodescendant” as a synonym of “immigrant.” So, the Afro-Chilean movement has confronted, not immigrants directly, but being categorized as immigrants. When we go to Santiago, they tell us: “You are Colombian, you are Dominican, you are Haitian, why are you stealing our traditions?”, that kind of nonsense. So, the Afro-Chilean movement has responded by stressing their own cultural tradition, their Chilean cultural heritage.

In the case of Chile, however, activists did not perceive Black immigrants as direct competition in claims-making processes but were mostly worried that if they were confused for immigrants, state officials would be less sympathetic to their cause. As explained earlier, the struggles of Afro-Chilean organizations and Black immigrants in Chile have followed quite separate pathways. In contrast to Argentina, it has exclusively been Afro-Chilean activists who have interacted with state officials to advance legislation and public policies targeting Afrodescendant communities. But although officials at regional ministerial branches and local government in Arica were well aware of the existence and struggles of the Afro-Chilean movement, central authorities frequently were not and reproduced common understandings that positioned Blackness as foreign. Given the growing anti-immigrant sentiments within Chilean society, Afro-Chileans believed that the state would not be willing to advance policies that could be perceived as benefiting the immigrant population. Even Afro-Chilean activists who were more sympathetic to immigrants’ struggles shared this perception, as expressed by Carolina Cortés (Interview, July 2021):

Look, in my organization, we do not have problems with immigrants, there is no discussion about that. We understand that the ship stopped in different ports and we are all part of the same diaspora. But strategically, we have used the concept of Afro-Chilean, because if the state barely accepts us, and we are Chileans, they are not going to accept immigrants in any kind of recognition. So, we are strategically emphasizing that we are Chilean Afrodescendants.

Many activists shared stories of how central authorities reproduced common ideas that positioned Blackness as foreign. Marco, an Afro-Chilean activist from Arica living in Santiago, narrated how a state official told members of his organization to go to the Foreign Affairs Office when they requested the inclusion of a question to capture Afro-descent in the 2017 National Population Census. Similarly, Mardones Marshall, Amigo and Cortés (2024) found that during debates at the convention that drafted a proposal for a new Constitution for Chile between 2021 and 2022, convention members equated Afrodescendants with immigrants arriving from Haiti, Colombia, Dominican Republic, and Venezuela – immigrants who were frequently spoken about as a threat to the country. In both situations, politicians implied that including Afrodescendants (in the census or in the Constitution) meant granting more rights to immigrant communities. Rodrigo Novoa (Interview, July 2021), who worked at the Arica branch of the Cultures, Arts, and Heritage Ministry, recognized the work that still needs to be done to educate central state officials about Afro-Chileans' existence:

Ministry officials need to learn that Afrodescendants are not immigrants. Something that happens to us a lot is that officials, after all the work we have done, take a step back when they ask you “Hey, are you the one working on the immigrant committee?” And I don’t work with immigrants, do you understand? Those kinds of things happen constantly, that’s why we need to strengthen central officials’ knowledge about Afro-Chileans.

To prevent state officials from confusing them for immigrants, Afro-Chileans made important efforts to communicate that they had nothing to do with immigration and that their claims would not benefit immigrants in any way. They also stressed the state’s debt to the descendants of enslaved Africans in the country due to the wrongdoings towards their ancestors, victims first of slavery and then of the state-led Chilenization process in Chile’s northern region. In this way, Afro-Chileans framed Afro-descent by making similar claims as Afro-Argentines from the colonial line, emphasizing a long-standing shared history from which immigrants and their descendants were necessarily excluded.¹⁸⁸ Samuel Pozo (Interview, August 2021) was one of many Afro-Chilean activists to express this position:

Migration is a voluntary phenomenon, right? But we were part of the most serious human rights violation episode in human history, slavery, which was a crime against humanity. Our families were brought 500 years ago against their will, they were enslaved for centuries. And after being liberated, they were persecuted by the state.

While immigrants were not perceived as competition in claims-making processes, some Afro-Chileans did fear that immigrants could take advantage of the policies advanced thanks to the hard and continuous work of the Afro-Chilean movement. They thus perceived immigrants as

¹⁸⁸ As we will see in the next section, the approval in 2019 of a law granting legal recognition to the “Chilean Afrodescendant Tribal People” institutionalized this way of framing Afro-descent.

possible competition for *access* to future targeted rights, which were thought of as scarce. For this reason, these activists made efforts to present their claims to state officials in such a way that rights could only be addressed to the Afro-Chilean community. Several state officials in Santiago and Arica expressed how Afro-Chileans distanced themselves from immigrants by highlighting the particularities of their struggle, despite the fact that public policies generally were not allowed to discriminate according to nationality. Daniela Abarzúa (Interview, June 2021), an official from the Cultures, Arts and Heritage Ministry in Santiago, told me about the role she perceived these distinctions to be playing within the Afro-Chilean community:

Those who are born in other countries of the Americas are, strictly speaking, also descendants of the transatlantic slave trade, but they [Afro-Chileans] distinguish between who arrived in Chilean territory before and after the formation of the Chilean state. It happens to be that the older Afro-Chilean leaders are more reluctant about advancing recognition towards immigrants, even if they come from the same diaspora. [...] Now, what happens with people [the children of immigrants] who are born in Chile, who are not immigrants? Again, we come back to how the cake is distributed. They believe that opening the door for other people would take away Afro-Chileans' role as protagonists.

In contrast to Argentina, where the relevance of distinguishing between types of Black subjecthood was a fundamental site of struggle between activists, in Chile there was a more well-established consensus about the need to highlight the particularities of Afro-Chileans' experiences and struggles. However, not all Afro-Chilean leaders agreed that state policies for Afrodescendants should exclusively address Afro-Chileans. As argued by De la Maza and Campos (2021:448), Afro-Chilean activists have increasingly noted that ethno-racial reform can also "bring about an improvement in the living conditions of migrants and recognition of their rights, particularly considering that the fight against racism and discrimination is a pillar of the Afro-descendant movement in Arica."

Luanda is one of the Afro-Chilean political organizations that has been more open to including immigrants as members and, in the past few years, has begun to connect with Black women's immigrant organizations in Santiago, co-launching initiatives such as workshops on Black feminism and anti-racism and the commemoration of the International Day for Afro-Latin American, Afro-Caribbean, and Diasporic Women (Parra Aravena et al. 2023). Milene Molina (Interview, December 2019), an Afro-Chilean activist from the Afrodescendant Women's Organization Luanda, told me how members of Luanda had decided to retire from some political processes in which other Afro-Chilean activists were pushing policies that excluded immigrants. However, since Black immigrants in Chile have neither played a significant role in political debates about ethno-racial reform *within* the Afrodescendant movement nor *between* activists and the state, their inclusion as subjects of rights never became a prominent axis of dispute within the Afro-Chilean movement. Afro-Chilean activists who have defended more inclusive framings of Afro-descent have generally ended up accepting more restrictive framings and settling for the idea that, in the future, legislation can be expanded so that immigrants and their descendants are legally protected.

Summing up, the arrival of Black immigrants in Chile has impacted how Afro-Chileans delimit Afro-descent and construct claims. As in Argentina, there is a consensus among Afro-Chilean activists about how Chilean society associates Blackness with foreigners, which they

confirm through their everyday experiences of being confused for immigrants. Given the strong social rejection of Black immigrants, who have been increasingly associated in Chile with criminality, Afro-Chileans fear that if they are lumped together with immigrants, the state will be less responsive to their demands. While Afro-Chileans do not perceive these immigrants as competition in claims-making processes – since they have not been significant political actors in political discussions around ethno-racial reform – they do perceive them as possible competition for *access* to public policies.

While Afro-Argentines have responded to immigration in two distinct ways, generating disputes within the Afrodescendant movement around the delimitation of Afrodescendant subjecthood, Afro-Chileans have responded to immigration more homogeneously, distancing themselves from immigrants by stressing the shared history and distinct culture of the Afro-Chilean people. Afro-Chilean activists have generally framed their demands for recognition and inclusion as a long-standing debt from the state for the wrongdoings against their ancestors. From their perspective, while immigrants and their native-born children might share their diasporic condition, they should seek reparation in their home countries. While there are some contesting voices within the Afro-Chilean movement who advocate for a more inclusive framing of Afro-descent that can include immigrants as subjects of rights, the absence of immigrants within the Afro-Chilean movement has prevented this advocacy from translating into an alternative that can dispute the hegemonic construction of Afrodescendant subjecthood.

Immigrants and the legal definition of Afro-descent

The Argentine and Chilean states have taken different approaches when institutionalizing Afrodescendant subjecthood. While in Argentina Afro-descent has been delimited in ways that consider both native-born and immigrant Afrodescendants as subjects of rights, in Chile only Afrodescendants with several generations of ancestors living in the country have been defined as legitimate policy subjects. In what follows, I analyze these differences by looking at how the Argentine and Chilean states have responded to two of Afrodescendant activists' main demands: their statistical inclusion and their legal recognition. I argue that how each state has framed recognition laws and questions to capture Afro-descent in surveys and censuses, has been structured by classification struggles *within* each Afrodescendant movement and *between* movement activists and the state.

Argentina: an inclusive institutionalization of Afrodescendant subjecthood

In Argentina, diverse Afrodescendant actors participated in debates to include an Afrodescendant variable in the National Population Census. As we saw in Chapter 1, the Argentine National Statistics and Census Institute (INDEC) included for the first time a question about Afro-descent in the 2010 census. Prior to the census, several meetings were conducted between state officials and Afrodescendant leaders, including native-born and immigrant activists. In these meetings, debates around how to frame the census question brought to the fore the boundaries between

native-born and immigrant Afrodescendants.¹⁸⁹ Some native-born activists insisted that the question should allow a distinction between Afro-Argentines from the colonial line and Afrodescendants and Africans who arrived in the country later. According to an activist who identified as Afro-Argentine from the colonial line (Interview, November 2021):

In the 2010 Census we were asking that they ask something like, “Do you have Afrodescendant ancestry?” And if you respond yes, “From what group?” I don’t remember the question exactly, but what is your group of belonging, what cultural heritage does your family have, if you are a native Argentine, nationalized, immigrant. For us it was important because it is also a way to track how many people in the country are from the colonial line, even if they don’t call it that, there are many who support this struggle.

Afro-Argentines from the colonial line, however, were in a minoritarian position during these discussions with INDEC officials. Black immigrants and Cape Verdean-Argentines had played an important role advocating for the inclusion of a census question to capture Afro-descent, and perceived this distinction as a way of excluding them. They were supported by some Afro-Argentine activists who believed that this division between types of Afrodescendants would produce confusion, in a context where the main goal was to promote Argentines’ recognition of their African ancestry. INDEC officials identified the technical difficulties of asking people to identify when their African ancestors arrived or what type of cultural heritage they had, and decided to frame the question to include both groups without distinction (Loveman and Mardones Marshall 2022). INDEC Director of Social and Population Statistics, Gladys Massé (Interview, May 2021), recalled the disputes between activists:

I remember that the inclusion or not of the term “Black” was very present, and also the question of the type of ancestry of those who were recognized as part of the Afrodescendant populations, because not all of them share cultural or religious characteristics, and there was some type of friction within the movement about who were more Afro, those who descended from African slaves who arrived in our country, who were to a great extent exterminated, Cape Verdeans, or current immigrants like the Senegalese, and there was also the term “Afro-Argentine” that some of them vindicated.

The census question was finally framed to include a reference to both Afrodescendant and African origins, asking “Are you or anybody in this household an Afrodescendant or have ancestors of Afrodescendant or African origin (father, mother, grandparents, great-grandparents)?” The fact that immigrants participated in discussions around this census question was crucial, so that it was not restricted to identifying Afro-Argentines from the colonial line. Thanks to the participation of African immigrants in these discussions – both from the Cape Verdean community and from more recent immigration flows – the question included the word “African.” The Census results revealed that 8% of those who identified as Afrodescendants had been born outside of Argentina (INDEC 2012:300).

¹⁸⁹ As described in Chapter 1, these boundaries had also become visible during discussions leading up to the 2005 Afrodescendant Pilot Test. On that occasion, after heated debates, activists agreed to count everyone but distinguish between Argentine Afrodescendants – the descendants of Africans brought to Argentina as slaves – African immigrants and their descendants, and Afro-Latin Americans and their descendants (Lopez 2005; Loveman and Mardones Marshall 2022; Stubbs and Reyes 2006:14).

Debates around how to frame the Afrodescendant question reemerged leading up to the 2022 Argentine National Census. Once again, Afro-Argentines from the colonial line sought to specify a question that could identify the descendants of enslaved Africans brought to Argentine territory. But again, they encountered strong resistance from other movement activists, including both immigrants and Afro-Argentines. Alejandra Egido (Interview, November 2021), an Afro-Cuban activist who had arrived fifteen years earlier to Argentina and participated in a meeting with INDEC officials in 2019, described the situation:

During a meeting, some Afrodescendants who are from that ultra-Afro-Argentine current, asked that the census question be framed to ask for those who had ancestry, I don't remember exactly, but something like that they had arrived in the 18th century, it was something unbelievable, we all looked at each other in astonishment. Fortunately, between all the rest of us we were able to fight back and the question ended up being framed very similarly to the previous census.

The question to capture Afro-descent in the 2022 census was finally framed very similarly to 2010, but included the term “*negros*,” and simplified the wording of the question since on the 2010 census there was a common diagnostic about some people not understanding the question and being particularly confused about the word “Afrodescendant.” The new version of the question read: “Do you recognize yourself as Afrodescendant or have Black or African ancestors?” Again, the participation of immigrants was a crucial factor in challenging those activists who were advocating for a more restrictive framing of the question. While there are only preliminary results available for the 2022 National Census, which do not disaggregate Afrodescendants by place of birth, results showed an increase in the number of people identifying as Afrodescendants, from an approximate total of 150,000 individuals (equivalent to 0.4% of the total population in 2010), to more than 300,000 thousand individuals (equivalent to 0.7% of the population in 2022).

Regarding Afro-Argentines' legal recognition, again the participation of diverse Afrodescendant actors in debates with state officials enabled the approval of legislation framed in an inclusive way. The fact that the first legislation to recognize Afro-descent – approved at the provincial level – had been formulated by a Cape Verdean-Argentine also impacted how the federal law was framed. As we saw in Chapter 4, Law 26,852 was approved in 2013, instituting November 8th as the National Day of Afro-Argentines and Afro Culture. We also saw that, previously, there had been three provincial laws recognizing Afro-Argentines. The first was approved in the Province of Buenos Aires thanks to the initiative of Ricardo Martínez, a Cape Verdean-Argentine who, after doing research in the provincial historical archive, worked on the bill project and took it to a provincial senator who supported him and invited him to present it in the legislature. The provincial law established October 11 as the “Day of African-Argentine Culture in the Province of Buenos Aires,” in commemoration of María Remedios del Valle. The category of “African-Argentine” was general enough to include all cultural expressions in Argentina that could trace some kind of African heritage. According to Martínez (Interview, December 2021), Carlos Álvarez, with whom he shared spaces where they practiced *candombe*, learned about the provincial law and used it as an inspiration to propose a federal bill to various Afro-Argentine organizations, which they ended up presenting at the National Congress. Thus, the only federal Law that recognizes Afro-Argentines was presented by an Afro-Uruguayan nationalized Argentine, inspired by a provincial law written by a Cape Verdean descendant. This gives us an idea of the crucial role of different Afrodescendant communities in getting Afro-Argentines recognized.

When the bill that resulted in Law 26,852 was first presented in September of 2012 at the Argentine National Congress, many native-born and immigrant Black activists came together to negotiate the content of this bill and to pressure politicians to approve it. However, in one of these congress meetings a group of Afro-Argentines presented an alternative bill to commemorate April 17th as the “Day of the Afro-Argentines from the Colonial Line.” Sandra Chagas (Interview, October 2021), a feminist Afrodescendant activist who was born in Uruguay but had lived in Buenos Aires for several decades, described how these two bills were discussed between activists and congressional representatives:

There was a confrontation because there were two laws proposed. They wanted to recognize only the “Day of Afro-Argentines from the Colonial Line,” and María Elena Lamadrid [an Afro-Argentine activist] was seated there representing them. She was asked by Congress representatives to accept the more inclusive law, which recognized Afro-Argentines but also recognized Afro culture more generally, including Afro-Bolivians, Afro-Paraguayans, Afro-Argentines. She finally gave in to the pressure. For us, it was an important triumph because it meant including Afrodescendant and African immigrants.

While Congress members had to convince those proposing the alternative bill to agree on the more inclusive one, it was undoubtedly the participation of diverse Afrodescendant activists in discussions around the bill that made these politicians aware of the importance of not excluding immigrants and their descendants. As a result of these discussions, the law was framed using the generic term “Afro culture,” allowing for the vindication of multiple Black cultural expressions. By referring to Afro-Argentines, but not specifically to those from the colonial line, the law included the Argentine descendants of immigrants as well as immigrants who had acquired Argentine nationality, as was the case of Nengumbi Celestin Sukama (Interview, November 2021), an immigrant from the Democratic Republic of Congo who participated in these disputes and celebrated their final results. Some of the Afro-Argentines I interviewed, however, claimed that by including immigrants in the Afro-Argentine agenda, Law 26,852 ended up reinforcing the foreignization of Blackness in the country.

Chile: A culturally bounded institutionalization of Afrodescendant subjecthood

In the Chilean case, a question about Afro-descent was included for the first time in the 2024 National Population Census. In Chapter 1, I analyzed how Afro-Chilean organizations from Arica mobilized to pressure state authorities to include a question to capture Afro-descent first in the 2012 census and then in the 2017 census, but were unsuccessful on both occasions. I also described how, as a compromise after rejecting their census inclusion, the Chilean National Statistics Institute (INE) conducted in 2013 a regional survey – the ENCAFRO – specifically targeting the Afrodescendant population in Arica. How to frame the questions in this survey was defined after heated debates between Afro-Chilean activists in Arica and INE officials, in which immigrants did not participate. However, according to Camilo Ortega (Interview, June 2021), who was hired by INE in 2012 to work on the ENCAFRO, whether to open the survey to identify immigrants and how to capture respondents’ nationality were important topics of discussion.

The ENCAFRO finally asked “Do you consider yourself Afrodescendant (Moreno de Azapa, Descendiente de Familia Morena, Negro/a, Zambo/a, Mulato/a)?” The first two categories included in parentheses, “Moreno de Azapa” and “Descendiente de Familia Morena,” refer to

Arica's local geography and to local terms used to refer to Afrodescendants in Arica, which are mostly unknown in the rest of the country. The other three categories – “Negro/a,” “Zambo/a,” and “Mulato” – reproduce colonial categories that were used in censuses in Arica until the mid-19th century. The ENCAFRO also included a section of cultural questions that asked individuals to identify characteristics that distinguish Afrodescendants, including particular foods, cultural and religious festivities, and music and dance expressions typical from Arica (INE 2014). Given that only Afro-Chilean activists participated in the construction of the survey, its main goal was to obtain information about the local Afrodescendant population, with little consideration for immigrants.

After two decades of intense lobbying by Afro-Chilean activists, a question on Afro-descent was finally included in the 2024 National Population Census. To define how to frame the census question, the Chilean National Statistics Institute (INE) convoked Afrodescendant organizations to participate in an intercultural process to give their input on how this question should be delimited. Only Afro-Chilean organizations from the Arica-Parinacota Region were invited to participate in this process, in which activists reported that there were intense classification disputes. Rural organizations from the Azapa Valley advocated for the inclusion of local categories connected to territorial identity, like “Morenos de Azapa.” In the city of Arica, some activists advocated for the use of more comprehensive categories, such as “Afrodescendant,” arguing that this is the internationally accepted juridical category and could allow the identification of all Afrodescendants in the country, regardless of where they were born or their immigration status (INE 2021:23-24). From their perspective, this would allow for the census to capture a larger amount of Afrodescendants, which would create more pressure for the state to create policies targeting them.

Finally, some Afro-Chilean activists claimed that the census question was added to respond to the mandate of the law that recognized Afro-Chilean Tribal People in 2019, which in its sixth article established the state's obligation to include Afro-Chileans in national censuses. Therefore, these activists argued, the census question had to include the terminology used in the law, asking people if they identified as a member of the Chilean Afrodescendant Tribal People. These activists generally stressed the particularities of their shared history to argue that since the law was circumscribed to Afro-Chileans, public policies had to target this community, and therefore the goal of the census question should be to obtain information about them and not about the immigrant population. Similar to what happened in Argentina, some activists requested the inclusion of a previous contextualizing question to filter individuals whose ancestors arrived during colonial times (INE 2021:24). Afro-Chilean activist Samuel Pozo (Interview, August 2021) represented this position:

We have worked a lot [on the census question] and there is an initial proposal, but there are some differences between what we want and what the INE is offering to us, around some categories they have proposed that we don't feel are the best. It is important to understand that the law only recognizes Chilean Afrodescendants, and although there is an important Afrodescendant immigrant population in the country, public policies should be first addressed towards our community. [...] There is already an immigration law in charge of creating affirmative action policies towards immigrants, so we cannot mix both groups. We need to identify who is Chilean.

INE officials discarded the inclusion of a previous contextualizing question, arguing that

ethno-racial questions needed to be direct and shouldn't relate to individuals' nationality. Nonetheless, INE ended up opting to include a variety of the categories advocated for by activists. The census question was finally framed asking: "In accordance with your ancestors, traditions and culture, do you consider yourself:" and included seven possible categories of response: "1. Afrodescendiente," "2. Afrochileno/a," "3. Negro/a," 4. "Del Pueblo Tribal Afrodescendiente Chileno," "5. Moreno de Azapa," "6. Negro/a de la Chimba," and "7. None of the above." The framing of this question shows how INDEC officials that mediated classification debates opted to include the diversity of categories advocated by activists, including more inclusive categories such as Afrodescendiente and Negro/a that immigrants could respond to affirmatively, categories such as Afro-chileno/a and Del Pueblo Tribal Afrodescendiente to distinguish Afrodescendants from Chilean nationality, and categories related to local territorial identities in the Azapa Valley (Moreno de Azapa) and in the city of Arica (Negro/a de la Chimba).

The inclusion of both more restrictive and more inclusive categories enabled the involvement of not only Afro-Chilean organizations but also of Black immigrant activists in campaigns to create awareness so that people with African ancestry would identify with one of these categories.¹⁹⁰ However, the number of categories used, the lack of an effective state-led awareness campaign for people to identify with these categories, and the fact that many of them are unknown to most people living in Chile, might have all contributed to this question not being adequately asked by census takers, putting at risk the validity of its results. While the census was in process,¹⁹¹ there were worrisome reports about problems with the Afrodescendant question.¹⁹² The fact that the inclusion and design of the question was a result of political agreements over technical concerns might have ended up working against the goals for which the question was included in the first place: identifying and characterizing in a reliable way the Afrodescendant community in Chile.

In regards to their legal recognition, in contrast to events in Argentina, Afro-Chilean activists were unified in promoting legislation to be recognized by the state, and there were no challenges from alternative recognition projects. As we saw in Chapter 4, Law 21,151 was approved in 2019 with the support of a congressional representative from Arica, granting legal recognition to the Chilean Afrodescendant Tribal People. The approval of this law marked an important milestone as it represented the first time that the term "Tribal People," coined in ILO's Convention 169, was used in national-level legislation to recognize Afrodescendants. In correspondence with Convention 169, Law 21,151 emphasized the cultural identity, institutions, worldview, and historical traditions of the Afro-Chilean people, resembling the "ethnic model" generally used to recognize Indigenous groups (Hooker 2005). The concept of "Afrodescendant Tribal People" institutionalized by this law thus excluded immigrants who do not share Afro-

¹⁹⁰ Negrocéntricas was one of the Black immigrant organizations that was most involved in this campaign, whose members went to various media outlets to inform about the new question and encourage immigrants' participation, as observed in the following online news program: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7UQJ336VWE>.

¹⁹¹ While previous National Population Censuses in Chile were conducted in one day, INE conducted the 2024 National Census over several weeks, from March 9th to June 2nd.

¹⁹² Afro-Chilean organizations denounced reports of people who were not asked the question to capture Afro-descent. As a personal anecdote, I was not asked that question either and had to ask the census taker to ask it after she had finished going through the survey. Talking to my neighbors, I found out that none of the houses the census taker visited before mine had been asked that question, while the census taker did begin to ask the question in the houses she went to after mine, after I called it to her attention.

Chileans' history and cultural identity.

The bill was modified during congressional discussions to become even more restrictive. While it originally identified the Afrodescendant Tribal People as Chileans who were descendants of the African diaspora and self-identified as such, its final version delimited this category to those who were “descendants of the transatlantic traffic of African slaves brought to the current national territory between the 16th and 19th century.” In this way, the concept of “Afrodescendant Tribal People” institutionalized by the state excluded the descendants of immigrants who arrived in the country after the 19th century, even if they formed part of the African diaspora originating from the transatlantic slave trade. During legislative debates, Senator Francisco Huenchumilla proposed to define the African diaspora as those who arrived specifically to Chile in the context of the processes of conquest and colonization, so that:

...with the passage of years, we don't have problems with the descendants of the African diaspora who arrived through immigration if they tell us that they are entitled to the rights present in Convention 169 of the ILO, the international law according to which we are creating this legislation. (BCN 2019)

While some Afro-Chilean activists denounced this modification of the original bill as a racist action to exclude immigrants from any benefit that the law could bring for Afrodescendants in the future, others defended delimiting legal recognition to Afro-Chileans whose families had a long-standing presence in the national territory. According to some of them, the law had to be addressed to Afro-Chileans given that immigrants had their own immigration law, and if Afro-Chileans travel to countries such as Colombia, laws for Afrodescendants there would not benefit them. During Congressional debates, there were no immigrants present to advocate for their inclusion. Nor did the Afro-Chilean activists who criticized the temporal delimitation of the bill intervene during these debates, because they feared that if the bill was framed to include the children of immigrants, congressional representatives would reject it. Instead, the bill was approved almost unanimously (with one abstention vote) by Congress members who considered it innocuous, given Afro-Chileans' small population and regional character.

This section shows how the inclusion or exclusion of immigrants was at the center of disputes around how to delimit Afro-descent in the two main processes of Afrodescendant subjecthood institutionalization by the Argentine and Chilean states: their statistical inclusion and their legal recognition. In Argentina, activists presented on both occasions alternative projects to institutionalize Afrodescendant subjecthood, one tailored for the recognition of Afro-Argentines from the colonial line and another that enabled the inclusion of diverse Black actors in the country. The presence of diverse Afrodescendant actors during political debates *within* the Afrodescendant movement and *between* movements leaders and state officials led to the inclusion of census questions and to the approval of a recognition law that were expansive enough to include all the different Afrodescendant communities present in the country. In Chile, in contrast, while there were different positions within the Afro-Chilean movement regarding how to frame the census question and the recognition law and who should be considered an Afrodescendant in these instruments, the absence of immigrants in debates both *within* the Afro-Chilean movement and *between* activists and state officials, enabled the prevalence of more restrictive definitions. As we will see, how Afrodescendant subjecthood is delimited in statistical instruments and in recognition laws is crucial, since these statistical data and the law are the bases for the construction of public

policies targeting Afrodescendant populations.

Immigrants and policies targeting Afrodescendants

Differences in how the Argentine and Chilean states have delimited and institutionalized Afro-descent have impacted the types of policies each state has enacted targeting Afrodescendant populations. To be clear, most activists in these two countries consider that the state has fallen short in regards to policy implementation. However, the little progress we find reveals important differences in how each state established who should be entitled to rights and what these rights should be. The Argentine state has launched policies and programs that focus both on the historical recognition demanded by Afro-Argentines from the colonial line and on combatting the racial discrimination and exclusion that affects all Afrodescendants, regardless of nationality or citizenship status. Chilean policies, on the other hand, have aimed for the recognition, protection, and promotion of the cultural heritage of Afro-Chileans from Arica, excluding immigrants.

Argentina: Diverse policies for diverse definitions of Afrodescendant subjecthood

In Argentina, the issue of racial discrimination was taken early on as common ground on which Afrodescendant organizations, including both native-born and immigrant activists, could work together to make claims towards the state. As we saw in Chapter 2, the creation of the National Institute Against Discrimination and Xenophobia (INADI) in 1997 opened an institutional space where Afrodescendants could come together for a common goal. While the INADI was created to support victims of all forms of discrimination, it was initially closely associated with the Jewish community, which lay the foundation for positioning ethno-racial discrimination as one of its main focuses. As argued earlier, both immigrants and native-born Afrodescendants were included in the institutional spaces opened by INADI for civil society participation. For example, Miriam Gomes recalls (Interview, July 2021) that INADI's Forum of Afrodescendants and Africans was formed by an Afro-Argentine from the colonial line, an Afro-Uruguayan, an Afro-Peruvian, and herself, an Afro-Argentine from the Cape Verdean community. Immigrants were also included in the diverse activities launched by INADI to give visibility to Black cultural expressions. In the section dedicated to Afrodescendants in the aforementioned National Plan Against Discrimination elaborated by INADI, there is not only a mention of the historical erasure of and violence against Afro-Argentines, but also a reference to one of the Cape Verdean community's mutual aid organizations. Thus, INADI identified diverse Afrodescendant actors since it began to construct an Afrodescendant agenda.

INADI's focus on reversing the erasure and foreignization of Blackness in Argentina has promoted public policies mostly centered on making visible the historical contribution of Afro-Argentines in the country (García 2017:170). This focus, in turn, has contributed to an increasing separation within INADI's organizational structure between Afrodescendants who can and who cannot claim a common history by tracing family members living in the country for several generations. In 2017, INADI was restructured along thematic areas, with an Afrodescendant area centered specifically on the Afro-Argentine population, while Afrodescendant and African immigrants were included in the Immigrants area (García 2017). Furthermore, the creation in 2020 of the Commission for the Historical Recognition of the Afro-Argentine Community reinforced an

Afrodescendant agenda within INADI, focused on attending to the demands of the “Argentine descendants of Africans brought enslaved to what today is Argentina, a community historically invisibilized, denied and foreignized due to the structural racism that operates in the country.”¹⁹³ Thus, this commission’s political actions focus on the Afro-Argentine community that can trace a common history in the country, excluding more recent immigrant flows and their descendants. Federico Pita (Interview, November 2021), who was the first director of the commission, described to me its goals as follows:

The policy we constructed through this Commission for the Historical Recognition has several very concrete goals that are related to the inclusion of those peoples who have been historically at the forefront of Afro-Argentine activism in a program within an area of the national public administration seeking to construct public policies focalized to our specific collectivity. We are constructing a list of Afro-Argentine organizations so that the state can know who are our policy subjects.

Afrodescendant activists who cannot trace their ancestry to slavery in Argentina, however, have resented this commission’s exclusive focus on seeking historical reparations for Afro-Argentines, arguing that they have been excluded from INADI’s Afrodescendant agenda. Mérida Dossou Sekel (Interview, January 2022), an Afro-Argentine activist from the city of Rosario, whose African ancestry comes from her Black Cuban father, described not being invited to the encounter of Afro-Argentines organized by the commission in the city of Santa Fe, just an hour and a half away from where she lives. Miriam Gomes (Interview, July 2021), who has been linked to INADI since it began to construct an Afrodescendant agenda, argued against this commission:

They created this Commission for the Historical Recognition of the Afro-Argentine Community, but it is limited to the descendants of enslaved Afro-Argentines, it doesn’t contemplate those who arrived later, even if we have been in the country for five generations. We asked for a meeting with INADI’s director because we were excluded from this commission, which is too important to exclude most sectors of the Afro community, especially those leaders and organizations recognized due to their historical trajectory. But until now we haven’t had any access to participate or to any of the commission’s contents.

A more comprehensive approach to anti-Black discrimination has recently been taken by the Human Rights Secretariat. As we saw in Chapter 4, the creation of an Afro-descent and Human Rights National Program in 2022 represented an important step for the implementation of the National Afro Plan in accordance with the International Decade for People of African Descent. The National Afro Plan’s goal is to advance public policies for Afrodescendants, regardless of their nationality or immigration status. The director of the Afro-descent and Human Rights National Program, Carlos Alvarez (Interview, August 2021), referred to his decision to include different communities in the National Afro Plan:

There is a tremendous tension between Afro-Argentine organizations, since some of them do not want to have anything to do with immigrants. Of course, Afro-Argentines need a specific approach and this plan has an approach towards them. But in Argentina, the Afro community also includes the Afro-diasporic movement, those who arrived twenty, thirty years ago and have children who

¹⁹³ This goal is stated on a page describing the commission within the Argentine government’s webpage, available at: <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/inadi/comision-para-el-reconocimiento-historico-de-la-comunidad-afoargentina>.

are Argentine citizens. And we additionally need an approach towards all the African collectives that have arrived more recently and continue to arrive. So, I believe that the National Afro Plan needs to include all these perspectives.

However, as we saw earlier, the appointment of Carlos Álvarez as director of Pluralism and Interculturality, from where he would initially direct the National Afro Plan, was rejected by some Afro-Argentine organizations, who pressured the Human Rights Secretary to restructure the office, resulting in the transfer of Álvarez to another position, although he continued to be in charge of the Afro Plan. He had additionally changed the office's name, from National Directorate of Pluralism and Interculturality to National Directorate of Ethno-Racial Equity, Migrants and Refugees, which also led to criticism from activists who considered that putting an Afrodescendant program under a directorate dedicated to immigrants was a new expression of the state's foreignization of Afro-descent.¹⁹⁴ Federico Pita (Interview, November 2021) expressed his concern about this position:

What I say, from what I have gathered from other activists' voices in my organization, is that the creation of a space within the national public administration that works around the idea of racial equity together with the idea of immigration and refugees, is a public policy of foreignization.

We have thus two very different approaches to Afrodescendant subjecthood in Argentina that have translated into the implementation of distinct types of public policies in the two state institutions in charge of advancing an Afrodescendant agenda. While the Human Rights Secretariat advances, through the Afro-descent and Human Rights National Program, a perspective of ethno-racial equality to promote access to public policies for all Afrodescendants and Africans living in Argentina, INADI's Commission for the Historical Recognition of the Afro-Argentine Community specifically targets Afro-Argentine descendants of enslaved Africans so that they can participate in the development of public policies as a form of reparations to their community.

Policies for Afrodescendants in other state institutions have taken a kind of middle ground, including all Afrodescendant communities in Argentina as policy subjects but stressing the specificities of Afro-Argentines from the colonial line. For example, the Afro Culture Program created in the Culture Ministry – which was led until recently by Emanuel Ntaka, an Afro-Argentine whose African ancestry comes from his South African father – had as its main goal to “develop policies that value, diffuse, recognize, and visibilize the historical presence and the cultural expressions of Afro-Argentine, Afrodescendant, and African communities and individuals, promoting the development of projects that that improve the life conditions of the communities in Argentine territory and contribute to the construction of a more just and inclusive society.”¹⁹⁵ The Afro Culture Program is in charge of conducting activities for the commemoration of the Day of Afro-Argentines and Afro Culture. In accordance with Law 26,852, the program promotes activities to visibilize the historical contributions of Afro-Argentines in the country, such as those that highlight historical figures like María Remedios del Valle – the Afro-Argentine captain commemorated by Law 26,852 – while fostering Afro culture by including the cultural expressions

¹⁹⁴ As I noted in Chapter 4, Álvarez had also secured funding from the World Bank to hire seven interns to support the implementation of the National Afro Plan, which included activists from Afro-Argentine, Afrodescendant, and African organizations (Interview with Álvarez, August 2021).

¹⁹⁵ This goal is stated on the Argentine government's webpage, available at: <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/cultura/gestion/cultura-afro>

of the diverse immigrant communities that have arrived to the country. As the son of an immigrant African father, it is not surprising that Ntaka advocated for this broad delimitation of the Afro Culture Program's target population.¹⁹⁶

Summing up, in line with definitions of Afro-descent institutionalized in Law 26,852 and in the inclusion of questions to capture Afro-descent in Argentine national statistics, public policies for Afrodescendants in Argentina have targeted diverse Afrodescendant populations. While some policies – particularly those promoted by the Commission for the Historical Recognition of the Afro-Argentine Community – have been specifically designed as a form of reparations to Afro-Argentine descendants of enslaved Africans in the country, others – such as those included in the National Afro Program at the Human Rights Secretariat – have focused on combatting racial discrimination and the promotion of ethno-racial equality, or on supporting Afrodescendants' diverse cultural expressions – as is the case of the Afro Culture Program. The appointment of Afrodescendants from these different communities in state offices appears as a significant factor that has influenced the diversification of public policies.

The chapter has revealed the tensions present in the construction of these diverse policies. While Afro-Argentines who have defended the institutionalization of restrictive boundaries that limit state attention to “historical” Afro-Argentines have failed to exclude immigrants from public policies targeting Afrodescendants, they have been able to maintain some separation and distinction of their claims and identity within public institutions. While they defend this distinction as crucial to combatting the foreignization of Afro-Argentines, they are seen by other activists as making instrumental claims to present themselves as more deserving of targeted public policies. It is precisely these tensions, however, that have enabled the institutionalization of diverse understandings of Afrodescendant subjecthood, promoting the creation of programs that intend to advance Afrodescendants' subjecthood recognition, cultural promotion, historical reparation, and ethno-racial equality.

Chile: Bounded policies for a bounded community

In the case of Chile, the few policies that exist addressing Afrodescendants have focused almost exclusively on the recognition, promotion, and protection of the cultural heritage of Afro-Chileans from Arica, with few repercussions for immigrants. In contrast to Argentina, no Afrodescendant immigrant has been hired in state offices in Chile to implement policies related to ethno-racial reform or Afro-descent. The few Afro-Chileans who have been hired in public offices have all been appointed to positions within the regional or municipal governments in Arica. Of these, the only institutional space in the Arica-Parinacota Region that has exclusively focused on Afrodescendant rights has been the Afrodescendant Municipal Office, which, as we saw in Chapter 4, was created in 2010 at the insistence of Afro-Chilean activists. While only Afro-Chileans have been appointed as directors of the Afrodescendant Municipal Office and several Afro-Chileans have also been hired to support the work of these directors, no immigrant or descendant of immigrants has ever held a position in this office. The Afrodescendant Municipal Office, furthermore, has focused all

¹⁹⁶ Similarly, the area of focus on Afrodescendant women created within the Women, Genders and Diversities Ministry, which promoted policies that focused on the violence suffered by all Black and Afrodescendant women and diversities, was led by three women, including an Afro-Argentine, an Afro-Venezuelan immigrant, and a descendant of Cape Verdeans (Interview with Patricia Gomes, November 2021).

of its policies on the Afro-Chilean population of Arica. Policies for Black immigrants have instead been concentrated within the Human Rights Municipal Office.¹⁹⁷

Other regional initiatives were also restricted to Afro-Chileans, such as those derived from the Intersectoral Roundtable created to promote policies for Afrodescendants within the different regional ministerial secretariats. On that occasion, only representatives of Afro-Chilean organizations were invited to participate in the Roundtable and the action plan that resulted from this intersectoral work was addressed to Afro-Chileans. Iván Astudillo (Interview, August 2021), who was in charge of implementing this roundtable led by the Social Development Ministry's Regional Secretariat, referred to how Afro-Chilean activists were concerned about who future policies would benefit:

I felt that there was some kind of discrimination towards foreign Afrodescendants, you could tell that if something was achieved in terms of rights, they thought it had to be for Chilean Afrodescendants, and they were permanently emphasizing that difference between them and the immigrants that at the time had started arriving from Colombia. I especially remember that in that moment it was the [Afro-Chilean] organizations that defended that what was accomplished had to stay with the local population. But at an institutional level, there are some things that if you have a RUT [Chilean identity document] you cannot discriminate against them, but from the organizations there was a sort of discourse that argued that “first at home and then outside,” but with different nuances.

Similarly, when the Cultures and Arts National Council started to allocate resources for Afrodescendants, such as through the AfroArica Project of Regional Cultural Identity or through a special modality of the FONDART – both initiatives described in Chapter 4 – these exclusively addressed Afro-Chileans from Arica. After the Cultures, Arts, and Heritage Ministry (MINCAP) was created and an Afrodescendant agenda was institutionalized in the Sub-directorate of Native People, located under the National Service of Cultural Heritage, this agenda did not consider the Black immigrant population. Policies for immigrants in the MINCAP have instead been allocated within the Interculturality and Immigrant Inclusion Program, under the Department of Cultural Citizenship, and have neither particularly focused on Afro-descent nor interacted with the Ministry's Afrodescendant agenda.¹⁹⁸

Afro-Chileans identify racism as a reason why they need state protection, but have not yet achieved significant policies or legislation centered on discrimination.¹⁹⁹ Black immigrants have

¹⁹⁷ Until 2020, the Human Rights Municipal Office was called Diversity, Discrimination, Inclusion, Refugees, and Migrants Municipal Office (DIRAM, Spanish acronym). This office has mostly focused on responding to the needs of the immigrant and refugee population and of LGBTQI+ communities in Arica.

¹⁹⁸ The only exception I identified was the organization of a “Festival of immigrant and Afro-Chilean cultures” in December of 2023. However, the Afro-Chilean artist who participated in the festival is not from Arica, but is a woman born in Santiago from a White Chilean mother and a Black Peruvian father. She represents a very recent phenomenon of second-generation immigrants or Chileans with a foreign Black parent who are increasingly identifying as Afro-Chileans. Future research will examine how classification struggles around Afro-descent evolve with the emergence of these new identities. Besides this festival, in the past couple of years the Interculturality and Immigrant Inclusion Program has also implemented isolated initiatives related to anti-racist education and training, and has supported the celebration of Africa Day, organized since 2013 by the NGO Ubuntu Africa Chile.

¹⁹⁹ The increasing engagement of Afro-Chileans in struggles against racial discrimination became evident during the 2021-2022 Chilean constitutional process, in which among their demands was the inclusion of the principles of

also made claims related to discrimination, but these have mostly responded to punctual expressions of racism, as for example in 2017 when a Haitian woman was unfairly detained by the police and died in police custody.²⁰⁰ In contrast to Argentina, in Chile there is no public institution focused on combatting racial discrimination that could bring together native-born and immigrant Afrodescendants. An Anti-discrimination Law was enacted in Chile in 2012, but there hasn't been any institution created to date to follow up with the implementation of this law. Only in the last couple of years, the Observatory of Citizen Participation and Non-Discrimination, at the General Secretariat of Government Ministry, has begun to develop training programs for state officials including the category of "immigrant" among other suspect categories, and taking into account racial discrimination. However, according to the Observatory Director Carmen Luz Morales (Interview, July 2023), the observatory had not yet done any work with Afro-Chilean organizations.²⁰¹ The Human Rights Secretary has also begun to include both immigrants and the Chilean Afrodescendant Tribal People in its Human Rights National Programs, but each group has been approached separately.

To conclude, in comparison with Argentina, the policies enacted by the Chilean state addressed to Afrodescendants have been quite uniform, mostly focused on Afro-Chileans' cultural recognition and promotion. In line with definitions of Afro-descent institutionalized through Law 21,151 and questions to capture Afro-descent in the ENCAFRO and in the 2024 National Population Census, these policies have been designed and implemented to specifically distinguish and target Afro-Chileans who share a cultural heritage derived from a common history traceable to the experience of slavery within the national territory and particularly bounded to the Arica-Parinacota Region. The fact that Black immigrants arrived in the country quite recently has prevented not only their participation in debates *within* the Afrodescendant movement and *between* activists and state officials, but also any possibility of being appointed to public positions from which they could push for the diversification of the Afrodescendant agenda.

Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation, we have seen how Afrodescendants in Argentina and Chile have confronted multiple obstacles to achieving legal recognition and advancing targeted policies. These obstacles have resulted to a great extent from the solidification of official narratives of nationhood in both countries, which have historically denied the presence of Black citizens and

equality and non-discrimination and the creation of mechanisms such as reserved seats or quotas to secure Afrodescendants' political participation in every state branch, among other demands. During the constitutional process Afro-Chilean activists also raised the issue of racism on a number of occasions, starting with their exclusion from reserved seats to participate in the Constitutional Convention. In this context, the Afro-Chilean Women's Organization Luanda published an anti-racism guide for the new Constitution (Colectiva de Mujeres Afrodescendientes Luanda 2021)

²⁰⁰ The death of Joan Florvil under police detainment in 2017 spotlighted the institutional racism faced by Haitian immigrants in Chile, elevating the combat against racism as an important struggle for immigrant organizations in the country.

²⁰¹ In July 2023, a couple of weeks after our interview, Morales travelled to Arica to conduct workshops to prevent racial discrimination and discrimination against immigrants, where Afro-Chileans participated among other groups. After that, in November 2023, Morales held a meeting with leaders of NGO Oro Negro, to include Afro-Chileans in the Observatory's agenda.

regarded Afrodescendants as foreign. The arrival of Black immigrants has tended to reinforce these notions, since immigrants' hyper visibility contributes to the foreignization of Black bodies in each national context. As a response, Afro-Argentine and Afro-Chilean activists engage in processes of boundary-making to distance themselves from immigrants when making claims.

Despite these similarities, the Argentine and Chilean states have taken different approaches when institutionalizing Afro-descent. This chapter demonstrates that these differences can be largely explained by the role of immigration in each national context. In Argentina, where immigrants have prominently participated in the Afrodescendant movement, we find two different pathways for Black subjecthood institutionalization. On the one hand, legislation has framed Afro-descent in a comprehensive way to include the cultural expressions of Black immigrants and their native-born descendants. Additionally, the state has created policies and programs that seek to combat anti-Black racism and look towards the future to imagine a society without racial inequality.

On the other hand, some native-born activists have pushed back by framing their demands in ways that inevitably exclude immigrants and their descendants. These activists stress their common culture as heirs of a colonial past characterized by enslavement and marginalization to demand historical recognition and seek reparations from the state. They have progressively gained access to state institutions where they have advanced policies aimed towards reversing their erasure from national history by looking towards the past to vindicate the role of their ancestors in the erection of the Argentine republic.

In Chile, immigrants have been present in the public imagination of Afro-Chilean activists and state officials when discussing laws and policies. Afro-Chileans have distanced themselves from Black immigrants when presenting their demands as a strategy to secure support from state officials who might be less open to advancing policies that target immigrants. Immigrants' absence from debates related to Afrodescendants' rights has enabled the construction of policies framed in ways that exclude them. Black subjecthood has been institutionalized mostly by focusing on the recognition of the historical contributions of Afro-Chileans in building the nation, and on the protection and promotion of their particular cultural heritage.

My comparative case study shows how the boundaries drawn by nationalism shape Afro-descent claims-making and institutionalization. However, how these boundaries are drawn differ in both countries as a result of how immigrants and the descendants of immigrants have interacted with activists who identify as native. In both Argentina and Chile, we find a group of Afrodescendant activists who distance themselves from immigrants and their descendants by emphasizing their groups' common history associated with their ancestors' experience of slavery and their long-standing presence in national territory. In Chile, these activists are drawing boundaries to distance themselves from very recent immigrants, while Afro-Chileans who are second-generation immigrants are only beginning to make claims. In Argentina, in contrast, the arrival of Black immigrants three decades earlier than in Chile, and the long-standing presence of Cape Verdeans who have been Argentine citizens for several generations, raise the stakes in the dispute of who is authentically Afro-Argentine. National belonging has therefore become a site of struggle that goes far beyond formal citizenship and can exclude communities that have been in the country for several generations.

My findings reveal that the participation of immigrants can strengthen Afrodescendant movements, but at the same time can trigger pushback from native-born activists who perceive them as competition in claims-making processes. Furthermore, the chapter reveals that whether Black immigrants participate in local movements or not, their arrival in contexts where activists are struggling to be legally recognized as Afrodescendants affects how these activists define belonging in their community and frame their claims in negotiations with state actors. Thus, immigrants play both a direct and an indirect role in structuring the political field in the struggle for Afro-descent institutionalization. An unexpected finding of my comparison points to how heterogeneity and contestation within social movements can actually produce broader inclusion in state responses to movements' claims.

By focusing on how immigration processes affect the framing of debates surrounding the recognition of minorities, this research advances knowledge on the interaction between race, ethnicity, and immigration. Ultimately, the chapter demonstrates the relevance of accounting for the role of immigration in local processes of ethno-racial mobilization and legal inclusion. Whereas the contemporary literature on immigrants and race and nation in the United States has centered on how immigrants fit into long-established and somewhat fixed racial systems, this chapter reveals how, in contexts where processes of ethno-racial renewal have only recently begun to dispute myths of racial homogeneity, immigrants can play an essential role in the legal construction of emergent understandings of race and racial politics.

The Argentine and Chilean states are only starting to take steps to recognize and include Afrodescendants, and we need to acknowledge that every gain accomplished by activists is the result of particular conjunctures and is not set in stone. While my research provides us with a snapshot of how classification struggles around Afro-descent have crystallized in Argentina and Chile, there is no linear story that can anticipate what will happen in these countries or elsewhere in the future. However, my results do suggest that by advancing policies aimed towards both symbolic recognition and ethno-racial equality, states will have a greater capacity to target the diverse populations making claims as ethno-racial minorities, including immigrants and their descendants.

CONCLUSION

STUDYING AFRODESCENDANT LEGAL RECOGNITION AS A RESULT OF CLASSIFICATION STRUGGLES

Three decades ago, the great majority of Argentines and Chileans would have never imagined that fellow citizens would soon organize around an Afrodescendant identity. Also inconceivable would be their claims for legal recognition and for targeted policies as a form of reparation for the wrongdoings against their enslaved ancestors, their erasure from national history, and their marginalization in contemporary society. Long-standing narratives of nationhood in each country had completely excluded Blackness from the national community and crystalized in everyday understandings of national belonging where the idea of a Whiteness ethno-racial homogeneity had gained absolute hegemony. The emergence of Afrodescendant movements in these two countries has confronted these profoundly engrained constructions of self and otherness within each national society.

Afrodescendants' processes of ethnic renewal and identity politicization in Argentina and in Chile were quite rapid in comparative perspective; only a decade after the formation of the first Afrodescendant NGO in each country we find some sort of institutionalization of an Afrodescendant agenda in a public office – within the INADI in the case of Argentina, and through the creation of the Afrodescendant Municipal Office in Chile. These state actions legitimized Afrodescendants as political actors, despite the constrained forms of recognition they have gained and the multiple obstacles they have confronted to advance policies that can produce concrete impacts in the lives of Black communities. Afrodescendants have challenged their historical erasure from Argentine and Chilean national histories, producing discomfort and anxiety within each national society, while engaging fellow citizens to rethink themselves and their histories, identify their racial prejudices and privileges, and unsettle constructions of nationhood taken for so long as a given.

It is unlikely that Afrodescendants in Argentina and Chile would have mobilized around an Afrodescendant identity and achieved these accomplishments in such a short period of time if it were not for the rise of multiculturalism as a global paradigm. The multicultural turn was characterized by a growing international consensus around the prevalence of ethno-racial inequality and an increasing pressure from intergovernmental organizations and multilateral agencies for states to enact ethno-racial reforms. Following the early mobilization of Indigenous peoples throughout Latin America, multiculturalism facilitated a regional context of Afrodescendant mobilization from which Afro-Argentine and Afro-Chilean early activists drew to frame and advance their claims locally. There is thus a significant degree of isomorphism both in the strategies that Afrodescendant movements mobilized to install an Afrodescendant agenda and in the ways in which the Chilean and Argentine states responded to these movements' demands.

My research revealed, however, that there are also substantial differences in how Afro-descent has been constructed, negotiated, delimited, and institutionalized in these two national contexts. Afro-Argentines and Afro-Chileans have built a sense of group membership, framed and

prioritized demands, and strategized on how to present them to state actors in distinct ways. State officials' responses to activists' claims have also been heterogenous, crystalizing in a variety of ways of delimiting and legally institutionalizing Afrodescendant subjecthood. These differences, as we have seen, are not innocuous; they carry significant consequences for the *types* of policies each state creates and for *who* is identified as a deserving target of these policies.

My research focused on explaining these differences. I started by asking: Why have the Argentine and Chilean states taken different approaches to institutionalizing Afrodescendant subjecthood? Which actors participate in and influence debates around how Afro-descent is legally defined in Argentina and Chile, and how do these actors' interactions affect such definitions? What are the stakes of how the Afrodescendant category is defined regarding the inclusion and exclusion of particular groups of people in public policies and programs? Each of the chapters in this dissertation examined a set of relationships and interactions that have influenced classification struggles over the definition, delimitation, and institutionalization of Afro-decent, contributing to answering these three questions.

Chapter 1 focused on the interactions and relationships between Afrodescendant local activists and international actors. It asked how activists' access to transnational networks and resources impacted the development of a local Afrodescendant agenda. The chapter examined the international alliances that Afro-Argentine and Afro-Chilean activists constructed and the political opportunities these alliances opened for local movements. The chapter specifically analyzed the type of transnational resources that early activists were able to mobilize to advance their demands locally and pressure governments to enact ethno-racial reform.

My findings revealed the crucial role played by Afrodescendant "transnational advocacy networks" (Keck and Sikkink 1999) for the consolidation of Afrodescendant movements in Argentina and Chile. Afro-Argentine and Afro-Chilean activists accessed these networks relatively late compared to other Black leaders in the Latin American region. They therefore relied on the experiences of earlier Black Latin American movements in order to frame their demands in ways that could resonate with international and local actors. They learned how to access valuable transnational resources in the form of social capital, multicultural frames, organizational experience, technical assistance, and, in some cases, direct funding. These resources helped them face the challenges of gaining local support and positioning themselves as legitimate political actors in two countries where Blackness had been excluded from the national "imagined community" (Anderson 1983).

Afro-Argentines and Afro-Chileans, however, were not equally successful in mobilizing resources for advancing their political agenda. Chapter 1 also revealed that differences in the time periods in which Afrodescendants in each country began to organize produced unexpected consequences for their possibilities of accessing and mobilizing various types of resources from international organizations, agencies, and foundations. From the time when the Afro-Argentine movement consolidated (mid-1990s) to when the Afro-Chilean movement did (mid-2000s) there was a pronounced change in multilateral agencies priorities. Between the mid-1990s and mid-2000s, Afrodescendant networks multiplied throughout the region and positioned an Afrodescendant agenda in major international organizations and funding agencies, resulting in unprecedented attention and resources focused on Latin American Black communities, including

direct funding for civil society organizations. Early Afro-Argentine activists relied on these resources to strengthen the Afro-Argentine movement, carry out activities to gain visibility, and gain leverage when making claims towards the state. This turned out to be a limited window, however, and movements that emerged too late lost out on many of the resources that had been previously made available. By the time that Afro-Chilean activists reached out seeking assistance and financial resources from multilateral agencies, they were consistently denied support. This distinct possibility of mobilizing international resources is crucial to explaining why the Argentine state included an Afrodescendant question in the 2010 National Population Census, while the inclusion of a similar question was rejected in Chile for the 2012 and the 2017 national censuses. While Afro-Argentine activists gained support from powerful multilateral agencies to position their statistical inclusion as a priority with state officials, Afro-Chilean activists had to rely instead on national institutions and local allies for political support, a strategy that turned out to be comparatively less successful.

Chapter 2 extended and deepened the analysis of how international actors influenced domestic politics, focusing on the interactions and relationships between state actors and international human rights organizations. Chapter 2 asked how local governments have implemented human rights and multicultural frames defined in intergovernmental forums and endorsed through international normative and legal instruments. The analysis shows how the Argentine and Chilean governments responded to the international commitments acquired through these instruments to advance Afrodescendant rights and policies.

An important finding from the analysis in Chapter 2 is that states' adoption and ratification of international instruments does not guarantee local ethno-racial reforms. While changes in national legislation are tied up with normative shifts in international institutions, states react differently to these shifts depending on internal political struggles. For these international instruments to effectively impact national agendas, there must be state actors willing to promote reforms aligned with their international commitments. The chapter identified how changes in power dynamics in the field of domestic politics can produce radical shifts in state discourses and policies, on which social movements can strategically capitalize in order to pressure states to implement reform aligned with international conventions – what Tianna Paschel (2016) refers to as “political field alignment.”

Post-dictatorship democratization processes in Argentina and Chile did not produce equal political openings for ethno-racial reform. In Argentina, the first post-dictatorship democratic governments positioned the defense of human rights as central to their political agendas and invested themselves in projecting Argentina internationally as a country committed to democracy. This tendency was accentuated with the election of left-leaning progressive governments after the Argentine economic crisis of 2001. These governments reaffirmed Argentina's commitment to international human rights standards and opened spaces for the political participation of previously marginalized communities. Afrodescendant activists leveraged these commitments and political openings to advance their claims. In Chile, in contrast, processes of democratization were slower and more contentious, and did not translate into significant political openings for the participation of civil society actors. Chile's post-dictatorship politics were overall stable, without significant crisis nor radical shifts in state discourses regarding minority rights. Although the Chilean state ratified international instruments focused on Indigenous and Afrodescendant rights, state

authorities showed little commitment to adjusting national legislation to international human rights standards, constraining activists' possibilities of advancing an Afrodescendant agenda.

Chapter 3 shifted attention from international influences towards internal dynamics within each country, focusing on the relationships and interactions between Afrodescendant activists and other local actors with whom they interact in the spaces they inhabit. The chapter asked how the political geography of Afrodescendant movements has impacted how Afro-descent is defined and delimited. In particular, it explored how associations between space and race are built both from central political structures and by local activists in their everyday interactions.

The chapter revealed that Afrodescendants have framed and delimited the boundaries of Afro-descent in relation to the geographical space they occupy and the social relationships that they develop there. It showed that to reverse Afrodescendants' historical erasure and contemporary marginalization, activists built spatialized definitions of Blackness that dispute dominant narratives and political structures that position Blackness outside the boundaries of the nation. These strategies, however, were themselves shaped and constrained by the narratives and political structures that had generated Afrodescendants' marginalization in the first place, and risked reproducing the same power asymmetries that activists were trying to overcome. As Afrodescendants became aware of these risks, they sought to overcome these limitations by expanding the Afrodescendant movement to other territories and building coalitions with, or positioning their claims in relation to, other subaltern actors with whom they share social space. These new strategies open possibilities for transforming the political field itself, disrupting the principles of vision and division that structure Argentine and Chilean national societies by producing a hierarchized spatial/racial order.

The Afro-Argentine and Afro-Chilean movements' distinct locations within each country's political geographies of power afforded different possibilities for disputing hegemonic notions of nationhood. In Argentina, activists' concentration in the capital city of Buenos Aires promoted framings that underscore Afrodescendants' contributions to Argentina's history and cultural heritage, disputing narratives that position Buenos Aires as an exclusively European enclave. These framings, however, risk positioning Afro-descent in the past and erasing the diverse Afro-Argentine cultural expressions that exist throughout the Argentine territory. Conscious of the limitations of this approach, some activists began to construct alliances with other marginalized communities to situate their struggles in the present, and supported the organization of Afro-Argentines outside of Buenos Aires who were disputing meanings of Afro-descent hegemonized from the center. In Chile, activists' location in the peripheral city of Arica encouraged framings that underscore Afrodescendants' connection to Arica's local history, culture, and territory, to gain local acceptance and support while resisting hegemonic constructions of nationhood that exclude them. This approach, however, risks reaffirming narratives that position Arica as a marginal geography and that reduce Afrodescendants' struggles to safeguarding their cultural heritage. Over time, activists have recognized these limitations and sought to expand the movement to other territories of the country to dispute the marginal space Blackness has been assigned by central power. They have additionally positioned themselves vis-à-vis Indigenous groups that are legally recognized by the state as a way to legitimize their claims for collective rights beyond cultural recognition.

Chapter 4 focused on the interactions and relationships between Afrodescendant activists and state actors. It extended the analysis of the impacts of political geography on definitions of Afro-descent, examining how Afrodescendant subjecthood has been institutionalized in laws and public policies. Chapter 4 asked what opportunities each state's political system has offered to advance ethno-racial reform. In particular, it examined how Afrodescendant activists engaged with public officials to advance their goals as well as how state actors responded to their demands.

The analysis in Chapter 4 revealed that the type and scope of laws and policies enacted in each country are strongly connected to the opportunities and constraints afforded by their respective political systems in relation to the political geography of Afrodescendant movements. On the one hand, activists' capacity to build alliances and access public institutions are mediated by their geographical location in relation to central political structures and the territorial organization of power. Afro-Argentines' and Afro-Chileans' distinct geographical locations in relation to central political structures, combined with differences between the Argentine federal system and the Chilean unitarian system, have provided distinct opportunities and constraints for activists to construct alliances with state officials and access state institutions. On the other hand, the installation of an Afrodescendant agenda is strongly conditioned by the government that is in power and by who is appointed at key state institutions. Opportunities and constraints have varied in each country over time according to the political priorities of the government in office and of the state actors with whom activists must engage to promote reforms.

Chapter 4 revealed that in both Argentina and Chile, proximity to the capital city matters for activists' possibilities of advancing political reform. In Argentina, while the federal system provides varied pathways for ethno-racial reform, the concentration of the Afro-Argentine movement in Buenos Aires has enabled activists' access to national authorities, who have supported the installation of an Afrodescendant agenda at the National Congress and within various national ministries. Afrodescendant activists have reached public offices, from where they have influenced and developed diverse programs addressed to their community. But changes in the political priorities from one government to the next have often risked these programs' continuity through time. While the federal system has hindered the impact of national legislation and policies outside of Buenos Aires, it has enabled the passing of local legislation and policies in the few provinces and municipalities where Afro-Argentines have organized. Progress in the Afrodescendant agenda has in consequence been very unequal throughout the Argentine territory. The Chilean unitary state, in contrast, provides a single pathway for ethno-racial reform, and Afro-Chileans' location in a peripheral city far away from central power has been an obstacle for the institutionalization of an Afrodescendant agenda in central public offices. While local politicians from across the political spectrum have supported Afro-Chileans' demands, national authorities have been generally less receptive. While a few Afro-Chileans have been appointed to state institutions in Arica, they have not reached positions at central offices from where they could influence the design of policies. Political authorities in Arica have used their discretionary power to include Afro-Chileans in local policies and have amplified their demands addressed to central government and Congress representatives. But although a national law was passed in 2019 recognizing the Chilean Afrodescendant Tribal People, policies so far have been restricted to the Arica-Parinacota Region, with little impact in the rest of the country.

Finally, Chapter 5 focused on the interactions and relationships within each Afrodescendant movement and, in particular, between native-born and immigrant Afrodescendant activists. The chapter asked what role immigration has played in Afrodescendant movements in Argentina and Chile and, in turn, how this role has impacted how the boundaries of Afro-descent are negotiated *within* each Afrodescendant movement and *between* activists and state actors. In particular, Chapter 5 examined how Afro-Argentine and Afro-Chilean activists have reacted to the arrival of Black immigrants and defined *who* should be considered a subject of public policies by the state.

Immigration plays a role in structuring the political field and the battle for how the Afrodescendant category is legally delimited in Argentina and Chile. My research revealed that the boundaries drawn by nationalism shape how activists make claims and how Afro-descent is institutionalized. Immigrants' participation in Afrodescendant movements affect both these movements' internal dynamics and their negotiation processes with state officials. But even when immigrants do not participate directly in local movements, the increasing number of Black immigrants has become a source of tension and debate within Afrodescendant movements and has impacted how activists frame and present their demands. National belonging has become a site of struggle that goes far beyond formal citizenship and can exclude communities that have been in the country for several generations.

Immigration has shaped classification struggles around Afro-descent in Argentina and Chile in varied, and sometimes contradictory, ways. In Argentina, immigrants played an important role in the emergence and consolidation of an Afrodescendant movement. While some Afro-Argentine activists valued the arrival of immigrants and their contributions to strengthening the movement, emphasizing Black peoples' common struggles, others perceived them as a threat and framed demands in ways that excluded immigrants. The heterogeneity and contentiousness within the Afro-Argentine movement produced two distinct dynamics of institutionalization of Afrodescendant subjecthood: on the one hand, some policies have focused on reversing Afro-Argentines' erasure from national history and on the need for reparations for the descendants of enslaved Africans, from which immigrants are excluded. On the other hand, there have been policies focused on the recognition of diverse expressions of Afrodescendant culture and on combatting racism, delimiting Afrodescendant subjecthood to include Black immigrants. In Chile, in contrast, Black immigrants have not participated significantly within the Afro-Chilean movement. Immigrants' absence has resulted in a relatively homogenous movement and activists have organized to present unified claims to the state as Afrodescendant citizens, distancing themselves from immigrants to avoid being rejected by state officials. The homogeneity of the Afro-Chilean movement has enabled a single dynamic of institutionalization of Afrodescendant subjecthood, in which policies have been exclusively targeted towards Afrodescendant citizens. These policies have mostly focused on making visible Afro-Chileans' historical presence and contributions to the country and on the revitalization, protection, and promotion of their cultural heritage. Racial inequality and discrimination affecting both immigrants and native-born Afrodescendants, in contrast, has hardly been addressed.

Broader implications

The positioning of an Afrodescendant agenda in Argentina and Chile has taken place within a

complex political field, which brings together the agency of local actors, the legal power of nation-states, and the legitimizing influence of international institutions. Taking the different sets of relationships and interactions analyzed throughout my dissertation as a whole, I propose here three main findings and analyze their implications. These findings relate to 1) the centrality of everyday interactions and strategic adaptations for the definition and delimitation of Afro-descent; 2) the persistence of the nation-state as the main source of symbolic authority to institutionalize these definitions; and 3) the high stakes of these definitions for those struggling to be recognized as Afrodescendants versus the low impact they have actually had – so far – on disrupting racial hierarchies.

The first key finding of my research is that Afrodescendant activists delimit the boundaries of Afro-descent contextually, interactionally, and strategically. Afrodescendant activists have been, without doubt, the main protagonists in classification struggles around the definition, delimitation, and institutionalization of an Afrodescendant category in Argentina and Chile. No law or policy related to Afro-descent would have been discussed, much less enacted, in these two countries, were it not for the organization and perseverance of Afro-Argentine and Afro-Chilean organized movements. I found that in both Argentina and in Chile there were multiple and disputed ways of framing Afro-descent, and that certain framings became more prominent than others depending on the social context in which activists situated themselves. My research revealed that differences between the types of framings that were comparatively more prevalent in one movement or the other were mostly related to, first, activists' position in relation to central power structures, and second, the social interactions in which they engaged in their everyday lives.

Geographical location mattered for how activists framed Afro-descent and constructed their demands. But in contrast to previous studies that have identified a rural-urban divide in claims-making processes, my findings identified how two predominantly urban movements navigated and mobilized different framings of Afro-descent depending on the contexts in which they were situated and the different actors with whom they interacted. Afro-Chileans in Arica have tended to *ethnicize* Blackness not because they are in isolation from broader society and have conserved distinct cultural traditions or autochthonous forms of organization, nor because they disregard struggles against discrimination, but mostly due to their interconnected history and everyday interactions with Indigenous peoples, who they often use as a reference group when constructing claims. Afro-Argentines' everyday interaction with Black immigrants and with other marginalized communities in Buenos Aires, in contrast, has driven them to identify a common position of subalternity and to often emphasize the relevance of struggles against discrimination.

That Afrodescendants define the boundaries of belonging in interaction with other social groups is not surprising. All identities are necessarily a result of the construction of boundaries between an "us" and a "them" identified as outsiders from the group of reference. Depending on the context, interactions with exogenous groups can take the form of competition over resources or can be the base for the construction of alliances. Moreover, boundaries can expand, shift, or contract through time or in relation to the social situation in which actors find themselves. Those who in a given moment are identified as outsiders can then become insiders in relation to third actors. Recognizing identities as contextual also means recognizing them as multiple and layered. This does not mean that definitions of Afro-descent are infinitely fluid, but that, as argued by Mara Loveman (2014:31), these distinctions are "often drawn in continuous or relative terms." While

both Afro-Argentines and Afro-Chileans framed Afro-descent by stressing their cultural heritage and a shared history of marginalization, *what* that culture and history consisted of and *who* was part of it was not the same if they were interacting with – or positioning themselves in relation to – Indigenous peoples, LGBTQI+ communities, Black immigrants, international actors, local authorities, or central state officials. Depending on these interactions, framings could be more prominently driven by a need to reaffirm their cultural distinctiveness or to combat discrimination, or by regionalist, nationalist, or diasporic allegiances.

The different ways of framing Afro-descent in which activists engaged were also strategic: from the repertoire of framings available, activists chose which ones to mobilize according to the types of claims they were making and to whom these claims were directed, emphasizing those aspects of their identity that they believed would enable them to achieve their goals more successfully. Afro-Argentines, for example, presented claims related to cultural recognition or to combatting discrimination depending on the institution to which they were presenting their claims. But since they mostly presented claims to national government institutions in Buenos Aires, activists tended to frame Afro-descent by emphasizing how Blackness has contributed to the formation of the Argentine nation, making sure not to threaten official accounts of what Argentine history and cultural heritage consist of, as constructed from the center. The example of how they stressed the Black roots of *tango* speak well to these efforts. In the case of Afro-Chileans, framing claims grounded on local culture and regional identity was strategic when interacting with local authorities in the Arica-Parinacota Region with whom they shared a strong sentiment of regional allegiance. In contrast, when interacting with central authorities, Afro-Chilean activists would strategically emphasize connections to national history and culture to distance themselves from immigrants in an increasingly anti-immigrant political climate.

Activists also learned to adapt their framings to the shifting political contexts in which they were immersed, evaluating how to present their claims depending on who is in government and their assessment of the general social climate regarding the different topics that concern them. This was particularly the case in Argentina, where changes from one national government to the other often meant the discontinuity of programs and policies in which Afrodescendants had previously been included. In this context, Afro-Argentines identified the election of leftist candidates as a political opportunity to expand their claims. In the case of Chile, activists did not perceive such a pronounced shift between the political opportunities afforded by different governments. However, they identified a political opening to expand their demands in the 2019 Chilean social uprising and the resulting 2021-2022 Chilean constitutional process, where they put forward claims related to the prevention of discrimination and to affirmative action policies that had been less prominent earlier.

More generally, I found that activists in both countries did not usually distinguish identity-based rights – generally associated with cultural practices and on occasion with land rights – from racial equality rights – mostly related to anti-discrimination and affirmative action policies – as two separate types of rights. Rights based on identity and on equality often intermixed in activists' discourses, and the repertoire of claims they mobilized took elements from both of these. Similar to Rahier's (2019) depiction of multiculturalism in Latin America, Afrodescendant activists regarded rights to identity and to equality as part of a singular multicultural project. Which kind of rights they tended to emphasize had mostly to do with context, political opportunity, and, on

occasion, with the particular interests of activists who perceived specific advantages from certain framings. This was the case, for example, of Afro-Chileans who lived in the Azapa Valley and have struggled to include land rights in the Afro-Chilean movement's political agenda, a claim often disregarded by majoritarian urban Afro-Chileans.

Levels of agreement on how to frame Afro-descent has varied in each movement over time. While at some points activists have reached agreements to present unified claims, at others, contentiousness within movements has prevailed as activists compete for who can position their views more successfully with state officials. This has often been the case in Argentina where some Afro-Argentine activists have sought to draw the boundaries of Afro-descent to exclude Black immigrants and their descendants, while others – including immigrants themselves – have opposed such exclusion. The greater heterogeneity and contentiousness within the Argentine Afrodescendant movement has resulted in a variety of ways to define and delimit Afro-descent, from which different activists strategically build to position their claims. Overall, differences in how Afro-Argentine and Afro-Chilean activists define and delimit Afro-descent in their everyday interactions and in exchanges with state officials have shaped debates related to the *types* of policies to which Afrodescendants should be entitled and to *who* should be entitled to them.

A second key finding of my research points to the persistence of the nation-state as the main source of symbolic authority to define and institutionalize the categories with which to classify the social world. The nation-state continues to be the main actor to which Afrodescendant movements address their demands. While activists understand themselves as living in a globalized world, and they increasingly rely on international instruments and resources to legitimize themselves as political actors, they ultimately perceive the state as the locus of power to enact reforms that impact their everyday lives. State actors, of course, are in a privileged position in classification struggles around Afrodescendant subjecthood. The state's role in these classification struggles is twofold. On the one hand, the state holds the authority to legally define and delimit different types of subjecthood, which can translate into opportunities and resources for specific groups. On the other hand, given the state's concentration of symbolic power, state categories strongly shape how society at large perceives and classifies the world and each other. The state thus plays a role in the social genesis of both, "structures," which include groups and their objective relations within a field, determined by the "positions occupied within the distribution of the resources..." (Bourdieu 1989:17), and "representations," including "schemes of perception, thought, and action" (Bourdieu 1989:14), which tend to reproduce the objective relations of power. How activists frame their claims is a crucial factor impacting how Afro-descent gets delimited and institutionalized, but at the end of the day, it is the state that holds the legal power to define how to respond to these claims and the symbolic power to produce common sense around particular social classifications. The state's symbolic power, however, is not absolute and activists continue to dispute official state narratives and pressure state actors – less or more successfully – to enact ethno-racial reform. My research revealed that an Afrodescendant agenda was more likely to advance when governments showed a commitment to adopting international human rights standards and to opening spaces for the political participation of civil society actors, and when Afrodescendant activists constructed alliances with central state authorities and were appointed to public office.

Who is in government impacts how Afro-descent is institutionalized, since governments

have diverse ideological positions in matters such as the inclusion of ethno-racial minorities or the state's role in preventing discrimination. Governments respond to international commitments differently, depending on the image they want to project internationally and what role the international realm plays for them in relation to domestic politics. State actors can take these commitments seriously and implement policies accordingly, do the minimum reforms necessary to save face at international forums, or ignore those commitments that do not align with their ideological interests and governmental programs. In the case of Argentina, governments elected after the end of the dictatorship included combatting discrimination in their human rights agenda, and appeared to be committed to adapting their national legislation and implementing policies aligned with international human rights standards related to minority groups. This was less the case in post-dictatorial Chile, where governments tended to do the minimum to comply with international commitments regarding minority rights, discrimination did not become a significant issue of political concern, and politicians have been overall resistant to implementing policies targeting ethno-racial minorities.

Governments can also promote the opening or closure of political spaces for the participation of social movement actors, enabling or preventing activists' influence in state politics depending on their vision of what the relationship between civil society and the state should be. In Argentina, the 2001 political and economic crisis produced an important shift in national politics, resulting in the election of leftist governments that reinforced the state's commitment to human rights and minority groups, and that were invested in opening spaces for the political participation of civil society. Afro-Argentine activists capitalized on the convergence of international and domestic political openings to position their demands in state institutions. Chilean politics, in contrast, were overall stable during the three decades that followed the dictatorship, without important transformations that could enable radical changes in the state's approach to civil society, constraining opportunities for social movements to influence national politics. It was only with the social uprising of 2019 that there was a significant political opportunity opening for civil society actors, which however encountered some backlash in the following years.

Governments, furthermore, can tend to be moderate and secure a certain continuity in how policies are implemented in relation to their predecessor, or can be more radical and make significant transformations within state institutions. In Argentina, national governments have tended to transform ministries and state institutions quite a bit from one political party to the next. In this context, Afrodescendants' claims advanced significantly when there were governments sympathetic to minority rights, as was the case during the Kirchnerista governments, but these political gains were easily dismantled during right-wing governments, as happened with the election of President Mauricio Macri in 2015 and after the election of right-wing libertarian President Javier Milei. In Chile there has been relatively more continuity in state politics between one government and the next – even when they have been from opposite political positions – which, on the one hand, has made it harder to implement new policies that can respond to Afrodescendants' claims, but, on the other, has not meant significant backlash either.

While in presidential systems like in Argentina and Chile how governments approach politics is crucial for the (dis)continuity of specific agendas, the state is not a monolithic, unitary, coherent whole, but is formed by heterogenous – and sometimes competing – institutions. These institutions are ultimately made up of the individuals who hold offices within them, who are rarely

completely coordinated and aligned with each other. State actors have diverse levels of social and cultural capital, represent different ideological positions and values, have dissimilar levels of decision-making power, and occupy distinct positions in classification struggles. If they have the power and political will to do so, state actors can promote changes in the rules of the game, transforming the state from within. The state is thus a site of dispute in which different actors struggle to impose their own state projects. For civil society actors, the stakes of gaining allies in the state and of accessing public institutions are therefore high.

By constructing alliances with state actors, Afrodescendant activists can influence how Afro-descent is delimited and institutionalized. By getting appointed into public offices, activists have greater chances of installing an Afrodescendant agenda, shaping definitions of Afro-descent, and influencing how policies are formulated and resources are distributed. Afro-Argentines have been more successful overall than Afro-Chileans in constructing alliances with state actors and in accessing public offices. Their location in Buenos Aires has enabled them to build relationships with congress members and government officials to present diverse bills related to Afrodescendant rights and to install an Afrodescendant agenda within a number of national ministries. Through these relationships, some activists have been appointed to state institutions, and have influenced how Afro-descent is delimited and institutionalized from within. Afro-Chileans, in contrast, had fewer possibilities of influencing legislative and central executive authorities. They constructed alliances instead with local politicians, who used their relative political discretion to include them in local policies and played the role of political brokers to amplify their demands with central authorities. However, the Chilean state has been generally unresponsive to Afro-Chileans' demands and the institutionalization of Afro-descent in Chile has been quite restrictive. Thus, to recapitulate, a heterogeneous Afro-Argentine movement has influenced how Afro-descent is institutionalized in several public offices, resulting in a diversity of ways of delimiting Afro-descent, while a homogenous Afro-Chilean movement has influenced mostly local policies that have delimited Afro-descent in more restrictive terms.

My third key finding is that the stakes of how Afro-descent has been institutionalized in each country are high for those struggling to be recognized. This is true despite the fact that the policies enacted so far have not significantly disrupted the racial/social structure that subordinates Afrodescendants in each national society. As argued by Morgan and Orloff (2017:11), "the power of states to authoritatively name, define, and rank order people raises the stakes of political struggle." The stakes are high for at least three reasons: First, the legal definition and delimitation of an Afrodescendant subject necessarily forces categorical distinctions around who is entitled to opportunities and resources from the state. Second, and following from the first point, the legal definition of Afro-descent shapes whether claims for legislation and policies primarily focus on the recognition of groups as culturally distinct or primarily focus on achieving racial equality. Third, an unavoidable consequence of the institutionalization of Afro-descent is the reification of particular lines of division between groups; the boundaries that the state reifies, in turn, has implications for how activists themselves draw boundaries in relation to potential members or allies, such as immigrants, Indigenous peoples, and other marginalized communities.

The boundaries of Afro-descent in Argentina and in Chile have been institutionalized in significantly different ways. The Argentine state has delimited Afro-descent expansively, including anybody who can claim African ancestry in some kind of policy. However, boundaries between

Black immigrants and their descendants, on the one side, and Afro-Argentines from the “colonial line,” on the other, have been maintained. While some policies have focused specifically on the latter group, others have targeted all Afrodescendants, regardless of their place of birth or nationality. The Chilean state, in contrast, has delimited Afro-descent to exclusively include Chileans who share a common cultural identity, institutions, worldview, and historical traditions due to a longstanding common history as the descendants of enslaved Africans. This has translated in practice into policies addressed specifically to the Afro-Chilean population that lives in the Arica-Parinacota Region, excluding Black immigrants and Afro-Chileans elsewhere.

Taken together, the three broad findings of my research underscore that just because the Afrodescendant category (or any other previously invisibilized social category) is legally institutionalized, does not mean that this category is forever set in stone. The state’s aspiration to the monopoly of symbolic power is never completely accomplished, and competing symbolic agencies – such as those coming from international legal instruments or from social movements themselves – can continue to challenge state representations and seek to transform them. Laws can be reformed or revoked, programs can be discontinued or reformulated, policies can be expanded, and so on. Struggles around the definitions and delimitation of Afro-descent have continued after the passing of legislation and policies institutionalizing an Afrodescendant category in each country. When resources and opportunities are attached to who is defined as an Afrodescendant subject, the stakes of these struggles become increasingly higher. As has happened with Indigenous self-identification throughout Latin America, it is likely that as times passes more individuals and communities will identify as Afrodescendants in Argentina and Chile, and that some of them will seek to shift the institutionalized definitions of Afro-descent by expanding their boundaries or by emphasizing framings that can enable new types of policies. While some Afrodescendant activists who benefit from current definitions might take the role of gatekeepers of the boundaries already established, others in that same situation might support boundary expansion or transformation.

While the stakes of how the state approaches the institutionalization of Afro-descent remain high, the actual impacts of the policies enacted in Argentina and Chile have left most activists quite disappointed. My findings revealed that despite differences in how laws and policies have been framed and delimited in Argentina and Chile, the types of policies implemented in both countries, and their overall impacts, have not been that different. Scholars and activists in Argentina and Chile have been critical of the policies advanced by each state for their exclusive focus on the recognition of diversity, in what they regard as a “culturalist” approach that does not really alter dominant views of nationhood nor commit material resources. States in Latin America have been generally more open to advancing policies related to cultural visibility, which they see as depoliticized and not challenging to existing power structures. The Argentine and Chilean states have also shown more willingness to respond to activists’ demands when these focus on cultural recognition and are not meant to produce redistributive effects.

In Argentina, while there were many bills presented at Congress that emphasized various aspects of Afrodescendants’ struggles, those approved were restricted to the establishment of days to commemorate Afro-Argentines, the promotion of “Afro” culture, and the inclusion of educational curricula focused on Afro-Argentines’ history. While diverse programs and policies have been framed from an ethno-racial equality perspective, measures have mostly focused on reversing the erasure of Blackness in Argentine society through the diffusion of Black cultural

practices through workshops and festivals, the strengthening of Afro-Argentine civil society, the organization of conferences and seminars about Afrodescendants' presence in the country, and the inclusion of Afro-Argentines in educational curricula. While the creation of a National Afro Plan held the promise of promoting ethno-racial equity by advancing affirmative action policies, the recent election of a right-wing libertarian president in Argentina makes it unlikely that this program will get implemented.

In Chile, policies have been mostly restricted to the focalization of resources to revitalize, promote, and diffuse Afro-Chileans' cultural traditions, regarded as a treasured heritage. Afro-Chileans' recognition as Tribal People, however, has promoted policies that go beyond cultural recognition, such as the inclusion of Afro-Chileans to processes of prior consultation. Prior consultation processes – one of the most significant rights included in ILO Convention 169 and until recently only applied in Chile to Indigenous peoples – has the potential to enable rights that can substantially impact the lives of Black communities, such as rights to land and to self-determination, and can serve communities to dispute the installation of investment projects that can affect their communities' resources and quality of life. In Chile, however, prior consultation processes are rarely conducted, and Afro-Chileans have only been included in processes related to the creation of the Cultures, Arts, and Heritage Ministry, the passing of a Heritage Law, and the regulation of the Law recognizing them as Afrodescendant Tribal People, reflecting again the exclusively cultural logic with which Afrodescendant rights have been seen by the state.

This is not to say that cultural recognition is not important. The erasure or “misrecognition” of Afrodescendants in Argentina and Chile represents a form of symbolic violence with deep consequences for these communities, and recovering and making their history visible represents a form of racial justice. Policies promoting Black culture and history can additionally stimulate self-recognition and further ethno-racial mobilization. Like policies focused on racial equality, policies based on the recognition of identities can have both symbolic and redistributive effects, as shown by the example of the inclusion of Afro-Chileans in processes of prior consultation, generally regarded as an identity-based policy. However, when cultural policies are constructed over a stereotyped visibility that occludes other political demands and disregards structural racial inequalities, they can debilitate movements while leaving the racial/social structure that subordinates them untouched. As argued by Antonio Gramsci (1971), state hegemony is not only constructed through force but also through consent, obtained by giving concessions to subordinated groups without threatening the basis of the hegemonic project.

Charles Hale (2005) coined the term “neoliberal multiculturalism” to describe a mode of governance that fosters the recognition of collective identities and cultural rights as long as these do not challenge privatization, the promotion of markets, and the overall neoliberal economic model. As long as the collective rights granted do not threaten to destabilize the neoliberal regime, they can help “advance the neoliberal model by rationalizing land tenure, reducing the potential for chaos and conflict, and locking the community into a mindset that makes it more difficult for expansive political alternatives to emerge” (Hale 2005:18). Within this multicultural framework, the state can co-opt movement leaders by appointing them to positions where they can advance some movement goals, without this implying any real transformations in overall racial hierarchies. Through the appearance of addressing inequality, these policies can divide social movements between those that perceive – and may actually receive – certain benefits and those that aspire to

more radical transformations.

Indigenous intellectuals have identified the process of Indigenous recognition initiated in Argentina and Chile in the 1990s with Hale's idea of neoliberal multiculturalism, as they witnessed how recognition went hand in hand with a development model that has enabled the continuity of processes of land dispossession, resource expropriation, and environmental destruction (Antileo 2012; Pairicán 2018; Zapata 2019). Some of these risks have begun to be observed for rural Afrodescendant communities in the Azapa Valley, where conflicts around land and water rights have emerged due to the advance of private agribusiness initiatives (Araya 2016). More generally, cultural recognition policies for Afrodescendants in Argentina and Chile have often been based on rigid and stereotyped ideas of cultural authenticity and purity, and have been criticized by activists themselves for "exotifying" these movements, occluding their political goals. However, Afrodescendants have also recognized the crucial role that culture has played for gaining visibility, social recognition, and political legitimization as an ethno-racial group. Furthermore, as activists have become aware of the risks of being exclusively regarded as a "cultural group," they have reinforced political demands for redistributive justice. My research revealed that while the installation of an Afrodescendant agenda within the Argentine and Chilean state has had important effects for the strengthening of Afrodescendant movements and for reversing the historical erasure of Blackness in these countries, there are still important struggles to be fought to transform the political field of power and transcend the principles of vision and division that have created a hierarchically structured racial/social order.

Post-Script

Moving beyond multiculturalism: a post-colonial anti-racist agenda

Several Latin American scholars have declared that multiculturalism is in crisis, given its incapacity to fulfill the promise of resolving the conflicts produced by the previous denial of the cultural diversity within Latin American countries. Statistical information confirms the persistence of ethno-racial inequality across the region, where after three decades of multicultural policies the lives of Indigenous and Afrodescendant populations have not improved substantially, and poverty, exclusion, racism, and social conflict is still rampant (Zapata 2019). While there have undoubtedly been positive transformations and gains in collective rights, racialized populations have also suffered the consequences of the expansion of violence, wealth concentration, and dispossession (Ardito 2024; Hale 2005). Multiculturalism has been therefore criticized – in particular by Indigenous and Afrodescendant intellectuals – "for recognizing diversity without addressing the power inequalities entailed by systemic racism and ethnocentrism" (Richards 2013:12).

Multiculturalism has also been criticized for essentializing cultural differences, while concealing the historical and political circumstances in which racial hierarchies were created (Antileo 2012:199). As argued by Anibal Quijano (2000), the idea of race – in its modern sense – was invented through the colonial experience. Frantz Fanon (1964) recognized early on how this colonial experience produced "frozen cultures" at the same time as a loss of self-determination. By requiring Indigenous and Afrodescendant people to display cultural authenticity and purity, multiculturalism dispossesses them from history and disqualifies their present struggles (Zapata

2019:56). The multicultural focus on culture in this way erases the historical and political constitution of racial categories that were precisely produced by the colonial experience.

Others have criticized multiculturalism for hegemonizing diversities and promoting essentializing and compartmentalized processes of identification that do not relate to the life experiences and cultural histories of Latin American populations (Grimson 2011; Segato 2017; Curiel 2020). Rita Segato (2017) refers to the “globalized identities” that have been produced in transnational forums, which construct types of subjects to which the state and activists adapt, hindering their possibilities of creating emancipatory projects connected to their historical alterities that could more radically pursue the elimination of race as a category structuring society. Ochy Curiel (2020) identifies how the liberal logic of multiculturalism solidifies differences by creating compartmentalized policies for each and every community, which do not challenge the systems of oppressions that are well ingrained within the modern state. Multicultural narratives and policies, according to Grimson (2011), do not confront the relationship between diversity and inequality, culture and history, culture and power. From these accounts, multicultural identities based on racial differences end up crystalizing instead of dismantling the idea of race itself as an oppressive construction.

A decolonial project would therefore recognize that vindicating difference in itself is not liberating. This does not mean, as some have implied, that struggles for equality should pursue some kind of universalism without identities. As argued by Grimson (2011:134), identificatory boundaries can be displaced, blurred, redrawn, but cannot disappear since they are constitutive of social life. Denying cultural differences, furthermore, is as oppressive as recognizing sanitized and depoliticized identities. Following Rita Segato (2017:17), a liberatory project would entail a recognition of cultural differences in a more profound, dense, and radical sense: the defense of a radically plural world that recognizes different cultural options as ways of living life and relating with each other, in opposition to “identity” as a logo whose only purpose is to make claims of inclusion in a world with premises and values that are already constituted and incontestable, despite their oppressive nature. The defense of a radical plurality would instead recognize the possibility of imagining other possible worlds, with other goals and values that can guide human coexistence outside of the neoliberal logic, taking as a base the concrete experiences of difference of subaltern groups. It is without an alternative project that identity politics become vacuous.

Such a project would require a change of focus from the classification of identities per se to the radical comprehension of heterogenous practices and values, and of the specific situations in which power inequality circulates (Grimson 2011:248). It would require overcoming the multicultural logics that segregate groups as they compete for scarce resources in an already established political system that excludes them, to expose instead the racial dynamics that operate in society and are implicit in a model of development that is contrary to sustainability and sovereignty. It would require as well the construction of alliances between the claims of the different marginalized populations, with a clear focus on the redistribution of economic resources and political power (Zapata 2019:111). Only in this way would autonomous histories and cultural projects have a place, cultural boundaries be blurred, and social and redistributive justice be part of a same singular project.

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