

# CULTURAL RHYTHMICS

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# CULTURAL RHYTHMICS

Applied Anthropology and Global  
Development from Latin America

BY

**GONZALO IPARRAGUIRRE**

*University of Buenos Aires, Argentina*



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*To Davydd Greenwood,  
for his constant support in translating my ideas  
and bringing this book to fruition.*

*To Viviana Montibeller,  
for her vitality, strength and love.*

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Gonzalo Iparraguirre** is a Doctor in Anthropology (2015) and Licentiate in Anthropological Sciences (2010) from the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the University of Buenos Aires. His work focuses on comprehending and translating temporalities, development imaginaries and their political interventions.

He completed international postgraduate courses and training at the University of Bern, Switzerland (2013); at the University of Sao Paulo, Brazil (2015); at the Czech Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic (2018); at ECLAC-United Nations, Chile (2018); and at the School of Architecture and Design in Oslo, Norway (2019).

He has more than 20 scientific productions corresponding to various disciplines (anthropology, archeology, heritage management, tourism, future studies). He has participated in more than 30 scientific and political outreach events. He has carried out consultancies and technical assistance to private and public organizations on various topics (development, agenda planning, management, cultural impact).

He is a postgraduate and graduate professor, and collaborates as postgraduate researcher for the Culturalia group (University of Buenos Aires), the ADETER group, the IIESS-CONICET (South National University), and the CEDETS group (Southwest Provincial University).

During the last 15 years he has worked in the design, management and application of public policies at different levels of public agencies in Argentina, such as: provincial government (2008–2010), national government (2010–2015) and municipal government (since 2016) where he is a public official as Secretary of Development of the Municipality of Tornquist, Province of Buenos Aires.

As a consultant in Anthropology of Development, he has worked on regional, provincial and national projects. Some of the activities carried out were: identification and modeling of territorial problems; historical analysis of development planning in Argentina; comparative analysis of public policies around the development and design of territorial agendas; fieldwork to set up sociocultural baselines for infrastructure projects with anthropological impact.

He is the author of the *Anthropology of Time* online course ([www.academia.edu/learn/GonzaloIparraguirre](http://www.academia.edu/learn/GonzaloIparraguirre)).

# PROLOGUE

It is my pleasure to introduce this work by an outstanding young Argentinian anthropologist, Gonzalo Iparraguirre, who has a PhD in Anthropology from the University of Buenos Aires and is currently the Secretary for Development of the Municipality of Tornquist in the Province of Buenos Aires. We have become colleagues despite the distance in both age and geography through the mediation of the internet. Having read my work, Gonzalo contacted me and we began a series of exchanges and videoconferences that convinced me that the issues he addressed and his unique combination of experiences tell a story of theory, method and ethnographic context that will be of broad interest to a transdisciplinary audience including anthropologists, sociologists, cognitive scientists, policymakers and philosophers.

Iparraguirre's training is both broad and deep. On the path to his PhD in Anthropology and thereafter, he has delved into cultural geography, the Frankfurt School, Cultural Studies, Bourdieu and Foucault. This combination creates fertile ground for anchoring ethnographic engagements in a much broader set of issues. He is exceptionally good and agile in managing and communicating these perspectives, and he joins the ranks of other anthropologists like Paul Rabinow (1996) and Hiro Miyazaki and Richard Swedberg (2017) in synthesizing these kinds of perspectives in a uniquely ethnographic way.

What makes him unique is that all of this academic background is leavened by year of experience as a public official in a municipal development agency. He is an academic and a practitioner who has worked out a way of conceptualizing what he learns daily in his administrative work as grist for his anthropological thinking. And then the return trip he makes involves bringing his academic learning to bear on improving the work of his agency. Unlike Donald Schön's *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983) who is an accomplished practitioner but cannot formulate in more abstract terms how he does what he does, Iparraguirre tacks back and forth between theory and practice effortlessly. He does so in a way that enriches both and shows us how both a PhD level of training and years of administrative experience can be made to speak to one another effectively.

Iparraguirre anchors the present work in a practical and grounded focus on the processes of patrimonialization, community development and internal colonialism. It is based on years of fieldwork and on his experiences in current employment as a local development civil servant in a smallish city in Argentina. Unlike many who focus on these subjects, often telling mainly applied case histories, his approach is undergirded with sophisticated readings from a variety of philosophical traditions, a blending of an amalgam of diverse social theories and systems theory.

This culminates in the novel idea of cultural rhythmicity. This notion of rhythmicity gathers up generations of insights about the mismatches between local and cosmopolitan cultures, between development agencies and local people, and between different strata of local societies. By rendering their linkages and disconnects in terms of this concept of rhythmicity, he moves past well-known but rather shopworn ideas about domination, development and cultural commodification. In their place and without denying them, he produces a more synthetic multi-dimensional view of the complexity of these processes. One of the key dimensions of these rhythmicities is anticipation and even hope as components in these processes. This links with the ground-breaking work of Hiro Miyazaki and Swedberg (op cit.) and Anna Tsing (2015) in complicating and enriching our understanding of policy processes and outcomes in more than oversimplified 'rational choice' terms.

This is more than a show of ingenuity. His way of engaging these issues manages to find in the diversity of stakeholder perceptions and experiences spaces for positive change and for hope. This contrasts solidly with the more dystopian views that dominate these subjects, a dystopian view to which I have also contributed my share of negativity (Greenwood, 2008). Iparraguirre offers us a sense of gritty realism, ethnographic diversity and complexity, but shows us the possibility of some negotiated solutions to the clear conflicts of interest existing between the various groups he analyzes. It is no small feat and is a story that deserves to be widely read.

I have also learned through our interactions that he has a lively, playful and ambitious mind, and I am certain that this book is only the first of many good things he will create for us.

Davydd J. Greenwood

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