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Insights from Mapuche and peasant communities



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# **Participation and forest protected areas in Chile:**

## **Insights from Mapuche and peasant communities**

Guillermo Pacheco Habert, Alejandro Mora-Motta, Till Stellmacher, Francisco Ther-Ríos

## Abstract

There are multiple approaches to forest conservation, including public and private protected area initiatives and varying degrees of involvement of local communities. At present, protected areas are seldom managed by local communities under integrated sustainable approaches.

This research provides insights into the modes of participation of Mapuche and peasant communities in the planning and management of forest protected areas in two municipalities of Los Ríos Region in southern Chile. Indeed, being directly related to the land, the forest, and the sea, the way of life of Mapuche and peasant communities in southern Chile constitutes an excellent case to elaborate on the constitution of borders, limits and frontiers generated by forest protected areas, and at the same time to glimpse possible strategies for their participatory planning and management. The paper is based on two in-depth empirical field works carried out between 2013 and 2019 using participatory observation, field notes and interviews. In the municipality of Panguipulli, in the Andean cordillera, we focus on participation of Mapuche and peasant communities in the Villarrica National Park, the Mocho-Choshuenco National Reserve and the Huilo-Huilo Private Reserve. In the municipality of La Unión, in the coastal cordillera, we address the participation of Mapuche and peasant communities in the Alerce Costero National Park and the private Coastal Valdivian Reserve.

The findings show that community participation mechanisms are generally consultative in the public protected areas of both municipalities, which effectively allows for a top-down implementation of territorial decision-making. Decisions are concentrated with the state authorities that manage the protected areas and with the owners of the private reserves. The formal consultative participation mechanisms in the public protected areas do not include a comprehensive participation of the Mapuche and peasant communities living adjacent to the areas. In the case of private protected areas, there are participation mechanisms for Mapuche and peasant communities, however, mainly limited to capacity building and employment. The lack of participation in decision-making is associated with open questions of land ownership and so-called 'green grabbing' in rural and indigenous ancestral territories in Chile, where both private actors and state authorities appropriate parts of nature by structuring spatial and sociocultural borders. Finally, it is concluded that it is necessary that state authorities provide more effective and transparent participation mechanisms in both private and public protected areas that guarantee meaningful and decision-making participation schemes.

Keywords:

Participation, conservation, borders, Mapuche, peasant communities, Chile

## Resumen

Existen múltiples enfoques para la conservación de los bosques que incluyen iniciativas públicas y privadas de áreas protegidas, y diversos grados de participación de las comunidades locales. En la actualidad, las áreas protegidas rara vez son gestionadas por las comunidades locales con enfoques sostenibles integrados.

Esta investigación permite conocer los modos de participación de las comunidades mapuche y campesinas en la planificación y gestión de las áreas protegidas con bosques en dos comunas de la región de Los Ríos, en el sur de Chile. Efectivamente, los modos de vida de las comunidades mapuche y campesinas, estando directamente relacionadas a la tierra, el bosque y el mar, constituyen una excelente oportunidad estudiar la constitución de bordes, límites y fronteras generados por las áreas protegidas, y al mismo tiempo para vislumbrar posibles estrategias de su planificación y gestión participativa. Así, este artículo se basa en la comparación de dos trabajos de campo realizados entre los años 2013 y 2019 mediante observación participativa, notas de campo, entrevistas y participación en reuniones comunales. En la comuna de Panguipulli, en la cordillera de los Andes, nos centramos en el problema de la participación de las comunidades mapuche y campesinas en el Parque Nacional Villarrica, la Reserva Nacional Mocho Choshuenco y la Reserva Privada de Huilo Huilo. Y en la comuna de La Unión, en la cordillera de la costa, nos ocupamos del problema de la participación de las comunidades mapuche y campesinas con el Parque Nacional Alerce Costero y la Reserva Costera Valdiviana (privada).

Los resultados muestran que actualmente los mecanismos de participación en general son consultivos pero no vinculantes en las áreas protegidas públicas de ambos municipios, lo que permite y potencia efectivamente un estilo de arriba hacia abajo en la toma de decisiones territoriales. Las decisiones se concentran en la institución que administra las áreas protegidas y los dueños de las reservas privadas. Por otra parte, los mecanismos de participación consultiva formales con los que cuentan las áreas protegidas públicas de Los Ríos, no incluyen la participación de las comunidades mapuche y campesinas colindantes. En el caso de las áreas protegidas privadas existen pocos mecanismos de participación, limitados a la consulta, la vinculación mediante el asistencialismo, la formación de capital humano y el empleo. La falta de participación está asociada a la propiedad de la tierra y al 'acaparamiento verde' en los territorios rurales y ancestrales, donde los actores privados y el Estado se apropian de la naturaleza mediante la estructuración de procesos de frontera. Finalmente, se concluye que es necesario que el Estado logre regular mecanismos de participación efectivos, transparentes y vinculantes tanto en las áreas protegidas privadas como públicas buscando esquemas de participación significativa.

Palabras clave:

Participación, conservación, límites, Mapuche, comunidades campesinas, Chile

# 1 Introduction: participation and protected areas

Nature conservation through protected areas (PAs) is globally discussed and implemented as part of socio-ecological transformations towards a more sustainable world. PAs are increasingly promoted in the context of climate change and biodiversity conservation; likewise, being spaces for biodiversity conservation, they also contribute enormously to agriculture, tourism, water protection, and energy security (Duque, 2018). However, the establishment of PAs is immersed in the dynamics of territorial transformation and nature and space appropriation (García & Mulrennan, 2020; Holmes, 2014). Especially in the Global South, this transformation leads to tensions and conflicts between actors with different interests over territorialised expressions of conservation.

Participation in the context of PAs is about who has the right to access, use, and make decisions over nature enclosures of a given territory. Said otherwise, who can appropriate nature and how. Conflicts emerge when social groups have different values, views, and interests over the same place and nature (Gudynas, 2018). The participation of 'local communities' in PA establishment and management is a major issue across all continents (see, e.g., Chang & Watanabe, 2019; Kelboro & Stellmacher, 2015; Kothari, 2008, 2003; Lovric *et al.*, 2018; Maestre-Andre *et al.*, 2018; Stellmacher, 2015).

However, many PAs are managed top-down without informed consent by *the people* who live in the area, often indigenous peoples' territories. There are some positive examples of participation, like in Argentina, where indigenous Puel communities co-manage PAs or in northern Chile where indigenous Aymara and Atacameño communities successfully co-manage PAs together with the National Forestry Corporation [*Corporación Nacional Forestal*] (CONAF) (Arce *et al.*, 2016; Molina, 2018). However, in southern Chile, as in other parts of the world, PAs are still largely planned, established, and managed with little or no real participation in decision-making.

The Chilean National System of Protected Wild Areas [*Sistema Nacional de Áreas Silvestres Protegidas del Estado*] (SNASPE), administered by CONAF, has currently 105 PA units, including 41 National Parks, 46 National Reserves, and 18 Natural Monuments. These PAs cover an area of 18,620,100 hectares, which is 21.3% of Chile's continental territory. Most of that area, totalling 17,189,600 hectares, is located in southern Chile, from the Araucanía region towards the south, including 27 National Parks, 21 National Reserves, and 10 Natural Monuments (CONAF, 2020).

Southern Chile is part of the Mapuche territory, today the largest indigenous group in Chile with 1.7 million people, which is 79.8% per cent of the entire indigenous population of the country (INE, 2017). Despite the long tradition of PAs in Chile, PAs decision-making often excludes indigenous and peasant people, whose ancestors lived in these territories long before the PAs were established (García & Mulrennan, 2020; Klubock, 2014; Pauchard & Villarroel, 2002). In general, many indigenous communities in southern Chile are still widely excluded from territorial decision-making within PAs, from the Mapuche in southern Chile to indigenous communities in Southern Patagonia, e.g., the Kawashkar and Yagán (Aravena *et al.*, 2018; Arce *et al.*, 2016; Rozzi *et al.*, 2007).

PAs territorialise resource control in new and old frontier spaces (Rasmussen & Lund 2017). State authorities, large international NGOs, private companies, or wealthy individuals are often behind these forms of 'green enclosures' (García & Mulrennan, 2020; Holmes, 2014; Klubock, 2014). We conceptualise the establishment of PAs as processes of boundary-making, where the creation of borders attempts to regulate nature appropriation for conservation in often disputed spaces. Spaces are contested because the lack of clear boundaries demarking who has the rights and the actual power to access, use, appropriate, and control nature. Conflicts can emerge from instituted boundaries that reflect social inequalities and exclusion.

Lamont and Molnár (2002) discuss the concept of the boundary. They highlight that boundaries reflect notions of similarity and otherness expressed in interrelated symbolic and social levels, i.e. symbolic boundaries can create, maintain, contest, and dissolve instituted social boundaries. Boundaries can be

of different types. They can be legally instituted, applied by national states through laws and regulations, or biophysical, related to geological, biological, or climatic conditions (Löv & Weidenhaus, 2017). Furthermore, boundaries can be not only legal but also moral. According to Lamont and Molnár (2002), boundaries can also be related to many socio-cultural dimensions such as cognition, identity, commensuration, census categories, cultural capital, cultural membership, race, ethnicity, and gender. Nevertheless, social and symbolic boundaries can be distinguished.

Social boundaries are objective forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to resources (material and non-material) distribution and social opportunities. Symbolic boundaries separate people into groups and generate feelings of similarity and group membership. The construction of boundaries may be more evident in territorial spaces where an internal homogeneity is produced (Löv & Weidenhaus, 2017). For Lamont and Molnár (2002), identities are constructed as a result of symbolic boundaries, and borders are geographical representations of boundaries that put similarity-otherness dichotomies in places. In a similar line, we understand the formation of PAs and their border demarcation as boundary-making processes to regulate nature-people interaction by instituting an otherness-similarity pattern in an enclosed space. For Löv and Weidenhaus (2017), borders are relations between spaces built upon differentiation, where a sort of internal homogeneity or commonality, a first space, contrasts with an outer or surrounding second space. The border regulates conflicts and creates a relation between spaces. It specifies certain relations and allows for overlapping and permeability: "... even territorial spaces enclose and overlap each other. Borders are thus relevant to certain objects and people in certain contexts. Borders are rarely, if ever, completely closed to all objects and persons, but are better understood as a membrane allowing different permeabilities." (Löv & Weidenhaus, 2017: 560).

For Löv and Weidenhaus (2017), borders are created and maintained as a claim of control of the interruption of circulation between two spaces, a claim that demarks differentiation. Hence, borders are akin to the bundles of power by which Ribot and Peluso (2003) denote the effective exercise of access to resources. Similarly, Rasmussen and Lund (2017) argue that cartography, territorial planning, or particular laws are boundary and border claims; hence, they are elements of the territorialisation of resource control. In this sense, PAs are bounded spaces that include creating and maintaining borders, supported with cartographies, policies, and laws that seek to protect nature. However, the creation of these permeable permanent enclosures often involves the exclusion of groups of rural peasant and indigenous people, who then contest those boundary-making and maintenance claims.

This paper explores levels of participation of local communities in relation to public and private forest PA border-making and -maintaining using a comparative analysis of Mapuche and peasant community areas in two municipalities of Los Ríos Region, southern Chile. Based on empirical fieldwork in forest PAs in the municipalities of Panguipulli and La Unión, we use a multi-scale approach in which national regulations, policies, and territorial planning tools influence the local processes of participation related to territorial conflicts. Throughout the paper, we intend to evidence, categorise, and characterise the participation of Mapuche and peasant communities in the territorial decision-making processes related to forest PAs and to analyse the tensions and conflicts associated with these PAs. The paper centres around the questions: how and by whom are PAs boundaries and borders established? Who finally decides on PAs use and management plans and their implementation? How do Mapuche and peasant communities participate?

How do local communities participate in decision-making and in the management of PAs? What is the degree or quality of their participation? What rights and opportunities do they have? Beyond the question of whether communities participate or not, which often leads to the issue of using participation as legitimation, what is more relevant is to assess the different levels of participation in PAs. Do they constitute co-management? Do they influence territorial decision-making? The relevant issues regarding PAs lie in the conceptualisation of different levels of participation. This approach will help to differentiate and clarify how far participation is truly meaningful. From a spatial viewpoint,

such degree of participation would be represented in the permeability of the borders and is a consequence of the rights and power of actors who dispute these forms of nature appropriation. Hence, the establishment, maintenance, and permeability of PA borders affect social boundaries between the owners of these areas and the surrounding communities.

Considering the breadth of the concept of participation, it is necessary to clarify what level of participation we are discussing. Given the fragility of the participation mechanisms that local communities possess in PAs in Chile (and worldwide), the various levels are conformed by partial mechanisms. In the most successful cases the ideal participation mechanism would correspond to co-management agreements, nonetheless, without participation of communities in decision-making (Brenner, 2019; Chang & Watanabe, 2019; Koy *et al.*, 2019; Lovric *et al.*, 2018; Maestre-Andre *et al.*, 2018; Major *et al.*, 2018; Maretti *et al.*, 2019; Mardones, 2018; Niedziałkowski *et al.*, 2018). Not all local communities have the same opportunities to resist or participate in the establishment processes of PAs, which sometimes leads to land appropriation processes that can be characterised as 'green grabbing' (Holmes 2014). In the case of indigenous people in Chile, the existing regulations grant them more tools to demand their participation rights; in contrast, peasant communities lack such recognition.

The paper consists of five sections after this introduction. Section 2 is about the participation of local communities in PAs; Section 3 offers a brief description of our methodological approach; Section 4 describes the two cases; Section 5 presents a comparative analysis of them; Section 6 discusses the findings; and Section 7 concludes.

## 2 Participation of local communities in protected areas

Worldwide, the participation of so-called local communities in PA management and governance processes is of increasing relevance. The number and sizes of PAs rapidly increased in the last decades. Land use pressure and conflicts over resources increased. Despite many advances and increasing awareness among key decision-makers, it is still a great challenge to improve the quantity and quality of participation and to better incorporate local communities, especially indigenous people, in PA decision-making (Brenner, 2019; Lovric *et al.*, 2018; Major *et al.*, 2018; Mardones, 2018; Maretti *et al.*, 2019; Niedziałkowski *et al.*, 2018). Many ways of participation are still merely consultive and do not reach levels of key decision-making.

### 2.1 Forests and PAs in southern Chile

The native forests of southern Chile are relicts that developed after the retreat of the Llanquihue glacier in the last ice age. Today these forests are subsumed under the term Valdivian temperate forests, named after the city of Valdivia, the capital of Los Ríos Region, and constitute the only temperate rainforests in Latin America. They are home to some of the world's largest and oldest trees. The region is dominated by the Andean Mountain range in the east, at the Argentinian border, and the coastal mountain range in the west, at the Pacific Ocean. Historically they both consisted of unique ecosystems, some of which are still present today (Donoso, 2013).

In the Andean mountain range, the most emblematic forest species is the Araucaria (*Araucaria Araucana*) or *Pewen* in Mapuche language, *Mapudungún*. It can reach a height of 40 meters, a diameter of two meters and a maximum age of 1,000 years. In the Chilean Andes, Araucaria grows between 1,000 and 1,600 meters above sea level, from the Antuco volcano in the north to the Carirriñe pass at the Argentinian border. Mapuche people consider the Araucaria a cultural and spiritual symbol and use its nuts as a food source. New settlers started the intensive logging of Araucaria trees for timber export in the 20th century (Donoso, 2013; Moreno *et al.*, 2020; Pacheco & Henríquez, 2016).

The main emblematic species of the coastal mountain range is the Alerce (*Fitzroya cupressoides*), or *Lahuen* in *Mapudungún*, a gigantic tree that can live for thousands of years (in La Unión, there is an Alerce tree with an estimated age of over 3,500 years). The Mapuche considered the Alerce sacred and only used its over-soil roots, but without logging it. From the arrival of the Spanish to the 20th century, Alerce forests in the coastal mountain range were heavily logged. The Spanish started logging Alerce trees for its timber properties; being waterproof and light, it was perfect for boat building and house construction (Donoso *et al.*, 1990; Gayoso & Schlegel, 1998; Molina *et al.*, 2006; Otero, 2006; Torrejón *et al.*, 2011; Urbina, 2011).

Chile has 14.6 Mio hectares of native forests, representing 19.4% of the total continental area of the country. Los Ríos Region is very forested, with 908,530.7 hectares of native forests, covering 49.5% of the region's area. Of these forests, the most abundant types are Cohihue-Raulí-Tepa (30.9%), Roble-Raulí-Coihue (27.8%), Evergreen (22.7%), and Lenga (15.7%) (INFOR 2019). Due to intensive deforestation, the emblematic Alerce and Araucaria forests have become rare, covering only 0.9 % and 1.5 % of Los Ríos Region, respectively. In colonial times, the forests of Los Ríos Region were logged for their timber. Later, after Chile gained independence between 1810-1820, the forests were mainly cleared to get open lands for agriculture. The native forests were logged until the 1950s. Thereafter timber production progressively shifted to eucalyptus and pine plantations that often replaced the remaining native forests (Camus, 2014; Heilmayr *et al.*, 2016; Klubock, 2014; Miranda *et al.*, 2016; Molina *et al.*, 2006; Mora-Motta & Stellmacher, 2020; Otero, 2006).

Southern Chile has a long-standing tradition of forest PAs, including a multiplicity of public and private forest conservation initiatives. According to García and Mulernan (2020), there were four historical phases of territorialisation of PAs. Between 1907 and 1924, forest reserves were created associated

with the consolidation of the Chilean national state. Mapuche and peasant communities were often banned from using these areas. However, the actual state control and authority was precarious, and often not even the borders of the reserves were well defined (Klubock, 2014; Otero, 2006).

Second, between 1925 and 1979, the Chilean state created forest PAs with a focus on conservation. It involved the expropriation of large areas and the resettlement of Mapuche and peasant communities. CONAF was established in 1970 to develop and manage Chile's forests until today. Nevertheless, many of the PAs in southern Chile were in practice 'paper parks' that existed on paper but without management plans and effective practical implementation on the ground. From 1973 onwards, Pinochet's dictatorship introduced an exclusion based PAs model by passing a law that prohibited the occupation of PAs south of the Bio-Bio river (i.e., current Regions of Bio-Bio, Araucanía, Los Ríos and Los Lagos) by settlers (García & Mulernan, 2020).

Third, between 1980 and 1999, the governance structure of PAs was reformulated by CONAF, then focusing more on protecting ecological values and conserving specific vegetation types and endangered species. The efforts involved the standardisation of practices, the development of management plans and a clear definition of the PA borders (García & Mulernan, 2020).

Fourth, between 2000 and 2020, the establishment of PAs in southern Chile was often led by or associated with private actors, sometimes so-called philanthropists, and international NGOs. PAs diversified, including strict conservation areas and touristic hotspots (García & Mulernan, 2020; Holmes, 2014, 2015).

In Chile, public PAs are managed by CONAF under the SNASPE. According to CONAF, in 2020 there were a total of 18.6 million hectares in Chile protected in public PAs. Private PAs (PPAs) contained a total area of 1.7 million hectares in 2013. In many cases, PAs are located in rural areas traditionally inhabited and used by indigenous communities that went through centuries of marginalisation and land dispossession. Today, the surroundings of PAs are mainly inhabited by peasant and indigenous communities.

In many parts of the world, and southern Chile is not an exception, decisions over the ownership and use of land are historically made top-down by state authorities and private companies (Chang & Watanabe, 2019; Lovric *et al.*, 2018; Maestre-Andre *et al.*, 2018). Since the first 'modern' concepts of PAs emerged in the 19th century, as with the Yellowstone National Park in the USA in 1872, PAs obeyed geopolitical boundaries and sovereignty visions on the use, management, and protection of natural resources (Newman, 1998). In this sense, PAs emerged as forms of state territorialisation in frontier areas, especially in countries like Chile (García & Mulrennan, 2020; Klubock, 2014). However, as both Klubock (2014) and García and Mulrennan (2020) argue, the state often lacked authority in the frontier areas, so the role of other actors (mainly private) gained momentum.

Unlike other Latin American countries like Brazil, Bolivia, or Colombia, where PAs have been often developed together with indigenous groups that inhabit these lands from time immemorial, PAs in Chile are still very much limited to a private-public binary (Figueroa & Vergara-Pacheco *et al.*, 2018; Pinto, 2018; Ruiz *et al.*, 2020; Tran *et al.*, 2020). Forest PAs were historically established as closed nature conservation without the direct participation of people who live in, around, or from these forests.

## 2.2 Participation in PAs in Chile

The problem of participation has received an important amount of attention since ‘participatory development’ appeared as a guiding policy development and research principle. The initial core discussion was related to the idea of participation of rural communities in the construction of their own development plans, being considered a fundamental human need (a concept developed by Max-Neef *at al.*, 1986), or the participation of researchers in the social reality (Fals Borda, 2014), to the participation seen as a necessary way to improve the local effects of development programmes, to the questioning of participation as a tyranny (Cooke & Kothari, 2001) in which development projects often use the consent of local population for legitimisation.

In Chile, the problem of participation has been addressed by the approach of inclusive development. However, this participatory approach has been widely challenged, especially by the Mapuche movement (Haughney, 2012) and different environmental movements (Jofré, 2022).

In the case of PAs, questions of participation are increasingly discussed by practitioners and scientists worldwide. Different approaches were developed and implemented in different PA concepts and contexts over time. The general question, however, is about the degree and quality of involvement of local communities in decision-making.

Different levels of participation exist in PAs in Chile. The entity that administers them (CONAF under the Ministry of Agriculture) can generate bilateral agreements of concessions and co-management with communities, organisations, or private companies. There is evidence from the north of Chile and from Easter Island that PA co-management with indigenous communities can be very effective (Molina, 2018). But this is not a national model, and it does not happen in the south of Chile, with a high presence of Mapuche people in a historical conflict with the Chilean state.

In Chile, there are no specific participation mechanisms for PAs, neither in the current laws nor in the draft of the new SBPA Law<sup>1</sup>. Nor are there participation mechanisms differentiated according to the type of protection. International standards (such as those of the IUCN and ILO Convention 169) are mostly not followed, as no type or level of real participation is clarified. Consultation is only mentioned as a possibility for participation in plans (and in the draft of the new SBPA Law), but its methodology is not clear or transparent.

The categorisation systematised in this research differs from global and national views that see community consultation as a goal. We believe that it should go beyond consultation, as interventions not only impact on private or public properties but also on conservation landscapes considered as common goods (Ostrom, 2000). It is necessary to add to the analysis a more ambitious category for a real participation of local communities in decision-making in public and private PAs, because the practices have effects within these areas, in their surrounding areas and at the landscape scale. In this sense, the category of meaningful participation is added, it reinforces the necessary idea that local communities that inhabit conservation landscapes have rights and a voice and can generate agreements with the different actors that produce the space, be they public and/or private agents.

Through the analysis of international scientific literature, complemented by the results of our field research, it has been possible to identify four levels of participation in PAs (Table 1). First, there are PAs with no participation in which boundaries and borders are designed, established, and maintained. Second, there are PAs that consider an income-based inclusion model that focuses on generating productive services for local communities, e.g., ecotourism or handicrafts markets. In this conception, participation does not influence the PA boundary definition or other key decision-making. Third, other PAs use a consultation level that ranges from the consideration of needs of local communities to mechanisms of prior consultation, as considered in the ILO Convention 169. At this level, participation

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<sup>1</sup> The new Service of Biodiversity and Protected Areas (SBPA) Law.

does recognise the rights and voices of local communities and may influence territorial decision-making. Yet, the control over key decisions is in the hands of public authorities or private entities.

Finally, meaningful participation in PAs refers to participation in which local communities can exercise their territorial rights and influence critical decisions, up to the possibility of refusing the establishment of a PA. This level is an ideal scenario for participation in decision-making by communities surrounding protected areas. Based on international literature and our field research in Chile, it is mainly based on the following premise: in the world, the owners (state or private sector) of protected areas tend to make the important decisions (Brenner, 2019; Chang & Watanabe, 2019; Koy *et al.*, 2019; Lovric *et al.*, 2018; Major *et al.*, 2018; Maretti *et al.*, 2019; Mardones, 2018; Maestre-Andre *et al.*, 2018, Niedziałkowski *et al.*, 2018).

Table 1. Levels of participation in PAs

Level	Description	Concept behind
<b>No participation</b>	Areas enclosed for 'pure' conservation. Local communities are often perceived as the cause of deforestation. They are totally excluded from territorial decision-making. Territorial decision-making is top-down.	Pristine wilderness is seen as an ideal of nature; the intention of the 'reserves' is to 'reserve' the resources or the ecosystem services for future exploitation. Parks without people as a PA model.
<b>Income-based inclusion</b>	Engagement in productive activities inside PAs enclosed for 'pure' conservation. Local communities are often perceived as the cause of deforestation. They are included as labourers but not considered.	Pristine wilderness is still important, but few human interventions, e.g. reforestation or tourism. Local knowledge is often disregarded or seen as less important. Local communities are seen as poor people in need of money.
<b>Consultation</b>	Local communities' knowledge and needs are important; hence they are invited to express opinions and their will for territorial activities. However, the main control over territory is still outside their hands.	The territorial rights of local inhabitants are considered important, and their needs and views on nature are considered. However, the major territorial decisions are not made by them, but by a powerful state or private and often extraterritorial actors.
<b>Meaningful participation</b>	Local communities can exercise their territorial rights and influence territorial decisions with some degree of control, from negotiating to having the full decisions and rights to decision-making.	Relational human-nature values are recognised, and territorial rights of local people are respected. Local actors have sufficient power to control decisions around territory. Autonomy becomes central.

Source: own elaboration

Participation of local communities in PAs establishment and management is, in most cases, limited to conservation-related productive activities with income-based inclusion approaches, often tourism (Tseng 2020; Bello *et al.* 2016; Islam *et al.* 2017; Pacheco & Szmulewicz 2013). This way, many public and private conservation actors see the participation of local communities mainly as service providers, but not as people with individual and communal rights, voices, and roles in territorial decision-making. Meaningful participation could be related to governance processes in which local populations themselves decide about PA border delineation and access, use, appropriation, and management of spaces and resources within the bounded areas. That is still a challenge in countries like Chile, where such mechanisms rarely exist. For example, in the case of the PAs Panguipulli, neither Mapuche communities nor peasants' organisations participate in the Advisory Councils of State Protected

Wildlife Areas<sup>2</sup> [Consejos Consultivos]. On the other hand, PA planning includes large-scale tourism actors.

With this in mind, we can broadly discuss the structure and mechanisms of participation in territorial relations in Chile. Historically, the Chilean state continues to exercise a very top-down decision-making process when establishing public PAs. In practice, local community consultation is performed through the Advisory Councils; however, these instances do not necessarily represent local communities.

Currently, the constitutional rights of PA participation in Chile are granted in the Constitutional Organic Law [*Ley Organica Constitucional*] (Law No. 19,175/1992), which designates the participation of local communities in territorial decision-making through Law No. 20,500/2011 on associations and citizen participation in public management. The *Indigenous Law* (Law Nr. 19,253/1994) gave legal recognition to indigenous communities with the aim to protect their remaining lands from further expropriation<sup>3</sup>. The ILO Convention 169, ratified by the Chilean state in 2007 (Decree No. 253/2008), included the need of consultation of indigenous communities. Complementarily, Law No. 19,418/1995 about neighbourhood councils and other community organisations, permitted territorial organisations, which allow the formation of legally recognised groups of neighbours, e.g. neighbourhood councils.

Territorial land rights are regulated by the Political Constitution of the Republic of Chile of 1980. However, it was approved and promulgated under the military dictatorship headed by Augusto Pinochet, is very private-property-based and widely appoints the state as a subsidiary of private interests<sup>4</sup>. Yet, the land of indigenous people, which has a long-term history of dispossession (Bengoa, 2011; Correa, 2021; Foerster, 1996; Klubock, 2014), is framed as another form of property, with special attributions and regulated by the *indigenous law*. The law considers *Indigenous Development Areas* as an instrument of particular importance to reduce poverty in indigenous communities. However, the Chilean approach has been strongly criticised as ‘neoliberal multiculturalism’, falling short in recognising historical dispossessions (García & Mulrennan, 2020; Klubock, 2014; Pacheco *et al.*, 2019).

Within this regulatory frame, several regional and local actors and mechanisms are involved in territorial planning. At the regional level, planning tools involve the Regional Development Plans and the Regional Territorial Ordering Plans (PROT, Spanish acronym) of the Regional Governments (GORE, Spanish acronym). The Local Agenda 21 is an example of a Regional Development Plan. Besides, the Municipality Development Plans (PLADECO, Spanish acronym) are tools to organise territorial relations at the local level. All these territorial planning mechanisms emerged from consultative participation processes. Their main shortcoming was that they were not binding but merely indicative according to Constitutional Organic Law. Hence, decision-makers were able to deviate from them, also using dubious excuses. However, a recent reform to the Constitutional Organic Law (Law No. 21,074/2018), sought to decentralize functions from the central government and made the PROT binding, among other important changes. Now, the PROT can be used as a management and negotiation tool to implement local demands.

Most of the planning processes that claim to be participatory in Chile do so in a consultative manner, and their influence on decision-making is minor and indirect. A better articulation of what local communities say with decision-making could strengthen the institutionalization of participation, which requires clear mechanisms to generate formal agreements respected by communities, public and private actors.

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<sup>2</sup> “The Local Advisory Councils of State Protected Wildlife Areas [PAs] (46 in the country) are a formal instance of participation of the regional and local community in the administration of these areas initiated by CONAF from 2002 to date. They have a directive, regulations and a work plan for their improvement.” (CONAF 2020).

<sup>3</sup> While inspired in the concept of *Lof* (traditional notion of Mapuche community), the operative concept of ‘indigenous communities’ recognized in the Indigenous Law does not match it. The main difference is that state recognized communities do not need to have a traditional authority (Lonko), but instead a community president, elected among the members.

<sup>4</sup> The massive protests of 2019 led to a plebiscite in 2020 where a large majority of Chileans voted for a new constitution, which was developed and submitted to popular vote in 2022. However, Chilean majorities rejected the draft and a new draft needs to be prepared.

Besides the structure of territorial planning and ordering, the appropriation of nature in rural spaces of Chile is governed by sectoral regulations. For instance, public PAs are regulated by a set of laws and decrees, most notably the *Forest Law* (Decree-Law No. 4,363/1931), the *Logging Promotion Law* (Decree-Law No. 701/1974), the *Native Forest Law* (Law No. 20,283/2008), the *Water Code* (Decree-Law No. 1,122/1981), and the *Tourism Law* (Law No. 20,423/2010). Nonetheless, the territorial regulation of public PAs at the local level happens through Management Plans. Similarly, private companies and individuals who own forested lands, PPAs and logging companies all need to have a Management Plan approved by CONAF if they want to extract timber or cut down trees. CONAF, as the regulatory authority in this matter, may approve or reject these Management Plans and then audit their execution. Besides, the *Tourism Law* seeks to promote the tourism sector through international and national private investments in Touristic Interest Areas [*Zonas de Interés Turístico*] (ZOIT), around public PAs. To a large extent, tourists in Chile can use public PAs for trekking and hiking.

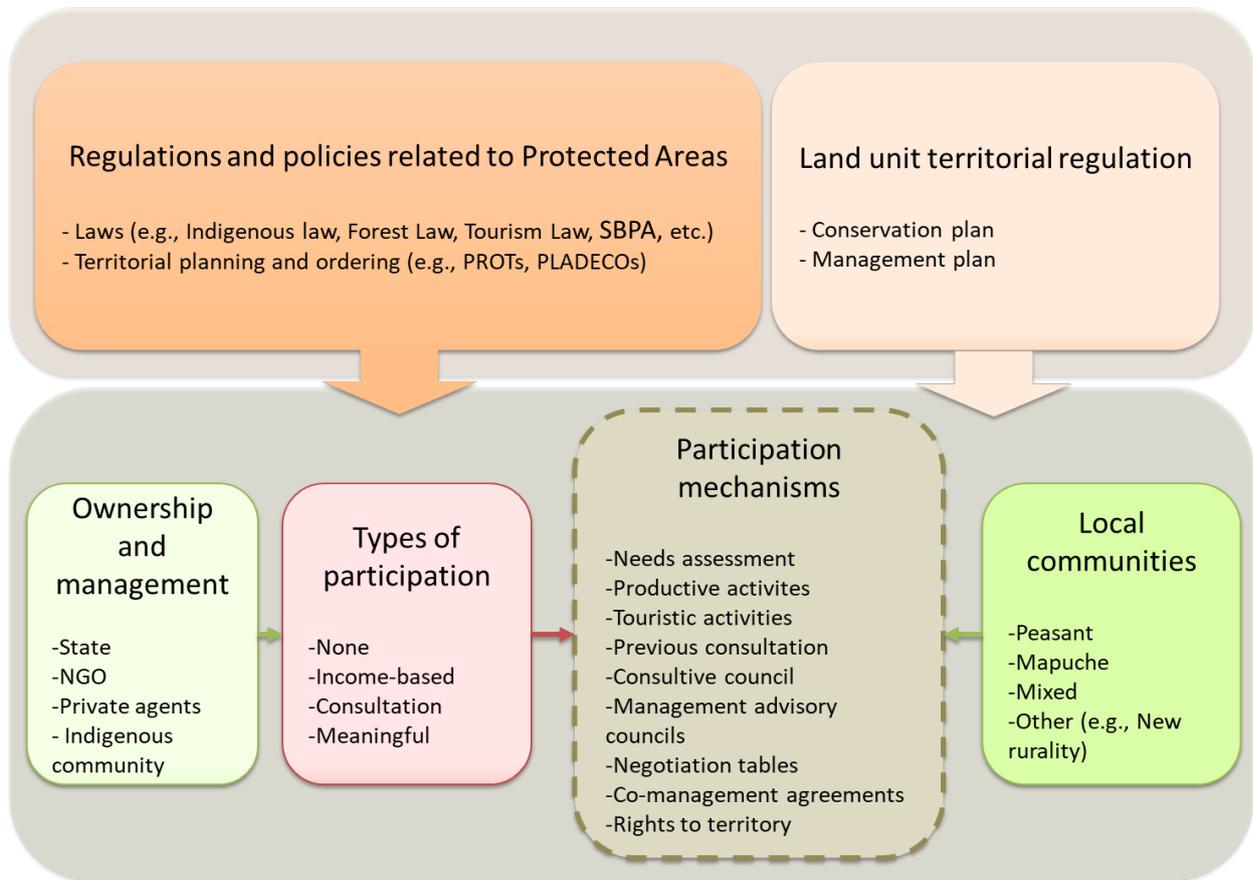
In June 2023, Chile's National Congress approved the new Service of Biodiversity and Protected Areas (SBPA) Law, which is yet to be implemented. Its design included the first massive prior consultation exercise, where it went to all registered indigenous communities and offered a series of workshops for feedback. However, the synthesis of those exercises, done at a regional level, excluded the most critical views. Under the Ministry of Environment, the new law intends to take over the responsibility for PAs management from CONAF. The law focuses on the principle of participation of citizens living in communities surrounding PAs. Its objectives include the participation of indigenous communities, considering the *Indigenous Law*, and the regulation of concessions within PAs. However, it does not mention concrete mechanisms for participation or co-management.

In southern Chile, most PAs are located in rural areas where Mapuche and peasant communities live. Many areas are former Mapuche ancestral territories with old-grown forests (Camus & Solari 2008). The Mapuche cosmovision was imbued into the forest's life cycles; thus, primary forests prevailed over a long time (Montalba & Stephens, 2014). Today, many Mapuche communities live in ongoing territorial conflicts over property and sovereignty with the Chilean state (García & Mulrennan, 2020; Klubock, 2014). This historically loaded burden makes PA co-management and other meaningful participatory experiences particularly difficult.

Some studies on PAs governance systems in Chile highlight the lack of participation in PAs' decision-making processes. Based on empirical research in the National Park Alerce Andino and Llanquihue National Reserve, both in Los Lagos Region, Mardones (2018) concludes a lack of participation mechanisms in PAs and proposes to develop a co-design approach. Similarly, Pacheco (2018), taking the cases of the Villarrica National Park (VNP) and the Mocho-Choshuenco National Reserve (MCNR), shows that Mapuche people do not participate in the PAs territorial decision-making with regard to the use of public spaces, conservation, sustainability and productive activities.

Within the borders of PAs in southern Chile, the critical decision-making is often exclusively with the PA owners or managers, as long as they comply with the PA Management Plans approved by CONAF. Together with these plans, other related plans set the strategy and measures for PAs. For example, zoning defines inner borders and subareas of PAs, detailing specific typologies of human-nature interaction for given subareas (e.g., exclusive conservation or areas for tourism). A particular zoning concept is the buffer zone, which includes an external layer or second border in the surrounding areas of PAs, often including places where local communities live. Below, Figure 1 captures the logic of participation processes in PAs in southern Chile.

Figure 1. Different forms of participation in PAs in southern Chile



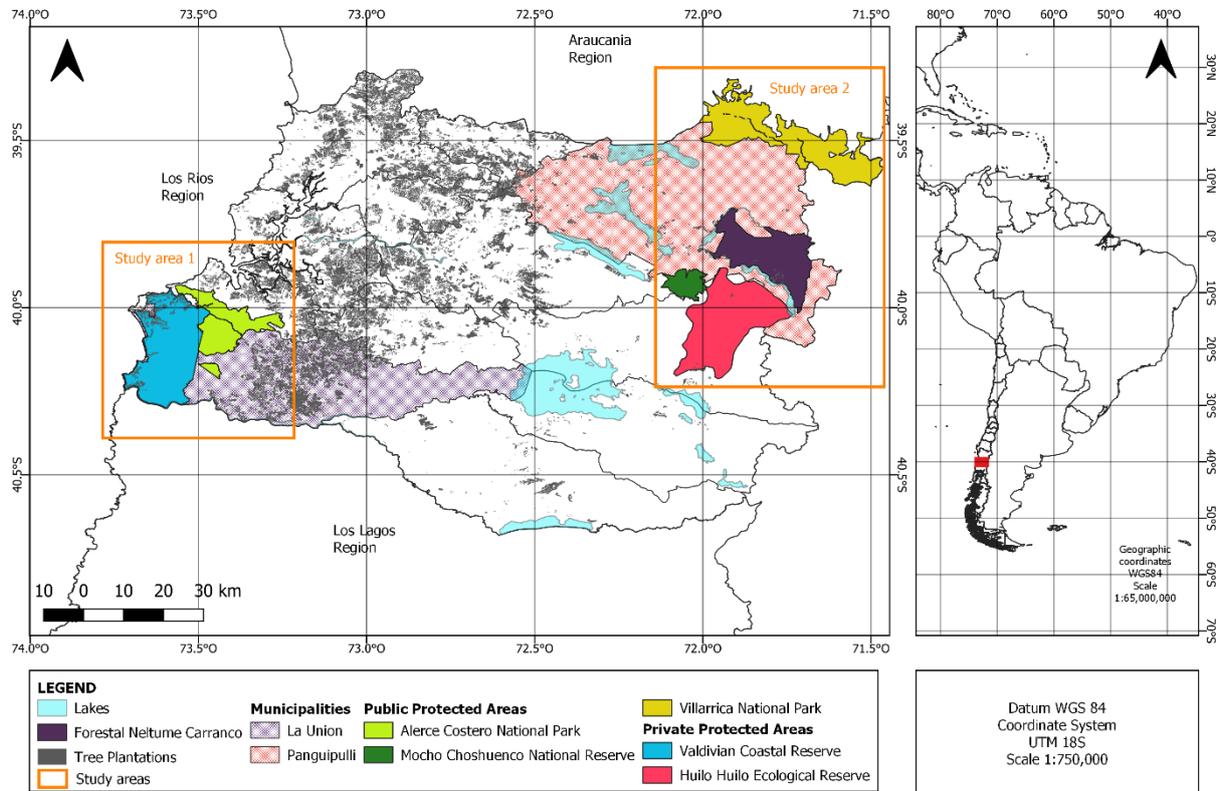
Source: own elaboration

### 3 Methodology

We conducted a comparative analysis to explore the participation of Mapuche and peasant communities in the establishment and management of five PAs in the Region of Los Ríos in southern Chile. The paper combines empirical findings from two PhD research projects with intensive literature review. The field research of the first PhD project (Pacheco, 2021) was conducted between 2014 and 2019 in Panguipulli (localities of Pucura, Challupen, Coñaripe, Liquiñe, Lago Neltume and Punahue) in the Andean Mountain Range (Figure 1, Study Area 2). The study focussed on public PAs, VNP and MCNR (both managed by CONAF), and the Private PA (PPA) Huilo-Huilo Biological Reserve (HHR). The second study (Mora-Motta, forthcoming) was conducted between 2016 and 2017 in La Unión (localities of Pilpilcahuín, Putraro, Mashue, Llancacura, Las Mellizas, Huillinco, Llaiquito and La Florida) in the coastal mountain range (Figure 1, Study Area 1). It focussed on the public PA Coastal Alerce National Park (CANP) (managed by CONAF) and the PPA Valdivian Coastal Reserve (VCR).

Both studies used participatory action research frameworks and included ethnographic methods (Mora-Motta, Stellmacher, & Barrera, 2022; Pacheco Habert, 2021), following well-stated notions of engagement through participatory action research (Fals Borda, 2014; Kindon, 2009; Villasante, 2007). The studies followed previous research on sustainability in PAs (Kelboro & Stellmacher, 2015; Mora-Motta *et al.*, 2020; Stellmacher, 2015) and were informed by territorial approaches to sustainability and conservation of natural and cultural heritage centred on local communities (Ther, 2002, 2006). The studies were conducted together with Mapuche and peasant communities living in the PAs' surroundings. A mix of workshops, field notes, interviews, participatory observation, and engagement in communal meetings and activities were used while considering PAs management plans and other related reports and news. Together, the researchers conducted 100 interviews with Mapuche people, peasants, state officials, researchers, and NGO representatives. 21 participatory workshops and meetings were conducted with different groups within Mapuche and peasant communities. These methods inquired about various topics related to the territorial dynamics of nature appropriation, space use, relation with forests, forms of participation, types of organisations, effects on well-being, livelihoods, and productive characterisation, among others.

Figure 1. Study areas in Los Ríos Region, southern Chile



Source: own elaboration

## 4 Struggles around nature and the appropriation of space and territory in Los Ríos

Los Ríos is a relatively new region in southern Chile. It was separated from the Region of Los Lagos in 2007. The region still harbours large tracks of native forests, but extensive deforestation occurred over centuries (Otero, 2006). Indigenous Mapuche and mestizo peasant communities largely inhabit the rural areas of Los Ríos.

### 4.1 Protected areas in Panguipulli

The first PAs in nowadays Los Ríos were the Villarrica National Park (VNP) and the National Park Puyehue. Both were inaugurated in 1940 and 1941, respectively, to preserve native forests. With the creation of the VNP in 1940, the first regulations to prohibit the logging of native forests appeared. After Pinochet's military dictatorship (1973-1990), the return to democracy increased the number of PAs, particularly PPAs, in nowadays Los Ríos. At the same time, the issue of participation became more relevant in public and scientific discussions.

Active volcanoes dominate the Andean Mountain range around Panguipulli. The main argument for the establishment of PAs was to preserve the last Araucaria forests. Accordingly, VNP (63,000 hectares) and MCNR (7,537 hectares) were founded as public PAs in 1940 and 1994, respectively. The PPA Huilo-Huilo Biological Reserve (HHBR) (100,000 hectares) was created in 1999. It is owned by the entrepreneur Victor Petermann, a mining engineer. All PAs in the area are located on ancestral Mapuche territories.

In the case of the VNP, 18 Mapuche and peasant communities live in the buffer zone of the PA, demarcating a transition area with particular use restrictions outside the PA. The Mapuche call the area of the VNP the "*Peweñentu*", the place of the "*gñen*" (vital energy) and "*pewen*" (araucaria forest) in *Mapudungún* language. The first concept points to the spiritual human-nature relationship manifested in volcanoes, forests, rivers, and lakes. The second points to the harvest of the araucaria fruit, which is part of the Mapuche diet.

According to Klubock (2014), in a hidden agenda, the establishment of these PAs in southern Chile were part of approaches of the Chilean state to exercise control and authority in this frontier region, given that landowners or landless squatters had appropriated many of the 'public' forest areas. From the establishment of the VNP onwards, the interaction between state agencies and the Mapuche communities has been historically characterised by tensions and conflicts. Mapuche people used to harvest Araucaria pine nuts (*piñoneadas*) freely within the nowadays park. In the past, they installed "*sayel*" (refuges) for that activity. However, since 1970, they have been strictly forbidden access to this PA, when CONAF started to control and prohibit the "*sayel*".

In the case of the Mocho Choshuenco National Reserve (MCNR), the Mapuche community "Manuel Curilef de Punahue" owns the lands surrounding the PA. However, there has been no participation in the PA conservation and tourism plans. In the latter case, for example, tourism trails cross Mapuche property without their prior and informed consent. The Mapuche lands are adjacent to HHBR and Fundo Huilo-Huilo (possessed by the Luksic family, owner of one of the largest companies in Chile). Mapuche claim these private properties as part of their ancestral territory. In December 2020, the Mapuche community "Manuel Curilef de Punahue" filed a lawsuit to gain lands occupied by the Fundo Huilo-Huilo.

The state actors in this territorial conflict are mainly the Ministry of National Goods, the Ministry of Agriculture through CONAF and the Subsecretary of Tourism. The Subsecretary of Tourism has designed policies for the touristic use of the VNP and MCNR without the participation of Mapuche and

peasant communities. This is documented in the related PA conservation and tourism plans (CONAF 2013a; 2013b).

The VNP has been prioritised and promoted by the Subsecretary of Tourism to attract private investments through the tourism law's concession system. Some national and international companies showed interest in investing in touristic infrastructure in the VNP at the foot of the Villarrica Volcano, with high-standard hotels and ski resorts. Most Mapuche communities reject these forms of tourism through protests and legal demands. In the interviews and FGDs, Mapuche people regularly mentioned that they are not against development and tourism *per se* but rather against extractive development. A Mapuche leader from Panguipulli said:

*We are rethinking the territory in parallel with the Chilean social awakening in 2019. We have not only been spectators, but we have also been fighting and claiming our territories for more than 500 years, and now there is an opportunity for a change. Our territories have been under constant pressure for decades with capitalist and extractive interventions, whether industrial, forestry, or tourism. But today, we are once again giving new meaning to the economy because it is part of the whole; we are also talking about cultural, environmental, and spiritual relations. Now we have the interventions of tourism because our territories are desired for the beauty of their landscape. At present, we are threatened by large tourist projects that want to come and settle in our territory and in Pewëñentu, as are the projects to install mountain and resort centres within the park. We base our economy on the "köme mögnen", which requires us to be good to ourselves and to the environment, in balance, being a good person, wise and respectful. (C.C., 2019)*

The HHR has a tourism value-adding strategy within the borders of the PPA. Inside the PPA, Mapuche and peasant communities can participate through employment and a handicraft workshop. While generating some income, the initiative excludes Mapuche community authorities from the important decision-making processes. Tensions and conflicts linger on given that Mapuche communities claim that the whole PPA area was once their ancestral territory.

## 4.2 Protected areas in La Unión

La Unión is situated approximately 80 km southeast of Valdivia at the Pacific Ocean. The coastal mountain range covers its western parts. The main argument for establishing PAs here was to preserve the last Alerce forests. La Unión was a Mapuche territory that was heavily disputed and part of early land appropriation by Chilean settlers in the first half of the 19th century. Over the 20th century, logging companies cut down large parts of the native Alerce forests, and - with the support of the Chilean State - replaced them with eucalyptus and pine plantations.

In 1987, the Coastal Alerce National Monument at the coastal mountain range of La Unión was declared as a PA, protecting 2,308 hectares of native forests rich in biodiversity. The PA became the CANP in 2012, adding a total area of 24,000 hectares. The CANP is managed by CONAF, which runs a collaborative conservation effort with the neighbouring PPA VCR. The VCR was founded in 2003 and is managed by the US-based NGO The Nature Conservancy (TNC). With nearly 60,000 hectares, the VCR is among the largest PPAs worldwide. TNC acquired the land for the VCR from the logging company Bosques S.A., which extracted timber (just as its predecessor Terranova S.A.) from the native forests and gradually substituted them with eucalyptus and pine plantations since the 1980s.

TNC purchased the VCR land from Bosques S.A. in a public auction, using funds from one of the compensation programmes of the large Anglo-Australian mining company BHP Billiton. TNC, in collaboration with Conservation International (CI), made use of an agreement that CI held with BHP Billiton. BHP Billiton agreed to donate USD 20,4 million to purchase and conserve the VCR. TNC purchased the land and developed a conservation and management plan. The plan included re-converting 3,500 hectares of tree plantations into forests through the plantation of nearly 2.5 million

native trees and establishing a REDD programme. In 2014, the TNC and the Chilean Center for Native Forests Foundation (FORECOS) signed a voluntary conservation servitude under which FORECOS acts as Land Trust to guarantee the VRC conservation objectives.

Over decades or even centuries, Mapuche and peasant communities have been marginalised and suffered a loss of their livelihoods and cultural practices. Today many Mapuche and peasant communities in rural La Unión live on small scattered agricultural plots squeezed between eucalyptus and pine tree plantations on one side and PAs on the other<sup>5</sup>.

Both the CANP and VCR in La Unión have management plans involving the participation of Mapuche and peasant communities living around the PAs. However, their participation is still at the consultation level. In the case of the CAMP, the participation of local communities is done, for instance, by allowing guides from Mapuche and peasant communities to take tourists through park-defined hiking paths, where they can, for example, visit the 3,500-year-old Alerce in the Mirador area. In the case of the VCR, a more detailed assessment of community needs led them, for example, to identify areas inside the PA that are sacred to the Mapuche (Delgado 2013). Both participatory processes included local communities to a certain extent, although the degree of participation is based on little income in the first case and consultive in the second. However, some people of the surrounding communities question the existence of these PAs, arguing that they are covering thousands of hectares that were once their ancestors' land.

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<sup>5</sup> This situation also occurs in other rural areas of Los Ríos (Mora-Motta *et al.*, 2020).

## 5 Comparative analysis

After this synthetic description, we now turn to the comparison. We chose five comparison categories to find similarities and differences between the selected study sites, namely: community organisation, actions for territorial re-appropriation, participation mechanisms in public PAs, participation mechanisms in private PAs, and decision-making over territory.

### 5.1 Community organisation

Panguipulli is a municipality with a long-standing history of community organisation. A crucial event in the Mapuche revindication was the historical “Parliament of Coz Coz” organised in the vicinity of Panguipulli in 1907. In this meeting, Mapuche people joined forces and discussed land-use conflicts with non-Mapuche to defend themselves from the *latifundia* usurpation (Diaz Meza, 1907). During the dictatorship (1973-1990), the political articulation and the self-organisation of the Mapuche people in Panguipulli, as elsewhere in southern Chile, was severely repressed. Since the end of the dictatorship, and increasingly since 2010, Mapuche and peasant communities in Panguipulli organise themselves and fight for their ancestral rights and territories. Organisations were re-established, or new ones were founded, such as Mapuche associations, and political groups, and productive associativity emerged through cooperatives and rural groups. Most of these organisations are focused on revitalising the Mapuche culture and developing a local solidarity economy, community-based tourism and food sovereignty. Some of them reclaim land ownership over the VNP.

In this regard, the organised Mapuche communities carried out various actions. On 15 April 2019, for example, a letter was delivered to the Committee of Ministers for Sustainability of the Government of Chile on behalf of Mapuche and peasant communities in Panguipulli, namely Trafun, Coñaripe, Tratraiko, Pucura, Challupen, Walapulli, Villarrica, Pukon, and Kurrarrewé. This document expressed the communities’ rejection of the state’s and private sector’s attempts to tender for and grant concessions for high-standard tourism infrastructure in the VNP, as these activities would have high negative socio-ecological impacts (Kona Rupu Mapu Lof 2019). The communities also presented two judicial appeals that seek to halt the bidding process called “Works for the improvement of public use zones in Villarrica National Park”. However, the demand was rejected by the Court of Appeals in October 2020, as it ruled that the communities would not be directly affected.

In La Unión, the organisation of Mapuche and peasant communities is generally weaker than in Panguipulli. Until the first half of the 20th century, Mapuche communities in nowadays La Unión were well organised; however, these organisational ties were succeeded by peasant organisations. During the agrarian reform (1964-1973), peasant organisations were stronger, but dissolved during the dictatorship. In the 1990s, the Mapuche and peasant communities living around the PAs in La Unión reorganised themselves in functional organisations that the state offered since the 1990s (*indigenous community, neighbourhood council, etc.*). Since 2010, the Mapuche and peasant communities in La Unión started building networks that pooled together the different functional organisations of various localities, for example, through cultural fairs and a tourism network. Through this, Mapuche and peasant communities in La Unión gained specific (but tiny) spaces to decide upon territorial and cultural relations.

### 5.2 Actions for territorial re-appropriation

In both case sites, Mapuche and peasant communities deploy strategies to re-appropriate their territories. They question the PA models that largely focus on a conservation enclave and high-standard tourism, and propose forms of tourism that respect local cultural values without disrupting nature. In this sense, a young Mapuche woman who leads a local cooperative in

Panguipulli mentioned: “the idea is to create a conscious tourism with [Mapuche] identity” (N.E., Panguipulli, 2017).

In the last years, Mapuche communities have organised territorial walks and cultural events to recognise PAs as ancestral spaces of spiritual relevance, identifying landmarks and reconstructing lost ancient forest refuges known as “sayel” in *Mapudungún* language. Since 2013, the Mapuche Community-Based Tourism (CBT) “*Trawun*” Route was developed to accompany that process in the buffer zones of the VNP, MCNR, and HHR in Panguipulli. The CBT “*Trawun*” Route offers different accommodation services, food and operation, and organisational support of the cooperative systems composed of Mapuche and peasant families. The families offer, for example, intercultural trails through the forests, cultural events, visits to “*rukas*” and cultural sites, fairs of local products, and horseback riding. That allowed establishing networks between different communities throughout Panguipulli.

The development of the CBT in Panguipulli has been made possible through a partnership between communities and the Center of Environmental Studies (CEAM), Austral University of Chile, Valdivia, that facilitated the building up of a body of knowledge that brings together local knowledge with scientific and technical knowledge. The participating communities have managed to establish CBT as one that is oriented towards the defence of their territory and culture, of multiversity and good living, which are part of the “*itrofil mögnen*” and “*köme mögnen*”, according to the spiritual knowledge and Mapuche language *Mapudungún*. CBT shows alternative productive forms inspired by intercultural travel, exchange, everyday life, the sense of community and coexistence (Pacheco, 2018; Skewes *et al.*, 2012). Mapuche and peasant communities evaluate CBT as an alternative to PA co-management or the creation of integrated spaces of autonomous management (Pacheco, 2018; Pacheco & Henríquez, 2016).

Meanwhile, in La Unión, communities living around PAs have organised rural activities that allow them to gain visibility outside the area. These consist of networking initiatives involving a tourism network and peasant fairs (e.g., the rosehip fair). Nonetheless, they lacked real influence over decision-making processes, as most important decisions are made by CONAF and private PA owners. Besides, one participation strategy of the PAs involved competitive funding, which generated tensions between individuals of the communities. Tensions arose between those members who received funding and those who did not. For example, the TNC created a GEF-SIRAP funding program to benefit the communities living in the buffer zone. The program funded 24 small-scale household-entrepreneurial projects in three municipalities<sup>6</sup>. The projects included horse riding, forest walks, environmental education, apiculture, traditional Mapuche cuisine, micro hydro-basin conservation and restoration. In La Unión, only five of those 24 projects were implemented (in Mashue, Las Mellizas, Llancacura, and Trumao) involving ecotouristic and conservation microscale initiatives related to tourism and nature conservation (GEF-SIRAP, 2013). Some communities (e.g., Mashue, Llancacura, and Las Mellizas) are located inside the buffer zone, while others (e.g., Pilpilcahuín and Putraro) are outside. However, members of the communities complained that they had no say in the demarcation of that border, which was designed following purely ecological criteria. After this project, no further PA initiatives were financed in rural La Unión.

However, the main difference between the cases of Panguipulli and La Unión is that in the former, communities have more robust participation and reclamation narratives, i.e., an overt strategy to claim the land under the PA’s, while in La Unión, communities do not explicitly seek to reclaim PAs land but use more indirect ways of participation. Some Mapuche and peasants in La Unión were very critical to

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<sup>6</sup> The program “Support for community management of natural resources in the buffer zone of the Valdivian Coastal Reserve” was implemented by TNC, WWF, and PNUD. It invested 300,000 USD between 2007 and 2009 into a contestable fund (GEF-SIRAP 2013). 24 projects were selected to be financed in the municipalities of La Unión, Chaihín, and Valdivia, with individual amounts between 3,500,000 CLP and 9,600,000 CLP (7,483 and 20,525 USD in 2008).

the establishment of PAs in this area. For example, a Mapuche man complained about the extraterritorial origin of the TNC (Interview, Pilpilcahuín, 2017). One peasant was upset with the fact that the TNC covers 60,000 hectares while the plots of most people in his community are rarely larger than 10 hectares (Interview, Pilpilcahuín, 2017). An important question came from a Mapuche woman (Workshop, Pilpilcahuín, 2016), who said that all the VCR and CANP lands once belonged to the Mapuche, and the indigenous titles were lost due to the historical dispossession of their people. The local dispossession that the lady referred to is captured, to a good extent, in the work of Foerster (1996), who did a systematic compilation of the centuries of historical dispossession of the Mapuche in La Unión.

The differences between Panguipulli and La Unión can be partly explained by the fact that Panguipulli, located in the montane hinterland, kept relatively isolated until the 1920s while La Unión, located right at the Pacific Ocean, was violently ‘opened’ one hundred years earlier, in early 19th century. In La Unión, most of the Mapuche land was already lost to private hands in a land rush characterised by illegality, theft, and even murder. In contrast, in Panguipulli, some elders remember doing agriculture inside the borders of the PAs as kids or recalled how their parents or grandparents made use of several places that are today within the PAs.

A second difference is the expansion of monoculture tree plantations. In La Unión, Mapuche and peasant communities are nowadays surrounded by eucalyptus and pine tree plantations owned by large logging companies that often replaced the remaining native forests. Hence, the contestation strategies in La Unión are more focused on ‘not drowning within the green desert’. In contrast, tree plantations in Panguipulli are rare and far smaller. La Unión is right within the southern Chile logging enclave, while Panguipulli is still outside.

### **5.3 Participation mechanisms in public PAs**

In Panguipulli and La Unión, formal participation mechanisms of local communities in public PAs are limited to the consultation made by CONAF. Co-management agreements with indigenous communities are current mechanisms in Chile, through direct agreements between CONAF and communities, but these are concentrated in the north of the country. Direct concession agreements for touristic use also exist in public PAs, but they are made with tourism companies.

The main challenge for meaningful participation of local communities in public PAs emerges from the liberal conception of property in Chile. Territorial decision-making is contingent on the landowner, be it the state or a private actor, it can be done within the regulatory frameworks of the state, but also through management regulations that are driven by the land owners. This concept is mirrored in the poor participation mechanisms when it comes to the establishment and management of PAs.

Most public PAs in Chile are managed by CONAF, which has the authority to decide over the modalities of participation and its enforcement mechanisms. The main instruments are Advisory Councils and co-management plans. The Advisory Council has the purpose “to make CONAF’s management transparent, to improve the administration of the areas and to support development in the territory of influence” [own translation from Spanish] (CONAF 2020). Advisory Councils in Panguipulli and La Unión are constituted by a variety of actors, such as the regional and local representation of CONAF, offices of the public sector, such as regional governments, municipalities, SEREMI’s, SERNATUR, private companies (e.g., touristic operators, or mountain clubs), and some but few representatives of local communities living around PAs. In the case of La Unión, in 2013 the joint Advisory Council of the VCR and CANP (being the first council including a private and a public PA) was launched with the GEF-SIRAP program, which sought to consolidate the conservation strategy of the VCR. The GEF-SIRAP program included workshops that assessed the needs of local communities, and some of their leaders were invited to the council, particularly from Pilpilcahuín. It remains an open question why, for example, Pilpilcahuín and Putraro were not included in the buffer zone, particularly because some members of these localities question the limited reach of their participation in the territorial decision-making.

Although these PA activities represent an advance against the previous times, consultative processes are still not binding for public PAs nor for PPAs. It is not clear what the participation rules are, i.e., who is entitled to take a seat at the councils, and the agreements reached in the councils are not obligatory to be considered in the final decisions.

In Panguipulli and La Unión, Mapuche and peasant communities still do not directly participate in PAs decision-making and governance processes. Although the Mapuche communities have international rights (e.g., ILO Convention 169), formally recognised by the Chilean State, they are excluded from participating in the important decision-making. On the other hand, in both municipalities, not all Mapuche and peasant communities and organisations are interested to participate. Some prefer to resist and to claim ancestral property by other means. The long history of dispossession, exploitation and exclusion has been systematic to the point that, in the interviews and group discussion in Panguipulli, some of the individuals expressed that they view co-management with distrust as another form of state domination. They questioned if these mechanisms are a real alternative for autonomy and control of these territories.

#### **5.4 Participation mechanisms in private PAs**

Participation mechanisms in PPAs and public PAs are different. In PPAs, the owners' intentions and objectives determine the modes of participation, and they can vary more than in public PAs. In Panguipulli, the tourism strategy of the HHR includes a high-standard hotel targeting activities such as hiking, visits to hot springs, and guided tours through the landscape. It also includes a handicraft workshop where they train and employ local inhabitants, several of whom are Mapuche. One of the most attractive pieces of craftwork is the 'fairy godmother'. The 'fairy godmother' is a fantasy creation to tell tourists that fairies appear in Huilo Huilo, and that they are the protectors of the forest. This is not real, and this fantasy creation has permeated and distorted the territorial identity about the significance of forest, so much that even tourists find this caricature comical (Pacheco *et al.*, 2019). This example shows how tourism can use local traditions and how geographical meanings and imaginaries can be installed (and changed) (Huiliñir *et al.*, 2019).

In La Unión, the NGO TNC invested significant time and resources to assist Mapuche and peasant communities living in the buffer zone of the PA. It sought to identify communities' needs through workshops and fieldwork (Delgado, 2013; Godoy, 2003; Selvo, 2013). Afterwards, it funded ecotourism projects in and around the VCR through the GEF-SIRAP program (Sanzana, Almonacid, & Mendez, 2015), including, for example, horse riding in Llanacura and a Mapuche-Ruca-Restaurant in Las Mellizas (GEF-SIRAP, 2013). It calls the attention that the participatory approach of the private VCR initiative is much stronger than the one of the public CANP. Finally, corporate social responsibility, focused on employment and training support, are inclusion mechanisms of PPAs. But their success is limited, as only few people get occasional income, and these initiatives include some and exclude other members of the communities at the same time, which is likely to produce mistrust and tensions. Although employment and training seek to improve well-being, they can become dominant mechanisms of social fragmentation, and could eventually produce cultural absorption and deterritorialization (Nates, 2011; Pacheco, 2021). In this sense, the PPAs in Panguipulli and La Unión have different approaches to participation. However, even a well-intended inclusion initiative is far from a meaningful participation of local communities in territorial decision-making.

#### **5.5 Decision-making over territory**

The two-century long historical ethno-political conflict between Mapuche communities and the Chilean state could be explained by a colonial and exploitative development model. It still mirrors the lack of participation in PAs in southern Chile. PA co-management agreements are successfully practised in PAs in northern Chile and on Easter Island, but there is no PA co-management from the region of

Araucanía to the south, in regions with a large indigenous and peasant population living around large PAs. In comparison, participation in PPAs in southern Chile tend to be stronger than participation in public PAs. In the south, public PAs have no participatory consultative mechanisms or income-based inclusion with Mapuche and peasant communities. In contrast, PPAs have income-based mechanisms focusing on employment and training, at least for some people.

In Los Ríos Region, PAs were established on very large tracts of land, many previously used by Mapuche and peasants. Until today regulations, strategic investments, and boundary-making of both public and private PAs exclude the meaningful participation of Mapuche and peasant communities. Participation in PA decision-making is still non-binding, and the vision of the responsible state agencies is far from establishing truly participative mechanisms in this direction. Decisions are often made without necessarily considering their effects on the surrounding communities and territories.

## 6 Discussion

PAs are ways of territorial management planning with the primary objective of enclosing and protecting nature. While early PAs were mainly established top-down without any participation of people living in or around the PAs, in the last decades, participation of local communities in PAs governance gained centrality. Worldwide this trend led to rethinking decision-making processes related to PA management and border-making. Southern Chile was once part of the Mapuche territory, the largest indigenous group in Chile, today comprising about 1.7 million people or about 79,8% of the entire indigenous population (INE, 2017). Since centuries, the historical tensions between Mapuche, the Chilean state and external actors such as investors or logging companies characterise the territorial decision-making in southern Chile.

Today Mapuche organisations, especially those that are part of the *Lof* (the traditional notion of the Mapuche community), are demanding ancestral and customary rights of access, use, and even the property, of PAs. They are re-signifying the processes of nature appropriation in these spaces, re-working concepts of participation and governance. Here we refer to disputed social and symbolic boundaries where differentiated forms of living and existing (i.e., differentiated ontological forms of territorial appropriation) have co-existed beyond property borders. Such disputed boundaries not only control and restrict people's movement but also legitimise which social groups can move within a bounded space, under what restrictions and how they can appropriate and use nature. PA regulations impact the everyday practices of Mapuche and peasant communities living in or around PAs in southern Chile.

Our comparative analysis clarified the problem of incipient participation processes in the region. On the one side, the participation focuses on income-related activities and less prominently on consultation with local communities. However, participation models exclude meaningful participation, e.g., over territorial decision-making. On the other side, the existing participatory mechanisms are not binding, meaning that they may legitimise PAs without significantly integrating local claims and needs in practice. In this sense, pseudo-participation also may act as a fig leaf and cover 'internal colonialism' legitimised through consultation and assistance processes (Koy *et al.*, 2019). For these reasons, some Mapuche and peasant communities are unwilling to engage in PA participation, a situation that can be found throughout the world (Chang & Watanabe, 2019; Lovric *et al.*, 2018; Maestre-Andre *et al.*, 2018).

PAs in Chile historically lack meaningful participation of local communities, especially in the South of Chile. However, in the last decades, many PAs have moved beyond non-participation, timidly exploring consultative and income-based inclusion mechanisms, while meaningful participation is still a long way off. In PPAs, participation tends to be based on income-generating activities through employment and training. In public PAs, there is a tendency towards consultative and income-based inclusion mechanisms, lacking broader success as it is only partially implemented in few cases (e.g., San Pedro de Atacama and Easter Island). Meaningful participation, therefore, seems ideal for the perception of local communities, but without much resonance among PA owners, public or private.

We have argued that PAs are bounded spaces that require defining, establishing, and maintaining borders, supported with cartographies, policies, and other regulations seeking to articulate and maintain nature conservation enclosures. The formation of PAs and their border demarcation is a boundary-making process attempting to (newly) regulate nature-people interaction. Their creation often excludes indigenous and peasant groups. PA regulations may emerge from instituting otherness-similarity patterns in enclosed spaces. However, that emergence is disputed. Considering that social boundaries are forms of sociocultural difference manifested in unequal access to resources (material and non-material) and social opportunities (Löw & Weidenhaus, 2017), and symbolic boundaries separate people into groups and generate feelings of similarity and group membership, PAs in southern Chile reflect the markedly instituted social and historical conflicts of the region.

In this sense, a three-layer identarian boundary reflects the historical conflict. The first layer consists of the marked differences within local communities with similar, overlapping, and yet differentiated identities, mainly Mapuche people (who are also peasants) and peasants (who are non-Mapuche). The second layer are tensions and conflicts with the state and the Chilean national identity: while Mapuche and peasant communities are Chilean mainly living in rural areas, they are often disregarded and excluded by city-dwellers and Chilean elites. With this historically loaded burden, some of the more radical autonomist Mapuche groups even seek an independent Mapuche territory in southern Chile. Finally, inter- or multinational actors also have a take on the local decisions. We could state to some extent that Mapuche and peasant actors are closer as opposed to the interests of extraterritorial actors.

Taking the conceptual notion of permeability of the borders that demark bounded similarities and consequentially define the strict demarcation of otherness (e.g., by social exclusion) (Lów & Weidenhaus, 2017), we could say that the social demand for participation is, in fact, a permeability mechanism attempting to modify the instituted othering. Similarly, the participation degree would affect the permeability of the membrane demarking the similarity-otherness exclusion pattern.

That symbolic order is behind an instituted social boundary, which is on turn reflected in the borders or limits of the PAs. Such limits mark an exclusionary border in which multiple layers of environmental conflict overlap, since a multi-layered exclusion occurs. The non-meaningful participatory PA frameworks leading to the exclusion of Mapuche and peasant communities create a permeable border that allows little room for involvement. While the communities have few economic opportunities, unmet historical land claims, limited access to forest resources, and lack of control over territorial decision-making impede nature appropriation through the cultural means of these groups.

Mapuche and peasant communities in southern Chile perform territorial walks, cultural ceremonies, cultural fairs, and even form tourism networks that constitute, above all, ways to challenge the instituted social boundaries and seek to gain access and control over nature appropriation. These expressions are often claims to redefine the permeability of PAs borders.

If PA borders demarcate differentiation and patterns of othering, modifying their permeability reshapes boundaries that simultaneously redefine identities. Additionally, the boundaries created by PAs have established ways to newly regulate human-nature relations within and around the enclosed areas. Nevertheless, these enclosed areas need social legitimacy. When communities claim a delimited area as their territory, they question the legitimacy under which the PAs are established. However, the extent to which they can redefine the boundaries and the permeability of their borders is a matter of power. Meaningful participation mechanisms would pave the way forward in the process of redefining PAs.

## 7. Conclusions

We analysed questions of participation in forest protected areas establishment and management in southern Chile. Our findings show that participation remains at a consultative level and is usually intended to providing information to higher/level decision-makers, mainly state agencies at different levels, NGOs, and private actors. Meaningful participation in territorial decision-making is relatively rare to find, and people who live in and around PAs – the so-called local communities - are excluded from key territorial decision-making processes. Indigenous people have legal instruments for participation guaranteed by international rights, such as the ILO Convention 169. However, in practice, the participation of indigenous people is often limited to tourism-related activities.

The lacking or weak participation of local communities in protected areas decision-making is heavily reflected in the border-making processes. The complex creation of protected areas borders, including internal zones, is associated with territorial transformation and geographical exclusion of certain people and uses. That often has a high negative impact on livelihoods. In this sense, the non-participation of so-called local communities in protected area border-making is regularly one of the underlying causes of long-term tensions and conflicts.

Meaningful participation in protected areas, one that includes the needs and the claims of so-called local communities into territorial decision-making processes (such as the rights and the actual power to access, use, appropriate, and control nature and land), is of utmost importance for the legitimacy and sustainability of this areas. It is also an active and important input for the co-design of public policies which is highly suggested to include. It could not only give a 'human face' to nature protection, but would make PAs more relevant, effective and sustainable. The state must guarantee transparent and binding ways of participation in private and public protected areas, more when protected areas are established on land that historically belongs to indigenous people who have been marginalised and excluded over generations.

Binding forms do not ensure participation. Nevertheless, they are crucial for so-called local communities to perceive that their involvement genuinely influences territorial decision-making. While they may not guarantee true participation, they do enhance transparency and inclusiveness.

In conclusion, distinguishing between various levels of participation of so-called local communities in the planning and management of protected areas enables us to clarify the mechanisms through which this unfolds and whether it truly fulfils the needs and aspirations of so-called local communities, primarily ensuring that their input holds meaningful weight in the underlying decision-making processes.

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**Photo:** Till Stellmacher (Cleared forest plantation in La Unión, Chile)

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