

Socio-Territorial Conflicts in Chile: Configuration and Politicization (2005-2014)

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Abstract

Within a context of intensifying socio-territorial conflicts in several countries, this paper analyses a database of 101 conflicts occurring in Chile between 2005 and 2014. These conflicts emerged from specific territorial problems, were scattered throughout the country, and did not involve urban centres. The evidence examined here shows significant contentious activity in non-metropolitan territories during this period. These conflicts occur in different places, arise from local problems and articulate new actors into the political game. They have had an impact on the modification of public and private investment projects and can also bring broader political consequences. The paper widens the argument that extractivism is the source of these conflicts, and suggests that politicization processes have modified what was once a Chilean historical pattern of relatively centralized conflict articulated by traditional political actors. It also identifies some venues for future research to more accurately determine the political consequences of such conflicts. *Keywords:* socio-territorial conflicts, extractivism, social movements, impact, Chile.

Resumen: Los conflictos socio-territoriales en Chile: Configuración y politización (2005-2014)

En el contexto de la intensificación de los conflictos socio-territoriales en diversos países de América Latina, se analiza un conjunto de 101 conflictos ocurridos en Chile entre 2005 y 2014. Distribuidos por todo el país y alejados de los centros urbanos, surgen en torno a diversos problemas propios de territorios específicos. La evidencia presentada muestra que en este período ha existido una importante actividad contenciosa en sectores no metropolitanos. Estos conflictos suceden en lugares diferentes, en torno a problemas de tipo local y articulan actores nuevos en el juego político. Son conflictos que han tenido incidencia en la modificación de proyectos de inversión públicos y privados y podrían dar origen también a consecuencias políticas más amplias. El trabajo amplía la discusión sobre el extractivismo como

origen de los conflictos y plantea que se advierten procesos de politización que modifican la pauta histórica del país, donde el conflicto era más centralizado y articulado por actores políticos tradicionales. Se identifican temas de investigación futura que permitan establecer de manera más precisa las consecuencias políticas de dichos conflictos. *Palabras clave:* conflictos socio-territoriales, extractivismo, movimientos sociales, impacto, Chile.

Introduction

Politics evolves in relation to social conflicts, and the forces that construct political power – expressed in various institutional and non-institutional forms – derive from such conflicts. Large-scope social mobilizations quite often give birth to new political forces, whose connection to the phenomena from which they emerged may intensify or diminish. We keep this premise in mind as we approach a phenomenon whose diversity and complexity have received scant attention until now: the widespread conflictivity related to territorial issues observed at the subnational level in Chile. In the twentieth century, Chile was known for large urban social movements and strongly institutionalized political actors (Garretón, 2000), but since the transition to democracy the country has experienced unprecedented social conflictivity (Donoso and Von Bülow, 2017; PNUD, 2015). For a long period social mobilizations were relatively few – except for the Mapuche conflict in southern Chile that followed the revival of democracy in 1990 (Oxhorn, 1994; Delamaza, 2015) – but the past decade has witnessed a proliferation of contentious mobilizations. The most visible and massive demonstrations, staged in the streets of major cities, have agitated for free education or protection of the environment, two issues that enjoy broad media coverage and social support (Donoso, 2017). Outside of large urban centres, meanwhile, other forms of collective action related to different problems of a territorial nature have emerged. Some little studied manifestations of conflictivity include opposition to industrial mining projects, resistance to the installation of power plants, and local communities' demands for provision of public services and increased access to decision-taking with respect to investment. The present work deals with these conflictive situations. It seeks to characterize them, comparatively analyse their impact on the immediate causes of their emergence and discuss some of their consequences and the extent of their power in the political sphere.

As they spread throughout the country, these socio-territorial conflicts have generated mobilizations and new forms of politicization, particularly at the local level. So far, the public debate has looked at these conflicts from a constrained perspective that treats them as isolated outbursts. The academic debate, for its part, has dealt with them mainly through case studies that have uncovered the local-level connections between different types of mobilization (Vargas, F. 2014), highlighted the relationship between extractive fish farming activities and mobilization (Floysand, Barton & Román, 2010) and questioned the links between these processes and the construction of regional identities

(Penaglia, Valenzuela & Basaure, 2016). Important as they are, these contributions refer only to specific cases and therefore do not permit a suitable national-scale quantification of this phenomenon. Our work seeks to contribute to a better understanding of political dynamics with major consequences in Chile by articulating the workings of local-level conflictivity. This leads us to question certain key aspects of the political order and the extractivist production model (Svampa, 2013; Gudynas, 2009). In addition, we aim to make it possible to compare Chile – a country long considered to be free of political conflict – with other countries in the region that have been better studied in terms of mobilizations, especially those of the Andean region (Arce, 2015; Panfichi & Coronel, 2014; UNIR, 2011; Yacoub, Duarte & Boelens, 2015).

This paper regards socio-territorial conflicts as going beyond NIMBY (not in my backyard) disputes in which, normally, specific interests prevail (Burningham, Barnett and Thrush, 2006). Socio-territorial conflicts are varied in nature and can have serious public repercussions due to the magnitude of the resources involved, the high-visibility scenarios to which the mobilizations spread, and the wide-ranging effects of conflict in the territories. The initial findings presented here have allowed us to outline an aggregate profile of socio-territorial political conflicts, including their geographical distribution, their relation to economic and productive sectors, the actions that unleash them, the actors involved and an initial estimation of their impact on public projects and policies.

Socio-territorial conflicts: A conceptual approach

The political conflicts we label as socio-territorial vary in nature. Some involve the environmental externalities of certain industrial or extractive operations; some grow out of disputes over local heritage sites, the use of natural resources or the appropriation of the profit resulting from surface or underground mining; and finally, some arise in direct opposition to State institutions and processes such as policy design modality, centralized application of public policies and limited participation in the decision-taking process. The social sciences have generally treated these as separate cases. By contrast, this paper intends to approach these different types of conflicts jointly, given that our main interest revolves around the politicization phenomena generated in conflicts that transcend their original field of action. Thus, this theoretical section shows the value as well as the limitations of an approach mostly restricted to socio-environmental problems. It also spotlights the importance of considering not only conflicts per se, but also their outcomes. This critical revision provides the foundations of the methodological framework presented in the following section. Each thematic area permits identification of variables that will later be documented for the conflicts in Chile.

Generally, the literature shows that socio-territorial conflicts in Latin America have intensified since the earliest years of the twenty-first century, and that

meanwhile the prices of both commodities and direct foreign investment have increased as demand for them rises – a pattern also observed in Chile (Haarstad and Campero, 2012, p. 89). In the case of mining, Hogenboom (2014, p. 18) points to the importance of its repoliticization and the constant and changing interaction between collective action and changes in the sector’s governance. Not all the conflicts originate in socio-environmental issues, but a large part of them do. Confirmation of this pattern in different countries, such as Peru, Bolivia (UNIR, 2011), Mexico (Melé, 2011), and Colombia (González, 2014; Ulloa and Coronado, 2016) has led to various studies and monitoring procedures.¹

Previous studies were prompted by the intensification of the development style known as “extractivism”, which has spread throughout the countries of the region, “underpinned by a boom that has raised international prices of raw materials and increased demand for consumer goods in the central countries and emerging powers” (Svampa, 2013, p. 31). This development style “generates comparative advantages made visible by economic growth, but at the same time produces new asymmetries and social, economic, environmental and politico-cultural conflicts” (Svampa, 2013, p. 31). It is worth noting that this pattern transcends differences in governments and ideological orientations: it is found in countries that adhere more or less firmly to neoliberal principles, as well as in countries that shun the neoliberal option (Humphreys & Bebbington, 2012; Haarstad & Campero, 2012; Li, 2015) and have instead developed what is known as “neextractivism” (Gudynas, 2009). Examining socio-territorial conflicts in the light of the intensification of extractivism may be relevant as a backdrop and a structural explanation for increased conflictivity. However, it is insufficient to account for the variety of conflicts and their forms of politicization without attending to two key factors: the diversity of the conflicts, and the forms in which they are structured. Both these aspects need going into to duly account for socio-territorial conflictivity.

To begin with, a focus on extractivism tends to homogenize the different conflicts, even though not all cases of intensification of extraction lead to conflict, and not all conflicts evolve in the same way. In the case of Colombia, for example, Vargas, G. (2014) shows that most conflicts between communities and mining companies do not arise in places with greater concentrations of mining activity, but in poorer locations with more serious local governance problems. At the same time, conflicts need to be differentiated in terms of their orientation. In the case of conflicts directly associated with disputes over natural resources, some are manifestations of full opposition to the introduction of mining and extractive activities; others have to do with the possibility of including local interests via negotiation of the different conditions initially set by the extractive industries; and others concern disputes over the income generated by these companies (particularly in cases in which specific territories are favoured by a royalty) (Monge et al., 2008, p. 127). Humphreys & Bebbington (2012, p. 33) draw attention to the diversity of motivations and objectives un-

derlying mobilizations and conflicts, and the varied forms of politicization from which different actors emerge. In general, conflict is not unleashed by a previously constituted set of actors with a common specific ideological matrix or orientation, but by actors that have emerged from specific conflicts and adopted different organization and protest modalities, as well as alternative proposals. Collection of information on the diversity of participating actors is crucial to determining the significance of these considerations.

Another conflict-related variable is the institutional organization of the State and the management of public policy in the territory. In this case, the conflicts derive from local demands for increased autonomy in decisions, through processes of political, administrative, and fiscal decentralization. Conflicts also arise from insufficient provision of basic services, as in cases identified by Calderón (2012), who points out that conflicts radicalize when “the State is a central player ... in the conflict, but has limited capacity to manage and resolve it” (Calderón, 2012, p. 15). When the State catalyses conflicts but lacks the capabilities needed to sort them out, the relation with extractivism is indirect: what first comes into play is the State’s capacity to manage public policy in contexts affected by an extractivist economy. For this reason, we shall also observe the participation of State actors in these conflicts.

Another type of territorial conflict involves the demands of indigenous peoples. In addition to the territorial dimension – fighting over land, defence of an indigenous territory from corporate or State action – these conflicts tend to articulate several other dimensions belonging in the classical category of “social reproduction” conflicts (Calderón, 2012) along with a dimension of assertion of cultural identity; increasingly, they also involve disputes over the resources of the territory, pressure from the extractive economy, and the economic value newly attributed to territories inhabited by indigenous peoples for centuries (Miller, 2014). The increasing importance of indigenous struggles on the continent and the generalized acknowledgement of native inhabitants’ rights in international contexts and national legislation – such as the ratification of ILO Convention 169 – have also entailed interesting “re-ethnification” processes (McPhee, 2010; Martí i Puig, 2013). Re-ethnification, underpinned by acknowledged rights, can be seen as a factor that permits the emergence of conflict, but also as the outcome of such conflict, in a reciprocal feedback dynamics (Delamaza & Flores, 2012). In this sense, politicization of the indigenous may stem from disputes over access to, and control of, the symbolic and material goods that are key to the capacity of “production” of the social, where the appropriation of profit, subjectivation models and people’s possibilities for constituting themselves in the public space are at issue (Martínez Neira, 2008, p. 82).

The political structuring of socio-territorial conflicts is another aspect worth considering that is not suitably dealt with by the extractivist approach. Quite often, local conflicts are analysed as if they were constituted by actors in the singular, which are conflated with the physical bounds of the territory. This

approach normally sets the local community (as a singular entity) against some external actor (a government project or a private company or alliances between them). However, changes in the structure of conflicts appear to have displaced the traditional political actors from the local scenarios and pluralized local actors in relations of “variable geometry”, which evolve according to the dynamics of the conflict itself. The political processing of conflicts has also undergone modification, particularly now that mediation by political parties appears to have lost momentum in all contexts. The link between social actors and political parties has been altered (Bidegain, 2015; Somma & Medel, 2017), and new mediation actors have appeared; these include internationalized networks (Bowen, Fábrega & Medel, 2012), public officials engaged in civil society activism (Abers & Von Bülow, 2011), and coalitions and alliances of actors (Birner, Sharma & Palaniswaly, 2006). Our approach, therefore, regards these conflicts as involving, in many cases, the participation of networks that frequently have formed with reference to the evolving conflict itself.

This is important because although the conflicts may be directly related to territories, quite often they are multi-level and multi-scale in nature. They may engage economic actors operating in the global market, such as transnational companies; governments and their regulatory, compensatory or redistributive policies; and networks of activists with links to local actors (Bebbington, 2007). Although these conflicts may not always produce systemic changes, they do generate friction in global economic circuits and the local/global networks underpinning them (Paredes, 2016). Thus, the structure of the conflicts goes beyond a mere “them” and “us” opposition – rather, these are cases of conflict between networks that differently articulate the actors who “belong to” the territory – inhabitants, local authorities, leaders – and the actors who “are in” the territory, such as national and foreign companies, government representatives, NGOs, activists, or international cooperation entities. Generally, the separate actors within these networks are characterized by an asymmetrical distribution of access to power and economic resources, and they are present in different ways in the territories. For this reason, the variable geometry of relations among the networks of activists, that is, between the different types of actors and their respective networks, is also a relevant object of analysis. Thus, the scenario is one where socio-territorial political conflictivity can to some extent be understood as a result of intensified extractivism, but the diversity of the conflicts and the new ways they are structured should also be considered.

Finally, it is necessary to consider the impact of these conflicts in theoretical terms. Surprisingly, this has not been much studied, probably because it has been considered the purview of other research fields, such as public policy analysis (Dupuy & Halpern, 2009). Some pioneering studies have been done, for example, McAdam & Schaffer Boudet’s (2012) analysis of the effects of mobilization on power plant projects in the United States in twenty different subnational contexts. In the case of Latin America, Silva (2015) recently stated the need for analytic study of the outcomes of mobilizations and presents a

preliminary study of national movements, such as the students' movement in Chile. Diani (2015) suggests revising the concept of social movements to incorporate the issue of their consequences. Bosi, Giugni and Uba (2016) work along similar lines, dealing with the institutional consequences of the public and biographical policies of the social movements. Previously, Giugni (2004) differentiated social mobilizations' direct, indirect and joint effects on the dynamics of public policy, linking them with political contexts. These analyses dealt mainly with large social movements oriented to a common ideology or cause.

In sum, the literature points to several axes of exploration of mobilizations, among which some novel aspects remain to be considered. Our methodological proposal intends to develop them further.

Construction of a panorama of socio-territorial political conflicts in Chile

The initial step is to determine the object of study – in this case, the dual nature of conflicts that are both territorial and politicized. The territorial character originates with a problem that affects inhabitants of a given territory who mobilize in that same territory by making claims and forming coalitions there. Meanwhile the problem also becomes politicized to an extent that its politicization overshadows the original complaint. This kind of politicization may be due to three main factors that are not necessarily mutually exclusive. First, other (national or international) actors can get involved or intervene in the conflict, bringing along their own networks, agendas and motivations, which may or may not coincide with those of the local actors. Second, the inhabitants claim may not be a demand that can be satisfied locally, as a specific conflict would be – say, one related to installations of a company or of a group of residents and the local authority – but might involve other mechanisms of the State (the judiciary, regional or sectoral authorities, etc.). Third, in its evolution the claim may spark debate about the global orientation of public policies like decentralization, environmental policy, regulation of foreign investment, and rights and regulations regarding territorial resources like mineral resources and water, as well as landownership. This paper does not consider all territorial conflicts, but only those that lead to politicization processes like those described above, which is why we speak in general of socio-territorial conflicts. Two methodological caveats have clear operational consequences:

- a) We have not considered urban conflicts or those that can be categorized as NIMBY conflicts, which, strictly speaking, lack the “outward” political dimension being considered here (Burningham et al., 2006). Conceptually, the socio-territorial category does not exclude urban conflicts, but their inclusion is empirically more complex to undertake, due to the larger number of consequential factors in urban issues. In the case of Chile, the disproport-

tionate weighting of the capital in relation to the rest of the country makes it advisable to consider urban problems in subsequent stages of research.

b) The presence of indigenous actors is considered a relevant variable in socio-territorial conflicts (see below), but our survey excludes cases where the scale of the conflict is hard to define, or where indigenous actors are not part of broader coalitions that share their goals. For example, some specific communities' mobilizations to recover land or forests are quite small in scale, but these same mobilizations may also be analytically considered as part of wider movements. The category "territory" includes very different magnitudes, not only in terms of areas of various sizes, but also depending on history, alliances, framing and the development of the conflicts themselves.² On the other hand, taking a very large region as the unit of analysis tends to obscure the specificity of concrete mobilizations. The same happens with the formation of networks of actors. For example, actors pursuing indigenous claims to lands and forests – particularly reclamations by the Mapuche (who form the majority of Chile's native people) – generally do not form territorial coalitions with other actors (Mallon, 2005; Martínez Neira, 2016). This tendency does not arise in conflicts over access to aquifers and heritage sites or territories (or over their protection from contamination), or when third-party interventions involve indigenous participation; on the contrary, these cases spur the formation of bigger coalitions with a multi-ethnic character. In other words, this study acknowledges the specificity of indigenous conflicts, especially conflicts over land that are likely to be underrepresented in the survey.

To look into conflicts occurring in non-metropolitan territories, mobilizing different local actors and transcending territorial boundaries via developmental dynamics as they become politicized, we used different primary and secondary sources to construct a corpus of conflicts. Our main source was the first survey of socio-environmental conflicts carried out by the Instituto Nacional de Derechos Humanos (INDH) for the 1990-2012 period, which registered 97 conflicts distributed in fourteen of the country's fifteen regions (INDH, 2012), and its updated version (INDH, 2015), which considers another 5 conflicts. However, the criteria used by the INDH relates more to "socio-environmental problems" – specifically problems deriving from the infringement of rights – than to conflicts per se. Not all the cases registered in this survey show evidence of contentious action by mobilized groups; some were instead motivated by vague unease about a large investment. Thus, we had to use complementary sources to carry out a case-by-case reassessment of the conflicts. We also considered the documentation published by the Observatorio Latinoamericano de Conflictos Ambientales (OLCA), compiled from interviews with activists in the different localities (OLCA, 2011). Moreover, we also used other surveys, which we vetted and complemented with information supplied by public institutions (particularly the Sistema de Evaluación de Impacto Ambiental), the

press and documentation provided by private companies and social and non-governmental organizations. The information from all these sources was later standardized for purposes of comparison.

Using the surveys, we built an initial corpus of 136 cases that were then characterized according to a set of variables, bringing the total down to 101 cases of socio-territorial conflicts for the 2005-2014 period. This number reflects the addition of some non socio-environmental cases that were not recorded in the surveys and the elimination of others that were much older or could not be considered proper conflicts. Some conflicts have ended; others are still ongoing. We chose 2005 as our starting point because of the importance of the mobilizations that year in Valdivia, motivated by the pollution produced by a pulp mill in San José de la Mariquina. There had previously been other important conflicts, for instance over hydroelectric power plants in Alto Bio Bio (Namuncura, 1999), but the case of Valdivia can be considered the inflection point because it had consequences for environmental legislation, public awareness of corporate social responsibility, and the formation of larger, more diverse social movements – later known as “citizen movements” – around environmental issues (Delamaza, 2012a). At the same time, as the INDH survey points out, 2005 saw a dramatic increase in conflicts of this type.

Once the cases to be studied were determined, we defined the variables for which we had to gather information. To do so, we considered differentiating elements – referred to in the theoretical framework – that could be observed in the socio-territorial conflicts. First of all, we determined the duration of the conflict from the first to the last manifestation of contentious acts. This allowed us to distance ourselves from both the idea that mobilizations are specific outbursts and the perspective in which mobilizations are subsumed into constant conflictivity throughout the centuries. After this, prompted by the debate on extractivism and other possible classifications relevant to the conflicts, we located each conflict within an economic sector, considering the traditional categories with the addition of “social services” and “other”. We also looked into the prevailing motivation, that is, the explicit element that generates the mobilization and continues to be valid throughout time – for example, different types of pollution, or cultural beliefs.

To examine the political structure of these mobilizations, we collected information on the participation of different types of actors in each conflict, differentiating between categories. To begin to understand the complexity of the mobilizations, we considered the numbers of local actors, extra local actors, indigenous actors, municipalities, members of Parliament, churches, and so on. Finally, our interest in the impact of the conflicts led us to research whether the cause of the conflict – usually an infrastructure or extractivist project – had been affected or modified by the mobilization.

Characterization of socio-territorial conflicts in Chile

Our theoretical framework and its operationalization into different variables structure the presentation of the information. We successively deal with the geographical distribution of conflicts, their distribution by economic sector; main causes; participation of different actors, particularly indigenous groups; and finally, the impact of conflicts on their direct cause. Chart 1 shows an overview of the total number of conflicts in Chile by region, from north to south.

The geographical distribution of conflicts shows that they have spread throughout the country, except in the O'Higgins region in the central part of Chile. A classification by economic sector reveals that most of the conflicts bear direct relation to intensive extraction of natural resources and the consequent demand for energy. Graph 1 shows the accumulation of conflicts in some sectors.

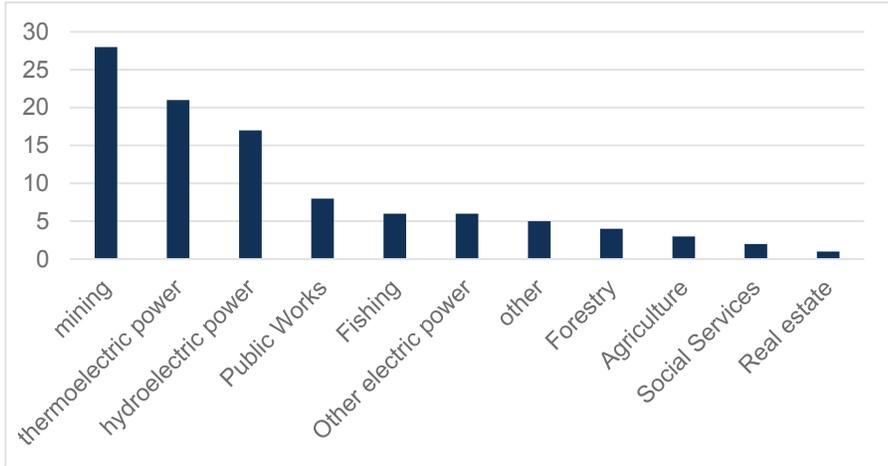
The energy sector and its various subsectors have experienced the largest number of conflicts (44), followed by the mining sector (28). These are precisely the activities most associated with the extractivist model, which highlights the relevance of this type of conflict for Chile, where rejection of this type of project is spatially well distributed. However, the geographical distribution of conflicts differs by productive sector. In the Andean municipal districts,

Chart 1. Number of conflicts by region (2005-2014)

Region	Conflicts
Arica Parinacota	6
Tarapacá	7
Antofagasta	9
Atacama	10
Coquimbo	11
Valparaíso	10
Santiago Metropolitan Region	1
O'Higgins	0
Maule	5
Bio Bio	8
Araucanía	16
Los Ríos	5
Los Lagos	8
Aysén	3
Magallanes	2
Total	101

Source: Prepared by the authors

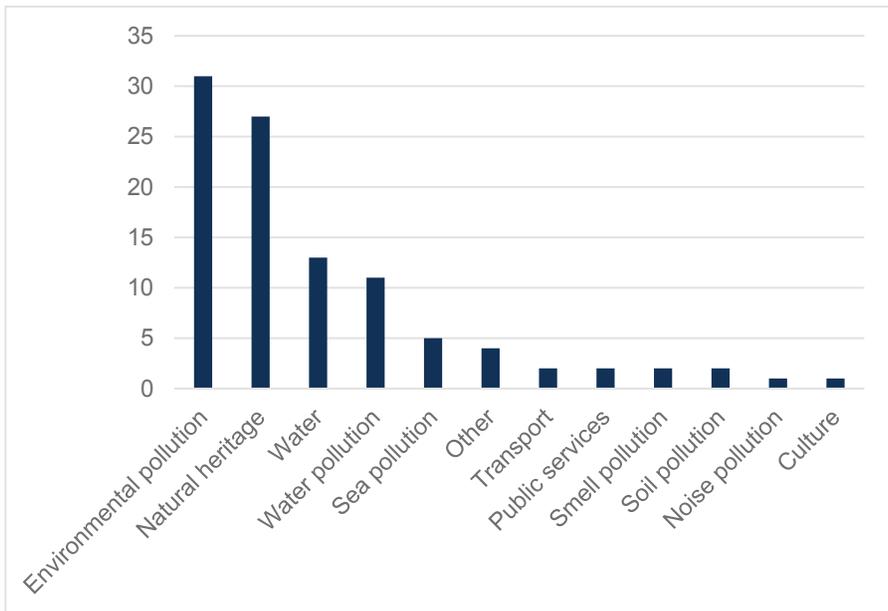
Graph 1. Conflicts by economic sector in Chile, 2005–2014



Source: Prepared by the authors

conflicts associated with mining operations are prevalent, whereas the coastal municipal districts have a higher frequency of conflicts related to thermoelectric power plants – built precisely to supply the energy required by mining works in an area lacking major hydrographic basins. Further south in the

Graph 2. Main reasons for conflict in Chile, 2005-2014



Source: Prepared by the authors

Andean districts, conflicts revolve around the exploitation of hydrographic basins for the production of energy. However, conflicts involve different economic sectors in the coastal areas. Interestingly, the production of energy based on alternative technologies has also been an object of social rejection.

Another variable for the classification of conflicts considers the reason(s) adduced by the actors, that is, the main issues that generate concern and a subsequent mobilization. Obviously, a single conflict may have many causes; this should also be a matter of analysis. But at an aggregate level it is more practical to analyse the prevailing cause of the conflict, which is the one that fuels it. The main reasons are diverse, as Graph 2 shows.

Pressure on natural resources is evident in the large number of conflicts relating to the pollution of different natural environments. In addition, some conflicts about the environment itself concern the use of water and other elements of the “natural heritage”, a recently introduced category in Chile. As a rule, local communities mobilize against actions that pollute ecosystems and generally affect their health – particularly water, soil, and environmental pollution. By contrast, local or extra-local communities undertake natural heritage actions to preserve or restore the characteristics of a resource, even if contamination events have not occurred. The resource is protected because it is considered an asset with intrinsic value for the protection of the ecosystem, scenic beauty or the local culture.³ These cases preclude mitigation measures, so demands tend to be more dichotomous. Characteristic of the repertoires used here is their promotion of transversal and interethnic groupings of different actors: the concept of “natural heritage” agglutinates the environmental and cultural concerns of the Mapuche people and facilitates cooperation between indigenous and non-indigenous actors.

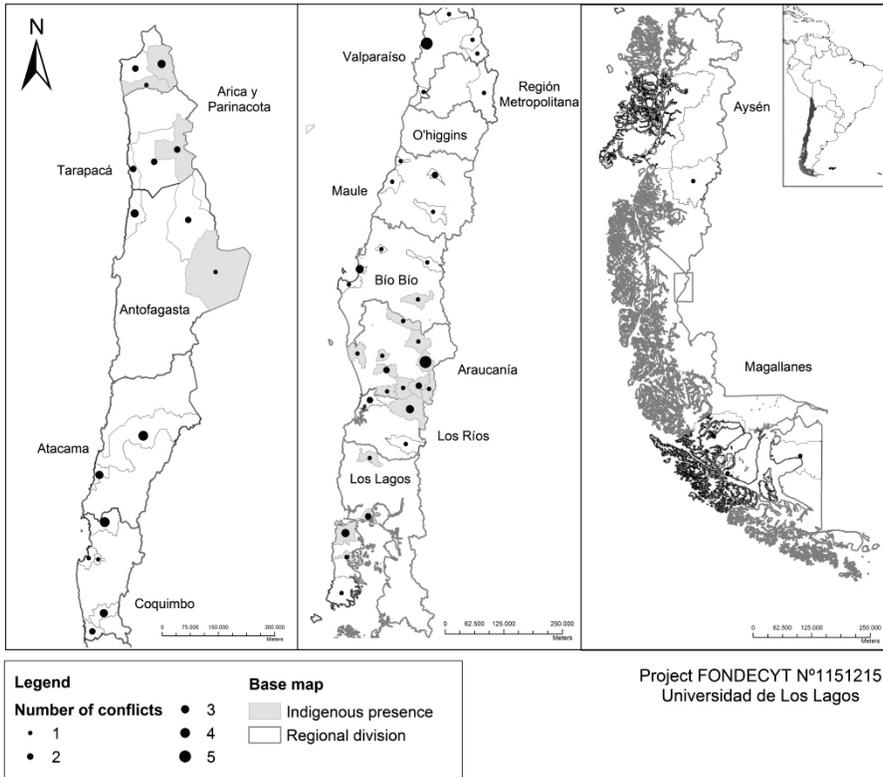
Furthermore, it is vital to consider the actors involved in these conflicts. In most cases there is no single organization, but rather an articulation of different types of actors that gather round these issues. Our survey shows that on average, conflicts involve more than four local actors. These can include traditional actors – for example, trade unions and professional associations – and other, new actors created specifically to tackle the conflict, many times in the form of a *coordinadora* (coordinating committee). Half of the cases (51) also involved extra-local actors, particularly non-governmental organizations specializing in environmental issues. This represents another form of articulation occurring at both the national and the inter-territorial level. This articulation also involves official political representatives from both within and outside the territory, especially at the municipal level. Thus, 59 conflicts involve the municipality in general as a party to the protest, and another 19 conflicts involve members of parliament. These numbers indicate that conflicts seep into the sphere of formal politics and therefore cannot simply be ascribed to co-optation, control and manipulation, or necessarily to integration or institutionalized participatory policies and mechanisms.⁴ They also show the importance of institutional actors in conflicts in Chile.

Many conflicts affect territories inhabited by another kind of actor – indigenous groups. This is relevant on at least two counts. First, indigenous groups' traditional and sustenance activities are directly related to the natural environment, and farming activity is highly sensitive to the extractivist pressure of mining and forestry, two of Chile's most important economic sectors. Second, Chile has enacted indigenous legislation designed to restore territories to native Chilean groups (Indigenous Act 19,253) and to guarantee these groups' right to be consulted about any economic activity or investment project that might affect them (Ratification of ILO Convention 169 in 2008). Thus, we have considered the different types of conflict associated with territories that have significant indigenous populations.

Map 1 shows that a significant number of conflicts have occurred in municipal districts with high indigenous presence. This is particularly evident in the Andean area inhabited by Aymara communities in Chile's northeast, where mining activities are concentrated, and in the Bio Bio, Araucanía and Los Lagos regions in the rural south-central parts of the country, which are home to the lion's share of Mapuche communities affected by the expansion of forestry (plantations and pulp mills), fish farming and the construction of hydroelectric plants. At least four indigenous communities are involved in five or more territorial conflicts. Analysis according to economic sector shows that conflicts revolving around forms of energy – especially hydroelectric power – and public works occur most frequently in the municipal districts with the largest indigenous populations.

In the initial approach to the outcomes of socio-territorial conflicts, another relevant aspect of the analysis is conflicts' impact on the progress of projects and investments. Here "impact" is used to describe a possible relation between an investment decision and the conflict generated. The conflicts are grouped into three levels of impact. The level of impact is high when the project fails to be implemented; medium when, after modifications, the project gets implemented; and finally, low when there is no evidence of significant change to the original project. Here, we are merely correlating conflict and a certain outcome. No causality is involved, though other hypotheses – rejection by the environmental authorities, economic reasons, and so on – may explain why a project has been abandoned. Companies usually resort to complex discourses to explain their reasons for cancelling a project, making it even more difficult to establish a causal relation. Such a study is beyond the scope of this paper and thus is left to future research. Our findings show a relatively high level of impact, which contradicts the idea that conflicts of this type are merely testimonial struggles against the overwhelming dynamics of neoliberal extractivism. Most of the conflicts analysed had medium (29 per cent) or high (30 per cent) impact levels, whereas a smaller group had low impact levels (16 per cent). One remaining group is still being processed. The following panorama emerges from our classification of the three levels of impact.

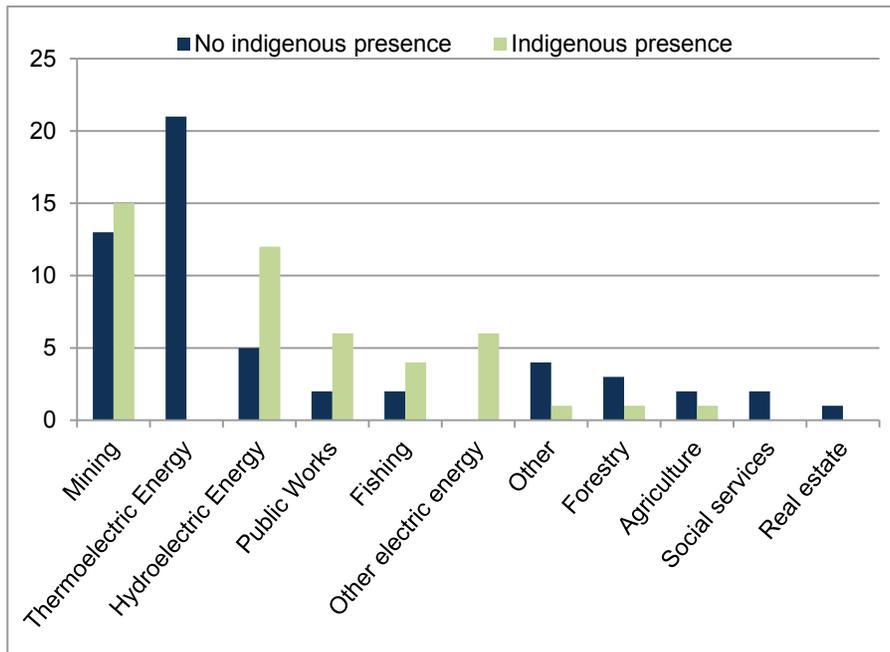
Map 1. Concentration of Conflicts in territories with high proportion of indigenous population



When we classify conflicts by economic sector, mining shows the highest level of impact, followed by the thermoelectric power sector. Projects have been cancelled or effectively modified, perhaps in relation to political conflicts they have triggered at the local level. Also, conflicts over projects in the fishery sector have a visibly high impact level, while hydroelectricity projects are equally divided into high- and low-impact projects, with a predominance of the latter. The impact level of conflicts related to “other types of energy” – wind or solar energy – is also low; conflicts involving public works are distributed among the three categories. Conflicts involving the real estate and forestry (particularly pulp) sectors have a medium impact level.

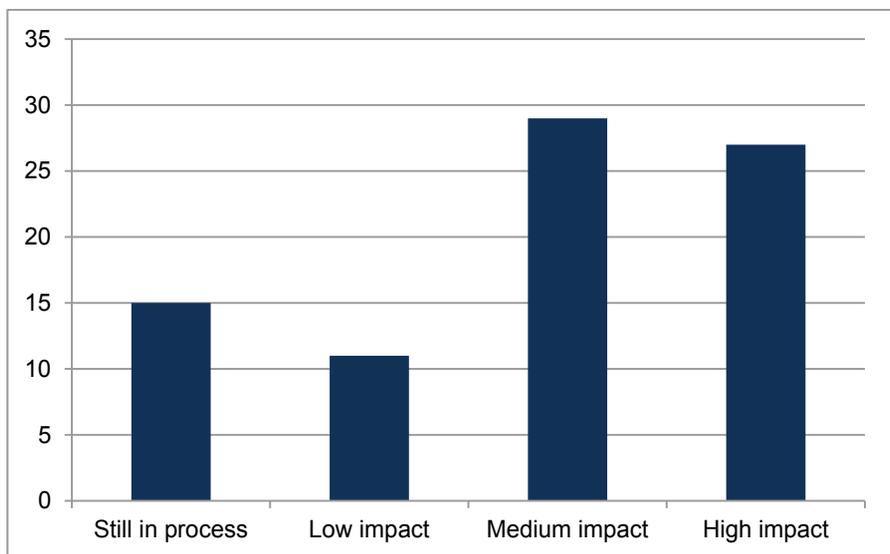
Another way to look into conflicts and their impact is to relate them to the extra-local actors involved in them. Contrary to what might be assumed, at an aggregate level it appears that the presence of extra-local actors does not correlate with the impact level. In fact, conflicts involving exclusively local actors have higher impact levels than those involving other actors, as shown in the graph below. This appears to refute the argument – proffered by some business leaders and their political representatives – that conflicts are artificially caused

Graph 3: Economic sector and indigenous presence in Chile, 2005-2014

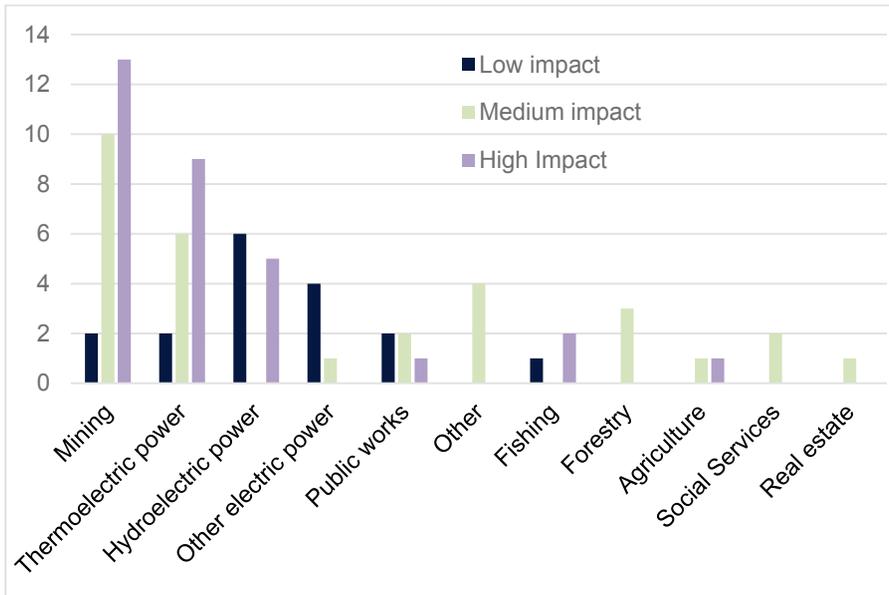


Source: Prepared by the authors

Graph 4: Level of impact of conflicts in Chile, 2005-2014



Source: Prepared by the authors

Graph 5: Number of low-, medium- and high-impact conflicts per economic sector in Chile, 2005-2014

Source: Prepared by the authors

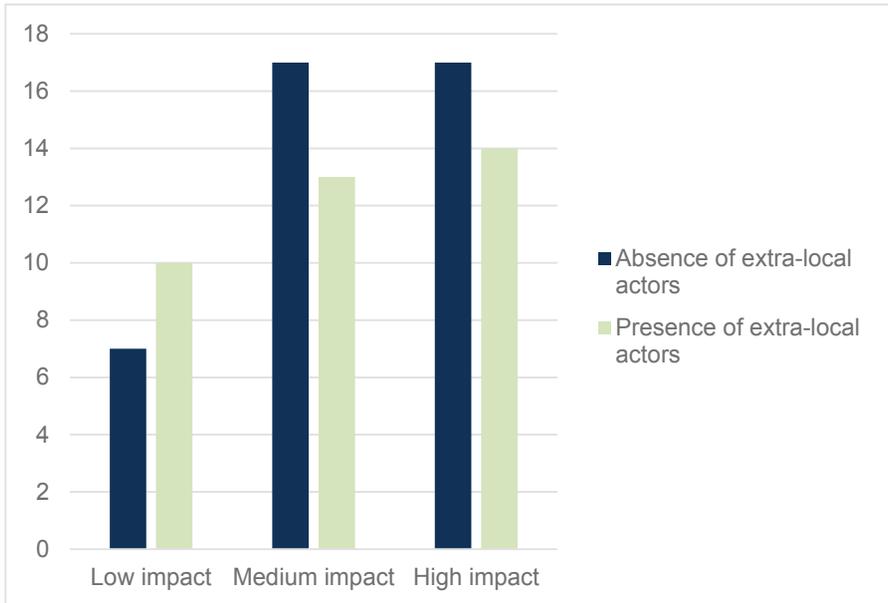
Note: The analysis does not include 23 cases that are pending.

by external activists, a position that complicates negotiation of a suitable solution with communities. At this level of analysis, no strong correlation is observed between the external actors variable and the conflict's impact. Future research would do well to explore these relations, as this initial approach hints at a very important issue: confirmation of territorial action's direct impact on public policy would reinforce the hypothesis of the emergence of new forms of politicization, suggesting major change in the traditional political administration patterns of the country (see Graph 6).

The data presented in this paper provide an initial characterization of the phenomenon, including some features of what seem to be new forms of politicization emerging from local issues and territories. The following section will discuss some elements that help to interpret this phenomenon.

Elements of interpretation and hypothesis

The emerging phenomenon of socio-territorial conflicts described above can be interpreted within the framework of the historical development of political and social conflicts in Chile. Its newness invites development of a research agenda to explore its underlying variables and probable projections in greater depth. In this context, the analysis of a specific kind of local conflict in Chile shows the

Graph 6: Impact level according to presence of extra-local actors in Chile, 2005-2014

Source: Prepared by the authors

importance of dynamics that do not correspond to Chilean society's traditional forms of mobilization before, during or after the military dictatorship. Neither do they correspond to the traditional socio-political matrix interconnecting the national popular State, the political system and the national social movements, whose main stage used to be the large cities, with large industrial complexes (Garretón, 2000; Calderón, 2012). Without confirmation of ideological unity or a political project behind these conflicts, all of them may erroneously be labelled as NIMBY. From a long-term historical perspective, however, the analysis points to a possible new cycle in Chilean politics that differentiates the current period from previous ones.

This research agenda would centre on the hypotheses that the effects of conflicts are cumulative (Silva, 2016), a claim supported by the scope of territorial mobilizations such as those in Aysén in February 2012 and in Freirina in 2013. In Aysén, a regional movement emerged when different social groups came together around the slogan "your problem is my problem". In Freirina, the odour emanating from a pig slaughtering plant triggered the mobilization of most of the community, which led the company to shut down the facility after years of tension. The scope of the sources of conflict should also be considered. For instance, in Tocopilla, in the north of the country, the population mobilized to remedy the lack of specialist doctors in the local hospital. Grievances had already accumulated after health problems were worsened by the activity of three thermoelectric plants built in the environs of the town to provide energy to mining companies operating more than 200 km away. The dearth of spe-

cialists and exacerbation of health issues gave rise to a third problem: the enormous distance and high cost of travelling to access specialized health services (Fondecyt project case files 1151215).

The data presented here also allow us to assess how socio-territorial conflicts are articulated on different scales. Further, they illuminate both the different levels of connection between actors that do not generally act together and the potential for a given conflict's escalation. Further research is needed to determine whether this escalation is triggered by the same dynamics that give rise to interventions that affect different local communities in the territory, or by the absence, locally, of the solutions these communities seek. Another factor to be investigated is the densification of collective action, which must prepare to operate not only at different levels of the public and private system, but also with diverse local and extra-local actors, with whom different agreements, issues and strategies are defined. Overall, the territorialization of conflicts implies complex articulation, requires different types of specialized knowledge, and needs to be explored more thoroughly.

The cumulative effects of conflicts and their possible escalation also raise the question of how this phenomenon of territorialized conflict relates to the institutional context in which it takes place. A mid-1990s analysis of environmental territorial conflicts observed that during Chile's long, slow return to democracy, "the usual procedure is to opt for and prevent environmental issues from giving rise to explicit disputes. Thus, the inhabitants of places that concentrate environmental impacts, especially the poorer communities, undergo a deterioration in their quality of life, under the aegis of a 'remote' political system and public administration" (Sabatini, 1994, p. 16). This situation is precisely what appears to be changing, by way of more widespread and massive conflicts that at the same time attract meaningful levels of social support. Despite the lack of a comparable database for the previous period, our survey suggests a phenomenon of great intensity and significant impact.

As for the institutional aspect, the State's ability to handle conflicts is another dimension to consider. In the Latin American context, the Chilean State is usually regarded as having a relatively large institutional capacity. From the viewpoint of our research, however, this is precisely one of its weaknesses because its centralist and unitarian tradition constrains the scope of local decisions (Floysand, Barton & Román, 2010; Penaglia, Valenzuela & Basaure, 2016). In addition, Chile is an exception in Latin America because decentralization has never been considered as part of the democratic consolidation (Angell, Lowden & Thorp, 2001). Many of the present conflicts have to do with agitation for changes in the rules of the power and decision-taking game. Sometimes, conflicts involving public services converge with socio-environmental disputes, as happened in Tocopilla; in others, such dynamics coexist but do not necessarily coincide. For example, the widely studied mobilization against the Hidroaysén hydroelectric project (Bauer, 2009; Barton, Román & Floysand, 2012; Romero, Romero & Toledo, 2009; Silva, 2016), did

not give rise to the vast social movement in the Aysén region in 2012 (Pérez, 2013).⁵

We hypothesize that a transition is taking place: conflicts originating in strictly local issues are evolving into confluences of objections to intensive extractive production patterns and decision-making mechanisms that fail to satisfactorily take the local population into account. In a recent work, Penaglia, Valenzuela & Basaure (2016) argue that not all movements seek to redefine the relations between State and society. Regardless, they are becoming increasingly politicized in their different aspects.

Conclusion

This research was inspired by concern about the paucity of attention devoted to the political transformation embodied in the multiplication of socio-territorial conflicts analysed here. In the Chilean case, the high visibility of the recent student movement has helped to alter the perception of Chile as a Latin American country whose political activity is distinctly concentrated in formal institutions. This shift has revealed a need to see social protest – disregarded since the return to democracy – as an important factor in public decision-making. However, the student movement that is capturing most of the attention threatens to obscure other, subnational social conflicts arising far from urban centres and the country's capital in particular. In this regard Chile resembles several other countries in the region.

In response, this paper proposes to revise common knowledge about social mobilizations in Chile. Defying the prevailing viewpoint, its analysis has uncovered evidence of a significant number of socio-territorial conflicts in Chile, disproving the claim that the country has yielded to neoliberalism and extractive economic models. On the contrary, Chilean society acts and mobilizes in many ways. This same evidence supports the call for a new view of the upsurge in mobilizations – specifically, a focus on the territorial dimension – that will avoid biased assessments of the Chilean case. The 101 conflicts studied here leave no doubt that some territories are affected by considerable contentious activity.

The methodology permits us to sketch a panorama in which the magnitude of the phenomenon is unquestionable. However, it also leaves open many questions whose answers require further studies. These should be conducted locally, address specific questions and entail a higher level of empirical accuracy. Our work can contribute to such case or comparative studies, as it allows cases to be situated beyond their local specificity in larger national trends. This paper is therefore also an invitation to reflect on the possible links between socio-territorial conflicts, their cumulative effects over time, and their transformative potential. Contrary to the opinion of many of the actors involved, the evidence indicates that most conflicts have a significant impact on their original cause, and sometimes on public policy in general. As for mobilizations, their medium-

and long-term cumulative effects on the country's development model and the factors that favour or hinder their success are still to be analysed.

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Notes

1. The Chilean equivalent would be the Instituto Nacional de Derechos Humanos (INDH) survey, which we discuss in the methodological section.
2. E.g., should different territorial claims in the same municipal district be considered individually – given that they involve different communities and land – or rather as a single land recovery conflict in which different communities take part? Several of the already analysed observations of conflict do not address this problem because they account for conflictive events. We propose an analysis that distinguishes the events from the conflict (which organizes and articulates the different events).
3. Svampa and Viale (2014, p. 372) refer to the argument that relates this notion of natural heritage to common goods, apart from natural resources like commodities or strategic resources that must be preserved.
4. Studies of social movements often use these terms to refer to the relationship between these movements and governments. See, e.g., the topics in the Call for Participation of the Conference “Impacts of Urban Movements on Local Governance” in 2017. <https://ecpr.eu/Events/SectionDetails.aspx?SectionID=632&EventID=96>.
5. It is worth noting that the conflict over the (aborted) construction of the Chacao Bridge in 2008, which gave rise to the Plan Chiloé, did not involve salmon farming (Delamaza, 2012b) – Chiloé’s main economic activity – even if at the time, the social and economic consequences of the ISA virus crisis that had struck salmon production were at their peak (Barton et al., 2010; Bustos-Gallardo, 2013; Ramírez et al., 2012). In May 2016, a conflict that isolated the Isla Grande de Chiloé for eighteen days appeared to amalgamate environmental issues posed by climate change and overexploitation of salmon, and social demands from various sectors of the island (Cronología del conflicto en Chiloé, proyecto Fondecyt 1151215).

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