

Forests and Public Policies in the Argentine Northern Patagonia Region—Small Producers, Capitals, and Territorial Claims



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Abstract The mountainous area in the provinces of Neuquén and Río Negro (Argentine Northern Patagonia) is extremely rich in terms of native forest cover, soils, grasslands, waters, and landscapes. Consequently, the area is highly valued for tourism and its associated activities (real estate, for example), among others. The increase of national and foreign capitals applied to these activities entails a threat for the traditional dwellers of these lands and territories: small producers who identify themselves as belonging to indigenous peoples, and those with a *criollo* origin. In 2007, National Law No. 26,331 on “Minimum Standards for the Environmental Protection of Native Forests” was enacted, as well as Provincial Laws No. 2,780 and No. 4,552 in Neuquén and Río Negro provinces, respectively. From then on, the management of forest areas has been subject to regulation by both the federal and the provincial states. This chapter examines the implications of public policies regarding nature conservation—in general—and territorial planning of native forests—in particular—in relation to the territorialities configured by the different social subjects. Furthermore, it analyzes the dynamics of increasing territorial conflicts in the forested areas of the mountain region in both provinces, as a result of the advance of different public and private ventures on lands and territories occupied by the above-mentioned small producers.

Keywords Forests · Regulations · Territories · Policies

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1 Introduction

Since November 2007, the surface of native forests in Argentina has been managed by the State—at its different levels—pursuant to the established criteria for its enrichment, restoration, conservation, use and sustainable management, as well as those of the environmental services they provide to society, based on the provisions of National Law No. 26,331 on “Minimum Standards for the Environmental Protection of Native Forests” (known as the “Forest Law”).¹ A proportion of this surface, corresponding to the northwestern region of the Andean-Patagonian forests, is located in the mountain area of the provinces of Neuquén and Río Negro (Argentine Northern Patagonia) (Fig. 1)² These lands are extremely rich, not only in terms of native forest mass but also soils, grasslands, waters, and landscapes. The traditional dwellers of these lands and territories are small producers who belong to—or who identify themselves as belonging to—indigenous peoples (in particular, the Mapuche people),³ as well as those with a *criollo* origin.⁴ National and foreign capitals have recently appropriated these lands and territories, particularly by means of consolidating the region for tourism and real estate expansion purposes (Blanco and Arias 2018; Iñigo Carrera 2019; Trpin and Rodríguez 2019; Valverde et al. 2015).

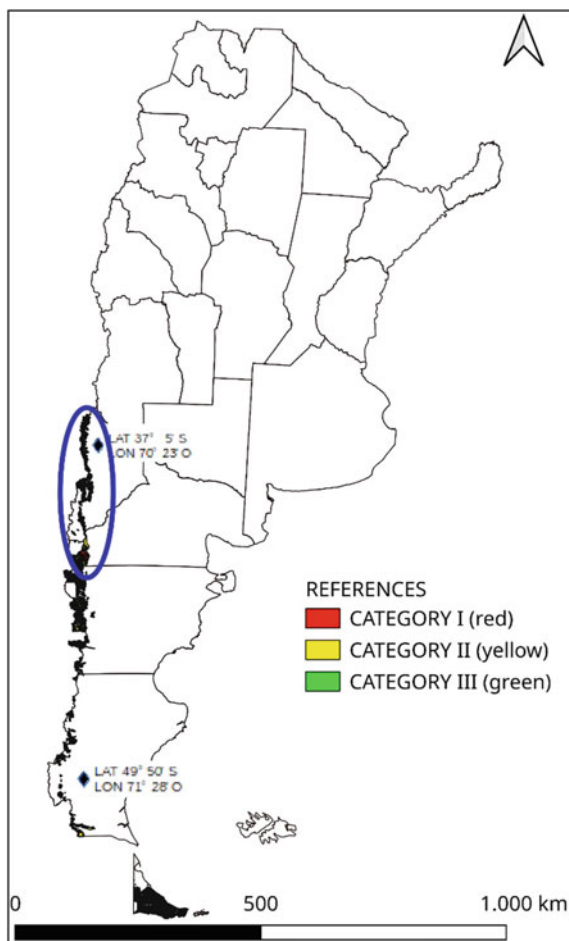
¹Current legislation considers native forests as natural forest ecosystems mainly consisting of mature native tree species, with various species of associated flora and fauna, together with the environment that surrounds them (Art. 2, National Law No. 26,331). The tangible and intangible benefits generated by the native forest ecosystems are considered to be environmental services, namely water regulation; the conservation of biodiversity, soil and water quality; fixing of greenhouse gas emissions; the contribution to landscape diversification and beauty; the defense of cultural identity (Art. 5, National Law No. 26,331).

²Patagonia is located in the southern tip of Latin America, comprising the southern territories of Chile and Argentina. In Argentina, it covers part of the provinces of Buenos Aires, La Pampa and Mendoza, and the whole of the provinces of Neuquén, Río Negro, Chubut, Santa Cruz and Tierra del Fuego, Antarctica, and the South Atlantic Islands. This work focuses on the Northern Patagonian districts, mainly Neuquén and Río Negro. The Argentine Northern Patagonia region includes two types of subregions with differentiated geomorphological, climate, hydric, and vegetation features: the one located along the Andes mountain range, with the Andean-Patagonian forest on its slopes; and the other one with highlands and wide plateaus, where the Patagonian steppe is located.

³The Mapuche are one of the indigenous peoples that existed before the creation of the Argentine nation-state, a process based on the violent incorporation of those peoples. There are numerous academic papers that conceptualize the expansive process of the national State and the policy applied to the indigenous peoples during the military conquest years (late nineteenth century) as a genocide (Delrio et al. 2010; Tamagno 2014; Trincherro 2006). A shift in the main production relations ensued, and the Mapuche inhabitants reproduced a precarious situation of land tenure which, to a great extent, remains unchanged until today, although they are increasingly organized in communities, *Lof* (collective subject based on family and land relations) and organizations based on claiming their specific ethnic identity and demanding the fulfillment of their acknowledged rights.

⁴*Criollos* are local, non-indigenous, residents of mainly European ancestry. They make up peasants communities.

Fig. 1 Native forests under the “Forest Law” in Neuquén and Río Negro, Argentina. *Source* Map made by the authors, based on data from the National Monitoring System of Native Forests of the Argentine Republic. Free software QGIS 3.12 Bucuresti. *Author* Gabriel Stecher



Our work examines the implications of public policies regarding nature conservation—in general—and territorial planning of native forests—in particular—in relation to the territorialities configured by the different social subjects. Furthermore, it analyzes the dynamics of increasing territorial conflicts in the forested areas of the mountain region of Northern Patagonia (in both provinces), as a result of the development of different public and private ventures on lands and territories occupied by small producers, on the one hand, and as a result of the lack of regulation of the producers’ ownership of those lands and territories, on the other.

For this purpose, we have structured the chapter as follows. First, we present some general principles of the “Forest Law” and the respective laws by which the provinces of Neuquén and Río Negro abide. Next, we analyze the territorialities configured by the State at its different levels, capitals and small producers

concerning the territorial planning policy for native forests and the territorial conflicts driven by these different logics, both in the province of Neuquén (Department of Los Lagos) and Río Negro (Department of Bariloche). Finally, we conclude by summarizing our approach. Our work is based on a literature review of empirical studies carried out in the area, analysis of secondary sources, participant-observation experiences, and interviews.

2 Native Forests: Legislation for Their Territorial Planning in Northern Patagonia

The surface of native forests in the provinces of Neuquén and Río Negro is managed pursuant to the provisions of National Law No. 26,331. This law was enacted in a context of intensive and extractive exploitation of natural resources, by emerging and multiplying conflicts related to this exploitation led by indigenous peoples and by different local populations (Giarracca 2006; Merlinsky 2013; Seoane 2006), and by the introduction of environmental considerations in public policies (Schmidt 2015). Unlike what happened in the Northern part of the country (in the Yungas area, Misiones rainforest, Espinal and Chaco parks), where deforestation assumed dramatic dimensions in the last two decades, Northern Patagonia was not subject to an equally high rate of deforestation resulting from the expansion of the agricultural frontier (mainly, soybean). Instead, the loss of native forests in Neuquén and Río Negro was one of the lowest in the country and was due to the occurrence of fires. Nevertheless, as the goal of protecting native forests grew to a national level, both provinces had to adhere to the terms set forth by the “Forest Law.”

Pursuant to the provisions of National Law No. 26,331, within a maximum period of one year after its enactment, each provincial jurisdiction had to carry out the Territorial Planning of Native Forests (OTBN) in its own territory, following a participatory process and the established sustainability criteria, and configuring the conservation categories based on the environmental value of the different units of native forests and the environmental services provided by them.⁵ The approval of each OTBN by law, and its certification by the National Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development (SAyDS), would allow the provinces to access the National Fund for the Enrichment and Conservation of Native Forests, as a compensation to the owners of the affected lands and to the provincial administrations for the conservation of the forests, acknowledging the environmental services they provide.

⁵ Among the established sustainability criteria, it is worth mentioning criterion No. 10: Value given by the indigenous communities to forested areas and their surroundings, and the use of their natural resources for the purpose of their survival and maintaining their culture. In the “Forest Law,” there are various references to the rights vindicated by the indigenous peoples who live or carry out activities in forested areas (Valtriani and Stecher 2019).

Thus, in November 2011, Neuquén passed its Provincial Law No. 2,780 on “Territorial Planning of Native Forests.” In July 2010, Río Negro followed suit, passing Provincial Law No. 4,552 on “Conservation and Sustainable Use of Native Forests.” In both jurisdictions, the largest amount of native forest surface was included in Category II (yellow—medium conservation value), a lower percentage in Category I (red—high conservation value), and a minimum proportion of that surface was included in Category III (green—low conservation value) (Table 1).⁶

3 Neuquén: Territorial Planning of Native Forests

In Neuquén, Provincial Law No. 2,780, passed in 2011, and its subsequent OTBN map, which covers an area of approximately 543,917 ha (Figs. 2 and 3), have sparked much debate since their enactment and provincial enforcement, which included the participation of environmental and social organizations, unions and small producers (indigenous and peasant communities). Following this process, the level of conflict and dispute between the different social subjects involved has increased, as reported by local, regional, and national media (radio, television, and printed or online newspapers).

The State’s need to respond to the interests and pressure of dominant groups linked to real estate investments has led to the enactment of regulatory decrees that go against the spirit of the law. Incidentally, they represent a breach of national, provincial, and municipal legislation—which often recovers international declarations and agreements—focused on indigenous and environmental matters, which results in the renewed exclusion and invisibility of the indigenous and peasant communities. Hence, they are denied territorial rights over forested areas of traditional use (Stecher 2013). This situation reproduces a regional development model based on tourism, with a strong extractivist imprint, that widens the social and environmental gaps (Encabo et al. 2016) and considers the landscape and its territorial multi-dimensionality as a commodity.

Although the legislation provides for the revision and update of this OTBN every five years, the local Enforcement Authority (the Forest Resources Division of the province of Neuquén) has modified the conservation categories, under the figure of “adjustments,” even to the extent of excluding areas which were contemplated in the original maps. As we have previously mentioned, these changes are mainly based on real estate development projects, generating strong controversies among the different social subjects. In 2018, the Enforcement Authority opened the participation and consultation instances, as established by law, by holding workshops in the towns located in the mountain area, thus gathering citizens, socio-environmental organizations, and the scientific-technological sector. The

⁶It should be noted that they are among the provinces with the lowest area of native forests declared.

Table 1 Total surface of native forest, divided by conservation category, according to the OTBNs of the provinces of Neuquén and Río Negro, in Argentina

| Province | Total surface (Ha) | Surface category I | | Surface category II | | Surface category III | |
|-----------|--------------------|--------------------|----|---------------------|----|----------------------|---|
| | | Ha | % | Ha | % | Ha | % |
| Neuquén | 543,917 | 192,686 | 35 | 347,672 | 64 | 3,559 | 1 |
| Río Negro | 478,900 | 181,900 | 38 | 252,700 | 53 | 44,300 | 9 |

Source Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of Argentina (MAyDS) (2017).

Author Gabriel Stecher

Ha: hectares

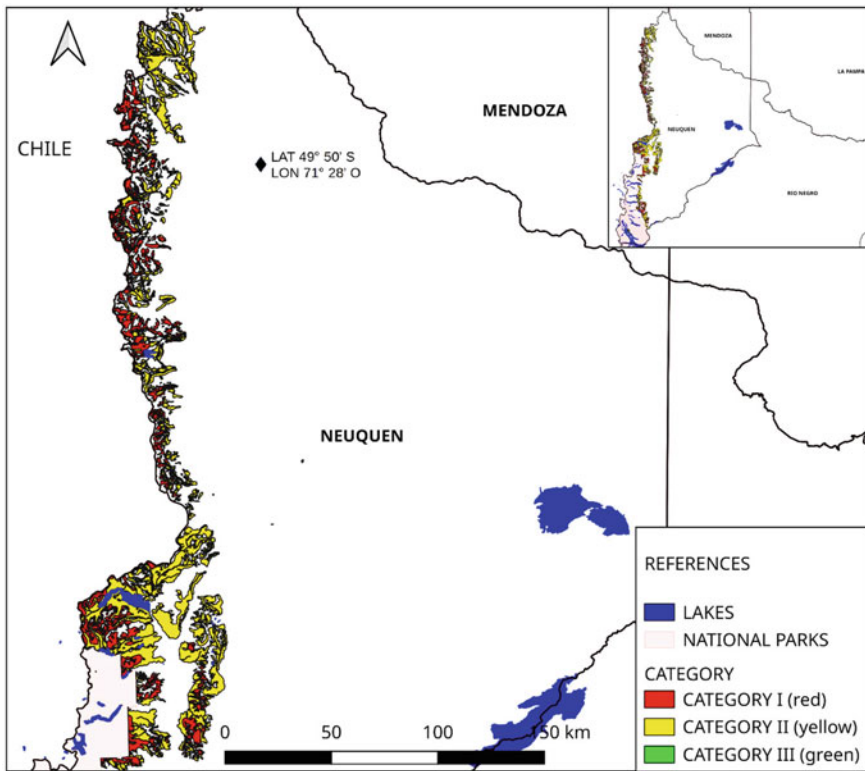


Fig. 2 Territorial Planning of Native Forests (OTBN), province of Neuquén (Northern area), Argentina. Source Map made by the authors, based on data from the National Monitoring System of Native Forests of the Argentine Republic. Free software QGIS 3.12 Bucuressti

methodological proposal was to focus on the representation and construction of new maps, making changes in the conservation categories based on the participants’ perspectives, and thus creating spaces to visualize and reveal the different perceptions on which society—both concretely and symbolically—builds its decisions

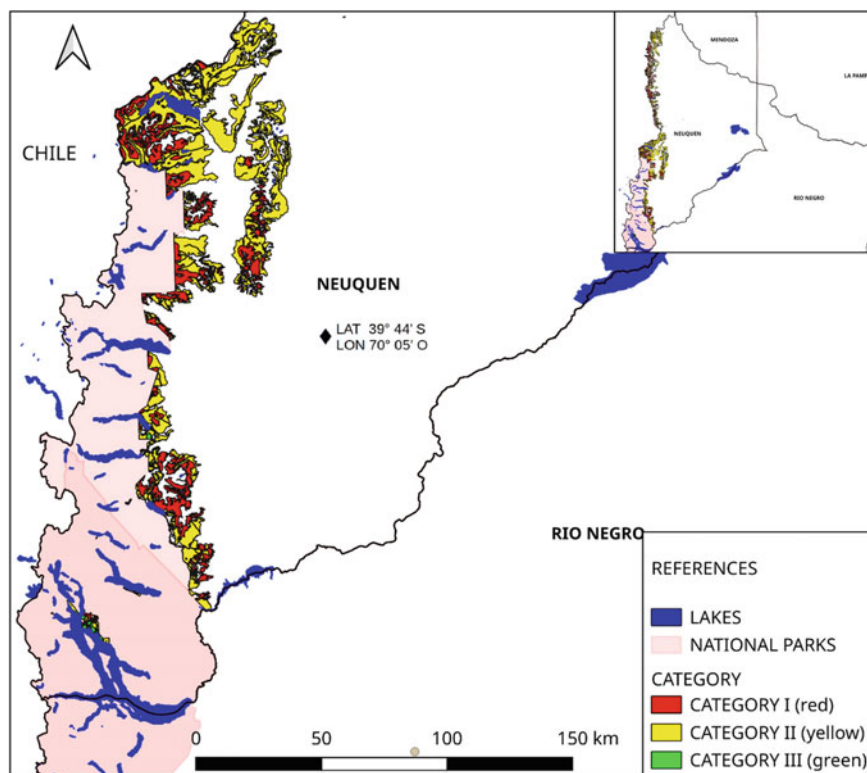


Fig. 3 Territorial Planning of Native Forests (OTBN), province of Neuquén (Southern area), Argentina. *Source* Map made by the authors, based on data from the National Monitoring System of Native Forests of the Argentine Republic. Free software QGIS 3.12 Bucuresti

about native forests as a common good (Arach and Stecher 2019). Due to the social heterogeneity of those spaces, different positions and analyses emerged—with various levels of agreement—that explicitly revealed the tension about forest conservation in the face of hegemonic development models.

A clear example of what has been described so far, also representative of other situations occurring at the provincial level—as Neuquén is characterized by an important social fabric made of indigenous and peasant communities—is the case of *Lof Paichil Antriao*. This Mapuche community is located on the slopes of the Belvedere Hill, within the 2-km municipal land surrounding the center of Villa La Angostura (Department of Los Lagos). Over the years, the size of its territory has been considerably reduced, since much of the old Plot 9 (ancestral location) is currently a luxurious residential neighborhood that encompasses important buildings used as households and for tourism purposes.

Since 2003, *Lof Paichil Antriao* has been conducting a series of mobilizations and judicial claims in search of recognition of its status as part of an indigenous

group. The provincial government, however, has not acknowledged these claims and much public debate has ensued, regarding indigenous pre-existence in a locality that was always considered as not having any indigenous peoples (García and Valverde 2007). The visibility of these groups has prompted a territorial reconfiguration, transforming the town of Villa La Angostura itself into a contested territory and, as quoted by the aforementioned authors, exacerbating the differences among various government levels, since the Federal State—through the National Parks Administration (APN) and the National Institute of Indigenous Affairs (INAI)—has acknowledged the Mapuche demands. In other words, a process of increasing conflict has started in a contested territory, where different social subjects converge, crossed by deep asymmetries of power (private capitals, the Mapuche community, the State).

In 2017, the Enforcement Authority of the Forest Law authorized opening up a road—of about 1300 m long, at an average height surpassing the 900 m benchmark—to have access to a real estate venture (“Correntoso Lake Urbanization and New Waterfront” or “Correntoso Lake Trust”) located in the area called Pichunco (Plot 9), in the upper area of the Belvedere Hill. Opening this road implied felling 1.34 ha of forests within a maximum conservation area (Category I) in the OTBN (Figs. 4 and 5).

For its part, if the urbanization of 87 ha surface were fulfilled, it would alter the Correntoso Lake basin, a territory that has traditionally belonged to the *Lof Paichil Antriao* (Stecher et al. 2018). Although the answer has been to establish an “environmental protection” area,⁷ this action was prosecuted as a crime of unlawful appropriation by the State. However, part of the local society, organized in neighborhood councils, non-governmental organizations, and socio-environmental assemblies, started not only defending the community but also getting involved in the rights guaranteed in the Forest Law (Fig. 6).

On the other hand, the actions based on interpretative intentions, carried out by the Enforcement Authority in favor of real estate stakeholders’ groups, created a context of greater social, cultural, and environmental conflict. This not only caused damage to the *Lof Paichil Antriao* but also created a perception of impunity in other local social groups. Thus, in a clear expression of joint and solidary action within the framework of the participatory instances established by National Law 26,331 to update the OTBN, the social groups managed to keep and even increase the protection categories, against a more lenient new proposal presented by the Enforcement Authority.

⁷It should be noted that private plotting will have a serious impact on biodiversity—called *ixofijmogen* in Mapuche language (*Mapuzugun*), which translates as “all the lives.” Therefore, and considering that “the Mapuche people depends exclusively on it, and we could not develop ourselves as a culture without these various elements that biodiversity offers us, such as lakes, waterfalls, streams, rivers, swamps, menukos (water sources), medicinal plants, native tree species, stones, rocks, land, fauna, biotic species, etc.” (Stecher et al. 2018), the plotting will have an equally serious impact on the social life of *Lof Paichil Antriao*.



Fig. 4 Deforestation in the area called Pichunco, Villa La Angostura, province of Neuquén, Argentina, 2018. *Source* Photograph taken by Gabriel Stecher



Fig. 5 Opening up a road in the area called Pichunco, Villa La Angostura, province of Neuquén, Argentina, 2019. *Source* Photograph taken by Gabriel Stecher



Fig. 6 Entrance to the “environmental protection” area, Villa La Angostura, province of Neuquén, Argentina. *Source* Photograph taken by Gabriel Stecher

4 Río Negro: Conservation and Sustainable Use of Native Forests

As it was previously mentioned, there are 478,900 ha of native forests managed pursuant to the provisions of Río Negro Provincial Law No. 4,552, through which Río Negro province abided by the terms established by the Forest Law. It addresses a surface located in the mountain strip to the Southwest of the province (Department of San Carlos de Bariloche). We also mentioned that according to the first OTBN conducted in the jurisdiction in 2010, 38% of the native forest area was included in Category I (red), 53% in Category II (yellow) and the remaining 9% in Category III (green) (Fig. 7).

This first zoning process—developed only by the province—was reviewed in February 2015, i.e., long after the two years established by provincial law to conduct the review had gone by, and even today such review has not been submitted for approval to the provincial Parliament. The review process, which started in February 2011, was conducted by the Enforcement Authority, the Provincial Enforcement Unit for the Protection of Native Forests (UEP-PBN), through the Advisory Council in the Andean Area, created by the Unit.⁸ The role of this Council was to advise the Forest Division of the provincial Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (MAGyP) and the provincial Secretariat of Environment

⁸For a detailed analysis of the Advisory Council’s actions on the social management of the territory, and in particular, an analysis of the actors (their interests, positions, demands) involved in the participatory process led by this consultative-participatory body, see Namiot (2018).

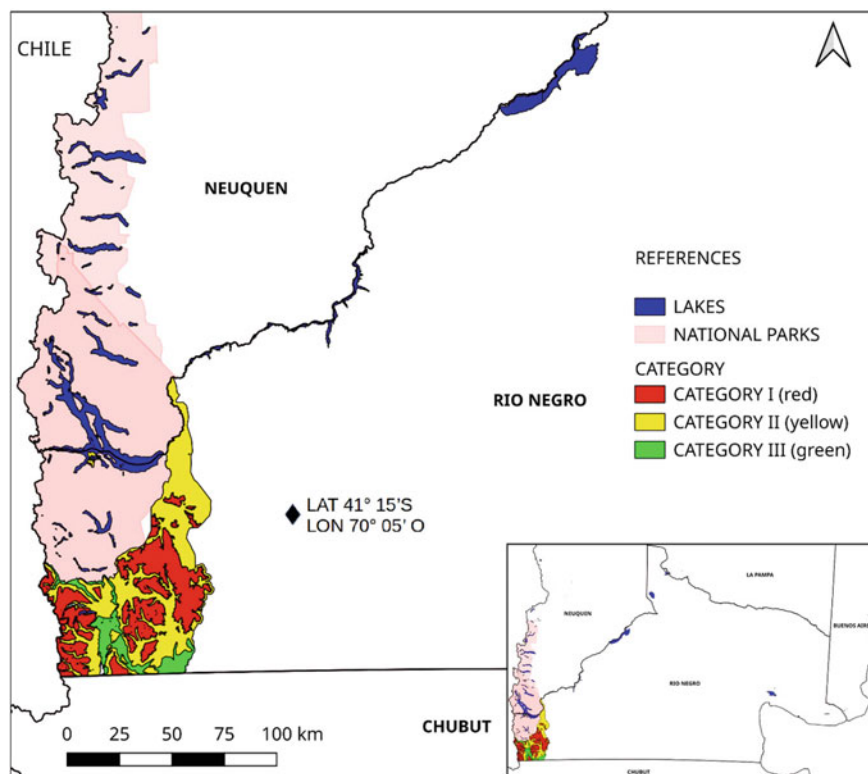


Fig. 7 Territorial Planning of Native Forests (OTBN), province of Río Negro, Argentina. *Source* Map made by the authors, based on data from the National Monitoring System of Native Forests of the Argentine Republic. Free software QGIS 3.12 Bucuresti

and Sustainable Development (SAyDS) on matters related to the effective implementation of Provincial Law 4,552 in the territory, although its judgment was not binding. The Council consists of public and private institutions interested in the conservation of native forests, and it focused on seven core areas: governmental; academic and research; intermediate non-governmental organizations; professional associations; indigenous peoples; primary producers and rural dwellers; forest service providers and related industries. Among the indigenous peoples, different Mapuche communities participated in that instance: *Huaytekas*, *Tacul*, *Huenchupan*, *Huenuleo*, *Quijada*, *Ranquehue*, *Tripay Antu*, *Follil*, *Rayen Mapu*, *Ñirihuau* (Namiot 2018).

The rezoning process under the OTBN was based on the revision of the criteria used in 2010 with proposals to modify or to include a new one. In this sense, the first OTBN did not consider all the sustainability criteria set forth in the law: the one related to biological aspects had a greater significance, while those related to the value indigenous communities attach to native forests was not taken into account

(Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of Argentina—MAyDS 2017). However, the 2015 zoning process did not include some essential criteria either, such as the value and the use given by these communities to the forested areas for the (concrete and symbolic) purpose of social (re)production of their lives. Rather, its definition mainly focused again on the biological aspects and, at most, the productive uses of those areas (UEP-PBN 2013). The main changes between the territorial zoning of native forests drafted in 2010 and the one drafted five years later were the reduction of the yellow and green categories (by 32% and 16%, respectively), in particular, and of the native forests surface (by 13%), in general (Namiot 2018).

The delay in the provincial Legislature's approval of the 2015 review resulted in a formal warning issued by the Federal Council for the Environment (COFEMA) to the governor. It also occurred simultaneously with the non-implementation of the budget allocated for the enforcement of this law. Although the province received the corresponding annual compensation through the National Fund for the Enrichment and Conservation of Native Forests, the government only implemented the percentage allocated to forest institutional strengthening, retaining the funds that had to be sent to the producers. Hence, over one hundred plans (mainly, sustainable management plans) presented by forested land owners between 2010 and 2015 for the harnessing of the forest resources (both its timber and non-timber resources) were left without the necessary approval and financing to be implemented (Rio Negro Newspaper 2018).

In line with the low participation of indigenous and peasant communities among the landowners who submitted plans for 2015 (1.3% of the total, at a national level) (Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of Argentina—MAyDS 2017), few communities—among the seven involved in the participatory process—submitted a management plan.⁹ One of them was *Las Huaytekas*, settled in the rural areas of El Foyel and Los Repollos (about 70 km from the city of San Carlos de Bariloche and 40 km from the town of El Bolsón, in the Department of Bariloche). Its territory, rich in forest species, has led both to the search for its conservation—through National Law No. 26,331 as well as through previous legislation—and to its exploitation by capitals focused on industrial logging.

Therefore, on the one hand, this community's territory is now almost entirely included within the limits of *Cipresal de las Guaitecas* Protected Natural Area (ANPCG). The area (around 4,000 ha) was created by Provincial Law No. 4,047 in 2005, to ensure the conservation of the relict species of Guaitecas cypress, mountain cypress, and larch (all of them, endangered or vulnerable species) and of the biological diversity and the ecological and natural evolutionary processes that create and/or affect this relict. The cypress area hosts activities related to the

⁹Technical difficulties faced when completing the required administrative procedures might explain the low proportion of plans implemented by indigenous communities. The "Forest Law" foresees that a part of the 30% of the fund granted to the provinces is used for technical and financial assistance to small producers (indigenous and peasants communities). However, it is unknown to what extent this was actually implemented (Aguiar et al. 2018).

material subsistence of the community (obtaining water, grazing animals, collecting mushrooms and medicinal plants). It also includes their *rewe* (spiritual and ceremonial site), where the *kamaruko* (a Mapuche ceremony) is performed. Different judicial decisions have recognized the significance of the cypress area for the reproduction of their traditional practices and identity as a people, and the community's rights over that space (Amico et al. 2014). Although the Protected Natural Area was created without prior consultation or participation and, even more so, with opposition from the community (Las Huaytekas 2009), an agreement was reached later on with the Council of Ecology and Environment (CODEMA) to implement a management plan for the cypress area. Eight years after the start of its elaboration, this plan has not been approved yet.

On the other hand, private and State capitals claimed to be interested in implementing afforestation plans, to justify the acquisition of fractions of fiscal lands—often through irregular transfers—that overlapped with the community's traditional territory. Incidentally, forestation initiatives with fast-growing exotic conifers (whether it implied clearing the native forests or not) have been promoted by the national and provincial States since the 1970s and led by private and mixed capitals (with State participation). This activity has not been highly developed: the forested area in Río Negro amounts to barely 11% of the forested area in the northwestern region of Patagonia (around 11,860 ha), a much lower figure than in Neuquén province (National Service of Agri-Food Health and Quality—SENASA 2017). However, afforestation has been pointed out by Mapuche communities and organizations as a tool used by those capitals for the appropriation of their territory (Consejo Asesor Indígena—CAI 2011).¹⁰ Thus, on the one hand, the indigenous groups that organize their production based on subsistence work find it difficult to access the necessary transportation guides for the use and/or commercialization of forest products (firewood and wood), since their occupied and/or claimed territories are not effectively recognized. On the other hand, companies focused on wood production extract these resources for their use and benefit, or they change their initial purpose of wood production and become tourism and real estate enterprises,

¹⁰In this sense, the afforestation processes carried out by the Forestry Company of Río Negro (EMFORSA) (of mixed capitals, and focused on the afforestation, industrialization, and commercialization of forest raw materials) are paradigmatic. These capitals have been involved not only in land transfers to private hands, but also in an irregular transfer. In 1999, around 289 ha of fiscal land were transferred to EMFORSA. Then, the State contributed its own land as capital. One year later, when the company was in a financial deficit situation, that parcel of land was sold—at its assessed value—to the former chairperson of the company between 1998 and 2012, who owned an adjacent parcel of land. He gained ownership only in 2001, after starting an eviction trial against an occupier of the fiscal land. That same year, he transferred the lands to Hidden Lake (a British corporation that owns 11,284 ha in the Department of Bariloche) (Iñigo Carrera 2020). Such land is part of the *Lof Palma-Villablanca* territory, a member of *Las Huaytekas* community.

within the framework of an ongoing increase of land prices since the late 1980s—with even greater intensity during the 2000s—particularly in tourist fractions of land, on the river or lake shore.¹¹

In this sense, the defense of the occupied and/or claimed territory, and the access and control of its resources—including, among others, the possibility of firewood extraction, a typical activity among indigenous and non-indigenous small producers—are the cornerstones on which *Las Huaytekas* community has based its main political actions for the last eight years (land recoveries, installing a gate to prevent entry to the territory, festivals, peaceful occupation of provincially-managed buildings, celebration of *kamarucos*, legal appeals). These actions have gained visibility on both the provincial and the national levels.¹²

5 Final Remarks

Throughout our work we presented general principles set forth by National Law No. 26,331 on “Minimum Standards for the Environmental Protection of Native Forests” (known as the “Forest Law”) and the respective laws that Neuquén and Río Negro provinces abided by. We then analyzed the territorialities configured by the State, the capitals and small producers in relation to the territorial planning of native forests—in particular—and the conservation of nature—in general—as well as the territorial conflicts sparked by these different logics, both in the departments of Los Lagos (Neuquén) and Bariloche (Río Negro).

These conflicts stem from the development of different public and private ventures on the lands and territories occupied by the small producers who belong to—or identify themselves as belonging to—the indigenous peoples, as well as those with *criollo* origin. Thus, public policy regarding the definition of territorial planning of native forests is pressed between the protection and conservation of natural resources, on the one hand, and the valuation of industrial capitals applied to different productive activities, including tourism and forestry, on the other. It is a tension that is contained in it but also transcends it, and that emerges in the form of the above-mentioned conflicts. In other words, in analyzing the implications of this public policy in relation to the territorialities configured by the different social

¹¹One of the reasons given by the then Deputy Secretary of Forest Resources of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries of the province—when submitting his resignation in 2014—for the delay in submitting the new OTBN, established for 2012, was the dispute about the zoning classification as Category III (green) or Category II (yellow) of the land parcels included in the Cerro Perito Moreno Comprehensive Development Project (Agencia Digital de Noticias 2014). This project is a tourism and real estate development one, around 25 km away from El Bolsón, located within different nature conservation areas, which entailed the development of a ski center and a tourist village at the base of the hill (Iñigo Carrera 2019).

¹²This is common to other communities throughout Patagonia (Briones and Ramos 2020; Schiaffini 2019; Tozzini 2014; among others).

subjects, we must reconsider the question about the relationship between nature conservation and the (re)creation of the necessary conditions for capital accumulation, through the dispossession of land and natural resources, the exclusion of local populations, and the promotion of nature-based tourism, among other mechanisms. Although at first sight it may seem contradictory, the link between these aspects is not necessarily obvious or immediately perceived.

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