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Sacrifice Zones and Socio-environmental Recovery in Chile: Failures and opportunities of the environmental policy

Alexander Panez Pinto [I]
Paola Bolados García [II]
Luis Espinoza Almonacid [III]
Bárbara Jerez Henríquez [IV]

Abstract: In this article we analyze the Social and Environmental Recovery Plans implemented by the State of Chile in the communes called sacrifice zones. From the contributions of environmental justice and the debates regarding participation and governance that this policy involves, we account for the contradictions and difficulties for the transformation of territories damaged by the intensification of extractivist activities, mainly mining-energy. We conclude by showing how these limitations and failures of state environmental policy are related to the dissociation of the environmental and social, -through the undervaluation of the latter-; the instrumental understanding of participation as a techno-bureaucratic tool for state purposes; and the tensions generated by a neoliberal environmental governance model. Finally, we propose the need to think about the concept of sacrifice zone linked to socio-environmental recovery as a proposal from the territories for the transition towards recovery zones.

Keywords: Environmental and Social Recovery; Sacrifice Zones; Chile; Environmental Governance; Communities.

[I] *Department of Social Sciences, University of Bio-Bio. Concepción, Bio-Bio Region, Chile.*

[II] *Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Autonomous University of Chile. Santiago Metropolitan Region, Chile.*

[III] *PhD student, Gino Germani Research Institute, University of Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, Argentina.*

[IV] *Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Sociology, University of Concepción, Concepción, Bio-Bio Region, Chile.*

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1. Introduction

The historical trajectory of development models in Latin America has been based on the deepening of the extractivist matrix. In Chile, this matrix has generated a concentration of contamination and socio-environmental degradation in numerous territories, conceptualized by the environmental justice movement as "sacrifice zones". In the last decade, the Chilean State has designed Environmental and Social Recovery Plans as spaces for environmental governance with public, private and civil society actors to implement actions in the three bays most environmentally degraded by extractive activities.

Throughout the different phases of economic accumulation in Latin America, both progressive and neoliberal governments have given full continuity to the consolidation of extractivist economic chains. In the case of Chile, the historical accumulation of extractivism has generated extreme socioenvironmental degradation centered on those territories where the installation of mega-complexes associated with mining-energy, agro-industrial and forestry activities have been destined, whose local populations and ecosystems have been exposed to accumulated and systematic socioenvironmental damage, which has increased the debate on their conformation as "sacrifice zones".

In Chile, 6 communes have been officially identified as sacrifice zones, in which thermoelectric, mining, chemical, oil, and forestry companies are concentrated. Of these, in the most degraded communes such as Quintero-Puchuncaví, Coronel and Huasco, a Social and Environmental Recovery Plan of the Ministry of the Environment began to be implemented since 2014, to contribute to environmentally recover the territory and improve the quality of life of the inhabitants (ME 2018).

This study focuses on the implementation experience of the Environmental and Social Recovery Plan (PRAS) by the Environmental and Social Recovery Council (CRAS), as a space in which actors from the State, private sector and civil society converge and whose function is to monitor the PRAS at the local level. The research was conducted through a case study of the 3 territories where the PRAS and CRAS are implemented, taking as a time frame the years 2014-2022. For this purpose, we applied interviews with representatives of companies, communities and the State that participate in the CRAS councils. We focused the analysis on the conceptions surrounding the PRAS, the perspectives of the actors involved with respect to social and environmental recovery, and the degree of importance acquired by the social and environmental dimensions in the implementation of these plans.

2. Neoliberal protected democracy and environmental institutionality in Chile

In Chile, an agreed exit from the dictatorship was designed under the idea of "protected democracy" between 1988-1990. This model, despite allowing an electoral democracy, the establishment of civil and political liberties; "glorifies the predominance of the right to property over all other rights and guarantees economic freedom over all

other freedoms" (GAUDICHAUD, 2015, p.32). A period of "correction" and at the same time legitimization of neoliberalism in Chile is inaugurated.

In this context, Law 19,300 on General Bases of the Environment was enacted in 1994, marking the milestone of the creation of an environmental institutional framework. This law created the environmental impact assessment system for investment projects and the National Commission of the Environment, whose function was to coordinate the State's environmental policy among the various ministries. Although Law 19,300 recognized citizen participation as part of the environmental institutional framework and states in Article 4 that it is a state duty to facilitate it, from the beginning this participation has had serious limitations.

After this law, a growing territorial conflict developed in Chile, where different communities opposed extractive projects authorized and supported by the environmental institutions built in the post-dictatorship period (Pangue-Ralco dams, Pascua-Lama mining project, CELCO cellulose pollution in Cruces River, Hidroaysén project, to give emblematic examples). These conflicts highlighted the contradictions of environmental policy and pressured the State to take more forceful measures to deal with the phenomena of pollution and territorial dispossession. Simultaneously, Chile's integration into the OECD in 2010 also pressured for the modification of the institutional framework and environmental programs aimed at responding to the growing number of complaints and socioenvironmental conflicts.

The State would partially respond to these demands through a "new environmental institutional framework" in 2010, creating a more complex structure in environmental matters that would differentiate functions and give greater powers to state agencies. Thus, four major entities were established: Environmental Courts, the Superintendency of the Environment, the Environmental Evaluation Service (SEA) and the Ministry of the Environment. Despite the promises of transparency and democratization behind this new institutional framework, the current structure is based on preconstituted agendas, where the country's current development model, the appropriation of natural resources or the scope of a dignified life free of pollution, among others, are not discussed. The environmental institutionality seeks to absorb conflicts through a bureaucratic process achieving legitimacy for extractive investment projects (PELFINI & MENA, 2017).

Faced with the national context of conflict, in 2014 a Social and Environmental Recovery Policy was implemented by the state through the Ministry of Environment as part of Michelle Bachelet's Government Plan (2014-2018) in the 3 most environmentally degraded bays by extractive activities (Huasco, Quintero-Puchuncaví and Coronel), which had continuity in the second government of Sebastián Piñera (2018-2022). These governments, as well as the previous ones, do not explicitly recognize the existence of sacrifice zones in the country, but refer to speak of "Environmentally Vulnerable Territories". The Environmental and Social Recovery Plans (PRAS) declare as an objective to environmentally recover the territory and improve the quality of life of the inhabitants of the commune by identifying, through a widely participatory process, the main social and environmental problems, proposing solution options that turn it, in the medium

and long term, into an area that shows that harmonious coexistence between industrial activities, care for the environment and a good quality of life is possible (ME, 2018, p22).

This is a multisectoral intervention strategy with participatory components (with different degrees of progress depending on the territory) that sets recovery objectives and measures to solve the socioenvironmental problems of the three selected territories. These plans were accompanied by the creation of Environmental and Social Recovery Councils. The CRAS are spaces in which state, private and civil society actors come together to design, execute and monitor the implementation of the recovery plans. This is an unprecedented mechanism in Chile's environmental institutions, which appeals to the categories of environmental governance as an instrument of social participation, "which seeks dialogue between different actors of the State, citizens and industry, in territories that present historical socioenvironmental problems and with high levels of complexity" (PRAS official website).

The implementation process of this policy has been conflictive and with conflicting assessments. Not only did it generate internal friction at the beginning between organizations opposed to sitting down to talk with those responsible for environmental damage, but also with respect to the hierarchical modality of the Ministry of the Environment through its regional secretariat. Questioned from outside and inside from its beginnings, the space represented an opportunity for dialogue and the possibility of influencing public and private policy in the territories.

From this logic, for part of the population that inhabits these territories, the space represented an advance as it implied an (implicit) state recognition through the compilation and validation of various studies and research that date the long environmental and social damage that have configured these territories into environmental sacrifice zones. However, for other inhabitants and organizations, the environmental and social recovery policy represented a government strategy to "contain socio-environmental conflicts" and legitimize the activities developed by private and state companies in the area (ESPINOZA, 2020).

3. Discussing "sacrifice zones", governance and socio-environmental recovery

3.1. "Sacrifice Zones" as the denied face of environmental policy.

Sacrifice zones in Latin America will have as a context, the multiple contradictions and controversies of the 1990s, marked, on the one hand, by advances in indigenous rights and environmental rights that were embraced by many countries in the region; while, on the other hand, an intensification of the pressures generated by the expansion of various activities associated with extractivism. In Chile, as in other countries in the region (such as Argentina, Colombia, Peru, Uruguay, Paraguay, among others), an investment fever was generated in mainly mining-energy, agricultural and forestry activities. Svampa (2019) describes this process as the shift from the Washington consensus to the Beijing consensus, a geopolitical shift that will have China and its commodity demands as the main actor during the first decades of the 21st century. In the same period, a regional infrastructure

megaproject known as IIRSA (Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America) was promoted, whose objective of improving the region's infrastructure brought as a consequence new environmental conflicts (MANSILLA et al., 2019).

Due to the growing conflict generated by the socio-environmental impacts of neoliberalism and the limitations of environmental policy, the discussion on the so-called "sacrifice zones" emerged at the end of the first decade of the 2000s. The term picked up from the North American (LERNER, 2010) and Brazilian (ACSELRAD, 2004) environmental justice movements, will be incorporated by environmental non-governmental organizations in Chile that begin to use them since 2012 to describe places where environmental and social damage resulting from pollution is concentrated. The concept expresses the unequal distribution of environmental burdens generated by polluting activities, initially chemical and nuclear in the USA, as well as associated with chemicals and hydrocarbons in Latin America, mainly in Brazil (ACSELRAD, 2004) and later in Argentina (SVAMPA & VIALE, 2014).

In Chile, non-governmental organizations focused their attention on air pollution from thermoelectric plants installed during the 1990s and the effects on marine pollution. A relevant milestone will be the intoxications of teachers, children and young students in 2011 in the sector of La Greda de Puchuncaví, as well as the oil spills that occurred during 2014 and 2016 in the bay of Quintero. Disasters that are again revived in an amplified way in August 2018 with a massive intoxication that involved more than 1700 medical attentions to children and elderly adults mainly (BOLADOS & JEREZ, 2019).

As background, the communities of Huasco in the 90's demanded the first air quality standard in Chile, as well as in Coronel in 2012, unions of seaweed and fishermen started a legal battle against the environmental damage of thermoelectric plants on fishing and seafood activities. In this period, from lawsuits focused on the ecosystem and traditional economic activities of these communities, there is a shift to focus on the damage to people's health. The concept coined in Brazil will incorporate elements associated with corruption and the political conditions that destine certain spaces and communities to carry environmental burdens under arguments of development and national progress. In both cases, the concept is associated with forms of environmental racism, as these areas are located in poor, black, Latino places and communities, depending on the geography, and where decisions and control of natural resources are subordinated to political decisions from centralized levels and associated with transnational and state capitals. These are generally coastal locations associated with ports for loading and unloading toxic, dangerous and polluting elements such as coal, oil (and other hydrocarbons), chemicals, LNG, cement, etc.

In Chile, this category is gradually beginning to be used by groups and inhabitants of five of the places called "sacrifice zones" by these foundations and non-governmental organizations. Among the common aspects that these zones have in common is that they were chosen as the site of energy generation based on fossil fuels such as coal and oil. These are home to 27 of the 28 thermoelectric plants in the country and are responsible for the emission of 91% of CO2 (carbon dioxide) and NOX (nitrogen oxide), 97% of

SO2 (sulfur dioxide) and 88% of the Particulate Matter of the national electric park.

Most of them were installed in the 1990s and under environmental regulations are governed by decontamination plans that, according to predefined levels, are declared as saturated or latency zones. The Chilean environmental paradox can then be understood from the international and regional context of the Rio Declaration and other international measures that advocate fair and sustainable energy transitions. Specifically the promotion of decarbonization policies as an urgent measure in the face of global warming and the global climate crisis. Meanwhile, during the same period in Chile, a large part of the current thermoelectric park was installed.

The sacrifice zones are thus presented as the visible face of the limitations and inefficiencies of Chilean environmental policy, particularly due to legal deficiencies in modifying the environmental problems of these communities. Hence, the organizations seek various strategies to stop the damage through the declaration of biodiversity sites (wetlands or priority sites) or the stoppage of new projects in their already deteriorated territories.

3.2 Governance as an approach to environmental policy.

Governance, despite being a polysemic concept, whose meaning varies according to the disciplinary perspectives, theoretical traditions and empirical approaches adopted (GRÜNKEL et al., 2019); there is common agreement in the literature to refer to it as the interaction between the public, private and civil society sectors in the organization of some collective interest, whose mechanisms move away from traditional management/governance models based on hierarchy or the market, in favor of more flexible, horizontal and participatory procedures and practices (CERRILLO & MARTÍNEZ, 2005; CHIA et al., 2016; GRÜNKEL et al., 2019; BUSTOS et al., 2019).

The environmental challenges of recent decades resulting from the adverse effects of the climate crisis, together with the growing pollution and socio-environmental degradation of territories affected by the exacerbated expansion of extractivism (where conflicts related to sacrifice zones have been their greatest expression in the region) have driven the creation of innovative environmental governance mechanisms for the democratic management of social, political, economic and ecological problems, whose goal has been to deconcentrate power and implement more efficient and transparent public actions as key elements for equity and well-being (DELGADO et al..., 2019: 118).

However, the discussion around its uses has been characterized by a high degree of ambiguity, since on the one hand it has been markedly anchored in the implementation of neoliberal policies (focused on the management of social tensions and consensus building in the midst of profound power asymmetries), but it has also been broadening to refer to more inclusive societal projects, contemplating the participation of a greater diversity of actors in the deliberation and decision-making on environmental problems of collective interest.

From an analytical perspective of environmental governance as an emerging field

of research, Castro et al. (2015) have referred to it as the process of formulation, elaboration, design and implementation of procedures and practices to configure the access, use and control of natural resources among different actors. Environmental governance does not occur in a spatiotemporal vacuum, but is contextualized territorially, taking into consideration the political struggles for territory and the different political, institutional and economic processes of other incumbent levels/scales (BUSTOS et al., 2019).

As Delgado et al. (2019) point out, there are few studies on typologies and/or structures of environmental governance that move away from strictly normative approaches and include the study of processes and relationships between civil society, private and political actors at different levels/scales. In this sense, Primmer et al. (2015) offer a typology of four modes/models of governance from an ecosystem services approach in the implementation of public policies analyzed in cascade: (a) hierarchical, corresponding to a structure where ideas are transferred from higher to lower political levels; (b) scientific-technical, which emphasizes the transfer of knowledge from scientists to local actors, with associated uncertainty; (c) adaptive-collaborative, where the main emphasis is on the participation of local social actors; and, (d) strategic, with self-organized networks within civil society with the common good as the main objective.

Based on this approach, the preponderance in the region of an eminently hierarchical environmental governance is highlighted, where the control of decisions on the territory remains centered on the state actors in charge of implementing such environmental policies (DELGADO et al., 2019).

3.3. Socio-environmental recovery and ecological restoration

The socio-environmental recovery objective of the PRAS is linked to the growing discussion in the scientific and planning fields regarding the restoration of biodiversity in areas that have been degraded or destroyed by human action.

> In Chile, progress in this discussion has been recent and has been reflected in initiatives such as the formation of the Chilean ecological restoration network in 2014 and the ecological restoration committee of the Ministry of the Environment. This committee was created in 2017 and aims to "generate a framework document and a work plan that would allow us to establish a technical basis to achieve effective ecological restoration of the affected territory" (ME, 2017, p.9).

This discussion comes from the Anglo-Saxon debate on Ecological Restoration, where some of its meanings conceptualize ecological restoration as the recovery of "the structure and composition of the ecosystem, so that it is able to perform its multiple functions in a sustained manner over time" (NAVARRO et al., 2017, p.17). Unlike approaches focused only on particular aspects of restoration such as reforestation with native species or the cleanup of contaminated areas, the ecological restoration approach seeks to carry out recovery actions under a holistic perspective that understands the complexity of

interactions in an ecosystem (PERROW & DAVY, 2002).

However, one of the central criticisms of the predominant ecological restoration approach has been the lack of attention to the social and political dimensions of restoration initiatives (ELIAS et al., 2021). Authors posit that it is a mistake to understand ecological restoration as "only an attempt to restore nature for its own sake, and not to restore at the same time an important part of the human relationship with non-human nature" (JORDAN 2000 in CECCON & PÉREZ, 2016). In the face of these limitations of the ecology debate on ecological restoration, in recent times there has been an increase in works that have drawn attention to a more complex incorporation of the social dimension in restoration processes (CECCON & PÉREZ, 2016). This social incorporation in the restoration debate is particularly key in Latin America, where there is an intimate connection between biodiversity degradation and the loss or precariousness of the livelihoods of the communities that inhabit these places.

But the inclusion of the social component of restoration not only aims to incorporate socioeconomic criteria in the restoration process (poverty, employability, income inequalities, etc.), but also to recognize the plurality of knowledge that exists regarding the care of ecosystems and the forms of coexistence with nature that community actors possess, going beyond the scientific field (CECCON & PÉREZ, 2016). In addition, recent studies have drawn attention to the power relations involved in ecological restoration processes, seeking to reveal who defines the restoration agenda and what are the socio political interests that seek to influence these agendas (BLISS & FISHER, 2011; ELIAS et al., 2021).

These arguments for the articulation of social and ecological components coincide with the experiences that have "emerged from below" in the territories known as sacrifice zones. Experiences such as the defense of wetlands, recovery of memory sites, improvement of community spaces, are part of the repertoire of actions in these territories. These experiences do not see a dissociation between the social and the environmental, since both spheres are not separated for the reproduction of the fabric of life. This is based on the realization that in the sacrifice zones the damage does not only refer to the loss of biodiversity or the contamination of air, water and soil, but that it is a multidimensional damage that also affects community ties and the expectations of a dignified life in these territories. For this reason, the experiences of socioenvironmental recovery that emerge from below bet strongly on the reconstruction of community ties, to "sustain each other in a deeply contaminated and damaged territory on different levels" (MORALES, 2021).

Although there is no explicit mention of the debate on ecological restoration and no reference to the Ministry of the Environment's ecological restoration framework, recovery plans in Chile implicitly approach it from the predominant viewpoint of ecosystem services and seek to articulate it with the social problems of degraded territories.

4. Method

This research was based on the case studies of the 3 territories where the PRAS are implemented (1. Huasco, 2. Quintero-Puchuncaví and 3. Coronel), which were analyzed in a multiscale manner seeking to unveil the levels of interaction of the socio environmental recovery policy.

We worked on two main:

i) State action and its interaction between the central and regional levels: At this level, the environmental governance policy of the State is observed and analyzed through environmental and social recovery policies. It was documented based on 15 qualitative interviews with key State actors in the implementation of the programs. As a complement to this work, the institutional documents on the recovery plans in the 3 territories that were implemented were reviewed.

ii) Local communities: This was complemented by conducting interviews with CRAS civil society advisors. In total, 41 interviews were conducted with public, private and civil society actors in the 3 territories.

The time frame of analysis consists of the years 2014-2022, ranging from the beginning of the implementation of the PRAS and CRAS in the studied communes until the end of the second government of S. Piñera. To analyze the information gathered, we established three axes of analysis: 1) how social and environmental recovery is conceived in these plans 2) what views those involved have on the objective of recovery and 3) the importance acquired by the social and environmental spheres in the implementation of the plans.

5. How is socioenvironmental restoration addressed in the PRAS?

When reviewing the extensive environmental and social recovery plans of the 3 territories, it is noticed that it was not defined what is meant by environmental and social recovery? They immediately state that the objective of the plan is to "environmentally recover the territory and improve the quality of life of the inhabitants of the commune" (ME, 2018, p.22), and subsequently begin to describe a large number of objectives and recovery measures[1]. In the implementation trajectory of these plans, this high number of objectives and measures tends to dilute the more global understanding about what is environmental and social recovery for this environmental policy and what are the emphases that such recovery should possess in the territories? This lack of definition is an important first observation, since it makes possible an ambiguity in the implementation of these plans where the environmental and social dimensions that make up the plan are fragmented.

In this context, the analysis of the questions defined in the previous section led us to identify 3 critical nodes that will organize our reflection on socioenvironmental recovery.

a. Undervaluation of the social dimension of land reclamation

The aforementioned ambiguity regarding the understanding of recovery has led to a dissociation between the social and environmental dimensions in the implementation of plans. The environmental sphere is broken down into aspects related to "Air, Noise and Odors", "Water", "Sea", "Soil", "Landscape and Biodiversity", while the social dimension

1 - In the Quintero-Puchuncaví PRAS, a total of 26 objectives and 123 measures were observed; in the Huasco PRAS, 17 objectives and 67 measures; and, in the Coronel PRAS, 20 objectives and 95 measures.

refers to "Society" (which is subdivided into education, poverty, employment, disability, among others), "Health" and "infrastructure" (linked to basic services, housing and transportation). In the plans, these two dimensions move along separate paths without being analyzed in their complexity and interdependence, and without much interaction in the way the measures are implemented. Although there is a point in the PRAS that refers to "cross-cutting measures", most of these are linked to the improvement of environmental management (e.g., clean production agreements, energy efficiency plans, priority in environmental control, etc.).

> This dissociation between the environmental and the social is not only a critical element of the program, but is also reproduced in the vision of some CRAS counselors: "the environmental is not the most worrying thing sometimes but there are other issues such as unemployment, there are more social issues that have to be worked on and that this environmental alert sidelines the social issues" (Interviewee 4 CRAS Coronel, 2019).

In this context, despite the fact that the environmental and social recovery plans have several objectives directly linked to the social sphere (for example: "to improve the quality of life and reduce poverty levels"), in the analysis carried out we have been able to confirm an undervaluation of the social sphere with respect to the environmental sphere as a central component of the recovery of the territories.

Among a significant number of CRAS participants, there is a tendency to view measures related to ecosystem restoration and regulations governing water, air and soil quality as recovery progress.

Another example of this can be seen in the deployment of State institutions, where the regional secretariats of the Ministry of the Environment (which act as Executive Secretariat in all the CRAS) are predominant, while other ministries such as Health, Housing and Urban Development, Social Development, among others, are absent or participate to a lesser extent. This prominence of the Ministry of the Environment accentuates the dissociation between social and environmental aspects in the approach to the PRAS.

Another appreciable consequence of the fragmentation between the environmental and social dimensions, and the subsequent valuation of the latter, is that the community component is absent from the objectives of the PRAS. This adds to the question of what is meant by environmental and social remediation the question of how such remediation should be carried out. Beyond the metrics of compliance with measures in a logical matrix, this question draws attention to the process component of achieving restoration. The evaluation of the PRAS is associated with the measurement of the level of compliance with measures that are based on the development of standards, plans, studies and campaigns on the topics of the plans. The question of how they are fulfilled and who makes the decisions takes second place, and there is no major questioning of what involvement the communities should have in the recovery objectives. This leads to the fact that community protagonism is not highlighted as a fundamental aspect of the process

of territorial recovery.

> Despite the above, this dissociation between social and environmental issues does not occur in all the territories where the CRAS is active. In Huasco, representatives of the olive growers in the CRAS raise the importance of reducing emissions to recover the olive economy that for many years provided social and economic welfare to the Huasco Valley, through the installation of filters in the emissions of companies and thus reduce pollutants: "we are hopeful now that they will place these filters and with this plan, with these people I believe we will manage to return to being, we want to be organic, leaders in the olive we are with much hope and many dreams" (Interviewee 5 CRAS Huasco).

b. Techno-bureaucratic environmental approach to the PRAS

As we have already mentioned, there is no definition of what socio-environmental recovery is in the PRAS. Recovery is reduced to a disjointed enumeration of a set of measures and objectives without considering their complexity and interdependence, avoiding discussions on "development models" or even the debate on the idea of development and well-being. This undervaluation of the social dimension of the problem is linked to a tendency to emphasize bureaucratic approaches detached from the other levels/scales of environmental management.

The above, has to do with the fact that the PRAS approach is associated with a vision of classical ecological restoration that looks at nature from an evolutionary viewpoint, to be addressed by specialists in sciences and techniques related to the environment such as ecology and conservation (CECCON & PEREZ, 2016).

This criticism of the PRAS is linked to the importance of a comprehensive change in the environmental institutional framework built under neoliberalism. As its inhabitants argue, social and environmental recovery plans do not succeed in modifying environmental damage, while regulatory changes are required under more demanding international standards. There is an urgent need for legal modifications to the current environmental law, whose environmental management instruments, such as the Air Pollution Prevention and/or Decontamination Plans (PPDA), have failed for decades to meet the objective of decontamination. Within this institutional design, the problem lies in the imbalances behind the techno-bureaucratic approach and the denial of other knowledge and experiences in the preponderance of this approach. An example of this is Phase 1 of "Elaboration of the Shared Diagnosis" in the PRAS, which has been built on the basis of reports and studies carried out by private consulting firms and state agencies, where critical thinking is invisible and excluded from the process, and, as we will see below, the little (or no) influence of civil society advisors in decision-making on the process of implementing PRAS measures and objectives.

c. Regulated participation in the environmental governance of the CRAS

Although there is participation of civil society organizations in the CRAS councils, throughout its implementation there have been several conflicts where social organizations question the effective capacity to make decisions within and, mainly, outside this space.

The CRAS is disconnected from other levels/scales of the environmental institutional framework (land-use planning instruments, entry processes for new projects through the SEA, development of norms such as the PPDA, to name a few), without having any major influence on key decision-making spaces for the environmental management of the territories. Discussions within it refer to the elaboration/modification of the internal operating regulations, presentation of the progress of the PRAS measures from the Ministry of the Environment, and other day to day issues related to the functioning of the sessions; The discussion regarding the process of implementation of the PRAS measures, as well as the general idea of the process of environmental and social recovery of the territories, is annulled.

A "deep" discussion on the meaning of environmental and social recovery is avoided, since this would inevitably lead to discussing the structural causes that contribute to the production of environmental inequalities in the territories, taking in consideration that the CRAS do not have sufficient power to influence the decision-making process at other institutional levels.

Therefore, we find ourselves with a governance space anchored at the local decision-making level (operation of the CRAS) without effective decision-making power over the implementation of measures and objectives, the elaboration of strategies and the general process of environmental and social recovery of the territories.

State agents, especially representatives of the Ministry of the Environment and the mayors of the communes, tend to have a leading role in the area (the former being the only interlocutor between CRAS and the central government), and in some experiences even becoming the actors who prioritize the measures on which the Recovery Plan must advance.

The above shows the instrumentalization of governance within the scenario of socioenvironmental conflict in Chile. The CRAS are built under the idea of a horizontal table where the different actors reach agreements based on a relationship in which "everyone wins", where "the search for consensus" based on "good faith" must predominate. However, this principle hides the pre-existing power relations in this decision-making space and at the same time "combines horizontality and verticality in a novel way, where both dimensions are self-generating: the former as something constantly present, the latter as if it did not exist" (SANTOS, 2007, p.33). This leads to the reproduction of power asymmetries within the recovery councils. However, these spaces do not take charge of these asymmetries by proposing ways to confront them. On the contrary, the perpetuation of power inequalities is exploited by state institutions take advance the political agenda and seek to achieve results that generate legitimacy. In this context, the search for consensus ends up pressing for the construction of solutions that ignore power relations and the different rationalities at play. This empties the political debate and hides fundamental issues in relation to societal projects that are in tension on the part of state, business and community actors (VIÉGAS, 2016).

In this scenario, the environmental and social recovery policy becomes part of a new

phase of neoliberal governance where action is more thorough and tripartite to defuse conflicts early (LEIVA, 2019; ESPINOZA, 2020). In this scheme, governance becomes a new stage of the "perverse confluence" between the neoliberal project and the democratizing project defined by Dagnino (2004) defines. By "perverse confluence" the author understands the conjunction of divergent political proposals under common concepts or claims, where the perverse refers to "a phenomenon whose consequences contradict its appearance, whose effects are not immediately evident and rebel different from what could be expected" (DAGNINO, 2004, p. 197).

Despite these limitations, in some territories where CRAS is implemented (for example, the commune of Coronel and Huasco) the members of civil society have valued the unprecedented possibility of meeting "as equals" with the companies and the State to discuss the environmental situation of the territories. It is interesting that civil society is looking for strategies to achieve goals, in spite the space restrictions. For example, what a counselor from Huasco suggests regarding the plan s decision-making mechanism, where civil society representatives have been able to organize themselves as a bloc and stop actions in which they consider their interests are not reflected.

6. Conclusions: Challenges for recovery processes in the new environmental policy

The sacrifice zones reveal a legal and political system that strengthens environmental inequalities in the territories whose affectation becomes a manageable device through governmental and corporate policies that prolong the situation, without proposing structural solutions to the damage done to these communities. By minimizing the damage from the State and the companies, the actions tend to seek to contain the disaster under the idea that progress is being made in the social and environmental recovery of these territories. Meanwhile, the invisibility of the scientific evidence generated by research in these areas is revealed as necessary to contain the conflict and seek intermediate paths of low investment but high publicity impact on the part of the companies.

Through the analysis that was carried out, we found that although the Environmental and Social Recovery Plans represent an advance in Chilean environmental policy in recent decades, they still have serious problems regarding the governance mechanisms that are deployed for their implementation and the reductions that are made in practice around the objective of socio-environmental recovery of the intervened territories. The conditions are not in place for environmental governance to be effective if there are gray areas that are not part of the discussion of the plans and their decision-making process (such as the debate on how to understand socio-environmental recovery, or about the development model as a country). It ends up being a regulated space, which ends up advocating a "socio-environmental recovery administered" by the State that does not complexify the plurality of knowledge in relation to the recovery of life existing in the actors that live in the territory.

Another one of the central conclusions of the research is that we believe it is necessary for the environmental policy to move towards a greater harmonization of the environmental and social dimensions within the recovery processes. We believe that a fruitful path is the visibility of the long accumulation of environmental justice discussions

and scientific works that have deepened the social dimension of ecological restoration. On the other hand, a complex recovery policy requires recognizing community recovery actions that are built outside the frameworks of state institutions. No matter how much private and/or state investment is made, it will be difficult to achieve a socio-environmental recovery of the sacrifice zones without community protagonism.

Finally, the substantive discussion on what is socio-environmental recovery, implies a profound debate on the development model in Chile. Such discussion has been constantly avoided in the trajectory of the environmental policy that we have analyzed (with special focus on the years 2014-2022). Faced with this, it seems to us that an urgent task is the politicization of the discussion on environmental policy in Chile. When we talk about politicization, we refer to the struggle over what can and should be socially decided, a "process of dispute over the delimitation of the political" (UNDP, 2015, p.53). This becomes important in the context of questioning the socio-ecological crisis caused by the deepening of neoliberal policies in Chile, which has intensified since 2011 (and is even more accentuated since the revolt of October 2019), where some of the central demands are the deprivatization of natural commons and the right to live in a pollution-free environment (PANEZ, 2022). However, this questioning of the socio-ecological crisis from the territories has a difficult path to achieve substantive transformations due to the defeat of the "I approve" option of the proposed new constitution in the exit plebiscite on September 4, 2022. This constitutional text, and especially its chapter III on "Nature and environment", contained a considerable part of the environmental justice demands of organized movements and communities. Furthermore, in this new political juncture in which the neoliberal restoration discourse is regaining strength, the new government of Gabriel Boric, who proposed to be an "ecological government" and who raised as a campaign promise to put an end to the sacrifice zones in Chile, has shown moderation in the depth of its political reforms, which revive the forms of democracy as far as possible from the post-dictatorship. Despite the recent political scenario, it seems to us that the critical balance of the experience of the Environmental and Social Recovery Plans represents an opportunity for civil society actors seeking to end environmental injustices to complexify their strategies to amend the course of the environmental policy towards the objective of putting the life of the inhabitants of the communities in the center.

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Alexander Panez

✉ email apanez@ubiobio.cl

ORCiD: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1978-2076

Paola Bolados

✉ email paola.bolados@uautonoma.cl

ORCiD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1583-007X

Luis Espinoza

✉ email lespinozaalmonacid@gmail.com

ORCiD: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3525-9605

Bárbara Jerez

✉ email bajerez@udec.cl

ORCiD: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9391-6410

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Zonas de Sacrifício e Recuperação Socioambiental no Chile: Falhas e oportunidades da política ambiental

Alexander Panez Pinto
Paola Bolados García
Luis Espinoza Almonacid
Bárbara Jerez Henríquez

Resumo: No artigo analisamos os Planos de Recuperação Social e Ambiental executados pelo Estado do Chile nos municípios denominados zonas de sacrifício. A partir das contribuições da justiça ambiental e os debates em relação à participação e a governança que essa política envolve, damos conta das contradições e dificuldades para a transformação dos territórios degradados pela intensificação de atividades extrativistas, principalmente minero-energéticas. Concluímos mostrando como essas limitações e falhas da política ambiental relacionam-se com a dissociação da dimensão ambiental e social, -através da subvalorização da última-; a compreensão instrumental da participação como uma ferramenta tecno-burocrática para fines estatais; e as tensões provocadas por um modelo de governança ambiental neoliberal. Finalmente, planteamos a necessidade de pensar o conceito de zona de sacrifício vinculado à recuperação socioambiental como proposta desde os territórios para a transição á zonas de recuperação.

Palavras-chave: Recuperação Ambiental e Social; Zonas de Sacrifício; Chile; Governança Ambiental; Comunidades

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Traditional practices and sustainable development: local indicators of sustainability among caiçaras and *quilombolas* in Bocaina

Alexander Panez Pinto
Paola Bolados García
Luis Espinoza Almonacid
Bárbara Jerez Henríquez

Resumen: En este artículo analizamos los Planes de Recuperación Social y Ambiental implementados por el Estado de Chile en las comunas denominadas zonas de sacrificio. Desde los aportes de la justicia ambiental y los debates respecto a la participación y la gobernanza que esta política involucra, damos cuenta de las contradicciones y dificultades para la transformación de los territorios dañados por la intensificación de actividades extractivistas, principalmente minero-energéticas. Concluimos mostrando cómo estas limitaciones y fallas de la política estatal ambiental se relacionan con la disociación de lo ambiental y social, -a través de la subvaloración de esta última-; la comprensión instrumental de la participación como una herramienta tecno-burocrática para fines estatales; y las tensiones generadas por un modelo de gobernanza ambiental neoliberal. Finalmente planteamos la necesidad de pensar el concepto de zona de sacrificio vinculado a la recuperación socioambiental como propuesta desde los territorios para la transición hacia zonas de recuperación.

***Palabras-clave*:** Recuperación Ambiental y Social; Zonas de Sacrificio; Chile; Gobernanza Ambiental; Comunidades.

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