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# When Citizen Mobilisations Transform the Andean Foothills: the Case of the Group for the Defence of the *Precordillera*

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

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## Introduction

- 1 The agglomeration of Santiago lies at the foot of the Andes, which form part of the everyday visual landscape of the city's residents. Their view suggests a stable, rigid, immutable image of the Andes that can be found on postcards and tourist images. Until recently, however, very few inhabitants had a direct or daily experience of these mountains. Since the 1990s the boundary between the city and the mountain range has undergone a major transformation, mainly because of urban expansion into the Andean foothills. Over the past few decades, this area has become a residential area for middle and upper-middle classes who reside in newly built private housing estates or gated communities. The foothills, commonly called the *precordillera*, have therefore become an increasingly private space coveted by many actors (citizens, institutions, housing entrepreneurs), each with a different project for the area. Researchers have worked on the *precordillera* – defined by geographers as a mountainous space situated between 800 and 1,500 metres above sea level (Romero & Vásquez, 2005) – while focusing on Santiago's urban expansion (Carlos de Mattos, 1999, 2006; Pereira &

Hidalgo, 2008), environmental risk factors (Romero & Vásquez, 2005; Romero et al., 2010; Romero, Salgado & Smith, 2010) and socio-spatial inequalities (Sabatini, 1997; Sabatini, Cáceres, & Cerda, 2001; Rodríguez & Winchester, 2001; Salcedo & Torres, 2004; Hidalgo, Trumper, & Borsdorf, 2005; Márquez & Pérez, 2008; Vásquez & Salgado, 2009). Yet, little attention has been paid to its inhabitants and to the conflicts involving the *precordillera*, whose transformation has given rise to forms of resistance and citizen mobilisation. These phenomena have raised specific issues, namely of attributing new meaning to the foothills and the mobilised inhabitants' need for definitions, delimitations and regulations that allow residents a certain degree of control over and management of the area. In contrast with other authors, we will deal with the *precordillera* starting from that which is claimed here. We will therefore deal with the foothills as a non-delimited and non-defined space that is constructed through situated, collective action and consider notions of territory, nature and environment in all their diversity (Trom, 1999). To this end, it is necessary to observe at close range how the inhabitants of this specific environment – the *precordillera* – interact, how the territory changes and is transformed, and how individuals attempt to understand, seize and define it.

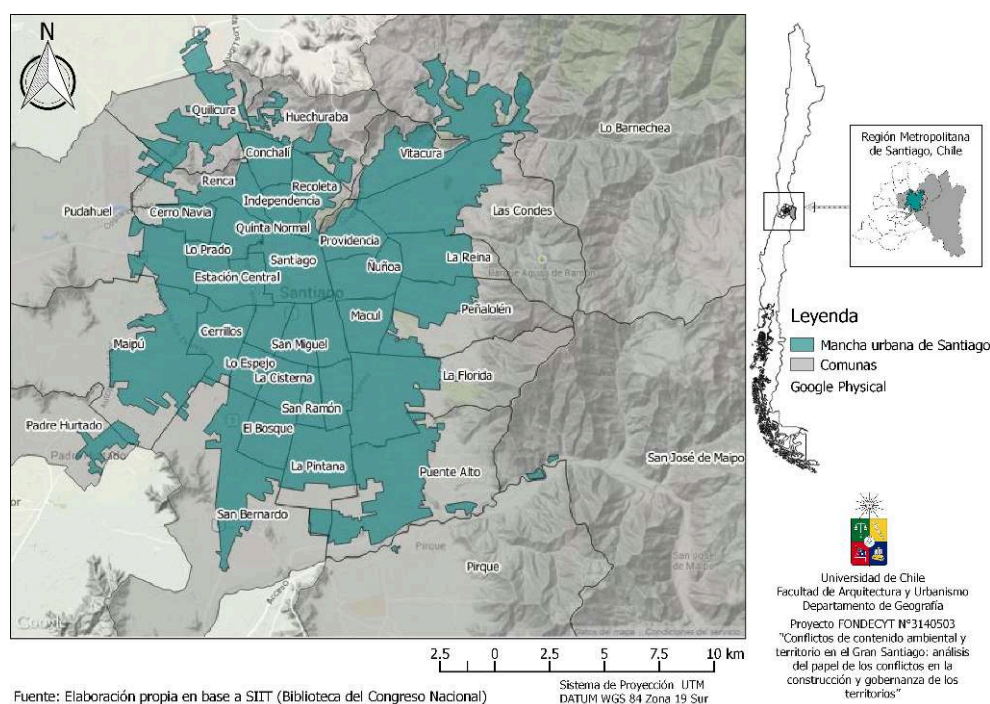
- 2 Therefore, our research analyses the way in which inhabitants who engage in the defence of the *precordillera* try to create a new kind of relationship with the mountain and new modes of management that are specific to this territory when faced with the State's incapacity to protect it. The purpose is to study conflict as a positive element, a form of socialisation that reinforces a group's identity, increases solidarity and multiplies interactions (Simmel, 1995). We focus on conflict as a form of territorialisation (Melé, 2008), to be understood as a double appropriation – both material and ideal – of a space by a social group (Di Méo, 1998; Melé, 2003). Actors territorialise space when they appropriate it both concretely and abstractly, and this non-linear process may give rise to territorial innovations (Torre, 2011).
- 3 This article seeks to understand the mobilisations of the collective “Group for the Defence of the *Precordillera*” (GDP) in the commune of La Florida (see maps 1 and 2). The sources are of two kinds: The first is an ethnography, carried out between 2007 and 2010 in the commune of La Florida. It is based on 59 semi-structured interviews, 37 meetings attended and the participant observation of 18 activities of different kinds, such as protests, exhibitions, debates, public seminars and other meetings. The second is ongoing fieldwork based on interviews and participant observation that started in 2014.
- 4 In the first part, we will introduce the context of the study. We will then analyse the process of the *precordillera*'s territorialisation by the actors involved. We shall see how, throughout the conflict, the “lived space” (Frémont, 1976) and the “perceived space” (Bailly, 1984) undergo an actual or ideal transformation through collective action. In the final section, we will discuss conflict as a process of territorialisation and territorial innovation, on the basis of a project for the creation of a community park.

## Context of study: Santiago's Andean foothills

- 5 The city of Santiago extends to the foothills of the Andean mountain range located to the east of the agglomeration (see map 1). The city underwent considerable expansion between 1975 and 2007, and the urban surface area doubled in all directions (Romero,

Salgado & Fuentes, 2009). In this article, we focus on the south-eastern area of the Chilean capital, in other words the part of the *precordillera* corresponding to the Macul basin (*Cuenca de Macul*) and, more specifically, to the commune of La Florida. The foothills have undergone important transformations during the past few years, especially in the commune of La Florida, which has urbanised rapidly up to 1,000 metres above sea level, the limit set by the Metropolitan Regulating Plan of Santiago (MRPS)<sup>1</sup>.

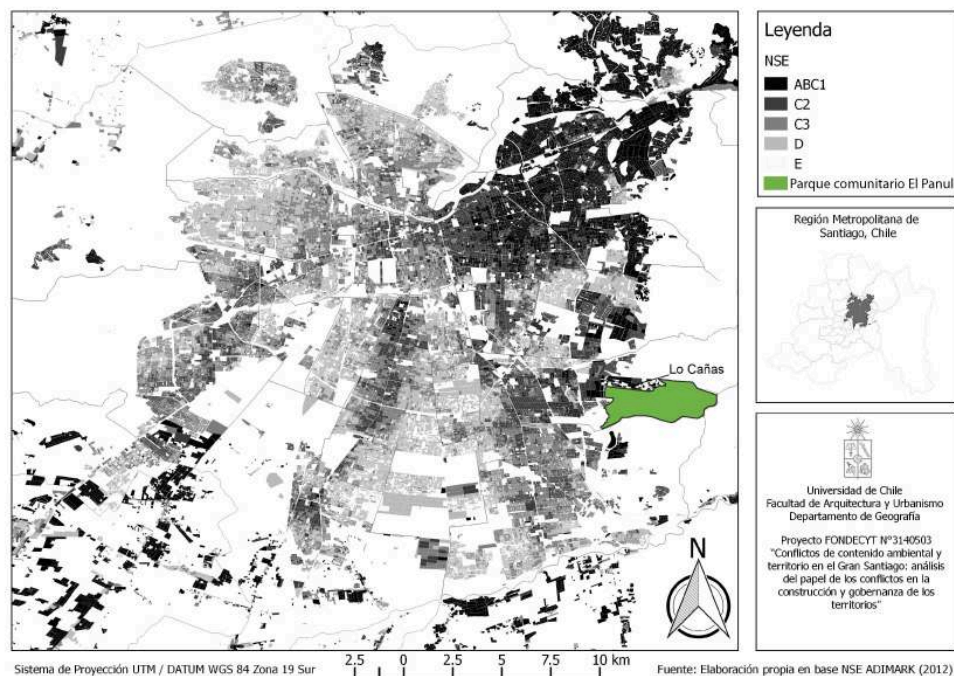
**Map 1. The context of study: Santiago of Chile and the Andes**



- 6 The *precordillera* in La Florida started to be inhabited in the 1950s, mainly through the improvised construction of precarious housing on fragile terrains. The growth of the sector, to which its own inhabitants contributed without technical assistance or urban planning, was quite chaotic and spontaneous (Muñoz, 1990). Housing construction intensified around the bed of the Macul gully, in areas that had already been affected by floods and were therefore exposed to the risk of floods, mudslides, earthquakes and landslides. Between 1960 and 1980, some precarious social housing, hardly adapted to the extreme natural phenomena specific to the Andean foothills, was also built (Biskupovic, 2015b). As of the end of the 1980s, during and after the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990), intellectuals and professionals, some returning from exile, others seeking to distance themselves from the dictatorship's violence, purchased land parcels in different areas of the foothills – both in the commune of La Florida and in Peñalolén, a neighbouring commune. They did this in order to live in a more “natural” setting and create what they called “ecological communities” on former landed property (*fundos*) or farms (in some cases, former vineyards) that were divided up into parcels and sold.
- 7 Today the foothills are increasingly attracting upper-middle class inhabitants who are settling in new gated communities on the slopes, in houses whose architecture is quite different from the “hippy” housing found on the parcels (Biskupovic, 2015a). In fact, in

Santiago, privileged social groups have shown a tendency to occupy the higher areas of the foothills, covered in forest and woodlands, while the middle and lower classes have settled farther north, in the centre and in the south-west of the agglomeration, on former agricultural land (Romero, Salgado & Fuentes, 2009). This layout is clearly visible on the map of the socio-economic level of Santiago's inhabitants (ABC1 being the highest and E the lowest) (see map 2) and is confirmed in the case of La Florida.

**Map 2. Distribution of socio-economic categories in Santiago**



**ABC1 BEING THE HIGHEST AND E THE LOWEST.**

## The creation of the Group for the Defence of *the Precordillera*

- 8 Faced with the increasing development of private housing estates, a collective of inhabitants from the “parcels” in Lo Cañas, a neighbourhood of La Florida, started in 1995 what later took on the form of a citizen association: the Group for the Defence of the Precordillera (GDP). A group of eight inhabitants from Lo Cañas registered this organisation in 2006 at the town hall of La Florida. Initially it mainly comprised women nearing the age of 60 and a few youths from the commune (between 20 and 25 years of age) who progressively integrated into the organisation and became more active around 2009. This first group was fairly homogeneous: It brought together inhabitants from middle and upper-middle classes who met in the evening, two to four times per month, at a member's house to talk, have some tea and think over the GDP's future activities. These sporadic meetings did not have a fixed timetable, and initially their frequency fluctuated a lot. Gaby, almost 70 years old, living in Lo Cañas since 1988, took charge of almost all the network's activities: organising internal GDP meetings,



answering emails, making contact with new members, going to the town hall to get information, writing to the authorities and organisations, etc.

- 9 At the centre of the GDP's cause is their opposition to real estate projects in the foothills, and more specifically one project involving a private piece of land and home to one of the last primal forests in Santiago: El Panul,<sup>2</sup> named after the farm property on which it is located. El Panul is a non-exploited forest, native to the foothills, that forms part of the endemic Mediterranean climate eco-system. Although the members of the collective call it the "defence of the *precordillera*" (judging from the group's name, one might think it refers to the whole area), and at different times they speak about defending the either "foothills", "nature" or the "environment" of the *precordillera*, it is actually El Panul, and its flora and fauna, that they are most concerned with. According to the GDP, the land of El Panul previously belonged to the University of Chile. However, during the dictatorship it was sold to the current owner in order to build a private estate composed of 1,300 housing units on 60 ha of the Panul forest (about 1,000 ha in total). The creation of the GDP stems from three main issues that emerged during interviews with inhabitants participating in the collective. First of all, the experience of living in the foothills created a particular interest for that which surrounds them. Lucy,<sup>3</sup> for example, says that when she and her family arrived they had "no idea" of what it meant to live in the area. But after living for years at the foot of the mountain range, and after bearing witness to the mudslides, their relationship to the place has changed, and they have taken an interest in this natural environment. The GDP's foundation must be contextualised in view of the deadly mudslide that hit this area of the *precordillera* in 1993, which makes residents painfully aware of current environmental risks. This event, which killed 34 people and left 30,000 injured, was one of the worst natural catastrophes in Chile since the 1950s.<sup>4</sup> Given the lack of appropriate urban regulation, the housing development exploded a few years after this accident, seemingly forgetting the specific dangers of Andean geography. But for some interviewees like Lucy and Gaby,<sup>5</sup> the fact that they live in the foothills entails an acute awareness of such dangers. They oppose the housing development in the Andean piedmont on the grounds that "everybody is in agreement...all the scientists are in agreement that the piedmont should not be touched" <sup>6</sup> because of the natural risks and its flora and fauna that are "unique" and threatened with disappearance. It is on the basis of what the scientists and researchers say that inhabitants get involved in the defence of their territory they live in. The work of geologists, geographers, historians and architects therefore helps to legitimise the collective's arguments. Experts' data<sup>7</sup> are widely accepted because scientists had predicted the 1993 disaster and warned against the hazards of the rise in the foothills' colonisation. These scientific statements on the dangers of the *precordillera* are the pillar on which inhabitants base their claims.
- 10 Secondly, inhabitants' common experiences of the foothills and their different practices on this territory are at the root of the constitution of neighbourhoods like Lo Cañas. The transformation of the farm lands into urban sectors was made possible by the first inhabitants: In fact, since the birth of Lo Cañas in 1960, its implementation has been carried out by the *junta de vecinos* (neighbours' association). Because they built their housing on their own, the first inhabitants feel like the owners not only of their pieces of land but also of the surrounding environment. The members of the GDP perceive the *precordillera* as something that belongs to them, who live there and helped to develop the sector. In this organisation, the first inhabitants invent fluctuating

“ways to seize the world” (Trom & Zimmerman, 2001: 209), which change and adapt to circumstances experienced by inhabitants. If new ways of understanding the world are necessary to protect the neighbourhood, new organisations are also indispensable.

- 11 The third reason used to explain the creation of the GDP is the passage towards politics, evoked by Gaby and Lucy, which stems from the denunciation of a perceived injustice. The shift in the direction of politics is considered appropriate because it is no longer a matter of building the neighbourhood but also of protecting it from new threats. After learning about the Panul forest, the members of the GDP discovered that not only was this forest private property and threatened by a housing project, but its owner, a close friend of Pinochet’s, had bought the land at a very low price during the years of the dictatorship. At various points the members of the GDP mention this property (El Panul) as a “gift from Pinochet” and say that, as the law certifies, “we cannot touch it”.<sup>8</sup> They consider the way in which the owner purchased the land to be contestable. They built their houses while considering the foothills as a shared territory, whereas a large piece of this territory such as El Panul belongs to only one person who has no interest in the “natural” value of the area. They view this situation as totally unacceptable. In the eyes of the members of the GDP, the forest belongs to everybody.

**Fig. 1. Entrance to a house in Lo Cañas, 2008**



**SOURCE: PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHORS**



Fig. 2. Photograph of *condominios*-type housing on the La Florida foothills, south of Lo Cañas, 2008



SOURCE: PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHORS

Fig. 3. MEMBERS OF THE GDP AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE PANUL FOREST



SOURCE: PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHORS.

## Committing to defend the environment: the construction of a natural territory in need of protection

- 12 In the context of mobilisation for the protection of the forest, the *precordillera* is reconfigured and redefined by its inhabitants: The landscape turns into an issue



(Marres, 2007). It is this social construction of the foothills that interests us: The mobilised inhabitants create a new territory, or a new territorial project. The foothills are the plural product of collective action. For these inhabitants, the *precordillera* first of all suggests the ideas of nature and environment. Informants combine what they feel, what they experience, what they have experienced in the past and that which they hope to experience in the future based on the knowledge at their disposal (scientific data, expertise, observation, etc.). One must think in terms of assemblage (Latour, 2005) rather than differences, because nature cannot be reduced to *one* definition. On the contrary, it is necessary to integrate the forms of knowledge developed by the inhabitants involved and the different discourses that feed into them into the list of possible definitions. As we shall demonstrate, defending the environment implies knowing the specific value of the defended territory. At the same time, the will to defend the environment stems from an attachment to a specific neighbourhood (or community) and territory (the *precordillera*).

- 13 Defending the environment is often understood on the basis of universal categories without taking into account local specificities, as if it were something self-evident (Gramaglia, 2006). Hence, nature appears as an abstract, de-territorialised, non-situated entity. The discourse of an idealised environment and the dangers caused by man resonate at precise moments in the discourse of GDP members, who associate it with ecological practices. Meanwhile, this definition is dropped when they speak about actions within the GDP. While they still talk about “defending the *precordillera*”, the notion of environment takes on an entirely different value. In their work with the association, where they are confronted with other actors, their perception and the meaning they attribute to nature (to the *precordillera* and the Panul forest) become less passive. It is not merely an idealisation of nature. Interviewees put their feelings towards a situated nature and their knowledge of it at the heart of their commitment.
- 14 The environmental issue is therefore associated with a community forged by a form of “rural nostalgia” (Bengoa, 1996) observable amongst the inhabitants of Lo Cañas. In an interview with one of the founding members of the GDP<sup>9</sup> who came to live in the foothills for the natural qualities of their environment, the informant opposed the bad quality of the air in the city centre to life without pollution in the foothills and stated that he considered that his neighbourhood and the organisation existed because of this natural value. For him, it was the “defence of the *precordillera*” that allowed the “development” of the neighbourhood: Residents got involved because they lived on the *precordillera*, and their commitment allowed the place’s “unity”. Their involvement is anchored in the nearby territory. This kind of involvement, which stems from the territory itself, appears in other interviews with members of the GDP. It consists of a commitment “developed in proximity” (Gramaglia, 2008: 83). It is through this rootedness in the vicinity and their attachment to local territory (Doidy, 2008) that participants define their role as active, committed residents. Their love for nature is reinforced by their communitarian belonging to the foothills (Thévenot, 2001). The GDP modes of political action are determined, on the one hand, by the connection of its action to the *precordillera* and to a particular neighbourhood. On the other hand, they are also determined by the attachment to the place that they have constructed and inhabited and where their political action originates.
- 15 The *precordillera* is a natural territory with its own specific and unique characteristics, such as its flora and fauna. Starting from a pre-existing territory, a new environmental

dimension is developed, and the landscape is reinterpreted. The geographical space is a key element in the conflict, as are the inhabitants' feelings towards the development of the territory. The mobilised group puts forward the qualities of the *precordillera* at a local but also a metropolitan level, in other words its characteristics as a natural place in (and of) itself but also as an environmental sector crucial to the equilibrium of the city of Santiago. Consequently, the actors identify, acquire and use their knowledge of the foothills (flora and fauna, water, air, etc.). Territorialisation translates into a learning process and one of spatial valorisation (Melé, 2013).

- 16 For the collective's members, however, local authorities do not have sufficient specific competences for that which concerns the *precordillera*, which they manage as if it were any other piece of land. For the authorities, it is a matter of "following" the urban planning rules, independently from the affective ties to the environment and territory. Teresa – a civil servant working at the town hall of La Florida<sup>10</sup> – is often called upon by the members of the GDP. In one of her meetings with the group, she explains that her relationship to the territory is mediated only by the application of the norms, the observation of maps and the use of other similar means, which act as intermediaries in her interaction with the area.

"The thing is this: we, as the Commune, 'Urban Council' [Asesoría Urbana] and Department of Public Works [División de Obras], have to adopt the highest-level territorial instruments, such as the Metropolitan Urbanism Plan [Plan d'Urbanisme Métropolitain] (...) If the plan established that in such and such a place it is legal to build up to a certain density, and a project of this kind is presented, it is not our job to say whether we like it or not. It doesn't work, in ecological terms. When you have to apply the norms, this decision is not the issue."<sup>11</sup>

- 17 The collectives' actions, with their expertise and ability to pressure the local and regional government, led to a modification of the Regulating Plan of La Florida in 2015. The current regulation forbids the residential use of a part of the Panul forest and only allows for the construction of cultural, sport or educational infrastructure. This still does not eliminate the threat of the forest's destruction. Hence, mobilisations have also involved the questioning of the management modes of the forest.

## The claim for a community park in El Panul: a citizens' territorial innovation?

- 18 In order to protect the forest of El Panul, the GDP demanded that authorities expropriate the land and transform it into a public park open to everybody. While a financial evaluation was carried out to estimate the cost of an expropriation, there are currently no signs of progress in this direction. Inhabitants therefore decided to take action on their own. Their initiative involves a process of territorialisation that is both concrete and abstract: abstract because, first of all, the members of the GDP insist on their affective relationship to the forest, and their need to make it known to the local community in order for people to create emotional connections, appropriate the forest and become sensitive to the issue at hand. In an interview with a member of the GDP on the origin of the park project, he stated:

"At the beginning, we organised to create a public park inside the forest of El Panul, in other words in order to impede a housing project and create a public park. We did not work a lot on that point. What happened is that with time, affective relationships to the territory were created (...) A spiritual link was forged, and I

think that this is essential to create a feeling of territoriality, of wanting to care for the place, of wanting to say this place belongs to me.”<sup>12</sup>

- 19 Paradoxically, getting to know the forest of El Panul has also involved an increase in the number of visitors and the concomitant vulnerability of certain areas. But for the members of GDP, protecting the *precordillera* necessarily implies getting its inhabitants acquainted with it in order for them to actively appropriate the area.
- 20 By announcing and sharing this project, even though no authority validated it, the park is today practically open to all. Anybody can enter, which is something that caught our attention. While there is a formal owner, it is the members of the GDP who manage it. When there are forest fires or other problems, inhabitants warn the GDP through social networks. It is they who announce where the fire is located, which species are in danger or what the best practices are to avoid the erosion of flora and fauna. Currently, visitors come to this area as if it were a public park. Members of the GDP also organise visits and walks in the forest for school children and Santiago locals. On 31 May 2015, we participated in one of these visits organised on the occasion of Chile’s Heritage Day. Accusing the State of not including “natural heritage” in the list, the GDP announced its desire to “restore the importance of natural heritage, common life and social and cultural relations that develop into the protection, appropriation and conservation of the Panul forest and our ecosystems”.<sup>13</sup>
- 21 In the case of the Panul forest, territorialisation means a concrete appropriation of the territory, an occupation that is formally illegal, because the land is private. This also translates into small interventions. Pathways have been laid out in the forest, panels put up at the entrance (cf. images 2 and 3), and posters illustrating local flora installed. At times, the GDP puts up a stand at the entrance to the forest to provide information to visitors who come to take a walk, have a picnic, take a bike ride or go for a hike. The estimated number of visitors is 1,000 per weekend, but this number can increase at various times.
- 22 Since 2013, the GDP has developed its project for a community park on the basis of assemblies open to all. About 10 assemblies were held in 2013 and 2014 to jointly decide on the park project and to delimit the areas for different uses of the park: walking, mountain biking, picnics, preservation, etc. GDP members mapped the territory and its uses. Several geography students joined the movement and contributed their skills to the project. On this occasion, they clearly defined the spatial limits of their action and delimited what would become the Panul community park. This space, delimited by the GDP, has a surface area of 1,000 ha and includes three private properties, including that of El Panul. Thus, the perimeter of action extended way beyond that of the initial housing project.
- 23 For the GDP, it is not about creating a private or a public park but rather a community park in which inhabitants can directly exercise their “sovereignty”:<sup>14</sup>

“The fact that it is a community park means the inhabitants, not only the GDP, have the right to participate in the decisions that are taken. We have tried from the very beginning to create spaces open to all, in which to discuss the community park that anybody can participate in.”
- 24 Other natural parks in Santiago, private or under concession, are not considered examples to be followed, because what GDP members want is for the park to be managed by the neighbours. According to them, one of the most interesting examples

in Chile is that of the recent community management of the natural park on Easter Island, which was agreed upon after several months of mobilisation.

“For example, the closest thing [to a community park] is what has been done recently on Easter Island [*Rapa Nui*], the national park of Rapa Nui, but that’s because the Rapa Nui are native people, an ethnic group, and they occupied that park for months. So the [Chilean] State had to give in. It gave them the management and administration and, in time, from what we heard, they are going to give them the ownership (...). If they let them manage the territory as a community, why would we not be allowed to do the same?”

- 25 For this member of the GDP, community management allows the exercise of actual citizen control, and it is an idea that is slowly taking hold. This new arrangement is not exclusive; local institutions’ participation is not refused. It is about inventing an innovative form of management, starting from a community approach.

Fig. 4. View of El Panul forest. In the background, a cloud of pollution covers the city of Santiago



Source: photograph by the authors.



**Fig. 5. Panel installed at the entrance of El Panul (Translation: "Participate in the creation of the first community park in the country")**



Source: photograph by the authors.

**Fig. 6. Entrance to El Panul. You can read on a banner, "Let's expropriate El Panul", while the panel on its left says "Private property". In the background, a stand where the GDP welcomed hikers on Heritage Day.**



Source: photograph by the authors.

## Conclusions

- 26 Starting from a catastrophic event in their life experience, the inhabitants adopted a discourse of environment protection and defence of nature that is anchored in the territory, in their practices and their affects. The territorial attachment and the “physical co-presence on the territory” (Boullier, 2009: 32) are central to the configuration of an associative project, a political movement and the creation of innovative forms of territorial management. In order for the problems that inhabitants face to become visible, and because the organisation under study was not been created in connection with a political party, labour union or any other institution (such as an NGO), its members must insist on their ties to the territory (Boullier, 2009).
- 27 By means of the conflict with housing developers and authorities who allow them to build, a process of socialisation and territorialisation takes place, which builds on representations but also on knowledge and valorisation strategies. Conflict modifies the territory’s representation amongst the inhabitants involved and the rest of the local population through the advertisement of conflict and of activities that raise public awareness. Conflict and, more specifically, claims concerning the Panul forest constitute a collective experience of territorial production, which consolidated in the project of a community park. Simmel (1995) demonstrated in his time how conflict stimulates innovation and creativity. In fact, conflict can be considered a process of innovation (Torre, 2011) that takes place through the public and communitarian uses of a private piece of land and projects for the construction of a community park.
- 28 The *precordillera* is the site, the theatre and the stake of the conflict, to use three terms employed by Aaron (1984) to define space. The case of Santiago’s foothills allows us to understand the ties between conflict and territory in a mountainous context and, at the same time, in an urban and metropolitan context. This last aspect is of great importance because it implies the need to reconcile the contradictory interests of urban development, from the protection of nature to the management of risks at the foot of the mountain range.

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## NOTES

1. The Metropolitan Regulation Plan (Plan Regulador Metropolitano), was created in 1960 to set the city limits and create a plan of land occupation. It is the main instrument of urban planning and regulation and comprises a set of norms aimed at directing and regulating, as the name indicates, the physical development of the metropolitan area.
2. According to the reports of the scientists who participated to the GDP, the Panul is a sclerophyllous forest, one of the last left on the Santiago foothills. See the GDP website <http://www.redprecordillera.cl/> consulted in August 2014<sup>[1]</sup>.
3. Lucy, 60 years old, retired after working for the University of Chile, lives with her children and husband in Lo Cañas.
4. According to the National Emergency Bureau (*Oficina Nacional de Emergencia - ONEMI*), of the Ministry of the Interior and Public Security. Information taken from website [www.sigweb.cl](http://www.sigweb.cl) consulted in August 2014<sup>[2]</sup>.
5. An inhabitant of La Florida close to 60 years of age, Gaby is a translator of Belgian nationality and the president of the GDP.
6. Interview with GDP member, Santiago, 7/5/2008.
7. For example, Rolando Armijo (Institute of Global Physics in Paris) or Francisco Ferrando (Geography department of the University of Chile) but also historians such as Benjamin Vicuña Mackenna (who, in his research on Chilean history, focuses on the history of earthquakes that have hit Santiago).
8. Interview with Gaby, Santiago, 01/10/2010.
9. He is one of the area's "first" inhabitants. He lived through the mudslides in 1993 and collected a lot of information on the *precordillera*. He lives a few metres from the *Quebrada de Macul* in the neighbourhood of El Esfuerzo, and he was a privileged informant regarding the mudslides because he saw them take down his whole house in May 1993.
10. Teresa, a counsellor in charge of urban issues (*asesora urbana*) for the Commune of La Florida, is an architect in charge of territorial planning, instruments and the commune's Urbanism Plan.
11. Interview with Teresa, Urban counsellor, Santiago, 24/4/2008.
12. Interview with Pedro, member of the GDP, Santiago, 02/06/2015.
13. GDP email flyer, Santiago, 27/5/2015.
14. Ibid.

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## ABSTRACTS

The Andean foothills found on the outskirts of Santiago are mainly private property. The management of this area has been an issue of conflict between residents and developers. Using the example of the municipality of La Florida, this article focuses on how conflict over the Andean foothills goes beyond simple land-use issues to create a new relationship with the “mountain” and new forms of land management. Combining ethnography and geography, this text highlights the role of the Andean foothills’ peculiar characteristics in the collective demands of citizens committed to their protection and conservation. It also discusses the role of conflict in creating and amplifying territoriality and as a process of (concrete as well as abstract) territorialisation and innovation in itself. The development of a community park that is neither private nor public highlights how innovative solutions can emerge from these citizen mobilisations.

## INDEX

**Keywords:** Chile, citizens, conflicts, engagement, Andean foothills

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