

**Mapuche Protest, Environmental Conflict, and
Social Movement Linkage in Chile**

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Abstract

This project chronicles the promise and limitations of social movement networks as mechanisms of political voice in Mapuche Chile. Though protest has largely fallen from favour in post-authoritarian Chile, environmental conflicts have shaken the southern territories of the Mapuche Indians since redemocratization. State promises of indigenous recognition and state access have clashed headlong with ambitious regional development priorities in hydropower and forestry. To resolve claims of injustice over ancestral land and resource rights, Mapuche leaders have forged sophisticated links with environmental organizations, human rights activists, scholars, and other indigenous groups. Linkage politics in Chile presents a vital test of civil society development and Latin American democratic consolidation.

Key Words

Chile, Mapuche, Indigenous Rights, Environmental Conflict, Linkage Politics, Social Movement Networks

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Many analysts view the density of horizontal and vertical social networks, coalitions, and other forms of social movement linkage as an important measure of the vitality of civil society.¹ A robust civil society is in turn a central consideration in studies of democratic transition and consolidation.² Chile, widely celebrated as one of Latin America's success stories, has experienced an international effort to hold General Pinochet to account for past human rights crimes, a national reconciliation process, the development of innovative new laws and political institutions, and the restoration of a healthy multi-party electoral system, producing a succession of stable, representative, civilian governments, including the country's first woman president.

Despite these achievements, Chile's prevailing style of political leadership exhibits an inherited elitist, vertical tradition that has limited civil society's development.³ Like its predecessors, the governing *Concertación* coalition tends to broker policy in closed, negotiated processes -- a top-down, 'pact making' style of governance popularly known as *cupulismo*.⁴ Though grassroots politics survived and challenged the repression of the dictatorship, centralized parties led the democratic restoration, and social movements suffered a subsequent decline.⁵ Reflecting the enduring legacy of the General's neoliberal vision, the political culture remains relatively individualistic, political apathy is comparatively high, and strategies of popular protest have fallen from favour.⁶

One notable segment of Chile's population has bucked this depoliticization trend. Mapuche Indians in the southern '*Araucanía*' region have adopted an increasingly activist stance since re-democratization, grabbing headlines with marches, sit-ins, property invasions, equipment sabotage, legal challenges, and pointed confrontations with political parties and leaders. The Mapuche have historically resided on the periphery of national politics, disconnected from the centre. However, a string of 'mega-development' projects in

hydropower and forestry have provoked a wave of protests, as Mapuche leaders struggle to overcome a legacy of distrust and forge strategic new alliances.

This paper examines the politics of Mapuche protest and social movement linkage. To what extent and with what efficacy have indigenous leaders employed strategies of social movement networking? Do cross-movement alliances indicate an increasingly robust civil society? How well do they hold up in the face of countervailing economic and political forces? What can we learn from Chile's environmental conflicts about its democratic development? The paper explores these questions in four sections, based on primary fieldwork in Chile from 1998-2006. Part one offers a brief historical foundation. Part two provides an overview of the pivotal land and resource conflicts. Part three explores Mapuche social movement linkages with environmentalists, human rights advocates, and other indigenous groups. Part four assesses the efficacy of linkage strategies and the lessons for Chilean democracy.

Exclusion and Inclusion in Mapuche Political History

Prior to the 'pacification' of 1860-1883, the Mapuche resisted centuries of conquest attempts by Incan, Spanish, and Chilean forces. Following its military victory, the government formed nearly 3,000 reservations in *Araucanía*, and charged catholic missionaries with integrating the native population into national society. Assimilationist policies challenged Mapuche cultural integrity, excluding them from the political decisions affecting their lives and livelihoods.⁷ Early twentieth-century governments subdivided and redistributed reservation lands to non-indigenous buyers, eventually pushing the Mapuche onto roughly five per cent of their original territory.⁸ This land colonization and usurpation was culturally and economically devastating, leaving the Mapuche suspicious of outsiders and distanced from national politics.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Presidents Frei and Allende promoted national land reform, restoring nearly 70,000 hectares to indigenous ownership by 1971. Indigenous cooperatives thrived, strengthening solidarity and optimism among Mapuche families.⁹ Still, the reform was incapable of reversing historical injustices, and local leaders turned to increasingly confrontational strategies of protest, land seizures, and strikes.¹⁰

Land reform came to a sudden end with the military coup of 1973. Consistent with the neoliberal agenda of his 'Chicago Boys' economic advisors, the Pinochet government issued Decree 2.568 in 1979, opening Mapuche lands to privatization. The law prohibited traditional communal land use, permitting indigenous families no more than six hectares of land each.¹¹ Eager to promote market-oriented development, the regime gave generous land concessions, subsidies, tax breaks, and favourable terms of investment to timber companies.

Pinochet ruled Mapuche territory with paternalism, division, and repression, especially against activist organizations whose leaders resented the loss of their lands to outside companies. Nevertheless, the movement sustained resistance across 17 years of dictatorship, foreshadowing the linkage politics of today. Mapuche leaders developed strategic alliances with a variety of civil society organizations to ameliorate marginalization. Advocacy NGOs offered workshops, legal advice, and launched other initiatives in agriculture, fishing, and rural development. One important initiative was the creation of the Mapuche Cultural Centres in 1978, which focused on cultural, socio-economic, and political issues in the communities, and provided the base for new movement organizations across the 1980s.¹²

Democratic Restoration and the New Indigenous Movement

When Pinochet's 1988 plebiscite opened space for electoral opposition, Mapuche leaders demanded land justice and political recognition. The centre-left opposition coalition, the *Concertación* (Coalition of Parties for Democracy) campaigned on indigenous rights,

with presidential candidate Patricio Aylwin's 1989 'New Imperial Pact' promising resolution of land disputes and constitutional recognition. While some Mapuche leaders were suspicious, others joined the coalition, believing the Pact represented a commitment to address their concerns in exchange for their electoral support.¹³ With the restoration of democratic rule in 1990, resolution to historical injustices seemed at hand.

The Mapuche movement was coming into its own at a propitious moment. The early 1990s was a time of renewal for indigenous peoples' movements everywhere.¹⁴ Latin American governments were abandoning assimilationist policies and modifying constitutions to celebrate their multi-ethnic societies. The 500-year anniversary of the European conquest boosted indigenous mobilization, fostered pan-Indian alliances, and generated broad re-interpretations of that history. Symbolizing the rising consciousness of the new indigenous movement, Rigoberta Menchú, a Mayan activist, received the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of her personal struggle against Guatemala's brutal military dictatorship. In 1993, the United Nations issued a 'Declaration of Indigenous Rights' and declared 'The Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples'.

The New Institutional Promise: Indigenous and Environmental Laws

In this period of ferment for Latin America's indigenous movements, many Mapuche leaders overcame their distrust, and participated in defining the mechanisms by which the *Concertación* government promised to deliver land and political recognition. In May 1990, the Aylwin government created a 'co-participatory' Special Commission for Indigenous Peoples (CEPI) to coordinate a new state-indigenous relationship. The CEPI consisted of ten indigenous representatives, ten government representatives, and a three-person directorate nominated by the president. From 1990 to 1993, they collaborated on legislation for a new indigenous law, constitutional recognition, and ratification of the International Labour

Organization's (ILO) Convention No. 169 Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries.¹⁵

In 1993, the congress passed the Indigenous Law (19.253), representing the promise of a new era of co-participation, justice, and indigenous rights and recognition. The law called for a new institution to promote the cultures and development of indigenous peoples. The CONADI (National Corporation for Indigenous Development) would place Indian leaders in state positions as agents of their own political futures. A Land Fund was created for buying and restoring usurped ancestral lands. The CONADI council would institutionalize the co-participatory spirit of New Imperial and the CEPI, with eight indigenous representatives, eight non-indigenous representatives, and an executive director appointed by the president. The new laws and institutions generated high hopes. For the first time in their history, Chile's indigenous people were empowered to select representatives to a state institution designed specifically to articulate their interests, respond to their concerns, and address land injustices. Many saw this as a long-overdue victory, and developed a proprietary sense, seeing CONADI as an institution of their own.¹⁶

At the same time, the government launched parallel environmental initiatives and institutions, rooted in a similar promise of democratic participation. Prior to the 1990s, no consequential environmental regime existed; regulatory politics were anathema to Pinochet's market fundamentalism. Just as the return of democratic governance raised high hopes for indigenous leaders, leaders of Chile's nascent environmental movement sought opportunities to address the accumulated legacy of environmental neglect.¹⁷ The governments of Patricio Aylwin (1990-1994) and Eduardo Frei (1994-2000) promised to prioritize sustainability and stewardship, presiding over the creation of a sophisticated body of environmental norms, procedures, and institutions. The centrepiece was the 1994 Environmental Framework Law (19.300), and the associated institutions are the National Environmental Commission,

CONAMA, and the Regional Environmental Commissions, the COREMAS. As with the indigenous institutions, *Concertación* leaders infused the environmental law and agencies with idealistic norms of prevention, participation, gradualism, and the 'polluter pays principle'.¹⁸

Megaprojects and Environmental Conflicts in Mapuche Territory

While many Mapuche leaders and environmental activists remained sceptical of the *Concertación's* promises, others viewed these legal and institutional developments with a growing expectation for more authentic citizenship and long-overdue redress of historical injustice and environmental abuse. In a few short years, those hopes would be clouded by disappointments, ultimately yielding a pattern of entrenched opposition, protest, division, and political violence in Mapuche territory. In Indian communities and environmental circles alike, institutional promises of co-participation deteriorated rapidly. When indigenous and environmental demands clashed with industrial and development interests, state agencies and policies perpetuated the Pinochet-era pattern of siding with private companies, against the expressed interests of indigenous communities, environmental experts, and civil society more broadly. Hydroelectricity and forestry provide the most vivid demonstrations of this pattern, and have been the flashpoints for the sharpest conflicts.

The Ralco Hydroelectric Project

For Mapuche and environmental leaders alike, the Ralco dam stands tall as a symbol of the betrayal of that democratic promise.¹⁹ During military rule, the National Electricity Company (ENDESA) planned a chain of hydroelectric installations in the Upper Bío Bío River Basin, the heart of Mapuche territory. The first, the Pangué, generated substantial environmental and cultural controversies from 1990-1997, including a discourse of 'ethnocide' and an eventual denunciation by the President of the World Bank. However, the project was under way years before the indigenous law, the environmental law, or their

associated institutions existed. These new protections and participatory mechanisms would not be tested until ENDESA (by then privatized and under the control of a Spanish industrial consortium) pursued a second dam, Ralco. Both installations involve major ecological and cultural disruption, the industrialization of wild lands, and the forced relocation of hundreds of Pehuenche families (the Mapuche subgroup that inhabit the highlands).

Mapuche leaders were determined to oppose Ralco, and some groups forged promising alliances with environmental, human rights, and other advocacy groups in Chile and abroad. The initial institutional response was encouraging, offering space for public criticism, as promised. In 1996, for example, CONAMA's review committee rejected the company's Environmental Impact Study (EIS) on grounds that it understated environmental and cultural consequences and did not adequately address Pehuenche compensation. In the longer run, however, verticalist intervention dampened those hopes. Though the first ruling prohibited addendums to the EIS, President Frei levied substantial pressure on officials to reverse position and permit addendums.

By 1997, the addendums were in place and EIS approval looked plausible. Indigenous and environmental activists shifted their hopes to CONADI, whose indigenous councillors seemed uniquely positioned to defeat the dam. However, in April 1997, President Frei intervened even more directly, removing Ralco's opponents from their offices, including the Temuco regional Sub director, the lead CONADI attorney, and the National Director, Mauricio Huenchulaf. In late 1997, CONAMA approved the environmental study, sparking indigenous and environmentalist outrage. In early 1998, CONADI officials appealed for a construction halt when they discovered the company had initiated construction without awaiting approval.

The next showdown came in July 1998, when two of Frei's appointed CONADI councillors indicated their opposition to Ralco. He responded by demanding their

resignations and replacing them with councillors sworn to vote in favour.²⁰ By early August, when the council would make its ruling, the indigenous councillors were opposed and the government councillors were in favour, leaving the deciding vote to Director Domingo Namuncura (whom Frei had appointed to replace Huenchulaf). When Frei learned of Namuncura's intention to vote no, he demanded his resignation. Once again, executive intervention trumped democratic deliberation. A month later, over the objections of the indigenous councillors, the president installed the first non-indigenous director, Rodrigo González, who voted to approve the relocation plan. Although several families refused to move and the controversy drug on for several years, by late 2003 the remaining Pehuenche families had accepted ENDESA's terms, and the dam was completed, inundating their historic territories and villages.

The Ralco experience deepened divisions within the Mapuche movement, and severely damaged relationships between the Mapuche, the environmental community, and the state. For environmental and indigenous leaders alike, CONAMA and the COREMAS were the first to disappoint. Their manipulation demonstrated agency capture and weak institutionalism, failing to respond to pressing environmental and human concerns, and instead offering expedited approval with scant recognition of popular opposition. CONADI's performance likewise sent a clear signal to Mapuche leaders. Revealing an enduring, autocratic style of politics, the executive 'usurped' and 'de-Indianised' 'our CONADI'.²¹ It was a devastating blow to the agency's credibility and to the government's promises of a new era of recognition and co-participation. With formal avenues of representation de-legitimized, Namuncura believes militancy, protest, and radicalization were made inevitable.²²

Industrial Forestry and Land Disputes

The Pinochet government prioritized industrial forestry in southern Chile, and the timber industry emerged as a powerful regional actor. In 1974, Decree Law 701 created

subsidies for companies to establish plantations on former Mapuche lands acquired through privatization. Timber plantations received 75-100 per cent direct government funding during the dictatorship. *Concertación* governments, dedicated to maintaining the export-driven economy, have continued the subsidies.²³ Timber products now account for 34 per cent of exports, second only to copper.²⁴

Immediately following the restoration of civilian rule, Mapuche leaders were divided over relations with the state. Many also took a hostile view of the companies, viewing them as complicit in the usurpation of their territories. Some Mapuche leaders pressed state officials for restoration of ancestral land and for mechanisms to prohibit companies from continued territorial acquisition. Frustrated by the lack of response, and by *Concertación's* galling renewal of generous state support for timber companies, more radical groups such as *Consejo de Todas Las Tierras* (All Lands Council) resorted to protest and land-seizure strategies not seen since the Allende years. Aylwin's government was quick to react against the militants, employing the Anti-Terrorist and Internal Security Laws used in the past to silence opposition to the dictatorship.²⁵ By 1992, the government had imprisoned 144 Mapuche land protestors, setting a cynical tone for the democratic era.²⁶

In spite of these setbacks, some leaders remained hopeful about the land restoration mechanisms of the Indigenous Law. One early test involved 3,000 hectares in the community of Lumaco that belonged to two Mapuche chieftains in the nineteenth century. After conquest, usurpation, and privatization, the lands eventually ended in the hands of one of the large companies, Forestal Arauco. In 1997, the descendants (85 families) initiated the land recovery process through the new law. However, the company fought back in the courts and stalled devolution. The frustrated families occupied the plots and interrupted company operations. In December 1997, protestors intercepted three logging trucks and set them on

fire. The Frei government arrested twelve Mapuches and imprisoned them under the anti-terrorism law.

With land restoration at a standstill, conflicts erupted throughout the region. By September 1998, 15,000 hectares were under dispute between 473 indigenous families and the forestry companies.²⁷ In early 1999, confrontations between indigenous groups and workers at another major company, Forestal Mininco, turned violent in several locations. Mapuche organizations threatened more protests and land invasions if CONADI did not act promptly to restore their lands. Under pressure, CONADI negotiated the devolution of 59 hectares with leaders in the communities of Juan Loncoyán and Traiguén. However, even CONADI's indigenous councillors denounced the agreement as inadequate and unfair.²⁸

With land takeovers, arson, police brutality, and imprisonments continuing into 2000, one group of Mapuche leaders (including Aucán Huilcamán, from the All Lands Council) accused the government of militarizing the region. These organizations staged numerous roadblocks and protests in Temuco and Santiago. In turn, prosecutors blamed indigenous leaders for threatening armed mobilization. CONADI councillors insisted that the Mapuche were open to peaceful dialogue, eager to discuss land restoration, the release of 'political prisoners', constitutional recognition, and ratification of ILO 169. However, President Frei refused to meet. To those Mapuche leaders who had staked their hopes on better relations with the state, this intransigence was yet another indicator of a government stance in favour of wealthy landowners and large corporations, but against the interests of indigenous peoples.

Ricardo Lagos assumed the presidency in 2000, promising to be more responsive to indigenous demands. He increased CONADI's budget, secured a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank, and immediately distributed 50,000 hectares to indigenous communities.²⁹ He also launched the 'Historical Truth and New Deal Commission' to develop recommendations for historical redress and constitutional recognition. However, the

Commission's 2003 report quickly encountered roadblocks, with conservative senators and landowners asserting that indigenous self-determination would lead to 'dismemberment of the Chilean state'.³⁰ With so little progress in land devolution, conflicts persisted.

Disappointingly, the Lagos administration continued to employ the anti-terrorism and internal security laws to jail Mapuche protestors. By the end of his term (2006), hundreds of Mapuche activists had been processed and many remained in prison.³¹

The Promise of Linkage Politics

The complex array of environmental, social, and political issues manifest in contemporary Mapuche struggles presents both crisis and opportunity. As Chilean activists strive to enrich their civil society and enhance the quality of their citizenship through organization, education, and action, land and resource conflicts in the *Araucanía* have proven to be especially fertile grounds for social movement linkages.

Environmental Links

Hydroelectric dams and industrial forestry tend to generate controversy and galvanize opposition everywhere. Large-scale dam projects invariably threaten to transform landscapes, watersheds, and human and ecological systems. Plantation forestry is associated with diminished biodiversity, habitat destruction, and soil degradation. Southern Chile's pine and eucalyptus plantations consume from 60-120 litres of water per day, drying out surrounding lands and fields; regular aerial application of herbicides and pesticides also contaminates watersheds and affects public health.³² Environmental and indigenous rights organizations would thus seem to be natural allies in the face of major industrial threats to southern Chile's rainforests, rivers, and communities. Comprehensive mapping of the dozens of organizations, networks, and alliances involved in Mapuche territory is beyond the scope of this paper, though a selective sketch is revealing of their diversity and their potential efficacy.³³

Older and more established organizations like CODEFF and 'Defenders of the Chilean

Forest' come from a tradition of biodiversity conservation. Their linkages with the Mapuche have tended toward the symbolic, involving expressions of solidarity and a discourse in defence of biological and cultural diversity.³⁴ Younger 'hard-line' organizations ('*duros*') take a more ideological stance, tying environmental problems to economic injustices, and seeking more dramatic structural change. Groups such as the Institute of Political Ecology (IEP), the Ecological Action Network (RENACE), and the Latin American Observatory of Environmental Conflicts (OLCA) share a conviction that environmental activism might ultimately generate a more vibrant Chilean civil society.³⁵ Their strategic ties to Mapuche activists are oriented explicitly toward tying environmental and social justice aims. In addition to hydroelectric and forest issues, they work on behalf of sustainable resource use, defence of traditional ecological knowledge, and environmental justice campaigns, such as challenging hazardous and solid waste disposal facilities in Mapuche communities.³⁶

In the Ralco case, the most important NGO was the Bío Bío Action Group, GABB. Alarmed by the environmental and human implications of ENDESA's plans, GABB founders approached threatened Pehuenche communities in the early 1990s. In early meetings they found isolation, disconnection, and distrust, but 'bit by bit we realized they were afraid... and they asked us for help: 'you... who understand the science of this; please, help us. Together, we will save the river and save ourselves'.³⁷ During the Panguel struggle, GABB served as the nexus between environmental and indigenous rights groups in Chile and their international counterparts. These informational and advocacy efforts achieved global notoriety, earning its founder and director, Juan Pablo Orrego, Sweden's Right Livelihood Award in 1998 (a social justice counterpart to the Nobel Award).

With GABB raising Ralco's profile, international environmental interest surged in the late 1990s. Since then, dozens of organizations have developed relationships with Chile's environmental and indigenous groups. The Indigenous Environmental Network, the

International Rivers Network, and the Global Justice Ecology Project have fused environmental, indigenous, and social justice issues in their campaigns in Chile. While forest protection organizations, such as the Latin American Network against Monoculture Tree Plantations, Uruguay's World Rainforest Movement, Global Forest Watch, and others focus largely on biodiversity and habitat protection, they also view indigenous groups as critical allies confronting timber-export economies, offering informational support and solidarity campaigns with communities affected by land struggles and timber exploitation.

Human Rights, Academic, and Advocacy Links

Chile has a strong tradition of human rights advocacy, including a history of resistance to military repression. Human rights concerns escalated in the 1990s with rising confrontations between Mapuche groups and police forces. Mapuche advocacy groups from the 1980s, such as the *Sociedad Mapuche Lonko Kilapang*, have launched human rights campaigns in response to recent police abuses, torture, and political imprisonment. National groups such as *Equipo Nizkor*, the Centre for Human Rights (at the Universidad de Chile), and the Corporation for the Promotion and Defence of People's Rights (CODEPU) help with advocacy and information. The Observatory of Indigenous Peoples' Rights, co-headed by attorney José Aylwin, son of the first *Concertación* president, provides legal defence to imprisoned Mapuche activists, and promotes collaboration with international human rights organizations from the United States, Europe, and Latin America.

International outreach has drawn ties to advocacy groups such as California's South and Meso American Indian Rights Centre (SAIIC) and Human Rights Watch, as well as a variety of legal assistance efforts. In July 2005, France's Observatory for the Protection of Defenders of Human Rights, the World Organization against Torture, and the International Federation of Human Rights lent legal support to a group of 16 protesters charged under the terrorism law.³⁸ In January 2007, Chile's Indigenous Observatory sponsored an international

campaign to call attention to violations against Mapuche activists. It included representatives from Amnesty International, the Centre for Legal Studies in Argentina (CELS), the Centre for Juridical and Social Studies in Bolivia (CEJIS), and Norwegian Popular Support (APN). The final report confirmed and documented police abuses.³⁹

Academics have assisted with alliance building. José Aylwin, an anthropologist, and historian José Bengoa, both renowned experts on the Mapuche, lent credibility to the Indigenous Law and CONADI through their participation. Aylwin has supported the UFRO's (University of the Frontier) Institute of Indigenous Studies, which concentrates on outreach and advocacy. Scholarly links are also international. For example, damaging assessments from several teams of international academic and scientific experts led to CONAMA's initial rejection of Ralco's EIS.⁴⁰ In 1998, the American Anthropological Association's Committee for Human Rights issued a briefing document, arguing that ENDESA's actions seriously breached Pehuenche civil and political rights.⁴¹

Indigenous Links

Finally, pan-indigenous mobilization has increased dramatically across the past two decades, within Chile and beyond.⁴² Organizations such as the National Indigenous Coordinator (CONACIN) link indigenous rights to human rights and social justice, including defence of indigenous ecological knowledge, and biological and cultural diversity. A GABB spokesperson called Ralco 'a banner of struggle for all indigenous peoples'.⁴³ According to Domingo Namuncura, indigenous groups across the country viewed relocation of the Pehuenche as an 'eradication' effort: 'we see Ralco as the symbolic expression of the threat of "modernity" and "progress" to the indigenous people of Chile...; we don't want your progress to rub out our culture'.⁴⁴

Mapuche leaders have also forged alliances with other Latin American indigenous groups. They have gained support from better-organized and more politically successful

indigenous movements in Ecuador and Bolivia. Mexico's Mayan Zapatistas and some Mapuche leaders have also voiced mutual expressions of solidarity.⁴⁵ Chile's indigenous leaders joined with their counterparts from across the region to forge the Andean Network of Indigenous Organizations. In July 2006, representatives from Chile, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, and Colombia met in Cusco, Peru, and signed the 'Cusco Declaration' for the promotion of legal, political, and constitutional reforms to enhance indigenous rights, political participation, recognition, pluri-nationalism, collective rights, and local control over land and natural resources.⁴⁶

Assessing Social Movement Links

Looking back over 20 years of Mapuche linkage politics, a first glance provides a discouraging picture. While leaders, base communities, and advocates have formed an intriguing web of social movement ties, adverse political decisions have dealt major defeats. The promise of 'co-participation' in the CONADI and CONAMA turned quickly to disillusionment and manipulation from above. The Ralco dam has long since inundated the Pehuenche villages of the Upper Bío Bío, and ENDESA has since unveiled plans to invest US \$4 billion for construction of four new hydroelectric plants in the XI region.⁴⁷ The forestry giants have likewise continued their march to expand landholdings and plantations.

Some Serious Setbacks

Ralco was especially damaging. Though Pehuenche communities were initially distrustful and divided about forging relationships with outsiders, the early days of the alliance were optimistic.⁴⁸ Grave threats to nature and people helped bridge those gaps, and the drama of forced relocation and wilderness destruction gave the cause a celebrity status in the international spotlight. But in spite of the resonance of the message, the sophistication of the relationships, hundreds of newspaper headlines, educational tours around the world, and new democratic institutions and laws, in the end the Chilean state closed the door on the

Mapuche and their allies, imposing a corporate mega development priority from the top, in classic *cupulismo*. That outcome was dispiriting to all involved.

The fragility of linkage was revealed in 2001, when GABB's indigenous-environmental alliance unravelled and the organization abruptly closed.⁴⁹ In fact, two years earlier, with the dam under construction and the last Pehuenche families negotiating relocation, the possibility of defeat hung heavily. According to Manuel Baquedano from IEP, 'nevertheless, we believed it would still be possible to achieve a dignified ending for the Upper Bío Bío'.⁵⁰ But rumours began to circulate and find a base among suspicious natives: the 'luxurious profits' of the environmentalists, the cynical manipulation of indigenous groups. From a GABB spokesperson at the time: 'many Mapuche groups hate us; they think we're getting rich off of the Pehuenches'.⁵¹ And from the director of a regional Mapuche council: 'we have a troublesome relationship with the GABB, and we are one of the most tolerant'.⁵² Years later, Baquedano voices the same frustration:

Until we decided to bring the community in, this population had not manifested knowledge or opposition. The alliances that we constructed were very unequal because they were constructed from the environmental realm towards the indigenous realm... when indigenous factors such as territory, property, and culture began taking precedence, the environmental demands took second stage... and they put the brakes on our project. But they were the ones who had to decide, not those who were supporting them, the environmentalists.⁵³

Enduring divisions among the Mapuche present problems for newer environmental groups such as the Citizen's Action Network for Environmental Rights (RADA). 'We always seek to establish linkages with Mapuche communities and organizations that are more open to contact with Chilean society, because there are other organizations that have a more difficult time with it, due to all of the historical weight of the Mapuche conflict. It is harder for us to create linkages to those groups'.⁵⁴

Regarding land restoration, many years of struggle have yielded only limited results. Supported by legal aid and human rights groups, the Mapuche have enjoyed some successes.

In the Arauco zone, families have recovered about 20,000 hectares, and in Traiguén about 12,000. However, land acquisition by timber companies has proceeded apace; the seven largest now hold about 2 million hectares, with 1.2 million in the hands of the two biggest companies, contrasting with only approximately 700,000 hectares of Mapuche agricultural land.⁵⁵

Whatever gains have been made have come at a heavy price in repression, and in deeper divisions in the communities and the movement. President Bachelet promised to ban the use of the terrorism and security laws against protestors, and to deliver on the *Concertación's* long-delayed agenda of constitutional recognition and ratification of UN indigenous rights treaties.⁵⁶ However, according to the 'Organization of Friends and Families of the Mapuche Political Prisoners', her government continues to exercise 'racism and state terrorism', even in the face of hunger strikes among the prisoners and sustained pressure from human rights groups.⁵⁷ This disappointment is reflected in a 2008 press release to the president from the National Association of Rural and Indigenous Women: 'We are deeply disturbed by the indifference of the government that you lead, which has established truly state-based terrorism in Mapuche territories, thereby generating an atmosphere of war similar or worse than what we lived under the dictatorship'.⁵⁸ According to one defence attorney, 'by using the terrorist law, the government has not only succeeded in disarticulating Mapuche groups, it has also robbed them of the moral prestige and sympathy they once enjoyed'.⁵⁹

While human rights linkages have retained salience, the fallout from Ralco has undermined potential links in other areas:

A few years back, after Ralco, we [environmentalists] were engaging in a campaign to protect native forests along with US organizations... When it seemed like we were close to a reasonable agreement [with timber companies and the government], the issue came up that we needed to solve the indigenous conflict first... At that moment I said 'no, we will not repeat Ralco..., the indigenous will never reach an agreement because they do not have the capacity, they are not organized... their struggle is decentralized...

we do not have time to wait until they organize themselves'. ...The linkages were very debilitated.⁶⁰

The new state institutions have also fallen far short of their promise. While many CONAMA and CONADI staffers are sincere, the gap between the letter and practice of the laws requires constant vigilance from activists. '[CONAMA's] staff produces technical reports, but in the end the decisions are made by politicians. The politicians do not want to make life difficult for companies because they have economic interests, and they oversee the negative environmental impact of these companies. Thus with CONAMA we can only get so far'.⁶¹ For example, in the recent cases of at least three landfills (Ankue, Boyeko y Kilaco), CONAMA failed to require environmental reports prior to construction. Local community members and environmental activists publicly denounced the lack of enforcement, finally managing to get the dumps closed until the companies complied.⁶²

CONADI's participatory mechanisms also continue to prove limited.

According to its Liaison to Indigenous Communities:

When CONADI emits its reports, we go to the communities and talk to people about the impact of environmental problems, but this participation does not go beyond the reports. There are difficulties in transferring the input from indigenous communities into the final reports..., and also at the national level under the *Intendente* [National Administrator]. They do not take indigenous participation as a priority in the elaboration of projects. The same goes for CONAMA, and we cannot force the issue.⁶³

Some Hopeful Signs

Though frayed by past setbacks, linkage politics in Mapuche Chile is also a story with some notable achievements and some positive indicators of a better future. Social movement networks have connected remote indigenous communities to national society, generating new conduits of communication and influence. For instance, a wave of human rights solidarity has unfolded in the wake of the January 2008 police killing of Matías Catrileo, a 22 year old Mapuche student. 'His death caused an indignation that spread beyond Mapuche territory', spawning a support network of 'catholic and evangelical churches, the CUT labor union,

feminist, gay, and lesbian movements, human rights groups, neighborhood and area associations, groups of historians, anthropologists, students, and a wide net of base supporters, including some members of congress'.⁶⁴

Mapuche advocacy networks continue to campaign against new hydroelectric proposals and against the expansion of industrial forestry. Alliances with environmental groups have brought national attention to additional environmental threats as well. For instance, the installation of water treatment facilities in more than 40 Mapuche communities in recent years has contaminated local rivers and lakes.⁶⁵ The existence of 28 solid waste dumps in and around Mapuche communities also has dangerous environmental health consequences.⁶⁶ As awareness rises, issues like toxic waste, landfills, road and airport construction, cellulose plants, and industrial salmon farming operations are making it onto the Mapuche political agenda.⁶⁷

Mapuche communities and their allies have launched innovative new environmental justice campaigns in recent years. In August 2005, 1,300 people protested a landfill in Vilcún.⁶⁸ The same month, CONAMA registered 349 complaints by local residents against a landfill in Pumanal.⁶⁹ Environmental justice activism sensitizes communities to hazards, and attracts assistance from potential allies, especially in areas such as legal protection. For instance, OLCA worked with the Law Clinic of the Catholic University of Temuco to begin legal action against landfill companies that have operated without regard to social and environmental impacts for over a decade.⁷⁰

Ties to environmental NGOs can also improve relations with the state. Government representatives increasingly communicate with environmental organizations on the design and implementation of environmental regulations, EIS reports, and industry compliance. In August 2001, the municipality of Temuco signed a 25-million peso agreement with UFRO (University of the Frontier) for technical assessments of infrastructure projects, which will

rely on consultative mechanisms with Mapuche communities.⁷¹ RADA, an indigenous-environmental partnership formed in 2005, focuses on landfills in Mapuche communities. They maintain contact with CONAMA's environmental engineers to design socially and environmentally oriented policies.

We are participating in a working group at the regional level... asking that these landfills in Mapuche communities be closed, that they move elsewhere. We are also fighting for reparatory measures, and then we will turn to demanding that all existing landfills be required to separate recyclable materials. We consider CONAMA an ally because its people design good policies. But they need to be implemented, and that is up to the municipalities... [which are] fundamental actors in environmental themes, and we need to deepen our work with them.⁷²

Finally, there may be some encouraging movement toward authenticity in Chile's environmental laws and institutions. In 2004, CONADI published the first comprehensive evaluation of environmental impacts in indigenous territories.⁷³ One staff person acknowledges that its proposals have made little headway, and environmental issues remain a low priority to *Concertación* leaders.⁷⁴ Still, the report brought state reformers, academic experts, and community leaders together to craft a vision for regional development, based on resolving environmental conflicts and supporting sustainable initiatives. Another promising sign is CONADI's creation (July 2006) of a 'Liaison to Indigenous Communities on Socio-environmental Issues', charged with bringing social and environmental concerns about forestry and hydroelectric projects into one department.⁷⁵ Though these initiatives arrived too late to avert the damage of Ralco, Lumaco, or Triaguén, they suggest growing recognition of the urgency and salience of environmental problems in Mapuche communities.

Conclusion

The lessons from these cases -- about the promise and limits of linkage strategies, the vitality of civil society, and the quality of democracy -- are decidedly mixed. Civic mobilization and linkage politics are central to these accounts, yet institutional failures have imposed major constraints. Chile's new indigenous and environmental agencies present an

idealistic structure and discourse of co-participation, but social movement leaders have struggled to find meaningful channels of representation. Viewed from *Araucanía*, new mechanisms of political access for civil society actors have created mostly the appearance of political voice, while political decisions have favoured corporate, industrial, and development interests over grassroots and community concerns. These patterns are hardly unique to Chile; agency capture and market power appear in much of the world. Unfortunately, they continue to fuel public cynicism about the quality of interest articulation and the value of active citizenship in Chile's democracy.

Taking the longer view, however, social movement linkages have undoubtedly facilitated rising popular consciousness about environmental, human rights, and social justice issues in Mapuche territory. These struggles have provided important opportunities for social learning, and have perhaps contributed, if tenuously, to civil society's development, in terms of ever-thicker webs of associational life. Indeed, the most striking feature of Chilean linkage politics is the determination, passion, and perseverance of its grassroots movements. Even with this troubled history, today's civil society organizations are working to bridge cultural, class, and geographic divides, albeit with more caution, scepticism, and tempered expectations. In the cities and in the villages, activists remain determined to build collaboration on behalf of a more just and sustainable future, not just for the Mapuche, but for all Chileans.

Notes

¹ For example, M Keck and K Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998; G Lievesley, *Democracy in Latin America: Mobilization, Power and the Search for a New Politics*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999; D Brooks and J Fox (ed), *Cross-Border Dialogues: US-Mexico Social Movement Networking*, La Jolla: Center for US-Mexico Studies, University of California San Diego, 2002.

² L Diamond, 'Rethinking civil society: toward democratic consolidation', *Journal of Democracy* (5/3), 1994, pp 5-17; A Brysk, 'Democratizing civil society in Latin America',

Journal of Democracy, 11 (3), 2000, pp 151-165; and P Oxhorn, *Organizing Civil Society: The Popular Sectors and the Struggle for Democracy in Chile*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995.

³ B Loveman, *Chile: The Legacy of Hispanic Capitalism*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1979; M Garreton, *The Chilean Political Process*, Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1989.

⁴ Politics taking place in the apex (or *cúpula*) of power. Latin Americans also know this pattern as *democracia de los acuerdos*, variously translated as 'consensus democracy', 'democracy by agreement', or 'pacted democracy'.

⁵ J Petras and F Leiva, *Democracy and Poverty in Chile: The Limits to Electoral Politics*, Boulder: Westview, 1994; L Taylor, *Citizenship, Participation, and Democracy: Changing Dynamics in Chile and Argentina*, New York: St. Martin's, 1998; P Oxhorn, *When Democracy Isn't All That Democratic: Social Exclusion and the Limits of the Public Sphere in Latin America*, Coral Gables: North-South Center, University of Miami Press, 2001.

⁶ A Riquelme, 'Voting for nobody in Chile's new democracy' *NACLA Report on the Americas* (32/6), 1999, pp 31-33; D Carruthers, 'Environmental politics in Chile: legacies of dictatorship and democracy', *Third World Quarterly*, 22 (3), 2001, pp 343-57.

⁷ L Degarrod, 'Female shamanism and the Mapuche transformation into Christian Chilean farmers', *Religion*, 28, 1998, pp 339-50.

⁸ G Muñoz Ramírez, 'El movimiento mapuche autónomo: su lucha en vivo', *Ojarasca*, 100, (Mexico City), August 2005.

⁹ F Mallon, *La sangre del copihue: La comunidad Mapuche de Nicolás Ailío y el Estado chileno 1906-2001*, Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 2004, p 121.

¹⁰ M Repetto, *Políticas indigenistas en el Cono Sur: Argentina y Chile frente a los Mapuche, siglos XIX y XX*, Brasilia: University of Brasilia, Social Anthropology Department, MA thesis, 1997.

¹¹ J Aylwin, 'Los mapuche o esa parte de la realidad que no queremos ver', in *El despertar del pueblo mapuche: nuevos conflictos, viejas demandas*, R Vera, et al. (ed), Temuco: Instituto de Estudios Indígenas, Universidad de la Frontera, 2004, pp 26-33.

¹² Ad Mapu, Nehuen Mapu, Sociedad Calfulicán, Choin Folilche, Lautaro, and other organizations formed out of the Mapuche Cultural Centres. See Repetto, *Políticas Indigenistas en el Cono Sur*.

¹³ Interview with Alejandro Herrera, Researcher, Instituto de Estudios Indígenas, Universidad de la Frontera, Temuco, 7 June 1999.

¹⁴ D Maybury-Lewis, *Millennium: Tribal Wisdom and the Modern World*, New York: Viking Press, 1992.

- ¹⁵ Interview with Alejandro Herrera, Temuco, 7 June 1999.
- ¹⁶ Interview with Alejandro Herrera, Temuco, 7 June 1999.
- ¹⁷ R Quiroga Martínez, *El tigre sin selva: consecuencias ambientales de la transformación económica de Chile, 1974-199*, Santiago: IEP, 1994; J Collins and J Lear, *Chile's Free Market Miracle: A Second Look*, Oakland: Food First, 1995; M Claude, *Una vez más la miseria: ¿Es Chile un país sustentable?*, Santiago: Ediciones LOM, 1997.
- ¹⁸ E Silva, 'Democracy, market economics and environmental policy in Chile', *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, 38 (4), 1996, pp 1-34. See also *Gestión ambiental del gobierno de Chile*, Santiago: CONAMA (Comisión Nacional del Medio Ambiente).
- ¹⁹ For complete accounts see R Morales et al., *Ralco: modernidad o etnocidio en territorio mapuche*, Temuco: Instituto de Estudios Indígenas, Universidad de la Frontera, 1998; D Namuncura, *Ralco: ¿represa o pobreza?*, Santiago: Ediciones LOM, 1999; *El proyecto ralco de ENDESA en Chile: un caso de genocidio*, Santiago: Universidad de Arte y Ciencias Sociales, Departamento de Derechos Humanos y Estudios Indígenas, 2000; and M Baquedano, *La batalla de Ralco: de la electricidad sucia a la electricidad verde*, Santiago: Ediciones LOM, 2004.
- ²⁰ Interview with Christian Vives, Former Government Councillor, Corporación Nacional de Desarrollo Indígena, Santiago, 10 June 1999; D Namuncura, *Ralco: ¿represa o pobreza?*, p 39.
- ²¹ Interview with Domingo Namuncura, Former National Director, Corporación Nacional de Desarrollo Indígena, Santiago, 2 June 1999.
- ²² Interview with Domingo Namuncura, 2 June 1999.
- ²³ A Grass, Antonio, 'Las empresas forestales y el pueblo mapuche', *La Tercera* (Santiago), 31 March 1999; M Maggio, 'El conflicto con las empresas forestales en territorio mapuche', www.biodiversidadla.org, 16 January 2007.
- ²⁴ Maggio, 'El conflicto con las empresas forestales en territorio mapuche'.
- ²⁵ The 1984 Anti-terrorist Law (No. 18.314), and the 1958 Law of Internal Security (No. 12.927), which Pinochet stiffened in 1975. See B Loveman and E Lira, *Arquitectura política y seguridad interior del Estado, 1811-1990*, Santiago: DIBAM, 2000.
- ²⁶ 'Gobierno estudia extender amnistía a indígenas condenados por tomas', *Diario Austral*, (Temuco), 8 August 2000; D Haughney, *Neoliberal Economics, Democratic Transition, and Mapuche Demands for Rights in Chile*, Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2006, p 72.
- ²⁷ According to an attorney for indigenous groups, the actual number of disputed hectares was closer to 400,000. 'Tomas de predios y tomaduras de pelo', *La Tercera* (Santiago), 26 April 1998.

²⁸ 'CONADI comprará tierras a Forestal Mininco', *Diario Austral* (Temuco), 19 March 1999; 'No se ha firmado la paz', *Diario Austral* (Temuco), 20 March 1999.

²⁹ 'Lagos se comprometió con los pueblos originarios', *Diario Austral* (Temuco), 5 October 2000.

³⁰ L Rohter, 'Mapuche indians in Chile struggle to take back forests', *New York Times*, 11 August 2004.

³¹ Estimates vary from 20-500, depending on the definition of 'political prisoner' and the legal provisions that led to individual convictions. Mapuche activists assert that the Frei and Lagos governments jailed 500 Mapuche protestors using the laws ('Mapuches marchan por la capital para exigir libertad de 'presos políticos' de su pueblo', *La Tercera*, 20 May 2006). One report found only four imprisonments during Lagos' term (in addition to those remaining in prison from Frei's term), but 210 Mapuche protestors processed under the laws (E Seguel and F Le Bonniec, 'Movimiento mapuche y justicia Chilena en la actualidad: reflexiones acerca de la judicialización de las reivindicaciones mapuche en Chile', in *Derechos Humanos y Pueblos Indígenas: Tendencias Internacionales y Contexto Chileno*, J Aylwin (ed), Temuco: Instituto de Estudios Indígenas, Universidad de la Frontera, p 354). See also R Zibechi, 'Chile: La larga resistencia mapuche,' Silver City, NM: International Relations Center, Programa de las Américas, 17 May 2007.

³² Maggio, 'El conflicto con las empresas forestales en territorio mapuche'.

³³ For a more complete discussion of the Chilean environmental movement, see Carruthers, 'Environmental politics in Chile'.

³⁴ Interview with Hernan Verscheure, CODEFF (Comité Nacional pro Defensa de la Fauna y Flora), Santiago, 4 June 1998.

³⁵ Interview with Manuel Baquedano, IEP (Instituto de Ecología Política), Santiago, 28 May 1998; see also Claude, *Una vez más la miseria*.

³⁶ 'Basurales en comunidades mapuche: Un conflicto latente en la region de la Araucanía', Santiago: OLCA (Observatorio Latinoamericano de Conflictos Ambientales), 2004.

³⁷ Interview with Rodrigo Garretón, GABB (Grupo de Acción por el Bío Bío), Santiago, 4 June 1999.

³⁸ 'Chile: juicio de dirigentes mapuche acusados de asociación ilícita terrorista,' FIDH (Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme), www.fidh.org, July 13 2005.

³⁹ 'Chile: misión internacional de derechos humanos por abusos policiales en contra de mapuche', Amnesty International, 29 January 2007, (report available at www.biodiversidadla.org).

⁴⁰ Baquedano, *La batalla de Ralco*.

⁴¹ 'The Pehuenche, the World Bank Group and ENDESA S.A.: violations of human rights in the Pangué and Ralco dam projects on the Bío Bío River, Chile', Committee for Human Rights, American Anthropological Association, www.derechos.org/nizkor, March 1998.

⁴² Indigenous groups in Chile also include the Aymara, Colla, Quechua, Rapa Nui, Yamana, and Atacameños, but the Mapuche comprise the vast majority (98%) of the indigenous population. The 2002 census counted 604,000 Mapuche (4% of the national population). See *Informe del Programa de Derechos Indígenas*, Santiago: Ediciones LOM/Universidad de la Frontera, 2003.

⁴³ Interview with Rodrigo Garretón, 4 June 1999.

⁴⁴ Interview with Domingo Namuncura, 2 June 1999.

⁴⁵ Though Mapuche leaders are careful to maintain distance from images of armed militancy. 'Controvertida vinculación mapuche-zapatista'. *Diario Austral* (Temuco), 22 April 2003.

⁴⁶ 'Coordinadora Andina de organizaciones indígenas: Declaración de Cusco,' *Ojarasca*, 112, (Mexico City), August 2006.

⁴⁷ V Ibarra, 'Megacentrales de Endesa desatan la guerra de Aysén', *La Tercera* (Santiago), 15 January 2006.

⁴⁸ Interview with Rodrigo Garretón, 4 June 1999.

⁴⁹ The GABB offices in Santiago were ransacked and looted in what one GABB leader suspects was a deliberate effort to silence environmental opposition (Baquedano, *La batalla de Ralco*, p 167). Financially devastated by the robbery, GABB leaders announced its closure.

⁵⁰ Baquedano, *La batalla de Ralco*, p 167.

⁵¹ Interview with Rodrigo Garretón, 4 June 1999.

⁵² Interview with Aldisson Anguita, General Director, Consejo Regional de Los Pueblos Mapuche, Temuco, 7 June 1999.

⁵³ Interview with Manuel Baquedano, IEP (Instituto de Ecología Política), Santiago, 14 September 2006.

⁵⁴ Interview with Alejandra Parra, RADA (Red de Acción Ciudadana por los Derechos Ambientales), Temuco, 12 September 2006.

⁵⁵ Muñoz Ramírez, 'El movimiento mapuche autónomo: su lucha en vivo'.

⁵⁶ 'Bachelet insistirá en reconocimiento constitucional a pueblos originarios', *La Tercera* (Santiago), 10 November 2006.

⁵⁷ 'Presos políticos mapuche en huelga de hambre', *Ojarasca*, 109, (Mexico City), May 2006.

⁵⁸ 'Open letter to Bachelet', ANAMURI (Asociación Nacional de Mujeres Rurales e Indígenas), 23 January 2008; cited in R Zibechi, 'Historical Mapuche hunger strike ends in success', Americas Policy Program Special Report (Washington DC: Center for International Policy, 26 February 2008).

⁵⁹ Rohter, 'Mapuche indians in Chile struggle to take back forests'.

⁶⁰ Interview with Manuel Baquedano, 14 September 2006.

⁶¹ Interview with Alejandra Parra, 12 September 2006.

⁶² OLCA, 'Basurales en comunidades mapuche'.

⁶³ Interview with Ivette Pamela Lincoqueo, CONADI Liason to Indigenous Communities (Corporación Nacional de Desarrollo Indígena), Temuco, 12 September 2006.

⁶⁴ Zibechi, 'Historical Mapuche hunger strike ends in success'.

⁶⁵ Aguas Araucanía, the main company involved in water treatment in Chile, has plans to construct another 17 plants in the region. See A Seguel, 'Modelo forestal chileno y movimiento autónomo mapuche: las posiciones irreconciliables de un conflicto territorial', www.biodiversidadla.org, 26 January 2006.

⁶⁶ OLCA, 'Basurales en comunidades mapuche'.

⁶⁷ Several solidarity organization websites chronicle current Mapuche land and resource conflicts, such as: www.mapuexpress.net; www.redchem.entodaspertes.org; and www.azkintuwe.org.

⁶⁸ R Hube, 'Multitudinaria marcha en rechazo a relleno sanitario', *Diario Austral* (Temuco), 24 August 2005.

⁶⁹ '349 reclamos llegaron a la Conama por proyecto Pumalal', *Diario Austral* (Temuco), 11 August 2005.

⁷⁰ OLCA, 'Basurales en comunidades mapuche', p 11.

⁷¹ 'Tema mapuche y medioambiente estaran en nuevo plan regulador,' *Diario Austral* (Temuco), 31 August 2001.

⁷² Interview with Alejandra Parra, 12 September 2006.

⁷³ 'Investigación evaluativa de impacto ambiental en territorios indígenas, informe final'. Código BIP: 20169006-0, Santiago: CONADI/MIDEPLAN (Corporación de Desarrollo Indígena/Ministerio de Planificación y Cooperación), January 2004.

⁷⁴ Interview with anonymous national CONADI official involved in the report, Temuco, 12 September 2006.

⁷⁵ Interview with Ivette Pamela Lincoqueo, 12 September 2006.