

Perception of socio-environmental risks in land occupation of Playa Ancha, Valparaíso Chile. The cases of Pueblo Hundido and Vista al Mar

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Abstract

Land occupations are precarious and informal settlements where the poorest sectors of Latin American cities are installed. The article analyzes the territorial processes into two land occupations of Valparaíso (Chile) using the approach of vulnerability and social risk management. It aims to identify the meanings that people assign to the risks with which they live and try to identify the actions taken to prevent disasters. The results show feelings of marginalization and exclusion of the urban system. Also people are aware of the precariousness of the environment and the threats that surround them. However, they are not organized, relying on neighborhood solidarity to solve the problems. Only after the tragedy, they appealed to organization, without achieving its materialization.

Key words: Social and environmental risk, vulnerability, land occupations, social risk management, territorialisation, urban poverty.

Resumen

Percepción de riesgos socioambientales en tomas de terreno de Playa Ancha, Valparaíso Chile. Los casos de Pueblo Hundido y Vista al Mar

Las tomas de terreno constituyen asentamientos poblacionales precarios e informales en donde se instalan los sectores más empobrecidos de las ciudades latinoamericanas. El artículo analiza los procesos de territorialización en dos tomas de terreno de Valparaíso (Chile), desde el enfoque de la vulnerabilidad y la producción social del riesgo. Se propone conocer los significados que los pobladores le asignan a los riesgos con los que conviven y tratar de identificar las acciones adoptadas para la prevención de catástrofes. Los resultados muestran sentimientos de marginación y exclusión del sistema urbano; conciencia de la precariedad del entorno y de las amenazas que los rodean. Sin embargo, sólo después de la tragedia se apela a la organización, sin que logre concretarse.

Palabras clave: Riesgo socioambiental, vulnerabilidad, tomas de terreno, gestión social del riesgo, territorialización, pobreza urbana.

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INTRODUCTION

*Legal and illegal are the two relevant ways of being towards law (...)
This central dichotomy abandons all the social area
where this dichotomy could be the unthinkable organizing principle,
that's the lawless territory, the a-legal, the non-legal, even more,
the legal and the illegal according to the non officially recognized right.*
Boaventura de Sousa Santos

Land occupations, just like informal settlements, have been in the center of the social debate in Latin America with different names: “shantytowns”, camps, irregular settlements, precarious, “favelas”, etc., and this shows the number of theoretical and research perspectives by which this have been approached and the socio-historical changes that have affected its dynamics and characteristics.

In the decades of 1960 and 1970, land occupations were understood as the result of the marginalization processes associated to the industrialization/modernization context in Latin America (Germani, 1967; DESAL, 1969, 1970; Quijano, 1971; Núñ, 1972). In the 70s and 80s, in the convulsive social and political context lived in the subcontinent, land occupations were understood as resistance points with a great political connotation and a material expression of the class struggle, identifying them as the most critical situations of the urban problem (Castells, 1973; Garcés, 2002; Valladares and Cohelo, 2003). In the nineties, in a context marked by the restoration of the neoliberal democracies, land occupations were conceptualized as “camps” or “irregular settlements”, which originated a social housing policy that seeks to reduce the housing deficit. In that period, researches were widely oriented to learn the new problems derived from sharing a life in large and overcrowding building of social housing program, which performed the issue of “los con techo”¹ (Rodríguez and Sugranyes, 2005) and the new “urban poverty” (Tironi, 2003). This led to a redefinition of the problem towards the settlement of formal housing, defined by the State.

In current times, land occupations are the settler’s strategy to reduce residential segregation, as they provide an easy access to public housing and have a better location within the city. In this way, land occupations are a reaction to the State programs of public housing in the surroundings of the city, too far from their social networks and the opportunities of the urban area, even though this settlements are placed in risky areas (Sabatini and Wormald, 2005; Brain, Prieto and Sabatini, 2010).

¹ Literally “those with house” expression referred to the people that own small apartments which generate a series of problems related with space and overcrowding.

According to the Chilean Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning (MINVU 2011), the region of Valparaíso concentrates the majority of camps in the country (22%), reaching a total of 140 camps, and they group about 7,531 families. Even more, the Gran Valparaíso² concentrates 70% of the camps in the whole region, settled in geographically risky areas, with difficult access and hardly inhabitable, such as hillsides and ravines. Thus, a big proportion of these spaces present great disadvantages, not only because of the distance, but because of the risk and difficulties of living there. However, and in spite of that, there are a scarce number of researches that show these phenomena originated by a very special geography.

In this article, the land occupations shall be analyzed from a socio-territorial perspective, that is to say, as spaces affected by the processes of territorialisation, which means that these have been taken by certain social and historical relations that gave form to them, both in its materiality, and its symbolic construction. As spaces of social relationships, the territories formed by land occupations generate dynamics of collective actions, not exempted from conflict (Fernández, 2005). The land occupation space is constituted then as “used territory” (Santos, 1994), since it sustains the historicity of the territorialisation processes, which are sustained themselves by political, economic and cultural incidences. This way, the used territories contain the actions from the past, crystallized in objects and rules, but also the present actions which allow to understand them as a form/content, as a segment of union between the past and the future, between different ranges of space and time, between materiality and social life (Silveira, 2008), between pertinence and differentiation / otherness, between limits and borderlands (Sánchez, 2015).

The present work seeks to analyze connections between the territorialisation processes and the collective action, and aims to understand the processes in which significance and interrelationships of individuals are produced. According to this purpose, we define our aim as the establishment of the significance that the people living in land occupations assign to the different risks with which they live in those territories. As a context, before we enter in that matter, in this conceptual diagram (Figure 1), we present a synthesis of the central aspects that give context to our approach to the studied land occupations.

² Gran Valparaíso is a conurbation that groups the districts of Valparaíso, Viña del Mar, Concón, Quilpué and Villa Alemana, the metropolitan zone of the regional capital of Valparaíso with a total population of 1 million inhabitants (seven per cent of the country, according to the census of 2012).

CONCEPT BACKGROUND

Socio-environmental disasters

Disasters as issue have been systematically studied, with theoretical, methodological and experienced-based approaches. International agencies provide assistance and insist on the need that local endeavors must improve their preparation and response to emergencies and disasters. These organizations consider that the most effective focus to reduce the impact of disasters in a long term is to incorporate the assessment of menaces and mitigation in the planning and developing investment processes (Fernández, 1996; MacDonald, 2005; Vergara, 2011) along with more efficient politics of organization and prevention (Morales and Alfaro, 2008).

On the other hand, the management of urban environment has been taken on both at national and international level, through the development of proper technologies to supply basic services of drinking-water, sewer system, garbage collection, air pollution control, industrial processes, among others. But there has not been a perspective that links the environmental degradation of the city and its vulnerability to deal with natural or human generated threats, as amplifiers of risks, emergencies and disasters (MacDonald, 2005; Vergara, 2011).

The evidence shows that the manifestations of natural-physical phenomena have not increased, although the number of disasters did increased, which leads to question about its causes. This shows that disasters should be considered social facts, not only as physical phenomena, that require an analysis of the human behavior towards itself and nature. The Latin American region is highly exposed to geodynamic phenomena such as volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, tsunamis and hurricanes. But we should add human action to these factors. For instance, if litter is not collected, it will be stored in the sewers, blocking them and causing floods every time it rains. When a flood occurs, it is considered as an exceptional event, even though the human group was gradually building it, without wanting to see it (Fernández y Rodríguez, 1996; Kuroiwa, 2002; Vergara, 2011), invisibilizing in this way the absence of State politics or the irresponsible actions of private individuals.

In this way, because of necessity, interest or ignorance, the different social groups are slowly degrading the environment that surrounds them, increasing vulnerability, or enhancing threats, whether natural or anthropic. The effects accumulate, until surprise comes, the disaster called “natural” that nobody expected, but that we build every day, year by year. In this

way, human (in) activity is the main cause of environmental degradation (Fernández and Rodríguez, 1996; Kuroiwa, 2002; Vergara, 2011).

Overall, resources and natural phenomena constitute threats when the chance of generate unbalance in a social system increases. Thus, water of rivers, seas and rain, wind, soil and volcanoes can produce floods, alluviums, landslides, eruptions, earthquakes and tsunamis. When a natural system produce a necessary event to maintain the balance, but disturb in that way the normal functioning of a social group, it is considered dangerous and its consequences, a disaster. On the other hand, when a social system generates an unbalance in an ecosystem, with actions that cause pollution and deforestation, the daily consequences are not considered as micro-disasters. Only when these small, but continuous, destabilizing actions accumulate and manifest themselves in a catastrophic event, then the disaster is perceived (Fernández and Rodríguez, 1996; Kuroiwa, 2002; Vergara, 2011).

The vulnerability and social risk management approach

In general, natural disasters are often considered as non-solved situations of development. The prevailing developing model generates social, political, economic and institutional conditions to favor the context for these disasters to happen. However, these conditions, although widely accepted, have not been enough for decision-makers to incorporate measures to ensure that the development model is devised in a relevant, participatory way and implemented safely in their local areas (Thomas, 2011).

The conditions that supposedly promote development do not work properly in underdeveloped countries, in which the efforts to reach economic growth are focused on the intensive use of energy and natural resources. The request for these resources has generated unsafe conditions that affect a wide proportion of the population, causing vulnerability and subsequent disasters. Usually, these are unsafe conditions due to the prevalence of private and business interests that neglect environmental impacts and degradation in their attempts to appropriate natural resources and their subsequent transformation (Thomas, 2011).

The structural causes of vulnerabilities have generated prejudicial conditions for people, because the inhabitant concentration in urban areas with precarious conditions in soil, building materials, domestic public services, collective equipment and settlements in marginal areas, increase the social problems, conflicts and risks of suffering devastating effects because of the natural events, such as intensive rains and wind storm (Lavell, 2008).

The aforementioned points lead to consider risks and dangers as aggravating conditions for vulnerability to confront potentially destructive events. It is important to state that disasters, besides the fact that they are not natural, does not occur, but manifest (Calderón, 2001). With these precisions, it is clear that those conceptions of risk based exclusively on a natural event, have led to public policies oriented to build infrastructure destined to reduce the impact of the event, but not to identify the social, politic, economic or institutional conditions that make communities vulnerable or damaged against that event in particular.

Because of the incidence of disasters and its magnitude are closely connected to the structures of power-knowledge (Foucault, 1969; Santos, 2013) that form society, it is said that the social construction of risk, to refer to the relevance it has in its contingency and its impact in poverty, exclusion and marginality conditions, make them highly vulnerable to external agents (Thomas, 2011). This is particularly true in the case of several countries in Latin America, for the number of disasters generated by natural events is bigger than in other regions in the world, as well as the loss of human lives, animals, and economic resources (CRID, 2007), especially associated with houses and household goods.

The concept of social construction of risk means that its treatment is not carried out in a reactive way, which is, to act only after having suffered a destructive event, in order to return to the conditions of equilibrium in which the communities were living before the event occurred. This procedure does not solve the problem, since it is precisely the normalization of these precarious conditions that generates the vulnerability of the population. On the contrary, the proposal is once the emergency is controlled by actions of rescue, attention and initial rehabilitation, in the reconstruction stage, structural modifications to those conditions that made them vulnerable in the first place will be added in. This means that it is necessary to confront reconstruction with transformation in order to reduce vulnerability (Lavell, 2008). This implies moving from a compensatory management to a prospective one, not only of risk, but also of the very conception of development, having clear that this is not about repairing the imperfections that have been consolidated through an unequal development model, but about the necessity of generating present and future conditions so these failures would not take place again (Thomas, 2011), assuming a holistic, ethical and human rights perspective for Good Living (Acosta, 2013).

Social risk management establishes an institutional and social process that shall be addressed through work in network, with a horizontal and

vertical sense in order to articulate a series of policies, agents, strategies, instruments and actions that seek prevention, mitigation and reduction -in good timing- the elements and levels of exposure of communities to deal with these potentially destructive events. At the same time, their response, adjustment and recovery capacity must be increased, as well as their adverse effects (Arteaga, 2006).

Social risk management implies not only mechanical reduction of risk, but it is based on the recognition and social awareness that certain economic, political, institutional, social and cultural practices originate the unequal circumstances that expose population differentially to potentially destructive events. In the face of those events, the most vulnerable and damage segments have a lesser ability to organize, confront, assimilate and overcome them. Because of this, the proposal is to promote the generation of social and institutional convergence spaces in order to include all different socioeconomic strata, all the diverse levels in the public and territorial management, and the different groups of interest and opinion, so they can understand how the social risk is constructed and the levels of responsibility and social joint responsibility that each one of the participant should assume (Thomas, 2011).

However, the response of the people against disasters is not automatic or lineal, but it is often mixed with collective experiences, attitudes, values and, in general, with normative, cognoscitive, and symbolic ambits that wrap a society. It is due to a territory is also constructed from the culture of the social groups that occupy it, conforming the cultural landscape (Nogué, 2015) where each group builds its relationships and daily life from what it is considered risky or safe. Although in certain contexts, the uncertainty or a permanent emergency state is normalized.

For some authors, risk is a cultural construction of society (García-Acosta, 2005), produced in its historical evolution, from the association of menaces and certain conditions of vulnerability, constructed and reconstructed in time. Thus, the public perception of risk and its acceptance are collective constructions including a historic and temporary dimension and they refer to a definite cultural matrix (Caram and Pérez, 2006).

Risks are factual and value propositions at the same time, being the definition of cultural standards about “a tolerable or intolerable life.” The question “How would we like to live?” leads to propositions that need to be decoded in a competitive interdisciplinary relationship, because it involves in equal proportions “the knowledge of technical learning and the familiarity of perceptions and cultural rules” (Beck, 2002: 219).

Risks and the perception of them are “non desired consequences” of the logic of control, the social and technical project of the nation-State in modernity. In this way, the consequences of risks call into question the affirmation of control of the nation-state, its structural relation to instrumental rationality (Weber, 1980), due both to the globalization of risks (global warming, the ozone layer, etc.) and the uncertainties and uncertainties of the risk assessment. Although Weber does not discuss the concept of “risk”, “one of its peculiarities is to have lost precisely this relation between intention and result, instrumental rationality and control” (Beck, 2002: 221).

To understand social and environmental risks, different models have been proposed, that identify four relevant elements, analytically distinguishable but bound, that give an account of the complexity of the concept. These are: dangerousness, exposure, vulnerability and uncertainty (Natenzon, 2004).

- Dangerousness refers to the potential of the menace implied in any natural physical phenomenon. In this sense, the more information is managed about this phenomenon, the better chance to know what could happen and prevent it.
- Exposure is about the material constructions y the distribution of the population in the territory. This is everything susceptible to respond and confront the danger. This component is manifested territorially as the historic construction that entwine the natural physic processes with social and economic relations, giving shape to certain uses of the terrain, a certain distribution of the infrastructure, human settlements, public services and others. In this case, exposure is manifested in people and precarious buildings placed in settlements with a lack of drinkable-water pipe systems within the houses, and a lack of electricity and gas.
- Vulnerability refers to the social and economic structures. It is about a society feature that previously to a disaster, defines the situation in which people are to confront an unexpected catastrophic phenomenon.
- Uncertainty, on the other hand, belongs to the area of (un/re)awareness of the menaces and dangers, its technical control and decision making, taking place at a perception level within the groups. Because of this, it is necessary to know the politic aspects and the perceptions of the social agents involved in the process, because there are important values and interests at stake, according to the consideration of these agents.

Social vulnerability and environmental risk are related from the social distribution of risk and the difference in the danger degree and the potential impact, because in modern society both risks and wealth are distributed unequally. But because risks are in general invisible, they have an unreal factor, due to emergency and disaster haven't occurred yet. However, it is necessary to have a position to deal with them, not only to prevent them, but to avoid or deny them. Risks have a suspended reality status, "not-anymore-but-not-yet" - not anymore confidence/safety, not yet destruction/disaster (Beck, 2002: 215). But perceptions of menace, even of emergency, seems to be potential and to predispose psycho-social states of alert, fear and panic, questioning the power of social (re)action, public policies and social assistance. This produce the confrontation of two different logics: the positive logic of goods appropriation and the logic of elimination of risks, which is a negative logic (Beck, 1998).

Risks are defined as the field of odds in which a population (people, physical structures, productive systems, etc.), or a part of it, suffers some kind of damage (Narváez, Lavell y Pérez, 2009). For a risk to exist, there must be some kind of menace or danger, and vulnerability is the tendency to suffer damage, exhibited by any part of the social or nature structure. Risk is, subsequently, a potential condition and its levels will depend on a social equation: the likely intensity of the menace and the levels of vulnerability, where vulnerability represents the unit of features of a certain social system that reduces its response ability against menaces.

In the trio of dangerousness-risk-vulnerability, the latter is a mainly social component, referred to those factors derived from human activity, and functioning as participating conditions to increase the damage certain phenomena may cause. From this perspective, it is considered that if the characteristic of human societies is risk, this latter does not need to lead to a disaster. In fact, every process of social change presupposes different qualities and intensities of uncertainty, risk and conflict. But disaster tends to precipitate with more likelihood when risk is added to vulnerability.

EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND

In the case of Chile, a quick inspection to the last decade, give an account of how disasters go through all the extension of its geography. The 2006 floods that gravely affected the most humble people in the city of Concepción; in 2008 the eruption of the Chaitén volcano that forced the displacement of the totality of the inhabitant of that southern area; in February 2010, the earthquake and tsunami that blasted central Chile (Ro-

mero, 2014). In March 2012, landslides leveled several rural settlements in the arid northern region of Tarapacá. In April 2014, once again the North region suffered the destruction of numerous sectors of settlements and connecting infrastructures because of an earthquake of 8.2 degrees on the Richter scale, and this implied the displacement of a large number of people, considering the menace of a potential tsunami. That same month, on April 12th, the biggest urban fire in Chilean history started, collapsing every response capacity in the city of Valparaíso: 1,100 hectares were destroyed by the flames, 3,000 houses were laid wasted, 16 people died and 15,000 persons lost their homes along with a family history that each one of them thought were protected. Between March 23rd and 25th, in 2015, an unusual storm hit three regions of the north of Chile: Antofagasta, Atacama and Coquimbo, causing floods and landslides, because of the overflow of multiple river-beds. More than fifty victims and a great number of displaced people, about 30,000, was the outcome of a disaster which origins, according to scientific studies, would have been in the settlements in risky zones. And while this present work was in its final stages, on September 16th, an earthquake of 8.4 degrees on the Richter scale, with its epicenter in the South of the Coquimbo Region, placed in what is known as the “Chilean Little North”, was accompanied by a tsunami of diverse proportions in the North-central coastline, along with multiple aftershocks, causing 15 dead and unassailable lost and damage in public infrastructure, housing, vehicles and fishing fleets.

A study carried out in the city of La Serena, IV Region, on the perception of risk in the face of the threat of tsunami, assessed the ability for self-protection and self-management, according to the socioeconomic level of the population of that locality. The answers vary according to the exposure to the menace and the level of social and economic vulnerability, because in zones of less social and economic vulnerability, one can see that there's a considerable exposure to tsunamis, specially in the zone neighboring the axis of Avenida del Mar, where in summer time, a great amount of temporary inhabitants find summer houses, and that's why it is in constant observation (Cid, 2012).

The previously mentioned study shows that the studied population does not have a proper level of awareness of the necessity of self protection and self-management. It is also observed that the factors associated to vulnerability are more linked to social aspects than the menace itself, which agrees with the social character of the risk, as it was expound in the previous points, where it is established that this arise from the process of continuous

and permanent interaction between the human community and the environment. This way, perception of risk appears as a relevant criterion associated to vulnerability. However, in the studied case, the different social and economic strata showed dissimilar standards. From this study, it is possible to infer that the “imaginary” vary according to the context and the social and economic stratum, and that there’s an aversion, in general, to risk, that can be translated into underestimation or denial on part of individuals when they find themselves in a risky situation (Cid, 2012).

Another relevant study on social experiences against risk was executed about the havoc the Henriette storm left when passed over Llano Largo and other areas at Zona Diamante, in Acapulco city, in 2007. It is a territory in the urban outskirts marked by the social and cultural heterogeneity where various participation dynamics were developed in order to push an organization, although incipient and still limited, with the mission of understand and manage in a reality full of risks (Rodríguez, Ruz y Hernández, 2012). This study make accounts of participation of fundamental agents in processes of management of emergencies and reconstruction after the disaster took place, in order to identify the social and cultural processes that make a contribution to create a perception oriented to face risk situations (Rodríguez *et al.*, 2012).

METHODOLOGY

The research had a descriptive character, based on a qualitative methodological strategy.

The research was descriptive, based on a qualitative methodological strategy. The universe of the study was conformed by the 15 land occupations existing in Playa Ancha (Valparaíso). Of these, cases of Pueblo Hundido and Vista al Mar were selected, using the antiquity criterion. The first being the oldest, whose origin dates back to 1970; the second being the most recent one, since the year 2002 began. The difference of years in its constitution is a relevant criterion, insofar as it was assumed that temporality could make a difference in the processes of organization, leadership and social dynamics of those territories.

The technique used to produce the data was the in-depth interview, which allowed us to examine the experience of key actors located in a social context, arriving through it to identify and characterize the actions and experiences of the subjects and capture the senses associated to them (Delgado and Gutiérrez, 1995). In each of land occupations, interviews were made with people who had played leadership roles in the emergence

of the settlement, and also, those without positions have equally proven experience of the reality that is lived in the land occupation. A total of 12 interviews were carried out, 6 in Pueblo Hundido and 6 in Vista al Mar.

RESULTS. THE MEANING OF RISKS IN THE TERRITORIES

The processes of territorialisation in land occupations have implied that different human groups placed themselves in terrains that are not of theirs to be used, where they build precarious houses without basic services, such as electricity and running water. The collective action these groups carried out have lead to a certain improves, such as electricity in public spaces, street planning and others. Nevertheless, they live in territories that lack basic services, to which they access, some times, through illegal ways, for instance, “hang off to the electric street post”, or connecting their houses with hoses to some running water point. This is additional to the usual problems this kind of terrains may present, where winter rains embody a menace with multiple risks: muddy places, blocked roads, isolation, landslides, diseases, etc. And in the particular case of the peninsula that Playa Ancha forms, heavy winds hit the area in winter time and summer time, which only give more power to the risk exposure. All this affect the way neighbors visualize the different risks and the meaning they assign to their own social landscape (Nogué, 2012).

Fire as the main perceived risk

In the case of the land occupations of this study, the main perceived risk by the neighbors is fire. They have had very painful experiences with fire in the past, that’s why they live in a constant attention in case a fire starts off³, for they are very aware that the wind and the limited distance between the houses makes the propagation of the fire an imminent danger, just as these testimonies illustrate it:

... we’ve been just about to get burnt in a fire twice. Last time houses were burnt, the alarm was set off in Pueblo Hundido, but before that, we almost get caught by the fire. Oh, yeah, the fire got to the road itself, and if it wasn’t for the fireman and the planes, all of us would have died burnt (Mrs. Roxana, Pueblo Hundido).

This year, there have been a lot of fire seats. They got to the limit, the fire got just right behind us (Mrs. Fabiola, Pueblo Hundido).

³ On January 2, 2017 there was an uncontrollable fire that affected the Puertas Negras sector of Playa Ancha hill, consuming almost completely the Pueblo Hundido land occupation.

Well, what some times happen here is fire. Someone start a fire pit to burn dry grass somewhere near. Down there, a lady lost her little room because of the fire (Mrs. Nancy, Vista al Mar).

Fear to fire comes way back in time, because people keep the memory of disasters happened in the past, traumatizing experiences that will never be forgotten:

Some children got burnt here in 1989, in a fire, they got burnt just there, and it was a terrible thing. I had a little baby girl then and that marked me forever, because I saw them, I started the alert, I was the very first person to see them, because it was something that left a mark in me... (Mrs. Fabiola, Pueblo Hundo).

Neighbors identify some of the aspects that cause fires. Among them, the emphasis is on the electricity cables, that when they hit because of the wind, they produce sparkles, just as this neighbor describes it:

Where the cables get all clustered, so many of them, with the wind and the rain, they produce sparkles. Just the other day, they sounded like a blast in the pole, just by my house. I wasn't able to sleep because I was so scared, and nobody was able to come and fix it. That's also very concerning for us because if a sparkle catches a house, and you can see how the houses are here, everything will set on fire. And the bigger risk we all live with is that nobody will be able to help us, because you know, this is a land occupation... The risk we see when it rains is that the cables start to collide. Those ones have been making sounds for more than a month and it's very hard to find someone to fix it. Because you have to pay them, they charge as much as 30,000 pesos. We all gather the money y and this way we stay hang off to the cables. But sometimes people don't have money. That's the most problematic issue (Mrs. Nancy, Vista al Mar).

In other cases, the origin of fire risk would come from the neighbors themselves, in the sense that their behavior in drug abuse, added to the wind issue in the area, set up a danger for everybody else, just as this neighbor expresses it:

Here is very windy. First, it was just my neighbor and me, but then a little house was built there, but the owner went away and left the house alone... So a young man started to sleep in the house. We fought for him to go, because we knew it was going to be a problem, because he was a drug addict and he could fell asleep with a cigarette... We talked to him, I talked to him. Once, I went to sleep when someone shouted "Neighbor, fire!" In the midst of darkness, I was

able to see a light and a big flame. I was, Oh, my God, I was traumatized. That was a long time ago (Mrs. Natalia, Vista al Mar).

Heavy winds in Playa Ancha not only help the fire to expand, but represent a real danger to the precarious houses in which these neighbors live. They often have problems with their roofs that get detach and walls that collapse, just as some of them tells it:

Once, the wind was so heavy that someone's roof was completely lifted and it ended up in the pole by my house. Fortunately, it got hitched. But it was raining. Luckily, other neighbors helped me with the laths... The wind is so heavy here (Mr. Lius, Vista del Mar).

Neighbor's perception on other risks

Fire is not the only risk perceived by the neighbors. Some of them mentioned floods: "The emergency we usually have is when the road floods. Just here two current get together, one from here, that runs down the hill, and other from that street, that enter through here" (Mrs. Berta, Pueblo Hundido).

Other neighbors mentioned the *roads where vehicles pass*, that are very narrow, without pave and sharp curves that go through the slope of the hill.

Look, here's the road, where the trucks go by. The other day, a van fell over the roof of a house. They have no respect. Just over here there's a hole and when trucks go by, bang! They jump and very often they end up hanging of the edge. That's super dangerous because here you can hear any kind of noise, because of the crashes. Once, a car fell over there, and a truck too. The lady wasn't at home; it fell over her living room... (Mrs. Roxana, Pueblo Hundido).

We had to talk to neighbors with vehicles so they would be more careful when they pass by, because where Mrs. Natalia lives, in that turn, is very dangerous. Because once, a car almost pass through all that, and the problem is not that the house could end up destroyed, but that someone could die. Many children play in that area (Mrs. Maricel, Vista del Mar).

For me, when cars and trucks pass by, and sometimes it's about moving trucks, is very distressing. Right now, I'm fighting to get them to build a road there, but they run and run and I think "Oh, it's going to end turned upside down". In that sense, I live in fear. I have talked to people with vehicles. In wintertime, this is a mess. Nobody can go up or down, neighbors only can get to that limit, they have to park there. I'm afraid of cars, I say "Go over there, go over there". They are trying to fix the road so they pass a little bit further (Mrs. Natalia, Vista del Mar).

They also mentioned the smoke that comes from the furnaces of a brick factory in the surroundings:

The furnaces release smoke. We've been having problems with that smoke. The smoke from the bricks is horrible, it's toxic. Because it is smoke, it ends up down here. First, it goes up and then, it goes down. But now I believe they placed the furnaces further back, because of the accusations. That's true. My kids suffered. You figure, my mother and daughter are asthmatics... (Mrs. Fabiola, Pueblo Hundido).

They also emphasize their concern for the neighbor's health, especially because of the stink in the environment, as a result of the lack of sewer services.

Yeah, health. In summertime, it's stinky and it's full of flies. Everything is down there, it is stagnant and people throw everything in there, garbage and everything. And when it rains, it's like it washes everything there. Once, the bridge kind of bended downward, because it was raining so hard. If you were to stand just for a while in that bridge, you were to end up all soaked. And those waters carry any kind of things. Nobody has a cesspool here, those ones with underground septic tanks. Everything goes to the ravine (Mrs. Fabiola, Pueblo Hundido).

There's no sewer here. They have cesspools. They are everywhere. It is full of rats and in summertime is even filthier. That's why I closed the backyard, so my kinds won't be able to play there. There are a lot of rats (Mrs. María Teresa, Pueblo Hundido).

They also live afraid of authorities, because they can take some actions on the territory they are occupying, and eject them or cut off the supply of any service they are illegally using. "We always live with fear to expulsion. It is a permanent fear, and I think everyone has it. Because you build something here, but you know that in any moment, they can take it away from you" (Mrs. Maricel, Vista al Mar).

"I fear that they cut the water off. I think that you can live without electricity, but without water, it wouldn't be the same. It is a fear all the community has, and it's also a fear that we personally have" (Mrs. Natalia, Vista al Mar).

Community actions to confront risks

An examination of the ways in which community acts and organizes to confront the menace of fire and others, shows that such organization is no-

nexistent and that there are no activities or agreements between neighbors in order to diminish risk, just as this neighbors explain it:

Look, here, they've never ever come to clear up the hills, and neighbors never get together to do it either. For instance, there are houses in the middle of the woods. If you tell them to clean up, and I give them pamphlets with instructions, they won't do it. 'Forestín' comes every year to teach the children, but they won't learn anything (Mrs. Roxana, Pueblo Hundido).

No, every time there is a fire, we say 'We need to clean up', but nothing happens. People live by themselves. No one thinks about their neighbors (Mrs. Fabiola, Pueblo Hundido).

Here there is no organization. When things happen, I tell you, for example fires, it is like everybody moves by themselves, so there is no organization in case of an attack, in case someone would intent to break in a house, or some kind of system to alert the neighborhood, nothing" (Mrs. Mary, Pueblo Hundido).

Some neighbors are aware of their lack of organization, but they are just a few of them.

"That's each one of us neglect. Because we all know that we need to mow the grass down. And there's also a lack of awareness" (Mr. Luis, Vista al Mar).

That's why we say "Mow the grass down", because that was the cause of that huge fire that destroyed the occupied land. Everyone says "Well, those are occupations", but humans have a huge influence, because their duty is to mow the grass. I dare to give everybody a lesson because I'm the one who cleans the area up, I use my broom to prevent the grass to expand to the next door, I don't care if it's my neighbor house. It doesn't matter to me, is to avoid fire. Besides, the wind here is very strong, it's terrible, when blows, it blows hard... (Mrs. Natalia, Vista al Mar).

All the neighbors help here. They build firewalls, they cut the bushes, but they do it when the fire is already set out. Previous to the fire, very few people care to cut the weeds and prevent a fire. You may imagine the situation of the people that live further there, near the hill, in contact with the bushes. In the past, when there was no seaside road yet (La Pólvara road), it was more dangerous, because that is a natural firewall we have now (Mrs. Bernardita, Pueblo Hundido).

Neighbors trust in the aid they receive from their pairs to put the fire out. The general risk a fire represents makes them trust their neighbors will be able to extinguish the fire, because the access to these occupied lands are very precarious and usually the trails the inhabitants have left would not allow the transit of fire trucks or ambulances.

Last time it was very close. There was a fire y everybody went there to throw some water, because the fire trucks don't have access, they can only get to the entrance (Mr. Luis, Vista al Mar).

Everybody goes to help extinguish the fire because it's a general risk. We are always unaware if someone goes down with a cigarette and leave it, because the grass dries out in summertime. Then we have a problem, we need to be very careful with the people going down there and throwing away a butt, we need to have our eyes peeled (Mrs. María Teresa, Vista al Mar).

That time, firemen came and also the people from that settlement. In that sense, the people from the hill is remarkable because a lot of young men came to help us with their shovels... from Edward Bello. If they didn't, it would've been a great mess, because here, I tell you, nobody would've moved (Mrs. Fabiola, Pueblo Hundido).

Overall, it is outstanding the poor prevision the neighbors live with daily, because they haven't found a way to organize themselves to confront emergencies; and they haven't agreed on any alert system. With the previous idea in mind, from the logic of territorial planning, but not from a technical rationality, but from the neighbor's logic itself, they are so used to live in that area, that they have naturalized risk and they failed to see it as such. Even the fires - which were the most mentioned issue - are seen as a fatal accident with which they have to live, when the help of other neighbors doesn't get there on time or is not enough to extinguish the fire.

CONCLUSIONS

The territorialisation processes involved in the progress of the studied land occupations must be understood in the context of the general transformations of the social and political matrix that makes possible or deliver the conditions to this processes. In that sense, we give evidence in the results of our study of the dissolution of the matrix that had historically articulated the management of urban and housing public policies in Chile. With this matrix, State-party-society (Garretón and Espinosa, 1992; Garretón, 2009), the processes of organization and social mobilization, which conditioned the processes of integration, marginality and socio-spatial modernization, had been answered. As a consequence of the social fragmentation that began in the military dictatorship and consolidated over time through the application of reproductive social policies of the neoliberal order, whose attendant, focused, precarious and individualistic nature inspires an un-supportive competition for always limited resources. The land occupation

people takes place between the loss of sense of the community, the fear of the other and the uncertainty (Beck, 1998) in front of the instituted powers.

From the standpoint of the risk social construction applied in this work (Caram and Pérez, 2006; Thomas, 2011), risk is naturalized when it is generated in conditions of high structural vulnerability, such as the characteristic one in the studied contexts. For that reason, people that live in the analyzed land occupations, assume the condition of an excluded citizen (Santos, 2013), marginalized from the urban system and victimized in their fundamental rights, such as life quality and fitting housing. That condition feeds the frailty and insecurity, with which they solve their physical infrastructure, and basic and energetic services, being subject, in the end, to a permanent state of emergency. This confirms the equation that the intensity of the menace perception facing different kind of risks to which they are exposed, it's strengthened by the high levels of vulnerability (Calderón, 2001; Thomas, 2011). This would be explained by linked factors, such as the lack of connection with support nets and infrastructure of the public emergency system, the scarce collective organization to deal with possible accidents and disasters, along with the nonexistent self-management forms of prevention, protection, timing action, and control of nature or anthropic caused risks (Thomas, 2011).

According to the history narrated by the women and men from the occupied lands in Playa Ancha, in the studied territorialisation processes, a traumatic memory is built, because of the lost of human lives in confrontation with risks that turned into tragedies, confirming a learnt hopelessness, the inability to face up to risk or to get timely help to save the life of the most vulnerable inhabitants in the occupied lands, children and elderly people.

Climate phenomena, for instance wind and rain, are perceived here as the main causes of exposure to risk, for they deepen the precarious nature of the infrastructures and connections that the settlers themselves build or, in the best case, some worker with construction experience did. In the case of electricity connections that supply the houses, the action of the wind over the unstable cluster of cables hanging from the transmission towers, would bring about sparkles that can lead to a fire and spread quickly because of that same wind, in addition to the unsteady construction materials and the short distance between the houses. The heavy gusts of wind in Playa Ancha, that from time to time exceeds 100 or 120 kilometers per hour, also cause roofs detaching and walls collapsing.

The location of the land occupations in zones where the complex terrain makes very difficult to design a plan for the access roads and the canali-

zation of the rain water - often forgotten since the drought periods could be very long -, are other risk factor perceived, the floods caused by heavy rains in wet years. In those occasions, landslides and mud avalanches over the fragile houses are very frequent. In the same way, the complicated access roads, without pave, with steep slopes and dangerously closed bends, usually cause accidents. Thus, car crushes, running over accidents, fallings to the precipice, and houses destruction turn out to be frequent events. With storms and mud places, cars get immobilized, blocking the settlement access, so no vehicle can go up or down.

Other factors also perceived as risky by the women and men in the studied land occupations, are those ones generated by people, even if they are caused by non regulated or regulated productive activities, previously to the settlement, and which toxicity cause risks to the community health; or by pollution caused by black waters because of the lack of sewers system, the proximity of illegal land fills and garbage heaps that set up a definite promoter of insect and rodent plagues.

Some other risky practices performed by people, and may increase the danger and menace of tragedies, are bonfires, dry grass and bushes burning, and using candles inside the houses as an illumination system. This is even more concerning when it is the product of irresponsible behavior that neighbors associate with decontrol because of drug and alcohol abuse.

The nature of the perception the people from the occupied lands have of the authorities and energy and water supply companies is very different. The potential expulsion and cutting the services off are two important components that feed the fear among the neighbors of being ejected from the land.

Just as it was mentioned before, the lost of political and community sense in land occupations currently make the vulnerability stronger in facing risks, even it's motivated by natural or anthropic reasons. Only after a tragedy, solidarity sets up, or a collective organization is applied, more as a reaction than a aware an planned way of management to prevent risks and emergencies, that usually have catastrophic outcomes in these territories of difficult access to emergency vehicles, such as fire trucks and ambulances.

Urban planning and housing politics face a great challenge in this context: to overcome the hegemonic and unilateral visions of eradication from understanding historicity and the sense of territorialisation of land occupations, an expression of an excluded citizenship that takes to present days the ethnic reductions of the colony times, generating now a particular reservoir of the otherness sense. This reduction or minoritization directly affects

the concept of nation-State, the quality of its democracy, the recognition of rights, even the questioning of the landless citizenship legitimacy. In these neoliberal times of overmodernity and social fragmentation, new frontiers, limits and overflows are arising (Sánchez, 2015), new urban segregations in this pericenter of displaced settlements in time and space, where invisibility and stigma affects the interactions and social nets, impoverished by the legitimized aspirations of a Good Living (Acosta, 2013). That's why it is necessary to promote participative politics, overcoming certain dichotomic rationalities that are heavily installed over the citizenship construction, and end up reproducing new vulnerabilities in social rights: an excluding integration, a normalization of surviving within emergencies, a citizenship growing from the invisibilized exclusion.

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