This thesis critically analyses corporate-community relations in the forestry industry, with a particular focus on cases in the Latin American context. The key conceptual focus is on the legitimacy of corporate activity from the perspective of local communities in the contested field of sustainability. The concept of legitimacy is critically discussed in the light of a pluriversal approach to reality: Instead of assuming that legitimacy can be derived from a universally socially constructed system of shared norms and beliefs, legitimacy in the pluriverse signals that the world is not made up of one single history or worldview but many different ways of knowing, sensing, and being; what is perceived as legitimate depends on the place-based social imaginaries of the communities where it emerges. This approach to legitimacy creation, provides a nuanced understanding of the contested nature of forestry-community relations in Latin America.

Adapting a pluriversal perspective on legitimacy has consequences for governance and how the corporate world engages with local communities. Instead of promoting consensus-seeking stakeholder dialogues among those who do not wish to become stakeholders of the corporate world, there is a need to open up for encounters between worlds through conversations across differences and celebrate conflicts as manifestations of the different worlds within the pluriverse.

Rooted governance is introduced as a concept that contrasts with the top-down approach of global governance. Instead, the bottom-up rooted approach recognizes local differences, knowledges, and livelihoods as important elements of reproducing and sustaining life in communities. This pluriversal way of conceptualizing and acknowledging different life worlds and social imaginaries opens up opportunities to explore new alternatives for co-existence of communities – one of the most urgent challenges for our and future generations.
Legitimacy in the Pluriverse
Towards an Expanded View on Corporate-Community Relations in the Global Forestry Industry

Helsinki 2016
Legitimacy in the Pluriverse: Towards an Expanded View on Corporate-Community Relations in the Global Forestry Industry

Key words: Extractive Industries, Decoloniality, Governance, Legitimacy, Livelihood Struggles, Ontological Differences, Place-based Social Imaginaries, Pluriverse

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Maria Ehrnström-Fuentes
Hanken School of Economics
Department of Marketing, Supply Chain Management and Social Responsibility
P.O.Box 479, 00101 Helsinki, Finland
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In Vaasa, August 2016

Maria Ehrnström-Fuentes
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1 INTRODUCTION

This is a story about legitimacy and how it comes into being. What defines it? Who is in charge of producing it? Who determines what is to be considered legitimate and what is not? How we conduct our lives as a community depends on our desires and aspirations to live the good life, and what defines this good life for each one of us will impact what kind of activities we see as socially acceptable. It guides us in our day-to-day activities, how we go about securing a living in line with our inner desires of the good life itself. The legitimacy of our endeavours as a group of socially connected people is thus directly dependent on the type of good life we separately as individuals and jointly as a community envision ourselves to be living now and in the future. But what is this good life of our inner imagination and how does it emerge as a shared system of meanings? In a globalised world where the geography of our social connectedness has been expanded beyond our own control, is it possible to jointly envision a common trajectory towards a life that is good for all? Or is this world actually made up of multiple worlds, a pluriverse, interconnected through place-based trajectories, each with its own vision of the good life?

The word pluriverse signals that the world we live in is not made up of one single history or worldview but is a constantly changing world that comprises many different worlds with different histories, different worldviews, and different ways of knowing, sensing, and being. This pluriverse is inhabited by different place-based life trajectories, different ontologies and epistemologies that define the contours of different historical processes, lived realities and future imaginations that sustain people’s capacity to reproduce life in the places that they inhabit (Escobar 2008; 2010; Mignolo 2011). Thus, place is important both as a site of material and cultural reproduction. The place-based component of the pluriverse signals that societies (and the identities within these societies) are a production of historical processes simultaneously restricted and enabled by their geographic location (Escobar 2001; 2008).

1.1 Entering the land of contradictions

My journey towards the question of legitimacy began back in 2003 when I was working on a study of the effects of foreign direct investments (FDI) on the environment in Latin America for the ‘FDI in Latin America Annual Report’ (for the UN’s Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC)). At that point I was introduced to the oil spills of Texaco-Chevron in Ecuador and the effects of the toxic environment on the health of the banana workers in Central America. As a recently graduated business scholar with a major in international business, I had until then been convinced that international trade and foreign investments were at some point going to be beneficial to all (or if not all, at least the overwhelming majority), including those at the receiving end of these operations. Reading and writing about the sacrifices of the locals at the receiving end (and backpacking as a tourist in the surrounding regions) is what prompted me to seriously question these assumptions. It was around this time that I started thinking about what ‘legitimacy’, or what I later learned to refer to as the ‘generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions’ (Suchman 1995, p.574), means in different contexts. How could the Texaco-Chevron operations be desirable for the Ecuadorian indigenous tribes who had to live with the consequences of these operations? And in what way were the
bananas of Standard Fruit Company, Dole, and Chiquita legitimate when they left whole populations plagued by cancer as a result of the poisons used on the plantations surrounding their communities (see Ross 2014)? Our job at the FDI department of ECLAC was to produce an annual report that highlighted the benefits of foreign capital in Latin America. By volunteering to write a section on the environmental effects of FDI in the region, I entered the land of contradictions (ECLAC 2004, p. 49-50).

The question of corporate legitimacy continued to haunt1 me as I joined the workforce of a Nordic multinational forestry corporation at its local sales office in Santiago de Chile. The year was 2005 and forestry companies featured almost daily in the news headlines for their conflicts with local communities in different locations across South America. Although my own employer was never directly involved in the most high profile conflicts (the swan conflict in Valdivia Chile, or the case of Botnia Pulp Mill on the border between Uruguay and Argentina), being a business insider meant that I was constantly hearing others in the industry discussing the wrong-doings of the other corporations involved in these conflicts on the one hand, and the ‘absurd’ and ‘illicit’ demands posed by protestors on the other. I was troubled by these contradictions. If corporate legitimacy was about corporations being aligned with the values, norms, and beliefs of its stakeholders (Suchman 1995), the sentiments within the industry towards some of its key stakeholders, who had just managed to halt operations and inflict both monetary and reputational costs on the corporations, just did not make sense. Five years later, when life pointed me in the direction to opt out of a career in the forestry industry, it was precisely this interest in understanding these contradictions, and finding solutions to them, that motivated me to initiate an academic journey towards a PhD in corporate responsibility.

Originally, I wanted to discover the institutional settings that are more likely to support ethically sound practices within the industry, and how these could be integrated into the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes of non-compliant companies. At this point I was still influenced by the legacy of my previous experience as a business insider and was convinced that what I had sensed within the industry was correct: there were both good and bad strategies to deal with conflicts and by finding the right mechanisms it would be possible to align all companies within the industry to follow the good ones. Thus I asked myself, what were the actual circumstances that encouraged companies to build strategies that were supportive of contributing to the wellbeing of all their stakeholders? Could these conflicts that I had followed closely in the forestry sector somehow have been avoided, or at least mitigated, had the management team chosen a different strategy in terms of how it engaged with the public and the environment? I also asked myself what lessons could be learned from these social protests to prevent similar conflicts from emerging in other places? However, as I started to investigate the different cases, learning more about the struggles in both Chile and Uruguay, I soon sensed that there were more similarities than differences in the institutional settings of the global forestry companies across national borders. I also got the impression that corporate responsibility, the mechanism used within the corporations to design strategies of societal importance, more than contributing to solve the conflicts in many cases might have been an integral part of the problem. I started to distinguish other voices that imagined a completely different kind of ‘good’ life to what these corporations were able to deliver. These were

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1 This feeling of being haunted by a sensation of discomfort is in line with Gordon's definition of 'haunting' (cited in Nagar, 2014) as a ‘domain of turmoil and trouble...when the cracks and rigging are exposed, when the people who are meant to be invisible show up without any sign of leaving’ (p. 160). As such this sensation of being haunted exposes the existence of subjugated knowledges, and the interlinked relation between presences and absences, knowing and not knowing.
the people who had been referred to as irrational and who it was said did not know what they were talking about while I was working within the industry. As I researched further, literally new worlds, new realities, started to collide with my own. Through the help of documentary movies, I started to allow myself to truly listen to those whose stories were not merciful to global corporations. I listened to the communities who saw their water wells dry up as eucalyptus tree plantations grew tall next to their lands (Lappalainen 2011; Varela 2010). I listened to the stories of the fishermen who feared for their professional identity and future subsistence as pulp mills were installed next to their fishing waters (Lappalainen 2011; Sepúlveda 2007), the indigenous communities who dreaded the death of their ancestral spirits as planted trees replaced native forests in their communities (Fernández and Henríquez 2008; Varela 2010).

1.2 Finding the limits of Political CSR and global governance

At this point I took an interest in the actual processes of legitimacy creation, exploring what claims and whose voices were included when the desirability of an investment was being defined through discursive processes in society. Seeing corporate legitimacy as an outcome of discursive processes relies on ‘the assumption that in pluralistic societies a common ground on questions of right and wrong, fair and unfair can only be found through joint communicative processes between different actors’ (Scherer and Palazzo 2007 p. 1097). Here, I engaged with the literature on ‘Political CSR’ that looks at the relation between corporate legitimacy and the interaction with stakeholders through dialogue (Palazzo and Scherer 2006; Scherer and Palazzo 2007; Scherer and Palazzo 2011). The argument put forward in the political CSR literature is that the globalisation process of MNCs has weakened the position of nation states to fulfil their duty to force corporations to adhere to national legal frameworks. At the same time, the moral norms of business managers and the operating environment that they are embedded in rest on a fragmented and pluralised set of values, norms and lifestyles. This in turn makes it difficult to set normative standards that work across cultures and that would determine how the legitimacy of corporate activities can be normatively assessed by different groups or societies. Instead of relying on the boundaries set by national regulations, political CSR emphasises that corporate legitimacy should be seen as a discursive process between the corporation and its stakeholders (see also critically Edward and Willmott 2012). Inspired by Habermasian discourse ethics, legitimacy is thereby perceived as ‘socially and argumentatively constructed by means of considering reasons to justify certain actions, practices, or institutions and is thus present in discourses between the corporation and its relevant publics’ (Scherer and Palazzo 2011, p. 916).

I wanted to find out exactly how political CSR could deliver a common sense of legitimacy when the views of the corporations were not in line with what the business insiders I had been working with previously had called ‘the absurd and illicit claims’ of the local stakeholders. Most of the work on ‘political CSR’ was based on examples from corporate-NGO negotiations (Baur and Palazzo 2011; Baur and Schmitz 2011; Mena and Palazzo 2012). These studies did not deal with other important actors in civil society such as local communities who serve as hosts for the multinational corporations. Banerjee’s work on CSR from a postcolonial perspective points out that there is more to legitimacy than producing a consensus through dialogue in such a context. In his research he maintains repeatedly that legitimacy is an outcome of long-lasting power relations, and that this type of legitimacy cannot easily be lost or withdrawn (Banerjee 2003; 2007; 2008; 2010; 2011).
At first sight, Palazzo and Scherer’s work on political CSR seemed to suit the research setting well. ‘The contestation of discourses’ (Dryzek 2000, p. 5) through the social mobilisations of those who opposed these investments and their impacts seemed to be a central aspect to how legitimacy had been tested and settled in the different conflicts that I had decided to investigate. However, as I started to study the different voices of the stakeholders in these conflicts, I found it challenging to implement theories that referred to processes experienced in the post-industrial European context to the social reality in my research setting in the Global South. In their texts, Scherer and Palazzo relied extensively on environmental movements with their base in the Global North, and European-based NGOs in raising claims that should be placed on the business agenda (Baur and Palazzo 2011; Baur and Schmitz 2011; Palazzo and Scherer 2006; Scherer and Palazzo 2007; Mena and Palazzo 2012). Even at the beginning of my research I asked myself how well this resonated with the marginalised or even excluded position that certain groups in rural communities in the Global South occupy (Banerjee 2007; Newell 2005). Their access to influence politics through NGOs or broader civil society support is very restricted. One of Palazzo and Scherer’s main arguments as to why this deliberative turn was needed was that of the failure of nation states in the Global South to provide protection and well-being for their own citizens (Scherer and Palazzo 2011; see also Matten and Crane 2005). I asked myself in what ways foreign multinationals could engage these locals in a democratic will-formation better than local governments, which had for centuries side-stepped local inhabitants favouring the interests of actors in the Global North.

As I embarked on my field research, the primary question to the people I met, who in one way or another had been involved in opposing forestry investments in Chile and Uruguay, was whether there could be an agreement, a consensus with the forestry companies, regarding the conflicts that they had been involved in. The overwhelming majority was of the opinion that this was not possible. Out of more than 20 conversations I held with key local stakeholders opposing these investments, I only met two individuals who thought engagement with the forestry companies could be beneficial and lead to something good for the locals (in contrast to the others, these two individuals took the presence of the corporations as a given fact and wanted to make the best of the situation). The others that I met and talked with had no trust in the company in terms of defining what they saw as legitimate. In fact, for them CSR and stakeholder dialogues were not perceived as something beneficial. Instead, these activities were seen as a strategy to convince locals to give up their lifestyles and freedom by accepting the kind of lifestyles promoted by the corporations, as one of the opposition leaders in the fishing village of Mehuín explained:

‘The company also sells. It does not only sell cellulose pulp, it also sells forms of living. But well, there it is up to you to choose. There are many people that have chosen like me – I am not interested in what you are selling as a company, I am interested in living as I have always lived, because no one decides for me, I do not have a boss, I don’t have anyone telling me that tomorrow at 8 in the morning I have to be here or else I will be fired from my job. No, that does not happen. The fisherman is not enslaved, he employs himself based on his needs. The company sells something very contrary to that and so that is where one asks, at least in Chile – what degree of ethical responsibility does the company have? What degree of true social responsibility does the company have? At least in Chile, this is an ongoing open discussion.’ (Opposition leader, Mehuín, Chile, September 2012).

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2 Habermas’s communicative theory, upon which Palazzo and Scherer’s framework relies heavily, emerges from the study of the rise of social movements in Europe in the 1960s.

3 Palazzo and Scherer refer to the ‘developing world’, a concept I intentionally avoid because it is a term that has emerged from a Eurocentric perspective on world relations and establishes hierarchies indicating an inferior position of other worlds to that of the ‘developed world’.
Different governance schemes that invited the locals to participate in the decision making procedures, such as the certification processes of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the public hearings of the Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) prior to investments were, by several persons, referred to as mechanisms rigged in favour of the corporations from the start. They felt that these schemes were designed to silence the grievances felt by these stakeholders and make the corporations look good in public. One of the smallholder farmers I met in Uruguay expressed his distrust of the certification processes:

‘These [FSC] certifications are just legal artefacts to justify their [plantations’] presence. I say this because on the other hand there are no de-certifications and here we have clear evidence of the harm that they have inflicted on us. And so I do not believe in these things.’ (Interview with smallholder, Cerro Alegre, Uruguay, November 2012)

There was also sense of long-term exclusion and exploitation among the locals that could not be remedied by the possibility for engaging in dialogue. At the public hearing (that I personally attended) for the FSC certification process of the Chilean forestry company Arauco, the people that participated but objected to the certifications did so without any hope of impacting the final outcome of the processes. After the meeting, one of the participants of Mapuche descent explained his view on dialogue:

‘What kind of dialogue are we talking about here? You engage in a dialogue when you are equal to equal, when both parties are respected. I can’t hit my wife, for example, and the next day pretend that I am happy, knowing clearly that inside, between me and my wife, there is a tremendous pain. I mean, I can’t just pretend that. How is the dialogue managed when the couple is fine, doing well? Both make an effort to have a dialogue and seek a better future, right? There I think you can talk on equal terms. But between us the Mapuche and the State, I cannot see even one dialogue. And the State and the company are the same. For example, to whom do they listen within the State? They listen to these big corporations that exploit their workers, and who have the laws on their side. But if you protest a little bit, they come and lock you up.’ (Interview with Mapuche leader, San José de la Mariquina, Chile, September 2012).

Still, the findings from my interviews in relation to the FSC certification process indicated that there was a ray of hope that this time things would turn out differently and that the voices of the excluded would actually play a role in the decision making of the granting of the FSC, as noted by another Mapuche participant:

‘I am here because I really hope that for once this thing won’t continue. We want to see the possibility that one day the persons looking from above will look at the persons below with respect, just this, and that he respects the right, the right of each human being, the right to our territory, the right for us to carry out our lives, the right to prosper, the right to grow...’ (Interview with Mapuche leader, San José de la Mariquina, Chile, September 2012)

The granting of the FSC label to the forestry firms in Chile in 2013 (and previously in Uruguay) indicated that these voices did not count in terms of defining what is desirable through governance. Instead, these voices of difference remained buried under the labels of ‘successfully completed citizen participation’ according to the standards set by the FSC governing bodies. Beneath the certifications and the participatory meetings, the conflicts with those who did not wish to be stakeholders of these projects in the first place continued. Their way of conceptualising the world and what they perceived as legitimate had no impact on the final outcome of the entire governance exercise.

Furthermore, moving beyond the setting of determining legitimacy in public hearings towards how legitimacy is created through the competing discourses in the public sphere (Dryzek 2000), I started to compare systematically the research material that I had collected from newspaper articles and the accounts of the people I had met. Here, I
found another set of discrepancies, or big gaps of absences of the kind of worldviews that the people I had met had transmitted to me during our conversations. If the contestation of discourses in the public sphere was supposed to lead to a shared sense of legitimacy in civil society at large, then there were certain voices that never seemed to rise to the surface in the media representation (see Article 1). What did this exclusion of certain voices in the broader public debate signify beyond the mere formalistic measures of designing governance schemes that promoted fairness and inclusion of all affected in the deliberation?

At this point, I started to sense that there was more to the concept of legitimacy than was being discussed in the majority of the management, political science, and natural resource management literature. Neither the concept of a ‘generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions’ (Suchman 2015, p. 574), nor the social contract theory (Donaldson and Dunfee 1999), or the political legitimacy of the consent of the governed (based on Locke cited in Taylor 2002) applied to what I saw and experienced while immersing myself in the impressions from remote and abandoned rural communities on the outskirts of vast tree plantations or in small coastal communities resisting the threat of water pollution from the pulp mills. They did not hold the same norms, values, and beliefs as the corporations. To give their consent to these kinds of activities was the last thing on their mind. In fact some even suggested that they were ready to fight to the death if that was required of them (interviews with author, Mehuín, September 2012).

1.3 Going decolonial: Seeing the world as a pluriverse rather than a universe

The people I met in these communities told different stories about themselves and their future than those that were transmitted through the newspaper texts. Their stories constituted different worlds, far away from the reality I had experienced during my time in the corporate world of the forestry industry. How the forestry industry was received as legitimate in one community was not the same as in other communities, nor could it even be compared to what forestry and the legitimacy of corporate conduct signified within the industry itself. There seemed to be different ways of sensing what the ‘good life’ or ‘bad life’ was in those places that had been seriously impacted or threatened by the forestry industry’s activities (I noticed this difference both in places affected by tree plantations and pulp mills). The legitimacy of the corporate world varied depending on what had been part of ‘being’ and ‘worlding’ in these places in the past (Blaser 2010; Escobar 2008; see also the observations of previous research on pulp conflicts by Groglopo 2012). Due to my experiences during the field research, some new questions formulated in my mind: When we talk about legitimacy, whose legitimacy are we talking about, and towards whom? And what roles does place play in the definition of what is deemed legitimate? Moving beyond the corporate sphere of influence, how should legitimacy be understood? Is legitimacy something more than the top-down perception of the term, is it also a construct that defines the very organisation of social life in particular places?

Thus, my field research pointed me in a completely different direction than the path I had originally embarked upon. What if the world is not made up of only one world but many, all embedded in places with their particular historical processes and imaginations? I started to see the excluded voices as struggles over the right to live in different worlds and engaging in different life projects outside the reach of a
‘consensus’ with the corporate and modern world (see also Blaser 2010; Escobar 2008; Porto-Gonçalves 2009; Zibechi 2012). I noted that the current debate on CSR, corporate legitimacy, and business ethics in one single globalised world was that this debate does not extend beyond the assumptions embedded in the dominant modern worldview and I discovered that other scholars – initially through the work of Escobar (1995) and Mignolo (2000) – had argued the same before me. I also discovered that this perspective does not give much attention to the symbolic meaning that places have in the everyday lives (and imaginations) of the people that inhabit them (see Porto-Gonçalves 2009). That is when I started to look for answers to my questions in the decolonial literature, seeing the world as a pluriverse rather than universe.

Decolonial thinking differs from the closely related theoretical perspective of Postcolonial Theory. It should not be seen as a competing but a complementary perspective confronting the legacies of colonialism (Mignolo 2011). In Chapter 6 on methodologies, I present some of the similarities and differences in more detail. Briefly, these differences are related to the origins of these two perspectives (studying how discourses of the Orient create power relations vs reflections on the realities of the excluded and social movements emerging in the Latin American context), the attention given in decolonial studies to the ‘geopolitics of knowledge’ and the location of the researcher (and his/her methodologies) in that context, as well as the attention given in decolonial studies to social processes that exist or emerge in the exteriority of colonial relations. I found decolonial thinking useful to support my empirical cases not only because it is concerned with similar types of social processes as my case studies, but also because this framework has allowed me to ‘see the pluriverse’ beyond the modern/colonial constructs.

Initially I saw the issues I confronted as typical to former colonies in the Global South (based on the literature on petrol and mining conflicts in Africa and India) and I failed to see that these processes have always been present in my own life and in my home country – Finland. As decolonial thinking emerged in a Third World context, by a Third World scholar (Mignolo 2013), it is mostly concerned with the socio-natural relationships in that context. However, during this research journey, the increased media attention on similar conflicts in the Global North, such as the problems arising from fracking operations in the United States, and the complete failure of the Finnish state to attend to the environmental consequences of the emblematic mining operations of Talvivaara, as well as the increasing conflicts within local communities destined to host large windmill parks made me realise that the relevance of my studies stretched far beyond the Global North/South divide. These conflicts made me see that modernity and development (framed as economic growth when a country has already been classified as ‘developed’ or ‘industrialised’) and the severe (but hidden) consequences thereof are not only a problem for rural communities in the South, but that this universalising dominant view of the world affects and threatens the pluriverse regardless of its geographic location.

1.4 Aim and research questions

The overall aim of this research is to explore how legitimacy is created when different worlds collide in the pluriverse, or more specifically how legitimacy is created when the
global world of corporations collides with the worlds of those places where these corporations are located, or wish to be located. In order to address this overarching question, I set the following specific research questions in the articles that constitute the body of my research:

1. How are the voices of the marginalised and excluded stakeholders presented and contested in print media over time, and what effect does this have on their willingness to engage in participation?

2. How do place-based social imaginaries influence local communities to engage in deliberation?

3. How do the excluded build their own legitimacies from below against projects that threaten their own way of life?

Place-based social imaginaries is the concept I use to anchor legitimacy in the pluriverse, and in place, where the way people come to see their own world is a production of historical processes that are simultaneously restricted and enabled by their geographic location (Escobar 2001; 2008).

Based on illustrative cases of conflicts within the forestry industry (here including both forestry plantations and pulp mill facilities) in Chile and Uruguay, I seek answers to these questions through multiple methods and materials. As I discuss more at length in the methodology section, during the research process I have come to see knowledge, or more specifically the act of knowing, as inherently linked to the stories that we share with each other. Storytelling is a way of worlding, of making different worlds come alive. We tell stories according to the epistemological boundaries of our own world (be it in a scientific community or a local community of shared common experiences or histories).

In my findings in all three articles, I point at the limitations to how legitimacy is currently being defined in management and governance literature. How legitimacy is conceptualised within the communities in conflict with forestry companies is directly dependent on the available narratives and stories in the communities themselves. Also, I find limitations in relying on the public sphere and media representation in the definition of what kind of operations are to be considered legitimate locally. In terms of legitimacy, this means that that in order to restore corporate legitimacy there is not only a need for a shift in how corporations and local communities engage with each other in dialogues (Scherer and Palazzo 2006), but a need to re-structure economic activities so that they support the production, reproduction and development of all human life (Dussel 2013) within the planetary limits of the pluriverse.

In terms of how legitimacy is conceptualised in the pluriverse, I suggest a move towards seeing it as the capacity to sustain and reproduce life in a community (see Dussel 2013), where the concept of community also includes the territorial boundaries which it inhabits. This conceptualisation of legitimacy makes it possible to liberate the concept from domination, by separating the construct of legitimacy from the power of authority, to which it is inherently linked when following a Weberian conceptualisation of legitimacy (Taylor 2002). Instead, Dussel’s approach to legitimacy makes it possible to locate it within the place-based social imaginary and boundaries where it emerges. In terms of engagement of the different interconnected worlds in the pluriverse, I identify the need for a shift from governance that strives for consensus through deliberation towards the opening up of spaces for encounters of co-existence through conversations across differences, celebrating conflicts for what they are – the manifestation of the
pluriverse – rather than suppressing them. I also introduce the concept of ‘rooted governance’ to describe the activities, or the encounters through conversations that take place ‘from the bottom up’; how communities come together to decide how to organise social life so that the capacity to sustain and reproduce life within that particular place is respected and supported by all members of the community. In this setting business entities can be an integral part of the decision-making process, however, it must be the long-term reproduction of life in the community (not the maximisation of economic growth or shareholder profits) that guides the processes of the conversations.

The rest of the work is structured as follows. To introduce the core of this research I first present the three articles that make up the basis of the following arguments. After the presentation of the articles and the core findings I discuss the theoretical grounding of my work in the discussion (and critique) of global governance as a limited modern construct, the difference between a universal and pluriversal legitimacy construct, and finally a discussion on the local community, its boundaries and how to overcome the problems of incommunicability (and the construction of borders) in the pluriverse (a topic I return to in the final discussion). Then I present the methodological aspects of my work, the transformations of my ontological and epistemological perspectives that have taken place as a consequence of the research process itself (and the encounters with different knowing subjects along the way). Finally, I engage in a discussion on what this pluriversal perspective on legitimacy would mean if we dared to take is seriously. What are the consequences for responsible management practices, or the very organising of community social life in the future?
2 PRESENTATION OF THE ARTICLES

2.1 Article 1: The Production of Absence through Media Representation: a case study on legitimacy and deliberation in a pulp mill dispute in southern Chile

The first article deals with the media representation of different voices. In this study I trace back how the voices of those who opposed the pulp mill during the initial stages of the EIA were treated in newspaper texts. I find that throughout the different stages of the conflict these voices are produced as absences in relation to the call for investment, modernisation, progress, and job creation in the region. The effect this has on what is debated publically is that certain imaginations are not given presence in the public sphere – they are actively produced as absences. As these voices do not exist as equals in the public discourses, they cannot achieve legitimacy for their claims in the public sphere. The interviews with the opponents that support this article indicate that they did not trust the media or public opinion in their fight for what they considered legitimate. The findings from this article indicate that there are limits to how well governance can reduce and prevent conflicts when certain voices do not count as equals. In terms of securing legitimacy of decisions, the design of governance schemes should not only be focused on promoting fair and reasoned dialogue with all affected parties. The systematic exclusion through the production of absences does not make participation in governance a very attractive option for those whose voices are excluded in this way. When aware of this position, the stakeholder groups that are the victims of the production of absences may seek different ways of defending their right to existence.

2.2 Article 2: Delinking legitimacies – a pluriversal perspective on political CSR

This article is about the place-based boundaries of legitimacy creation. Because of these boundaries I argue for the need to acknowledge the existence of pluriversal legitimacies when discussing the role of corporate governance and the political responsibility of corporations. By comparing the narratives that emerge in the two locations where the pulp mill was disputed, I find discrepancies in how people made sense of history, subsistence, nature and the future. I argue that these four aspects of the common social imaginary are core elements that define what kind of economic activity is perceived as legitimate in terms of sustaining social life in a particular (place-based) community. By comparing the imaginaries in the two locations, I also argue that the reason one community decided not to engage in dialogue with the corporation through any kind of governance scheme was that there was a heightened awareness of these boundaries among community members which helped them to construct their own sense of legitimacy (of difference) and to defend their way of being beyond the realms of dialogue.
2.3 Article 3: Confronting Forestry: The cultivation of ‘Alternatives to Development’ in the Uruguayan countryside

This article looks at legitimacy creation from the social movement perspective. How can stakeholders build a defence from below in a place where the boundaries between different legitimacies are not visible? Here I rely on the social movement literature and more particularly on social movements as ‘societies in movement’ (Zibechi 2012) and how such movements construct their boundaries by engaging in ‘politics of place’ (Escobar 2001). The article builds on the stories, or testimonies, of three small-scale farmers who actively seek to resist forestry plantations on their land. They do not give their consent to this type of economic activity to sustain social life. However, as they are an absolute minority, their actions to raise their claims are rendered invisible in the political discourses in the public sphere. One of the testimonies shows a different type of strategy, one engaged in building a new imaginary, and boundaries of difference through place-based politics – the farmers are engaged in building new locally embedded narratives on the history of place, their relations to nature, means of subsistence and how to imagine the future. They use this strategy in their efforts to raise awareness and point towards alternatives to forestry in the Uruguayan countryside.
3 GOVERNANCE AND THE EXCLUDING FEATURES OF COLONIALITY

In the past decade, the concept of ‘governance’ has acquired an increasingly central role as a substitute for authoritative, institutionalised, top-down political decision-making (Hajer and Wagenaar 2003). In a broad sense, governance refers to ‘the rules and forms that guide collective decision-making. That the focus is on decision-making in the collective implies that governance is not about one individual making a decision but rather about ‘groups of individuals or organisations or systems of organisations making decisions’ (Stoker 2004, p. 3). This approach to ‘defining and implementing global rules’ (Scherer and Palazzo 2011, p. 900) implies that political processes are horizontal, constituted by fluid networks of actors who can agree, or find a consensus, through continuous engagement in genuine dialogue (Hajer and Wagenaar 2003; Innes and Booher 2003; 2004). Thus the focus lies on collaboration and supposedly horizontal relationships of engagement by all affected parties.

The emergence of governance as a form of doing politics can be traced back to three social processes of the past four decades: 1) the legitimacy crisis experienced by the political institutions as a result of the rise of social movements (student, feminist, environmental) movements) in Europe and the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s; 2) the void in governability created as a result of the withdrawal of the state from social and economic sectors through the neoliberal policies implemented in these same places from the 1980s onwards; and 3) the globalisation processes put in motion by the internationalisation of global trade through which the nation-state and traditional politics lost their regulatory power over globally operating corporations (De Sousa Santos 2009; Scherer and Palazzo 2011). De Sousa Santos (2009) argues that governance in political processes responded both to the demands for inclusion and participation coming from the social movements and to the demands for autonomy and self-regulation of the market embedded in the neoliberal ideology. Banerjee (2007) notes that governance (in the form of public-private partnership, stakeholder dialogue and NGO involvement) has served to enhance the legitimacy of the neoliberal structure of social and economic life.

In the age of globalisation, global governance has emerged as a type of ‘soft governance’ where corporations work together with NGOs and other groups in civil society to set internationally applicable voluntary standards and procedures (Scherer and Palazzo 2011; Moog et al. 2015).

‘On the global level, neither nation-states nor international institutions alone are able to sufficiently regulate the global economy and to provide global public goods (Kaul et al. 2003). Rather, global governance, seen as the process of defining and implementing global rules and providing global public goods, is a polycentric and multilateral process to which governments, international institutions, civil society groups, and business firms contribute knowledge and resources (Braithwaite and Drahos 2000; Detomasi 2007; Reinicke et al. 2000). Unlike national governance with its monopoly on the use of force and the capacity to enforce regulations upon private actors within the national territory, global governance rests on voluntary contributions and weak or even absent enforcement mechanisms.’ (Scherer and Palazzo 2011, p. 900)

The readings of governance as a rule-making procedure are also accompanied by the ‘discursive turn’ in research where discourses are central to the formation of institutions and legitimacy (Dryzek 2000). Instead of interpreting political processes through the efficiency of political institutions (elections, opinion polls, civic interactions) to guarantee legitimate decision outcomes, this ‘communicative approach’ (Palazzo and Scherer 2006), inspired by the Habermasian Communicative
Theory, focuses on the linguistic or discursive processes (also referred to as deliberation) that leads to the formation of legitimacy (Joutsenvirta and Vaara 2009; 2015; Palazzo and Scherer 2006; Vaara and Tienari 2008). For Dryzek (2000), the prerequisite for discursive legitimacy to work is a vital civil society, susceptible to democratic control. This argument relies on Beck’s reflexive modernities, in which the future is chosen not adjusted to. In a context where the nation state is losing its jurisdiction (both due to the globalisation of trade and the transnational scope of environmental problems) over democratic processes the established institutions are less prepared to keep risk at bay and thus the discursive processes in society at large become a sort of manifestation of politics in the making (Hajer and Wagenaar 2003).

Governance thus exists at many different levels. In the national setting it is implemented as citizen participation in public planning, to enhance the legitimacy of the decision outcomes (Innes and Booher 2004). A prime example of this kind of governance is the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) where the public is invited to attend public hearings and submit written comments on proposed large-scale projects predicted to have an impact on the surrounding environment (Wood 2003). In the international setting, cross-sector partnerships between business, government, and civil society groups are a type of governance that fosters the formation of ‘multilateral collectives that engage in mutual problem solving, information sharing, and resource allocation’ (Koschmann et al 2012). Such partnerships are for example a) multi-stakeholder initiatives that set industry-wide standards for sustainable global supply chains, or b) business-community partnerships collaborating on providing benefits to the communities in which the corporations seek their license to operate (Loza 2004). The former, although not liberated from the chains of being anchored in place, moves on a level that is abstract and global where the role of place is secondary to the importance of raising consumer awareness. The focus of this thesis in on the latter of these two, because these instances are always localised or embedded in a particular place, which means that the tools and means available to those who oppose partnerships and governance all together are different from those struggles that are not directly related to struggles over the right to determine the practices of particular territories.

In these types of global and multi-level models for governance, business, civil society (including international NGOs) and potentially also the government jointly set the moral standards of global operations. Scherer and Palazzo (2006; 2007; 2011) have argued that it is these types of initiatives that are changing the conditions for how corporations are granted their legitimacy and how they engage in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):

‘CSR in a domestic context is building on the assumption that corporations, in order to preserve their legitimacy, follow the nationally defined rules of the game. In the changing institutional context of global governance, this stable framework of law and moral custom is eroding and corporations have to find new ways of keeping their licences to operate (Palazzo and Scherer 2006; Suchman 1995).’ (Scherer and Palazzo 2011, p. 907).

They argue that the eroding regulatory environment and the pluralisation of norms values and beliefs in a global operating environment is setting the stage for ‘political CSR’, where the morality of corporate actions is evaluated and redefined based on the engagement in deliberative processes with multiple stakeholders (Palazzo and Scherer 2006; 2007; 2011).
3.1 The limits of governance in a pluriversal world

The presentation of how governance has emerged as a national and international political process demonstrates that what is referred to as governance exists at multiple levels, what is common to them all is the emphasis on deliberation and mutual understanding to reach a consensus on issues that affect different social actors in society. In this sense, it is a concept that is embedded in the different processes that aim to define the boundaries of human activity and social life. The concept implies, in line with Habermas’ Communicative Theory (1996), that the different stakeholders (or networks of stakeholders as in the case of social movements) are ready to collaborate, seeking a consensus based on reason (instead of interests) on topics of joint concern (Palazzo and Scherer 2006; Scherer and Palazzo 2011; Moog et al. 2015). By establishing inclusive procedures it is thus foreseen that governance in its different forms fosters a broad sense of public legitimacy; by establishing the boundaries of corporate conduct (as in the case of ‘political CSR’), the boundaries of particular investments (through the participatory processes of EIA) and the boundaries of topics of global reach (under the umbrella of multi-stakeholder initiatives, MSI).

In essence, whether governance is practiced in a national setting where local authorities are in charge of the procedures or in an international setting where the role of authority is less obvious, the focus lies on the joint efforts to reach an agreement, a consensus, based on the rationality of the claims raised. Furthermore, the concept of governance assumes that hierarchies have been broken down as all affected actors have equal possibilities to participate in the horizontal rule making game (Innes and Booher 2004). The outcomes of decision-making through governance schemes are perceived as legitimate when they are based on values such as transparency, rule of law, accountability, fairness, inclusion, participation, representation and deliberation (Kronsell and Bäckstrand 2010).

From a pluriversal perspective, these theories and practices of governance face a serious drawback: they are embedded in political processes that have emerged in modern contexts: they build on the modern European and North American historical experiences without considering the colonial experiences felt elsewhere that ran parallel to these processes. Thus, the theories on deliberative democracy and consensus building through governance fail to consider the existence of realities other than those of the modern society and the concepts that are discussed within this framework are limited because they emerge from a particular political context and particular epistemic tradition(s) that do not move beyond the context of the modern imaginary.

This type of exclusion that is related to the limits of modernity as an imaginary construct is what de Sousa Santos (2009) refers to when he argues that governance in the age of neoliberal globalisation not only excludes certain demands but even converts them into absences, as if they were non-existent. This subtle form of exclusion is what I focus on in the first article where, drawing on de Sousa Santos’ work on production of absences (2012; 2013), I show how at the moment of public participation in the Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) of the pulp mill project certain (oppositional) voices appeared as non-existent in the public sphere. I also find that the production of absences was one of the reasons that the community of Mehuín decided to defend their territory outside the realm of deliberation.
3.2 Exposing governance to coloniality and ontological conflicts

De Sousa Santos’ description of governance as a system based on a set of principles where the excluded appear as non-existent through the production of absences in public discourses brings to the fore the changing core of what ‘authority’ signifies in a globalised world where national governments are losing their regulatory capacity. Despite the weakened role of the traditional political authority, which can rely on the coercive power (legitimate as long as this authority enjoys the support of the people) of the military and police forces to impose regulation (even this can be debated if it is globally absent or if it has only been ‘privatised’, see, for example, Banerjee 2010; Elms and Phillips 2009; Singer 2004), ‘authority’ still persist, albeit in a subtle and hidden form.

This type of power is what has been called ‘coloniality’ within the decolonial school of thought (Mignolo 2011; Quijano 2000). Coloniality is an analytical concept developed by decolonial scholars in Latin America to describe the underside, or ‘the darker side’ (Mignolo 2011) of modernity (see Quijano, 2000; Escobar, 2008; Mignolo, 2000; 2011). It is a form of power that subjugates the subject to institutional forces in a similar way to Foucault’s reading of power and knowledge, however, coloniality follows a different set of hierarchies that departs from the colonial difference between the (superior) coloniser and the (inferior) colonised (Mignolo 2000). It refers to the longstanding patterns of power that have prevailed since the discovery of the Americas, and which continue to define the hierarchies of human relations and establish hierarchies and structure the colonial difference between the modern and the colonial world (Mignolo 2011).

Thus, coloniality, as a construct of power, cannot be traced back to the actions of one particular entity (such as the state or the multinational corporation), but works through the hierarchical relationships of the modern rationality (structuring knowledge and subjectivities, race and gender, and who has the control over the economy and authority) (Mignolo 2011). It continues to mutate through the power of the rhetoric of modernity (i.e. embedded in the eternal promise of development, economic growth, progress etc.) that hides the sacrifices made by those who suffer from the logics of coloniality (Mignolo 2000; 2011). It was this rhetoric that became visible in my first article, where I used de Sousa Santos (2013) sociology of absences to show how media portrayed the pulp mill conflict in Chile in its early stages. However, this rhetoric should not only be understood to work only as a discourse, coloniality has effects both at the epistemological and ontological level.

Coloniality works at the level of epistemology when modern rationality is given priority over other ways of knowing. The detachment of the knower from what is known is what hides the geopolitical (Europe) and bodily political (white man) location of from where this knowledge is produced (Mignolo 2000; 2002; 2011). By claiming universal validity (and superiority) this rationality supresses the histories, knowledges, and languages, while restricting the field of possibilities in terms of what can be known. This is an important aspect to consider when discussing governance. A governance system that follows Habermas’ Communicative Action takes as a starting point that consensus can be achieved based on free and reasoned deliberation. The rationale to be applied to the validity of arguments is the kind of detached knowledge that hides its colonial difference towards other knowledges and other ways of beings.

The ‘Coloniality of Being’ (Maldonado-Torres 2007) works at the ontological level and refers to both the lived experienced from colonisation and the impact it has on mind,
language and meanings. Maldonado-Torres (2007) sustains that ‘[i]nvisibility and dehumanization are the primary expressions of the coloniality of Being’ and it manifests itself ‘in the cries of those whose humanity is being denied’ (p. 257).

When Suchman (1995) defines the legitimacy of organisations as “a generalized perception or assumption that the action of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and assumptions” (p. 574) he does it from a position within the modern imaginary. What the literature on global governance (and political CSR) tries to achieve, relying on Habermas Communicative Action, is a sort of commonly agreed upon moral legitimacy (create a common understanding of what is desirable, proper, or appropriate) negotiated across various stakeholder groups (Palazzo and Scherer 2006; Scherer and Palazzo 2011). However, common norms, values and beliefs cannot be negotiated with invisible stakeholders, or within a socially constructed system (modernity) that denies the humanity of the victims it produces.

Thus, ontological conflicts between different forms of ‘Being’ are bound to emerge when governance is situated in the context of livelihood struggles endemic to corporations in the extractive industries. In such a context, it is difficult to see how exactly stakeholders and the corporations can build social cohesion based on consensus, mutual understanding, and collaborative partnerships when the relationships are marked by mutually exclusive ways of engaging with the very core of life itself, and when these relationships are hierarchically constituted through the colonial difference between the modern and the colonial.

These type of ontological conflicts are what I refer to when I examine place-based social imaginary and how different actors engage with each other and the nature that constitutes their everyday lives, from their own social imaginaries, their reality and their world (Article 2). For example, if the place under dispute is conceptualised within the modern imaginary, land is given meaning purely in terms of its economic value, and categorised according to its natural resources and property rights (Escobar 1998; Porto Gonçalves 2009). As I make visible in the second article, this creates conflicts with other ways of relating and engaging with place that for example stresses the interconnection of the human and the nonhuman and the spiritual significance of nature in the whole of the cosmos.

Acosta (2013) underlines the problems of governance in such a context:

‘From this point of view, the problems and conflicts that arise from extractivism would be solved with proper “governance” of how natural resources are used. The ways to achieve this are orthodox and conservative economic policies, increasing civil society participation in the oversight of extractive industry projects, more social investment in the areas where extractivism takes place to reduce social protests, and transparent information about the income obtained by the extractive enterprises, local governments and central government. Environmental destruction is accepted as the inevitable cost of achieving development. Since this is not questioned, these approaches are weakly analytical, lacking in historical analysis and unconnected to the underlying problems.’ (p. 62)

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5 Extractive industry is here understood as those corporations engaged in removing large quantities of unprocessed natural resources destined mainly towards export markets with few benefits for the locals (Acosta, 2013; Gudynas, 2013). The activities are not limited to minerals or oil but can also be linked to the modus operandi of other industrial sectors that require access to natural resources in a particular place for their operations (i.e. farming, fishing, forestry). The forestry industry (including both industrial tree plantations and pulp mills) can therefore also be understood as a type of extractive industry as its presence has an, albeit contested, impact on the local environment and way of life.
The underlying problems that the literature on political CSR and global governance misses are thus the ontological conflicts that exist between the world (or social imaginary) within which governance has been constructed (the modern) and the multiple (decolonial) worlds it wishes to ‘govern’. By placing governance within the limits of its own imaginary and making visible the assumptions that are constitutive to this imaginary it is possible to better understand the shortcomings, or even impossibilities of this type of governance to offer solutions in situations and places where multiple modern and non-modern imaginaries (co)exist. Next, I explore the limits of the modern imaginary and some of shifts needed in the collective thinking to enable co-existence across imaginaries.

3.3 Modernity and modern rationality - hierarchical tools for exclusion

In my research I look at modernity as a two-fold concept: 1) as a myth that informs a particular ontology, a world in itself, embedded in a particular set of underlying assumptions (Blaser 2010); and 2) as an ever-changing dynamic process, with origins in certain historical experiences (originating in Europe), which aims at universalising itself through the forces of globalisation (Escobar 2010; Mignolo 2000; 2011). While relying on this definition of modernity in my research, I still acknowledge that there are other ways of engaging with modernity, such as seeing modernity as a contested construct that is shaped by locally specific variations (alternative modernities) or reading modernity through multiple different lenses without a predetermined geographic origin (Grossberg 2010).

Blaser (2010) defines the modern myth as being composed of three underlying and interlinked threads: 1) the divide between nature and culture (or society) 2) the colonial difference between moderns and non-moderns (hierarchical relationships between the supreme colonizer and the inferior colonized), and 3) an unidirectional linear temporality flowing from the past to the future based on the industrial experience of Europe and onwards. For the modern myth to function, he maintains, all of these three assumptions must be fulfilled, if one is removed, it is no longer the modern myth. These are the ontological assumptions that I also understand as constitutive to the kind of modernity that I make reference to throughout this thesis. The ontological hierarchical difference is expressed in terms of the binary separation between a) the modern and the colonial (sometimes labelled ‘premodern’), b) racial superiority and inferiority (and hierarchical classifications based on gender6), and c) the advanced / backward position in time depending on the subjects’ location in the (modern) industrial history of the world.

Escobar (2008) summarises the idea of modernity as a historical process of globalisation based on the work of several influential European thinkers (e.g. Habermas, Giddens, Taylor, Beck, as well as Kant and Hegel before them). Modernity emerges as an idea from the historical processes of the Reformation, the Enlightenment and the French Revolution from the seventeenth-century in northern Europe. The organisation of social life, or the way of belonging in time (past present and future) and space is tied to the nation-state (as I have argued above, this connection to the nation-state is currently partially dissolved through the processes of globalisation). This means that as a spatial construct modernity can be seen as tightly connected to the territorial boundaries of the nation-state while social life is disembodied from the local context

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6 I only engage in gender methodologically, and not as a topic of study, when I rely on feminist methods for my work in Article 3.
(Escobar 2008). This is also noted by Porto-Gonçalves (2009), who argues that – within the idea of modernity – place loses its cultural and historical meaning within the society that it sustains.

‘Expert knowledge’ that produces a certain type of rationality is applied in the practices of (capital and state) governmental apparatuses, making it possible to define certain ways of imagining the reality as knowledge while dismissing others as beliefs (Escobar 2008). This expert-focused modern rationality that emerges from the Enlightenment holds man as the foundation of all knowledge, separated from nature and the divine (anthropocentrism), sustaining also the dualist assumption of the divide between nature and culture, subject and object, us and them (Escobar 2008; 2010). The primacy that the modern rationality proclaims over other ways of engaging with the world (central to the context of governance) is what creates the exclusion of the voices of those who engage with the world from other perspectives.

An eco-centric perspective contrary to the modern ego-centric perspective stresses continuity between the natural, the human and the supernatural, the embeddedness of the economy in social life, the restricted character of the market, and a relational worldview shaping the notions of personhood, community, economy and politics (see Blaser 2010; Dussel 2013; Escobar 2010; Radcliffe 2014).

Currently, the demand for a change in the collective thinking is not only prevalent in the decolonial literature, or the literature on indigenous ontologies and epistemologies (Blaser 2010; Kuokkanen 2008), but emerges on a broad front as a response to the dire consequences the planet faces in the age of the Anthropocene (humans impacting the geology and biology of the earth) (Eisenstein 2011; Klein 2014; Norberg-Hodge 2015; Scharmer and Kaufer 2013). Scharmer and Kaufer (2013) talk about the ecological divide (self and nature), social divide (self and other) and the spiritual-cultural divide (self and Self, one’s greatest potential) that represent three different tips of ‘the iceberg of massive institutional failure’ and that within these institutions we are ‘collectively creating results that nobody wants’ (Otto Scharmer, https://www.presencing.com/ego-to-eco/3-divides). The solution is a switch from the ego-system mindset, the outdated paradigm of economic thought, vastly out of touch with the realities of the current times to an eco-system awareness, focusing on the well-being of the whole. Thus, the decolonial literature converges with ideas on how leaders and communities across the globe can tackle the current global problems of death and destruction. In essence, it is a call for a global shift from the ego-centric awareness that acts in separation to an eco-centric view addressing the whole.

![Figure 1](from_an_ego_centric_to_an_eco_centric_view.png)
Decolonial thinkers argue that this dominant imaginary of modernity based on separation is just a particular kind of ‘historical and epistemic imagination’ (Escobar 2008, p. 305), emerging from a particular local history, which through colonial domination has produced a particular global design resulting in the subordination of other local histories and their corresponding designs and imaginations (Mignolo 2000). It is this hierarchical relationship between the dominant modern rationality and other knowledges that structures the deliberative processes in a way that the excluded are silenced, or even made to appear as non-existent (De Sousa Santos 2009; 2012; 2013).

In essence, it is the claim for universal validity of the modern imaginary that hides the silencing effects it has on other radically different (decolonial) alternatives of engaging with the world. Consequently rather than being inclusive, governance as practiced from this location becomes a tool of exclusion; its location within the modern world, and particularly within a predetermined (superior) knowledge system, structures what can be debated and on what terms. This is what I argue in my first article, that through the rhetoric of modernity and the production of absences (the discursive constructions of modern supremacy, which I will explain in more detail in the next section) of other worldviews creates the ground for exclusion and marginalisation even before the debate begins.

Zibechi (2012) notes a change in power balances once the formerly excluded take charge of their own knowledge production as subjects instead of inhabiting the space of the objectified ‘other’:

‘The emergence of new subjects constituted in the social margins, the so-called excluded, turns upside down the knowledge and practice of specialists. This is especially true for those specialists who believe that the knowledge of the ‘other’, whether Indians, peasants, or the poor, “was not only considered irrelevant, but also as one of the obstacles to the transformational task of development” (Lander 2000, 31.). When these “obstacles” becomes subjects, and begin to change the course of history and produce forms of knowledge that call into question the monopoly of the specialists- when the “objects” become subjects – then the established powers face a dilemma.’ (Zibechi 2012, p. 53)

For any form of governance to become inclusive, it must start by opening up the possibilities for other ways of knowing and imagining the world outside the imaginary of modernity, and thereby also changing the terms of the conversation (Mignolo 2011) for those hitherto excluded. For this to happen, governance cannot be restricted by coloniality but needs deeper forms of transformations to cope with the multiple decolonial options of the future. As Zibechi suggests in the excerpt above, this does not happen from within the (current) governance scheme but from its exteriority. It is when the formerly excluded take charge of their own knowledges to change the course of their own history that new horizons emerge. This type of thinking from the exteriority is what Mignolo (2011) refers to as ‘decolonial thinking’, a way of moving beyond the power of coloniality, ‘...not to resist but to re-exist in building decolonial futures’. (Mignolo 2011, p. 91)

In both Chile and Uruguay, the negation to participate in dialogues with the company and state representatives, where at the same time attempts ‘to re-exist in decolonial futures’ in the exteriority of the current governance systems. The people in Mehuín negated the participation in dialogues while at the same time defending their way of life, deeply intertwined with the clean water of the ocean bay that they defended (Article 2). In Uruguay, the resettlers refrained from going to public hearings and instead built their own decolonial future through farming and producing new stories that they hoped would reconnect the young with the countryside (Article 3).
The point I have wanted to make in this chapter is that there are limits to governance in its current form. First, it does not engage with the geographical embeddedness and the significations that arise within that realm. This lack of consideration for place becomes a problem when corporations and locals meet to deliberate over what is to be perceived as legitimate in a particular place. Second, the hierarchical relationships embedded in the modern imaginary/myth set the structures of and exclude certain (non-modern) groups from the debate. Because of these hierarchies, not all subjects can participate on equal terms in deliberation (see Article 1). These limits refer to the lack of attention paid to the ontological conflicts of those who do not follow the dominant modern categories of thought, within which governance as a construct is embedded.

Instead, the hierarchical relationship between what is allowed to be discussed (structured through the production of absences) and what kind of imaginary is allowed to be imagined (based on the linear assumption of time) within the deliberative space of governance as currently theorised, excludes the views of those whose life project does not follow the path of the dominant modern imaginary (Article 2). How can legitimacy be conceptualised beyond the structures of domination inherent to the modern imaginary? How can the concept of legitimacy also encompass the voices of different place-based local community groups regardless of the imaginary that they adhere to? I will return to these two questions in the next chapter after I have presented the concept of pluriversal legitimacy and given some reflections on how it relates to power. Understanding legitimacy from a pluriversal perspective requires a shift in how the world is conceptualised, moving from a universal perspective to one where the world is ‘conceived as a network of local histories and multiple local hegemonies’ (Mignolo 2000 p. 22). From this perspective, legitimacy must also be connected to place, which means that it is embedded within the historical processes of the place where it is being disputed. This requires breaking away from the modern myth of societies as culturally disconnected from the place that they inhabit (Porto-Gonçalves 2009).
4 UNIVERSAL AND PLURIVERAL LEGITIMACY

There are two aspects about legitimacy that are recurrent in the management literature that seeks to define it: the consensual nature of legitimacy and its links to power and domination. Both emerge from conceptualisations coming from the modern school of thought. In this chapter I will describe some of the features and limitations of these ways of understanding what legitimacy is and then introduce an alternative view that makes it possible to see legitimacy as a pluriversal construct embedded in the location and the imaginary(-ies) of that particular place. My main argument is that the current modes of conceptualising the legitimacy of the firm in the management literature, and the CSR/governance literature more specifically, is only defined based on the relationship between the corporation and its (modern) stakeholders, not in relation to the ontological commitments or the place/nature/territory where its activity is located. Furthermore, I argue that there are limits in terms of how legitimacy can be referred to based on the ‘consent of the governed’ in those places where the members of a community are not initially stakeholders of the firm. Legitimacy (political) as the outcome of political processes within the state is limited by national borders and thus those who are governed are already defined within these limits. In natural resource conflicts such pre-determined borders do not exist before communities become involved as stakeholders, often against their will, in the place being disputed.

Before I outline the three different ways of engaging with legitimacy, I wish to raise an important point about legitimacy as a pluriversal construct: What I am proposing with regards to legitimacy in the pluriverse is not the same as engaging in a debate on pluralism, or pluralist identities and their effects on consensus/dissensus (see for example Mouffe 1999: Young 2001a). These struggles take place within the ontological commitments of the modern myth (which is what can also partially be seen in my second article where the activists in Valdivia are engaging in this kind of ‘politics of difference’). However, when different worlds and life projects are at stake, such theories fall short of dealing with the complexity of how different worlds come into being and are sustained, and as such do not engage in the differences created through the ontological conflicts between different ‘worlds’.

4.1 Mutual agreement between different actors

Suchman’s (1995) definition of organisational legitimacy emphasises the consensual nature of legitimacy when stating that ‘the actions of an entity are appropriate within some socially constructed systems of norms, values, and beliefs’ (p. 574). It is assumed that there is a relationship of mutual understanding between the entity and a socially constructed system of norms. Suchman distinguishes three different types of organisational legitimacies: pragmatic legitimacy is related to the type of strategic self-interest focused exchange between the actors, cognitive legitimacy refers to the underlying cognitive system (in the form of taken-for granted-ness) to which an organisation must adhere in order to appear as legitimate and moral legitimacy refers to the normative evaluation of the organisation’s behaviour as desirable according to the audience value system.

Aguilera et al (2007) notes that legitimacy is regarded as ‘a relational motive since it refers to a concern for how a firm’s actions are perceived by others’ (p. 845). They note that even in a framework were wealth-maximisation is the primary concern of corporate legitimacy, the social legitimacy is dependent on the specific norms, values,
and beliefs of the specific industry and the regulatory context under which the firms operate and this social legitimacy is also related to bad publicity, institutional investors’ disinvestment, and penalties due to non-compliance with these norms (see also Kagan et al. 2003). Social Legitimacy is thus on the one hand related to the organisation’s long-term survival in terms of the social acceptance from its institutional stakeholders (i.e. owners, shareholders, and financial institutions), its customers, and those stakeholders who grant them their fiduciary license to operate (i.e. government and politicians). There is supposedly a consensus between these actors on how the organisation should operate.

On the other hand, the social legitimacy also depends on the broader context in which these firms operate. To avoid conflicts with local communities, it is suggested that these firms need to secure a locally grounded social license to operate (SLO) (see critically Owen and Kemp 2012). Furthermore, to avoid value-based conflicts with different activist groups (defenders of human rights and the environment) they also need to elaborate business models that allow for Collaborative Value Creation (CVC) with nonprofit organisations such as NGOs (Austin and Seitaniidi 2012a; 2012b). Also in these cases the legitimacy is supposedly formed through a common agreement between the actors involved.

4.2 The consent of the governed

Defining corporate legitimacy as a ‘social contract’ between the corporation and its stakeholders relies on the Weberian sense of legitimacy, or the idea of ‘the consent of the governed’, depicting how stakeholders give their approval to corporations (or managers) to have an influence on their lives (see Donaldson and Dunfee 1999; Gilbert and Benham 2009; Marens 2007).

In terms of defining legitimacy as a concept related to power and domination, Max Weber’s work on the legitimacy of authority predominates (Taylor 2002; Dussel 2013). For Weber legitimacy always includes domination, either through the merits of tradition, values, or bureaucratic rationality. Power is seen as a relation between the dominator and the dominated where: ‘those who dominate influence the acts of others, [...] as if the dominated had adopted the content of the dominator’s mandate for themselves and on their own account’ (Weber cited in Dussel 2013, p. 404). For Habermas, who studies the discursive processes of legitimacy creation, domination is unavoidable but in a stage of permanent (legitimacy) crisis (Dussel 2013). Essentially, the communicative power embedded in deliberation lies in the capacity of different social groups to mobilise change, through fair and reasoned dialogue, in what (and who) is perceived as legitimate in order to dominate the masses (Habermas 1996).

From a decolonial perspective such power works through the rhetoric of modernity that promises salvation for those who are willing to modernise (Mignolo 2000:2011). This understanding of domination also includes the notion of coloniality, where the geopolitical (that is, where the subject is located geographically in the modern/colonial divide) and the body-political (i.e. the race/gender the subject embodies in the modern colonial divide) determines the domination/oppression of the subject who speaks. In this context, domination is understood as a type of Foucauldian knowledge-power relation but embodying the position (location in the colonial divide) from where the subject speaks. Through the rhetoric of modernity this kind of domination legitimises certain hierarchical constructs of engaging with the world while subjugating and delegitimising other ways of relating to the world (Mignolo 2011; de Sousa Santos...
2013). Thus coloniality is linked to legitimacy in terms of delegitimising alternative forms of being (e.g. beings that stress the interconnectedness of the humans and nonhumans instead of the separation thereof).

Legitimacy as dealt with within the modern myth, promoting an abstract universal understanding of the world, is thus dependent, on the one hand, on the dominant socially constructed system of norms, values and beliefs of the stakeholder group in question, and on the other hand on the interests or subjugations of that particular group (giving their ‘consent’ based on the social contract theory). The conditions for what is considered desirable within the socially constructed system of norms or for giving consent is what the deliberative processes of stakeholder dialogues would define (Palazzo and Scherer 2006).

However, both the definition of legitimacy as a concept of mutual understanding between different actors and legitimacy as the outcome of domination in the form of consent of the governed do not go beyond the assumptions embedded in the modern imaginary, or beyond the modern ontological assumptions. Furthermore, this way of engaging with legitimacy does not specify the relationship the organisation has to either the territory in which it is itself embedded (or is dependent on for its own material reproduction) or the relationship that the stakeholders have to the territory where they construct their social life. This territorial disembeddedness of corporate legitimacy is a common feature of the modern rationality: a type of ‘global delocalisation’ (Virilio cited in Escobar 2008, p. 166, see also Porto-Gonçalves 2009) that overlooks place in the definition of social life. Consequently, this mode of conceptualising legitimacy of the firm is only defined based on the relationship between the corporation and its (modern) stakeholders, not in relation to other ontological commitments that may exist in the place/nature/territory where its activity is located.

There is also another limitation to these definitions of corporate legitimacy: they assume that all groups of individuals with whom the corporations engage automatically have ‘a stake’ by their own free will in the company (by giving their consent to being stakeholders). However, there are those stakeholders that would rather not be part of the sphere of influence of the firm (the ‘victims’ in the terminology of Dussel 2013), and their relationship to the company is contentious, implying they do not – nor do they want to - share the same norms, values, and beliefs as those representative of the corporate world. These stakeholders do not agree on a binding social contract (through an implicit consent) with the firm, but instead engage actively in resistance to assure a ‘stake-free’ life through different strategies of contention (see for example Kröger 2010; 2014). Thus, despite its unavoidable embeddedness in the pluriverse of multiple ontologies (or multiple worlds), the current literature on ‘corporate legitimacy’ is limited by having been defined from the firm’s perspective only, assuming that stakeholders can be managed (see Mitchell et al. 1997) based on measures emerging from one type of ontological commitment only. Thus, this perspective does not deal with the realities and the conflicts that may arise with those groups that do not wish to take part in this kind of world, or who fiercely reject the possibility to have ‘a stake’ in the firm’s operations. Instead, the dominant perspective within management categorises such stakeholders as dangerous, or as terrorists who use coercive means to advance their claims (see Mitchell et al. 1997). From a pluriversal perspective, those whose worldviews do not follow the modern ontological commitments cannot be delegitimised as dangerous or as terrorists in their fight to live a stake-free life outside the sphere of influence of the global corporations. Instead, their fight for their own worlds must be interpreted for what it is: a clash of worlds, a struggle over what kind of ‘life projects’ (Blaser 2010, p. 2) are perceived as legitimate in the
place/nature/territory where they are embedded. To expand the understanding of legitimacy beyond the ontological commitments in management it is necessary to give a voice to those who wish to remain stakeless and to start understanding legitimacy as a cultural construction that is embedded in place.

4.3 Legitimacy as reproduction of life in community

Starting from an analysis of the uprising against colonial rules in the Americas, Dussel (2013) argues that the legitimacy of a political order is not related to the consent of the governed to submerge under domination but upheld through a legitimate kind of coercion, valid as long as it can guarantee the production, reproduction, and development of the human life of each of its members. The order loses its legitimacy when ‘the misery of many becomes intolerable, unsustainable’ (Dussel 2013, p. 405). He argues that while Habermas’ theory of communicative action focused on social conflicts that emerged in the sphere of cultural reproduction, meaning the cultural values and norms of a society (as also noted by Habermas’ himself, cited in Dussel 2013, p. 406), it is still the material reproduction, the capacity to sustain life, that is the most relevant for four fifths of the world’s population.

‘The ethical conflict starts when the victims of a prevailing formal system cannot live, or have been violently and discursively excluded from such a system; when sociohistorical subjects, social movements (e.g. ecological), classes (workers), marginal groups, gender (feminine), races (non-white) peripheral impoverished countries, and so on become conscious, organize themselves, formulate diagnoses of their negativity and prepare alternative programs to transform the system that are in force and that have become dominant, oppressive, the cause of death and exclusion. For such new sociohistorical subjects, the ‘legal’ coercion of the system (which causes their negation and constitutes them as victims) has stopped being “legitimate”. It has stopped being so, first because the subjects have become aware that they had not participated in the original agreement setting up the system (and thus it stopped being “valid” for them); and second, because in such a system new victims cannot live (thus the system stops being a feasible mediation of the life of those dominated).’ (Dussel 2012, p. 401)

Legitimacy can thus be seen as the ‘communitarian self-validation granted to a political order (or to other practical systems), starting with the empirical capacity of such an order for (a) the reproduction and development of the life of the subjects (the material), and (b) the symmetrical intersubjective participation in decision making by those affected (the formal); all of which should be possible (c) with efficient instrumental mediations (the feasible), thus creating a fundamental consensus of acceptance of the mentioned political order (or others)” (p. 405-406).

As stated, this definition still holds that there is a ‘fundamental consensus’ within a certain political order just as the deliberation proposition made by Habermas. The difference lies in how the formerly excluded engage in critical liberation and self-validation based on their own needs to reproduce life (not based on the rationality of their arguments within a knowledge system that is not theirs). As the title of his substantial philosophical groundings indicates (‘Ethics of Liberation – In the Age of Globalization and Exclusion’) this ethical principle engages in the critical liberation or the transformation of the victims of and those excluded from globalisation to take charge of their lives. The subject is the living, needy, natural, and cultural subject and the victim or the community of victims and those who are denied life based on ‘the nonintentional consequences of an oppressive system’ (Dussel 2013) (in Mignolo’s terminology those who suffer from the hidden features of the logic of coloniality).

The transversality of the work of Enrique Dussel is what makes his work on ethical liberation suitable when developing an understanding of legitimacy from a pluriversal
perspective. He has a sound understanding of Marxism which served as his own initial departure point to examine the struggles of the community of victims (Dussel 2013, p. 361-364). His focus on the living human subject and the possibility of production, reproduction and development of the life of the subject as the material frame of the ethical grounding opens up possibilities of a pluriversal understanding of ethics and legitimacy embedded in place. In line with Marx’s teaching, Dussel’s work emphasises the material limits of social reality, where the concrete world shapes socioeconomic interactions and that those in turn determine the sociopolitical reality (Dussel 2013). For Dussel, the negation of the subject’s corporeality (expressed as domination) is not only a concern of the workers and expressed through labour relations but is also present in the lived realities of indigenous people, African slaves, or exploited Asians in the colonised world; as the bodily reality of women, of those who are not white, of the future generations, of the elderly without a place in a consumer society, of children abandoned in the streets, and all those excluded because they are foreigners, immigrant, or refugees.

Dussel’s ethics of liberation is not purely informed by the material limits of reproduction of life. His work also covers considerations of the socially constructed world (from the perspective of the oppressed and excluded) and his understanding of modernity as a construct of (European bourgeois) cultural and political domination that needs to be overcome (through liberation of the negated Other) would suggest that his work also includes a poststructural component. However, Dussel rejects abstract generalisation because these deny the material context of their enunciation (the concrete lived experience of the subject). Instead, Dussel (2013), explicitly engaged in understanding the moments when a dominant order become illegitimate among what he calls a critical community of victims. In the case of natural resource conflicts such communities would be those that do not wish to be stakeholders of the firm but who have been previously ignored by the ruling entity (the corporation in terms of stakeholders or the state in terms of citizens) ‘in so far as they passively “accepted” domination exerted legally and legitimately against them’ (p. 401). In conflict situations, contention, and resistance, these stakeholder groups are no longer passively accepting domination but they ‘struggle for the recognition of the dignity of their endangered lives’ (p. 401).

Dussel’s work makes it possible to imagine how legitimacy as an outcome of different realities is perceived by the person connected to his or her particular imaginary (embedded in place). This allows legitimacy to emerge also in the pluriverse without subjugating certain realities under the assumptions held by others. As Dussel (2013) notes:

‘Human beings access the reality that they confront every day from the ambit of their own lives. Human life is neither a goal nor a mere mundane-ontological horizon; human life is the mode of reality of the ethical subject (that is, not that of a stone, of a mere animal, or the Cartesian angelic “soul”), which gives content to all of its actions, which determines the rational order and also the level of its needs, drives, and desires that constitute the framework within which ends are fixed.’

The ethical feasibility of an order (the processes of social organisation of life, what needs to be sustained and legitimised) is marked by the limits of human life:

‘Life is suspended in its precise vulnerability, within certain limits and requiring certain contents: if the temperature of the earth rises, we will die of heat; if we cannot drink water because of the desiccation of planet – as has happened to sub-Saharan peoples – we will die of thirst; if we cannot feed ourselves, we will die of hunger; if our community is invaded by a stronger community, we are dominated (we will live, but in degrees of alienation that are measured from a life lived almost animalistically to the point of extinction itself, as is the case with the indigenous peoples after the conquest in Americas). Human life marks limits, it
Dussel’s definition of legitimacy as the community’s capacity to sustain the production, reproduction, and development of human life makes it possible to see legitimacy as a pluriversal construct embedded in the place where it is being disputed. Thus the legitimacy of an entity or an activity is not directly related to domination and the social contract between the dominator (in the case of the extractive industry and forestry the global corporations that provide the community with development, investment, employment) and the dominated (the community providing access to land necessary for the survival of the global corporations). Instead, legitimacy refers to the self-determination of the community and to its own capacity to sustain and reproduce life within the common imaginary and place-based reproductive practices that exist in this particular place. Following Porto-Gonçalves’ (2009) argument on the link between territory and cultural practices, this imaginary is inherently linked to the natural surroundings in which the community is embedded. Because of its dependence on the natural surroundings to reproduce life⁷, the rationality embedded in this understanding of legitimacy is neither global nor universal, but is bound to the changing features of the community’s own surrounding (natural and institutional) to provide the means to sustain and reproduce life.

4.4 Power in the pluriverse

Undertaking an extensive analysis of the construct of power and how it relates to legitimacy in the pluriverse would signify a deep engagement with yet another body of literature that is both complex and heterogeneous. However, leaving out considerations of power would also be a major shortcoming of describing the pluriversal legitimacy presented so far because between the two understandings of legitimacy that I have outlined above, one based on hierarchical relationships and the other on the community’s self-validation as a living entity, there is a dramatic shift in terms of power configurations. The powers at work from a hierarchical perspective (ascribing superiority to the modern and inferiority to other imaginaries and other ways of being) is what I outlined in Chapter 3 when I discussed the power of coloniality and how this shapes who is allowed to speak in deliberation. In this section, I will look at power from the liberating perspective, a power that emerges ‘from below’.

At the risk of oversimplifying complex issues, I start by drawing on Holloway’s (2002) distinction between two different forms of power: power-to-do and power-over. Power-to-do implies the capacity of an individual to do something. It is not an isolated individual act of doing, but ‘part of a social flow of doing’, which is interlaced and dependent on the activity of others. Power-over is instead a relation of power over others, where the powerless are deprived of their own capacity-to-do, to instead undertake the projects of those with power-over (Holloway 2002) (i.e. power of modernity to shape coloniality).

⁷ Escobar (2008) uses the concept of life not as a reference to human life but to encompass all life that is interdependent (meshed together in a network of relations) for reproduction; Dussel (2013) only makes reference to human life in a community, although a community can be interpreted to include the nature that constitutes the habitat of that community.
In a similar vein, Escobar (2008) makes the distinction between hierarchical modes of organising and self-organisation that emerge from a flat ontology, and he argues that forms of power practised from a hierarchical structure do not operate in the other context. He cites Manuel de Landa’s work on ‘hierarchies and self-organizing meshworks’ when distinguishing the differences between the two models of organising social life:

‘This distinction underlies alternative philosophies of life. Hierarchies entail a degree of centralized control, ranks, overt planning, tendency toward homogenization, and particular goals and rules of behavior; they operate largely under linear and treelike structures. The military, capitalist enterprises, and most bureaucratic organizations have largely operated on this basis. Meshworks on the contrary, are based on decentralized decision making, self-organization, and heterogeneity and diversity. Since they are nonhierarchical, they have no overt single goal. They develop through their encounter with their environments, although conserving their basic organizations.’ (p. 274)

Escobar (2008) notes that this perspective of what Landa denominates ‘flat ontologies’ are not explicit about the configurations of power dimensions, and that this is an emerging field of study still lacking the language to explain it properly (p. 284). Hence, attending to issues of power in the pluriverse must at this point be seen as an initial reflection and as something I aim at returning to in the future. To draw on some insights from my fieldwork and the three presented articles, I will for now rely to a large extent on the work of Dussel (2008) and Escobar (2008) to connect (some of) the dots between power and legitimacy in the pluriverse.

4.4.1 Power as the will-to-live

Power is understood and conceptualised differently when arguing for a legitimacy that starts from the capacity to reproduce life in the community instead of out an idea of common shared norms, values and beliefs. Although narratives still inform legitimacy formation, it does not do so detached from the observer based on some grand narratives of ‘Development’ or ‘Modernisation’, but from the subject’s own sociohistorical location in place, in relation to the observer’s own experiences, desires and needs, as a living human being.

According to Dussel (2008) the liberating power of the people starts at the moment when:

‘The victims of the prevailing system cannot live fully (this is why they are victims). Their Will-to-Live has been negated by the Will-to-Power of the powerful. This Will-to-Live against all adversity, pain, and imminent death is transformed into an infinite source for creation of the new’ (Dussel 2008, p. 78)

Thus, Dussel, just as Holloway, makes reference to two different configurations of power: the desire to live of human beings in a community, ‘the will-to-live’, and the

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8 Escobar (2008) uses the distinction between hierarchies and self-organising to explain the organisation of different models of social movements, however, he also acknowledges that this distinction applies to a broader and deeper foundational aspect of how Social Theory is understood (p. 284), and also how it links to the kind of relational epistemologies and ontologies found in indigenous worlds (p. 295-296).

9 In the chapter on networks of social movements, Escobar (2008) also makes reference to system theory, assemblage, complexity, and cybernetics.

10 The lifestory of Rigoberta Menchú’s about how she became conscious of her community’s victimhood in Guatemala is an illustrative example of this kind of narrative that emerges the sociohistorical location of the subject who speaks (Burgos 2000 [1985]).
‘will-to-power’ (2008, p.14). It is the will-to-live that inspires the victims to engage in their own liberation:

‘From this negated Other departs the praxis of liberation as affirmation of the Exteriorty and as original of the movement of negation of the negation.’ (Dussel 1996, p. 54 cited in Escobar 2008).

Dussel’s (2008) view on the praxis of liberation as the unleashing force of humanity includes both a negative and positive moment (of power as the will-to-live):

‘All subjects, upon becoming actors – and especially when representing a movement or people – become the motor, the force, the power that makes history […] This praxis has two moments: a negative struggle, deconstructive of a given[…] and a positive moment of outlet, of the construction of the new. Insofar as this “liberates” – as in the act by which the slave is emancipated from slavery – it creative potential is opposed to and finally triumphs over the structures of domination, exploitation, and exclusion that weigh heavy on the people. The power of the people – hyperpotentia, the new power of those “from below” – becomes present from the beginning, in its extreme vulnerability and poverty, but it is in the end the invincible force of life “that desires-to-live”. This Will-to-Live is more powerful than death, injustice, and corruption' (italics in the original, p. 94-95)

It is thus perhaps no coincidence that the movement in Mehuín came to mobilise under the slogan ‘No al Ducto’ (No to the pipeline) (Article 1, Article 2). The word ‘no’ here signals the negative moment of the people’s struggle. This ‘no’ was not only directed against the construction of a pipeline of life-threatening toxic waste, but it was also a redundant ‘no’ to any attempts of the state or the corporation to appropriate their living environment, a no in the defence of the desire to live in this community.

Furthermore, the interviews in Mehuín revealed that the threat of the pipeline and the defence of the ocean bay impacted the villagers view of themselves and their world, creating new decolonial subjects that could see beyond the victimhood presented to them in the story they had until then at least partially adhered to. In Article 2, I cited one of the villagers, who reflected on this exact moment of becoming aware of his victimhood, which makes visible both the negative and positive moment that resides in the transformation of identity that it entails:

‘The conflict in itself […] generates a transformation of identities because in order to look for arguments to defend your vital place you start returning to history […] I have to argue for why I am defending my place and why I have to oppose the pollution of the place I have lived for my whole life, and in the end you realise that you and your parents have lived there all your life and all the previous generations have lived there […] and that in fact that place […] was a territory linked to another much broader territory, and there were political relations and interchanges with Mapuche from the other side of the mountains, and you realise that there is a profound history […] and you start feeling that you are a part of that, and responsible for defending that history.’ (Interview Mehuín-3 2012)

This sentences signals the positive moment of the struggle and how the subject come to realize his own historicity in place, which inspires him to imagine another world with different political and economic relations, creating new ways of imagining his place in this world. Place here is to be understood both as his location (of difference) in relation to the conflict with the proposed project of the pipeline and his historical and geographical location in the place of the dispute, which also serves as the inspiration to his engagement in its defence. Escobar (2008) makes this connection between identities and place when he describes activism as history making, where the identities of social movement activists has historical and political dimensions rooted in the community where they emerge:
‘[H]umans live at their best when engaged in acts of history making, meaning the ability to engage in the ontological act of disclosing new ways of being, of transforming the ways in which they understand and deal with themselves and the world. This happens, for instance, when activists identify and hold on to a disharmony in ways that transform the cultural background of understanding in which people live (say, about nature, racism, sexism, homophobia). There is also a connection to place in this argument, to the extent that the life of the skilful disclosing, which makes the world look genuinely different, is possible only through a life of intense engagement with a place and a collectivity.’ (p. 235)

This place-embeddedness of the power that emerges from the community’s will-to-live is an important aspect of legitimacy in the pluriverse. It also refers back to the communities own power-to-do, their capacity sustain the reproduction of life in community, which is the last point I want to make on the kind of power-from-below that is at work in the context of my empirical work.

4.4.2 The power that emerges from community and place

The capacity to resist power-over, through disobedience, is not only an issue at the level of becoming aware of one’s situation in relation to domination, but it also refers to the wider placed-based context, and aspects related to the local community’s power-to-do: the capacity to sustain life without giving in to the power-over of external forces. This implies that legitimacy derived from power-to-do cannot be detached from the place in which it is produced; it is, thus, embedded in place, based on the collectivity in that particular territory and its capacity to sustain life. Legitimacy that arises in this sense is neither global nor universal, but is made up of many different local realities and deeply embedded in the natural surroundings that provide the community with the possibility to sustain life and power-to-do independent from domination and control.

It was this place-based power that existed in Mehuín, where the sea gave the community an alternative source of subsistence outside industrial relations. This was the material power the community needed to stay alive while resisting and negating any attempts of domination (Article 2). Without access to clean water, many in the community would have been dependent on external sources of employment and it would have restricted the whole community’s capacity to reproduce life in community. The place (and the clean water) was thus not only the site of the actual struggle; it was also the community’s source of material power. In the urban life in Valdivia, place did not offer alternative means of subsistence (to that of salaried employment), rather the community was dependent on industrial employment for their subsistence (Article 2). The industry’s power-over the means of subsistence also restricted the environmental movement to challenge the legitimacy of the company in the city, as those who counted on the pulp mill for their own subsistence continued to lend it their support (Article 1).

In Uruguay, I observed a similar situation (Article 3). The movement that resisted forestry on their land was weakened due to the fact that forestry development signified a weakened relation to place in the community affected by tree plantations. The plantations had taken over the landscape, and according to the farmers, this had also affected the availability of water necessary for them to subsist -in other terms, to maintain their power-to-do - on their farms. The depopulation of the countryside that had taken place as large-scale plantations took over what had once been multiple small farms also weakened the community and its capacity to jointly create its own living environment. According to the farmers, it was this lack of both natural and social endowments needed to reproduce life in this rural community that forced many to give up the fight against forestry plantations and instead sell their lands and search for subsistence elsewhere.
In contrast, in the location where the resettlers were mounting a project to counter the arrival of forestry plantations it was precisely the relation with place that they tried to strengthen; both through the legends they constructed for educational purposes, and as an alternative practice to that of forestry development. As I argue in the third article, they were not mounting resistance by trying to create broader awareness and thereby support for the vulnerable position that the rural population of Uruguay faces because of the forestry industry. Instead, this group of people was engaged in a practice of ‘politics of place’ (Escobar 2001), strengthening the community’s attachment to place while also constructing narratives based on real life examples of alternative worlds.

Now I return to the two questions I raised at the end of Chapter 3: First, how can legitimacy be conceptualised beyond the structures of domination inherent to the modern imaginary? And second, how can the concept of legitimacy also encompass the voices of different place-based local community groups regardless of the imaginary that they adhere to?

First, to liberate, or ‘delink’ (Mignolo 2000), legitimacy from the structures of domination of the modern imaginary, it is important to locate it in the context where it emerges, making visible the socially constructed system(s) by which it is contained. This will also broaden the understanding of conflicts, why they emerge, and why some people refrain from participating in legitimacy-seeking dialogues. For the victims, legitimacy is not an outcome of decontextualised discourses on how well an entity manages to comply with the goals of development, economic growth, sustainability, or shareholder profits when these goals at the same time are what create the destruction of their own livelihoods and the worlds that they inhabit. Instead, to understand legitimacy in a pluriversal setting, where many worlds are allowed to exist, it is important to place it in the context where it is emerging, and to look at what different ways of being in the world – not as different cultures detached from place but as place-based practices sustaining life-forms - signify for the reproduction of life in that particular context.

Second, by liberating the norms and beliefs of legitimacy production from the colonial difference produced by coloniality, the space of conversing across differences is opened up for non-modern ways of being and knowing. Legitimacy cannot be measured based on how well corporations engage in consensus seeking dialogues, when these dialogues are based on a rationality that excludes the sociohistorical subjecthood of those who do not adhere to that particular rationality. Differences are to be celebrated as strengths and the conflicts are the alarm bells that signal that some worlds are not being respected. Conviviality (and not ‘Development’, ‘Economic Growth’, ‘Industrialisation’) should be placed at the centre of the conversation: meaning how to create solutions of coexistence between different people situated in their own sociohistoric context. It is also important to give place the attention it deserves. Place plays a role, people are part of place and place is a part of people, without place there can be no reproduction of life in the community.

In the next, and final, chapter of this theoretical framework, I will discuss this relationship between community and place more in detail by exploring what exactly I mean by community when I argue that legitimacy emerges as a shared perception of the reproduction of life within communities. I will also engage with some of the critiques often raised towards a perspective that stresses the importance of the local community. I end the chapter by suggesting a way out of the rigid positions that currently exist between different worlds inhabiting the pluriverse by introducing the concepts of ‘conversations across difference’ and ‘rooted governance’.
DEFINING COMMUNITY AND ITS BOUNDARIES

My research engages in the struggles over land and who has the right to determine what are considered legitimate land-use practices in a particular place. Community is central to that struggle as it is the site of the socially constructed system (Suchman 1995) that determines what is right or wrong. Because of the centrality of place, the communities in my research are ‘localised’, meaning that the common feature of the community members is the place that they inhabit, and the shared narratives or stories that they as a group build up being in a continuous relationship with that particular place. More than place, it is the territory that they engage with, implying that the place-specific relations between humans and non-humans have a role in shaping the common understanding of the particular place (Porto-Gonçalves 2009). Thus more than only a socially constructed system of norms, legitimacy is an outcome of relations between place, humans, and the stories that are being shared within that context.

To refer to the group of individuals unified in their struggle as a local community can be (and should be) questioned as it is, just as Peet and Watts (2004) point out, a word filled with contested and unstable meanings:

‘The community is important because it is typically sensed as: a locus of knowledge, a site of regulation and management, a source of identity and a repository of “tradition”, the embodiment of various institutions (say property rights) which necessarily turn on questions of representation, power authority, governance and accountability, and object of state control, and a theater of resistance and struggle (of social movement, and potentially of alternative visions of development). It is often invoked as a unity, an undifferentiated entity with intrinsic powers, which speaks with a single voice to the state, to transnational NGOs or the World Court. Communities, of course, are nothing of the sort.’ (Peet and Watts 2004, p. 24, emphasis in original).

Discussing legitimacy as the outcome of the locals’ capacity to reproduce and sustain life within the community should not be interpreted as something static and stable over time. Instead, it is highly relational, as the imaginaries that emerge within the community are never fixed but emerge in relation to the changing features within and in relation to external events (including natural phenomena), ceaselessly in movement, an ever-changing web of inter-relations involving humans and non-humans (Escobar 2010, p. 9). The socially constructed system of norms, values, and beliefs may differ among the inhabitants (e.g. some follow Catholicism, others abide by indigenous norms). Nevertheless, in their diversity they still share the relation to place as a territory of a diverse set of cultural practices, and it is in this intimate and interdependent relation that a sense of belonging and place-based legitimacy may emerge when the local community is faced with threats that endanger some livelihoods. However, as said, these imaginaries are highly relational and depend on what existed before and what kind of different relations make up the day-to-day practices of those inhabiting that particular place. This is exactly what I try to make visible in my second article – the interdependent relationship between how legitimacy is formed and the practices embedded in the community, in those places where investments are being contested. Legitimacy is not an outcome of dialogues but an interdependent relationship between people, places and nature. Thus, thinking of the world as a pluriverse instead of as a universe invites us to think differently about local communities, places and the relations that exist not only between humans but between humans and nonhumans, and nonhumans and nonhumans (see for example de la Cadena 2009; Radcliffe 2014).
There are at least two reasons why the word ‘pluriverse’ should in itself signal a shift in terms of how life and legitimacy in the community is conceptualised. First, the word should be understood as one that wishes to emphasise the existence of multiple ways of life, worldviews and visions about the future, both modern and non-modern, which in an ideal world would be able to co-exist both within and outside the boundaries of the community (no one has the right to live at the expense of the other). Second, because of its relational and holistic underpinning, the concept has a geographic dimension to it, as it locates the core of knowledges, understandings, and meanings to the site of their emergence and reproduction; in the territories where the relations to each other and nature come to shape the ontological assumptions of the group. I realise that these two explanations of communities in the pluriverse do not easily combine, as one speaks of difference while the other of sameness. The distinction lies in the ontology itself, by shifting perspectives; from a representational to a relational perspective it is possible to see that one does not exclude the other. It is the holistic relations between the entities that maintain cohesion, not the separate entities by themselves. This means that the world is not separated into binaries such as man vs nature but interpreted as a whole and as an outcome of relations – a topic I will return to in the methodology section.

I understand local communities in the pluriverse as those groups that are united through the territory that they inhabit and the narratives (practices and conversations) that they share to construct common social imaginaries over the reproduction of life in that particular territory. Because of the holistic relationship that I acknowledge to exist between humans and nonhumans, where place is a territory of cultural praxis and reproduction, the community itself is more than the parts that constitute it: ‘... it is a group of human beings in their totality, with distinct characteristics, not reducible to the individuals that constitute it. The community is a space of relations between the people and the surroundings that they inhabit’ (Escorihuela 2015, p. 104, author’s translation). Thus local communities are not necessarily (but can be) defined by shared norms, values, and beliefs but by the shared relations that they jointly and continuously construct with each other and the place that they inhabit. Through their shared relations, visible in the stories they tell each other and others, they can come to form shared ontologies or shared worlds. These relations are what make it possible for shared narratives to emerge, continuously interacting within the territorial boundaries where they are located.

5.1 Critique raised against local perspectives

There are several well-founded criticisms that have previously been raised against an over reliance on the local community’s capacity to make their own decisions, or their right to self-determination. Before going into detail I first want to point out that seeing the world as a pluriverse is not only an acknowledgement of the multiple worlds that exist in the world today, it also signifies a profound shift in terms of how we relate to the world and each other beyond what the myth of modernity has taught us to believe on both sides of the modern/colonial divide. To make this shift more explicit, I will point out and respond to five of the most common criticisms of the pluriversal perspective, namely: 1) romanticising the local 2) the challenges of cultural relativism, 3) pushing for a life of poverty and the return to tribal times, and 4) overlooking the role of the state in addressing global problems, and finally the question of 5) how realistic it is that a shift towards coexistence would take place on a larger scale.

11 The term territory is here used to include both the cultural reproduction and the nature embedded in a particular place.
5.1.1 Romanticising the unity of the local

The criticism often raised about the local community perspective is that there are no isolated and pure communities that assume total difference towards the global (and modern) capital markets (see for example Nederveen Pieterse 2000; Storey 2000). Nederveen Pieterse (1998) notes:

‘While the shift towards cultural sensibilities that accompanies this perspective is a welcome move, the plea for “people’s culture”, indigenous culture, local knowledge and culture, can lead if not to ethnochauvinism, to reification of both culture and locality or people. It also evinces a one-dimensional view of globalization which is equated with homogenization’ (Nederveen Pieterse 1998: 366)

It is important to note that most communities are not united in their formation of identity and relation to the global markets (Peets and Watts 2004). This is particularly evident where the extractive industries are claiming access to places of territorial importance for life in community. Divisions are commonplace, and how community members interact or disintegrate when confronted with the promises and threats of global investments cannot be reduced to one single explanation. However, the way communities are constituted based on their own local power hierarchies (Peets and Watts 2004) surely plays a role in how easily they disintegrate or unite when a corporation or the state seeks access to their land for natural resource extraction. It is the very purpose of decolonial studies to dwell in these borders between the modern and colonial, and to study the decolonising effects that take place when people and communities engage in border dialogues and become aware of the hierarchical power structures of the logic of coloniality that is hidden in the rhetoric of modernity (Mignolo 2011).

A common feature of all my three articles is that the community members engaged in resistance against the forestry investments have at some point become aware of and decolonised themselves from the rhetoric of modernity, seeing through its promises and perceiving instead the hidden threats of coloniality. There are those community members (although not all) that have been able to articulate an already existing narrative (in Chile) or to construct a new one (in Uruguay) that values place as something more than of mere monetary importance that can be settled through dialogue and different compensation schemes. These locally constructed narratives strengthen the connection between the inhabitants and the territory that they inhabit because of the threat of the complete annihilation of both. It is this shared narrative of on the one hand difference towards the threat of environmental destruction and on the other hand unity embedded in place that creates the local agency. This agency is expressed through the strong sense of unity and connectedness with nature that brings protection against livelihood destruction at decisive moments in time.

In the second article, where I engage with different territorially informed narratives, I draw on Escobar’s (2008) work on what constitutes the main features of the movements engaged in constructing ‘territories of difference’ against the forces of globalisation. I wish to make clear that when I refer to these narratives, I do not see them as fixed in time and space, but as temporal stories that emerge from the whole, and that both shape and constitute the fluidity of life in the community. More than as evidence of an ‘authentic’ representation of how life is lived in this place, I see these

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12 The same critique has been raised about the unavoidable role of modernity in terms of shaping local imaginaries. There are no communities, or at least very few, that have not been influenced by modernity in their mindsets.
narratives as an outcome of relations between the people and the place (and nature) where they live.

To argue that the communities I have engaged with through my studies have been liberated from all forms of oppression would go too far beyond the focus of my research. I have not studied gender issues, or issues about internal power structures within these communities and how these influence the creation of a place-based legitimacy perception. For example, how the conflict in Mehuín has shaped the relation between the indigenous Lafkenche people and the local fishermen and how this relationship has impacted the resistance movement over time, particularly before and after the resistance leaders accepted compensation from the investing company, would certainly be well worth a study in future research. Instead, what my research aims to demonstrate is the liberating capacity of a community when it as a whole becomes aware of its colonial relations and acts consciously from that position when building resistance and its own legitimacy against outside threats.

5.1.2 The dangers of engaging in cultural relativism

In emphasising cultural diversity and rejecting universalism, it is said that this kind of pluriversal approach is cultural relativism and thus runs the risk of accepting local (tribal) oppression and the violation of human rights (Lober 2001; Nederveen Pieterse 2000). This is a very limited understanding of what the pluriverse and its theoretical grounding in decolonial thought entails.

The overarching theme of the decolonial literature is liberation, and precisely liberating subjects from domination (including not only domination based on race but also gender) (Dussel 2013; Mignolo, 2011). It does not reject the need for human rights to defend those who are currently being abused but it does however seriously question the origins of the human rights project with its roots in Europe’s Imperial history. Instead, the focus of the decolonial thinkers is on restoring the dignity of being human in those (colonial) subjects whose own ethical grounding and knowledge systems have been made inferior or nullified in relation to modernity. As Mignolo (2011) notes:

‘It [the decolonial option] opens up new avenues for conceiving decolonial democratic projects, decolonial subjects that re-appropriate their stolen dignity and relocate human rights as their own decolonial project to relearn dignity, stemming from the interiority of local histories implementing global designs. That is to say, ‘human rights was not a project that emerged in Bolivia or Ethiopia but – from the rights of the people in the sixteenth century to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in 1948 – it was always an imperial project stemming from the moral imperial sector.’ (p. 236)

Cultural relativism, Mignolo (2011) argues, was introduced to the rhetoric of modernity to hide the colonial difference. Cultures have been shaped by the making of the modern/colonial world and arguing for universalism is only possible as long as the hierarchical power structures between the modern and colonial continue to exist. Restoring dignity in all of humanity gives former colonial subjects the capacity to speak for themselves, acting as ‘critical thinkers in their own right’ (Mignolo 2011, p. 223).

‘Pluriversality means unlearning, so to speak, modernity, and learning to live with people one does not agree with, or maybe not even like. Conviviality is not holiday, but a hard and relentless effort towards cosmopolitan localism and pluriversal futures’ (Mignolo 2011, p. 176)

Pluriversality means thus that the worlds of the pluriverse engage in a relationship of conviviality or coexistence. This relationship is always embedded in the place where the
different worlds meet. In local communities there can be multiple worlds that coexist in the same place (see above on unity/difference in community). The challenge is to find solutions that allow for coexistence without imposing the world of one group on the other. The relationships are constantly entangled with each other and are shaped by each other's interactions.

Escobar (2008) originally engages in how capital, production, nature, and development shape the territorial identities and movements that emerge from them in the struggles of difference in the Colombian Pacific region. I make use of these categories (but in the format of history of place, means of subsistence, relation to nature and narratives of the future) to identify the incommensurability between different narratives that emerge as a consequence of the promise/threat of industrial investments and simultaneously also how these narratives shape what is deemed legitimate in a particular place (Article 2). The difference between the narratives cannot be disregarded as cultural relativism if we are to take seriously the equal value of different life projects beyond the assumptions in the modern myth. Instead, it is these positions of difference that are at stake when two worlds collide. From a hierarchical perspective on legitimization creation it is then possible to argue that legitimacy for a particular investment can be obtained by engaging in dialogue or deliberation: let the community have a say in how to construct durable and conflict-free relations and everything will be fine. What this means, however, when legitimacy is only allowed to exist based on the universalised ontological and epistemological assumptions of one world – the modern world, within which global corporations dwell – is that the desirable outcome of such an exercise is already set before the dialogue has begun.

Instead, to engage in legitimacy creation in the pluriverse means that no party can impose their world on the other. The assumption that (interest-based) stakeholder relations can be established cannot be taken for granted. Community members are not a priori corporate stakeholders. They are people who engage in reproduction of life based on the opportunities available to them within the territory that they inhabit. Whether the corporations and the modern world have a role to play in the community depends first and foremost on how well the two worlds can accommodate themselves to a relationship of co-existence. This relationship of co-existence is not built on shared norms, values, and beliefs but on the respect of the legitimacy of the other (Maturana and Pörksen 2010), while building relations of mutual trust, and acknowledging the strength of a diverse set of ways of living within the community itself.

5.1.3 Urging all to live in poverty and to return to tribal times

‘They all still want an iPhone!’ was a remark made by a student on the masters course on business ethics that I was teaching in Finland – after having given three lectures on the conflicting relations between the forestry industry and local communities in South America. The suggestion that communities that lack access to basic goods and services would be willing to voluntarily reject the benefits of an increased standard of living is a critique that often is raised about this perspective (Nederveen Pieterse 1998; Storey 2000). The community’s own capacity to reproduce life should neither be interpreted as a call to urge everyone to return to a premodern lifestyle without today’s technical advancements (Nederveen Pieterse 2000) nor as an attempt to keep the status quo in the power relations between the haves and have nots (Storey 2000).

However, claiming that everyone would choose the modern lifestyle – and its latest gadgets – if they had the choice, demonstrates a lack of engagement with what these
communities are actually fighting for (the reproduction of life on their own terms). The whole idea that someone would be willing to sacrifice their actual home, their livelihood, or their way of life, in order to own an iPhone (or a car, or a house or anything else that gives them an increased material standard of living) can be directly traced back to the rhetoric (of modernity) that hides the logic of coloniality (Mignolo 2011). The basic needs of impoverished communities are not due to the lack of destructive investment facilities in their back yard; rather it is a question of a wicked and unequal distribution of wealth that leaves these communities vulnerable and without alternatives to sustain themselves and their families.

Acosta (2013) argues that success or failure is not a question of physical resources but depends on the inhabitants' capacity to organize, participate and innovate. He sustains that the principle obstacle to a better life, or a better world, for all is the lack of politics and institutions that strengthen and boost the human capacities of all the existing cultures. Thus, when talking about the pluriverse, it should also be understood as a signal to seriously engage in a discussion on how to eliminate the distortions between rich and poor, which is the main obstacle to the emergence of self-determination and creativity at the local level (Acosta 2013). When I say distortions I do not only refer to the monetary and technological distortions that exist between rich and poor (which was what my student was referring to when mentioning iPhones. Instead, these distortions also impact how modern/colonial subjects become indoctrinated with a certain mindset that sees a certain way of life (labelled as ‘modern’) as superior to others, although it is that very way of life that is currently threatening the whole living system on this planet (Eisenstein 2011; Klein 2014; Scharmer and Kaufer 2013).

The core of the misunderstanding of the pluriverse is the lack of attention given to what happens to social life when there is a shift in what is considered desirable from the current dominant model of development to a system that encourages living well and in balance with nature. The very meaning of being poor and living in poverty changes when social life is focused on coexistence, aiming at living life in plenitude and in harmony with nature (or ‘buen vivir’, ‘sumak kawsai’) rather than decreasing predetermined statistical measures on poverty (Acosta 2013; Gudynas 2011; Mignolo 2011; Miscozky 2011; Shor and Thompson 2014). Instead of ‘living to work and develop’ where life is placed at the service of development, a life ‘lived in harmony’ signifies a shift towards nurturing rather than developing, re-generating life rather than generating industrial productivity (Mignolo 2011, 313).

So does this perspective then urge us all to go back to tribal times, in order to live in balance with nature (Nederveen Pieterse 2000)? And what happens to all those major technological advancements experienced as a consequence of the modern scientific era (Nederveen Pieterse 2000)? If the pluriverse carries with it the assumption that everyone has the right to self-determination, then these are two of the most important questions that need to be addressed. Also those living within communities in the modern world have the right to exist, however, not at the expense of others and nature.

Finding solutions to how the modern and other worlds can coexist is a task that must be prioritised for the future if a change is to occur. Acosta (2013) suggests a double move toward post-extractivism in the global South coupled with economic degrowth, or stationary growth in the global North. The focus should be on building sustainable and diversified economies ‘with the capacity to create good quality employment, equitable, and respectful of cultures and Nature’ (p. 81). He also stresses the importance of ‘the re-encounter with indigenous worldviews in which human beings not only coexist in harmony with Nature but form part of it’ (p. 81).
Regarding the technological achievements of the modern epoch, the scholars engaged with decolonial thinking and the pluriverse acknowledge the richness of the many different worlds and their knowledges – including the modern (Grosfoguel 2007; Mignolo 2011). The idea is not to eliminate the knowledge that has evolved as a consequence of the scientific advancements of the modern world. Instead, the task should be to put this knowledge and technology at the service of all humanity. By situating the modern knowledge within its own epistemological limits and by incorporating more ways of knowing, the blind spots of each epistemology can become visible (de Sousa Santos 2013). Thus, acknowledging the legitimacy of different traditions in the pluriverse is not about going backwards but about acknowledging the richness of knowledge that exists in the present. Ultimately it should serve to encourage all forms of human creativity to minimise the risk of livelihood destruction and instead enhance and sustain the reproduction of life in all communities across the world.

5.1.4 Overlooking the role of the states

It is often argued that locals cannot solve global problems, and that there is a need for top-down interventions to solve the global environmental problems (Storey 2000). To deal with this critique, it is important to look at the relationship between communities, the state, and corporations when we move from a hierarchical perspective on legitimacy to a locally constituted model that starts with the community’s own capacity to sustain and reproduce life. In my research setting, most of the people I talked to at the community level did not differentiate between state and corporations. Instead, it was as if they saw the state as a facilitator of corporate interests on their lands. For example, a Mapuche leader noted in a conversation after a local public FSC meeting in Chile that there is not much of a difference between how the state and the corporations interact with his community. In fact he went as far as to suggest that the state and the company are one and the same:

‘The State and the Company are the same, and I think that the president of the Republic is more than a president of the republic, he is man, a general manager of a company that is called Chile [...] I am not part of that company called Chile, I am part of the social, the society in its totality, independent of if we are Mapuche, Chilean, or Gringos. I don’t know, in a way that doesn’t matter. [...] I am not part of that Chile because we are not at the same level. Our possibilities are not at the same level as those that they give to their people. For example, look at how much the State listens to them and the big companies that exploit the workers, and who have the laws on their side. Then look at what happens if you complain just a bit and they come and lock you up. I don’t know how to explain this part to you but the possibilities are just not there. (Mapuche leader, San José de Mariquina, September 2012).

This excerpt shows the effects of a system that is encouraging states to couple with corporate interests while neglecting the interests and the protection of some of its citizens, leaving them with a sense of profound exclusion. The question then becomes, how can global problems that need the committed people at all levels be solved, if the views of those on the ground are completely ignored by those holding the political and economic power? A perspective that allows for self-determination at the community level and the rejection of an imposed universalism starts from the premises that the people living within a community should together decide on the rules of living together, without external forces intervening in the name of certain universalist principles (Ziai 2007 cited in Loper 2011).

Acosta (2009) calls for a reconceptualisation of the political role of the state put at the service of the people and not the market. The market becomes a social relation that depends on the necessities of the individuals and the community, a space of exchange
based on the societal needs and not only the needs of the capital (Acosta 2009). Hence, in the pluriverse, the state does not cease to exist but instead becomes the facilitator of community needs, providing access to innovation and education that exists beyond the community boundary. Thereby, the state becomes the enabler of local creativity by creating the space for it to flourish.

Zibechi (2012) argues that the territorialised social movements that emerge in place, or societies in movement, point at a different form of struggle than was commonplace in the past. It is an era ‘of the self-construction of another world, without the need to go through the seizure of the state’ (p.332). The focus changes from the state to the territories where the new worlds are being constructed, most visibly within the Zapatista’s, but also across other Latin American social movements, that are ‘threads of a tapestry that is being woven, and unraveling’ (Zibechi 2012, p. 333). Thus the local legitimacies are in their early phases of being constructed. How these emerge and impact the global and not only demand more participatory power over decisions that affect their lives, but take it by direct action, are yet to be seen as the future unravels.

How the state is viewed from the perspective of the communities is also a topic of relevance for the studies on political CSR. The argument for increased deliberation between corporations and civil society starts from the assumption that in the age of globalisation the traditional role of the state as regulator of business conduct has been eroded (Palazzo and Scherer 2006; Scherer and Palazzo 2007; 2011; Scherer et al. 2009). The argument within this line of thought is that states are losing the power to control corporate conduct. Consequently, in this context, the corporations need to engage directly with civil society to secure the legitimacy that they formerly used to be able enjoy by following the laws set by national regulators. However, if the state is not only a passive actor set to the side due to the processes of globalisation, but an active agent that enables corporate investments within the national borders, as the above excerpt suggests, it has consequences both for what is remaining of the national regulation that set the limits for the corporations and for governance initiatives. It further increases the vulnerability and exclusion of local communities from processes of democratic will formation. Examining the role of the state as a political actor siding with corporations and the consequences this has for the locals, is a topic that deserves more attention in future studies on global governance and political CSR.

5.1.5 Let’s be realistic now...

Is then all this realistic on a global scale? In an ego-centric world, where most people seem to seek more and more growth and consumption, how can the pluriverse possibly survive? As Zibechi (2012) notes, the greatest challenge for the local movements is to find alternative forms of producing and living. However, although the proposal of an alternative life philosophy such as the ‘buen vivir’ proposal goes in that direction, he argues that it does not have any relation to reality except for some ‘impoverished minorities that do not excite anyone’ (p.327). I tend to agree with him that whether or not a pluriversal world, where humans and non-humans live in harmonious relationships of coexistence, is within reach will depend on the following:

‘it requires a different culture, based upon practices that are unlike the hegemonic, with enough potency that the egomaniacal dreams of consumption and power with which capital appeals are dissolved by an ethics of life. In this regard we have advanced very little, while capital continues to seep into our minds and our hearts, infecting our bodies with an attraction so compelling that it is destroying not just humanity but also the planet itself. One overcomes this situation not by destroying capitalism, because capitalism is within us, but by developing a love for life, something that cannot be created artificially. Maybe that kind of love will only be reborn when
humanity's fear of self-annihilation becomes so strong that it compels us to put a sense of responsibility before the whims of our desires.' (p. 334)

However, having followed different local initiatives not only those of what Zibechi (2012) refers to as ‘impoverished minorities’ in the Andes of the global South, but also those of communities within Europe and the United States (Hopkins 2013; Schor and Thompson 2014), there are signs that communities of empowered people are moving (slowly) in that direction. For example, Schor and Thompson (2014) point out that poverty becomes relative when people voluntarily downshift to live in ‘plenitude’ to such a level that their cash income is similar to that of the poor.

Still, the aim of this research is not to point out the path towards the future, rather to open up the possibility to talk about and imagine possible futures that are different from the one pre-determined by the modern myth. In order to start imagining different futures and to inspire a shift in how people dream about and imagine the future, the act of conversing becomes primordial. The kind of conversation that takes place across differences is what determines whether or not it nourishes or destroys the different worlds in the pluriverse. This is the final topic I wish to engage with briefly, before moving on to the methodological considerations.

5.2 Conversation across differences and rooted governance

Abandoning communication all together forecloses all possibilities to construct relations between different worlds in the pluriverse. Rejecting communication does not promote the transition towards coexistence but legitimates instead acts of violence on the basis of the threat of difference (Maturana 1990). Thus, arguing that we should quit communication all together does not solve any of the urgent problems that need to be solved to sustain a liveable future in the pluriverse. Despite my criticisms of deliberation and stakeholder dialogue above, I still want to stress that I believe there is an urgent need to open up, not to close down, the possibility to communicate across worlds in the pluriverse. In fact, Dussel also notes that dialogues can, and should, take place across different boundaries:

’[A]n ethics of liberation establishes – from the standpoint of the universal material principle of the reproduction and development of the life of each human subject in community, as long as adequate formal conditions are also given – a dialogue among traditions that can be transformed through ‘external’ interpellations (this is the whole theme of critical exteriority) and ‘internal’ ones (from the indicated material principle). The conclusions of this dialogue are reached because we have passed from a necessary moment (of setting out from the particular history of a tradition) without understanding that this is not sufficient to displace or exclude intercultural and critical dialogue.’ (Dussel 2013, p. 78)

Hence, Dussel (2013) does not promote the creation of isolated communities without interaction with each other (he makes this explicit by distancing himself from the ‘communitarian’ movement, which is does not have any kind of rational debate beyond the limits of the community). Instead, adapting the perspective of the ethics of liberation signifies an acceptance that every conflict or struggle arises out of a particular community or tradition, still promoting ‘an intercultural dialogue that is redefined in non-Eurocentric terms’ (Dussel 2013: p. 79). How exactly could the reproduction of life be sustained and different legitimacies be constructed beyond the boundaries of different ontologies in the pluriverse? This is a question I will engage with in more detail in the final discussion of this dissertation, by arguing for the importance of ‘conversations across differences’ and ‘rooted governance’.
Conversation across difference does not necessarily imply that those involved in the conversation do not agree on anything but it does signal that their different ontological assumptions are equally valued and respected and are not negated because of the apparent superiority of one over the other. I use the term conversation instead of dialogue deliberately, since I want to highlight that these encounters are not necessarily defined by a two-way dialogue focused on finding common ground, but are instead horizontally constituted and may not always lead to a consensus. When conflicts emerge these should not be occluded but celebrated as manifestations of the diversity of the pluriverse, allowing the different entities in the pluriverse to take action to protect the co-existence and reinforce the reproduction of life in community and in nature. Conversations also indicate that it is not only rationality that counts but activities across differences are built on the desire to coexist, to continue conversing despite differences, the equal importance between the act of talking and the act of listening, sharing experiences and stories through conversations without the obligation to make the story of the other one’s own.

Rooted governance becomes the kind of conversation across difference that takes place at the crossroads of encounters between worlds in the pluriverse, always rooted in place. Knowledge is not abstract but the way of knowing and expressing that knowledge through the narrative is an outcome of each individual’s own imaginary (for example, but not restricted to, the conceptualisation of history of his or her place, relation to nature, forms of subsistence, and imaginings of the future). The premises of co-existential social life emerge from the reproduction of life within this circle of interconnected realities and it is situated at the crossroads of encounters. Rooted governance can be compared to what Scharmer and Kaufer (2013) refer to as ‘awareness-based collective action’ that ‘allows for fast, flexible, and fluid coordination and decision-making that are far more adaptive and co-creative than any other organizational model currently being used in major societal institutions’ (p-17) and it is a thinking that is leading towards the emerging future (rather than being based on past experiences).

Before I can engage in this discussion on conversation across differences and rooted governance at a deeper level, however, it is necessary to clarify two points regarding my own position within the research: 1) how do I see my role as a researcher in a pluriversal world, and 2) what are my own ontological and epistemological assumptions that inform me in terms of finding solutions to the problem of incommunicability in the pluriverse. I will address these issues next in the methodology section.

To come to a closure on the theoretical engagements in this story on legitimacy creation, I would like to summarise my critique of the dominant views on legitimacy in four key points: 1) Governance, and deliberation as the core activity within the rule-making procedures of governance, provides limited tools to deal with legitimacy conflicts that arise where different worlds collide. 2) This limited perspective builds on hierarchical relations, where modern assumptions (on separation of man and nature, linear time, colonial difference between modern and non-modern) are given the front seat at the expense of other worldviews. 3) The belief in one universal truth (consensus) that can be established based on a common rationality does not solve problems in places where there are multiple truths, and multiple rationalities. 4) The role of place as a site of cultural/ontologic/epistemic reproduction is not given enough attention and leaves certain groups vulnerable to exclusion before deliberation even starts.
Creating legitimacy within such a setting of governance is thus not based on equal relations but on relations of domination between those who govern and those who are (willingly or not) governed (in this case the modern and the non-modern). Instead, to understand legitimacy in the pluriverse, it must be situated within the place where it emerges, in other words rooted in place. Legitimacy in the pluriverse emerges from the group’s own capacity to sustain and reproduce life in community (a concept that here also implies a holistic view on the relation between man and nature, or the territory of cultural/ontologic/epistemic reproduction). Conflicts emerge when one group robs another of the capacity to sustain life in community. To allow for peaceful coexistence, governance must be rooted in place and the conversations that give way for co-existence need to celebrate differences instead of suppressing them.
6 METHODOLOGY

Conflicts emerge at the intersection where different worlds, and the convictions held within those worlds, clash with each other. My research is therefore, inevitably, situated at the cross-roads of the ontological and epistemological convictions of many different worlds, because these conflicts are not only about access to land and resources but are also struggles over meanings and significations embedded in particular places and communities. To see the world through a pluriversal lens means acknowledging the existence of multiple ontologies and at the same time positioning one’s own ontological assumptions as an integral part of the analysis (Blaser 2010; Mignolo 2002; 2011). There is not only one truth out there but many, shaped by the stories transmitted through different common imaginaries, discourses, or myths of the world. In this context, conflicts become, as Blaser (2010) has argued, political struggles over the right to enact different ways of worlding, different ontologies. With the word worlding, Blaser signals that worlds come into being through the different ways words are used and understood in the stories we tell each other. In the midst of this scenario of multiple worlds and ways of worldings, where am I situated? What is my role as researcher in terms of relating to the research context in the pluriverse? Before moving on to give a more personal account of my methodological choices, I start by positioning my work within a decolonial perspective.

6.1 Engaging with theory from a decolonial perspective

Decoloniality, or the framework of Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality (MCD) (Escobar 2008), is often placed within the tradition of postcolonial theory. There are many common features of these two streams, such as the interest in studying the consequences of colonial power relations, providing a critical view on Eurocentric universalism, and to some extent an interest in how certain historically bound discourses frame social reality and constitute the core of colonial power relations. Many scholars working from and within a postcolonial tradition also engage with similar social processes as those of interest within the MCD framework (e.g. Banerjee 2003; Parson 2008; Sullivan 2012; Panoho and Stablein 2012). There is also a certain degree of confusion between whose writing is considered postcolonial and who writes from a decolonial position, which indicates that there is perhaps not such a clear line between these two perspectives (Grosfoguel 2011). However, there are distinctions between how these two streams of thought have emerged and thus also in how they frame their scholarly interests (Grosfoguel 2007; Mignolo 2011). Next, I will outline three of these distinctions that I also find to be important for how I have engaged in my own research and for how I constructed my theoretical framework and methodological approach.

First, emerging from Literature Theory, postcolonial studies have initially been framed through a poststructural lens of the colonial encounter between (mostly) the Anglo-Saxon world and the Orient, (Bhabha 1994; Said 1979). The focus has thereby also been on what is common in poststructural theory: representations, discourses, and the connection between knowledge and power. Decoloniality, as a coherent area of study, emerged principally from World System Theory (Mignolo 2000, Quijano 2000) as well as from a reflection on the concrete lived experiences of social movements (the Zapatistas are often cited as an example) and the exploited and oppressed people in the Latin American context (Dussel 2013; Escobar 2008). This does not signify that the perspectives put forward by those engaged with this field would not apply to locations outside Latin America, rather it is the commitment to the geopolitical (and
body-political) location of the oppressed and excluded and their concrete lived experiences that is central to this framework (Mignolo 2000; 2011); it is thus not only about how discourses and representations frame the Other as ‘subaltern’ and ‘inferior’, but about the concrete lived experience (‘the local history’ in Mignolo’s terminology, signalling that there is a concrete geographic location where these experiences are lived, sensed and articulated) of the victims of the modern system (Dussel 2013).

Second, it is the recognition of the ‘locus of enunciation’\(^{13}\) (Mignolo 2000), not only of the oppressed and the excluded, but also the researcher (from where do I think, from what position am I speaking) that is important in decolonial research. By anchoring his/her historical geo- and body-political motivations in the historicity beyond ‘the global linear thinking’, the researcher assists the emergence of new epistemes and new ontological sites while simultaneously revealing that modern thinking is neither superior nor universal but rather a product of a historical frame constructed from the vantage point of European experiences (Mignolo 2011)\(^{14}\). Global linear thinking is a term used by Mignolo (2011) to explain the imperial structures of knowledge that assume universality by being detached from their geopolitical and body-political origins (European white male), and which is an epistemic tool of control over other ways of knowing and being that from this point are classified as rationally and ontologically deficient. Instead, to challenge this domination and allow new thinking to emerge, Mignolo suggests thinking from the border of modernity:

‘Border thinking is of the essence as we switch from imperial and territorial epistemology (global linear thinking) to an epistemology emerging from the places and the bodies left out of the line (e.g. the Anthropos, the Orientals, the Third World, etc.). And I take “I am where I think” as the basic proposition of such reasoning, both epistemically and politically.’ (Mignolo 2011, p. 91-92).

Postcolonial studies have also made similar points about the universalisation of European thought and the need to ‘provincialise it’ back to its origin (Chakrabarty 2000; Prasad 1997). However, the main focus within this field still remains on the power and authority that emerge from politico-economic, cultural and ideological (colonial) discourses and how these discourses impact the identities and knowledges of the colonised (Bhabha 1994; Prasad 2003; Prasad 2012). Border thinking is not restricted by discourses but allows the researcher to engage in an epistemological and ontological examination of social processes from the perspective of the subject and the world (the ontologies) that they inhabit (for a serious attempt at the empirical level of this endeavour see Blaser 2010). This approach acknowledges that it is not only discourses that change and form identities, but identities, subjectivities, and knowledges (entire worlds) are formed in relation to the context where they emerge\(^{15}\). Thereby, it also points at the importance of place – the ‘nonhuman’ political actor (de la Cadena 2010) – in terms of how social reality comes into being.

Third, one of the main criticisms raised by decolonial scholars is not centered on colonialism and imperialism per se, as is often the case of postcolonial studies (Prasad 2003; 2012; Said 1979; Young 2001b), but on the story of modernity itself and how it

\(^{13}\) The locus of enunciation is the place from which knowledge is created and articulated, it is the local historical grounding of knowledge (Mignolo 2000; 2011).

\(^{14}\) This aim to ‘provincialize Europe’ and its attempt to universalize the history of the rest of the world based on its own experience also exist within postcolonial literature (see for example Chakrabarty 2000; Prasad 1997).

\(^{15}\) For a more indepth account of the role of a researcher located in the in-betweens of ‘Nepatla’, or in the liminal spaces of different social realities, see Gloria Anzaldúa’s work on Nepatleras in Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 81-84.
has been constructed as a phenomenon that emerged internally in Europe (from the Renaissance in Italy, to the Reformation in Germany, leading to the Enlightenment and then the French revolution). For decolonial scholars, modernity emerged together with colonialism (and coloniality) and not after it (Dussel 2013; Mignolo 2000; 2011). It was the colonies of the Americas that gave Europe the necessary material means to take the political and economic lead and to construct an image of Europe as a role model for the human race.

Although the long standing colonial relations between the West and its colonies is of concern in postcolonial literature, these relations are not directly linked to the emergence of modernity but to how ‘modern Western colonialism served as a condition for the very emergence of European capitalism’ (Prasad 2003, p. 5) and how ‘Western colonialism was new in that it attempted to subjugate its colonies in the realm of culture and ideology as well as Modern Western colonialism’ (Prasad 2003, p. 5). Thus, the focus of postcolonialism does not lie on overcoming modernity but on resisting Modern Western colonialism (leaving space for ‘alternative modernities’, and ‘nonwestern modernities’). The decolonial scholars stress the importance of transcending modernity and overcoming its hierarchical categories of thought ‘not simply by negating it but thinking of it from its underside, from the excluded other’ (Escobar 2008, p. 169). This is what Dussel (2013) denominates ‘transmodernity’, a concept that signals that the aim is not emancipation within modernity but liberation from modernity in its exteriority16 (Dussel 2013).

My view on decoloniality, and what it offers in terms of thinking of, and from, the underside of the modern project is that it makes it possible to not only visualise but also to strengthen the needed transformations that delink social life from modern categories of thought, both on the personal and the collective level, towards new forms of knowing, sensing and being. Thereby this approach offers a move away not only from colonialism or coloniality but from modernity (and postmodernity), not only acknowledging the alternatives that already exist in modernity’s exteriority but also supporting such alternatives (in the form of place-based economies, social movements, networks of self-organising groups, etc.) to emerge as viable and visible ways of how to reproduce life on this planet. It is not only the victims that the researcher engages with that undergo deep transformations as they move from coloniality of being towards decolonial ways of being. Through the stories of the victims or social movement activists that take part in the research activities, the researcher is also confronted with the limits of modernity and the existence of other worlds, which opens up possibilities to see his or her own world ‘otherwise’, through a new decolonial lens. It is this personal journey into this precise borderland between many different worlds that I wish to make visible in the next section, as I engage in a discussion on my own road towards becoming radically vulnerable to the worlds of others.

6.2 Becoming radically vulnerable

As I have stressed already at the beginning of this dissertation, the topic of my research, and my decision to focus on conflicts and the incommensurability of corporate/community legitimacy struggles, has radically impacted my own understanding of the world since the start of the project. This sense of engaging in deep

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16 This exteriority should not be understood as untouched by modernity but as Escobar (2008) notes: “This exteriority is not a pure ontological outside, untouched by the modern but it is an outside that constitutes the difference to the hegemonic discourse(s) within modernity.” (p. 169).
personal transformations as a consequence of what confronts you as you proceed with the research is how I have come to understand the term ‘radical vulnerability’ that Nagar (2014) refers to when she tries to come to terms with the obstacles and difficulties of the positionality of the researcher and in crossing borders or learning to come to terms with borders one cannot cross. For me the term radical vulnerability has come to signify not my limits in terms of the borders I cannot cross but the capacity to reflect on the limits of how I grasp the world around me. To be radically vulnerable means that I am open to changing my perceptions as new perspectives completely challenge what I used to believe to be the truth.

Before my field research I had not been able to break through this filtering screen. Anzaldúa (1999; 2002a; 2002b; 2015) writes about this kind of shift and how this allows a new consciousness to emerge which sees beyond the borders of a specific perspective:

‘Your identity is a filtering screen limiting your awareness to a fraction of your reality. What you and your cultures believe to be true is provisional and depends on a specific perspective. What your eyes, ears, and other physical senses perceive is not the whole picture but one determined by your core beliefs and prevailing societal assumptions. What you live through and the knowledge you infer from experience is subjective.’ (Anzaldúa 2002b, p. 542)

To illustrate my own journey into this type of radical vulnerability I wish to highlight the events that brought me to question some of the core beliefs and prevailing societal assumptions of my own world.

After my first field research trip to Mehuín in southern Chile and to the rural areas of Uruguay I had also come to understand that some of the core thinking on poverty and development were radically flawed, serving the interests of some while excluding the viewpoints of others. During my discussions with the people engaged in building resistance against the arrival of the big forestry companies in their communities, I had understood that they themselves were not concerned about fighting poverty figures (although statistically they would be considered as poor) or of taking advantage of state implemented or corporate-led development models. Instead they were fighting for their right to self-determination, to live a life in dignity, free from environmental pollution, domination and control. Some of these stories also brought me to see the importance of Nature, as an intrinsic part of the culture and the self. After our conversations my viewpoint of the place radically changed, and I myself could sense the deep connection with Nature (and the force of the sea) that they were fighting for.

These stories not only allowed me to sense and appreciate the interconnectedness between humans and non-humans (de la Cadena 2010) but it contradicted some of the core assumptions I had held about poor rural areas in the Third World (i.e. their desperate desire to develop, become modern, and move to bigger cities). In other communities that were more exposed to the effects of forestry plantations and lack of subsistence opportunities, I heard stories about people who against their own will had been forced to leave their homes to look for work elsewhere, as there were no opportunities for livelihoods left in their villages. These stories radically contrasted what I experienced next.

Coincidentally, the day after returning from Mehuín to Valdivia there was a big event at the university on how to alleviate poverty in Chile with a panel of key academic experts on this field in Chile. It struck me that they were not differentiating between poverty

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17 At that time I had not yet read any of the work by decolonial thinkers.
lived in places where there are no other options (suburbs, shanty towns, rural areas affected by environmental pollution from extractive industries) and the kind of poverty in those places where people could sustain a living based on what their (unpolluted) environment gave them. At the end of the session I raised a question about how they see this contradiction between the development policies that they promote (industrialisation, infrastructure, export growth) and the risk that such interventions further marginalise and impoverish some communities while exposing them to the kind of environmental destruction that makes subsisting on nature impossible, all in the name of ‘poverty reduction’. The four experts in the panel were unable to answer my question. In fact, they did not even seem to understand the question. It was as if they were unaware of the fight for a clean living environment and self-determination that was going on just some 70 kilometres away from where the seminar was being held. The radical vulnerability that I had experienced during these few days – first seeing the world from the perspective of the marginalised and excluded and then sensing their exclusion in this seminar got me seriously thinking about the limits of my inherited worldview and the invisible contradictions that are hidden within some of its core assumptions on improving the world of the poor.

The continuous encounters with different people with conflicting ideas about what is true and what is false, what is desirable, what is to be avoided, from the CEOs and high ranked corporate managers in my former workplaces, to the activists fighting for a cleaner environment in Valdivia, and the subsistence farmers, indigenous groups and fishermen in the remote villages both in Southern Chile and in the Uruguayan countryside, exposed me to what Anzaldúa calls the nepantla, or the world in between worlds, the place in the borderlands (Anzaldúa 1999; 2015).

This also meant that I could no longer stay within the limits of a worldview that described the world as one and where I as a researcher was separated from the rest. Instead, I started to distinguish the different worlds of the pluriverse, all made up of different stories of different subjects situated at a certain place in time. The challenge for me as a researcher navigating the pluriverse is to be radically vulnerable in my own hidden assumptions towards the perspective of others. Because it is precisely in these borderlands in between worlds where the boundaries of different worlds expand and new ways of knowing can emerge.

6.3 Changing viewpoints: from knowledge creation to knowing, sensing, being

The work of Chilean biologist and epistemologist Humberto Maturana has played a crucial role in my understanding of what we as humans distinguish as real at certain points in time. Maturana argues that what we see as ‘real’ is highly dependent on the coincidences of our being, our doing and our knowing in relation to others with whom we share networks of conversations about our co-existence (Maturana and Verden-

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18 Anzaldúa refers to nepantla as the place where her cultural and personal modes clash against the world’s diktats, and where the different worlds converge in her writing. ‘Nepantla is that point of contact y el lugar between worlds – between imagination and physical existence, between ordinary and nonordinary (spirit) realities […] It means dealing with the fact that I, like most people, inhabit different cultures and, when crossing to other mundos, shift in and out of perspectives corresponding to each; it means living in liminal spaces, in nepantlas.’ (Anzaldúa 2015, p. 2-3)
Söller (1993; Maturana and Pörksen 2010; Maturana 1990; Maturana and Dávila 2015).

To explain this pluriversal reality (or multiverse in his terminology) Maturana (in Maturana and Pörksen 2010) distinguishes between the universally encompassing and observer-independent ‘objectivity without parenthesis’ and the observer-specific ‘objectivity within parenthesis’. Objectivity without parenthesis assumes that the real or reality is independent of the observer, and that there is an independent domain of existence. Things and entities exist independently and separately from the observer, who distinguishes them. It is the independent existence of things that specifies the truth. Objectivity without parenthesis entails unity (the truth is established as a common consensus of many observers). The persons who have access to what is perceived as real are right in any dispute, and those who do not have such access are wrong. The coexistence of different persons is made possible by the obedience to one particular knowledge construct (or rationality). Objectivity in parenthesis on the other hand, is made up by the accumulated experiences and acquired knowledge(s) of each observer. This is what constitutes the observer specific reality and the observer is the producer of his or her own truth claims. No truth claims can be universally applicable but they all depend on the experiences and the position of the one who speaks. The diversity of observer specific realities is limited by shared experiences in the community, since culture and history are constructed through the shared interests and preferences of the community members (Maturana and Pörksen 2010).

The shared sense of being that constitutes reality from the perspective of objectivity in parenthesis is an outcome of relations. The real does not exist independent of the observer but is shaped by his or her experiences and conversations within and outside his or her community network. Adapting a view of objectivity in parenthesis means thus that one also assumes a relational perspective of the world in which humans (or entities, things) do not exist as separate entities but are an expression of the relations (and conversations) in which they are embedded (Blaser 2010). Reality is the outcome of the interconnected relations between nature, discourses and society (Blaser 2010).

This dynamic view on the world, and our being in it, has had a profound impact on my view of what knowledge is. The notion of knowledge as an outcome of the joint actions of ‘being, doing, knowing’ (Maturana 1990; Escobar 2008; 2010) or ‘thinking, sensing, doing’ (Mignolo 2013) positions knowledge production not as something abstract and detached but as highly relational to all the senses of the researcher and the world(s) in which the researcher dwells. Also Scharmer and Kaufer (2013) sets out the principles of presencing (the practice of how we can expand our knowing and become part of the future rather than holding on to the past) as a process, involving opening the mind, heart and will towards the perspective of others.

The type of knowing that emerges from a perspective of objectivity within parenthesis is then also an outcome of situated relational encounters. Research is a journey of continuous repositioning (as the word re-search implies) of one’s own assumptions on what constitutes the ‘real’. It is a relational endeavour since only what is made available to us through (non-hierarchical) relations can impact our own knowing. If there are hierarchies, such as the labelling of others as ignorant or inferior, stories remain disconnected, and thus are not shared as new ways of knowing. In this practice it is not only what I know that is challenged but also all of my senses that are called into question. It cannot be reduced to an abstract practice of reasoning, since how my

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18 Also the work of Mignolo (2002;2011a;2011b), Escobar (2008; 2010), and Blaser (2010) has reinforced my understanding of knowledge as an outcome of situated relational encounters.
senses prepare me to listen to the stories of others and the surrounding nature (the relations with them) also impacts how I decide to filter and reposition (re-search) it into my own knowing. Understanding this kind of knowing from a position of radical vulnerability also forces us to constantly alter our own assumptions about what is real, as Anzaldúa (2015), notes:

'We revise reality by altering our consensual agreements about what is real, what is just and fair. We can trans-shape reality by changing our perspectives and perceptions. By choosing a different future, we bring it into being.' (p. 21)

### 6.4 Storytelling as a way of worlding, making sense of ourselves and our place in the world

The kind of knowing, sensing, and being, that has emerged as a consequence of my research journey is what I now position within the storytelling tradition.

Blaser refers to the differences in reality-making through the stories we choose to tell as ‘ways of worlding’. He argues that different stories imply different ontologies (worlds) and the stories perform different worlds by contributing to the phenomena that they narrate. They are part of the relations and the outcome of these relations as they have an effect on reality. Blaser (2010) also argues that ways of worlding are not constituted in a vacuum but in relation to each other; different stories interact with each other in a relation and make up the reality perception of the different worlds in the pluriverse.

Anzaldúa (2015) also stresses the importance of storytelling (including telling, reading, and listening) as a tool to make sense of ourselves, our lives and our place in the world: ‘storytelling is healing when it expands the autohistorias (self-narratives) of the tellers and the listeners, when it broadens up the person that we are’ (p. 177).

Thus, the lived experiences and accumulated knowledges of each person are always transmitted through their own personal understanding of the world, their stories. The knowledge that emerges from a storytelling perspective is then also the result of a process of co-creation between the researcher and the people that played a role in its making. However, this knowledge can never be abstract nor objective, since the one who reads it does so within the limits of his or her own world. Instead, knowledge production becomes a chain of interconnected stories, where the connections between stories are the things we are capable of making sense of and reproduce as new perspectives within our own world.

### 6.5 On incommensurabilities and relativism

At times, my work has been interpreted as relativist, as a projection of the world out there based on different cultural configurations without any common standpoints. This has always left me with feeling that my aims have been misunderstood, in terms of research, although my work stresses the incompatible nature of certain standpoints. It was only when I became acquainted with Mario Blaser’s work that I myself started to understand the connecting dots of my work. His book ‘Storytelling Globalization From the Chaco and beyond’ introduced me to the concept of ‘relational ontologies’, how realities become real based on how we relate to and retell the stories we hear. From the perspective of relational ontology, translations are the processes through which ‘certain imaginations come into being’.
In contrast to the modern constitution’s ontological split between nature and culture, the starting point for the relational ontology is a network in which the points of articulation between different threads or communicating conduits constitute the imaginations A, B, and C. [...] Articulations are the result of translation, that is, of mutual accommodation between intersecting threads in such a way that they eventually become entangled in a mutually reinforcing exchange of vital energy. Thus from a relational perspective, translation is fundamentally about a mechanism of reality-making. (Blaser 2010, p. 151-152)

For Blaser (2010), ontological conflicts are expressions of ‘questions about what counts as knowledge and what kind of worlds different knowledge practices contribute to perform.’ (p. 3). He distinguishes between translations as ‘the logic of representation’, grounded in ‘an assumed world out there’ (2010, p. 150) and from the perspective of relational ontology translations as ‘the process by which imaginations come into being’. Within the logic of representation the assumed world out there is what allows the researcher to make certain assumptions based on certain authorised knowing practices that assert a privileged access to the world based on claims of ultimate causes and underlying structures of hierarchical relationships in terms of how knowledge is produced. Criticising or deviating from this way of dealing with the world exposes the researcher to the criticism of promoting relativism. Relativism describes the ‘reality out there’ always only as a reflection of our own cultural and subjective projections, where all existing cultures lack the common grounds that allow for mutual understandings and communication. In this way of worlding, all that exists are incommensurabilities which apparently make it impossible to communicate across cultures.

To be explicit, I understand the difference between a multicultural world and the pluriverse as the following (following the work of Blaser 2010; Escobar; 2011; Mignolo; 2011): in a multicultural world, which is being broadly recognised today, different cultures are recognised as valuable and even given importance in governance and elsewhere. However, it is still the modern epistemology, and the separation of humans from nature, observer from observation, that counts as constitutive of the real at the moment when reality is being defined. The pluriverse, on the other hand, allows for different ways of knowing to constitute the shaping of reality in different worlds and it also acknowledges the coexistence of different simultaneously existing realities without hierarchical power relations that defines whose reality is more ‘real’ than that of others.

When I describe the differences in the social imaginaries in Valdivia and Mehuin in my second article, my point is not to describe how two different cultures interpret the history, nature, subsistence, future ‘out there’ from their own cultural basis. It is not a relativist account, but a relational one. My intention is to show that there is a relation between how legitimacy is created in particular places, dependent on the shared interconnected stories (between humans and non-humans) that exist and make up reality in those places. Therefore the communities have different views on reality (also within themselves) and this also shapes their desires and aspirations of living the good life of their imaginations. The disconnection between the stories in the two different places (where only one story, the modern, seeks to impose itself on the other, the non-modern) also impacted the willingness of the people situated in its exteriority to participate in dialogues. The people who did not engage in dialogue understood the dangers it posed for their world, as it would have put them at risk of being vilified, ignored, and ultimately excluded (produced as absent in De Sousa Santos’ terminology) because of the disconnection that their stories had with that of the rhetoric of modernity. Their worlds did not follow the ‘right kind of representation’ of the world
This means that the villagers understood the hierarchical power relations of the dialogue situations and how their view of the world would have been subordinated to the authorised story of modernity.

6.6 The risk of being produced as absent in Academia

Blaser’s notion of how reality comes into being through the frequency of the stories that are being told (and repeated) to us, also resonates with what I have experienced during my review processes of the journal articles (both those in this thesis and others that are still unpublished) and teaching on this topic in business schools. This has led me to believe that scholars that engage with the hidden stories of the pluriverse are exposed to just the same hierarchies of power in our position as researchers as those who we are citing in our work. When we cite the voices of the marginalised or the excluded, the worlds they defend are not considered equally real as the worlds of those that follow the logic of the modern world. This has led me to reflect quite a bit on the role of the researcher and the work that is produced as an outcome of this role. On numerous occasions I have asked myself if it is our job to just observe what is readily accessible to us to observe or if our duty as researchers extends beyond what is available at first sight. For example, how am I as a researcher going to address the acceptance of an investment in a community where the majority of the inhabitants support the presence of the company although, according to those marginalised voices and evidence from other communities with similar investments, it may eventually destroy the possibility to make a living in these places (Article 3 is most concerned with this topic but in terms of historical data it also includes the stories described in Article 1 and Article 2)?

Studying legitimacy is never straightforward. The majoritarian support (also visible in the abstract figure of ‘public opinion’) may be an outcome of the locals being either afraid to speak up (see Article 3) or because of the absences produced in the media of the alternatives (see Article 1 and Article 3), as they have never been given the opportunity to imagine the world from a different viewpoint. What kind of phenomena and what kind of world are we as researchers (re)producing if we are not capable of going beyond what is mostly made available to us through the framing of media, and the viewpoints of corporate and state representatives in favour of such investments? Or could it be that research is also about choosing sides, acknowledging that we as researchers also impact the world through our writings and our choices of what kind of material we collect, who we talk to and who we decide (consciously or subconsciously) to ignore? Our stories matter also to those who we research, it opens up the possibility to engage in conversations across differences and to make those stories available that otherwise would run the risk of remaining untold.

However, if research is about choosing sides, which based on my experience it always is in the kind of conflictual research setting that I dwell in, then scholars need to be aware of what kind of world they are living in and what kind of worlds they create through their work. I think Blaser explains the role of the researcher well when he describes

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20 Translation based on the logic of representation is about creating equivalences, streamlining, subordinating, and eliminating anything that endangers the authorised or dominant (modern) representation of the reality out there (Blaser, 2010, p. 153).
research (or more precisely ethnography) as an outcome of dialogues with other knowing subjects:

‘...the border dialogue I envision aims to engage the radically different knowledge practices of those worlds/realities deemed inferior by modernity, and to be willing to allow modern ways of knowing be “contaminated” by them. This does not mean that one ends up located where one’s interlocutors are; rather, it means that through dialogue with them one becomes dislocated from the modern enunciative position. Ultimately this border dialogue aspires to produce a standpoint that performs itself as a mediation articulating in symmetrical terms the worlds/realities that the colonial difference articulates hierarchically’ (Blaser 2010, p. 23).

My three articles all engage in this kind of ‘border dialogue’. In the first article I wish to show that how public opinion and what is deemed legitimate based on what is being debated in the public sphere is articulated very hierarchically through the production of absences of certain voices. I engage in a border dialogue where I show how this also impacts those who are left on the outside of this public debate in their unwillingness to engage in a deliberation that does not acknowledge their world. By opening up the perspective on what is considered legitimate in different places through their own place-based social imaginaries, in the second article I aim at mediating different articulations of different worlds without placing them in a hierarchical relationship as the assumption on what is considered ‘rational’ within the Habermasian perspective on communicative theory. The third article aims to make explicit, through the stories of the affected, what happens when the hierarchies of different worlds are left uncontested, and how resistance/re-existence can emerge in those instances.

Am I still representing a world that is not mine? Have I fallen prey to the risk of romanticising and essentialising representations as an outsider, and thereby only reinforcing colonial relations instead of liberating them (Spivak 1988)? Here, I find the view of Blaser (2010) comforting and supporting the position that I am taking myself:

‘My aim is thus not to explain and re-present these intellectuals’ views of the world as traditional ethnography would, but to narrate/enact a standpoint that has emerged from the relation with their embodied views of the world.’ (p. 25)

Thus my standpoint is an expression of my relationship to the embodied views of the world of those knowing subjects that take part in my studies. I tell these stories from a standpoint that aims at questioning what has been held as an all-encompassing truth (but that in fact hides the hierarchical relationships of domination), and to open up the debate on what kind of world we want to live in. This might sometimes make the stories I choose to tell sound less real than those that are consistent with the modern myth. However, they are not. If all persons count as equals, then all stories count as equal too. Particularly in a moment when the modern myth is increasingly being questioned for the consequences it brings about (Eisenstein 2011; Klein 2014; Norberg-Hodge 2015; Scharmer and Kaufer 2013). Those who are used to hearing only the most readily available material, easily reject these stories because they find the ‘validity’ to be weak. I have confronted criticisms that label this perspective as an unrealistic, a hopelessly naïve and a very romantic view of the world that will never become true in the future (similar experiences have been documented elsewhere, see for example Koukkanen 2008). However, over the years I have started to see this critique as the Academic version of how some realities are ignored and ‘produced as absent’ (de Sousa Santos 2013), because they do not follow the dominant belief in how the future will be based.

21 Blaser (2010) makes reference to ‘indigenous intellectuals’ but since my research includes not only indigenous communities but also smallholders and activists, I prefer to refer to them as ‘knowing subjects’ – which is also how Mignolo (2000, 2011a) refers to what are most often called ‘interviewees’. 
on past and partial historical accounts (that do not include the suffering of colonial subjects).

However, in my decision to focus on those that oppose the investments, and their worlds, I am also producing absences of others who are supportive of the investments. I do recognise that the stories of those in favour of these investments also exist in some of these places, sometimes they are even the absolute majority. After all, that is what the pluriverse is all about: the multiple worlds that coexist in the same places. However, the drive for development, economic growth, and maximisation of shareholder profits (through these investments) are often unquestioned assumptions in business research of a world where only one world is allowed to exist. The stories I have heard by those who oppose the investments point towards a world that stands in sharp contrast to that world, where the reproduction of life in community is organised based on principles other than increasing monetary wealth. This is why I have decided to go beyond the dominant assumption and allow stories that are not consistent with it to take the front seat in my research. I do this because only by retelling these stories can the pluriverse become visible and impact the world of those whose decisions are already at risk of destroying it. Thus my research aims at performing ‘a rupturist story’ (Blaser 2010): to show the pluriverse that lies before us if we choose to acknowledge it.

In the pluriverse, the future is not fixed to follow a predetermined linear evolution over time (Blaser 2010; de Sousa Santos 2013; Mignolo 2011). Instead, the very aim of the research in this field is, in the words of de Sousa Santos (2013): ‘to identify and enlarge the signs of possible future experiences... that are actively ignored by hegemonic rationality and knowledge’ (p. 28, author’s translation) or ‘the alternatives that enter on the horizon of concrete possibilities’ (p. 28, author’s translation), where the concrete future is always uncertain and open to change. It is in a sense the kind of ‘emerging future’ that Scharmer and Kaufer (2013) speak of in their work on eco-system economics, where the focus is on co-creation and seeing and acting from the whole rather than working within the silos of separation as in the past.

In a scenario where the dominant myth of modernity, or the unbreakable linear evolution of the modern world is being contested at multiple levels, what perspectives are unrealistic in the future is also highly contestable. If we as researchers are not able to pronounce the existence of different kinds of worlds and our position within or in between these worlds, aren’t we then also part of the machinery that creates the invisible assumptions on what are ‘realistic visions’ for the future and what are just ‘romantic dreams’? Aren’t we then only reproducing reality based on dominant assumptions, enforcing the hierarchies of power that have been in place for centuries? If the modern world is to change its course of action and move away from the destructive path it is currently on, I feel that we as researchers have a duty to change our ways of engaging with Academia and the worlds we are researching.

6.7 Why am I (t)here

In a recent workshop on Postdevelopment, I participated in lengthy discussions on the implications of our research on the places that we study. The core question that was raised was, what are we as researchers doing (t)here in the sites marked by colonial wounds if we only reproduce colonial relations between us and them (on the moral implications of engaging with colonial subjects, see Smith 1999). Originally my intention of engaging in the cases I study was to find solutions to prevent conflicts with local communities. It was my belief that these communities represented good case
studies that could provide an answer to universally applicable strategies advancing the discipline that I had set out to serve (business studies). I was thus motivated by the idea of helping corporations perform better in their global investment strategies. I was also still hooked on the idea that once I had become an expert on CSR, I would return to the world of global corporations, either as a manager within this field or as an external consultant on community relations. Thus initially I was more guided by (or blinded by) a self-serving interest to observe the local communities to advance the discipline than by ‘engaging in knowledge-making’ in order to advance the cause of the local communities (Mignolo 2011, p. 137).

I now see that following through on this intention would have made me into yet another victim of the kind of research that Smith (1999) calls ‘research through imperial eyes’. The reason for my being there would have been to help the global corporations to colonise local worlds, convert the people to stakeholders lured by the promise of incentives such as community development, and corporate social responsibility. My intention to help corporations avoid conflicts with locals could indeed have been fulfilled had I chosen that path, and decided to engage with stories favourable to these kinds of investments. However, it would have happened at the expense of other worlds and the struggles of those locals who still fight for the right to live their lives as non-stakeholders, and to reproduce life on their own terms without the involvement of corporations.

As I already noted previously, the stories I heard while visiting communities affected by forestry operations did not leave me untouched. Instead they made me radically vulnerable and had a profound decolonising effect on how I see the world(s) that surround(s) me and impacted the very purpose of my research. This left me with a sense of confusion that raised questions such as ‘who am I in relation to the rest of the world?’, ‘what is the purpose of my research?’, and ‘what kind of relations am I reproducing through the kind of work that I do?’ Escobar (2010) also notes that in a pluriversal setting the researcher is confronted with the issue of whether it is enough to think from the space of modern social sciences: ‘the questions of where one thinks from, with whom, and for what purpose become important elements of the investigation; this also means that the investigation is, more than ever, simultaneously theoretical and political’ (p. 3). Thus, I had to take a stand on where I was heading with my research and whose interests it would ultimately serve.

In my own reflections over what kind of relations I want to build through the work that I do, I came to the conclusion that I am (t)here to open up spaces for conversation across differences to occur. My proficiency in the cultures and languages on both sides of the conflicts made it possible to engage deeply in different stories across boundaries. Here, I resonate with Anzaldúa’s (2015) observation on the strengths of inhabiting multiple identities: ‘Speaking from the geographies of many countries make me a privileged speaker, I speak in tongues – understand the languages, emotions, thoughts, fantasies of the various sub-personalities inhabiting me and the various grounds they speak from.’ (p. 3).

In a world without colonial difference my own standing would not play a role in how I am granted access and given space to speak, since all subjects would be able to speak for themselves, and their stories would be heard across boundaries. However, we are unfortunately far from having achieved a borderless pluriversal world. Thus by using my privilege, and putting it at the service of those that are part of the investigation, with my research I have aimed at bridging the gaps between different worlds, bringing them together by connecting previously disconnected stories.
What then is the contribution of my work to my own discipline, and the study of the social responsibility of corporations? Business decisions can have profound implications on the existence of many worlds of the pluriverse. By bringing the pluriverse into the debate over responsible management practices, we are confronted with the limits of our own convictions (just as I myself experienced when becoming radically vulnerable to the stories of those I interviewed). Acknowledging the pluriverse, bringing it out of the blind spot created by the hierarchical power structures of the modern/colonial divide, can thereby also change how we teach ethics and corporate responsibility at business schools and change how business is carried out in far-flung places. Ultimately, this is why I am (t)here. It is my belief that dramatic changes (for the better) can happen, if we dare to become radically vulnerable and see the consequences of our own actions without responding in an outcry of arrogance and self-defence.

6.8 Giving back by going back – the act of reconnecting stories

As I engage in research that is about making disconnected stories connected, it also means that my own story must be reconnected with the stories that have influenced my work, otherwise I run the risk of falling prey to the ‘they came, they saw, they named, and they claimed’ trap (Smith 1999, p. 80) of research.22 The one-way communication that often takes place between the researcher and the interviewee cannot be justified if reality-making is a relation of interconnected stories. How do we know that we share our stories and that they are not disconnected representations of worlds apart? How can we guarantee that what the researcher does when he or she goes back to present the field research to an academic audience still maintains its connection and relevance to those where the storyline of the research originally emerged? This can only happen by going back and engaging continuously in conversations with those who originally helped me to bring my own research story into being. Reconnecting with the stories of my research is in a sense also about ‘giving back’, which is the final topic I will discuss before I end the methodological discussion and move on to the final discussion on the contribution of my research to the wider (research) community.

In indigenous research the importance of ‘giving back’ is often given centrality (Blaser 2010; Kuokkanen 2008; Smith 1999). For Kuokkanen (2008), ‘to give back’ is ‘to conduct research that will be both relevant and helpful to indigenous peoples themselves’ (p. 44). Nagar (2014) stresses the importance of creating alliances, of including the knowing subjects as co-authors and as researchers becoming radically vulnerable, opening up the possibilities to engage in politics without guarantees. I interpret this as an attitude of openness towards whose knowledge counts and what will become of the research findings in terms of a contribution to the broader society. In the words of Nagar (2014):

‘If the Academy is not the only site of knowledge making then an opening up of the horizon of theorizing must begin with the recognition that academic knowledges might be enriched through creative conversations with knowledges that evolve in the sites of struggle that seem distant to the academy...’ (p. 44).

22 Smith (1999) raises a criticism of the research methodologies used to study indigenous peoples as she shows that the work of European-based anthropologists has been complicit with the colonising of the world, when they were given the power to name people and places according to their own cultural background.
This practice requires that we also pay attention to who we choose to listen to, or ignore, the stories and truth claims that emerge in and from these sites of struggle. It requires that conversations do not only happen once, but continuously, with those who our research engages with. However, how can I guarantee that we understand each other and reconnect our stories once their stories have become academic accounts detached from their site of reproduction? As Blaser (2010) notes, one way to not have to face this difficulty is to just not return and thus avoid the uncomfortable interpellations in the community of origins, a strategy he sees being used by many scholars today. However, as the kind of knowing I have argued for in this thesis is one that emerges from the interconnection of shared stories, not going back is simply not an option. Another option would be to involve the knowing subjects in the whole process, allowing them to become co-authors in writing the actual research story (Nagar 2014). However, such an approach requires many years of building relationships and trust, which is not possible within the time frame of a doctoral thesis project. Instead, a first step towards sharing interconnected stories is thus to go back to the sites of struggle. Only by engaging in continuous conversations with the knowing subjects will I know if my story is inter-connected to those who contributed to its making.

In November 2015, I returned to the sites of struggle in Chile. At this point the first two articles that concerned the Chilean cases had been published. One could argue that the timing of my return was too late since the outcome of connecting my stories to those of the knowing subjects could no longer change what had been published and disseminated in academic circles. However, with hindsight, this second field visit was of great value to the final redaction of this dissertation and I am grateful I was given the opportunity to go back for an extended period of time. I think that the most important value of this giving back exercise was just me being there, showing them that I still have an interest in their struggle and I will continue to engage in their struggle in the future. Many of them told me that it was very rare to see the researchers again after they had collected their material. Rarely did they even get the research reports that were elaborated based on the stories told during the interviews. However, in terms of the actual contribution of my findings to the day-to-day struggle in the village, I am not sure I have managed to give them anything concrete other than another description of a struggle that has been part of their territorial identity for the past 20 years. I agree with many other scholars who work in this field that giving back something of use, in terms of my ‘expertise’, is a very challenging task (Blaser 2010; Kuokkanen 2008; Nagar 2014; Smith 1999), particularly when I see them as more expert than me on the topic that I am giving back on.

During our long conversations with those locals I had interviewed once, I not only shared the findings of my research (which was received mostly just with a nod or a word of agreement – and with some we engaged in a conversation on what my categorisations of imaginaries meant in terms of their struggle). I also shared the story of how my research had been received in the publication processes. I could sense a feeling of pride as I told them that the comments I so often got when I presented their struggle was that people did not believe that it was true; was there really a small community that had been able to halt industrial large-scale investments – against all odds – for almost 20 years? For me this was perhaps the most important gift I could give back: showing that their stories and everything they have gone through in the past 20 years matters beyond the limits of their own direct sphere of influence, it matters as a concrete example of a successful struggle and as a story that makes the pluriverse visible and real beyond the borders of their own community.
7 DISCUSSION

The overall research question that initially guided my research is: can deliberation remedy the legitimacy deficiency felt by global corporations today. After having engaged with corporate-community relations in the forestry sector in South America for four years the simple answer to that question is – unfortunately – ‘no, it cannot’. While legitimacy is the outcome of a deliberative exercise that is based on a rationale that has emerged from one particular world (the modern), it cannot meet the expectations of those whose worlds are made up of other rationalities which the modern world continuously marginalises and excludes in its efforts to build its legitimacy beyond its own borders. The production of absences – or the systematic categorisation of difference as ignorant, backward, inferior, unproductive, and too local to bear importance - works as a gilded gateway to what counts as good and desirable within the dominant modern worldview. This categorisation is what creates distances between us and them, hides the destructive forces embedded in a system of domination, and ultimately disconnects stories by creating a divide between the modern and the colonial.

Expecting others, whose worlds are not accepted as equal within the deliberative space, to find the exercise of engaging in dialogue meaningful when their world is not acknowledged as important, is a dangerous attitude that does not promote planetary life as an equation of co-existence. Thus, I do not see how this type of governance would solve any of the long-term issues that cause conflicts over land/territory to emerge. However, the last thing I want to do with the contribution of my work is to suggest that the situation is futile, that we might as well pack up our things, go home, close our doors and build more walls, because we are too different to be able to get along.

Suggesting that communication across worlds in the pluriverse will not work is not an option. Particularly not as this is exactly what is happening as worlds are colliding right now through the mass migrations that are occurring on a global scale. The refugee crisis my own country is currently witnessing is not a random event, but the direct consequence of the logic of coloniality, which the rhetoric of modernity can no longer conceal. The consequences of modernity and its rapid spread over the past 30 years through the dramatic impact of globalisation, bring the entire planet (including humans and other species) to a massive crossroads beyond national borders and mentally constructed barriers of imaginaries. Racism and xenophobia is what will naturally follow if we cannot overcome the hierarchical constructs of separation embedded in the modern/colonial imaginary and start communicating across our differences.

Thus although I clearly distance myself from promoting deliberation or stakeholder dialogues as a remedy to the current legitimacy crisis of global corporations, I do not argue that mutual disengagement would solve any of the problems at hand. Instead, I suggest a different kind of communicative relationship, where the desire to co-exist and celebrate the strength of our differences constitutes the fundamental core of our conversations. Only when these hierarchical constructs between us and them, the superior and inferior, the advanced and the backward disappear, can we start a serious conversation about how to organise, sustain and reproduce life in coexistence.
7.1 Conversations across differences instead of stakeholder dialogues

Conversations across difference means that the encounters are horizontal, just as when friends engage in conversations with each other. There are no pre-set assumptions that predetermine how these conversations will end. It includes a holistic perspective where rational thinking is only the point of departure; when differences occur in how people raise their rational arguments, the conversation continues to explore the underlying premises that they rely on to make such claims. Consensus in terms of how both parties make sense of the world may not be possible, but by sharing stories through conversations both parties are offered the opportunity to explore the boundaries of their own knowing, sensing, and being in this world.

The conversations emerge from the desire to build common stories of coexistence and not consensus based on reason. The focus is not on defining what is true or false but on finding an agreement on how to live in coexistence without suppressing the world of the other. The differences between viewpoints that become visible in these conversations are the blind spots of the different worlds in the pluriverse. Engaging in conversations across difference makes it possible to reduce such blind spots. Within the modern myth these blind spots are the hidden stories of coloniality produced as absences to legitimise acts of imposition and domination. Only by engaging in a conversation across the modern/colonial divide can these blind spots be brought to the attention of the defenders of this dualistic system of progress/destruction.

Reconnecting with nature and other human beings through conversations of difference with the purpose of coexistence creates new imaginaries and new opportunities on how to engage with the world, and how to reproduce life. The aim of the conversation is therefore to expand imaginaries, open up our own consciousness about the different place-specific realities that exist in each and every individual. This also makes it possible to dream and imagine beyond what we previously held possible. This is not a phenomenon that is restricted to the geographic locations of those communities engaged in livelihood struggles against multinational corporations (as was described as a resistance strategy of one of the farming communities in the third article) in the Global South. The search for alternatives is happening on a global scale. Studying absences (in Article 1), has also made me aware that there are many things going on ‘underground’ that you can only learn about through direct contact because the media does not write about it. At the initial stages, the people involved may not even know that they are involved in building alternatives.

7.2 Rooted Governance instead of Global Governance

To go beyond the locked-in paradigm of global governance and the effects of exclusion that this model imposes on those who do not embrace the dominant rationality of the modern myth, I make use of the term rooted governance to describe the activities, or the encounters and conversations that take place ‘from the bottom up’ across different imaginaries and different ways of knowing, sensing, and being. Rooted governance describes how (local) communities come together at the roots to define how to organise the reproduction of life in community so that the different ways of life within that particular place are respected and supported by all members of the community. In this setting, business entities can still be an integral part of the decision-making process, however, it is the long-term reproduction of life in community (not the maximisation of economic growth or shareholder profits) that guides the processes of the conversations. This means that the role of all community members (including those who represent
certain business interests) must change from a position of maximising their own interests at the expense of others and nature to a position where they all contribute to the communal good and support each other in their co-existence. These possible solutions are also limited by the territorial boundaries within which they operate.

The rule-making processes of a society that recognises the rootedness of its actions in place (whether locally, if it is a society that is completely localised, or globally if its actions are scattered around the globe) under these circumstances radically changes governance as a concept. Table 1 explains these differences between the top-down governance concept that I have raised several points of criticism against in the theoretical framework (and the three articles), and the bottom-up rooted governance that I here suggest as a way forward and a means of overcoming some of the problems of exclusion and marginalisation.

Table 1  Global Governance vs Rooted Governance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Global Governance</th>
<th>Rooted Governance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legitimacy</td>
<td>Top-down</td>
<td>Bottom-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consent of the governed</td>
<td>Capacity to reproduce life in community</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public opinion</td>
<td>Shared stories/conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Power-over</td>
<td>Power-to-do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode of interaction</td>
<td>Stakeholder dialogues</td>
<td>Conversations across differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontology (reality)</td>
<td>Abstract universals (representations)</td>
<td>Observer specific and relational (including with nature)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Linear (follow a predetermined path)</td>
<td>Multidimensional (open ended)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemology (how do we know)</td>
<td>Rational arguments/reason</td>
<td>Multiple ways of knowing, sensing, being.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>Consensus</td>
<td>Detect 'blind spots' of different viewpoints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>Sameness</td>
<td>Diversity</td>
</tr>
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In a bottom up system of rooted governance, it is the capacity to reproduce life in community that is central to the rule-making procedures, and not the acceptance of the governed to obey rules (of domination). Here it is the shared stories that give a sense of legitimacy and not abstract measures of the acceptance of a (mis-informed) public. Instead of obeying a ruler, it is the capacity to reproduce life as an outcome of a unified power-to-do (Holloway 2002) that helps the community to mobilise and fulfil necessary tasks. These tasks are negotiated based on conversations across differences. Reality is observer-specific and shaped in relation to the observer’s relationship to his or her surroundings. The future is not predetermined based on dominant historic accounts of the past but is open-ended and coincidental depending on the circumstances of the social processes. It is not one set of rational arguments that predetermines the outcomes of what is legitimate, desirable and feasible, legitimacy is instead negotiated from shared place-based accounts of knowing, sensing, and being. The goal of conversations is not to reach a consensus but to detect blind-spots so that the solutions can be geared towards supporting coexistence. The strength of the community lies in its diversity, thus difference cannot be suppressed for the sake of unity, but must be celebrated as a force of resilience.

Where do we find rooted governance in action today? In the multiple territorial struggles that take place where global industrial investments in the extractive
industries, forestry included, threaten the livelihoods of local communities. In those places where the local community has realised its political exclusion and unified in its struggle against incorporation in a system of appropriation and victimisation. Rooted governance was what made it possible for the community in Mehuín to reclaim power over their own destiny and the clean waters of their ocean bay (article 1.2). Rooted governance can also be found in those places where communities engage in constructing alternatives to development (article 3), and aim to find locally grounded solutions to the environmental crisis that lies before us (see for example the initiatives of ‘beautiful solutions’ documented on Naomi Klein’s website www.thischangeseverything.com).

What about the legitimacy in those places that are already touched by global investments and development projects? What about those places where most of the community members are dependent on forestry or other industrial operations for their source of living? Can rooted governance also play a role where the local meets the global? My point regarding the conversations that need to emerge on a global scale through rooted governance is not about the mode of production per se, although it is my belief that how communities decide to produce the necessities of life becomes a top priority of these conversations once we acknowledge our mutual right to co-existence beyond the maximisation of self-interests at the expense of others. Instead, what I argue is that those who embrace the modern imaginary as the only way of engaging with the world need to open up and become radically vulnerable in their attitudes towards those whose lives are sacrificed ‘in the name of development’. Conversations across difference open up the possibility to see the consequences of our actions beyond a rhetoric that currently hides them. It is a shift in mentality from a mode of superiority to a mode of coexistence while also recognising the importance of the pluriverse for our own wellbeing and our own survival as one of many interdependent species on this planet. It is a shift from an egocentric to an eco-centric perspective, acknowledging that we as humans do not live our lives disconnected from the rest but we exist together with others as an outcome of relations of mutual dependence.

This is thus a mode of conversation that fosters mutual trust and interdependence instead of separation and destruction. A lot changes in how we relate to each other if we do not classify our counterparts as ignorant and inferior before we even give them a chance to speak. A lot changes if instead of making our arguments count as the most rational, we listen to the other and let ourselves be inspired and influenced by their stories and their realities. A lot changes if we start to understand that time is not defined according to the industrial past of certain geographic locations but at every moment it is contingent, open-ended, and apt to change according to unforeseen internal and external circumstances.

The burning question is whether the current system that sustains a globally encompassing corporate world (in this case the presence of a certain type of corporate activity) can allow the existence of other worlds, or if in the long term it can only lead to death and destruction? And if so, how can corporate activities change so that they can coexist with other realities within the pluriverse? Multinational corporations are not abstract global actors. In every instance and in every decision, the effects of these corporations are sensed locally in a particular place. In their global supply chain these corporations stand at crossroads with myriad other worlds. That the main theories on corporate legitimacy and global governance do not engage with the relation to place that we as humans depend upon in our basic need for survival is a major shortcoming and a challenge that needs to be addressed if the pluriverse is to stand a chance against its current threat of extinction. Transitioning from the hierarchical modes of
productions inherited from the industrial revolution to one where interconnected networks of people and places contribute to the reproduction of life in the community may be decisive for the pluriverse to have a chance to survive at a global scale.

7.3 Engaging with the alternatives

To be able to break this global predicament of the colonial divide between winners and losers, and the reproduction/destruction of lives, it is necessary to find alternatives ways of living that can change how people go about their lives in terms of getting food on the table. The current dominant mode of production relies on the reproduction of some lives at the expense of an increasing number of others. I discovered that one of the reasons the pulp mill in Chile could continue its operation despite the mass mobilisation demanding its immediate closure was that there was a workers coalition that continued to lend strong support to the mill in the midst of the environmental crisis (Article 1). The response from these people could have been different had they had alternatives – both in terms of their actual means of subsistence but also in the way they imagined themselves as part of the community in which they were embedded. Article 2 deals with these different social imaginaries that build boundaries in favour of or against different locations. The availability of an alternative imaginary, such as the one present in the community of Mehuín, not only strengthens resistance against operations that pose a threat to the reproduction of life in community, but also make it possible to build viable alternatives in practice. In communities that are completely reliant on industry for their own survival (e.g. mining communities that lack any other place-based history than that of mining) such alternatives are not readily available, and finding alternatives that build on relations of coexistence may be a much tougher process.

Still, the need to find new ways of living sustainably is important on all levels of (the modern) society. Just as ‘Development’ was once constructed as a political discourse (Escobar 1995), which favoured the rise of extractivism, so can new stories about the future be created, impacting the desires and dreams of the younger generations. This is exactly what I found the resettlers in Uruguay engaged in doing (Article 3): consciously rejecting deliberation with the forestry companies, while confronting forestry development by building both new alternatives and new dreams among the young in their own community. In the end, the fewer that are dependent on the global corporations as providers of jobs (and shareholder profits) and the fewer that structure their future expectations based on invented goals such as economic growth and industrialisation, the less influence these corporations will have over politics and people’s lives. When new solutions to societal needs emerge from below, they can accomplish two things: first, they show that there are alternatives that are not only viable but also desirable from the perspective of the people, and second, as they provide solutions that large industrial companies cannot accomplish they make it easier for the people to reject the temptation of becoming a stakeholder in destructive businesses by engaging in dialogues with the corporations.

When I argue in the second article that political CSR ‘could be a tool of transformation that aims at realigning corporate activities so that they comply with the boundaries of the communities they depend on’, I do not argue for merely a cosmetic make-over that will allow corporations to continue with business as usual. If political CSR is to stand a chance of meeting the requirements set by the pluriverse, it must follow the principles of rooted governance that I outlined above. Until now, the deliberative turn of corporate conduct has been nothing of that sort. At this point I do not believe that the
large multinational corporations that have been built by the one-sided story of development and whose very ontology is based on colonial differences can undergo the radical transformations that are required. However, the push for change comes from the exteriority of the system, but it does not leave the system unchanged. Therefore, I see the future of corporations as open-ended, and believe that even radical changes can take place when new stories start emerging from a broader front, both outside and inside the corporate world.

From a broader perspective, and if business schools are going to be able – with any credibility – to call themselves ‘responsible in management education’, it is necessary to start discussing and teaching alternative economic thinking and forms of peaceful transition towards a more liveable future. We need an economic model that promotes life and not the continuous production of death and destruction in the name of shareholder profits. The growth economy (and the maximisation of shareholder value), which relies heavily on extractive industries and mega projects, cannot be taken for granted in a responsible business school education programme. Growth is what is producing these imbalances. The maximisation of shareholder values cannot only deal with profits in monetary terms. It can be of no shareholders’ interest that his or her basic premises for life are being sacrificed in the name of short-term economic growth. The ideas put forwards within what is currently labelled ‘degrowth’ (Kallis 2011) are helpful as a starting point for this conversation. However, just as with any conversation, this is something that must be discussed broadly, across differences, across academic disciplines, across the different realms in society, and across imaginaries (degrowth implies yet again a linear evolution of time and its negative connotation creates an imaginary dissonance in a worldview that has been constructed based on the premises of progress).

Fortunately, there is much going on in terms of alternative economic thinking that inspires hope that a new, more respectful, mode of thinking is emerging; and that includes among business school scholars (see for example, Gibson-Graham 2006; Hopkins 2013; Norberg-Hodge 2015; Scharmer and Kaufer 2013). To give the pluriverse a chance, it is necessary to think of these types of alternatives and start to transform social economic life from its locked-in position of an egocentric perspective of competitive relations to an eco-centric perspective of interdependent relations fostering coexistence. In this debate over the alternatives I see three important emerging initiatives as possible generators of change towards a pluriversal world: 1) circular economy 2) collaborative economy, and 3) the gift economy.

The circular economy initiatives are dealing with reducing the pressure of extracting natural resources – this is a necessary step if local communities are to be saved from the current pressures they face to give away their territory for natural resource extraction (The Ellen MacArthur Foundation 2013). Collaborative economy initiatives are bringing people together in what can be conceptualised as rooted governance, conversing across fields and finding new horizontal and networked solutions to how to organise the exchange of goods in a more equitable manner (www.ouishare.net). Still more radically, the idea of ‘the gift economy’ (Vaughn 2007, see also Eisenstein 2011; Kuokkanen 2008) directly aims to challenge our current dominant economic thinking where distribution equals exchange and forced reciprocity, and instead regard human interactions (between humans and with nonhumans) as those of building relations, fostering peaceful relationships and community building. Vaughn (2007) suggests that by identifying the already existing gift giving within our own societies – in my reasoning making the pluriverse visible – we can liberate the worldview that corresponds to it and foster new/old ways of peaceful interaction (Vaughn 2007). The
gift economy has its roots in indigenous knowledges and is a radical shift in mindset that makes it possible not only to imagine alternative imaginaries but actually to engage with them through the gift of giving. Future research on responsible economics should focus on such initiatives and thereby also contribute to their emergence as viable options on a larger scale (by telling their stories also making them more visible and thus shaping our imaginary on what is possible and real).

To return to my initial enquiry about the legitimacy of large-scale global corporations, I wish to address the question of the role of these organisations in the pluriverse? If their legitimacy deficiency cannot be remedied by stakeholder engagement, how are they to act as responsible actors within the communities in which they operate or wish to operate? The short answer to that question would be: learn to understand the meaning of the word ‘no’. No entrance, no dialogue, no collaboration, no cross-sector partnership. No means no. There are limits, physical limits, and imaginary limits, to how much corporations can grow. However, I think that this question about global corporations is misdirected. Instead, I hope that in the near future we can go beyond the needs of the corporations and start talking about the needs of the people: both those currently working within the global network of multinational corporations and those affected by it on its outside. It is the reproduction of our lives that are at stake. The reproduction of organisational institutions should only be legitimate as long as they support us collectively in our needs of coexistence. An urgent question to be addressed is thus, how can we engage in conversations across differences that lead us towards a more humane future, without the corporations that currently sustain some of us at the expense of others? This is a question that also deserves attention in future research.

In this thesis, although my strong defence of the pluriverse might imply the opposite, I am still not suggesting a radical overnight change in terms of the current industrial production base across the world. If the structures of the modern world were to cease to exist overnight, the most likely outcome would not be the construction of alternatives of peaceful co-existence but a scenario of complete chaos and – in all probability widespread violence. In general terms, following Dussel’s definition of legitimacy as the capacity of a system to reproduce life in a community, it is possible to see that the legitimacy of the corporations fulfil this definition in those places where the inhabitants welcome them. In Valdivia, the reproduction of life was predominantly imagined in terms of salaried employment and industrial development (Article 1, Article 2). Thus the arrival of a pulp mill in the region was perceived as being beneficial to the community (Article 1, Article 2). Thus working with legitimacy as a place-based construct based on the system’s capacity to reproduce life works equally well in the context of the modern myth as outside it. It is the consequences of the relations fostered within the different stories that differ (hierarchical oriented relations of control versus horizontal self-organised relations of coexistence). This in turn impacts the possibilities for the pluriverse to flourish and coexist peacefully in places where extractive industries rob other worlds of their basic need for material and spiritual reproduction.

Rooted governance can be a tool to bring corporations back to their roots, making visible the damage they do to the places that sustain them. Acknowledging this may not change the institutional framework by which the corporate world functions today, but it might make the people working for these organisations begin their own processes of decolonisation. Being confronted with the limits of their own worldview might encourage them to open themselves up to the possibilities of the pluriverse, to seek alternatives in the exteriority of the corporate world. Alternative economies such as
those that fall under the labels of circular economy, collaborative economies, and the gift economy (Kuokkanen 2008; Vaughn 2007) have the capacity to change radically how we see corporate-community relations, from hierarchical reductionist views on what a corporation is to horizontal and holistically constituted networks of place-based social practices.
8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Finding the pluriverse is a personal journey of discovery, revealing that another world is not only possible but in fact already exists, if we just allow ourselves to see it. Decolonising one’s mind from inherited colonial mindsets of control and domination cannot be but a personal endeavour leading us into new worlds and new relations with those around us. This research journey has made me aware of the pluriverse that exists right in front of me. The conversations I have engaged in with different people along the way have made me question many of the things that I used to take for granted as universal truths. My research has made me realise that the world I live in is not the same world as that of others, and that we all live in this world through our own imaginaries and stories. The imaginaries make up our own personal reality and are shaped by the stories we hear and tell each other.

The greatest obstacle for me by far has been to dare to write and speak about what I have come to learn during this process in those places where the disconnection between different stories has been most apparent. This might sound contradictory, as one might assume that the natural inquisitiveness of our species would encourage the sharing of those stories that are just waiting to be shared. But speaking about stories that make absolutely no sense within a certain world is not an easy task, even less so when these stories challenge the fundamental core of your own and your community’s well-being and existence (the paper industry in Finland is not only part of my professional past but it is also what built the welfare state and contributed to the benefits I have personally enjoyed in the form of a free first-class education). It is not only a fear of telling the inconvenient stories but also a fear of asking inconvenient questions in places where such questions are not welcome that limit the possibility to initiate conversations across difference. For me, this mental barrier of fear about the reaction of others (the incapacity to cross borders) was most palpable in my interviews with corporate representatives and ex-colleagues, whose world I had departed since I had allowed myself to go beyond those borders and become radically vulnerable to the worlds of others.

This experience of fearing the consequences of speaking up and raising troublesome questions has made me reflect on how to break down these borders. If reality is made up of the stories that we choose to tell each other, how can we change the course of our action if we do not dare speak up in those instances when it matters the most? How can the pluriverse manifest itself within boardrooms, in business schools, among corporate managers if we do not engage in connecting previously disconnected stories? This research journey has shown me that most of my fears have only been a construction of my mind. By persistently writing and presenting the pluriverse and worlds lived in other places, beyond the hierarchies of colonial differences, the purpose of my being (that) here has been to tear down borders and make the pluriverse visible: first in my own mind, and then, through my writing, making it visible to others. I now know that when I encounter fear in my own mind it is a sign that I am on the right path. Fear is a sign of disconnected stories calling out for connection. My job as a researcher is to overcome this fear. By engaging in conversations of difference across imagined boundaries, my task is to connect previously disconnected stories, and thereby inspire others to dare to open their eyes to the pluriverse that exists before them. Colonial differences, the divide between the modern and colonial, between us and them, only prevail because we allow them to. Coloniality is not a construct out there but exists, first and foremost, as a construct in here, in our own mindsets. Sharing stories through conversations across
difference brings coloniality to an end and gives us the tools to dare to imagine our own world differently.

Today I avoid seeing the world as separated into the ‘the colonial’ and ‘the modern’. During this process, I have come to realise that the reason we are unable to grasp the detrimental consequences of global operations on remote rural communities in the Global South is not (only) because we are on the winning side of the equation – because, in the end, there is no winning side of this equation. If we do not acknowledge the importance of sustaining community life and nature there will soon be no life left to sustain, for ourselves or for our children. The cause of our ignorance is our embeddedness in a rhetoric that hides the detrimental consequences of our actions and legitimises them as the only possibility for the future. Because of this we are incapable of seeing and imagining any other way of being in the world. We – ‘the modern’, just as they – ‘the colonial’, are colonised in our mindset. Our stories, although they depend on each other (hierarchically through dependence and exploitation) in terms of making a living, are disconnected by default. This is what creates the divides between the modern and the colonial, the borders between us and them, and ultimately a sense of separation that legitimises abusive relationships where one lives at the expense of the other. In the end, it is this disconnection between stories that hides the pluriverse from us and makes us view co-existence as nothing more than a fantasy beyond the reach of human kind. As long as we insist that any alternative to the modern way of knowing, sensing, and being is unrealistic and utopic, we ourselves contribute to the extinction of the pluriverse.

Acknowledging the pluriverse is a first step towards a serious conversation on the legitimacy of all different forms of life on this planet. As such, it is also an open invitation to all of us to join the conversations with all those communities around the world who do not want to bear the brunt of the sacrifices of the modern myth. By acknowledging that the pluriverse exists among us, we plant a seed of hope for planetary co-existence and contribute to its (re-)emergence not only at a distance but in here, in our minds, in our worlds, and above all in our hearts.
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Production of absence through media representation: A case study on legitimacy and deliberation of a pulp mill dispute in southern Chile

Maria Ehrnström-Fuentes
Hanken School of Economics, Supply Chain Management and Social Responsibility, Arkadiankatu 22, P.O. Box 479, 00101 Helsinki, Finland

Abstract

Deliberation is increasingly promoted as a means for producing legitimate decisions in a wide variety of public and private governance schemes. Through a case study of a disputed pulp mill in Chile, the study challenges that assumption by examining what the media representation reveals in terms of how legitimacy is constructed in the public sphere. The study asks how were the demands of marginalised stakeholders presented and contested in media texts over time and how this representation contributed to the legitimation process of the mill in the public sphere. Through a decolonial analysis of the newspaper texts, the study finds that the media representations preconditioned how legitimacy was constructed through deliberation, producing an absence of those who did not support the project. Not only does this type of exclusion affect the stakeholder willingness to participate but the legitimacy of the governance schemes itself is at risk when stakeholders chose to defend their demands in its exteriority. The study concludes that to overcome the challenge of exclusion in the public discourses, the focus of public participation need to change from an abstract rational argument driven debate toward an engaged dialogue on subsistence and co-existence in a world where all living beings are interconnected and valid contributors to the debate.

Introduction

Public participation, or stakeholder dialogue, is currently promoted as a desirable activity that produces outcomes that are perceived to be legitimate and tailored to the needs of all affected parties (Appelstrand, 2002). However, the process of producing legitimate decision outcomes through governance is far from straightforward. Previous research on resource conflicts between multinational corporations and local communities suggests that stakeholder participation does not provide marginalized locals with the opportunity to voice their concerns within the system itself (Walter and Martinez-Alier, 2011; Urkidi and Walter, 2011; Suryanata and Umemoto, 2004). Research in the forestry sector also indicates that communities adversely affected by the expansion of the pulp industry in South America have been unable to make their voices heard through the official channels of governance schemes; rather, they have done so through concentrated contentious strategies and by communicating their message in national, conservative mass media (Kroger, 2011, 2013).

Members of the mass media have been argued to function as ‘information gatekeepers’ that drive public discourses in certain directions (Hansen, 2000; Palazzo and Scherer, 2006). Various stakeholders’ access to media coverage and how their claims are portrayed by the media will also have a profound impact on how legitimate the broader public perceives their claims to be (Hansen, 2000; Miller and Parnell Biecht, 2003). This access will influence whether the claims made by certain marginalized groups are perceived to be rational and valid in the debate or whether these groups can legitimately participate in the act of deliberation, producing reasonable, well-informed opinions (Chambers, 2003). The media are, in this respect, central to the debate on participation and its relationship with legitimate decision outcomes. Yet, studies on precisely how public discourses contribute to the legitimation processes of various governance schemes remain scarce (Palazzo and Scherer, 2006).

This paper examines what media representation reveals with respect to how legitimacy is constructed in the public sphere during the approval stage of the construction of a pulp mill in southern Chile. It also follows developments in the months following the beginning of mill operations, when the mill was accused of causing the deaths of thousands of swans in a nearby sanctuary. The study addresses the following research questions: (1) how were the demands of the stakeholders who opposed the planned pulp presented and contested in media texts before the approval of the mill and after the swan deaths?, and (2) how did this representation
To define what is meant by legitimacy in this study, it is first necessary to clarify what is meant by deliberation. Deliberation presupposes that anyone can engage in free and reasoned dialogue to identify common solutions to conflicts and disagreements regarding collective problems (Habermas, 2005 [1996]; Olson, 2011; Young, 2001). In the words of Chambers (2003, p. 309), this includes “debate and discussion aimed at producing reasonable, well-informed opinions in which participants are willing to revise preferences in light of discussion, new information, and claims made by fellow participants.” He continues: “Although consensus need not be the ultimate aim of deliberation, and participants are expected to pursue their interests, an overarching interest in the legitimacy of outcomes (understood as justification to all affected) ideally characterizes deliberation.” (Chambers, 2003, p. 309). Two interrelated themes concerning legitimacy can be derived from this: what is a legitimate decision outcome and how this decision came into being through open debates involving all parties. Thus, the claims advanced by each stakeholder (proponents, governmental representatives, the public) during the deliberation process should, in principle, be open to change for the decision outcome to be considered legitimate by all affected parties (Parkins and Mitchell, 2005; Reed, 2008).

This raises questions such as whether all affected parties are equally welcomed in the debate and whether their knowledge claims are regarded as legitimate when a decision is made. Stakeholder legitimacy can thus be understood as the “right to participate” and the “acceptance” of stakeholders’ worldviews/knowledge claims as valid and rational in the debate. If the deliberation process itself does not permit the inclusion of all values and knowledge claims, those whose claims were excluded during the deliberation phase may not accept the final decision as either legitimate or justified. Thus, in this paper, the legitimacy of decision outcomes and the legitimacy of stakeholder claims are considered inherently linked.

Public participation has been argued to enhance the legitimacy of investments by offering affected locals the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process (Wood, 2003). Public participation is a term that is widely used and, as such, has also been defined in various ways, for example: as “situations where citizens come together and communicate with each other about matters of public concern” (Parkins and Mitchell, 2005, p. 529); “a categorical term for citizen power” (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217); “the expectation that citizens have a voice in policy choices” (Bishop and Davis, 2002, p. 1); and “a process where individuals, groups and organizations choose to take an active role in making decisions that affect them” (Reed, 2008, p. 2418). Regarding how the public relates to the EIA processes of public participation, O’Fairchealáigh (2010) argues that the process includes “any form of interaction between government and corporate actors and the public that occurs as part of EIA processes” (p. 20). As a legally required process in government decisions, however, in which the EIA process serves as one of the most studied examples, public participation often refers to the formalistic and one-way communication from members of the public to the decision-making body in the form of public hearings, reviews, and written comments on proposed projects (Innes and Booher, 2004). While acknowledging that public participation does not occur in a vacuum in meeting rooms, separated from broader societal discourses, this type of formalistic, one-way communication is also how public participation is understood in this study. However, despite its importance to the debate, how legitimacy is created through public participation remains largely unexamined in the natural resource management literature (Parkins and Mitchell, 2005).

Research on public participation in this field often concludes that the quality of, and satisfaction with, decision outcomes is likely to be greater if the public is allowed to participate in the decision-making process (Appelstrøm, 2002; Arnstein, 1969; de Stefano, 2010; Hartley and Wood, 2005; Healy, 2009; Parkins and Mitchell, 2005; Reed, 2008). Appelstrøm (2002) notes that one key factor determining what constitutes a legitimate decision is whether or not it is accepted among those whom the outcome will affect. Thus, a key question regarding legitimacy creation is how the affected stakeholders are engaged in the process itself. The greater the influence that citizens have in the decision-making process, or the greater the level of citizen power, the more democratically legitimate the decisions are assumed to be; consequently, the more they are assumed to achieve greater public acceptance (for different categorizations of the level of citizen control, see Arnstein, 1969; Bishop and Davis, 2002). In the case of EIA, as Wood (2003) notes, different levels of citizen control can be identified in the various EIA systems, depending on the time, place, and other circumstances. This focus on the extent of citizen control nevertheless fails to consider how certain outcomes are favored by the dominant perceptions of what is right and wrong in the public sphere and how such perceptions may be influenced by how the mass media portrays certain subjects, thereby also excluding certain voices from the debate.

How well different stakeholders and their claims are represented within public participation itself has been a concern among scholars interested in improving the outcomes of participative governance systems. Studies often argue that low representation of

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1 In contrast to Eurocentric epistemologies that assume a universalistic, neutral, objective point of view and in which European culture is implicitly considered pre-eminent, the decolonial perspective stresses that all subjects speak from a particular location in the power structures (modern/colonial) in different (local) geopolitical contexts (Miguélez, 2000). Decolonial studies advance the hidden perspective of those on the colonial side of the modern/colonial divide (Miguélez, 2011).
affected stakeholders may ultimately weaken the legitimacy of the decision outcome because not all parties have agreed to the decision (Innes and Booher, 2003; Parkins and Mitchell, 2005). Considerations on how to create more inclusive representation (de Stefano, 2010; Innes and Booher, 2004; Hartley and Wood, 2005) and incorporate the knowledge of laypersons situated in a particular context (Healy, 2009; Innes and Booher, 2004; Taylor and de Loë, 2012; Yanow, 2003) have been suggested to improve the situation for those who find themselves marginalized in such a debate. However, the internal procedures regarding citizen control and their representation that can influence the outcome of public participation and perceptions of what is considered legitimate in public participation are not the only important factors. The availability of, and respect for, different perspectives in deliberative spaces outside of public participation will shape the debate over what is and is not possible when alternatives are being debated (Santos, 2013; Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003). This is not to neglect the importance of just and fair procedures within the governance scheme; rather, it draws attention to the broader issue of how legitimacy is created in society at large.

To understand legitimacy creation from a broader societal perspective, including the perspective of the marginalized, it is necessary to move away from a strict technocratic and rational approach to public participation and incorporate a deeper understanding of how the act of deliberation within governance schemes is embedded not only in the political realities of decision-making (Morgan, 2009) but also in a context in which certain views are not as accepted as others. Who is allowed to participate in the public discourse and on what terms will not only shape the debate on and outcomes of any public participation but also the position of all affected stakeholders as valid contributors to the debate.

Toward a broader understanding of legitimacy creation

The idea of deliberative democracy, upon which public participation also theoretically relies, originates from Habermas’ theory of communicative action, the basic assumption of which is that deliberative democracy thus emerges from a limited, Eurocentric perspective, under the assumption that all human beings not of the world’s population (Mignolo, 2011; Dussel, 2013). Deliberative democracy therefore emerges from a limited, Eurocentric perspective, under the assumption that all human beings not of the world’s population (Mignolo, 2011; Dussel, 2013). Legitimacy is achieved when all citizens have at least been accorded the opportunity to speak, and when a consensus is not possible, the outcome has at least been justified to all parties. However, this idea originates from lived realities and experiences in Europe. Habermas’ vision of “public spheres”, the actual spaces in which deliberation occurs, emerges from the bourgeois society of Europe between 1700 and the 1960s (Santos, 2013; Hohendahl and Russian, 1974). As Santos (2013) notes, even Habermas recognized that his theories are based on “a limited and Eurocentric vision”, which thus according to Santos, excludes those living outside this Eurocentric reality (p. 23), the reality lived by four-fifths of the world’s population (Mignolo, 2011; Dussel, 2013). Deliberative democracy thus emerges from a limited, Eurocentric perspective, under the assumption that all human beings not only have equal basic human rights (Santos, 2013; Frick, 2012) but also common interests (i.e., benefiting from increased development and modernization). However, as Santos (2013) notes, consensus building based on rational arguments in free speech situations under these premises does not account for the colonial difference of those who do not benefit from modernity but suffer its colonial consequences (for a comparison on Habermasian Communicative Action with the perspective of the subaltern, see Nagel, 2008).

From a decolonial perspective, modernity is perceived as a European construct that conceals the atrocities committed by its darker side, coloniality (Mignolo, 2011). Coloniality is the constitutive but concealed part of modernity. Mignolo (2011) argues that colonial domination has been justified through the rhetoric of modernity. Through its promise of salvation and progress (through, e.g., development and modernization), this rhetoric conceals the logic of coloniality (i.e., the appropriation of land and exploitation of indigenous peoples). Within this rhetoric, the interests, values and beliefs embedded in modernity acquire a universal validity while discrediting others through hierarchical classifications, such as, developed versus underdeveloped or civilized versus barbarous (Mignolo, 2011). The rhetoric of modernity operates on multiple levels, particularly at the epistemic level: through knowledge production. By failing to account for the location from which the subject speaks, Western philosophy has been able to create a myth of a universal knowledge that conceals who is speaking and his or her location in the modern/colonial divide (Mignolo, 2011; Grosfoguel, 2011).

In his critique of this universalizing effect of the Eurocentric perspective, Santos (2013) describes how non-existence, or the sociology of absences, occurs when certain groups are made invisible in the debate and distinguishes five different modes through which non-existence is constructed:

1. The ignorant: all that modern science does not legitimize or recognize is declared nonexistent.
2. The backward: time is perceived as linear, and Western modernity defines what is legitimate; those that have not achieved the same level of modernity are categorized as primitive, savage, outdated, pre-modern and underdeveloped.
3. The inferior: a social classification based on race or sex that naturalizes hierarchies and colonial domination. The naturally inferior cannot construct credible alternatives to those superior to them.
4. The local/particular: All realities that are dependent on specific contexts and cannot be transformed into universal or global modes of existence are not considered credible alternatives to the global realities or modes of existence.
5. The unproductive: Economic growth is a rational and unquestionable objective, and maximum productivity best serves this objective. All other modes of existence are categorized as lazy (with regard to the use of labor) or not useful (with regard to the conservation of the natural environment).

If the legitimacy of the decision outcomes in certain governance schemes depends on the inclusion of all affected stakeholders (de Stefano, 2010; Hartley and Wood, 2005) and their acceptance of the outcomes as justified (Appelstrand, 2002), then the exclusion of certain affected stakeholders or the produced absences of certain values and beliefs in the public sphere indicates that there are substantial limitations to how legitimacy is currently understood in the public participation literature. Not only will marginalized groups be reluctant to participate if they believe that their participation has no real possibility of influencing the outcome

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3 Scholars have presented other visions of modernity from viewpoints outside the Eurocentric perspective. In his concept of “our modernity,” Chatterjee (1997) stresses the importance of regarding modernity from the perspective of the colonized; while Comaroff and Comaroff (2012) contend that the Global South is not a rigid classification of locations in the Southern Hemisphere but refers more to an “ex-centric” location, which can also exist in Europe or the United States, but more than a location, is a term that points toward a place other than mainstream Euro-America, an exterior to its hegemonic centers, real or imagined. These are the realities lived in the exteriority of Western thought and Eurocentric modernity.

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4 The colonial difference refers to the subordination of knowledge and culture of populations outside the Eurocentric reality (Escobar, 2008).
To create more democratic, fair and non-imperial/colonial societies, Mignolo speaks of changing not only the content of the conversation but also its actual terms. By this, he refers to the need for decolonizing knowledges, or epistemologically disconnecting from Western thought, thereby allowing the perspectives of those occupying subaltern epistemic positions to emerge as equally valid in the debate. Absent accounting for the colonial differences of the subjects who speak, achieving a universal understanding (consensus) of what is to be considered legitimate is only the result of excluding the views of those who do not follow the logic embedded in the Western perspective of the world (scientifically or in relation to modernity and the effort to improve productivity) or of those who are considered racially inferior. By improving the representativeness of governance schemes and the inclusion of different types of knowledges, the content of the debate can change in favor of formerly excluded viewpoints. However, without examining who is excluded as valid contributors to the debate, the terms used for those who speak from the subaltern’s perspective will not change. Instead, their viewpoints will continue to be excluded based on the illusion of a universally agreed upon consensus.

The first step toward a more just and democratic system of deliberation begins with unveiling the rhetoric and promises of modernity, revealing its darker side and making visible those whose views are being excluded (Mignolo, 2011). This is what this study aims to do by examining the media representation of a pulp mill project in southern Chile. In the analysis in this study, I employ Santos’ (2013) five distinctions of the sociology of absences to demonstrate how certain arguments were delegitimized or made invisible in newspaper texts and analyze what effect this had on the stakeholders’ capacity to make their voices heard. Next, I introduce the methods applied to examine media representation and the voices of the stakeholders.

**Methodology**

This paper examines what media representation reveals with respect to how legitimacy is constructed in the public sphere. Mass media, and the press in particular, are important producers of public discourse, as the discourses and opinions of various public actors only become influential through media accounts (Van Dijk, 2009). From the perspective of colonial differences, the mass media is also an important upholder of the rhetoric of modernity (Mignolo, 2011). To illustrate the change in how the demands of two stakeholder groups were presented in newspapers over time and affected perceptions of the pulp mill in the public discourse, I make use of available newspaper archives (articles, columns, letters to the editor and editorials) from both the local newspaper El Diario Austral de Valdivia (henceforth referred to as El Diario Austral) and the national newspaper El Mercurio from June 1995 until August 2006. Before the advent of the Internet, and despite their shortcomings with respect to who is published and who has the capacity to engage in a debate, newspapers were one of the few forums in which members of civil society – through “letters to the editor” – could express their views and have them contested by others. Indeed, letters to the editor are argued to be an important component of deliberation in the public sphere (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2001).

Chile is a homogeneous country with respect to newsprint content. Two conglomerates, Grupo Edwards and Copesa, control the print landscape, and the both represent “a uniformity of political-ideological projects, editorial lines, styles, and news coverage” (González-Rodríguez, 2008, p. 62). Grupo Edwards owns the majority of Chile’s daily newspapers, including El Diario Austral and El Mercurio, and is widely known for its conservative and business-friendly approach to news production (Baltra, 2012). El Mercurio plays an important role in national politics, as it is directed toward the most influential social class: the national and international business elite (Baltra, 2012). Due to its importance among the social elite, El Mercurio is a significant actor in setting the agenda for the public debate (Amoef Gallardo, 2004). El Diario Austral’s primary purpose is to cover local news both in Valdivia and its surroundings; however, this newspaper follows the same conservative and business-friendly editorial line as the other titles controlled by Grupo Edwards (Baltra, 2012).

It is against this background that these two newspapers were selected as the primary sources of empirical data for this study; their dominant position, both locally in and around Valdivia, in the case of El Diario Austral, and nationally, in the case of El Mercurio, as well as their business-friendly outlook made it possible to analyze the production of absences in the public discourses of those voices whose demands did not conform to business interests and the modern worldview. Due to the highly mediatized environmental crisis involving swan deaths, it was also possible to identify clear breakpoints in the legitimation process or in how the public discourse, nationally and locally, shifted from supporting the pulp mill project to criticizing the environmental consequences that the mill had for the surrounding ecosystem. Here, the voices of those who had originally identified these risks during the approval stage became more visible in the media.

The collected newspaper material from the pulp mill conflict ranges from the initial debate over the construction of the mill in July 1995 to the reopening of the pulp mill after its second closure, a decade later, in August 2005. During that period, over 900 entries existed in El Diario Austral and over 200 entries in El Mercurio, in the form of news articles, columns, letters to the editor and editorials that addressed, in one way or another, the pulp mill and its consequences in Valdivia and Mehuín. The focus of this analysis is the material concerning the desirability of the project, i.e., the views of opponents and how the conflicting views were contested in the local newspaper prior to the final approval of the mill’s construction, as well as during the aftermath of the swan deaths. The material was first analyzed by limiting the relevant time frames based on the timeline of events (see Table 1) and then by identifying the presence (and absence) of texts that addressed the negative consequences of the project (during the EIA stage) and those contesting these opinions. The content of texts contesting the opposing stakeholders was then analyzed based on Santos’ sociology of absences (ignorant, backward, inferior, backward/particular, and unproductive).

To achieve triangulation of the research material, several expert interviews were conducted with those who had opposed the mill and its waste products in Valdivia and Mehuín. The experts were identified based on their letters to the editor at the time of the conflict, as well as through local investigators who were familiar with the social movements in both locations. The interviews were conducted between September and December 2012 in Valdivia, Mehuín, and Santiago. Following a decolonial methodology, these interviews highlighted the stakeholder demands in their own words and in relation to how they were portrayed in the newspaper texts. Decolonial scholars (Grosfoguel, 2011; Mignolo, 2011) speak of focusing on the knower rather than the known, shifting the geo- and body-political location where the articulation occurs (from the researcher to the subaltern subject), thus allowing the knowers to speak from their own perspective to make their voice heard.

Next, I will present a brief historical review of the Chilean economy, social structure and the emergence of environmental
legislation, including the EIA, to provide an understanding of the contextual setting of the public discourses and legitimation process of the pulp mill in Valdivia. Then, before turning to the analysis of the newspaper texts, I provide a detailed overview of the conflict from 1995 until 2005, describing the various stakeholder groups and their role in the legitimation process of the mill.

### Contextual setting

In Chile, modernity and coloniality have continuously shaped the reality lived by its inhabitants during and after Spanish colonial rule. Throughout (and before) its independence, Chile's economic structure has been influenced, or even determined by, global markets (Frank, 1967; Villalobos et al., 2005). Since the advent of the industrial revolution in Europe, commodities such as nitrates, wheat, copper, and more recently, cellulose pulp, have been of substantial importance in satisfying the raw material needs of the industrial centers of the world (Frank, 1967; Clapp, 1995). During the military dictatorship (1973–1989), the Chilean economy became the world's first neoliberal experiment (Silva, 2009), as the economy was transformed based on market-driven principles. The policy included the maximum privatization of economic activities (with the exception of CODELCO, the state-owned copper consortium), limitations on government regulation, strengthening of private property rights, pricing freedom, and openness to international markets, where environmental management was also considered best left to the market to regulate (Tecklin et al., 2011). In 1990, the new democratically elected government continued the neoliberal model, with economic growth based on the export of natural resources, but had to implement stricter environmental legislation due to pressure from both internal, nascent

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**Table 1**

Timeline of critical events. Sources: Sepúlveda and Mariángel, 1998; Selected articles from El Diario Austral; La Defensa de Mehuín: Los Archivos, 2005.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 8, 1995</td>
<td>CELO initiates voluntarily work on Environmental Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 26, 1995</td>
<td>First announcement of pollution (bad odours) registered in newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 12, 1995</td>
<td>First negative letter to the editor published in El Diario Austral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 24, 1995</td>
<td>Public hearing in San José de Maripuña and Valdivia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 16, 1995</td>
<td>Final day for submitting written comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 21–19, 1995</td>
<td>Possible rejection of planned mill debated in El Diario Austral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 30, 1995</td>
<td>Technical committee of COREMA finalises EIA with recommendations to reject plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1, 1995</td>
<td>President Eduardo Frei visits planned investment site before final decision has been made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 16, 1995</td>
<td>CELO announces new approach to present EIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 10, 1995</td>
<td>CELO responds to COREMA’s requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 30, 1995</td>
<td>CELOMA approves the proposal to the market with seven conditions, including advanced water treatment or pipeline to the sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 5, 1996</td>
<td>Article in El Diario Austral reports on the plans for a pipeline to Mehuín</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 7, 1996</td>
<td>CELOMA announces new approach to present EIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 8, 1996</td>
<td>VOLUNTEER shutdown of mill, general manager and corporate lawyers leave the company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 10, 1996</td>
<td>SENATOR Gabriel Valdes meets with villagers to find a solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1, 1996</td>
<td>CELO announces that they will abandon the pulp mill plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 6, 1996</td>
<td>Extract of second EIS published in El Diario Austral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 14–15, 1996</td>
<td>Public hearing in which neither villagers nor company representatives attend. Women from Mehuín protest outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 19, 1997</td>
<td>CELOMA forms a committee of experts to address concerns about pollution in Mehuín</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1, 1998</td>
<td>Villagers prevent technical measures for the third time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 6, 1998</td>
<td>CELOMA announces new approach to present EIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 6, 1998</td>
<td>COREMA approves the pulp mill plant with emissions into the river</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 30, 2004</td>
<td>Pulp Mill Valdivia initiates production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 29, 2004</td>
<td>First report of swan death in El Diario Austral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 20, 2004</td>
<td>Villagers’ worries about the proposal published in letters to the editor, also taken notice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 10, 2004</td>
<td>Citizen Movement Acción por los Cisnes (ACI) is formed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 6, 2004</td>
<td>March for the swans attracting thousands of Valdivians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 10, 2004</td>
<td>Swans reported to be falling out of the sky in Valdivia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 13, 2004</td>
<td>March for the swans in Valdivia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 18, 2005</td>
<td>COREMA orders CELO to close the mill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 18, 2005</td>
<td>Mill reopens, number of swans in Sanctuary reported to be from 600 to 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 8, 2005</td>
<td>Study from Universidad Austral de Valdivia finds CELO responsible for the swan deaths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 25, 2005</td>
<td>Workers March against a closure of the mill: in defense of employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 31, 2005</td>
<td>Supreme court does not find enough evidence against CELO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 7, 2005</td>
<td>President Ricardo Lagos. CELOM ending country’s international reputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 8, 2005</td>
<td>President Lagos announces reopening at 80% capacity, and a pipeline to be built on the sea</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
environmental movements and, particularly, demands from important trading partners in external markets (NAFTA and the EU) (Silva, 1996). Additionally, in 1992 at the UN Conference on Development and Environment in Rio, these types of governance solutions were proposed globally to reduce the gap between environmental harms and economic growth (Principle 17 in the Rio declaration) (UN, 1992). The EIA represented the core of the new environmental framework (Sabatini and Sepúlveda, 1997; Silva, 1996; Sepúlveda and Villarroel, 2012), and it offered the public an unprecedented opportunity to participate in the decision-making process (Sepúlveda and Villarroel, 2012). Based on the Environmental Impact Study elaborated by a project’s proponent (in the case under study, the forestry company CELCO-Arauco), the observations from the environmental authority’s (COREMA) technical committee and the public, decisions regarding the viability of an investment project were made by a committee of (mostly) politically assigned state representatives (Sepúlveda and Villarroel, 2012). However, from an early stage, repeated political intervention in the decision-making process (particularly in the case under study) caused some to question what the true purpose of public involvement in the process was (Sepúlveda and Villarroel, 2012).

Several studies have highlighted that the public participation in the Chilean EIA system fails to fulfill the requirements of fair and just participation (e.g., Lostarnau et al., 2011; Sepúlveda and Villarroel, 2012; Haughney, 2012; Skewes and Guerra, 2004a; de la Maza, 2001). Concerns have been raised on the systems limitations in terms of when and how long the public can participate (Nardini et al., 1997; de la Maza, 2001; Lostarnau et al., 2011), the accessibility for remote communities both in terms of availability and assistance in interpretation of technocratic language (Lostarnau et al., 2011; Sepúlveda and Villarroel, 2012), and the subordination of local interests to the national and economic interests of the ruling elite (Haughney, 2012; Sepúlveda and Villarroel, 2012). Based on the extensive body of research of the EIA in Chile, one could argue that the Chilean environmental framework is a textbook example of worst practices with respect to the degree and nature of participation, or the fairness and inclusiveness of the actual public debate to contribute to the final decisions. In this study, however, I go beyond these analyses and argue that it was the available public discourses that determined the playing field of the actual debate. This has implications for the whole governance scheme itself, as it affects the willingness of stakeholders to engage in the debate, even before they are invited to participate.

Valdivia pulp mill

Analyzing media representation of this case is of particular interest. The events surrounding the pulp mill in Valdivia have been present in local media texts since the initial EIA proceedings in 1995 and played a role in the temporary closures of the mill in 2005 (Sepúlveda and Villarroel, 2012). Therefore, it is possible to follow how the pulp mill and affected stakeholders are portrayed in the newspapers as the conflict evolves, unveiling the rhetoric of modernity and how certain voices are silenced through the process.

In 1995, the pulp mill project in Valdivia (southern Chile, 800 km from Santiago, see map) was one of the first projects to be voluntarily submitted to the EIA under the new environmental legislation. The project’s proponent, CELCO-Arauco, was part of one of Chile’s most important privately owned conglomerates, which had been privatized during the military regime. The submitted proposal anticipated an investment of US$ 1 billion, with an annual production capacity of 550 tons and an expected lifecycle of 20 years, generating 900 direct and indirect jobs at completion and 3500 direct jobs during its construction phase (Proyecto Valdivia Els, 1995). It was to be located in San José de Maríaquina, some 40 km northeast of Valdivia, a city of approximately 100,000 inhabitants and one of Chile’s most important industrial centers before a devastating earthquake in 1960 saw most industries relocated. The proposed plant was the first of its kind in scale and modernity (Sepúlveda and Villarroel, 2012) and was considered to be of national importance because the forestry industry was regarded as a key industry for export income and industrial growth (and had received state subsidies for vast tree plantation since the 1970s) (Clapp, 1995). In the coming years, this project became one of the most debated industrial projects in the country’s history, first through the attention it received due to the prolonged EIA processes and subsequently through the headlines and images of swans dying next to the plant that came to mark a “before and after” comparison in Chilean industrial environmental management (El Mercurio, 2005c; Sepúlveda and Villarroel, 2012).

The historical events surrounding the dispute over the pulp mill have been divided into three different periods: 1995–1996, 1996–1998, and 2004–2005 (what occurred after 2005 is not included in the analysis in this study).


The phase of the first EIA ranged from June 1995, when the company began to conduct on an environmental study, to June 1996, when COREMA approved the project with several conditions, including incorporating a pipeline to the sea (see Table 1 for additional details). During this phase, the company voluntarily submitted itself to the EIA process and arranged three public hearings. Opponents feared that the proposed technology for the treatment of liquid waste would be insufficient to protect the water in the River Cruces, affecting both the delicate nature in the reserve and posing a risk to persons living nearby (Sepúlveda and Mariángel, 1998). The opponents voiced their concerns by participating in the three public hearings, writing letters to the editors of newspapers, and drafting an extensive report including scientific calculations regarding the mill’s effluents and the potential impact on the protected sanctuary nearby (personal interviews, 2012). Due to a lack of technical details regarding the prevention of negative impacts on the environment in the environmental study, the COR-EMA’s technical commission initially recommended rejecting the project (Sepúlveda and Mariángel, 1998). Nevertheless, in May 1996, COREMA approved the EIA under seven conditions, including two options regarding wastewater: the project must either incorporate a more advanced waste treatment system for the runoff that would be released into the river or transport the waste via a pipeline to the sea.

1996–1998 resistance in Mehuín

During the second phase (June 1996–October 1998, see Table 1 for details), the inhabitants of Mehuín, a traditional fishing village of 1500 inhabitants, located 30 km west of San José de Maríaquina, strongly opposed the planned pipeline. To save their community from potential pollution, the entire village came together to categorically oppose the planned pipeline (Trejo and Correa, 2013). From an early stage, the villagers learned that the planned pipeline could be impeded by preventing the company from completing the necessary tests on the bay’s capacity to disperse the pollutants (Skewes and Guerra, 2004a). Without the study, governmental approval could not be obtained for construction. By closing all of the roads and seaford paths that accessed the village and the water, the villagers used their local geographical knowledge to defend the bay each time the company attempted to conduct the tests (Skewes and Guerra, 2004a). Despite the lack of a real...
environmental study, COREMA organized public hearings that neither the villagers from Mehuín nor representatives from the company attended (Sepúlveda and Mariángel, 1998). After three attempts to measure the water quality in the bay, the company altered its plans and decided to direct the liquid waste into the river. COREMA awarded its final approval to the project on October 30, 1998, on the condition that an advanced water treatment system would be included.

2004–2005: Swan deaths and the rise of a citizen movement in Valdivia

The final period ranges from the mill beginning operation in February 2004 until August 2005 (see Table 1 for details). This is when the conflict became nationally visible. In 2004, within nine months of initiating operations, the mill faced accusations of noise pollution, water pollution, and of causing the deaths of the black-necked swans in the nature sanctuary (Sepúlveda and Bettati, 2005). In response to the deaths of the swans, the inhabitants of Valdivia formed the citizen movement “Acción por los Cisnes” (APC) (Sepúlveda, 2007; Sepúlveda and Bettati, 2005). The pressure from public marches and media attention resulted in a temporary closure of the mill for one month in February 2005 (Sepúlveda and Villarroel, 2012). In June 2005, the conflict led to the second closure of the mill and changes in the company’s management (Sepúlveda, 2007). In August 2005, the mill reopened at 80% capacity and then-president Ricardo Lagos proposed a solution to the crisis: constructing a pipeline to the sea (Sepúlveda, 2007).

Although not within the scope of this study, the conflict over the wastewater and pipeline continues to the present. The renewed threat of the pipeline in Mehuín has created both resolute unity among those who continue to defend their traditional way of life (currently, primarily from Lafkenches, the coastal Mapuche Indians) and despair, as some community members accepted compensation from the company instead of continuing to defend their community and the bay. In August 2013, after a court found the company (for the first time) responsible for the environmental degradation in the sanctuary, the company recognized its role in the destruction of the habitat, a development that was widely celebrated as a victory by the mill’s opponents and the social movement in Valdivia (personal communication, August 23, 2013; August 26th, 2013 and August 28th, 2013). For those living in the village of Mehuín, the uncertainty of the pipeline continues to keep them on guard, with some prepared to risk their lives in defense of their bay and way of life (Radio Biobío, 2013; Trejo and Correa, 2013).

Research findings and analysis

The pulp mill in Valdivia has been the center of both local and national media attention ever since it was first presented as a project in March, when the president ‘‘will visit the site where the Pulp Mill will be located in the municipality of San José de la Mariquina’’ (author’s emphasis, El Diario Austral, 1996b), the newspaper suddenly reported alarming front-page headlines: ‘‘In Osorno they will deal with its location. THE PULP MILL HANGS IN THE BALANCE’’ (El Diario Austral, 1996b, author’s translation). From that moment on, the debate in the newspaper focused on the risks of losing this promising investment due to environmental concerns (El Diario Austral, 1996c, d, e, f). Valdivia’s then senator, Gabriel Valdés, was quoted on the front page as saying: ‘‘I have followed the opinions that have been expressed. They are all respectable, but knowing the project … the seriousness of the company and the magnitude of the Mill and the enormous amount of work that it will bring to the people … it is progress that arrives in a very substantial form to Valdivia’’ (El Diario Austral, 1996d). The senator’s remarks highlight how the environmental concerns of the opponents were downplayed in relation to the importance of increasing employment and the need for progress in the region.

In the following months, the few critical letters to the editor (El Diario Austral, 1995h, j) noted the risks the mill posed to the ecosystem, the possible negative social consequences of the mill (i.e., increased poverty), and the pressure on increasing the area under tree cultivation in the region. Such opinions were contested on the editorial pages (El Diario Austral, 1995g, i), and the mill’s opponents were accused of hindering growth in the region and of sabotage for attacking ‘‘the progress of Valdivia under the flag of erroneous environmentalism’’ (El Diario Austral, 1995), author’s translation). By discounting the opponents’ arguments as invalid, on the basis that they hindered progress and development (unproductive and ignorant in terms of the production of absences), the opponents were excluded from being valid contributors to the debate. Mignolo (2011) refers to this as ‘‘rational classification’’, which is, simultaneously, ‘‘racial classification’’ (p. 83): ‘‘allowing those who […] are classified as deficient, rationally and ontologically’’ (Mignolo, 2011, p. 82). He continues: ‘‘such an epistemic style of thinking hides coloniality and prevents pluriversal, dialogic, and epistemically democratic systems of thought from unfolding’’ (p. 82).

In January 1996, the discourses of El Diario Austral changed from one day to the next. Based on the newspaper material, it is unclear what was responsible for this change but, at the time, the technical committee was about to submit its recommendations to the committee that decided on the investment. From having treated the arrival of the mill as an undisputed fact, in announcing the presidential visit in March, when the president ‘‘will visit the site where the Pulp Mill will be located in the municipality of San José de la Mariquina’’ (author’s emphasis, El Diario Austral, 1996b), the newspaper suddenly reported alarming front-page headlines: ‘‘In Osorno they will deal with its location. THE PULP MILL HANGS IN THE BALANCE’’ (El Diario Austral, 1996b, author’s translation).
In terms of the production of absences, the opposing voices were made nonexistent by being depicted as unproductive and backward regarding regional interests.

Despite the political support for the mill, the opponents’ efforts to voice their environmental concerns provoked a public discussion in the local newspaper concerning wastewater. In fact, their participation and efforts to raise unwanted issues in the public sphere had an impact on the outcome of the first EIA. The approval was conditional; either the mill must have an advanced water treatment system or the wastewater should be directed through a pipeline to the sea. However, the opponents’ efforts to halt the project and protect the sanctuary through their active participation in the debate were insufficient because the resistance in Mehuín ultimately only forced the company to direct the wastewater into the river (and as later became evident, without an advanced wastewater treatment system).

Once the black-necked swans in the sanctuary began dying in 2004 and the environmental changes to the area surrounding the pulp mill gained visibility in the media, the position of those defending nature and local subsistence changed both with respect to newspaper coverage and in the letters to the editor. At this point, *El Diario Austral* accorded space for the concerned voices through an illustrated front page and priority news coverage of the first public demonstration in Valdivia (*El Diario Austral, 2004a,b*). Subsequently, the newspaper added additional space for letters to the editor, which contained outraged comments from numerous community members (*El Diario Austral, 2004c,d,e,f,g,h,i,j,k,l,m,n,o,p,q,r,s*, t,u,v,w,x,y,z). The news reports also remarked on the importance of protecting the sanctuary and the swans (*El Diario Austral, 2004g*). When the mill temporarily closed, first in February 2005 and again in June 2005, these environmental concerns had become important in the national news among conservatives and the business elite (*El Mercurio, 2004a, 2005a,b,c,d,e*).

However, in the discourses present in the newspapers following the second closure of the mill in June 2005, the reporting predominantly focused on the environmental disaster and protecting the swans; it did not consider the livelihoods of the villagers or the sociocultural impact the pipeline would have in the location it was to be placed in. For example, Senator Gabriel Valdes issued a public statement declaring that he had always been in favor of a pipeline to the sea (*El Diario Austral, 2005a*). Additionally, the proposed solution announced by President Ricardo Lagos to remedy the environmental disaster was to construct a pipeline to the sea carrying the liquid waste (*El Mercurio, 2005i*). Furthermore, although the opponents in Valdivia had managed to incorporate environmental values into the debate, this did not halt the mill’s operations. These competing interests remained very much present in the local debate: environmental values did not reign in Valdivia at this point; the interests of the mill workers and the region’s unemployment received substantial attention in the debates over the future of the mill (*El Diario Austral, 2005b,c,d,e,f; El Mercurio, 2005d*).

The production of absences [Santos, 2013] in the newspaper texts was not only a question of what topics were overlooked in the newspapers (as in the early stages, before the EIA in 1995) but also in how the opposing comments were contested by the editor of the newspaper and other members of society in letters to the editor. The findings above indicate that the absences, or invalidity, of their claims was produced both through ignorance, backwardness, particularity and unproductiveness. While the logics of ignorance were altered once the swans began dying, proving the opponents correct, the other categories remained uncontested in the debate that followed; the debate did not change the outcome of the conflict itself or the destiny of the habitat in the sanctuary that the opponents were defending. Ultimately, it did not stop the mill from operating.

**The struggle for legitimacy in Mehuín**

When the project entered the public sphere in Mehuín, it was perceived as a direct threat to local inhabitants’ traditional subsistence and value system (*El Diario Austral, 1996c,d,f,g,h,i,j,k,l,m,n,o,p,q,r,s*). At the beginning of the Mehuín conflict, *El Diario Austral* reported the villagers’ claims regarding the threat the mill posed to their livelihoods and subsistence both in newspaper texts and by publishing the villagers’ views on the editorial pages (*El Diario Austral, 1996e,f,g,h,i*, j,k,l,m,n,o,p,q,r,s,t,u,v,w,x,y,z). However, several letters to the editor written by those in favor of the project in Valdivia, as well as news articles and an editorial, signaled frustration with the community’s capacity to halt the proposed project (*El Diario Austral, 1996j,k,m,n,q,r,s*), discrediting villagers’ claims as hampering the region’s collective wellbeing. As the conflict continued, the news referred to the villagers’ non-negotiable position as a “headache” for the local government (*El Diario Austral, 1996c*), and the villagers were accused of being “exalted without justification” (*El Diario Austral, 1996w, author’s translation) and of having adopted a position that was “irrational” (Provincial Governor Jorge Vives, cited in *El Diario Austral, 1996x, author’s translation*). Several articles directly or indirectly suggested that the consequences for this village were of less importance than the national and regional interests of modernization, progress, and industrialization (*El Diario Austral, 1996o,s,t,u,w,y,z*). The production of absences in these texts occurred on several levels: the opponents were portrayed as ignorant, deemed to be backward, acting irrationally because they did not welcome progress, and unproductive because they did not embrace industrialization. Their claims were also delegitimized for their local outlook, focused on place-based subsistence (local particular in the production of absence), rather than the global and national interests of modernization and industrialization.

By not participating in the public hearing organized by the environmental authority (COREMA), the residents of Mehuín again made headline news (*El Diario Austral, 1997a*), demonstrating that they were unwilling to negotiate. They highlighted the unfairness of the proceedings and the lack of political will to support their concerns regarding the effects of the pipeline for their local livelihood (*El Diario Austral, 1997b, 1998bc*; *El Mercurio, 1998a*). However, the authorities and experts countered these claims, and the “irrationality” of the villagers’ attitude toward the pipeline was, once again, emphasized. For example, an environmental expert from the local health authority maintained that the pipeline posed no risks (*El Diario Austral, 1998d*), which produced absence by categorizing the villagers as ignorant. Nevertheless, by impeding the project’s proponents from collecting the scientific evidence necessary to legitimize the viability of the pipeline, there was no scientific evidence to discount the villagers’ claims as false. Absent the EIA, no one could state with certainty that the pipeline would or would not have a negative impact on the water quality in the bay. However, as one of the interviewees in Mehuín confirmed, the position of the pipeline’s opponents changed, from having been considered ignorant to being taken seriously, following the tremendous media attention devoted to the swan deaths in the sanctuary where the pipeline had been constructed:

“While the mill was not built, while it did not pollute the river, while the swans didn’t die, we were classified as ignorant people, who lacked the arguments to oppose. Moreover, it was impossible for the fishermen to compare themselves to the people in Valdivia because [the latter] were more scientific, more educated [...] it was really such a grotesque thing.”

[Mehuín opponent, September 2012]
Despite the fact that 80% of the villagers in Mehuín belonged to the indigenous Mapuche community (El Diario Austral, 1998a), their role as defenders of their territory and ancestral traditions were rarely mentioned in El Diario Austral or El Mercurio. Due to this absolute absence, there was no “production of inferiority” based on race in the newspaper texts; rather, the focus of the debate in the newspapers was on the whole community’s right to subsistence no matter how the inhabitants positioned themselves in terms of indigenerity. The reason for this may be that in the early years of the conflict, public discourses on indigenous communities in Chile in general remained absent or nascent, at best. The claims of the Mapuche community were completely absent from the newspapers during the period under analysis. However, in the later stages (from 2005 onwards), the Mapuche community was at the forefront of the defense of ancestral land (Álvarez San Martín, 2011), not only in Mehuín but also in other conflicts with forestry companies in Chile (Gómez-Barris, 2012).

In the case of Mehuín, this also produced logics of inferiority (Santos, 2013), as Mapuche’s defense of their ancestral lands was portrayed as an obstacle to progress and development under racial justifications in El Mercurio (Nahuelpan, 2008). Well aware of their marginalized position in the public discourse (interviews in Mehuín, 2012), for the community in Mehuín, the defense of their claims was not primarily concerned with contesting current truth claims in the media but instead with maintaining local unity and defending their community from outsider intruders (Skewes and Guerra, 2004a). By being so strongly locally, the community also attracted the interest of national politicians and, with them, national newspapers.

“Our organization is here; while we are strong here, we do not need to rely on anyone else. Because in some way, by being strong here, it still led to the senators coming here, and other people also came here to negotiate [...] and they brought along the press, and so the press in one way or another had to find out, and had to let it out.” [Mehuín opponent, 2012, interview with author]

However, the press was of secondary importance in the opponents’ strategy, as they never trusted the media:

“The press was, just as it is today, pro-business and pro-government. The press in Chile will never go against the government. [...] That was not the way we did it, it was not through the press.”

By physically preventing the measurements necessary for the environmental study from being taken, the villagers in Mehuín made the planned pipeline legally unviable and, although they distrusted the media and their ability to affect decisions within the EIA, their claims nevertheless appeared in both the local and the national news, and through the community’s unified defense of their bay, they saved it from becoming an industrial wasteland.

**Discussion and conclusion**

This paper examined what media representation reveals with respect to how legitimacy is constructed in the public sphere. The findings from the media coverage of the pulp mill conflict indicate that the way in which a deliberation scheme is designed – regarding citizen power, representation and the inclusion of different types of knowledge – will not be the only factor determining how legitimacy is constructed. The way in which legitimacy is constructed through the media will also affect who are considered legitimate contributors to the debate and what types of claims are regarded as valid in the deliberation process. In Valdivia, an increased level of citizen power in the EIA would not necessarily have granted the opponents greater influence in the deliberation itself, which occurred when the environment had no value in the public sphere. In terms of representation, the media portrayed stakeholders in both Mehuín and Valdivia as obstacles to development, which also restricted the stakeholders’ capacity to have any real influence in a governance scheme designed to promote development. Furthermore, an increased openness to local knowledge (what arguments are regarded as valid) would not necessarily have changed the terms of debate while the underlying values of industrialization and progress continued to condition the outcome of the debate.

How stakeholder claims are portrayed and contested in newspapers affect whether governance schemes can achieve what they are intended to: produce outcomes that are perceived to be legitimate and suited to the needs of all affected parties. It will not be sufficient to develop representative and inclusive governance schemes if the public discourse excludes certain groups in society. The procedural power such groups are granted through a high degree of citizen control (Arinstein, 1969; Bishop and Davis, 2002) may be irrelevant if their claims are portrayed as irrational or opposed the collective good of society (in this case, disguised as development, modernization and industrialization), issues such as who is allowed to speak (representation) and based on what criteria (local knowledge) may be of secondary importance if the worldviews that underlie the deliberation itself do not allow alternatives (to modern and industrialized society) to emerge as credible options for the future.

Regarding Chambers’ definition of deliberation as an effort to produce “reasonable, well-informed opinions in which participants are willing to revise preferences in light of discussion, new information, and claims made by fellow participants”, the findings in this study indicate that the production of reasonable arguments was affected by how certain participants or their claims were disqualified or portrayed as invalid by newspapers. If certain stakeholders and their claims are disqualified, legitimacy can be obtained without providing “justification to all affected” (Chambers, 2003, p. 309). In this sense, the media representation in this study provides an example of how the rhetoric of modernity serves to universalize the values and beliefs of certain groups at the expense of others. Regarding the practical implications of this observation for policy making, public participation cannot generate outcomes that include the concerns of all affected stakeholders when certain arguments are already absent or delegitimized in the public discourse. In the longer term, this will affect the willingness of stakeholders to participate in deliberation, thereby also delegitimizing the entire governance scheme due to its incapacity to generate outcomes that have been justified to all affected parties.

Who is allowed to speak and on what terms is not only restricted by what is considered legitimate at a certain point in time in society at large but also depends on the subject’s own position in the modern/colonial divide. Those on the latter side of this divide are not always aware of their colonial position because “...the success of the modern/colonial world-system consists in making subjects that are socially located on the oppressed side of the colonial difference, think epistemically like the ones in the dominant positions” (Grosfoguel, 2011, p. 8). The findings from Mehuín indicate that altering the terms of the conversation and achieving “decolonial freedom” (Mignolo, 2011, p. 116) requires that the subjects become aware of their subaltern position in the modern/colonial divide. Precisely how such groups decolonize their own relation to the modern world and manage to defend themselves from that position is a topic that deserves attention in future research.

The analysis of media representation in this case was based on newspaper material from two locally and nationally important newspapers in Chile, owned by the same conglomerate, which might be considered a significant limitation of this study. It is important to note that when the pulp mill was initially introduced
to the public, very few alternative (printed) news channels, through which the public had the opportunity to openly raise their concerns, were available and widely distributed. Although most Chilenos are aware of the conservative and business-friendly position of the conglomerate that owns these newspapers, their limited access to alternatives nevertheless conditioned what could be debated in a broader deliberative space as opposed to face-to-face interaction. Furthermore, the empirical materials’ greatest weakness is also their greatest strength: due to the conservative, business-friendly focus of the selected newspapers, the shift in the discourse regarding the pulp mill clearly indicated a shift in how the political and business elite related to the environmental consequences of the mill. Thus, although the empirical data come from a relatively narrow source, they nonetheless reflect how public discourses were portrayed outside the meeting rooms, homes, and streets at the time of the EIA.

By examining how the legitimacy of various claims is constructed over time and analyzing the role that the media played in the production of absence, or the occlusion of those suffering from coloniality, I have argued that although the process could have been more inclusive concerning the level of participation, more supportive for the participants to make their voices heard, and more open to local knowledge claims, the exclusion of certain arguments from the public discourse ultimately shaped who was more supportive for the participants to make their voices heard, have been more inclusive concerning the level of participation, and the evolving conflicts surrounding the location of the residual waste from the mill.

To conclude, creating more inclusive public participation processes is not merely a question of how marginalized stakeholders can be better represented or how they can be provided with the necessary support to participate on equal terms. Instead, these stakeholders’ own willingness to participate is highly dependent on the extent to which their values and beliefs are considered valid and justified in the broader public sphere. In terms of deliberation, the focus should not be on achieving consensus but increasing the living conditions of all stakeholders, whether embodied or not in the industrial modern world. How different stakeholders and their claims are portrayed in media and elsewhere would then be of secondary importance, as it is not a consensus formed through abstract, rational arguments that provides the solutions but an engaged dialogue on subsistence and co-existence in a world in which all living beings are interconnected and valid contributors to the debate.

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Appendix A. Supplementary material

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2014.11.024. These data include Google maps of the most important areas described in this article.

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Delinking Legitimacies: A Pluriversal Perspective on Political CSR

Maria Ehrnström-Fuentes
Hanken School of Economics

ABSTRACT  This study critically examines the concept of political CSR, or legitimacy creation through deliberation, as something that can be universally agreed upon in places where incommensurable differences exist. Through a comparative case study of two local stakeholder groups – one urban and one rural – involved in a conflict over a pulp mill in the south of Chile, this paper asks: 1) why did the two groups choose different participation strategies in the deliberation over the desirability of the mill? Based on multiple data sources, the study finds differences in how each community made sense of the world through place-bound social imaginaries, which affected the stakeholders’ willingness to participate in deliberation. The findings suggest that legitimacy cannot be universally secured through dialogues that seek consensus at the expense of occluded imaginaries, rather it exists as a pluriversal construct. If political CSR is to play a role in legitimacy creation across imaginaries, the focus should be on constructing economic alternatives embedded in place that supports the co-existence of different forms of life.

Keywords: decolonial, deliberation, incommensurable differences, legitimacy, pluriverse, political CSR, social imaginaries

INTRODUCTION

Recent debates on how corporations should act in an increasingly globalised world have suggested that greater communication between corporations and their stakeholders should be promoted. This has come about as a response to the growing sense of distrust that corporations have faced from the public at large. In this context, Palazzo and Scherer (2006) suggest a shift in the focus of how corporations gain and maintain their legitimacy, from a purely self-interested and pragmatic legitimacy towards a more morally informed legitimacy. In the wake of globalisation, this shift is seen as particularly
necessary as nation states are losing their ability to regulate business activities, and the emergence of heterogeneous values and lifestyles has undermined the taken-for-granted socially acceptable rules and norms that were once the guiding principles of legitimate corporate conduct (Scherer and Palazzo, 2011; Scherer et al., 2009).

Legitimacy is often referred to as the necessary ‘social license to operate’ that a firm requires from society, or more precisely from its stakeholders, in order to enter and remain in business and, ultimately, to survive as a company. Inspired by Habermas’ (2005 [1996]) theory of communicative action, Palazzo and Scherer (2006), recommend deliberation as a way of arriving at a mutual understanding with the broader civil society on how corporations should act. This shift from a purely strategic, profit-maximising focus, where corporate action is driven by the goal of increasing shareholder value, to one where corporations and civil society organisations work together to regulate the market through democratic principles, is what they have promoted under the concept of ‘political CSR’ (Palazzo and Scherer, 2006; Scherer and Palazzo, 2007, 2011; Scherer et al., 2009). As they summarise: ‘[P]olitical CSR suggests an extended model of governance with business firms contributing to global regulation and providing public goods...where private actors such as corporations and civil society organizations play an active role in the democratic regulation and control of market transactions’ (Scherer and Palazzo, 2011, p. 901).

Most of the research taking Scherer and Palazzo’s framework of political CSR as its starting point has looked at the relationships between companies and influential stakeholder groups such as large international NGOs or powerful civil society groups that manage to impact the corporate agenda through successful negotiation (Baur and Palazzo, 2011; Baur and Schmitz, 2011; Mena and Palazzo, 2012). However, little attention has been paid to marginalised or even excluded stakeholders that lack the power to make their voices heard, and have views that are incommensurable with the solutions proposed by large multinational corporations (e.g., rural communities that see their livelihoods threatened or even destroyed by the arrival of multinational firms in need of land and resources for their business activities) (Edward and Willmott, 2008, p. 420).

Although Scherer and Palazzo acknowledge the challenge of reaching a common solution – in the form of consensus – in what they describe as ‘value-based conflicts’ (Palazzo and Scherer, 2006, p. 83), their proposal does not clarify how legitimacy is formed and sustained through deliberation in situations where the interests of the corporation and its stakeholders are incommensurable. Paradoxically, they note that in cases where different values are disputed, communication might even ‘fuel the conflict’ (Palazzo and Scherer, 2006, p. 83), and that ‘this process sometimes provokes fundamentalist and nationalist backlashes that even further challenges the existing democratic order’ (Scherer and Palazzo, 2011, pp. 902–3).

When incommensurable differences exist regarding the use of land between corporate entities and local community stakeholders, what is one party’s gain is the other’s loss; there is no consensus that can be reached, no win-win situations to be found. For the companies, their own survival may depend on how their activities are perceived by its local and global stakeholders, since this can determine both their access to land and resources as well as to financing and markets (Owen and Kemp, 2013). For those whose
lifestyles are threatened by the arrival of these companies in their community, achieving recognition for their claim is not only a defence of their lifestyle but also a fight for survival based on worldviews not accounted for in the dominant perception of the modern world (De Sousa Santos, 2013; Escobar, 1995, 2008; Mignolo, 2011). This marginalization, or the exclusion of the claims as irrational (De Sousa Santos, 2013), within the realm of the modern world also limits their possibilities to influence the public opinion in their favour through deliberation (Ehrnström-Fuentes, 2015).

From a postcolonial perspective, Banerjee (2003, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011), has repeatedly pointed out that the current understanding of legitimacy and CSR poses great limitations for marginalized groups who possess incommensurable differences to the dominant modus operandi of multinational corporations. When participants have diametrically opposed interests this may lead to situations where the outcomes of deliberation are based on a fabricated consent from the marginalized (Desmarais, 2002). Because of their marginality, the values and interests of these stakeholders are often not visible or comprehensible to the larger public (Ehrnström-Fuentes, 2015) but hidden through the subordination of their knowledge and culture in the dominant modern worldview (De Sousa Santos, 2013; Mignolo, 2011). In fact this one-sided perspective on legitimacy building from the perspective of the corporations has produced exclusion and victims among those who do not benefit from corporate activity, but actually pay the price of displacement, unemployment, hunger, and misery (see for example Banerjee, 2011; Dussel and Ibarra-Colado, 2006; Misoczky, 2011). With regards to stakeholder dialogue as a solution to, or prevention of, conflicts, Chatterjee (2004) notes that ‘participation’ has become a widely used slogan, proposed as a common solution to issues related to resistance from affected stakeholders. This word, however, means different things to those who govern and those who are governed (Chatterjee, 2004). In order to expand the current understanding of political CSR, there is a need to address this issue of incommensurability and what the proposed deliberation may mean from the perspective of marginalized and excluded stakeholders in terms of legitimate corporate conduct. Incommensurabilities are understood here as the differences in interests and livelihoods that may exist between stakeholders and MNCs, for example in terms of how land is to be used when one loses and the other one gains depending on whose interests/livelihoods are being prioritized.

In this study I examine the concept of political CSR – interpreted here as legitimacy creation through stakeholder dialogues – as something that can be universally agreed upon in places where incommensurable differences exist. Through a comparative case study of a protracted conflict over a pulp mill in the south of Chile, where the opposing stakeholders in two different localities chose different participation strategies in the deliberation processes of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) leading up to the approval of the construction of the mill, and in the debates that arose once the pulp mill initiated its operations and the environmental harms became evident, the study asks: why did the two stakeholder groups choose different participation strategies in the deliberative processes leading to the approval of the construction of the mill?

Deliberation in this context refers to the participation of the stakeholder groups in the actual EIA (through public hearings and the elaboration of written reports) and the public debate in the local newspapers defending or opposing the presence of the pulp mill in
the different localities at different points in time. The pulp mill conflict in Chile offers
the opportunity to explicitly examine whether political CSR, and the engagement in
deliberation can restore corporate legitimacy and reduce risks of future conflicts with
different stakeholder groups.

By adapting a decolonial view on deliberation, legitimacy and political CSR, the
study sets out to shed light on the otherwise often hidden perspective of the marginalized
and excluded (Ibarra-Colado, 2006). Within the decolonial concept lies an understand-
ing that the world cannot be interpreted from an abstract universal standpoint but is
rather composed of diverse critical epistemic/ethical/political projects towards a pluri-
versal (as opposed to a universal) world (Grosfoguel, 2007; Mignolo, 2011). Acknowl-
edging the pluriversality of the world is not about engaging in cultural relativism, but
about exposing the interconnectedness of several social imaginaries, or cosmologies, pre-
viously occluded by the universalizing effects of the rhetoric of modernity (Mignolo,
2011). In the comparative analysis of the empirical material of this study, I bring for-
ward the otherwise often occluded imaginaries as equally valid perspectives on what
constitutes legitimacy in different places with different histories, rationalities and narra-
tives of the future. The differences in these place-based social imaginaries, or how peo-
ple think of their social surroundings through images, stories, and legends (Taylor,
2002), played a crucial role in how the stakeholder groups positioned themselves in
terms of participating or not in deliberation and how the legitimacy of the company was
sustained or rejected in each location. The findings suggest that corporate legitimacy
cannot be restored through dialogue with stakeholders whose own imaginaries and exis-
tence are threatened by the arrival of the corporation in their communities. In a pluri-
versal world, where multiple legitimacies are allowed to co-exist, the role of political
CSR will depend on how the corporate world positions itself in relation to others; either
it should be seen as a set of practices that strive to hide and co-opt diverging locally con-
stituted and differing legitimacies, or as a tool of transformation that aims at realigning
corporate activities so that they comply with the boundaries of the communities that
they depend on. This means that if political CSR is to play a role creating legitimacies
across boundaries, such responsibility should focus on how to construct locally embed-
ded economic alternatives that support the co-existence of different forms of life.

THE LIMITS OF CORPORATE LEGITIMACY IN A PLURIVERSAL
WORLD

Within the conceptualization of political CSR, and within organization studies in gen-
eral, legitimacy is commonly defined as ‘the generalized perception that the actions of
an entity are appropriate within some socially constructed systems of norms, values, and
beliefs’ (Suchman, 1995, p. 574). However, Suchman’s definition of legitimacy assumes
that legitimacy is an established and universal concept and that there are common sys-
tems of norms, values and beliefs that can define the limits of what is and is not legiti-
mate. Moral legitimacy, which is what Palazzo and Scherer (2006) argue would be
achieved through deliberation, implies that the company and its stakeholders should be
able to reach a mutual agreement on what kind of corporate conduct should be consid-
ered morally legitimate. Implicitly this suggests that the result of deliberation or
accommodation to local demands may also force the organization to adapt to local cultural norms (Kostova and Zaheer, 1999). Yet, in places where the local norms are incommensurable with those of the corporation, Suchman’s definition of legitimacy does not specify exactly which of these qualify as legitimate.

In fact, the non-issue of the incommensurabilities that may exist in terms of value grounds and what is perceived as legitimate rests on the assumption that the modernity emerging from Europe through the forces of globalization is an inevitable process of all societies in the world, as proposed by Giddens (1991) and also cited by Scherer and Palazzo (2011). This creates the illusion that other ways of life – categorized as ‘subaltern’ (Spivak, 1988), placing them in a hierarchical relationship with the superior modern way of life – will eventually disappear (Escobar, 2008). Modernity is an inevitable universal fact, where local hybrid and contested modernities are only reflections of a Eurocentric social order (Escobar, 2008).

The belief that the modernity emerging from Europe is universal, has denied the existence of other worldviews that conceptualizes the world from a different perspective, and whose knowledge systems escapes the rationality concept of the modern world (Blaser, 2010; de la Cadena, 2010; Escobar, 2008; Radcliffe, 2014). This sets the limits of whose claims and whose realities count when alternatives are being debated, even before deliberation has started (Ehrtntström-Fuentes, 2015). It is a systematic exclusion which has been made possible through a rhetoric that has been traced in many decolonial and postcolonial works, including within management studies (Banerjee and Line, 2001; Fougère and Moulettes, 2007; Ibarra-Colado, 2006; Jack and Westwood, 2006; Prasad, 2009).

Placing deliberation in its historical and geopolitical context, it is possible to see that deliberation in the form proposed by Scherer and Palazzo, relying on Habermasian communicative action, is based on realities lived in the modern societies of Europe. Habermas’ theory on ‘public spheres’ emerges from the bourgeois society of Europe between 1700 and 1960s (De Sousa Santos, 2012, 2013; Hohendahl and Russian, 1974). As such, it fails to recognize the existence of other realities beyond the ‘modern’ world. As De Sousa Santos (2013) notes, even Habermas recognizes that his theories are based on ‘a limited and Eurocentric vision’ and this results in the exclusion of those living outside this Eurocentric reality (p. 23) as valid contributors to the debate (see also De Sousa Santos, 2012; Dussel, 2013; Mignolo 2011). Thus, this literature assumes universal relevance, while it may be just as ‘provincial’ as other literatures (see Chakrabarty, 2000) and thereby fail to recognize the existence of other realities beyond the modern world. Consequently, such a dialogue only works in a particular (modern) setting. Hence, understanding stakeholder dialogue, and moral legitimacy, from a perspective that acknowledges the existence of multiple realities and knowledges demands an expanded view on how legitimacy is created in different contextual settings.

**Social Imaginaries as the Basis of Legitimacy Creation**

Interpreting moral legitimacy as a shared collective signification emerging from common social imaginaries (Anderson, 1991; Castoriadis, 1987; Levy and Spicer, 2013; Taylor, 2002; Wright et al., 2013) allows for an expanded understanding of how the
legitimacy of any form of social organizing comes into being in the place where it is embedded. Social imaginaries have been used to explain the shared sense of meaning, coherence, and orientation around highly complex issues in society (Castoriadis, 1987; Levy and Spicer, 2013; Taylor, 2002; Wright et al., 2013). They explain how people think of their social surroundings through images, stories, and legends and when shared by large groups of people they enable a shared sense of legitimacy (Taylor 2002, p. 106). Social imaginaries are also closely related to moral legitimacy (Suchman, 1995) as they encode collective visions and practices of the good society, and what are viewed as feasible futures based on what is considered good, desirable and worth attending to in a particular community (Jasanoff and Sang-Hyun, 2009).

This implies that there may be multiple notions of what is considered morally legitimate, all dependent on the meanings and significations emerging from the collective imaginary in a particular place or community. The moral legitimacy of different stakeholder groups are therefore also connected to the significations embedded in that collectivity and the particular place where they are located, created by what Escobar (2001) refers to as a ‘place-based consciousness’, or ‘a place-specific (even if not place-bound or place-determined) way of endowing the world with meaning’ (Escobar, 2001, p. 153).

The common social imaginary in a particular place is at any given time complex, as it ‘incorporates a sense of the normal expectations that we have of one another, the kind of common understanding that enables us to carry out the collective practices that make up our social life’ and ‘how we all fit together in carrying out the common practice’ (Taylor, 2002, p. 106). Imaginaries are in a sense the social fabric of society that ties together the collective past, present, and future understandings of the world, thereby producing systems of meanings that enable a collective interpretation of social reality (Castoriadis, 1987). They also form the basis for a shared sense of belonging and attachment to a particular community (Anderson, 1991).

How different activities are perceived within a particular social imaginary will not only impact the legitimacy of the corporation but also the stakeholder’s willingness to engage in deliberation over the desirability of these activities. For marginalized stakeholders, trying to defend claims within a system of deliberation that is built to exclude certain views as irrational or inferior may not be worth the effort invested in the process (see Ehrnström-Fuentes, 2015). Understanding the boundaries of different social imaginaries, and their relation to the imaginary of the corporate world, is therefore crucial in order to understand whether deliberation can play a role in granting legitimacy to a corporation in the place where its presence is being contested.

**Drawing Boundaries of Social Imaginaries**

What then are the boundaries of different social imaginaries? Exact boundaries may be hard to detect due to the complexity and the multiscalar dimensions of collective systems of meaning. It would be naïve to think that such clear-cut boundaries even exist. However, building on Escobar’s (2008) work on what constitutes the main features of social movements engaged in constructing ‘territories of difference’ against the forces of globalization, four specific themes can be distinguished as relevant when drawing the boundaries of place-bound social imaginaries in relation to the globally encompassing
modern imaginary: the relation the inhabitants have to Place, Capital, Nature, and Development.

History of place. Escobar conceptualizes place in terms of territory, which can be understood as the shared sense of meaning that links history, culture, environment and social life in a particular place (Escobar, 2008, p. 62). The concept involves both social and ecological boundaries, such as established production systems, history of settlement, tenancy, local projects, and visions of the use of territory, as well as different types of commerce that exist or have existed in this place (Escobar, 2008, p. 56). Therefore, the meaning of territory in a particular place will also have a profound impact on how different economic activities are perceived as legitimate by the community members.

Means of Subsistence. What Escobar (2008) discusses under the label of Capital can be expanded to be understood as the relation to external markets or the different means of subsistence that exist in a particular place to sustain reproduction of life (Dussel, 2013). How community members engage in the reproduction of life in terms of livelihoods defines the collective practices that make up social life in a particular community. Therefore the collective social imaginary is highly dependent on how the members provide for their families, through salaried employment tied to the capitalist global market or through other alternatives such as subsistence economies and local trading systems (Gibson-Graham, 2006).

Relation to nature. How the local community members engage with nature will also shape their social imaginary and how they defend it in a conflict situation. It is not only their practical day-to-day relation to nature in terms of subsistence (see above) that forms their perceptions of the value of nature but the meaning of nature in itself changes depending on the available knowledge systems in a particular place (de la Cadena, 2010; Escobar, 2008; Radcliffe, 2014).

Narrative of the future. While the narrative on Development places emphasis on industrialization, economic growth, and globalization to achieve progress and wellbeing (Escobar, 1995; Mignolo, 2011), other narratives make it possible for community members to visualize alternative ways of engaging with the future (see Gudynas, 2011, 2013; Misoczky, 2011; Radcliffe, 2014). For example the visions emerging from Latin American indigenous cultures encompass a circular vision of time, emphasizing the quality of life (in the community, including nature), instead of the constant need to achieve (linear) progress through economic growth or material consumption (Gudynas, 2011). While the Giddensian thesis suggest that development becomes naturalized with the forces of globalization and all people come to desire the same things, the existence and emergence of alternatives suggest that this may not be the case everywhere and that how communities conceptualize their future is also related to place (Escobar, 2008).

The legitimacy of the corporation, although rarely explicitly mentioned, is embedded in the modern social imaginary, emphasizing the historical processes of industrialization and the consequences thereof that led to the environmental consciousness awakening and mobilization of civil society in modern and postmodern Europe and the USA (Den Hond and De Bakker, 2007; Doh and Guay, 2006). The relations between humans and nature are detached from each other, making it possible to conceptualize nature as a resource from which surplus economic value can be extracted (Gauffney, 2008). Global capitalist markets provide for the means of subsistence through industrial employment...
(Morrison, 2006, p. 74), and reference made to the creation (or loss) of employment opportunities is used to discursively legitimate corporate action (Vaara and Tienari, 2008). The future is narrated through a linear notion of time where the idea of maximization of shareholder value over time is central to the instrumental legitimacy of the firm (Scherer and Palazzo, 2007).

In this theoretical framework I have argued that the ideal of deliberative democracy, and how legitimacy is theorized as a universal construct, have emerged from European experiences. As such, they do not account for the voices of those whose histories, rationalities, livelihoods and narratives of future are imagined differently. How do such diverging social imaginaries influence the stakeholders’ willingness to participate in deliberation with corporations (whose imaginary excludes and threatens their own imaginary)? Based on the findings of the comparative analysis below, I argue that the reason why one of the stakeholder groups refrained from participating in deliberation can be traced back to differences between the imaginary of that particular community and the modern social imaginary. Such an expanded view on legitimacy, as a pluriversal and place-bound concept also brings consequences to the concept of political CSR.

DATA AND METHODS

The methodology of this study follows a comparative case study approach of two different cases, where cases are seen as bounded systems (rather than organizational units) with a focus on the specific entity of the study (i.e., two disputes over the investment of a pulp mill and its toxic waste) (Langley and Rowley, 2006). The two cases are compared to draw attention to differences at the ‘local’ level (Mills and Helms Mills, 2011) regarding the social imaginaries in each location and the effects these differences had on stakeholders’ willingness to participate in the deliberation.

Selection of Cases

The selected cases are two disputes between locals and corporate/state representatives over the installation of a pulp mill (and its residual waste) in Southern Chile, where the local opponents in each location chose different participation strategies in the initial EIA. The impetus for using these two cases to compare the role of deliberation and legitimacy creation in different contextual settings, originated from the following statement, made by one of the key spokespersons of Acción por los Cisnes (APC) in Valdivia in a public speech in November 2004:

‘We didn’t want the plant in Valdivia. We stated our arguments, as many people, trusting the environmental impact system. And finally... this famous system installed the plant anyway. The only worthwhile struggle was that of the people of Mehuín, who rejected the research, who rejected the public services, who rejected the environmental legislation. And finally, ended up saving themselves, and we got stuck with the stench we have now and with what everyone is now talking about: the dead swans floating down the Cruces River Sanctuary’. (Araya in Sepúlveda, 2007)
The statement indicates that those that had been active in the deliberation process of the public hearings of the EIA had lost their case by participating in the EIA, while those that had stayed outside the system had won and saved themselves from the environmental destruction of the project. This begged the question of what had given rise to the two different strategies of (non-)participation among these stakeholder groups. A longitudinal comparative analysis of the media representation of the stakeholder groups in each location indicated that not all stakeholders were treated equally in the newspaper discourses and that some claims were not present in the public debate (Ehrnström-Fuentes, 2015). Furthermore, observations from field research visits in the communities provided hints of the existence of different place-bound social imaginaries. These preliminary observations suggested that a systematic comparison of the differences could illustrate why one community refrained from participating in deliberation with government or corporate representatives while the other did not.

Data Collection

The empirical material for this study comes from multiple sources and was collected over a period of two years, which included four months of research in Chile during 2012. The material (See Table I for an overview) that constitutes the core of the analysis of this study were in-depth interviews with identified opponents in each location, editorials and letters to the editor of the local newspaper *El Diario Austral de Valdivia* (referred to as *El Diario Austral* hereafter, and the accounts of locals in two documentaries on the subject (Nahuelpan, 2011; Trejo and Correa, 2013).

The selection of editorials and letters to the editor were considered relevant for the analysis of social imaginaries as they transmitted the view of different stakeholder groups in the first person without intermediaries. These accounts of the pulp mill investment could therefore serve to illustrate the standpoint of different stakeholder groups, from their own position in relation to the pulp mill project (Mignolo, 2002). Furthermore, editorials in local newspapers articulate a unique local public opinion (Neveu, 2002) but also set the dominant interpretive framework (i.e., social imaginary) within which political events are understood (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2008). The newspaper *El Diario Austral* is part of one of Chile’s most influential media conglomerates, *Grupo Edwards*, which is known to represents the voice of the political and economic elite of the country (Baltra, 2012).

Although subject to editorial gate-keeping, letters to the editor are an important component of deliberation in the public sphere (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2001). Also, the newspaper material provided the opportunity to investigate discursive elements in texts from a longitudinal perspective showing the durability of the imaginaries held by different stakeholder groups over time, which is important when distinguishing social imaginaries from other types of short-lived perspectives held by different actors (Jasanoff and Sang-Hyun, 2009). A total of 20 editorials and 24 letters to the editor were selected based on their appearance in the newspaper during critical points in time (see Table II) when the pulp mill’s operations were publically debated.

Using newspaper texts does not provide a comprehensive picture of those voices that are excluded and marginalized through editorial gate-keeping or media representation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Pro/con</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<th>Location</th>
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<td>Pro</td>
<td>Valdivia</td>
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<td>Pro</td>
<td>Valdivia</td>
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<td>Editorial</td>
<td>Pro</td>
<td>Valdivia</td>
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<td>Pro</td>
<td>Valdivia</td>
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<td>Interview with author</td>
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<td>Con</td>
<td>Valdivia</td>
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<td>Valdivia</td>
<td>6.11.2012</td>
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<td>Mchúin -3</td>
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<td>Rody Oñate</td>
<td>Con</td>
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<td>2011</td>
<td>Doc Nahuelman</td>
<td>Rosa</td>
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<td>Doc Nahuelman</td>
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<td>2013</td>
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## Table I. Continued

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<td>Doc Chile se Moviliza</td>
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<td>Con</td>
<td>Mehuín</td>
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<td>Por Comunidad de Mehuín</td>
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<td>2013</td>
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<td>Fabiola Marilaf</td>
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<td>O. Lunecke Anwander</td>
<td>Pro</td>
<td>Valdivia</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Doc Chile se Moviliza</td>
<td>Fabiola Marilaf</td>
<td>Con</td>
<td>Mehuín</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Since the aim was to understand why certain stakeholders did not participate in deliberation it was also important to include those voices that were not visible in the media. Thus, another important part of the comparative analysis was the material from in-depth expert interviews (Flick, 1998). Between September and November 2012, I conducted ten in-depth interviews with key persons who had actively opposed the pulp mill in each location since the start of the conflicts in 1995–96. These experts were identified based on their letters-to-the editor and recommendations from local researchers engaged in the conflict since its initial stages in the late 1990s. The main focus of all interviews was on how the interviewees themselves interpreted the conflict and the legitimacy of the firm and their capacity to cause an impact through different forms of deliberation. All interviews lasted between one and two hours, and were

(Ehrnström-Fuentes, 2015). Since the aim was to understand why certain stakeholders did not participate in deliberation it was also important to include those voices that were not visible in the media. Thus, another important part of the comparative analysis was the material from in-depth expert interviews (Flick, 1998). Between September and November 2012, I conducted ten in-depth interviews with key persons who had actively opposed the pulp mill in each location since the start of the conflicts in 1995–96. These experts were identified based on their letters-to-the editor and recommendations from local researchers engaged in the conflict since its initial stages in the late 1990s. The main focus of all interviews was on how the interviewees themselves interpreted the conflict and the legitimacy of the firm and their capacity to cause an impact through different forms of deliberation. All interviews lasted between one and two hours, and were

Table II. Time line of the events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 1995</td>
<td>First EIA is presented to the public, followed by public hearings in Valdivia and San José de la Mariquina.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1996</td>
<td>Technical committee rejects project because of lack of considerations for the nearby natural sanctuary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1996</td>
<td>Political committee gives a conditional approval to the project: either company invests in water treatment or it should build a pipeline with the residuals to the sea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1996</td>
<td>Conflict over the environment measures for the EIA in Mehuín starts, creation of the movement Comité de Defensa de Mehuín, defending the territory of the village.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 1998</td>
<td>Company decides after various attempts to access Mehuín waters for EIA measures to opt for the second option: build a plant with an advanced water treatment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2004</td>
<td>Mill opens. Locals complain of odors and sounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2004</td>
<td>First article about swans dying in the Sanctuary nearby the pulp mill published in El Diario Austral De Valdivia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2004</td>
<td>Citizen movement Accion por los Cisnes is formed in Valdivia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 2004-Jan 2005</td>
<td>Daily national media coverage of the dying swans and accusations of the pulp mill as causing it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan-Feb 2005</td>
<td>Mill ordered to shut down for one month.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June-July 2005</td>
<td>Mill voluntarily shuts down for two months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2005</td>
<td>President Ricardo Lagos announces the reopening of the mill with reduced production capacity and the construction of a pipeline to the sea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2005</td>
<td>Community of Mehuín continues to oppose the pipeline through a defense of their territory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2007</td>
<td>Some of the community in Mehuín negotiate compensations with the company. Village is divided and some continue to oppose the pipeline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2010</td>
<td>Company receives the governmental permissions to construct a pipeline to Mehuín.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2013</td>
<td>Court decision finds Pulp Mill guilty for causing the swan deaths in 2004.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2015</td>
<td>Pipeline is still not built, opponents in Mehuín continue to defend their bay.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: El Diario Austral, El Mercurio, personal communication.
recorded and later transcribed by a native Chilean Spanish speaker. Due to the limited access to interviewees, particularly in one of the locations, and to add more detail and depth to the analysis, more personal accounts from community members on how they positioned themselves and their surroundings in relation to the pulp mill conflict were added from two documentaries (Nahuelpan, 2011; Trejo and Correa, 2013). These documentaries (Nahuelpan, 2011) included many accounts on how the community members made sense of the world and the community in which they lived, while also giving key persons the opportunity to explain their points of view with regard to the conflict.

Data Analysis

To analyse the collected material, I adapted Jasanoff and Sang-Hyun’s (2009) longitudinal and interpretive method, identifying and comparing recurrent discursive elements in the texts (from newspapers, interviews, documentaries) produced by the different stakeholder groups. Through this interpretative approach the comparative analysis focused on understanding how certain constructs were constituted and achieved meaning in the debate over the desirability of the pulp mill in each location (see Jasanoff and Sang-Hyun, 2009). The analysis was centred on how the different texts referred to history of place, means of subsistence, relation to nature and narratives of future. The analysis was conducted in four different stages: First, I made a list of all the texts used in the comparative analysis (see Table I), listing the position of the text producer (Valdivia/Mehuin, for/against), and any reference made to the four topics used for the comparison, as well as assigning a code to each text to simplify the subsequent processes. Second, for each of the four topics, the corresponding discursive elements (in most cases one-three sentences in each text) were placed in a table with four columns dividing them according to the text producers’ position for or against the pulp mill and their geographic location. This categorization of the different narratives produced by opponents/proponents made it possible to compare the different meanings embedded in the subjects’ own conceptualization of the world, depending on the location from which she or he spoke (for or against the mill and the geographic location of the text producer). Third, based on the texts in the four tables I compared the similarities and differences of the discursive elements in relation to place, subsistence, nature and the future and identified patterns that suggested that there were similarities in how different subjects made sense of the world based on the location from where they spoke. Fourth, I then compared the findings of the patterns of similarities to the justifications made by the interviewees to why they had chosen to participate or not in the deliberation over the investment of the firm.

CASE BACKGROUND: THE VALDIVIA PULP MILL CONFLICT

In 1995, the Valdivia pulp mill was one of the first projects to be submitted to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process under the new environmental legislation. This opened up the possibility for a public debate on the desirability of such projects for the first time in Chilean history (Sepúlveda and Villarroel, 2012). The project’s proponent, CELCO-Arauco, was part of one of Chile’s most important privately owned conglomerates, which had been privatized during the military regime. The submitted
proposal anticipated an investment of US$1 billion, with an annual production capacity of 550 tonnes and an expected lifecycle of 20 years, generating 900 direct and indirect jobs at completion and 3,500 direct jobs during its construction phase (Proyecto Valdivia EIS, 1995). Located next to Valdivia, a city with 100,000 inhabitants, the mill was expected to boost local employment and industrial development, which had slumped after a devastating earthquake in the region in 1960 (Trejo and Correa, 2013). In coming years, this project became one of the most debated industrial projects in the country’s history, first through the attention it received during the prolonged EIA processes and subsequently through the headlines and images of swans dying next to the plant shortly after commencing its operations (Sepúlveda and Villarroel, 2012). Initially in 1995 and 1996, the disputes over the investment were centred on the risks that the residual waste of this mill would pose for its surroundings. The opponents in Valdivia who participated in the public hearings feared that the proposed technology for the treatment of liquid waste would not protect the water in the River Cruces, affecting both the delicate wildlife in a nature sanctuary downstream and the human health in its surroundings (El Diario Austral, 1995a, b, c; Sepúlveda and Mariángel, 1998). After a prolonged decision-making process, the regional environmental authorities approved the mill with several conditions, including two options regarding the wastewater: either devise a more advanced treatment of the waste to be released into the river, or pipe the liquids into the sea (El Diario Austral, 1996a).

When the company began preparing a report on the effects of a pipeline that would end in Mehuín, a small fishing community 36 km from the planned mill site, the locals in this village united to defend their territory by physically obstructing access to their bay for the necessary EIA proceedings (author’s interviews, 2012; Skewes and Guerra, 2004; Trejo and Correa, 2013). According to the villagers, the toxic residue would have endangered their livelihoods (author’s interviews, 2012; El Diario Austral, 1996b; Skewes and Guerra, 2004; Trejo and Correa, 2013). The territorial defence of the coastal community by the opponents in Mehuín was ultimately successful: unable to complete the necessary environmental study for the EIA process, the company was forced to withdraw its proposal to run the pipeline into the bay and decided instead to release the waste water, through an advanced water treatment facility, into the Cruces River (El Diario Austral, 1998).

The disputes continued as the mill initiated its operations in February 2004. Within 6 months, the newspapers started reporting that the black-necked swans in the nearby sanctuary were falling out of the sky in Valdivia and dying (El Diario Austral, 2004f, 2004g, 2004h, 2004i, 2004j, 2004k, 2004l). The response from the public and national media was unprecedented and gave rise to Chile’s first powerful environmental movement (Acción Por los Cisnes, APC) (Sepúlveda and Villarroel, 2012). Eventually, the demands emerging from the movement led to a crisis both for the governmental authorities, with a call for new environmental legislation (Sepúlveda and Villarroel, 2012), and for the company, with two temporary closures of the mill and changes in the top management (El Diario Austral, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c).

In August 2005, to remedy the swan crisis, the then-president of Chile, Ricardo Lagos proposed that a pipeline into the sea would be built. In this second stage, the threat of the pipeline created both strong unity, among those who continue to defend their
traditional way of life (today mostly the Lafkenche community, the coastal Mapuche Indians) and despair, as some of the community members accepted financial compensation from the company rather than continuing to protect their community and the ocean bay (author’s interview, 2012; Flores, 2013; Trejo and Correa, 2013). Although the pipeline has now been legally approved on the basis of what the opponents in the community refer to as a ‘false’ EIA, as they are convinced that measurements in the bay have never been taken, some of the community members continue to defend their bay from the construction of a pipeline (author’s interview, 2012; Trejo and Correa, 2013). The decision of these opponents to defend their livelihoods outside of dialogues, first with the governmental authorities and later with the company representatives, has to this date been successful, since the pipeline has not yet been built.

What prompted the opponents of this project to choose such different strategies in terms of participating in the deliberation regarding the project? Next, I illustrate the empirical material pointing at different social imaginaries in each location, and I argue that these differing imaginaries played a crucial role in the opponent’s decision to participate in deliberation or defend their position outside the deliberative spaces.

ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

History of Place

Based on the newspaper texts and the interviewees’ accounts of their communities, it is clear that how history was imagined differed in Valdivia and Mehuín. In Valdivia, the editorials of the local newspaper repeatedly made reference to the struggles encountered by the province in the past to attract industrial investment and to provide the community members with the same opportunities as in other parts of the country in terms of progress and modernisation (El Diario Austral, 22 October 1995; 8 November 1995; 10 February 1995; 13 April 1996; 2 June 1996). For example on 13 April 1996, the editorial stated: ‘It is an industry that is destined to strengthen considerably the economic and social development of the province, in particular the municipality of Mariquina, which will receive an important injection of resources and expectation of progress’. The pulp mill was also referred to as an opportunity to ‘put an end to the obstacles that are permanently curbing the progress of Valdivia’ (El Diario Austral, 13 April 1996). Interviewees in Valdivia also noted that the memories of a vibrant industrial community in the past initially helped to create a positive attitude among the inhabitant’s towards the pulp mill investment:

‘Valdivia in 1900 was considered the second most important port in South America, because of the exports that Valdivia managed in terms of manufactures... This is why there was a very important economic upswing in Valdivia at the time, with the assistance of the German immigrants. And then, during the 1930s, the global recession hit, and later the earthquake in the 1960s, which was the biggest earthquake in the world. This is when all the companies and industry started to collapse. [...] Valdivia was left very isolated in economic terms [...]; [The support for the pulp mill] ... had to do with sort of a hope of once again regaining that potent industry that fed the country’. (Interview Valdivia-3, 2012)
This reference to the industrial past was also present in the local newspaper in the editorials and letters to the editor sent by those in favour of this investment, who clearly envisioned industrial activities playing a central role in this community’s future (editorial 8 November 1995; editorial, 21 April 1996; letter to the editor, 23 July 1996). Also, in stating their support for the mill, many proponents referred to the devastating effects of the earthquake of 1960 for Valdivia’s economic activity (letter to the editors 27 June 1995; 2 August 1995; 20 January 1996; 26 February 1996; 23 July 1996) and argued that this project would bring new hope to the region.

These memories of the past that garnered support for the mill in Valdivia created a marginalized position for those who opposed the investment. The opponents were perceived as irrational and they themselves also understood that they had very few possibilities to influence the actual outcome of the EIA (author’s interviews, Valdivia and Santiago, 2012). In this context, the opponents still engaged in deliberation by trying to raise awareness of the adverse effects such a project could have for the community (author’s interviews, Santiago and Valdivia, 2012). They did so by exposing the historical experiences in other locations in Chile where the installation of pulp mills, rather than bringing prosperity and new opportunities to the communities, had led to increased poverty and environmental destruction (letters to the editor, 12 September 1995; 18 December 1995).

In Mehuín, in contrast, the community members did not refer to past times in terms of industrialization and progress. This was a community that had not been directly connected to industrial activities in the past. In fact, in April 1996, just before the conflict over the pipeline started, an editorial in El Diario Austral described Mehuín as a community that had ‘from nowhere moved forward’ since the devastating earthquake in 1960, and that now through the inauguration of a paved road ‘. . . opens the doors to development, the investors and to its own inhabitants to take advantage of the village’s natural potentials and its generous lands’ (El Diario Austral, 27 April 1996). This road, according to the editorial, offered ‘the prospects of installing new industries, diversifying the production. . .’, which would provide the inhabitants with ‘increased incomes, an adequate living standard. . ., access to culture, and all that modernity offers to man’ (editorial, 27 April 1996). However, in contrast to the editorial’s framing of the hopes of the community members, one of the accounts emerging from Mehuín indicates that its isolation from the rest of the world was not necessarily regarded as something negative:

‘When I was young, and I saw the airplanes pass by, I used to think that we were so far away from the city and the world that if there was a war we would not even find out about it or suffer from its consequences. And I thought that our lives would always be like this, like this calm’. (Nahuel, 2011, Documentary Nahuelmapu)

The villager’s unified opposition against the pipeline also reactivated old stories and legends that inhabited this place, creating a cleavage between the dominant imaginary of the Chilean history and the subjective colonial experiences of the indigenous groups in this village, as noted by one of the interviewees:

‘The conflict in itself [. . .] generates a transformation of identities because in order to look for arguments to defend your vital place you start returning to history [. . .] I have to argue for why I
It is clear to me why I have to oppose the pollution of the place I have lived for my whole life, and in the end you realize that you and your parents have lived there all your life and all the previous generations have lived there [...] and that in fact that place [...] was a territory linked to another much broader territory, and there were political relations and interchanges with Mapuche from the other side of the mountains, and you realize that there is a profound history [...] and you start feeling that you are a part of that, and responsible for defending that history'.

(Interview Mehuín-3, 2012)

This reconceptualization of the history of the place contributed to the construction of a strong division between the members of this village and the outside world. The territorial identity dictated the acceptability of the project and also the distrust in the deliberative processes of the EIA (author’s interviews, Valdivia and Mehuín, 2012). In Mehuín none of the interviewees believed that engaging in deliberation would have helped them defend themselves against the risks of a pipeline being approved. The history of the place therefore created the boundaries between the community and those in favour of the project and this boundary also affected the locals’ (un)willingness to enter into dialogue with the project proponents. Because of this, all of the interviewees expressed distrust in any sort of dialogue with the company and the local authorities in charge of the EIA. As one of them put it:

‘There is no effective dialogue with them, because it means that you give a “yes” to the construction of a pipeline and you receive some economic compensation... This type of project, because you build a pipeline to the sea to dump the toxic waste, means death, there is no way out of it. It means the death of the fish, the shellfish, killing a source of income, polluting a place that has a ritual significance, ceremonial importance, that is part of a territorality, part of our identity, of our sons and daughters, our grandparents’. (Interview Mehuín-3, 2012)

Relations to Nature

How the community members related to nature created differences in terms of what kind of claims could be raised and considered valid and rational in each location. In Valdivia, the state of nature was a ‘non-issue’ at the time when the public debate over the desirability of the pulp mill was initiated:

‘The Valdivians did not have a clue [about the environment], for the common Valdivians the sanctuary was not important, the sanctuary could not give them any jobs’. (Interview Valdivia-7, 2012)

This dissociated attitude towards the environment was confirmed by the debate in the editorials and the letters to the editor in El Diario Austral, where those in favour of the investment either placed high hopes on the technology coming from advanced industrialized countries (editorial 11 February1996; editorial 10 February1996; letter to the editor 18 February1996a; letter to the editor 8 March1996) or were of the opinion that the negative changes in the environment were justified as the investment was so important...

To sustain the reproduction of life within the industry-focused imaginary that reigned in Valdivia, nature was not directly connected to the daily practices of the community members. Even those engaged in defending the conservation value of the local environment, did not rely on it for their subsistence, but defended it because of their own personal conviction of the importance of environmental protection. As one of the interviewees noted on his motivation to participate:

‘[I participated] out of conviction, I think more an environmental, ethical and political conviction. We wanted to create some noise, to tell these guys, to their face, that actually we were not going to remain quiet. What motivated me was the fact that at least we were going to create some sort of environmental consciousness, which at that point didn’t exist’. (Interview Valdivia-7, 2012)

In Mehuín, nature was an integral part of the villager’s identity and their everyday lives. Access to a clean ocean was a matter of survival for this community and it also constituted the basis of its food security and local culture, and the conservation of both of these, as one of the interviewees noted:

‘In Mehuín it is not only the economy that is connected to the river and the sea but also the local identity. What for some was a purely environmental issue was for others a much more complex situation because your livelihood was at stake. If they pollute the sea and the river in Mehuín, the people will not be able to fish and there will be migration to be able to work in the salmon industry elsewhere’. (Interview Mehuín-3, 2012)

The interviews in Mehuín and the accounts presented in the documentaries revealed a distinct construction of the natural world in comparison to that of the accounts emerging from Valdivia and in the public debate that arose in El Diario Austral. Expressions such as ‘the sea takes care of us’ (Interview Mehuín-1, 2012), and is ‘the connection to our source of life and our spirituality’ (Nahuelpan in Nahuelpan, 2011), or ‘in the force of nature lies the force of us’ (Rosa’s brother in Nahuelpan, 2011), clearly distinguish the role of nature as a guardian of the people and its interlinked connection to the community members. This conceptualization of nature is quite different to how the proponents and opponents in Valdivia referred to nature. Nature was not only part of the community members’ livelihoods, it was the something that protected them and supported them in their daily lives. This distinction underlines the political role of nature as a source of power and it expands the notion of politics to also include nonhumans in the political playing field (de la Cadena, 2010; Radcliffe, 2014). What this type of conceptualization of the world suggests is that humans, nature, and place are part of an interconnected reality. Such analytical categorization escapes the rationality concept of the modern world (Blaser, 2010; de la Cadena, 2010; Escobar, 2008) making it very difficult to raise such claims within an imaginary and scientific assumption that views nature as separated from human life. In fact, one of the interviewees in Mehuín noted that their arguments were not ‘scientific’ enough and that they were classified as ignorant during the EIA process:
‘While the mill was not built, while it did not pollute the river, while the swans didn’t die, we were classified as ignorant people, who lacked the arguments to oppose. Moreover, it was impossible for the fishermen to compare themselves to the people in Valdivia because [the latter] were more scientific, more ‘educated’ […] it was really such a grotesque thing’ (Interview Mehuín-2, September 2012)

The exclusion of their claims in the public debate created distrust in deliberation as a mechanism that could protect the village from the pipeline. Instead the villagers chose not to rely on the public debate but to construct a strong local unity in the defence of their territory, as noted by two of the interviewees:

‘At some point in the beginning we thought it would help [to raise awareness through the press], but later we realized that no… that while we had our organization, the strong base here, there was no need [for deliberation] because while we were strong here it forced the senators to come here, and they came here with the press’. (Interview Mehuín-1, September 2012)

‘No it wasn’t through the press that we did it… It came down to some basic questions: we thought, where is the weakness in all this? And we found the weakness: if the company cannot obtain the data, and if they cannot do the research, then it cannot be evaluated, and if it cannot be evaluated, then it can’t be resolved. That is the issue’. (Interview Mehuín-2, September 2012)

Means of Subsistence

How the community members went about getting food on their table not only created a clear distinction between how social life was imagined in each community, but it also created the boundaries of what type of economic activity was framed as welcome in the public debate in each location. The dependence on the external market to make a living limited the political debate about the desirability of the investment in Valdivia, where both the political right and left supported the arrival of employment opportunities in the region:

‘If you look at the panorama in 1996 in Valdivia, the people from the conservative right-wing sectors and even to the workers union, people from the left, they were all in favour of the project. The people that were of a different opinion, we were very few and we seemed crazy’. (Interview Valdivia-2, 2012)

The dependence on salaried employment for subsistence and the fear of losing one’s job made it difficult to publically raise claims against the investment:

‘It’s not that the people here are misinformed, they know what is going on, but the people are afraid of losing their jobs. If they lose their jobs they are left with nothing.’ (Interview Valdivia-6, 2012)

The role of the company as one of the most important conglomerates in the country therefore influenced the level of open and free dialogue (free from individual interests) that could be conducted in Valdivia. There were wide expectations of job creation and
development in the region (Ehrnström-Fuentes, 2015). In this context, those who opposed the investment had little chance of gaining influence over decision-making outcomes. Their position partly changed after the swan deaths, giving them more visibility in the public discourses (Ehrnström-Fuentes, 2015). However, the community in Valdivia remained dependent on the pulp mill: closing down the entire factory would have left the community without subsistence. In this sense, the interests of the industry and those employed by it also influenced the kind of outcomes of the deliberation over the continuing operations of the mill that were regarded as desirable after the swans started dying.

In Mehuín, in contrast, the capacity to sustain life outside of the external market was directly related to access to a clean ocean. It was not the external market that predominantly determined the villagers’ capacity to maintain their subsistence but the availability of an unpolluted ocean bay.

‘What for some was a purely environmental issue was for others a much more complex situation because your livelihood was at stake. If they pollute the sea and the river in Mehuín, the people will not be able to fish and there will be migration to be able to work in the salmon industry elsewhere’. (Interview Mehuín-3, 2012)

As one of the interviewees explained, this community had been able to sustain life based on what the sea offered them and this made it possible for the younger generations to continue living their lives in the village:

‘The jobs, the source of employment here is the sea, most people live off the sea because here people are not professionals [...] they do not have a degree. Here, most children go to school until the 8th grade and then they go to the sea, because they can have enough to eat and subsist, because they can sell the shellfish’. (Interview Mehuín-1, 2012)

The community’s reliance on fishing and tourism therefore created a situation whereby the community formed an ‘internal consensus’ or unity against the arrival of the pulp mill. In the later stages of the conflict, when some of the villagers did negotiate compensation packages with the company, it was still the independence from the external market in terms of means of subsistence that made it possible for those who did not enter into dialogue – or negotiate – to refrain from engaging in deliberation with the corporate representatives, as noted by one of the interviewees:

‘A very important aspect has to do with the level of integration that the people had with the market... Those who had a higher level of subsistence or self-subsistence... these people had the capacity to not negotiate’. (Interview Mehuín-3, 2012)

The almost 20-year-long defence of Mehuín has been made possible because of the autonomy that those who choose to continue to resist the pipeline have maintained in terms of their subsistence. Engaging in some sort of deliberation that could bring the deliberating parties to a common understanding by destroying this autonomy was not seen as an option for those who valued their independence from the external markets:
The company doesn’t only sell cellulose pulp, it also sells forms of living. But well, there you have the option to choose. I am not interested in what you sell as a company, I am interested in living my life as I have always lived it, because nobody is my boss... one thing that the artisanal fishermen signal is the liberty that they have. The fisherman is not exploited through employment, but employed by himself and his necessities. He can choose tomorrow to go out on the sea but he can also choose not to and nothing happens. But well, the company sells something very contrary to that'. (Interview Mehuín-2, 2012)

Narratives of the Future

The difference in narratives of the future depicted different sets of priorities in each community. While there was a consensus on the need of development and progress in Valdivia, the locals in Mehuín had a common priority in the preservation of traditions and nature. In Valdivia, the proponents painted a picture of the improved living conditions, progress, and wellbeing that the industrial development would bring to the community (editorials 22 September1995; 21 April1996, letter to the editor 5 November1995; 23 July1996), as expressed for example in the following letter to the editor:

‘I invite all of the Valdivians and those who are not [from here] but who have adopted this place as their home, to once and for all overcome personal interests, and political ideologies, to join in our best efforts to support the construction of the Valdivia Project, the monumental installation of Celulosa Arauco Constitución which, I trust, will become real in the shortest term possible, as an indicator of progress, wellbeing, and improved prospects for thousands of inhabitants in our region’. (Letter to the editor 23 July1996)

The opponents in Valdivia did not reject the need for development but they called for a development model that would not harm the environment and increase poverty as demonstrated by similar investments in other locations in the past (letters to the editor 12 September1995; 28 October1995; 18 December1995).

In Mehuín, the community members did not use the word ‘development’ to describe how they imagined their future in this place. Instead of a linear projection of time describing life as a trajectory of progress and improvement, all empirical material emerging from Mehuín signalled a circular notion of time, passing on the way of life from one generation to the next (letter to the editor; author’s interviews, September 2012, Nahuelpan, 2011):

‘Our defence as a family is that our children can see themselves in our territory in the future, and with the interruption of a pipeline from Celulose Arauco that is impossible. The defence is about being able to continue our way of life and the connection we have with our territory’, Rosa’s brother, Documentary Nahuelmapu, Mehuin, 2011.

This difference in the narratives in Mehuín made it possible to construct an alternative vision of the future that was not dependent on the progress (and the destruction) that industrial development would bring to the community, but on the preservation of life in
the form it had been previously imagined (on these type of imaginaries see Gudynas, 2011).

A letter to the editor written on behalf of the community also indicated the incommensurability of the priorities between the development proposed to benefit the community of Mehuín with the arrival of the project, and those of the priorities of the community members:

‘Under no circumstances is our village for sale [referring to an offer to receive compensation for loss of livelihood]. We ask ourselves what would an advanced payment on behalf of the company Celulosa Arauco serve us when the pollution and just the presence of the installations would end everything? Bread today, hunger tomorrow. In light of all this, Celulosa Arauco y Constitución should look for other alternatives that do not mean the destruction of a village’. (Letter to the editor, 9 July 1996)

The narrative of the future in Mehuín made it possible to construct a local unity, a local consensus, on the need to preserve nature in order to continue life in its current form. This unity is what made it possible to construct a defence of the village outside the EIA and the public debate in the media. The difference in narratives of how the future was imagined in Valdivia and in Mehuín therefore also reveals the articulation of difference towards globalization (Escobar, 2008). Both the proposed project itself and the spaces where the deliberation process took place were embedded in a context where desires for increased modernity and development dominated. To engage in a dialogue under such circumstances could have had serious consequences for those defending an alternative narrative of the future. In this case, if ‘development’ would have been allowed to structure the desires of the local community as a whole, it would have also destroyed not only the livelihoods of the locals but also their own narratives of how the future could be imagined.

DISCUSSION

The findings from this study show that local communities with different social imaginaries and different relations to the global market forces have different starting points when offered the possibility to engage in deliberation. What is considered rational, and legitimate cannot be detached from the place in which deliberation takes place and this also influences different stakeholders’ capacities to engage in a meaningful dialogue in deliberative spaces where they feel that their claims are regarded as irrational or inferior. In the comparison of the social imaginaries of Valdivia and Mehuín, the differing social imaginaries and the differing relations to global markets not only created different perceptions of what is morally right in each location but also affected what kind of social organizing of (economic) life was perceived as legitimate in each community. This structured the kind of public debate that emerged in each location and marked the limits of engaging in meaningful dialogue within a deliberative system that was structured by the modern imaginary.

Table III summarizes and compares the most significant differences found in the comparison of the social imaginaries in the previous section, and the effects these differences
had on how the willingness to engage in dialogue. In each community, differences were noted in how the community members related to their past history of (non-)industrial development, their relation to nature, their means of subsistence, and how they articulated their visions of the future within their communities. These differences created the underlying conditions for (non-)engagement in dialogue within the deliberative spaces in each location.

The memories of past social life affected the desirability of the project at the outset of the conflict, created a dominant approval of the project in Valdivia with its historical industrial roots, while rejecting it in the village of Mehuín with a past not directly connected to the global (industrial) markets. These place-based memories created differences in terms of how locals made sense of the desirability of the project, forming a dominant support for the project in Validivia while a rejection of it in Mehuín already before deliberation started in each location.

The relations to nature of the inhabitants in each community (detached or interlinked) affected the types of claims raised and thereby also the kind of rationality used when defending nature. While the opponents in Valdivia followed the same epistemological and ontological assumptions as the proponents in terms or nature being detached and external to humans, in Mehuín the different epistemological assumption did not fit this rationality and could not therefore be ‘translated’ into valid and rational claims within the deliberative spaces defined by the modern social imaginary. The feeling of being treated as ignorant that prevailed among the interviewees also demonstrates the limitations of what kind of claims were regarded as rational, and how this created a sense of exclusion from the public debate. Consequently, this difference affected whose voice counted as valid within the deliberation processes, excluding voices that were not rational according to the modern knowledge system.

The means of subsistence in each location affected the community members’ capacity to engage in ‘free speech’ situations differently. The promise of employment opportunities in Valdivia created expectations and different interests favouring the investment, thus fragmenting and marginalizing those who opposed the project. In Mehuín the preservation of an unpolluted nature was crucial for the community to maintain the autonomy and the independence from external markets. This was also a reason why the

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locals were able to create a unified defence and refrain from deliberation in the beginning of the conflict. Thus, the different interests in terms of subsistence, created the boundaries for what kind of dialogue was welcomed in each location, while locally marginalizing those voices that threatened the dominant form of subsistence in each location.

Finally, while the future prosperity of the community members in Valdivia were imagined in terms of development and progress, in Mehuín an alternative narrative was articulated where the future was imagined as a continuation of the lives of previous generations. The consensus formed in Valdivia was therefore in favour of industrial development that could provide the community with progress and modernity. In Mehuín the emphasis on the circular notion of time and humans living in balance with nature created a dominant narrative of a different future than the one proposed by the project proponents. Whether this narrative existed before the arrival of the conflict, or if it was a product of the conflict itself cannot be determined based on the data collected for this study. However, the narrative made it possible for the community to signal difference and local unity against the state project of national growth and development, and the corporate interests of accessing their living environment.

The cases of the disputes over the Valdivia pulp mill are unique in the sense that they emerged in two contexts that do not necessarily replicate themselves easily in other places. The historical processes and the actors involved, as well as how the conflicts played out in each location were specific to these two places. It is not a coincidence that others refer to the struggle in Mehuín as one of a kind and the only successful environmental struggle in the Chilean history (author’s interviews, 2012). However, numerous place-based conflicts over natural resources (Blaser, 2010; Escobar, 2008; Haughney, 2012; Kowalczyk, 2013; Kröger, 2014; Misoczky, 2011; Rodriguez, 2013; Walter and Martinez-Alier, 2010; Zibechi, 2012) indicate that similar struggles over diverging imaginaries also take place in other locations. Theories on consensus and deliberation are very limiting when trying to make sense of such events of resistance and contention.

What do the two cases on (non-)participation in the deliberation over the Valdivia pulp mill investment reveal in terms of creating legitimacy through stakeholder dialogues? First of all, legitimacy cannot be detached from the place where it is being disputed. There are multiple perspectives on what is deemed desirable, all dependent on place-based social imaginaries. This means that drawing on an abstract modern reason that has emerged from European experiences to determine the morality of corporate conduct is not possible in places where the collective memory is determined by other social experiences and other local histories (Chakrabarty, 2000; Mignolo, 2000).

The findings from Valdivia and Mehuín raise questions about how mutual understanding can arise in places where incommensurable differences exist and historical processes exclude some stakeholders as equals in the deliberation processes. More than basing corporate legitimacy on processes of dialogue that excludes rather than includes, it is therefore necessary to acknowledge that how community members make sense of their past, present, and future socio-natural worlds have a profound impact on how corporations are accepted locally. Failing to respect locally grounded and distinct imaginaries does not encourage mutual understanding. Instead, such systems of exclusion more than soothing conflicts aggravate them, by forcing the excluded to defend their position.
outside the premises of dialogue. Suggesting that stakeholder dialogues can remedy the legitimacy deficiency of global MNCs runs the risk of favouring the interests of those who stand to gain from the presence of the MNC, at the expense of those on the losing side of the equation.

If the reasons behind encouraging MNCs to engage in stakeholder dialogues through different kinds of governance systems are to counter corporate power, the lack of nation-state governance, and increase the democratic accountability of private enterprises (Scherer and Palazzo, 2011), it is important to note that the current scenario of globalization is by no means new for local communities threatened by corporate activities in the form of ‘extractivism’ (Gudynas, 2012, 2013). Since the outset of industrialization, or even the discovery of the Americas, the industrial world has been dependent on natural resources and cheap labour at the expense of the locals and their own imaginaries (Mignolo, 2000). Instead, the challenges faced by the corporate world today, as the findings from Mehuin in this study also indicate, reside in the coming alive and the strengthening of the social imaginaries of the locals themselves. Many of these ‘societies in movement’ (Zibechi, 2012), who fight for the right to existence on their own terms are doing so by constructing and sustaining their own legitimacies of difference in relation to the model of extractivism that is imposed on them (Gudynas, 2012, 2013). Restoring some form of durable social peace between the corporations and these communities must start with the acknowledgement of the community’s right to difference, and not from the assumption that there is a universally accepted conceptualization of the world.

What meaning could political CSR hold for these communities depends very much on the corporate world’s capacity to change its direction in the future. If the corporate world is incapable of changing how it relates to local communities in places where no common interests exist, then political CSR risks being interpreted as a tool of co-option of local dissent (Zibechi, 2012), incapable of reducing social conflicts with those who hold alternative imaginaries. In contrast, adapting a vision of political CSR as a tool of transition towards the imagining of a pluriversal world, where multiple place-specific local legitimacies co-exist, all considered as equal alternatives for the future, also opens up the possibility for the co-construction of corporate/community legitimacies. The primary challenge of such political CSR lies in the leadership required from business leaders to rescale and reorganize corporate activities so that, rather than being a destructive feature of local livelihoods, they aim at constructing local economic alternatives that supports the co-existence of different forms of life.

CONCLUSIONS

In this article I have argued that in order to understand how corporate legitimacy is upheld in particular places it is not enough to rely on an abstract notion of consensus-driven stakeholder dialogues or the assumption that the action of an entity is considered appropriate within a dominant socially constructed system of norms, values and beliefs. Instead, the notion of pluriversal legitimacies acknowledges the existence of different place-based social imaginaries that structure not only the perception of what is deemed morally right in a particular community but also the possibilities for different
stakeholders to engage in meaningful dialogues. The role of political CSR in this context
depends on the capacity of businesses to change their course of action; either it should
be seen as a set of practices that strive to hide and co-opt diverging locally constituted
and differing legitimacies, or as a tool of transformation that aims at realigning corpo-
rate activities so that they comply with the boundaries of the communities that they
depend on.

In this study, the values embedded in each community have been analysed in terms
of the position of the proponents and opponents in each location. As such, this approach
runs the risk of essentializing imaginaries and presenting the sentiments towards the mill
as being very black and white, leaving little space for a nuanced interpretation of how
realities are socially constructed in multiple ways. In addition, the empirical material
from each location may leave the impression that Valdivia was completely immersed in
a modern social imaginary and Mehuín was completely cut off from the modern world.
It is important to note that in both locations there may have been multiple and hybrid
imaginaries as well as different degrees of integration with the external markets among
community members. Nevertheless, the differences detected in this study refer to how
those who were engaged in the legitimacy creation for or against the pulp mill made
sense of their world depending on the location where they stood in terms of the project.
Therefore, it is important to note that the description of the different imaginaries as pre-
scribed above should not be interpreted as an absolute difference in all realms of social
life. Instead the differences in imaginaries emerge in the border areas between those
who were supportive of this particular industrial investment and those who saw it as a
threat towards themselves or the natural habitat of their surroundings.

To build a strong empirical base for the arguments raised in this study, I have made
use of multiple sources of empirical data. My own position as a visiting and foreign
researcher has impacted both the empirical material made available to me in a setting
marked by conflicting positions and the type of analysis I could conduct based on my
own personal experiences and knowledge frameworks. All accounts used in the compar-
ative analysis visualize certain sentiments that prevailed in the communities at a particu-
lar point in time. However, they do not include all the perceptions that may have
existed during almost two decades of dispute. The interviews and accounts in the docu-
mentaries supported and complemented the findings from the newspaper material. Fur-
thermore, observations made during local hearings on the certification process (FSC) of
forestry plantation in the region, visits in and around the disputed locations, meetings
with indigenous groups in other locations all point in the same direction as the argument
raised in this study: the existence of diverging social imaginaries play a crucial role when
stakeholders refrain from participating in dialogues.

To continue examining the world as a pluriverse instead of a universe, and its effect
on the legitimacy of the firm, future research should engage in understanding the role of
corporations in a pluriversal world. How to be a responsible corporation in a pluriversal
world may require that new questions should be asked: What is needed from the corpo-
rate world in order to respect and acknowledge the existence of communities that do
not want to become victims of projects that destroy their livelihoods? What are the
boundaries and premises for co-existence between the modern industrial world and
those whose livelihoods are endangered? The emerging, alternative ways for organizing

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and understanding social and economic interaction through different types of economies (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Schumacher, 1999); postdevelopment (Escobar, 2015; Gudynas, 2012, 2013), degrowth (Kallis, 2011), new rationalities (Maturana and Førksen, 2010; Weber, 2013), and the transition movement (Hopkins, 2008) may prove useful when seeking answers to these questions.

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NOTES

[1] There are several distinct features between decolonial and postcolonial studies, albeit with similarities in terms of how they problematize the universalizing effects that Western epistemology has on the colonized and subaltern. Decolonial thinking emerges from Latin American historical processes in contrast to the Asian perspective of postcolonialism (Mignolo, 2011). Furthermore, ‘coloniality’ is here perceived as the occluded but constitutive part of modernity and as such it is not, in contrast to colonialism, part of the past but continues to mutate through the power of the rhetoric of modernity (i.e., the promise of development, economic growth, progress) that hides the sacrifices made by those who suffer from the logics of coloniality (Mignolo, 2000, 2011). By delinking epistemically from this rhetoric, building on theories in the borders (Mignolo, 2000) or outside of modern thought (Dussel, 2013) (postcolonial working mostly within), it is possible to articulate new possibilities for all of humanity, in particular for the previously excluded and oppressed (Dussel, 2013).

[2] COPEC, a holding company including gas stations, mining interests, shipyards, forestry products and insurance.

[3] Extractivism refers to the exploitation of large volumes of natural resources that are exported as commodities and enslaves local economies to that particular economy (i.e., mining, petrol, monocultures of soy, or industrial tree plantations) (Gudynas, 2012).

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CONFRONTING FORESTRY DEVELOPMENT: THE CULTIVATION OF ‘ALTERNATIVES TO DEVELOPMENT’ IN THE URUGUAYAN COUNTRYSIDE

Abstract

Based on the testimonies of small-scale farmers in rural Uruguay who have been adversely affected by neighbouring forestry plantations, this study asks: given the almost universal acceptance of the desirability of forestry development, how can those whose livelihoods are threatened by the arrival of forestry projects in their communities construct broader support for their claims? This question is explored through a case study of the Forestry Sector in Uruguay, where the political support for such industrial projects has been reinforced by the extended border conflict with Argentina over the construction of a pulp mill. Through the testimonies of three affected farmers, the study finds two different coping strategies are being used by those whose livelihoods are threatened by the spread of plantations: one based on traditional forms of resistance – by organising and raising claims in the public sphere; the other engaged in politics of place, altering the meanings and values embedded in land among local community members. The article explores the potential of the two different strategies to change the currently favourable conditions for forestry development, and thereby also challenge the future of new forestry ventures in rural Uruguay.

Key words: Alternatives to development, extractivism, Forestry, resistance, social movements, Uruguay
**Introduction**

Research on the extractive industries in the global south has recently shown an increased interest in the conflicts that emerge between ‘those who bear the brunt of development’ (Banerjee 2011) and the multinational corporations in charge of that development (Banerjee 2000; Banerjee 2011, Bebbington et al. 2008; Bebbington 2012; Gilbertthorpe and Banks 2012; Halboom 2012; Hilson 2012; Kapleus 2002; Misoczky 2011; Mutti et al. 2012; Stetson 2012). The increased resistance and pressure from local communities, indigenous peoples and environmental NGOs is shaping the political landscape in terms of who has the right to access local land and resources.

Recent debates on governance in a world marked by globalisation, on the contrary, have stressed the importance of cross-sector partnerships (Koschmann et al. 2012; Loza 2004; Austin and Seitadini 2012a; 2012b) and the role public discourses and civil society can play in shaping the norms to which transnational corporations must abide (Palazzo and Scherer 2006; Scherer and Palazzo 2007; Baur and Palazzo 2011). In parallel, other scholars discuss how social movements can force change in terms of how firms operate and relate to their stakeholders (den Hond and De Bakker 2007; Tilly 2004; Keck and Sikink 1998; King 2008; Soule 2009). Embedded in these discussions is the assumption that the actors (or ‘stakeholders’ – to use the terminology of the governance literature) affected by the corporations have the ability to mobilise a unified front to raise awareness and also that they are by themselves powerful enough to engage in a dialogue that seeks common solutions to the problems at hand.

However, the dynamics of corporate-community relations in the extractive industry are marked by win-lose situations, or positions of incommensurabilities: what is one party’s gain is the other party’s loss. For the extractive industry, how desirable their presence is perceived in the location of the natural resources determines both their access to land and resources as well as to financing and markets (Owen and Kemp 2013). For those whose livelihoods and lifestyles are threatened by the arrival of foreign companies, achieving recognition for their claims is part of a wider fight for the survival of worldviews that run counter to the dominant desire for development and modernisation (Banerjee 2011; Escobar 1995; 2008; 2010; Stetson 2012). When community members are truly marginalised, or even excluded from the public debate, the space to achieve recognition for their claims by a wider audience may be restricted (Ehrnström-Fuentes 2015). In fact, Gerber (2010) notes that many livelihood struggles in the forestry sector never go beyond locally restricted ‘everyday forms of resistance’, and thus lack the capacity to defend their right to subsistence and livelihood on rural land. In contrast to this pessimistic outlook for rural communities, Misoczky (2011) relates two livelihood struggles in Peru and Ecuador, where indigenous groups through the revitalisation of their ancestral cultures and histories have managed to question the whole logic of development and create alternatives, where they ‘bring to the foreground their epistemologies and the values which define their economic and political organizations’ (Misoczky 2011:358). Bebbington et al. (2008) also find in their study that when unified in their struggle, social movements in Peru have managed to force a debate on the desirability of mining activities on rural land and have modified the dominant meaning of rural development. These studies indicate that there may be multiple strategies at work when marginalised community members construct resistance against the corporations that threaten their own existence.

In Uruguay the border conflict with Argentina regarding the construction of one of the world’s largest pulp mills has reinforced the support for such mega-development projects among Uruguayans. The arrival of the left-wing ‘Frente Amplio’ in
government, and the change in the party's attitude towards these types of investments has also weakened and silenced the political opposition to these projects. Still, many Uruguayan smallholders continue to resist the spread of eucalyptus tree plantations in their neighbourhoods. However, their claims and their ability to form a strong social movement to counter forestry development have been undermined by the political environment in the national context and by the Argentinean border conflict. These farmers are thus engaged in a struggle of the marginalised and are excluded in the truest sense of the word: cut off from the political discourses and without popular support they fight from a position of exclusion.

The goal of this study is two-fold: First, I aim to bring forward the struggle of those that remain excluded in the global governance literature: the stakeholders who are actively produced as absences because of their incommensurable position in relation to globalisation and more specifically the global extractive industry. Second, based on the testimonies of small-scale farmers in rural Uruguay, I seek to relate how the Uruguayan family farmers confront, resist or take action against the forestry development that threatens their way of living. By presenting the stories of the farmers themselves in the format of testimonies, the study aims to give the excluded a voice in the academic literature, rather than merely being represented through statistics or interpreted as an outer reality emerging from interview material. This approach makes it possible to visualise the experienced reality of the often silenced 'others', expressed through their own wor(l)ds.

Strictly defined, the forestry industry, due to its vast use of arable land, is often referred to as part of the agribusiness industry (Kröger 2007; 2010; 2014), or – as the industry portrays itself – as part of the renewable resources industry (Stora Enso 2011; UPM 2012). However, as has been noted in previous studies (Böhm and Brei 2008, Gerber 2010; Kröger 2012; Labarca 2008) and as will become evident through the testimonies in this study, one of the core disputes between neighbouring communities and the forestry industry is the question of water availability and its impact on neighbouring communities. For the communities affected, the plantations are extractive in the sense that they extract large quantities of water from the soil, with significant environmental implications for the surrounding land and community (author’s interviews, 2012). Furthermore, it is important to note that ‘extractivism’ is a term that is increasingly being used beyond the traditional sectors of oil and mining, by including farming, forestry and fishing. As such it refers to the industrial activities that extract large quantities of unprocessed, or almost unprocessed, natural resources destined towards export markets with few benefits for the locals (see Gudynas 2013).

The perspective that this study takes focuses on the dynamics of resistance towards forestry on the local level. This is not to say that how local movements engage and connect to global debates against globalisation through, for example, networks such as La Via Campesina (LVC), is not important. LVC is an important global solidarity movement that has forced a global critique ‘from below’ against the development discourse and market-driven agricultural policies that threaten the livelihoods of traditional rural communities (Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2010; Desmarais 2002). However, this study focuses on the role of the farmers themselves in constructing local resistance and local alternatives that can help them defend their claims for the right to existence, and their position of difference against globalisation and (forestry) development.

The farmers’ testimonies in this study reveal that two sets of strategies are being used to confront the development of the forestry industry in their communities: one by
trying to create awareness and unity for change of their current situation by publically opposing the investments, and one by seeking to create a new set of values and beliefs in the local sphere by reconnecting the rural population to a territorial identity and reviving ancient norms and place-based identities. To date, neither strategy has proved particularly successful in overturning the support that the forestry sector has been enjoying in Uruguay. However, the study ends with a discussion of how the two strategies could be successful in the long term, halting the current trend of forestry expansion, and questioning the legitimacy of the norms supported by the political elite, nationally, and the multinational corporations, globally.

**Theoretical Framework**

To understand the perspective of the marginalised and excluded in the context of rural development, it is important to look at how the political support for large-scale development projects has been discursively constructed in the past, working in favour of some interests while marginalising others. In his path-breaking book ‘Encountering development: the making and the un-making of the Third World’, Arturo Escobar (1995) describes how the ‘under-developed Third World’ was invented and constructed through a carefully designed discourse first introduced in President Truman’s inaugural speech for the UN in 1949. In the quest for development and the underdeveloped countries’ progressive routes towards modernisation, traditional livelihoods were regarded as superfluous societies inhabited by ‘a somewhat bothersome and undifferentiated mass with an invisible face’ (Escobar 1995;157). This same logic was later reproduced when rural peasants were targeted to transform their traditional farming activities into productive units focused on efficient and large-scale production in the market economy. Escobar (1995) notes that ‘the rural development discourse repeats the same relation that has defined the development discourse since its emergence: the fact that development is about growth, about capital, about technology, about becoming modern. Nothing else.’ (p. 162). In this setting the rural population would either be absorbed by the urban economy or moved ‘out of low productivity agriculture’ (p. 161). Thus, the type of reasoning present in this discourse did not account for family farmers whose livelihoods were not determined by capital, technological and productive advancement. Instead, the discourse on development assumed that these farmers would naturally disappear as ‘the underdeveloped’ countries modernised and developed (Escobar 1995; Teubal and Ortega Breña 2009). For the farmers, this assumption has created a situation where their claims for the right to livelihood on their own terms are not accounted for, but are assumed to disappear as modernity takes over their farm lands. In the political discourses, where development remains the main reference point on how to imagine the future, these voices are therefore converted into ‘absences’, produced as ‘non-existent’ in the debate over the future (see Sociology of absences by de Sousa Santos 2013).

In the Latin American context, the dire consequences for rural communities of the development policies implemented by their governments and the intensified exploitation of natural resources in the extractive industries have increased the local awareness of the adverse effects of development projects on the local communities (Gudynas 2013; Zibechi 2012; Escobar 2008; Stahler-Sholk et al. 2008). As a consequence new social movements that mobilise to defend rural interests have emerged. Zibechi (2012) calls the new powerful form of social mobilisation in Latin America the ‘territorialisation of the movements’ (p. 14). The communities that emerge as movements do so by building new political and cultural identities that are inherently linked to the space they occupy (Zibechi 2012). The movements are not primarily
focused on class struggles. Thus, interpreting the movements as an ideological struggle between the right and left may limit the understanding of what is really at stake, and how the movements organise in terms of resisting development (Blaser and de la Cadena 2009).

Castree (2004) talks of ‘differential geography’ where communities struggle to obtain ‘the right to make their own places, rather than have them made for them’ (Castree 2004, p. 136). The term ‘territories of difference’ (Escobar 2008) links the social struggle to a particular place, and the historical, cultural, environmental and social meaning among movement members. Through conscious daily practices, engaging in politics of place (Escobar 2001), these places acquire a new meaning as sites of ‘dynamic cultures, economies, and environments rather than just nodes in a global capitalist system’ (Escobar 2008, p. 67). Blaser (2010) sustains that what is at stake where these movements emerge, in the form of ‘rupturist stories’ that challenge globalisation and development, defending the right to their own worlds and their life projects, are in fact ontological conflicts about how to shape the global age as an alternative to, rather than a continuation of, modernity:

‘Ontological conflicts are central to the time both because they reveal that alternatives to modernity do exist and because they force modernity to reshape itself in order to deal with radical difference.’ (Blaser 2010, p. 2).

The exclusion of certain social groups from the political playing field, or the ‘production of absences’ (de Sousa Santos 2013) that the discourse of development (or more broadly the ‘rhetoric of modernity’, see Mignolo 2011) has led to, is what changes the logics of the social struggle. When included, the political subjects can raise claims, carry out demonstrations and engage in the ‘contestations of discourses’ (Dryzek 2001) that create resonance in society at large and thus demand change for their social demands. However, when working from a position of exclusion, the methods to break the relations of domination must follow a different logic, a logic that is ‘subterranean’ or ‘hidden’ in terms of not being visible before it becomes mobilised (Zibechi 2012).

For these place-bound movements, Zibechi maintains that the key to carrying out a process of mobilisation is ‘the politicization of social and cultural differences’. He then argues that to politicise difference is to become conscious of the rationality and the discourses that govern the subjects. By engaging in popular education, this consciousness of difference provides the politically excluded (in dominant discourses) the necessary agency to build a new world for themselves in the spaces that they occupy (Zibechi 2012). The territorialisation of the movement takes place as new territories and new relationships are formed. It is precisely this ‘tie that binds’ the collective community to the geographic territory (Zibechi 2012) that gives them the strength to challenge the status-quo of the hegemonic discourses and imaginaries that exclude them from political life. This is the kind of politics of place that the excluded engage in, in order to build resistance that supports how they view their own future.

‘These movements have achieved something quite simple, yet utterly profound: they occupy territories, defend them, and within these spaces create new social relations. This new ‘territoriality’ exercised by the movements distinguishes them from older ones and from their counterparts of the First World, and it is what has allowed them to reverse neoliberalism’s strategic defeat of the workers’ movement. Their territories are spaces of self-organization and power, in which new ways of organizing society are being collectively constructed.’ (Zibechi 2012).
The conceptualisation of these movements as geographically/territorially/ontologically bound, or as movements that engage in political struggles of difference through a territorial dimension, challenges the assumptions that the strength of social movements lies in their capacity to engage in the public political debate through unity and public resonance, made visible through boycotts, demonstrations, solidarity movements and transnational advocacy networks (e.g. den Hond and De Bakker 2007; Tilly 2004; Keck and Sikkink; 1998, King 2008; Soule 2009). By bringing the struggle and its politics back to the actual place being disputed, these movements build their collective identities in their daily practices, by giving meaning to and defending the place that their world (culturally and epistemologically) depends on.

Social mobilisation in the forestry sector

Evidence from the forestry industry indicates that rural populations have directly experienced the dire consequences of the implementation of the development discourse in the political policies that affect their livelihoods. In Chile, Clapp (1998) reports how local peasants ended up selling their land and moving to urban areas as a result of coercive tactics of the corporations such as exposing livestock, crops, and people to pesticides, isolating communities with plantations, and prohibiting people from accessing land they previously had the right to access (see also Fletcher 2001; Haughney 2006; Kowalczyk 2013). Kröger (2012) reports how local farmers in Brazil were enticed into selling their land in the hope of creating a better life for themselves and their children in urban areas. Later, this produced a domino effect where others were forced to do the same as their farms were soon surrounded by walls of eucalyptus plantations, with fewer neighbours and public services (Kröger 2012). Farmers in Brazil have also been forced to sell their land due to the debts and risks involved in the highly volatile ‘Green Revolution’ agriculture (Kröger 2012). Additionally, the arrival of tree plantations is reported to have further complicated rural life by causing water shortages in the areas surrounding industrial tree plantations (Gerber 2010). Thus, the coercive tactics of how ITPs have been implemented, and a lack of awareness of the effects that such transformations would have for the remaining rural population have weakened local resistance movements in the initial stages of plantation installation.

The rise of resistance against forestry projects, embodied in movements such as the landless movement (MST) in Brazil (Kröger 2011; 2012; 2014), and the Mapuche indigenous resistance in Chile (Labarca 2008; Gomez-Barris 2012; Tricot 2013), demonstrate that the affected rural populations also actively engage in opposing projects that threaten their livelihoods. They are not absent nor do they lack agency in defending their position outside of the discourses that seek to exclude them. Experience from Brazil, for example, shows that attempts to re-appropriate lost territory or to halt further expansion of plantations has been most successful when the protesters have used multiple strategies simultaneously: organising and politicising a movement, targeted campaigning, protesting, networking within the state whilst still retaining autonomy (Kröger 2011; 2014). In Chile, the Mapuche resistance movement follows various political strategies (Labarca 2008; Kowalczyk 2013). Their efforts to regain access to ancestral lands has resulted in a (limited) state-funded land restitution programme which gives access to lost land to certain groups of the Mapuche community (Labarca 2008).

Part of the landless movement strategy in Brazil is to build territories of difference through a tactic of politics of place. Through their daily practices the movement’s members aim at creating radical alternatives where territorial, social, and symbolic
practices are interlinked (Kröger 2014). Furthermore, the mystical and strongly emotional rituals of daily drama plays (Místicas) connect different people to a common cause of defending the land (Kröger 2014). This construction of a social space separated from the dominant social space in society has allowed the previously oppressed and marginalised social groups to build a strong resistance based on radical alternatives for the future (Kröger 2014).

The politicising of the landless movement in Brazil has also included the construction of educational programmes aimed at raising public awareness of their current situation of oppression and their natural right to access land (Kröger 2014). According to Kröger, the efforts to change the movement’s members’ relationship to nature has created a binding tie to place, allowing for a strong defence of their land in conflict situations (Kröger 2014, 64). In this sense, how the members relate to land is important for the long-term success of the movement, since when nature is valued for more than its economic potential the members are less likely to accept monetary compensation for loss of livelihood (Kröger 2014). Instead, their holistic relation to land allows the movement members to envisage an alternative way to organise rural life (Kröger 2014).

The Mapuche struggle is not unified in its social organising nor are the goals of the different organisations the same. Some aim for increased representation and inclusiveness in the Chilean system while others take a more radical stand in terms of decolonising the Mapuche identity in order to achieve total autonomy from the colonising state and neoliberalism (Kowalczyk 2013). Still, as Labarca (2008) notes, the movement has been able to revitalise its strengths and demands by relying on ancient memories of the landscape and an understanding of their own past. These memories of the past are used to legitimise their demands, empowering the Mapuche to reconstruct their territorial identity (Labarca 2008). Furthermore, they have strategically chosen to focus on the local struggles to position themselves in spaces where they can defend their claims based on their own culture and rights (Hale and Millaman cited in Labarca 2008).

Both the Landless struggle and the Mapuche resistance indicate that the politicisation of the movements is based on a position of difference in relation to the dominant trends of globalisation and development. In addition, the strength of the movements lies in the way they have incorporated the territory they occupy as a defining feature and created ties that bind them together in their defence of their world and life projects against the global forces that threaten their very existence. In terms of how the farmers position themselves against the project, the testimonies from Uruguay presented below reveal both differences and similarities to these ongoing struggles in Chile and Brazil. Before presenting the testimonies, the methodological assumptions and implications of using testimonies as a form of storytelling method are discussed.

**Methodology**

The method selected to shed light on the resistance against forestry development is that of storytelling, or more precisely testimonies. This method is chosen to create an understanding of how marginalised voices try to counter dominant discourses that threaten their livelihoods based on their own stories. Storytelling as a research genre has become increasingly important in academic research in recent years. It has been used to study questions of sense-making (Brown and Humphreys 2003; Gabriel 1995), communication, politics, and identity (Rhodes and Brown 2005). Used in a critical research agenda, and particularly in feminist research, this method can give visibility
and meaning to otherwise ignored, marginalised or oppressed voices (Fosl 2008; Gugelberger and Kearney 1991; Smith 2011). Testimonies (or ‘Testimonios’ in Spanish, as most of the work within this genre has emerged from Latin American countries, the most celebrated example being the testimony of Guatemalan Rigoberta Menchú in the book I, Rigoberta Menchú) are a distinct form of storytelling where the experience of one person may symbolise the experience of a whole group of people (Yudice 1991), where ‘the witness portrays his or her own experience as an agent (rather than a representative) of a collective memory and identity.’ (p. 17). Smith (2011) notes that the form of testimony varies greatly and as a genre its greatest strength is that it can be used in various ways ‘to give voice to the voiceless’ (p. 27).

The reason that the genre is common in the Latin American context may be attributed to the historical processes of colonisation and nation-building and the role of patriarchy. Maloof (1999) notes that ‘citizens’ in the modern Nation-state of Latin America ‘implied a landed, upper-class white or mestizo male, whereas women and indigenous populations were ignored and excluded from the symbolic configurations of the nation’ (p. 4). Given their subaltern position in the public debate, the women had to resort to other ways of making their views heard and engaging in politics. Through testimonies women have been able to make visible their otherwise hidden reality by the discourses of power, rupturing the conventional images that restricted them to the position of subaltern, lacking agency (Caravantes 2012; Smith 2011). The small-scale farmers in this study are excluded from the public sphere by being produced as absences in the discourse of forestry development. Telling their stories through testimonies may help make them visible, both in terms of their role as agents of change, and in terms of their otherwise oppressed experiences of the effects that extractivism and development have had on their lives.

The concept of storytelling, according to Blaser (2010), is a way of practising knowledge: ‘My argument is that storytelling globalization is one of the many grounded ways through which the present moment is being shaped. But stories are told in different ways, and this difference is crucial for the kind of worlds that are currently taking shape.’ (p. 153) By letting the farmers speak for themselves, and thereby representing their own reality, the intention is to shape the present moment so that those stories that do not fit the dominant discourses on globalisation and development become visible and part of the story of territorial conflicts in the Global South. The method is used to shift ‘the locus of enunciation’, the geo–political and body–political location of the subject that speaks (Mignolo 2011), from the world of the investigator to the world of the ones who have experienced the oppression or the exclusion (see also Grosfogel 2011). The accuracy of these stories, in this sense, is not measured by external rationality concepts but it is perceived as a construct of the reality in which the farmers themselves are embedded. Thus the accuracy of the events is shaped by the farmers’ own experiences and realities. This approach acknowledges that other actors may have had a different perspective about the accuracy of the stories. Negating the accuracy of someone’s perspective, and thus rejecting it, is in a sense an ontological fallacy; from a relational ontology perspective, the issue is not to agree on a certain representation of the world but to respect each individuals’ conceptualisation of the world based on his or her lived experiences and knowledge systems (see Blaser 2010; de Sousa Santos 2013; Mignolo 2011).

Here it is important to make clear that there are two different stories (or to be more precise four) that are being shaped in this research paper. The first story is the one constructed in order to make visible the different worlds of resistance towards the development of the forestry sector in Uruguay. This story includes the theoretical
approach and the story of the development of the forestry sector in Uruguay and its consequences on the locals, and it includes my analysis of the research material. Thus, engaging with the world of the small-scale farmers is by itself a translation between different worlds (Blaser 2010), between the world of the farmers and the researcher's own world. Thus, this story is told to bridge the gap between different realities/worlds of imaginations, translating intersecting threads so that they make visible otherwise invisible realities (see Blaser 2010, p. 150-154). The second thread of stories are the three stories of the farmers (or group of farmers) themselves, making visible their realities and their struggle to resist forestry development on their land. The method follows a relational ontology, where knowledge is seen as an intervention, rather than as a representation of reality, breaking down hierarchies by making visible other stories of the world. This perspective implies that the kind of knowledge available will also shape how reality is perceived by the audience (Blaser 2010).

The selection criteria of the testimonies brought forward in this study were based on accessibility (contact made based on recommendations of those who had previously visited these areas with similar research topics) and relevance to the topic of research. The preliminary contacts with the farmers were established through a Finnish journalist who had visited Uruguay and a member of the Montevideo-based NGO Guayubira, who has been actively supporting the farmers in their struggle against the national forestry model. After establishing contact with a local activist in the city of Mercedes, this same person then introduced me to farmers who had suffered the consequences of eucalyptus plantations. The meetings with the farmers took place in November 2012 and were held either in their homes or on their farms.

The storylines of the testimonies follow the conversations with the farmers. The topic of the research was introduced then they were asked to tell their story of why and how they resisted forestry development in their community, with a few clarifying questions in between. The conversations were informal, lasting one to three hours each. The focus was on letting the farmers tell their stories in relation to the arrival of the plantations and the methods they used to make their voices heard. Based on these conversations (later transcribed and translated into English) the testimonies were then re-written into a coherent text. Translations like these, just as Maloof (1999) notes, risk losing part of their uniqueness in the process of turning them into a coherent written story outside the context (i.e. facial gestures, body language, the intimacy of the situation, the surrounding environment, local sayings that cannot be translated into standard English). However, the editorial intervention in this process follows Maloof's (1999) methodological approach to translating voices of resistance into coherent testimonies, including: (1) producing stories that allow them to speak for themselves to a wider English-speaking audience, (2) preserving the wording of the narrator and only eliminating repetitious phrases and stock expressions (e.g. 'you know', 'as I was saying'), (3) selecting the parts of the conversations that were relevant to the research topic (in all three cases this was the majority of the recorded text); (4) rearranging the chronology of the stories told to frame fragments into a coherent narrative (see Maloof 1999, p. 7).

The Arrival of Development in Rural Uruguay

The historical processes of how development, in the form of forestry, entered the lives and landscapes of those who inhabit rural Uruguay, can be traced far back in the collective memory of the locals. However, tracing the current situation back to historical processes, including events never recorded in historical documents, such as
the arrival of the ‘colonos’, the genocide of the charrúa indigenous tribes in 1831 (Arocena and Aguiar 2007), the industrialisation and economic upswing during the second world war, or other possible events that shaped the political discourses of exclusion of small-scale farmers is beyond what can be told within the frames of this study. It is clear that the small-scale farmers arrived in the location where they are today not as a consequence of recent events, but through a thread of events, documented and undocumented, that shape and make up the reality of all those involved in the processes of politics of place; how certain visions come to dominate others in terms of how the rural landscape should be shaped is embedded in past and present broad societal processes. However, addressing some current key issues of the contextual setting in which this study is embedded is necessary to describe the processes of exclusion that the small-scale farmers currently face in rural areas in Uruguay.

Uruguay is the least densely populated country in Latin America. The country covers an area of 17.1 million hectares, of which 16.4 million are agricultural land (Pinheiro 2012). Approximately one third of the country’s 3.3 million inhabitants live in the capital Montevideo and 95% live in urban areas (INE 2013). This means that only 5% of the population live in rural areas, and considering that tree plantations are concentrated to certain regions, the percentage of citizens directly affected by the growth of pine trees and eucalyptus in their back yards is far less. Consequently, those directly affected by industrial tree plantations are a small minority of the Uruguayan population.

The arrival of forestry as an industrial sector in Uruguay has had a great impact on the realities lived in those areas affected by the implementation of the Forestry Law in 1987 (Fernández Aguerre 2002; Pinheiro 2012). Through this law, companies were given tax exemptions and financial subsidies for establishing forest plantations on land categorised as ‘forestry priority’ (Pinheiro 2012). As a consequence, pine and eucalyptus forests, mainly owned by foreign companies, have grown steadily, currently covering one million hectares (Pinheiro 2012). It was particularly land that had previously been used for free-ranging cattle husbandry that was converted into fast-growing plantations, especially in the central and northern parts of the country. The implementation of this law made the raw material readily available to attract more foreign investments in forestry, including the establishment of two large-scale pulp mills, one located in the city of Fray Bentos and owned by Finnish UPM Kymmene and, later, one located just outside the city of Colonia, a joint venture between Swedish/Finnish Stora Enso and Chilean Arauco.

Piñeiro (2012) describes how the dynamics of change in land ownership in the past century has affected the lives of those whose subsistence was dependent on small landholdings (who are the group in focus in this study):

“Throughout the twentieth century, land ownership in Uruguay had been highly concentrated. In the first half of the century, through land parcelisation and distribution policies, the number of farms (establecimientos) increased. Import substitution industrialisation (ISI) policies then stimulated the small and medium-scale production of grains, fruits and vegetables for consumption by a growing urban population. Nonetheless, large farms remained dominant. By mid-century, the dual agrarian structure – composed of large landholdings (latifundia) and small landholdings (minifundio) – was pronounced. In 1956, farms smaller than 100 hectares represented 75 per cent of the country’s farms, but occupied less than 10 per cent of the agricultural area in production. Farms greater than 1,000 hectares made up only 4 per
cent of the country’s farms, but occupied 56 per cent of the farmland (Pinñeiro and Moraes 2008, 106). In the second half of the twentieth century, neoliberal policies led to a reduction in the total number of farms: from 87,000 in 1961 to 57,000 in 2000. This process primarily affected farms of less than 100 hectares, while the farms with over 1,000 hectares appropriated their lands. In other words, land concentration has been taking place for well over 50 years.’ (p. 472)

Groglopo (2012) notes that the focus of the public debate regarding the Uruguayan forestry model and particularly the sustainability of this industrial sector has always been centred on the possible water pollution of the pulp mills and their effect on the local economy, while the effects of large-scale tree plantations on the surrounding community have been overseen (see also Carrere and Lohmann 1996).

The construction of the first large foreign owned pulp mill (then Botnia now UPM Kymmene) in the border town of Fray Bentos received much media attention, particularly during 2006. The almost four year closure of the border crossing between Fray Bentos and Gualeguaychú increased Uruguayan resentment towards environmental concerns, due to the negative consequences that the decreased number of Argentinean visitors had on the local economy (interviews with author, Montevideo 2012). As the conflict escalated, the media framed it as a struggle between two nations, a political conflict between the national interests of Argentina and Uruguay (Kröger 2007; Pakkasvirta 2008). The political left-wing opposition ‘Frente Amplio’, who had originally supported the resistance against forestry, changed their position by favouring such developments once they gained power in 2005 (interview with author in Mercedes, November 2012; Groglopo 2012; Kröger 2007). Thus the consequences of the Botnia conflict had negative impact on those who oppose forestry plantations in Uruguay, marginalising them even further (interviews with author, Montevideo 2012). Furthermore, to reduce the risk of costly conflicts, such as those of the first pulp mill in Uruguay, the companies heading the second pulp mill investment, Montes del Plata, have been engaging the local community in its plans at each stage of construction (personal interviews with company representatives, Helsinki June 2012; Stora Enso 2012:19).

In general the corporate communication to the public on the pulp mill investments focused on the benefits the industry would bring to the country in terms of economic growth, poverty alleviation, and sustainability (see Table 1). The dominant political discourse in favour of these types of investments also continued to be favourable during José Mujica’s term in office. This can be noted in a TV interview conducted by the Finnish Broadcasting company YLE during his visit to Finland in September 2014, with the prime purpose to attract more forestry investments to Uruguay:

‘[The pulp mills] have indirectly employed more than 10,000 people working for them permanently with better salaries than we had before and they also bring currency income. We are a small country that needs to import a lot, but this industry is now exporting pulp for the same amount as the meat industry, this year for approximately two billion dollars. This means that for us, under our circumstances, it is beneficial.’ (José Mujica in YLE interview, September 2014)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits/Source</th>
<th>Economic</th>
<th>Social (employment)</th>
<th>Social (community)</th>
<th>Environment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Stora Enso Press release, 18.11.2011.</td>
<td>The construction and operation of the pulp mill will have significant economic and social impacts in the country. The mill is forecast to have a positive impact on Uruguay’s GDP of 0.8% during construction and 2% when it is operating.</td>
<td>An average of 3200 and a peak of 6000 workers will be employed during construction and about 500 people is expected to work at the mill once it is operational.</td>
<td>The project will also be of value for the economic and social development of Colonia and Conchillas, where the company is committed to an environmental performance of excellence and to working with the local authorities and the community.</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<td>Stora Enso Sustainability Report, 2011</td>
<td>Montes del Plata will significantly boost the country’s economy, especially after the pulp mill starts production. (p. 20)</td>
<td>Together with indirectly created jobs (including forestry activities around the country) the total employment impact of the mill should amount to more than 5000 full-time jobs. During the construction phase over 6000 jobs will be created, including 3000 jobs for construction workers as well as many jobs for suppliers and service providers. (p. 20)</td>
<td>The mill construction involves several schemes designed to mitigate harmful impacts and find innovative ways for local communities to benefit [...] Partnership with local farmers gives them additional income from wood production. Montes del Plata is also engaged with local communities through various development programs. (p. 5)</td>
<td>Our joint venture in Uruguay, Montes del Plata, obtained FSC certification for more of its tree plantations, following a second audit carried out in August 2011.</td>
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<td>Stora Enso Stakeholder Magazine, 2011</td>
<td>The largest private investment in Uruguay’s history also involves a lot of work guaranteeing local sustainability. (p. 22)</td>
<td>Montes del Plata has also established a programme to recruit local young people with the potential to be trained as technicians for the mill. (p. 25)</td>
<td>The basic principle is always to work together with local stakeholders. We’re trying to create innovative long-term projects that will bring real added value to the community, not quick fixes. (p. 25)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
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<td>Montes del Plata, Press Release, 14.09.2014</td>
<td>As a whole, the operations will increase Uruguay’s annual GDP by 2%.</td>
<td>The mill is the last link of a value chain that comprises over 5000 full-time jobs (including direct, indirect and induced jobs)</td>
<td></td>
<td>When it comes to sustainability, Montes del Plata’s goal is to set a benchmark in terms of stakeholder relations, land use and contribution to local development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPM, Press release, 16.09.2014</td>
<td>The current focus of discussions is on the development areas required for further industrial growth, notably the infrastructure for logistics and plantations as well as education to nurture versatile skills and expertise.</td>
<td>In Uruguay, UPM has 550 direct employees and employs indirectly around 3400 people. The value chain of UPM’s Uruguay operations creates altogether 6400 jobs</td>
<td>UPM’s operations in Uruguay include [...] in cooperation with local organisations contributes to education, entrepreneurship and improving the quality of life through projects focusing on the rural areas where the company operates.</td>
<td>All of UPM’s forest plantations are certified to FSC® and PEFC™ standards.</td>
</tr>
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Table 1: Corporate discourse on the benefits of forestry development projects in Uruguay.
Both the corporate and the political discourses shaped the possibilities of the rural population to, in a unified effort, raise their concerns about the consequences of an increased reliance on forestry (and pulp production) on their lives as industrial tree plantations took over the rural landscape. The focus of corporate discourses 1) relied on how to increase export and GDP figures, while alleviating poverty by increasing industrial employment and social programmes in rural areas. In the corporate discourse, the sustainability of the investments was defined based on the forestry industry’s own benchmarks and standards set by the Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC), a multi-stakeholder initiative that promotes responsible management of the world forests based on the participation of a wide range of forestry stakeholders (owners, industry, environmental and social NGOs). However, concerns raised by a few independent researchers and NGOs on how large scale plantations were affecting the social life in the nearby communities and the surrounding environment were met with what Carrere and Lohmann (1996) have called a ‘voluntary blindness’ (p. 196), referring to the government officials’ incapacity to take the warnings seriously, denying the existing studies of the problems of monoculture plantations in Uruguay.

Presentation of the testimonies of the farmers

*First testimony: Farmer in Cerro Alegre*

This farmer lives some 10 km from the city of Mercedes, in the village of Cerro Alegre, a village that only 20 years ago still had many inhabitants and a small school filled with children. Today, many houses have been abandoned and the farmer’s estate is surrounded by eucalyptus plantations on one side and soy plantations on the other. The farmer has been participating in the resistance since the beginning of the 1990s and was also formerly affiliated to the ‘Frente Amplio’ party. However, he left the party once it came into government and, according to him, failed to fulfil its promises to the rural population. Today, as most of his neighbours have sold their farms, and there are almost no people left in the countryside who can work on his farm, this farmer is also considering his options for the future. This is his testimony:

“They arrived here with a lot of propaganda, and then some neighbours sold their land but we didn’t pay much attention until more people started selling. They took advantage of a situation of crisis here, when people had to sell because they were experiencing financial difficulties. But, well, from that moment on we tried to learn for ourselves what was going on, and then we started to have a real awareness of things. We learned that these companies were looking for their advantages in the world, their corporate advantages, for where to make their investments. And we learned that the advantage that this territory had for them was on the one hand the climate; the climate makes it possible to harvest their trees in 10 years. And then they had the advantage that here in Uruguay, the countryside was relatively unpopulated and that was synonymous to less resistance.

But the most serious thing about all this is the permissiveness of the politicians, who made all the laws in line with the needs of the companies, something that is not being questioned but ethically it is very bad. With all these advantages they started to install themselves here and after four or five years our wells started drying up. Traditionally the neighbours here drank the water from the wells. We always had water, and then the water went down a lot, which meant that the people with few resources started to have problems with access to water. Because without water life here is impossible and it makes any kind of production more expensive, whether it is to water a plant or to give it to a cow or for ourselves.

When Frente Amplio won the elections there were a lot of people with expectations of change. This demobilized a lot of people. We are now in a time of being relatively unorganized, because at one point we were very organized. This doesn’t mean that there aren’t a lot of people that have a
clear understanding of things. But what makes it more serious is the tremendous disinformation of the people because everyone knows when Suárez and Forlán scored a goal, everybody knows. But they do not know that there are 150 families here that do not have water to drink. If they heard about that every day on the radio or on the TV, the people would become more aware. But really, there is a lot of disinformation because nobody likes it when they invade your home and our country is our home and there are people that aren’t aware that they are invading us. And well, that is a bit about the big issues at stake.

I’ve been here for 38 years, and when I arrived there were many neighbours around. From here one could see five or six neighbours. Today you do not see anyone and this landscape repeats itself for 15 kilometres. Over there, there are 20,000 hectares of eucalyptus; there are no people left, no people. ...It doesn’t make sense. Besides, they made a law, the forestry law, for the needs of these companies, but they do not even fulfil that because one of the clauses, of the forestry law, which I have here, says that land that isn’t used for other things is to be declared forestry priority. But here clearly the land did serve other purposes; for all of us who lived here, before there was eucalyptus, there were other things here better than this. So from the social and economic perspectives the land was better than this. So clearly they made a law, but not even they themselves fulfil that law because in the name of progress they transformed a place of work—with a lot of people working here—into a desert.

At any moment now I will have to leave, I feel very cornered here, for various reasons. To me, what happens is that I am very committed, stubborn. But in reality we are saying to ourselves that we have to leave, it is with a lot of pain that I say this but that is the reality because this model that they are forcing on us doesn’t allow any space for this kind of production... I would like to grow old here, I like it here, I like it a lot. But one has to work under more or less decent conditions. ' 

So what are the possibilities you have now to make your voice heard?

‘And well, here we think that we have some weaknesses and some strengths. Among the strengths we have is the nobility of the cause that we are defending. We are not defending anything more or anything less than our land, the natural resources, so that the people can live a better life. The thing is to make the people understand this in a time when the big companies buy the diffusion channels. Difficult I’d say, but that is our task, if not for anything else than to leave something to those coming after us.

In 2007, we got together from all departments (provinces) in Uruguay, all affected by the plantations, and I was assigned to go to Brazil to a global meeting. And there we were in contact with a lot of people, and I told them about our issues, representing Uruguay... and the only thing I asked for was that they would organise a good press conference, so that the people here could see what is going on. Because here, it seems like it is only my problem, and that it will be only my problem. The problem belongs to all of society. But there is no awareness that it is a problem for all of us. So that is our task now: to try to open the eyes of the people.'

And how do you do that?

‘I would like to know, because I want to but I can’t.’

Second testimony: Former farmer living in Mercedes

This man used to have a farm in Cerro Alegre. He participated for a long time in the resistance against the pulp plantations but due to health reasons and his economic situation he had to give in and sell his land. He now lives in a small house in the centre of the town of Mercedes. This is his testimony:

‘I am telling you that more than 20 years back— and I am native of Cerro Alegre— forestation didn’t exist. So we have evidence that this is real, what I am going to tell you is real, it isn’t a lie. The water issue— we had a lot of water in Cerro Alegre. When I worked at the farm at that time we had wells made with only ‘pico y pala’ and we had a mill. When there was a strong wind I managed that mill and we could get out 2,500 litres per hour and sometimes we had wind for
two to three days. That well, when the forestation started to increase, after 4-5 years, it ran out of water.

I first started working at different farms, and after that I bought a small farm for myself nearby. I used to have a good well but it started to dry up, so I had to make a deeper hole because underneath there was more water. But the forestation left us without water. And after that the predatory animals started to appear, all these animals that ate my corn. We were completely abandoned with our worries about the water situation and the plagues [of predatory animals], and we had to cover the costs ourselves.

We organised ourselves and went out on the road. At that time we were protected by the ‘Frente’ which is today the government. We handed out fliers listing the problems we were starting to experience. But today they are in government and they continue with the same things. Even more, I think today one more pulp mill is being planned. It is sad because these people do not love the land, which is the richness that we have, foresting the land makes it unusable for life.

I wanted to continue living there but I came to the city because of problems with my health. Because of problems with my heart I had to sell. But if it was for me, I would continue living there. I think really this has become political, we had meetings with Mujica here at the farms and he was against the forestation. Now he is in government and has forgot everything about our farms and that this is affecting the whole area, the schools, everything, now everything is forested. That is why this isn’t coming out in the press. There is a lot of money in it, and for those of us who lived it, the reality passed over our heads. In the city they ignore the reality of things. Now, the food comes from the land but they do not value the land. They destroy the land. The animals are also badly fed. When Mujica became president he sent ministers to our meetings that had to convince us that planting forests is good. There is no help from the government.’

These plantations are certified by FSC, did you participate in the stakeholder dialogues of the certifications?

‘We participated in several meetings but we were the rural and they the technical. We participated to make our point but they wanted to change our mentality. They made us graphs saying that the forestation was profitable, that there was no prejudice in that, but we had already started to experience the problems. I mean, what they mentioned there was a big lie. They fooled the people with propaganda and money. Also the press came to see the people but with lies. Before, the local press used to write about this, after that they forgot us, as did the national press. Here we had various journalists that followed our story until they realised that the forestation just continued. Like I said, the current government was in opposition and they supported us, but when they became the government they did the same thing as the governments before them.

It is sad. I grew up in a time when my dad had pigs and cows to maintain us through the winter. Now all that farmland is covered with soy and a lot of chemicals. There aren’t any natural plantations, no matter how much one would like to have them because the air is so contaminated. I never used chemicals, my products were all organic. Now all the water is polluted, and I am surprised by the doctors who give medicine to the chicken, those animals aren’t natural, they have hormones. It is very different from the natural chicken that we used to eat. I have done my part, what hurts me is to think of the young and the children. It is sad.’

**Third testimony – farmer resistance through a proposal of alternatives**

The following testimony is from a community of non-traditional farmers who have also been opposing the arrival of the second pulp mill in their region. One of the main figures in this community has lived twice in exile in Buenos Aires, something that has clearly marked his understanding of urban-rural relations. Their farms are located outside Colonia and some 30 km from where the country’s second pulp mill – Montes del Plata – was being built at the time of our meeting. This is Uruguay’s most important region for dairy production and it is also an area that has yet to be affected by forestation (interview with local journalist, November 2012). The governmental categorisation of land use has until now prohibited the arrival of forest plantation in this area. Recently, however, the debate over re-classification of the land in this area...
has risen on the political agenda. In late 2011, a confidential document between the investors and the government was made public where the government had agreed to reclassify land and thus give the Montes del Plata pulp mill access to land for a eucalyptus plantation within 200 km of the mill (Guayubira 2011). The following story consists of the accounts of these three community members and how they built resistance towards the threat of the arrival of tree plantations in this area.

"With Montes del Plata we only participated in the first public audience... But we quickly realised that we were few soldiers, and that we were going to be used in this parody that they were going to create, so we said, we are going to work underground instead and multiply our efforts. So that the people can return to look towards the countryside as a possible horizon in their dreams, so that the young guys can build their dreams here in the countryside.

Environmentalism in Uruguay is rather like being part of Al Qaida. The leaders have made it their job to demonize the environmentalists. That is not what we wanted and so we said: "what more can we do? We are few, we cannot challenge all this, where there is a government that is hijacked by the companies, who have more power than the state itself." The only thing we could do was to try to build an alternative and multiply it, by working and showing that it is possible to produce well in the same places where they say it is only possible to plant eucalyptus or soy, showing that you can have a high productivity in small spaces, within reach for many people.

We have to work with the basics and work with the educational centres so that the children become aware of the planet they inhabit, of what ecosystem they belong to. A way of doing this is to spread the information. When we talk about education, we talk about all levels – higher, primary, and secondary. If we do not start with the children, when they arrive at the secondary level they already have an affective understanding of certain things which will obviously favour this consumption of superficial things.

In the schools we are creating a native forest (Montecito) and for every tree we pass on all the knowledge to the children through legends. We have recovered the legend as an educational method, it is fantastic because you enter the child’s world, and the children from a very early age until the sixth grade, which is the primary school, and in the secondary also, you can imagine they pretend that they are big, but when you start telling them a legend they absorb the knowledge, the fantasy that unites and has values, well obviously we do not have legends about everything, so we investigate and create the legends. In all this that we are proposing, there is an acceptance in all the schools. We donate plants to them, and we return to repair the ecosystem with these species, which also produce fruit for the schools. We build it and the school teachers work on explaining the ecosystems, about the plant and animal life, which is the basics in education, just as with any animal that teaches their offspring how to survive. We also try to recover the native names of the plants.

We call this an ecosystem-based multi-production forest, or in other words, restoring the ecosystem, acknowledging it and living well from it. To live well does not mean that you can buy the latest model of pickup truck, it is to serve yourself with all the benefits, for example to wake up in the morning because there are many birds around...and to go out for a walk, to look forward to the evening without having all that technological equipment that will disturb you. What you see here, when we took it 7 years ago it was all destroyed rocks and land, its productivity capacity was very low, or in other words it could only be used to plant eucalyptus. This is the job we are doing now, documenting the whole process, profitability, and recovery of the resources.'

Discussion

What the testimonies in this study reveal is that raising awareness of the negative consequences of development is difficult to do from the position of absence as the lived reality and the claims that they raise are stigmatised for their perceived inferiority and irrationality in relation to the dominant, favourable view of forestry development. It is the effects of the production of absences (de Sousa Santos 2013) in the development rhetoric that categorises certain groups in society and their life project as inferior and irrational which created a situation where the visions they defend as possible
alternatives for the local population in the future were not considered politically viable in the broader public debate.

The first story reveals how the farmer experienced the arrival of tree plantations in his community, as something that happened gradually without anyone really noticing the consequences at first. This is similar to the experiences felt in Brazil, where Kröger (2012) has also reported how farmers were seduced into selling (and later forced to sell) their land to forestry prospectors. This indicates that, just as Kröger found in a separate study (2014), the local resistance towards forestry was weak while the relation to land was only measured in its monetary terms and not as a collective and culturally important site of reproduction of life in broader terms.

The lack of indigenous communal lands, and the lack of the kind of ancestral mentality present in the indigenous relation to territory, as seen in the struggle of the Mapuche communities in Chile (Labarca 2008) also signified that initially the selling decisions were not dealt with as a collective decision, but were rather dependent on individual farmers’ needs. Both the first and the second story reveal that for those who wished to continue the traditional lifestyle, the effects of their neighbours’ decision to sell had a coercive outcome on their own decision: without neighbours, without the people that could help run the farms, and without the availability of water, life quickly became difficult to sustain on their own. Also, the coerciveness of being indebted – as seen in the second testimony, reduces the capacity to resist selling their land. However, having had to sell does not signify agreement with the current development; rather it could be interpreted as a coercive consequence of the spread of forestry close to their farmlands.

These farmers have tried to resist selling for many years by organising resistance against the spread of forestry plantations. In this sense, their strategy has been about challenging the current situation from within the political system, by attending meetings and public hearings, mounting public protests, and trying to voice their concerns in the national media. As the first farmer’s story reveals, they have also engaged in resistance by building transnational solidarity connections hoping that by making their situation known abroad they would also impact the political situation at home. This type of strategy is in line with Keck and Sickink’s (1998) transnational advocacy networks, or solidarity movements that can have a boomerang effect in the home country. The main aim of their efforts has been to impact the public opinion, the political parties, and the awareness of the people, by making them aware of the consequences that the forestry development has on the farmers. However, when speaking from a position of absence, their arguments can easily be disregarded as being of no importance for the larger public and thereby side-lined by more important political priorities.

The strategy of the farmers reported in the third testimony aims at a different outcome. This group works with a completely different set of assumptions, and the main difference to the former strategy is that they are not primarily focusing on changing the public opinion through demonstrations or elaborating strong oppositional discourses but by building a new alternative, a new model of rural living. In doing so, they hope to set a locally-grounded example that can serve as an inspiration for those who still wish to live a life outside the global designs of the market economy. The farmers outside Colonia, who still have the opportunity to halt the forestation plans in their vicinity, do not rely on public debate in their struggle against the threats from the pulp mill; instead they are engaged in politics of place (Escobar 2008) and in building alternatives in the exteriority of the system (Mignolo 2011). They are not seeking to gain power over the corporations in the public debate, instead through emancipation in
local schools they seek to both overturn and escape the dominant discourses that do not allow for their existence.

Their strategy is not primarily about achieving visibility in the media or gaining the support of the public; they have realised that currently that is not an option. Instead, they build their own alternative to development, through sustainable small farming practices and the emancipation of other community members by educating school children. What this group is trying to do is to build a strong local social movement that would be capable of defending their collective identity in case it came to be threatened by the arrival of forestry prospectors. By building local awareness of the alternatives to the risks of forestry plantations, the farmers are simultaneously engaged in this sort of politics of place and constructing alternative discourses based on real life examples of alternative worlds.

What can be seen in how these farmers position themselves in relation to the dominant discourses in the country is a way of destabilising power relations through practice and providing solutions to how rural life could be imagined in the future. By showing that it is possible to produce well without pesticides and costly equipment these farmers show that there is an alternative to large-scale farming. By making the indigenous culture in Uruguay come alive through reinvented legends of the charrúa tribes, the resettlers build new relations with the land that are not based merely on its monetary value. This is in line with how the landless movement in Brazil has created a strong resistance towards forestry projects (Kröger 2014). By restoring the natural state of the land with higher levels of humidity and the availability of water the resettlers also expose the misconception that their land is only suitable for large-scale industrial tree plantations. By showing that it is possible to live well from this type of agriculture, they challenge the assumption that the only possible future for the young generation is to be found in urban centres. The discourse that they are using to unpack the dominant assumptions is deeply embedded in the same context as the ‘buen vivir’ discourse of indigenous communities in other parts of South America (Gudynas 2010; 2011, Radcliffe 2012, Misoczky 2011). The difference to indigenous struggles is that here the collectivity is created not based on existing ancestral worldviews, but on the invention and rediscovery of legends that support such a worldview. The educational projects of these farmers can therefore be interpreted as a long-term attempt at making the local population conscious of the role of nature and inspiring a sense of belonging to place. This in turn could help to mount a resistance that is embedded in place, where the locals define their territory and their collective identities in cultural and epistemological terms (see Porto-Gonçalves 2001).

Neither of the two strategies has until now been very successful in overturning the support that the development model and the forestry companies are enjoying in Uruguay. When the counter-discourses are made public, those confronting the system are accused of being anti-patriotic and backward minded (personal interview, Mercedes, November 2012). The third group of farmers are a very marginal group, whose values are a far stretch from the predominantly urban population of this country. How well their efforts to educate the local school children is perceived by the rest of the population has great significance for how they can build strong local collective identities, from where they can begin a strong local social movement. However, their strategy is a long-term one. If successful, they may be able to find resonance for their claims in the broader community, not only by offering an alternative but by changing the value-base of the appropriateness of large-scale development projects such as tree plantations or pulp mills. As Zibechi (2012) holds, how these movements emerge depends very much on the relations they manage to build and the spaces they manage
to occupy. As he states: ‘To be recognized, they need to occupy the space, to disturb the given order so as to gain visibility, to “make themselves present” in order to remove those who represent them’ (p. 79).

What do the testimonies reveal in terms of impacting the norms of society, or the norms in which global corporations are embedded? In relation to the debates on the communicative turn in global governance (Palazzo and Scherer 2006; Scherer and Palazzo 2007; Baur and Palazzo 2011), cross-sector partnerships (Kuschmann et al. 2012), and the capacity of social movements to pressure corporations to change (Davis and Zald 2005; den Hond and De Bakker 2007; Tilly 2004; Keck and Sikkink 1998; King 2008; Soule 2009), these testimonies seem somewhat disconnected. The stories of the farmers and the business community partnership solutions described as possible solutions in the governance literature (Loza 2004; Kuschmann et al. 2012) are in this scenario worlds apart. In a dialogue setting, the testimonies here reveal the sense of exclusion that they face (for example, their categorisation as inferior for being rural rather than technical, or their being likened to terrorists because of their concerns for the environment) which did not give them any space to defend their world on equal terms. Working through strong social movements (and even NGOs) and pressuring for change through mass-mobilization requires the creation of resonance for one’s claims among a wider audience (see for example den Hond and De Bakker 2007). Such an option was not possible while the reality of these few smallholders was not a primary concern for the urban population. This was shown by the reference made to people being more interested in the football than what was going on in the countryside, to the media’s lack of interest in their situation, the urban population’s not placing enough value on where their food comes from, and the government being ‘hi-jacked’ by the corporations. Instead, the third testimony reveals how the farmers resisted participation in public hearings organised on behalf of the corporation and instead focused on building a locally embedded position of difference. By constructing a territorial identity that visualises alternatives to the current dominant mode of imagining the future, they engaged in a type of politics of place as seen previously in the struggles over land in Chile and Brazil (Labarca 2008; Kröger 2014). This shows that despite their absences in the discourses and the stakeholder dialogues, the ‘subterranean’ resistance is not necessarily inactive but may very well be confronting the system by building alternatives from below.

This subterranean movement also has two implications for global governance. First, without stakeholders at the public hearings, these organisations will not be able to demonstrate that they have included those affected by their actions, which is an important criterion of achieving legitimacy (or ‘input legitimacy’ as per Mena and Palazzo 2012) within deliberative governance (Ehrnström-Fuentes 2015; Innes and Booher 2003; 2004; Parkins and Mitchell 2005). The outcomes of these governance-led monologues can by no means be considered to consist of ‘authentic preferences of the citizens’ (Scharpf cited in Mena and Palazzo 2012, p. 528) if the citizens (in governance a better word would be stakeholders) never showed up at the meetings.

Second, the organisation from below can be a powerful tool of defence for the local communities facing exclusion in the national debate on development and the threat of extractivism on their land. All three stories above reveal that with the spread of plantations, people at the local level have become more aware of the serious implications these types of investments have on their own lives. Finding effective ways of organising a defence for themselves does not only imply resisting extractivism (and governance), it also requires active engagement with the alternatives – both the material, of how to make ends meet, and the imaginary, of how to envision the good life
— so that they have both the material and the imaginary means to organise an effective
defence of their community against extractive development projects. Such defence, if
successful, marks the borders for both governance and extractivism and it sets powerful
eamples for other communities in similar situations.

Concluding remarks

This study has had two main goals. First, it has intended to describe the territorial
struggles against extractivism in a format that makes visible the 'subterranean' projects
of those actors that are not visible in the public debate. These are not struggles of
legitimacy that can be studied and analysed based on how they are mediatised in
contemporary globalising societies (Joutsenvirta and Vaara 2015). Nonetheless, the
struggle to achieve legitimacy for one’s claims is just as urgent (if not even more urgent
considering that these actors’ entire ‘worlds’ and livelihoods are at stake) for those
whose legitimising discourse never goes beyond the local sphere. By letting the
subjects speak for themselves, the intention has been to make the absent present,
lending visibility to those struggles that have been silenced by the promises made by
the development discourse, particularly the discourse on forestry development in
Uruguay.

The second goal of this study has been to examine how the farmers confront the type of
extractivism that is threatening their way of living. The stories in this study reveal that
without the creation of alternatives, including how the socio-natural world is given
meaning in the public debate, challenging the assumptions embedded in ‘development’
may prove difficult. Reactivating a sense of belonging to place, and an alternative
epistemology of the world may be a first step in the construction of such a new
alternative way of looking at the future, a perspective that could come to challenge the
assumptions embedded in the discourse on development. By providing alternatives, the
farmers are no longer working from a position of absence but they are building
alternatives that could be part of a solution to many burning concerns of the
contemporary world today. However, the potential strength of their tactic lies in
whether they manage to construct a local politics of place, reactivating a collective sense
of belonging, and thereby changing the significations of land and the identities of the
local population.
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This thesis critically analyses corporate-community relations in the forestry industry, with a particular focus on cases in the Latin American context. The key conceptual focus is on the legitimacy of corporate activity from the perspective of local communities in the contested field of sustainability. The concept of legitimacy is critically discussed in the light of a pluriversal approach to reality: Instead of assuming that legitimacy can be derived from a universally socially constructed system of shared norms and believes, legitimacy in the pluriverse signals that the world is not made up of one single history or worldview but many different ways of knowing, sensing, and being; what is perceived as legitimate depends on the place-based social imaginaries of the communities where it emerges. This approach to legitimacy creation, provides a nuanced understanding of the contested nature of forestry-community relations in Latin America.

Adapting a pluriversal perspective on legitimacy has consequences for governance and how the corporate world engages with local communities. Instead of promoting consensus-seeking stakeholder dialogues among those who do not wish to become stakeholders of the corporate world, there is a need to open up for encounters between worlds through conversations across differences and celebrate conflicts as manifestations of the different worlds within the pluriverse.

Rooted governance is introduced as a concept that contrasts with the top-down approach of global governance. Instead, the bottom-up rooted approach recognises local differences, knowledges, and livelihoods as important elements of reproducing and sustaining life in communities. This pluriversal way of conceptualizing and acknowledging different life worlds and social imaginaries opens up opportunities to explore new alternatives for co-existence of communities – one of the most urgent challenges for our and future generations.