Chapter 10
Exploring Social Representations of Nature-Based Tourism, Development Conflict, and Sustainable Development Futures in Chilean Patagonia

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Abstract This chapter explored how *Modernization*, *Transformation*, and *Control* Sustainable Development (SD) imaginaries and trajectories interacted, nuanced, and mediated the approaches of neoliberal development initiatives and the conflicts which surrounded them. A collective case study approach was employed to better understand actors, their strategies, and perceptions about three large-scale development proposals, the Patagonia National Parks network, the HidroAysén hydroelectric project, and the Río Cuervo hydroelectric project. We identified six themes that characterized participants' preferences related to processes: a desire for greater proactiveness around *transparency*, a *binding participation* process of governance, *bottom-up* decision making, *re-empowerment* of local groups, *decentralization*, and *improved oversight* practices. Further, directed content analysis revealed numerous

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manifestations of the three SD futures trajectories and several examples of interactions and overlap between the SD imaginaries. Seemingly, some development actors navigated between SD imaginaries and tactics to maneuver between local and national actors, agendas, and decision-making processes. We have termed these tactics as *SD agility*, which are initially defined as: "the strategic ability to maneuver between SD imaginaries and trajectories to achieve strategic SD outcomes." SD agility tactics merit additional study as we believe they may represent an important capacity for SD futures trajectories.

Keywords Patagonia · Futures of sustainability · Development trajectories · Neoliberal development · Patagonia National Park · HidroAysén · Río Cuervo

10.1 Introduction

The Aysén Region of Chilean Patagonia is a biogeographic region with an abundance of relatively-well conserved natural resources. In recent decades, different visions of sustainability have led to tensions and conflict in the area with respect to proposals for territorial development. Since 1990, when Chile returned to democracy, numerous territorial conflicts have arisen around large privately driven development projects, generally driven by foreign investors and firms and/or large-scale exportation opportunities, like mining, aquaculture, timber harvesting, and energy production. For example, for over a decade beginning in 2005, intentions to implement large hydroelectric projects within the region triggered backlash from many of the region's citizens and groups. They preferred less invasive and extractive forms of development, like scientific or nature-based tourism (NBT) as they believed them to be more complementary with social and environmental conservation (Inostroza and Cànoves 2014). Other local actors have different views for the best path of regional development. For example, some groups have found recent nature conservation initiatives which have used private funding to influence the creation and reclassification of public protected areas (PAs) suspicious. In the past, the creation of PAs has meant the prohibition of many traditional local uses of PA lands and resources (e.g., animal grazing or small-scale cuts for firewood) by local communities (Blair et al. 2019; Inostroza 2007; Oltremari et al. 1994). And, even among NBT stakeholders, who often depend on PAs to develop their work, there has been a range of opinions about these projects, especially in relation to the processes that have been employed in their designation, and ongoing uncertainty about how new PAs and stricter PA designations will affect future NBT within the region (Gale and Ednie 2019).

Many believe that Aysén's territorial tensions and conflicts have their origin in the neoliberal economic development model that was implemented during the

1973–1990 dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (Gentes and Policzer 2022; Harvey 2005; Latta and Aguayo 2012). This model is characterized by large national and transnational private sector actors who are motivated by the pursuit of economic profit and enabled by free markets operating under government guarantees (Harvey 2001, 2005; Latta and Aguayo 2012). Neoliberalism has remained the dominant economic model over the decades that have followed Chile's return to democracy. Numerous authors have written about the implications of this overarching model for Chile's environmental management and social well-being (Borrie et al. 2020; De Matheus e Silva et al. 2018; Gentes and Policzer 2022; Jones 2012; Latta and Aguayo 2012). These authors have described Chile as having a complex public/private oversight and governance system with limited regulatory capacity, that was purposefully designed through the implementation of the neoliberal model, to limit and weaken governmental authority over private business.

Latta and Aguayo (2012) noted some progress has been made in the years following the dictatorship to develop policy and oversight processes to facilitate debate with respect to development and protect Chilean environments and communities. For example, Chile's Environmental Impact Assessment System (SEIA) was implemented in 1997, requiring all new public and private projects to evaluate and declare their prospective environmental impacts, using either a Declaration of Environmental Impact (DEI) or a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), depending on the scope of the project. Both are reviewed by the appropriate regulatory government agencies. In the case of an EIA, additional rigor requires a public comment period and a plan detailing mitigation, remediation, or compensation measures. Finally, the Environmental Evaluation Service (SEA) deliberates and eventually approves or rejects project proposals based on the outcomes of these processes (Chilean Environmental Evaluation Service 2022; Latta and Aguayo 2012; OECD 2016).

The SEIA's mission stresses sustainable development (SD), environmental and social well-being, citizen participation, transparency, mitigation, and compensation; yet it promises the efficiency facilitated by a neoliberal approach to economic development:

> To contribute to sustainable development, the preservation and conservation of natural resources, and the quality of life of the country's inhabitants, through the management of the Environmental Impact Assessment System, ensuring a transparent and efficient technical and environmental evaluation, in coordination with State agencies, while encouraging and facilitating citizen participation in the evaluation processes, with the purpose of mitigating, compensating and/or repairing significant environmental impacts (Chilean Environmental Evaluation Service 2022. para. 1).

As SD is emphasized as first and foremost within Chile's SEA mission, it seems appropriate and necessary to understand how this concept nuances and mediates conflicts around different development proposals that have advanced within the Aysén Region of Chilean Patagonia.

10.2 Theoretical Framework

Sustainable development and neoliberalism Since the early years of the twenty-first century, academic discourse has advanced two points of view in parallel: the domination of neoliberal development agendas that worsen social inequities and the dominance of sustainable development (SD) principles that empower democracy, social justice, and the environment (Baldwin et al. 2019; Kashwan et al. 2019; Khan 2015; Kumi et al. 2014; Raco 2005; Slocum et al. 2019; Torres et al. 2015; Wolters 2022). For example, Raco (2005) pointed out the irony in these parallel conceptions, suggesting that SD has become an all-inclusive "meta-narrative" for development throughout the world; yet the spread of neoliberalism and its inherent market-based demands for enhanced capital accumulation, have augmented social inequities and resource exploitation, resulting in a development that is anything but "sustainable." Throughout the years, researchers have called for increased focus to address the many equity issues that have arisen from global interventions at local levels and the development of mechanisms to address the unfair power relations that frame many neoliberal development conflicts (Kashway et al. 2019; Khan 2015; Kumi et al. 2014; Slocum et al. 2019). Others have criticized neoliberal approaches and their conceptions of nature as being too narrow, focused solely on its commodification and economic value (Baldwin et al. 2019; Wolters 2022).

In recent years, new neoliberal forms of conservation-based development (CBD), like private protected areas (PAs) and NBT, seem to better align with SD objectives; yet, these types of development have also been criticized for predatory land grabbing, displacement, and practices that reduce social embeddedness of nature (Blair et al. 2019; Borrie et al. 2020; Büscher and Davidov 2016; De Matheus e Silva et al. 2018; Fletcher 2011; Holmes 2012, 2014). For example, Borrie et al. (2020) identified, "in order to improve long-term support and integration of PPAs and NBT, greater attention needs to be given to social well-being outcomes (including equity and justice concerns), building of social capital, and the preservation of local identities and histories" (p.1). Neoliberal ideology suggests that corporate social responsibility (CSR) and corporate community development (CCD) tactics can effectively address the social impacts of large-scale capitalist development projects within local communities, including those proposed by Borrie et al. (2020). Yet, debate continues to evaluate CSR/CCD as a replacement for the wider social role played by governments in SD, through the protection of the public good (Babidge 2013; Gentes and Policzer 2022; McLennan and Banks 2019).

Social Conflict Reboratti (2019) defined conflict as involving, "situations in which concrete facts are viewed and interpreted in dissimilar and opposing ways by different groups and sectors of society, who adopt actions according to those visions and interpretations"(p. 2). The causes of conflicts originate from the different representations of social groups around nature, land use, and the use of natural resources (Sæþórsdóttir 2012). Williams (2002) argued that conflicts can be expected when multiple representations of a particular place occur. Jacobsen and Linnell (2016)

identified that, "The extent to which stakeholders regard a management system as being just and fair is a key social dimension of conflict" (p.197). Torres et al. (2015) contextualized growing social conflict in Chile around neoliberal development, highlighting the important role that Chilean student movements have played in resistance movements and discourse since 2011. Discourses have a role in the construction of social realities, serving the interests of specific social groups. It is within this difference of interests that conflicts arise (Sæþórsdóttir 2012).

Sustainability Social Change Imaginaries Adloff and Neckel (2019) proposed three trajectories of social change related to sustainability that evolve from distinct imaginaries: Modernization, Transformation, and Control. According to Adloff and Neckel (2019), these three trajectories do not operate in a vacuum; rather, they are likely interrelated and may even operate incrementally, with one form contributing to the evolution of another. They have called for researchers to consider these trajectories within their research about SD and conflict, through consideration of the actors, practices, and structures involved in these imaginations, evidence that they are already manifesting and interacting, and evidence of how these imaginations might be able to provoke societal change on larger scale.

According to the authors, an imaginary based on sustainability through *Modernization* involves transforming economies and institutions around "*green*" and sustainable models of growth (e.g., CBD, circular economies). They explained:

> Programs dedicated to a sustainable modernization intend to improve the ecological balance of modern societies by means of technological and social innovations, so that the earth's capacities are no longer overstrained. These programs do not intend to fundamentally alter existing structures—such as liberal democracy and market capitalism—or crucial elements of the modern lifestyle—such as individualism, consumption, prosperity, and mobility—but only to adapt these to the changed conditions, characterized by ecological constraints (Adloff and Neckel 2019, p. 1018).

In stark contrast, a sustainability through *Transformation* imaginary proposes a fundamental societal paradigm shift, redefining well-being and eliminating the centrality of economic growth within development (e.g., *buen vivir*, or good living in English; post-capitalism), as this hinders SD potential. This social imaginary seeks an end to competitive, growth-based social orders and a fundamental change in the human–nature relationship. While there are many debates about specific concepts and manifestations, there are also numerous intersections. Adloff and Neckel (2019) attributed this to a common reference point: "the insight that the natural and social foundations of life on earth will not be protected by means of a further economization of sustainability" (p.1020).

The *Control* social imaginary of SD takes a third path, which is decidedly more extreme. It is rooted in assumptions that the future will be marked by increasing ecological emergencies (e.g., pandemics, floods, pollution, wars, drought) and collapse. Thus, this imaginary envisions an authoritarian sustainability with markedly different paths for wealthy elites and the rest of humanity. Enclaves would emerge to protect those with means, while the rest of society would be increasingly exposed

to ecological disasters. Adloff and Neckel (2019) explained, "Under the conditions of ecological emergencies, sustainability as control refers to a world of resilience rather than one of genuine sustainability…It refers to forms of coping with crises and adapting to emergencies once they have occurred" (p.1021). In practice, this imaginary operates through *particularlist ethics*, and a belief that the population as a whole will not be capable of enhancing their resilience equally; thus, regulating and restraining practices (e.g., strongholds, exclusions, dispossession, banishment, monitoring, force) will be more appropriate than preventative practices.

This chapter responds to Adloff and Neckel's (2019) call for research using a collective case study approach to explore the ways in which SD imaginaries and trajectories have manifested for actors associated with the NBT sector during three development conflicts within the Aysén region of Chilean Patagonia. We were especially interested in examining how these SD imaginaries interact, nuance, and mediate the approaches of neoliberal development initiatives and the conflicts which surround them. Thus, our case study was guided by two overarching research questions:

- How did regional actors' perceptions, tensions, and conflicts compare with respect to the three development contexts?
- How did sustainability imaginaries manifest within the perspectives expressed by actors about development projects?

10.3 Methodology

10.3.1 Research Design and Justification

The exploratory nature of our research lent itself to qualitative methods, allowing us to engage with the many layers of actors' perceptions and imaginaries (Schutt and Chambliss 2013; Yin 2016). We employed a case study approach, focused on the complexity of development conflict in Aysén and the potential ways in which Adloff and Neckel's (2019) sustainability imaginaries nuance and mediate conflict trajectories (Creswell 2014; Simons 2009). Our approach considered Stake's (2003) ontology, which called for the recognition of reality as subjective, based on elements that are intrinsically linked. We also applied his guidance on the election of a collective case study approach as appropriate for "investigating a phenomenon, population, or general condition" (p.136). Thus, we purposefully selected three recent large-scale development proposals: the Patagonia National Parks Network CBD project, the HidroAysén hydroelectric project, and the Río Cuervo hydroelectric project, to represent a spectrum of development approaches and outcomes in our analysis of SD imaginaries (Fig. 10.1). Common factors between these cases involved their neoliberal driven frameworks, their large scale, and their potential to affect regional NBT operators. We sought to identify and better understand how SD

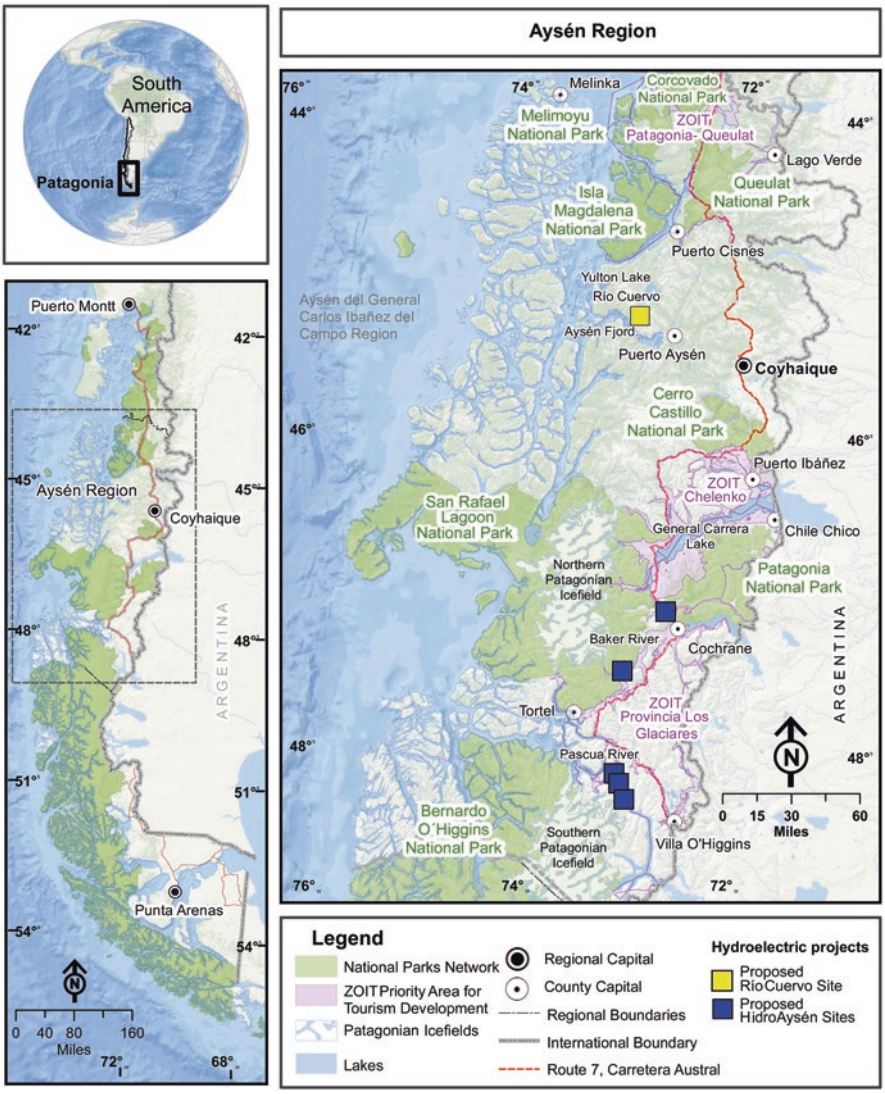

Fig. 10.1 Location of the three large-scale development proposals analyzed within the current study

imaginaries manifested within the perspectives and narratives expressed by actors related to these development contexts and the conflicts they provoked.

The Patagonia National Parks Network CBD project involved the work carried out in Chile by businessman and ecologist Douglas Tompkins, through the creation of private PAs. In 2015, a group of foundations linked to the Tompkins family presented their formal proposal to the Chilean Government to donate 4076.25 km^2 to the Treasury, for the creation of a "Network of National Parks in Chilean Patagonia"

(Chilean Ministry of the Interior and Public Security 2018). In exchange, the Chilean government had to incorporate at least double that surface area (more than 9000 fiscal km^2) within the National System of government Protected Wildlife Areas (SNASPE), protecting these lands within the category of national park. In April of 2017, the Chile's Council of Ministers for Sustainability, approved the creation, expansion, and recategorization of eight PA initiatives within the context of the new Patagonia National Parks Network, accepting the donation of the 4076.25 km^2 initially committed and annexing 9493.68 km^2 of new public lands (Chilean Ministry of the Environment 2017). In the Aysén Region, this included the creation of Melimoyu National Park, Patagonia National Park, the expansion of Magdalena Island National Park, and the reclassification of Cerro Castillo National Reserve as a National Park. In total, 13,569.93 km^2 were incorporated into the SNASPE (Chilean National Forestry Corporation 2018). Adding the already existing protected area, the network consists of more than 45,000 km^2, distributed in eight national parks across the Los Lagos Region, the Aysén Region and the Magallanes Region of Chilean Patagonia (Chilean National Forestry Corporation 2018).

The HidroAysén hydroelectric project, as submitted to SEIA, consisted of five hydroelectric dams and power plants located on the Pascua and Baker rivers in the southern reaches of the Aysén region, with a total reservoir area of 59.1 km^2 and a capacity to generate 2750 MW of energy. Of the five dams, the highest would be 114 m and the lowest would be 40 m. Its capital came from two main partners: Colbún and Endesa. In addition to the dams and power plants, the project proposed a high-voltage power line of more than 2000 km, to transport the energy that was produced to the central and northern regions of Chile. Presumably, the company sought to address the environmental and social impacts of this line separately from the reservoirs, as this line was not included in the assessment process. As a result of the large citizen mobilization in opposition to this project and the complaints filed by civil society organizations, on June 10, 2014, the HidroAysén hydroelectric project was rejected by the Chilean Council of Ministers for Sustainability (Chilean Ministry of the Environment 2014).

The Río Cuervo hydroelectric project, as submitted to SEIA, consisted of two hydroelectric dams and a power plant on the Cuervo River, commune of Aysén, 26 km northwest of Puerto Aysén (communal capital). The projected reservoir area was 131.66 km^2, with two adjacent dams, 55 and 57 m high, respectively. The project was proposed by Energía Austral, a subsidiary of the Xstrata Group. Its installed capacity would have been 600 MW (Pramar Ambiental Consultores 2007). After several legal proceedings, in 2018 the Third Environmental Court of the Chilean Republic reversed earlier SEIA approval for the project and the company finally abandoned its plans (Chilean Third Environmental Court 2018). In addition to the reservoirs, the project proposed to transport the energy to the central region of Chile via lines that would be buried in the fiords, along the coast. Presumably, as in the case of HidroAysén, the transmission line proposal would be submitted to the SEIA as a separate project.

10.3.2 Data Collection

The data collection process and format differed for each of the three contexts of interest in our work; nevertheless, as recommended by Stake (2003), our process employed many common practices and approaches that would help ensure a holistic treatment of the intrinsic links and subjective realities that emerged. Thirty-seven participants from the NBT, environment, energy, and public-service sectors contributed perspectives about the development initiative proposals and approaches through interviews and commentaries during a public panel (Table 10.1).

For each of the contexts, primary data collection began with an invitation to share their work related to NBT in Aysén and their overall perspectives about the region and its development. These accounts were followed by questions oriented to explore participants' perceptions, imaginaries, and lived experiences regarding the particular project and their perspectives about its potential impacts for regional NBT. All the participants were asked to share their preferred future scenarios for the project and NBT, and to reflect on the possibility that both could co-exist and thrive.

With respect to the Patagonia National Parks Network, a forum-debate was organized in August 2018 in the city of Coyhaique, entitled, *Tourism and Patagonia Parks Network: opportunities or obstacles to development ?* during which the creation of the network was officially announced. This forum was organized and convened by a civil society organization linked to NBT, the Association of Tourism Professionals of Chilean Patagonia (APROT), and a political authority of the region, a regional NBT leader and a leader of the conservation sector, all from the Aysén region, were invited as panelists. Representatives from the mining sector were also invited, as this sector was one of the big opponents to the creation of Patagonia National Park, but they declined to participate. As an introduction to the forum-debate, the Chilean National Forestry Corporation (CONAF) was invited to give a presentation on the Patagonia National Parks Network.

The event was attended by 85 people including the three panelists and participants from CONAF. Three questions were posed to the panelists at the forum to characterize the dimensions of conflicts and explore perceptions and values related

Table 10.1 Study participant profiles

	Number of interviews/panelists by sector				
Development initiative	Nature- based tourism sector	Environment sector	Energy sector	Public sector	Total
Patagonia National Parks Network conservation-based development project	1	2	Not applicable	1	4
HidroAysén hydroelectric development project	9	4	2	10	25
Río Cuervo hydroelectric development project	2	3	1	2	8
Total	**12**	**9**	**3**	**13**	**37**

to the project and sustainable imaginaries. The first question involved understanding whether the panelists considered the Patagonia Parks Network CBD project to be an opportunity or a threat to the territory. The second asked panelists to reflect on the adequacy of the citizen participation process employed in the establishment of the Patagonia Parks Network CBD project. The third asked panelists to consider how a range of development projects, including CBD, NBT, ranching, mining, forestry, and salmon farming—among others—might harmoniously coexist in the Aysén region. Panelist answers were recorded and transcribed verbatim, to form the primary dataset for this development context.

In order to develop a more complete and well-rounded understanding of conflict and SD trajectories, we augmented the four primary data accounts from the forum with secondary data obtained from Chilean popular press articles, and press releases from core actors and interest groups, that presented perspectives on the *Patagonia National Parks Network* (Stake 2003; Boblin et al. 2013). We obtained an initial set of results by employing the Google Search Engine, with custom search settings for time frame (2017–2019) and type of result (news). From the initial list, we reviewed place of publication, titles, and summary paragraphs for all results, maintaining those that were published in Chilean outlets, and offered new perspectives and opinions of the initiative. If multiple articles shared the same basic information and outlook, only one was maintained. A total of 17 articles were added to the dataset in this manner. For each article, we reviewed the full text and extracted all of the relevant meaning units within. These meaning units included: "words, sentences, paragraphs, graphs, maps, illustrations, and other graphical alternatives to text, which are related through content and context" (Gale et al. 2019, p.12). Meaning units from the 17 articles were added to the existing dataset obtained from the forum transcripts.

For the HidroAysén and Río Cuervo projects, in-depth interviews were conducted with various NBT and conservation stakeholders, representatives of the energy projects, and public sector employees, between 2012 and 2018. In total, 33 accounts were collected. NBT sector participants included NBT micro-entrepreneurs and union leaders. The environmental sector involved representatives of environmental NGOs. The energy sector consisted of company representatives driving the two hydroelectric projects. The public sector included representatives of government and public institutions. Most of the participants were persons living and working within the Aysén Region, and the rest were national level actors, who were interviewed in Santiago. The interview sought to characterize tensions and dimensions of conflicts, and explore perceptions and values related to SD imaginaries and trajectories. For example, participants were asked to reflect on NBT in the Aysén region and how it might evolve in the future, both with and without the implementation of the particular hydroelectric project of interest. Then, they were asked to visualize and describe the compatibility of NBT with other economic sectors, like the hydroelectric sector. Participants also reflected on the role of the NBT sector in the environmental tensions and conflicts provoked by the hydroelectric project. Finally, participants were asked to share their perceptions of the process and outcomes reached between and the energy sector, the NBT sector, and the

environmental sector. We also complemented the primary data with secondary data in these two contexts; using a similar search process related to conflicts occurring between 2012 and 2018, and the following search strings: *HidroAysén* and *Río Cuervo* (Stake 2003; Boblin et al. 2013). As before, we reviewed the full text and extracted all of the relevant meaning units from the 15 secondary sources that were included through this process, adding these to the existing dataset obtained from the forum transcripts.

10.3.3 Data Processing and Analysis

For data processing and analysis, we sought an approach that would permit us to integrate data across the three case contexts, opting for a combination of directed content analysis (Gale et al. 2019) and inductive coding methods. Although interviews and events occurred in different contexts and timeframes, the Spanish audio recordings and participant-observer notes were transcribed and joined within a master database, to form a unique dataset for this study. For the first research question, we sought to understand the underlying meaning, or latent context, within the dataset, with respect to tensions and conflicts regarding the development contexts. We began with an open coding process that resulted in 12 sub-themes, grouped into two primary categories. This stage was followed by triangulation and member-checking, to resolve points of confusion and ensure the consistency of the final themes and categories. For the second research question, we employed a consistent system of deductive coding to identify and analyze theory-driven codes across the dataset (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006). We used the definitions established by Adloff and Neckel (2019) for the three SD imaginaries to guide our codebook, and the codification of textual phrases within the three trajectories: *Modernization*, *Transformation*, and *Control*. Each of the members of the research team conducted an initial coding process, and then a second stage of analysis focused on triangulation of the original coding among the three-member research team for this paper. During both of these phases of analysis, the researchers accepted participant comments at face value, although when the context or comment was unclear, elaborations were sometimes requested to clarify confusion that arose during coding and/or triangulation stages.

10.4 Results

The following sections provide an overview of the study results, beginning with the characterization and descriptions of the actors and their interests, and the two categories and 12 sub-themes that arose from latent meaning analysis of the data associated with tensions and conflicts for the three development conflicts. Next, we present the results of the directed content analysis of the three SD trajectories: *Modernization*,

Transformation, and *Control*. This section closes with a summary of the results with respect to the overlap and/or interaction of SD trajectories within the dataset.

10.4.1 Contexts, Actors, Interests, and Underlying Dynamics of Tensions and Conflicts

Figure 10.2 provides an overview of those from the Aysén Region who are in support and in opposition to each of the three development contexts, along with their main criticisms and acknowledgements. Major NBT associations and groups within the region expressed their support for each of the three initiatives, although the sector was divided for the HidroAysén hydroelectric development project, with some groups showing support while others opposed. With respect to the two hydroelectric development projects (HidroAysén, Río Cuervo), opposition was driven by broad coalitions consisting of environmental groups, outdoor enthusiasts, outdoor educators, some tourism professional organizations, and several foundations related to Doug and Kris Tompkins. With the Patagonia National Parks Network CBD project, opposition was driven by actors within the mining and ranching sectors, located in the buffer zones around the proposed area of Patagonia National Park.

While all three projects were criticized for technical reasons (e.g., anthropogenic impacts of excessive tourism, ecosystem damage from dams, landscape impacts, potential for disaster in event of earthquakes), they were also criticized for process and governance issues. Of the three projects, the Río Cuervo hydroelectric development project received less criticism in this aspect; in fact, many participants commented that the project approached stakeholders proactively to discuss concerns and develop mitigation plans. The benefits noted for all three projects related primarily to their economic upside potential for local communities, although the CBD project was also viewed as having the potential to *green* Chile's image and contribute to international conservation commitments.

Inductive coding of the latent meanings of participants' discussions of the conflicts and tensions around development processes for these three contexts helped to dig deeper into participants perceptions and values around the development process and governance. This analysis resulted in 12 themes that were grouped around two main categories: Trust (Fig. 10.3) and Distrust (Fig. 10.4). While technical and ideological differences were central to tensions and conflict in all three cases, these categorical perceptions of process and governance around development contexts in Aysén were expressed throughout the dataset, from actors in support and in opposition to the contexts.

The Trust category (Fig. 10.3) was comprised of six main themes, which defined participants' desires for regional development processes: a desire for greater proactivity around *transparency*, a *binding participation* process of governance, *bottom-up* decision making, *re-empowerment* of local groups, *decentralization*, and

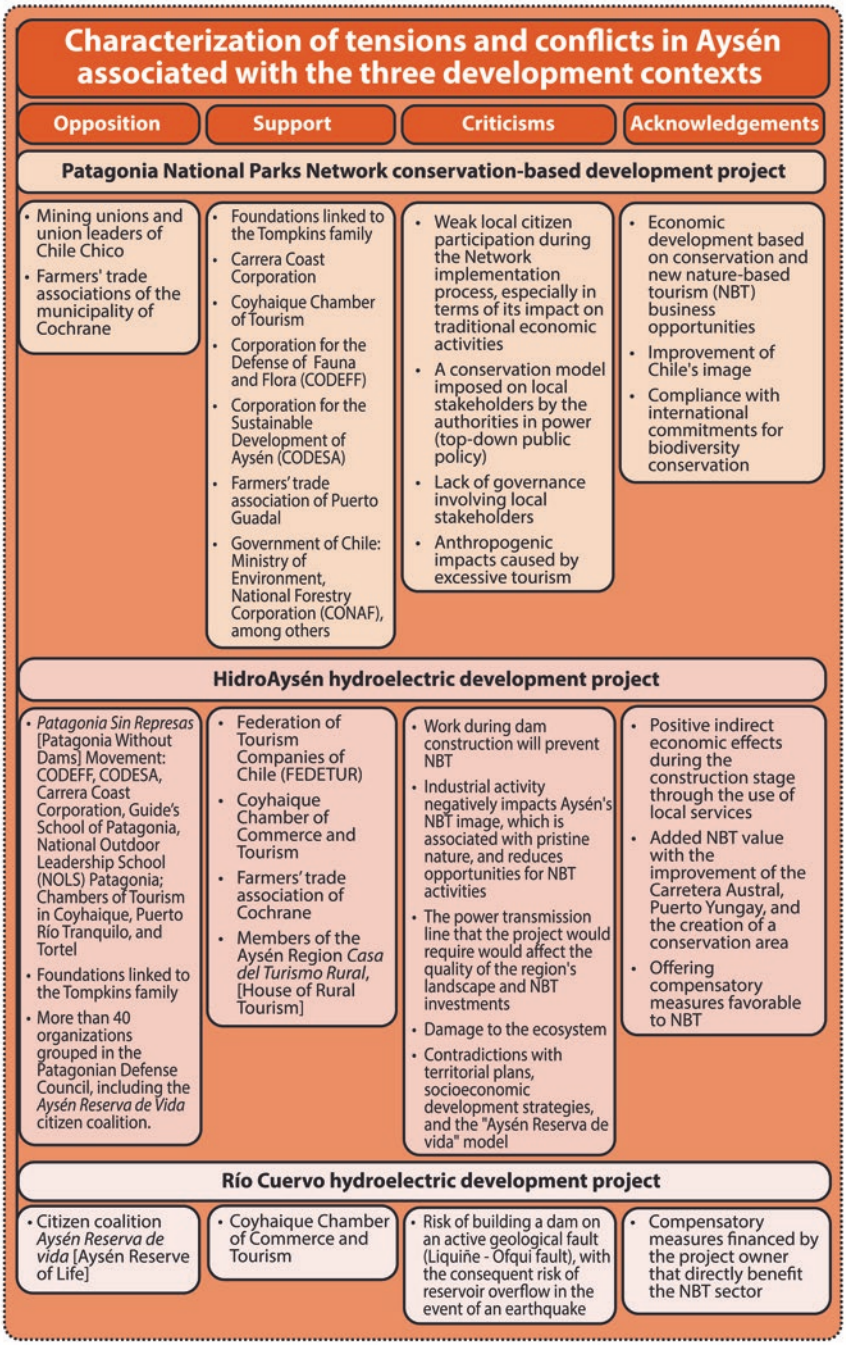

Fig. 10.2 Overview of actors and interests with respect to the three development contexts

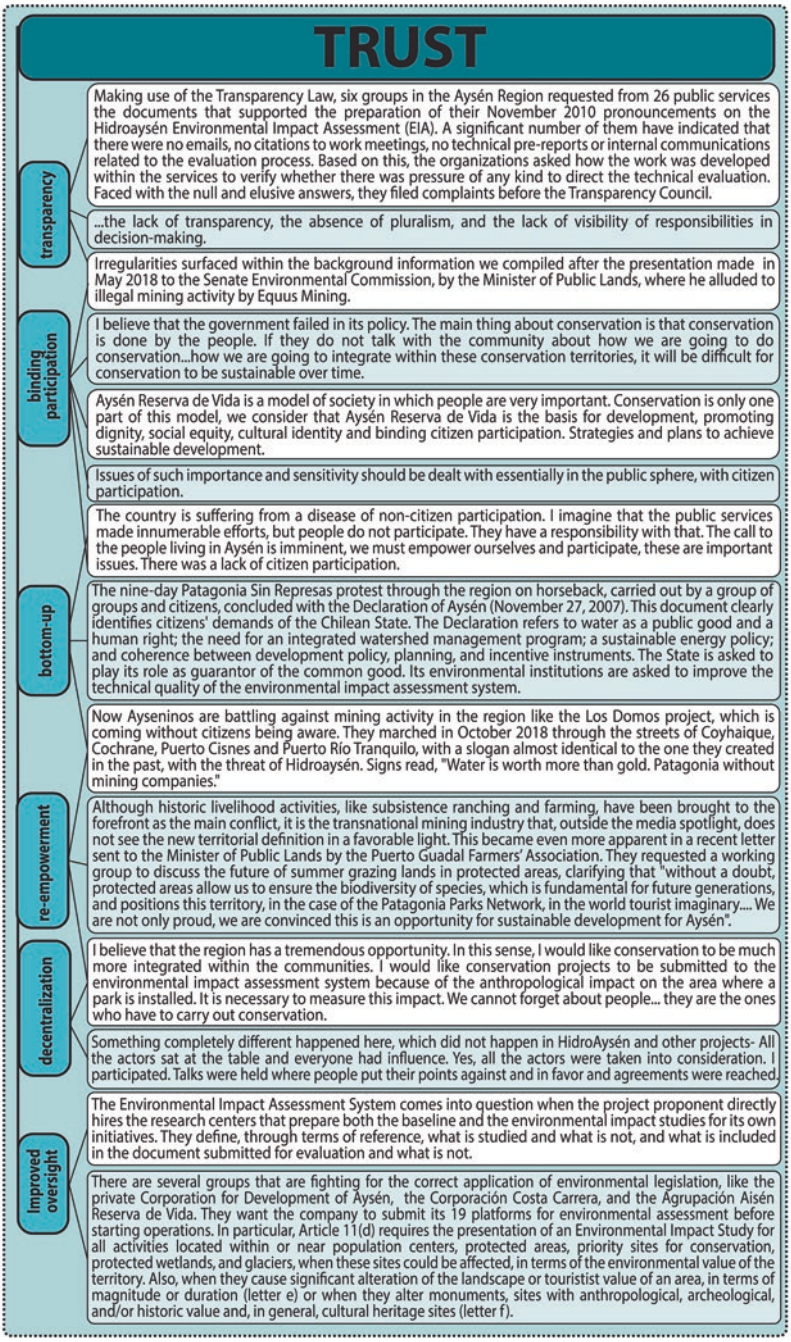

Fig. 10.3 Themes and evidence related to the Trust category that emerged within the conflict-related data for the three development contexts

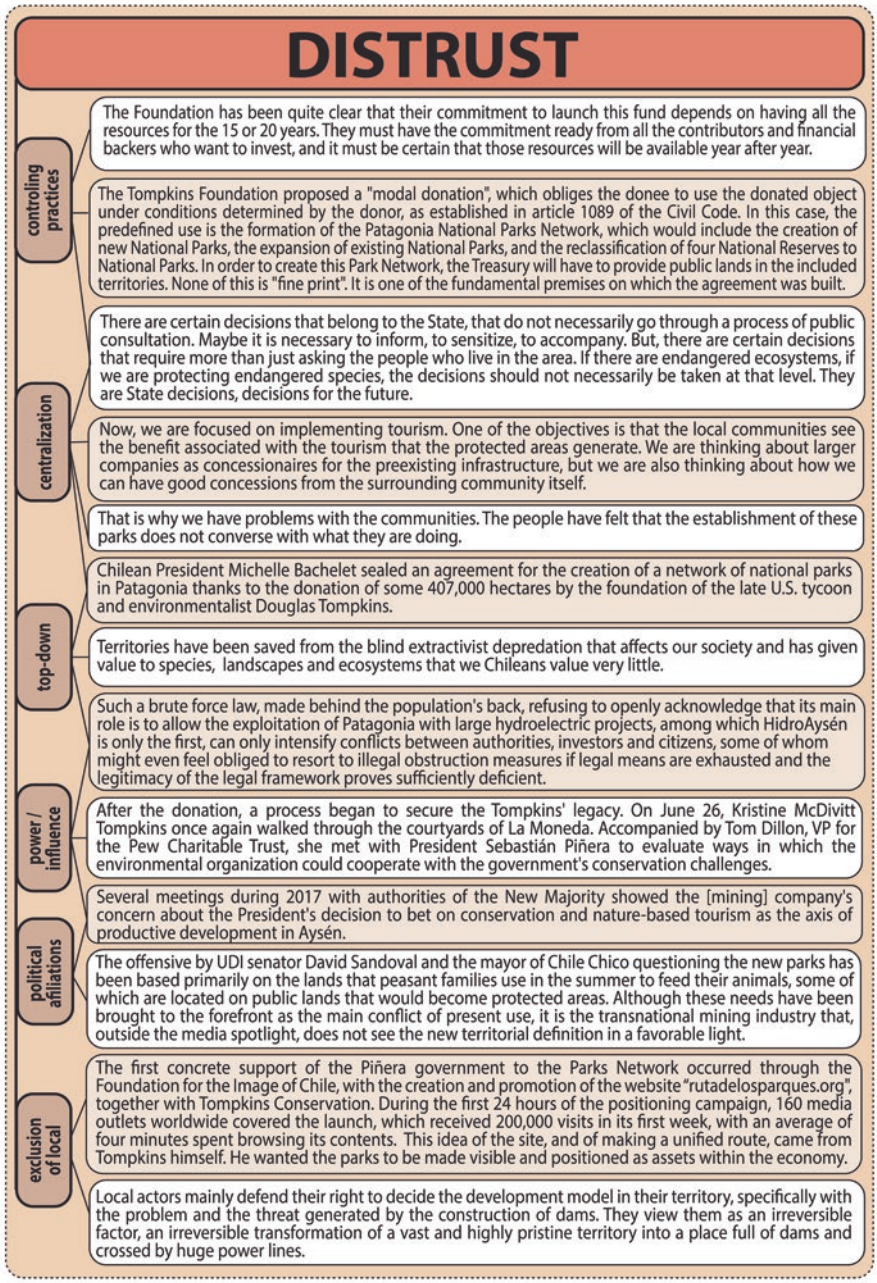

Fig. 10.4 Themes and evidence related to the Distrust category that emerged within the conflict-related data for the three development contexts

improved oversight practices. Sample excerpts from interviews and secondary sources illustrate the depth of each theme within the data.

The six themes grouped within the Distrust category (Fig. 10.4) described the issues participants described with respect to the processes employed for the three development contexts: *controlling practices*, *centralization*, *top-down* decision making, improper use of *power* and *influence*, *political affiliations* and alliances, and the *exclusion of local people* within development decision-making processes and plans. Again, sample excerpts from interviews and secondary sources illustrate some of the ways in which these themes emerged within the data.

Some of the themes overlapped within the data; for example, one participant stated:

> I think that there are certain decisions that belong to the State, that do not necessarily go through a process of consulting the public, maybe it is necessary to inform, to sensitize, to accompany. But there are certain decisions that require more than asking just the people who live in the area. If there are endangered ecosystems, if we are protecting endangered species, the decisions should not necessarily be taken at that level, they are State decisions that have to be taken, decisions for the future.

This excerpt was characterized within the theme of controlling practices because the narrative suggests a controlled decision-making process that did not involve local communities; but as well, it demonstrated the centralization of decisions, through the president and the Tompkins, who developed their negotiations in Santiago, Chile's capital, some 1505 km from the area that would be affected.

10.4.2 Manifestations of Sustainable Development Futures Trajectories

Directed content analysis revealed numerous manifestations of the three SD futures trajectories —*Modernization*; *Transformation*; *Control*— within the dataset. Manifestations of the SD futures trajectories were related to all three development contexts (Patagonia National Parks Network; HidroAysén; Río Cuervo). Figure 10.5 illustrates the core concepts of the *Modernization* SD future trajectory, which worked from an adaptation imaginary, based on practical innovations, technology, and concepts of the *green economy*, that would push toward more sustainable practices. The sample excerpts from interviews and secondary sources in Fig. 10.5 illustrate the range of ways in which this trajectory manifested within the interviews and secondary sources, including NBT, new financing mechanisms (i.e., Project Finance for Permanence [PFP]), the *greening* of Chile's image, a pro-business energy agenda based in non-conventional renewable energies, among others.

Figure 10.6 illustrates the core concepts of the Transformation SD future trajectory, which involved imaginaries that involved fundamental social transformation, along a new development model that involved non-consumptive values, *buen vivir* (living well, in English), utopias, and an overall alignment with the earth system. While the evidence was less prominent for this SD trajectory, several excerpts

Fig. 10.5 Manifestations of Modernization Sustainable Development Trajectory within the conflict dataset for the three development contexts

emerged from interviews and secondary sources, as highlighted in Fig. 10.6. *Transformation* SD imaginaries seemed to contribute to some of the actors' actions with respect to the tensions and conflicts that emerged in the development contexts. Two movements arose, in particular, as representative of the *Transformation* SD trajectory: the *Aysén Reserva de Vida* (ARV; Aysén Reserve of Life in English) and *Patagonia Sin Represas* (Patagonia without Dams) movements.

Although perhaps not to the degree described by Adloff and Neckel (2019), the *Control* SD futures trajectory also manifested within the dataset, as shown in the sample excerpts from interviews and secondary sources, provided in Fig. 10.7. Manifestations pertained to expressions of narratives and imaginaries relating to the anticipation of future socio-ecological disturbances, forms of State controls,

Fig. 10.6 Manifestations of Transformation Sustainable Development Trajectory within the conflict dataset for the three development contexts

Fig. 10.7 Manifestations of Control Sustainable Development Trajectory within the conflict dataset for the three development contexts

particularistic ethics, and earth system control structures like the proposed dams and the PA network.

While the examples provided in the previous results represented meaning units that were coded to a single SD futures trajectory, several of the meaning units that

were extracted from the interviews and secondary sources were coded to multiple SD trajectories, suggesting overlaps and/or interactions in the ways these trajectories manifest in territories or development contexts (Fig. 10.8).

Fig. 10.8 Overlap and/or Interaction between Sustainable Development Trajectory within the conflict dataset for the three development contexts

10.5 Discussion

The results of our study identified several commonalities between actors and groups with respect to the tensions and conflicts around development contexts proposed for the Aysén region of Chile. While technical aspects of the projects varied, all three implied large-scale territorial land-use change that would have an intense local impact. Many of the outcomes that the projects emphasized would provide benefits on a larger scale (e.g., national energy supply, national and global conservation goals, national and global carbon offsetting, national and global NBT). Thus, while there were fundamental differences between actors and groups with respect to the ways they valued nature and its use, several commonalities arose with respect to tensions and conflicts around process and governance. Similar tendencies have arisen in other studies of NBT actors and development conflict within the Aysén territory (Bourlon 2020; Inostroza 2016).

The two main categories (Trust and Distrust) that evolved in our coding of latent themes portrayed the underlying factors that emerged around these process and governance related tensions and conflicts. They portray the stark contrasts between what local community actors sought from development contexts and what they rejected. In all three development contexts, actors sought greater proactivity from developers with respect to *transparency* about their intentions and actions, a *binding participation* process of planning and governance, *bottom-up* decision making about how things would occur in their territory, *re-empowerment* of local groups, *decentralization*, and *improved oversight* practices, especially with respect to Chile's EIA process. In contrast, they rejected actors who employed *controlling practices*, especially when these controls were imposed through *top-down* decision making at a *central* level, with repeated *exclusion of local people* within development decision-making processes and plans. Distrust also manifested through perceptions (and proof) of improper uses of *power* and *influence*, *political affiliations* and alliances.

Chile's EIA process stresses SD as its first and foremost mission. Thus, as all large-scale public and private development projects must participate in this process, one must assume that the creators of Chile's large energy projects, like HidroAysén and Energía Austral, were operating within the logics and parameters of a sustainability trajectory. In fact, several Control SD tactics were observed in their approaches; especially in the case of HidroAysén, who in recognition of future water scarcity, sought geoengineering on a massive scale, to facilitate the requirements of mining, at the expense of local communities and their needs. Nevertheless, our analysis suggested stakeholder recognition and rejection of these Control SD trajectories, initially at a local level and later on, with the successful consolidation of opposition movements and coalitions, through widespread national and international manifestations. One of the main issues with these Control SD trajectory projects was their large scale, and their design for national (not local) needs. Moreover, as the energy produced by the dams would largely support extractive industry and big business (i.e., mining in northern Chile), the irreversible changes in Aysén were considered an unacceptable sacrifice.

In contrast, the intensity of opposition in the Río Cuervo hydroelectric development context was much lower. Conflicts gathered fewer actors, coalitions were not obtained, and there was less media coverage. The Río Cuervo project threatened a smaller geographic sector of Aysén (i.e., the Puerto Aysén commune), with indirect impacts on NBT and the artisanal fishing sector, as the dam and power plant would have much less impact on viewsheds, as compared with the HidroAysén proposal, and the transmission lines would run under the fjords. To a certain extent, the project was even recognized as potentially having positive impacts related to cruise ship tourism, as its construction and transmission infrastructure would necessitate improvements to the ports in Puerto Chacabuco, that would also facilitate this mass tourism model. Several factors likely contributed to the differences we noted in opposition intensity. For example, our data reinforced positive aspects about the approach employed by the company for positioning and advancing the initiative at the local level. In the Río Cuervo context, Energía Austral representatives purposefully assembled actors and proactively worked on plans to mitigate the project's impacts. For example, one of our study participants described:

> Something completely different happened here, which did not happen in HidroAysén and other projects, because all the actors sat at the table and everyone had influence; all the actors and yes, they were taken into consideration, I do not know the extent, but I participated, talks were held where people put their points against and in favor and agreements were reached.

Environmental groups were the main opponents to the Río Cuervo hydroelectric development context, steadfastly maintaining their views that the project would create irreparable damage to local ecosystems and risks for local community safety; thus, did not represent SD. The perceptions that surfaced from participants representing these two groups illustrated clear examples of the Control and Modernization SD imaginaries. For example, in the following excerpt, representatives for Energía Austral, the company behind the Río Cuervo project, described the Control SD approaches they perceived from environmental groups, emphasizing their own approaches through Modernization SD imaginaries, that were, in their opinion, more representative of the best interests of local territories:

> The views of the environmentalist sectors are influenced by the opinions of more radical environmentalist groups, such as Tompkins, who thought that nature was pristine and that it cannot be touched, and nothing can be done. That is a selfish view from the point of view of development, because in our opinion, it is not possible to have a territory and not take advantage of the natural resources. We believe that it is possible to take advantage of the resources, making a sustainable and rational use of the natural resources and providing for the future what is needed. To leave a piece of land untouched is a utopia, we believe that it is a very selfish view, and it is not possible to do it here, that is why some more radical environmental foreign capitalists buy large extensions of land and block them and seal them. Metaphorically, they put a padlock on them and who wins with that? Only a group of people who think that way, but the communities that need a more harmonious development do not understand it and do not accept it.

This excerpt was one of several examples of interactions and overlap that emerged in our study between the SD imaginaries (Fig. 10.8). Although the Energía

Austral representative's representation of Tompkins' vision portrayed a Control SD mindset, it also accurately captured the Transformation SD trajectory that the couple and their foundations employed at the off set of their projects in Chile. Based on principles of Deep Ecology and Doug's vision of a "next economy" that would intimately intertwine economic sustainability and the restoration of natural systems (Tompkins 2012), the couple's initial approach to private conservation was centered on a Transformational SD futures trajectory (Bourlon 2017). Along the trajectory of their work in Patagonia they experienced significant tensions with local and national stakeholders. Thus, as the following excerpt from our dataset reinforces, the Tompkins realized that the cost of a Transformation SD trajectory, might be the failure of achieving the large-scale change they sought:

> ...the objective is not to develop the tourism offer, but to focus on the environment and protection... tourism may be involved, but it is not really the priority... we are in the tourism business out of necessity, not out of desire.

In 2017, Kris Tompkins shared her perspective of what is needed to achieve SD in the future (González Isla 2017). Her statement reaffirms the overlaps and interactions between SD imaginaries that we observed in other aspects of the Tompkins long-term approach. The first part of her comments describes the need for Control SD approaches: "Adequate legislation that prioritizes environmental protection, an alert and mobilized citizenry, and a State that oversees, are fundamental conditions to avoid harmful projects." Her next statement moves toward Transformative SD imaginaries, "But nothing will change if we do not modify our production and consumption patterns, which have plunged us into the current socio-environmental crisis." And the final part of her excerpt returns to a Modernization SD trajectory, focused on incremental improvements, "In this sense, the creation of national parks has proven to be a successful instrument for the conservation of biodiversity and to contain, in part, this crisis."

While the Tompkins maintained their Transformation SD ideology throughout the trajectory of their work in Chilean Patagonia, our data suggests that they adapted their strategies to work within the political and social settings they encountered. Seemingly, they navigated between Modernization and Control SD imaginaries and tactics to maneuver between local and national actors, agendas, and decision-making processes. These tactics, which we have termed, *SD agility*, merit additional study, as they may represent an important capacity for SD futures trajectories. Within the context of our study, we have established an initial definition of SD agility as: "the strategic ability to maneuver between SD imaginaries and trajectories in order to achieve strategic SD outcomes."

We hypothesize that SD agility may work in similar manners as other capacities (e.g., *boundary concepts*, *translation*), that have been successfully used to bridge differences between interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary actors (De Witt and Hedlund 2017; Gale and Ednie 2019; Gale et al. 2021; Hedlund-de Witt 2013). These practices orient communication strategies to resonate with stakeholders' values. They *meet people where they are* by interacting with them in ways that will resonate with their values (Kohl and McCool 2016, p. 271). Perhaps this concept

also works in political and legislative concepts, requiring an agility to recognize and maneuver between SD trajectories, depending on the imaginaries of receptors and the ways in which these imaginaries are enacted within policy, legislation, and practice.

A second example of the SD agility concept involves the *Aysén Reserva de Vida* (ARV) movement. This movement surfaced within each of the three development contexts of our study in several different contexts and roles. For example, ARV frequently arose in association with an environmental defense stance that operated from an SD Control imaginary focused on limiting the forms of growth and change that occurred in the Aysén Region. Nevertheless, as representatives of the movement described, they obtained their desired outcomes through an SD agility that included agents operating from a range of SD imaginaries:

> The first thing we learned many years ago is that we must make alliances... from time to time you end up allying with the devil, but in this case it was the lesser of two evils…Do not play David against Goliath, rather, play Gulliver, and use everyone to tie them up. The key is long campaigns. You have to try to buy time, because they end up collapsing for improbable reasons.

In his 2019 book, Peter Hartmann, the ARV movement's founder, described the movement based on a Transformation SD-based imaginary and purpose, saying, "the citizens' mega-proposal 'Aisén Reserva de Vida' emerged in 1990 as a search for a sustainable regional development alternative and in response to the traditional centralist, destructive, and predatory model" (p. 2).

One of our interview participants explained that over the years, the ARV movement has been positioned as,

> ...a citizen proposal built by a wide diversity of Ayseninos and Ayseninas, organizations, and actors from other parts of the country and the world, who work to protect the heritage of this region in Patagonia, and promote the desire to live in a different model of society, based on economic, social and cultural rights, so as to improve the quality of life for, and by, the inhabitants of this territory, and thus, contribute to a more sustainable world.

As such, ARV offers a fourth proposed development context for Aysén, which arose within our case study, through push-back and support for elements of the other three proposed development contexts.

During the early years of the ARV movement, efforts focused on aligning citizens who were operating from a range of SD imaginaries and trajectories around promoting the Aysén Region as being a reservoir of life that must be protected and conserved. For example, many early participants were professionals who had arrived in the region during the late 1980s and early 1990s, to work with technocratic institutions that were ramping up in Coyhaique, the region's capital, with the transition back to democracy (Blanco Wells 2009). Many had studied abroad during the 1970s and 1980s, with disciplinary training geared toward natural resources, parks and reserves, wildlife, outdoor education, and other aspects of conservation and ecology. As the historic photos in Fig. 10.9 illustrate, early ARV efforts aligned with the work of these professionals. Photo A was taken during the second Latin American Congress of National Parks and other PAs, which occurred in 2008. In this session, professionals associated with ARV shared the movement's objectives,

Fig. 10.9 Historic photos documenting key events in the early years of the Aysén Reserva de Vida movement

principals, and strategies, with the goal of extending the movement throughout Chilean and Argentine Patagonia. Photo B was taken during the same year, at the launch of the movement's declaration statement, which is featured in the large, framed pictures shown in front of the participant members standing for the picture.

The ARV declaration shared environmental, cultural, economic, social, and political principles for citizen activism and engagement, proposed and shared by people who self-ascribed to the ARV movement. The declaration was developed by members during a project financed by the Arena Foundation, which sought to strengthen ties between social, cultural, environmental, and NBT organizations and entrepreneurs from Chilean and Argentine Patagonia around the pursuit of sustainability. Framed versions of the declaration statement were displayed within the businesses, offices, and homes of participants. Considering the momentum of the movement, its resonance with professionals in Aysén technocratic institutions, the Arena Foundation project outcomes, and growing interest in public participation, it is not surprising that, a few years later, the ARV concept and slogan were incorporated into the 2010 regional development strategy put forth by the Regional Government of Aysén (Ilpes/Cepal-Gore Aysén 2010), even though the plan largely maintained Chile's dominant neoliberal paradigm and a Modernization SD futures trajectory.

Since then, the movement has been increasingly associated with overlapping and interacting SD trajectories. For example, in recent years, several Chilean geographers have associated the ARV movement with larger Modernization SD imaginaries that have manifested in Aysén (Miranda Cabaña 2016; Núñez et al. 2018, 2020), identifying State policy and discourse which has encouraged CBD, and especially NBT (Aliste et al. 2018; Miranda Cabaña 2016; Núñez and Aliste 2017; Núñez et al. 2014, 2018, 2019, 2020). Their research proposes that recent land redistribution in Aysén represents a new form of *green* colonization within the territory, and that this reterritorialization process has been framed and enabled by the State, through the positioning of a new social narrative of the Aysén region, as a *Reserva of Vida* (Miranda Cabaña 2016; Núñez et al. 2018, 2020).

Nevertheless, our study reinforced the ARV movement's self-expressed commitment to a Transformation SD trajectory, even though members sometimes employed Control SD tactics in conflicts with other development paradigms, and/or supported the Modernization SD trajectory expressed within the Patagonia National Parks Network CBD project. For example, although one of the panelists (who has been a long-standing leader within the ARV movement), advocated for the Patagonia National Parks Network CBD project and the NBT opportunities it could bring for local communities in Aysén, they also described:

> Not everything is based on the generation of money and accelerating consumerism as it is exacerbated today on the planet. Here in Aysén I believe we have a historic opportunity to do something different. We must change the paradigm. We have entered a neoliberal model of only producing and working in slavery and we are not living, we are surviving.

This second example of SD agility seemed to work differently from what we observed within the first example involving the Tompkins' SD trajectory. Perhaps, since the ARV coalition is citizen-based rather than private, and dependent on a broader base of participants who likely operate along a range of SD imaginaries, their work has required an inherent SD agility in order to resonate with their participants' values. Thus, ARV may be willing to *meet people where they are*, providing

spaces and opportunities in which they may advance toward the ARV Transformation SD imaginary. Alternatively, perhaps the attractiveness of Aysén Reserva de Vida, as a slogan, has been appropriated by other groups, and used to position a new CBD narrative and reterritorialization process based on Modernization SD imaginaries that differ in substance from the Transformative SD trajectory that the original movement has proposed. Clearly, additional research is warranted to better understand the interactions and overlaps that occur when SD imaginaries and futures trajectories are implemented at a territorial level, including the ways in which they evolve and adapt over time.

10.6 Conclusions

The collective case study we have presented within this chapter characterized the tensions and conflicts that arose in the Aysén Region of Chilean Patagonia, in response to three large-scale development proposals. We identified dimensions of Trust and Distrust that affected local actors' perceptions of these projects and the conflicts that surrounded them. Further, we have identified that Adloff and Neckel's (2019) SD imaginaries and futures trajectories manifested within the debates that surrounded all three of the proposed large-scale development projects. Frequently, we found examples of Modernization and Control SD imaginaries in the narratives, strategies, and tactics employed by the development projects and by many of their opponents. These tendencies seem logical, especially as Chile is a unitary republic with a purposefully developed, overarching neoliberal economic model, that is reinforced by an overly complex public/private oversight and governance system with limited regulation capacity, that effectively limits and weakens governmental authority over private business (Borrie et al. 2020; De Matheus e Silva et al. 2018; Gentes and Policzer 2022).

For example, given their size and complexity, both the HidroAysén and Río Cuervo hydroelectric projects were submitted for full EIA under Chile's SEA system. Both projects advanced for assessment as project-level EIAs, as neither project bundled their reservoirs and power plant proposals with the proposals for their transmission lines. This type of approach has been criticized as having inherent limitations for four main reasons: (1) it is reactive, and prevents an effective anticipation and planning around sites that are environmentally sensitive; (2) project-level EIAs are normally financed by the proponent of the project and have often been shown as biased against the environment; (3) often occur after key decisions in an overall strategy have been taken, thus no serious alternative assessment occurs; and (4) project-level EIAs do not effectively consider project subcomponents, ancillary developments, or the cumulative impacts of multiple projects (United Nations Environment Programme 2018).

The HidroAysén hydroelectric project proposal was initially approved through the SEA system (May 2011), under the government of Sebastian Piñera, but was subsequently rejected (June 2014) under the presidency of Bachelet. Both during

and after the EIA process, the project was criticized for legal and procedural irregularities, but was ultimately rejected for technical reasons, including the absence of a community resettlement plan. The Río Cuervo hydroelectric project was also initially approved by the SEA (May 2012), in a decision that was subsequently ratified by the Committee of Ministers for Sustainability. After numerous appeals, it was also ultimately rejected by the Third Environmental Court of the Republic in Valdivia for technical reasons related to its proposed location above the active Liquiñe-Ofqui Faultline. Interestingly, despite the massive scale of the Patagonia National Parks Network, which spans three Chilean administrative regions, and the well-documented impacts of NBT in PAs and communities around the globe, there has been no mention of evaluating the environmental impacts (positive and/or negative), that could arise as a result of the project, or the subsequent development of the Route of the Patagonia Parks.

In our process to understand the actors involved and positions for and against the three development contexts, we identified latent themes related to the components of trust and distrust that merit future research and consideration within SD development trajectories and processes. We believe that improving Chile's current Environmental Impact Assessment System (SEIA) represents an important process improvement that could positively affect several of the themes that we identified related to the Trust category. For example, currently the SEIA focuses on evaluating extractive projects and does not evaluate others, such as the Patagonia National Park Network, despite their potential social, economic, and environmental impacts. In light of the growth of CDB in Chile, and especially Patagonia, it seems necessary to consider how to adjust the SEIA so that it can effectively evaluate development projects based on conservation.

Further, Chile's SEIA process warrants change to improve its capacity to accurately consider the SD related impacts of traditional large-scale development projects. Comparing Chile's environmental impact assessment process to systems in Brazil, Spain, and Canada, a recent evaluation identified four main weaknesses in the current Chilean system: high national-level centralization, a lack of scoping requirements, the non-binding nature of the EIA process, and the lack of consideration of project alternatives (Rodríguez-Luna et al. 2021). To address these weaknesses and improve the capacity of Chile's SEIA regulation, this study recommended modifications to the current system, including decentralization, mandating design alternatives within projects, the incorporation of scoping, a register of baseline information reviewers, and an improved public information process during and post-evaluation. Our research, and especially the underlying factors of trust and distrust that surfaced through the latent themes, supports the recommendations made by Rodríguez-Luna et al. (2021), as important steps in improving Chile's SD evaluation and oversight process.

We hope that this research helps to advance the agenda outlined by Adloff and Neckel (2019), providing further evidence that supports their hypothesis about the interrelated nature of these SD trajectories. Our results identified several interactions and interrelations between Modernization, Transformation, and Control SD imaginaries and trajectories, demonstrating how they often overlap and interact as

development contexts unfold. The two examples we described within our discussion seem to strongly support another of Adloff and Neckel's (2019) hypotheses, that some SD forms can impulse or contribute to the evolution of others. We would extend that hypothesis, through consideration of SD agility. Our results suggest that SD agility may represent an important capacity within large-scale SD transformations, and as such, may be an important component of understanding SD territorial transitions. Further research is warranted around all these hypotheses.

We conclude by adding one final possible explanation for the pluralism and interactions observed within the work of ARV. Perhaps the SD agility we observed within their strategies has arisen through the collaborative initiatives and alliances that have formed during their many campaigns and projects, in order to be heard and listened to within the current limits of Chile's environmental and social oversight capacity. For example, in the introduction to Peter Hartmann's (2019) book about the movement, he explained:

> In our Chile, individual views are not considered, unless one is famous or influential, which forces us to act through organizations. We have learned that organizing is very important and that in this way incredible goals can be achieved…In general we think that it is necessary to work jointly or in alliance with people and organizations related to the objectives we want to achieve. (p. 2–3)

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