

Chile mega-fire 2017: An analysis of social representation of forest plantation territory

By: [Pliscoff, P](#) (Pliscoff, Patricio)^[1,2]; [Folchi, M](#) (Folchi, Mauricio)^[3]; [Aliste, E](#) (Aliste, Enrique)^[4]; [Cea, D](#) (Cea, Daniela)^[4]; [Simonetti, JA](#) (Simonetti, Javier A.)^[5]

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Abstract

Between January 1 and February 10, 2017, the central southern area of Chile faced several mega-fires events that were considered the second largest of the history, 518,174 ha were affected. The devastating consequences of this fire also include the loss of 12 human lives, as well as an enormous financial cost in the fight against fires. Due to the increase in global mega-fires and the increase in industrial forest plantations during the last decades in southern Chile, it is relevant to analyse how this industry interact with the occurrence of these events and their socio-environmental consequences. We contrasted the content of public and private sector stakeholders discourses with four discursive elements of a spatial nature of interest, Extension and continuity of forestry plantations, native ecosystems damage, affectation of non-forestry land cover and proximity to localities. The results show strong discrepancies for the discourses of mega-fires effects and consequences between the different stakeholders. Two relevant emerging issues were identified, the biodiversity value of native ecosystems affected as a forgotten element in the discourses of environmental-related government agencies and the role played to promote mega-fires by the forestry plantations spatial structure which is seen in the opposite way depending of stakeholder.

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Author Information

Corresponding Address: Pliscoff, P (corresponding author)

+ Pontificia Univ Catolica Chile, Fac Hist Geog & Ciencia Polit, Inst Geog, Av Vicuna Mackenna 4860, Santiago, Chile.

Addresses:

- + [1] Pontificia Univ Catolica Chile, Fac Hist Geog & Ciencia Polit, Inst Geog, Av Vicuna Mackenna 4860, Santiago, Chile
- + [2] Pontificia Univ Catolica Chile, Fac Ciencias Biol, Dept Ecol, Av Libertador Bernardo OHiggins 340, Santiago, Chile
- + [3] Univ Chile, Fac Filosofia & Humanidades, Dept Ciencias Hist, Av Capitan Ignacio Carrera Pinto 1025, Santiago, Chile
- + [4] Univ Chile, Fac Arquitectura & Urbanismo, Dept Geog, Av Portugal 84, Santiago, Chile
- + [5] Univ Chile, Fac Ciencias, Dept Ciencias Ecol, Las Palmeras 3425, Santiago, Chile

E-mail Addresses: pliscoff@uc.cl

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