

Livestock Activity in Northwestern Patagonian Protected Areas

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Case Report

This paper presents results on how livestock and livestock activity (or cattle ranching) is perceived by the National Park Administration in the Andean region of northwestern Patagonia, Argentina. Livestock activity in Argentinean Patagonian Andes has older antecedents than the establishment of National Parks. Its development and expansion is found around late 19th and early 20th centuries, when the entire Patagonian territory was incorporated into the National State of Argentina as agricultural-livestock colonies [1,2]. By then and for a few decades, open-borders policy was proposed as a strategy for economic development of Argentina and Chile [3]. A related activity, transhumance, has even older roots in Patagonia, dating back to the 16th century [4], but the network of herding roads or trails throughout the mountains had a clear expansion in this particular period, and just a few years before the creation of the first National Parks. Given that livestock activity precedes the creation of National Parks, we compared the way in which the ideas surrounding cattle ranching are presented in the Management Plans documents of the protected areas of northwestern (where Andes mountains are) Patagonia in Argentina (Table 1).

Table 1: Information on dates of protected areas creation, and management plans elaboration.

National Park	Year of Protected Area Creation	Year of Management Plan Writing
Laguna Blanca	1940	2017
Lanín	1937	2014
Nacional Nahuel Huapi – Los Arrayanes	1934; division of Los Arrayanes National Park in 1971	2019
Lago Puelo	creation in 1938 as an annex to Los Alerces National Park, creation of Lago Puelo National Park in 1971	2019
Los Alerces	1937	2019

For the analysis, we first compared the number of citations of “livestock activity” with respect to citations to the idea of “population”. We also compared “livestock activity” with “tourism”, which in theory is the main activity in national parks, and with the idea of “conservation management”, for each of northwestern Patagonia National Parks. Results are summarized in the following Table 2. Results suggest that the association of “livestock activity” with the present population is strong only in the cases of Laguna Blanca and Los Alerces National Parks (in green). For the rest of the National Parks (in blue), “population” as a term, should be associated with a larger variety of activities (or pluriactivity), and with other aspects to be considered in the management of the National Park (e.g., land tenure).

Table 2: Comparison of citation.

	Livestock Act/Population	Livestock Act/Tourism	Livestock Act/Conservation Management
Laguna Blanca	0.88	3.84	0.34
Lanín	0.48	0.53	0.23
Nahuel Huapi-Los Arrayanes	0.56	1.15	0.17
Lago Puelo	0.57	1.66	0.2
Los Alerces	0.79	0.81	0.14

- Very high relevance of livestock activity mentions
- High relevance of livestock activity mentions
- Low relevance of livestock activity mentions
- Minor relevance of livestock activity mentions

“Livestock activity” shows more references than “tourism” in all the national parks (in yellow), with the exception of Lanín (in blue) and Los Alerces (in green), where tourism is possibly more complex, or either, ranching is considered with fewer variables than in the other cases. Notions related to management and conservation are clearly higher for all National Parks (in light blue). From here, the “livestock activity” was reviewed in its context, based on a line-by-line reading (Riessman, 2008). In the reading of the documents, four open codes appeared in relation to cattle ranching: use; patrimony; management; environmental impact. This means that there are

four approaches or views that the National Parks Administration introduces. A use (USE) as a fact in a given space. It is linked to past use but is characterized in the present by its precariousness and informality. A patrimony (PATR.) or heritage, that understands this activity as cultural and relevant to the identity of the protected area. Management (MAN.) that must be carried out by both parts, the population and the National Parks Administration. An environmental impact (ENV. IMP.) that has only been recognized as negative, for the ecosystems than must be protected [5-9].

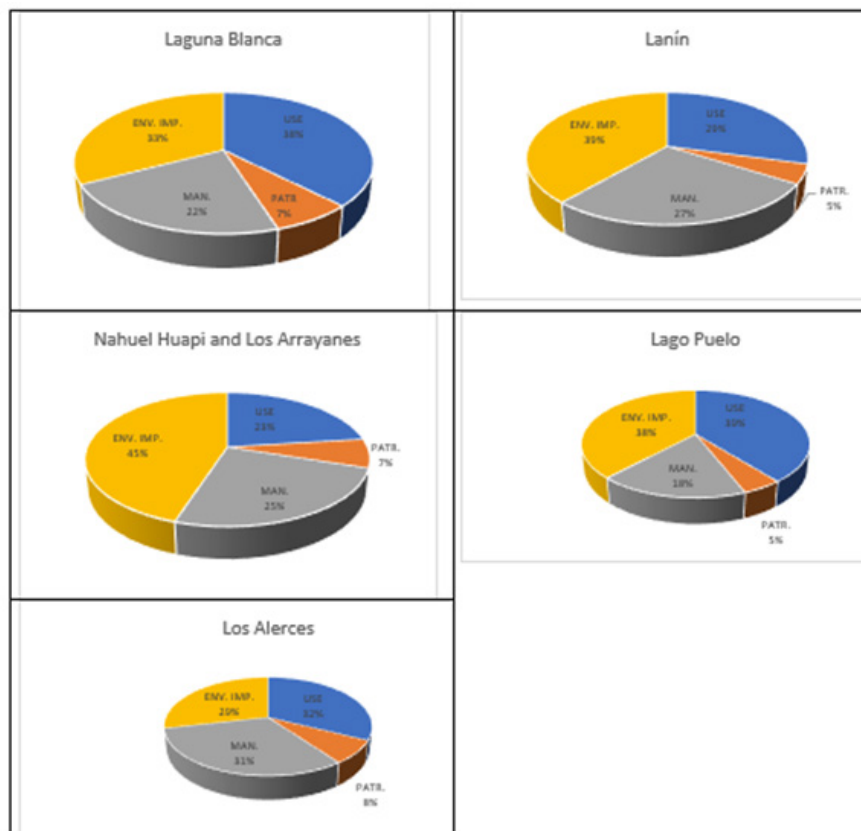


Figure 1: Weight of different coding for each protected area.

The following graphs (Figure 1) allow to see the weight of each coding for each National Park. Livestock activity was built on the destruction of many of the environments that are now part of the analyzed protected areas, but at the same time represents an identity recognized as intangible heritage. The analysis allowed us to recognize some aspects to highlight:

- a. Livestock activity is just one of many environmental problems.
- b. Livestock activity is not the main conservation problem for most National Parks, with the exception of Laguna Blanca, where is the central problem.
- c. In all cases, the rural populations living in protected areas recognize that cattle ranching is their main activity and the source of their identity.
- d. The only protected area that recognizes a change associated with tourism is Los Alerces National Park.
- e. The management and policies focus on internal aspects of the park rather than on dialogue with other stakeholders, with the exception of Los Alerces National Park, which does not mention this issue.
- f. Livestock is seen as an activity with high negative environmental impact in all protected areas.
- g. Livestock activity itself is seen with negative ecological impact, as a tradition (and precarious) and is also recognized as intangible heritage.
- h. The cultural value recognized to the Mapuche culture does not appear in the characteristics of the existing or past use, with the exception of transhumance.
- i. There is no gender perspective in management plans.

Herding trails, transhumance, appear as the heritage of a

territory lived with livestock activity, installed at the end of the XIX century, but its negative environmental impact still remains in the way the activity is carried out. In all Management Plans, managers are particularly sharp in terms to their own historical shortcomings, they seek initiatives to overcome limits and history, they recognize themselves as responsible not only for conservation but also for the redefinitions that practices need. Although not all of the Patagonian Andes range are in protected areas, the size of the biosphere reserve makes it necessary to address this issue. Change and innovation are an enormous challenge for an institution that has yet to define a clear definition of this particular activity [10].

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