



## Review article

# Informal settlements: Reinterpreting rural imaginary in urban areas: The case of Valparaiso's ravines



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## ABSTRACT

This article aims to reveal and highlight the socio-spatial processes related to the establishment, reorganisation and consolidation of rural life in informal settlements in the urban ravines of Valparaiso, as shown through social representations of inhabitants. These urban neighbourhoods located in the ravines of Valparaiso are a complex socio-spatial reality embedding meaning, representations, and social imaginaries associate with rural life.

To understand the logic of this kind of appropriation of space in the ravines settlements, we worked with and studied the key players, the inhabitants who showed and revealed from their experiences, expectations and actions this imaginary reconstruction of rural life in urban areas.

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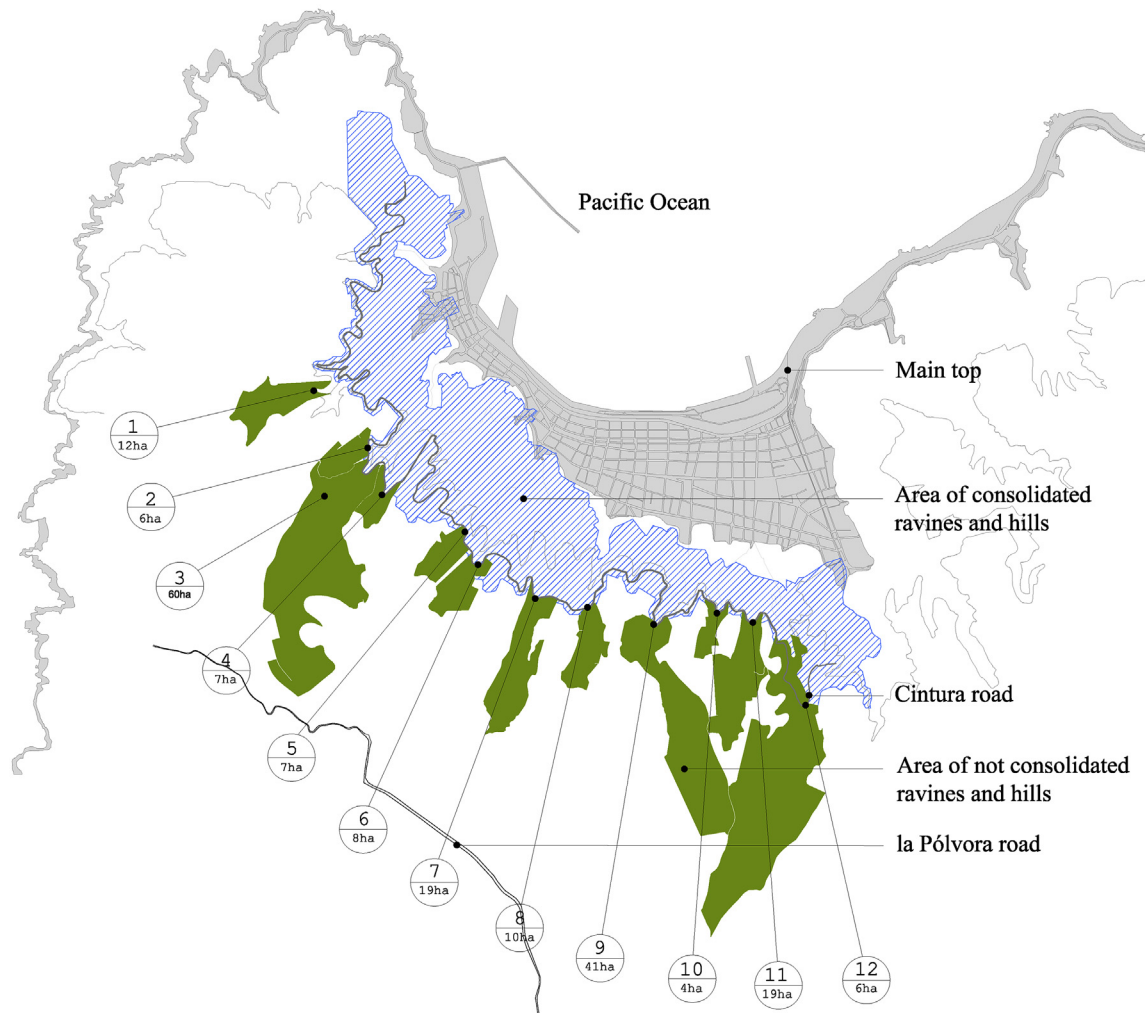
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## 1. Introduction: social representation

The phenomenon on informal urbanization in the ravines of Valparaiso began in an early stage, as an evolutionary process where settlers self-constructed their shelters while gaining access

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Not consolidated ravines analyzed		Legend	
1- Ravine Las chanas	7- Ravine Yerbas Buenas	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:blue; border:1px solid black;"></span> Area of consolidated ravines and hills	
2- Ravine Perragallo	8- Ravine Osman Perez Freire	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:olive; border:1px solid black;"></span> Area of not consolidated ravines and hills	
3- Ravine San Agustin	9- Ravine Jaime	Cintura road	
4- Ravine Guillermo Munich	10- Ravine El Litre	Main top	
5- Ravine San Juan de Dios	11- Ravine Las Cañas		
6- Ravine Posada	12- Ravine La Rinconada		

Fig. 1. Map of Valparaíso indicating the 12 ravines that were studied. Source: author.

to urban conditions. This evolutionary process of family relocations is a consequence of successive earthquakes (Pino & Ojeda, 2013) as well as the rural-urban migration that occurred in the early nineteenth century, when Valparaíso was the most important port on the Southern Pacific Rim (Pino, 2015) (Figs. 1 and 2).

The process of the appropriation of the ravines of Valparaíso has involved a complex construction of social representations with a direct impact on the built environment. Jodelet defines the notion of social representation as 'a way of interpreting and thinking about our daily life, a form of social knowledge. [ ... ] it is mental activity

displayed by individuals and groups to set their positions with respect to situations, events, objects and communications concerning them' (1984, 3). According to Flament, social representations are 'an organised set of cognitions regarding an object shared by members of a homogeneous population in relation to that object' (in Negura, 2006). For this city, each ravine as an urban unit is defined and identified by locals as a neighbourhood and as a territory containing a number of representations.

This article focuses on the social representations inhabitants create of ravines as informal settlements, allowing us to recognise

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