

ECO_CARE Midterm Conference 2023

“Sharing of the co-created results”-journey of the ECO_CARE team
Rio de Janeiro and Chiquitano Indigenous territories of Mato Grosso, Brazil

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Figure 1. Kick-off at the Escola Estadual Indígena Chiquitano José Turibio, Vila Nova Barbecho, from left: Silvano Chue Muquissai, Margherita Poto, Giulia Parola. Photo credit: Edmundo Chue Muquissai

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Summary

This report provides an overview of the midterm ECOCARE Journey to the Chiquitano territories of Mato Grosso, a collaborative initiative coordinated by Giulia Parola and Margherita Poto, with facilitation by Silvano Chue Muquissai. The journey aimed to assess the midterm results of the ECOCARE research and education, fostering connections with various partner institutions and key individuals. Objectives included evaluating the research and educational outcomes and engaging with members from partner institutions such as professors Rodrigo Tavares (Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, UFRRJ), Giulia Parola (ECO_CARE Coordinator for Brazil and Research Fellow at the Department of Law, University of Turin), Margherita Poto (ECO_CARE Principal Investigator), and exchange students Cecília Campos (UNIRIO) and Aline Wennerstrom (UFRRJ). Additionally, the ECO_CARE midterm program developed with the Chiquitano community members, our ECO_CARE non-academic partners, were pivotal in shaping the project's direction. The journey featured diverse activities, including co-led sessions on indigenous knowledge (at Vila Nova Barbecho), major events presenting co-created project results (Vila Nova Barbecho, Aldeia Central, Aldeia Acorizal, Terra Indígena Portal Do Encantado), field trips to river courses and waterfalls (Rio Nopetarch - Vila Nova Barbecho Tarumã River, Cachoeira do Barbado Aldeia and Fazendinha), and informal meetings with community members, teachers, family members and children. Additional external funding from EGU Public Engagement Grants 2023 facilitated the presentation of an educational toolkit to the school pupils involved in water and ocean literacy activities, integrating materials from the Ocean Senses project (Akma2, coordinated by Giuliana Panieri), to children and teachers. A unanimous agreement among project members emphasised the importance of continued efforts in decolonising legal knowledge. The team also reached a consensus on developing a future project, along the lines of ECO_CARE WPs, focused on mapping and researching the indigenous art of basket weaving as an integral aspect of Chiquitano indigenous heritage. This research not only preserves cultural richness but also serves as a legal milestone, highlighting the resilience of indigenous communities against assimilation efforts and advocating for self-determination and fundamental human rights. This report concludes with a commitment to sustaining these collaborative efforts and acknowledging the ongoing journey towards cultural preservation and legal recognition.

Acknowledgments

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Figure 2. Decolonising knowledge starts with positioning ourselves. Photo: Edmundo Chue Muquissai

Aim of the midterm journey to the Chiquitano Indigenous territories of Mato Grosso and content of the main activities

Sharing of research and education results

The primary aim of the journey was to establish in-person connections with team members, expressing gratitude for collective efforts toward the achievement of the project results thus far. Additionally, the journey aimed to develop new relationships, listen to the needs of individuals, disseminate project outcomes to partners and students, and brainstorm innovative ideas for the project's future development. A pivotal aspect of the journey was to reestablish a research approach centered on delivering results rather than merely extrapolating them.

Throughout the journey, the core principles of ECO_CARE were wholeheartedly embraced. The first tenet, empathy, was manifested through the sharing of individual needs. Compassion was demonstrated by actively addressing and meeting the needs of one another. Lastly, care was exemplified in the commitment to healing the environmental and human wounds inflicted by the historical aggression of colonization and exploitation.

The ECO_CARE team planned the journey in different steps: the first part in Rio de Janeiro, where the majority of the academic partners reside and second part in the Chiquitano Indigenous territories of Mato Grosso, where ECO_CARE has been cooperating with many aldeias (villages) in multiple projects over the last three years.

Day 1

To set the stage for this enriching experience, and thanks to the contact and the trust building facilitated by our PhD exchange student [Natalia Médici](#), from UFRRJ, Giulia Parola

and Margherita Poto were hosted by Julia Xavante in the Aldeia Maraka'nà in Rio de Janeiro. Here, the project coordinators met several members of the different indigenous groups and learned about their history and also the story of the aldeia and the resistance movement toward the recognition of the land. The discussion concluded with a shared dedication to collaboratively create a project aimed at aiding the "Casa das Mulheres," a facility established to provide assistance to indigenous women facing challenges. Our renewed commitment to championing indigenous knowledge and the empowerment of women has taken on a new objective. Presently, the project coordinators are actively planning strategies to identify funding sources that align with this initiative. As a result of this preliminary cooperation, the ECO_CARE Team, with the support of the illustrator Valentina Russo (Mucho Amor), developed a project cover for the 25th of November (Day of the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls), that will become also the project cover of an anthology on ecological and emotional education and the SDGs (Palgrave McMillan, SDG Series, editors Giuliana Panieri, Margherita Paola Poto, Emily Murray, exp. 2023/2024). In the project cover, to represent the indigenous peoples, the team was granted permission to use the image of Mainumy, the girl symbol of the Aldeia Maraka'nà.



Figure 3. Indigenous illustration on the walls of the Aldeia Maraka'nà. Photo: Margherita Poto



Figure 4. Illustration "Amiamoci" (Let's love each other) for November 25 by Valentina Russo, 2023

Day 2

During the time spent in Rio, Giulia and Margherita had the possibility to meet prof. Tavares and touch base on the different activities and students involved in the project, as well as [Cecília Campos](#) (UNIRIO) and Aline Wennerstrom. Cecilia, Margherita and Giulia participated also to the International Conference organized by Innovation Norway [Research and Innovation for Energy Transition](#), 6-8 November 2023. During the event, the ECO_CARE project results were shared with the conference participants interested in knowing more about the relationship between environmental law and the indigenous discourse.

Day 3-4

The ECO_CARE team started the journey toward the Chiquitano Indigenous territories of Mato Grosso. In particular, Giulia and Margherita met the project cultural mediator Silvano Chue Muquissai in Cuiabá, the capital of the state of Mato Grosso. In Cuiabá, the team members procured all the necessary items for the upcoming journey, fulfilling the requirements specified by the communities. This encompassed provisions such as event food supplies, essentials for children, school materials, and medical supplies. Food insecurity, health concerns, and the significant distances faced by the Chiquitano Indigenous people residing in the remote aldeias remain pressing challenges in their ongoing struggle for survival. Our project aims to address these primary difficulties, providing assistance to bolster their resistance and uphold their fundamental rights to food, healthcare, and quality education. Additionally, ECO_CARE seeks to support their rights to self-determination, access to clean water, and a safe living environment.



Figure 5. Care for water, in Chiquitano language: a writing on the walls of the Chiquitano Indigenous School Escola Estadual Indígena Chiquitano José Turibio, in Vila Nova Barbecho. The writing is surrounded by the Chiquitano patterns representing the masculine and feminine elements. Photo: Margherita Poto

Day 5

On the fifth day, a day-long activity involving project members, teachers, and all the learners (of different ages) of the aldeia was organized. The team expressed gratitude to the school community for their warm hospitality, introduced themselves, and provided the learners with insights into the research and educational initiatives undertaken by the ECO_CARE project. They showcased the work documented in the books focusing on the Taruma river and distributed copies of the narrative about the Ocean, featuring Nina and Berry, the two foraminifera symbols representing the Ocean Senses project.

The children enthusiastically embraced the engaging characters and expressed a keen interest in learning more about the ocean. In the second part of the school day, the Chiquitano teachers and school (Edmundo Nicolau Chue Muquissai, Gonçalo Arildo Muquissai, Saturnina Urupe Chue, Suzilene Urupe Chue) took the stage, delivering classes on indigenous arts and crafts, which included a lesson on the names and patterns various body paintings and their cultural significance. The educational session continued with a lesson on basket weaving, during which Giulia and Margherita actively participated in hands-on exercises under the watchful guidance of the teachers (coordinated by Suzilene Urupe Chue).



Figure 6. Everyone was included in the activities co-created in the school of Vila Nova Barbecho. Photo collage: Margherita Poto

Day 6

On the sixth day, an evening event unfolded in the village of Vila Nova Barbecho. The youngest members of the community showcased traditional dances in their traditional Chiquitano dresses, accompanied by percussions and songs, as well as a violin performance (Francisco Chue Muquissai).



Figure 7. Dancers and musicians at the end of the performance. Photo: Edmundo Chue Muquissai

Afterwards, Giulia, Silvano, and Margherita presented the community with the outcomes of the co-created research—the book “Tarumã, As águas que falam” (“Tarumã, waters that talk”) available in both English and Portuguese (see References).



Figure 8. Co-created project results. Photo: Margherita Poto

Following this presentation, a video forum ensued, featuring the screening of two documentaries. The first documented the [Ocean Senses activities](#) conducted in Chiquitano schools in 2022. In the second video documentary, created and directed by Felippy Damian, many members of the Chiquitano villages narrated their personal stories of connection with water, emphasizing the importance of water for us and the Planet. The documentary underscored the collective commitment to protect and preserve this vital resource, shedding light on the profound significance water holds within the Chiquitano communities. The audience was delighted to witness themselves in the films and observe how their involvement played a pivotal role in the project's success. Throughout the event, an art exhibition showcased the primary artworks crafted by both children and adults.



art

Figure 9. Chiquitano art crafts created by the students of the school, Vila Nova Barbecho. Photo: Edmundo Chue Muquissai

Day 7-8

The team travelled to and settled in the Aldeia Central, Portal do Encantado, in the municipality of Porto Esperidião. The agenda encompassed group games and a rejuvenating excursion to the Tarumã River with the participation of the students (50) and the teachers of the Chiquitano School from Aldeia Central e Acorizal (Benedito Santana de Campos; Cristiane Conceição Vaca Pereira Leite; Henrique Mendes Surubi; José de Arruda Mendes; Maria Izabel Rupe; Maria Siria Rupe; Roberto Luciano Ortiz da Silva; Rosiane Catarina Cezario Rupe) and from the Chiquitano School in Nossa Senhora Aparecida (Adelaide Aparecida Chue Urupe and Laucino Costa Leite Mendes). Along the riverbanks, children and teachers reveled in the picturesque surroundings, spending the entire morning engaged in singing, swimming, and socializing.



Figure 10. Enjoying the Tarumã waters. Photo: Margherita Poto

The afternoon was dedicated to preparing for the evening event, which featured a series of engaging activities. These included performances by children showcasing Chiquitano dances and songs, a second book launch of "Tarumã, As águas que falam" ("Tarumã, waters that talk") (see References) with the distribution of copies to all co-authors and illustrators from the Chiquitano School in Nossa Senhora Aparecida, the screening of video documentaries, and final speeches and expressions of gratitude.



Figure 10. Evening performance, at the Chiquitano Memorial. Photo: Margherita Poto

Additionally, an exhibition showcasing local handicrafts added a cultural touch to the festivities. Despite the looming threat of local wildfires, the community gathered back at the school for a communal dinner, making the entire event a testament to resilience and community spirit.

Participants

The key participants in this event were researchers and community members from the ECO_CARE Team and namely: Margherita Poto, Giulia Parola, Silvano Chue Muquissai, Rodrigo Tavares, Cecília Campos, Aline Wennerstrom, Edmundo Chue Muquissai, Adelaide Aparecida Chue Urupe; Amélia Chue Urupe Merendeira; Beline Tatiane Urup Tossué; Benedito Santana de Campos; Cecília Campos; Cristiane Conceição Vaca Pereira Leite; Edmundo Chue Muquissai; Gonçalo Arildo Muquissai; Giulia Parola; Henrique Mendes Surubi; José de Arruda Mendes; Laucino Costa Leite Mendes; Leiliane Chue Muquissai; Maria Izabel Rupe; Maria Siria Rupe; Roberto Luciano Ortiz da Silva; Rosiane Catarina Cezario Rupe; Saturnina Urupe Chue; Suzilene Urupe Chue. In total, we counted more than 200 participants, including children, elders, community and team members.

Midterm outcomes

1. Participants expressed a strong commitment to continuing the cooperation on the research and education exchange in water governance.
2. The network of educators, researchers and community members dedicated to the protection of water, the process of self-determination for the Chiquitano people and the protection of their lands and waters was established, facilitating ongoing collaboration.
3. Recommendations for future research projects, and educational resources were discussed.
4. Social media content created by Giulia Parola, Edmundo Chue Muquissai, Margherita Poto and Silvano Chue Muquissai was shared during the event, increasing visibility for the different projects (ECO_CARE, EGU Public Engagement Grants 2023), including footage of short videos and documentaries.
5. Preliminary outline of a Chiquitano publication on the theme of preservation of indigenous knowledge and history of the assimilation and restoration (Multifoco – Series on Water), expected in 2024.

Ways forward and the next event

At the end of the journey, the team members reflected on the takeaways or feelings they were left with after this engaging and innovative approach to midterm conference, and agreed on the need to move toward a decolonizing approach to research where results are co-created and research has a restorative meaning of creating connections, establishing new networks and enriching people and the surrounding environment with feelings of empathy, compassion and care. The conversations that were held and research network this workshop fostered demonstrates the innovative ideas and creative solutions that are born when interdisciplinarity and emotions are welcomed in environmental legal research that has the protection of the Planet and its inhabitants at the core. The outcome of this ongoing dialogue is anticipated to be published in a volume entirely coordinated by Chiquitano researchers, expected to be released either in 2024.

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Websites

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