



TRANSFORMING UNIVERSITIES FOR A CHANGING CLIMATE

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH: CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND ITS RELATION TO EDUCATION, LAW, PUBLIC HEALTH, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The Federal University of Paraná (UFPR) – a higher education institution committed to the goals of the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations (UN), joined the Climate U Project – *Transforming Universities for a Changing Climate* in 2022 as an affiliated university, under the coordination of the Institute of Education at the University College London.

Through its Graduate Programs in Education (PPGE); Law (PPGD); and Environment and Development (PPGMAD), UFPR has developed Participatory Action Research on the climate emergency and its relation to education, law, public health, and the environment.

This project aims to engage with vulnerable communities on climate matters, rights violations, and experiences of resistance. It focuses on mutual knowledge building on climate risks, vulnerability, and climate justice. It also promotes community empowerment in protecting their lands and collaboratively drafting an environmental sustainability plan.

Participatory Action Research Partnerships

In the development of the Climate-U Project, UFPR has established partnerships with representatives of social movements, community associations, and traditional communities that have been historically impacted by the effects of climate change on their territories. The communities involved in the project were: Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST), Movement of People Affected by Dams (MAB), Movement of Peasant Women (MMC), Movement of Artisanal Fisherman and Women (MPP), as well as representatives of Traditional Communities, namely Indigenous, *Quilombola* and *Caiçara* communities.

Action Fronts of Participatory Action Research at UFPR

The **culture circles**, which involved representatives of social movements, community associations, and traditional communities, as well as students and research professors from UFPR, allowed for the exchange of knowledge, the meeting of cultures, and the construction of actions based on the participants' demands.

The **Agroecology, climate change, and peasant women's resistances** seminar held during the Agroecology Journey underlined the impact of climate change on the lives of women from the fields, waters, and forests, from an intersectional perspective. It also examined their response to these destructive effects through various resistances. These women manifest an ethic of care, through feminist practices, for both human and non-human nature.

Figure 1. The Agroecology, climate change, and peasant women's resistances seminar. Curitiba, UFPR, 24th June 2022.



The **Climate Justice and Litigation** seminar scrutinized the notion of climate justice, often framed by Global North proposals. These strategies lean heavily on market instruments for climate issues resolution which could potentially escalate socio-environmental conflicts.

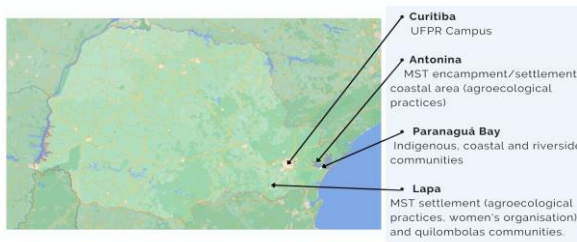
The seminar **The 27th United Nations Conference on Climate Change from the perspective of social movements and indigenous peoples** served as a platform for indigenous communities to voice their concerns about inadequate representation at the central negotiating tables of COP. They highlighted the vital role of indigeneity in addressing climate issues.



Actions in the communities:

José Lutzenberger agroforestry community (Antonina/PR); the Contestado settlement and the Restinga *quilombola* (Lapa/PR); the Ilha do Mel fishing community and the Tekoa Takuaty Village Community in Ilha da Cotinga (Paranaguá/PR).

Figure 2. Map of the state of Paraná.



Conducted visits to communities to ascertain their understanding of climate issues and the approaches they employ to tackle them.

Initiated a knowledge exchange between the university and social movements via a hands-on class for UFPR Pedagogy students exploring agroecological experiences and training agroecology technologists at the Contestado Settlement in Lapa.

Organized a training course for community women involved in the project focusing on gender issues, empowerment, food sovereignty, and climate change.

Facilitated a culture circle with professionals from the Contestado Settlement Rural School to learn how they integrate climate change into their curriculum and how the university can aid in teacher training.

Incorporating climate change in UFPR's graduate programs, including master's and doctorate levels.

The **Climate issues, education, gender and intersectionality** special topics class (15 hours) was offered on the Postgraduate Program in Education. This class will be expanded and will also involve the Graduate Program in Law and the Graduate Program in Environment and Development.

“Hence, fostering genuine openness for those who genuinely need to listen and perceive the plight of the peoples facing daily massacres, those most profoundly impacted, becomes paramount. It is imperative not to perceive these communities as mere subjects requiring protection, but rather as the true guardians of the entire biome and its rich biodiversity, a source of national pride. Until we accord this critical importance to their voices, the prospect of a healthy planet remains elusive.” (Juliana Kerexu, *Cacique* of the Tekoa Takuaty Village on Cotinga Island, Paranaguá-Paraná).

Impacts of the university's actions regarding climate justice

UFPR's discussions with social movements has acknowledged ongoing efforts in rural and traditional community territories, enhancing the collaborative knowledge production about climate change between the university and social movements.

By incorporating the point-of-view of social movements, indigenous people, and traditional communities into the climate justice debate, we've been able to challenge prevalent climate strategies.

Recognizing the impact of climate change on women's lives and their resistance has sparked research initiatives and educational courses targeting women, focusing on climate emergencies, food sovereignty, and the empowerment of women from the fields, waters and forests.

The inclusion of environmental and climate topics in the university's research and extension programs, as well as its course curricula, has reinforced its role in epistemic discussions about climate change. Adapting the university's curricula to include climate discussions amplifies education's role in shifting cultural perspectives on climate issues.

Learnings from the Participatory Action Research

Understanding the practices and resistance experiences of communities has been pivotal in creating new syntheses and acknowledging a new climate emergency epistemology rooted in social movements. This comes with a feminist perspective, closely linking social justice and climate justice.

Emphasizing the voices of women from the fields, waters, and forests concerning climate emergencies has been paramount. Recognizing their 'pedagogy of care' focused on the body, others, social ties, territory and the planet aids in combating epistemic, gender, and socio-environmental injustices through Participatory Action Research.

Climate-U Research Group - UFPR

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