

*Giving Rights to Mother Earth. Rituals, Indigeneity and Ecospiritualities (Feb. 2020 – July 2021)*

*Jean Chamel*

A decade after the inclusion of the rights of nature in the Ecuadorian constitution of 2008 and a comparable process in Bolivia, attempts – sometimes successful – to grant legal personality to "Earth Beings" are multiplying in the world: the Whanganui River in New Zealand, the Ganges in India, the Atrato River and the Amazon Basin in Colombia, Lake Erie in the United States, etc.

These widely publicized cases that fascinate jurists are part of a global movement, which remains very little studied. My research project aims to disentangle the ontological intertwining associated with the rights of nature by studying the discourses of European actors in the movement as well as their sensitive relationships with these natural entities. These relationships are strongly tied to innovative ritual practices developed in conjunction with representatives of indigenous peoples.

Starting from a detailed analysis of the rituals observed and filmed during rights of nature events (conferences, tribunals, etc.), the project also studies the interactions with the indigenous representatives who initiated these rituals, focusing in particular on the issues of power and recognition, against the backdrop of legitimizing bodies such as the UN and as a point of comparison the movement for the rights of indigenous peoples and its UN mechanisms. Indigenous rituals and cosmologies also nourish a certain spirituality of nature that seems difficult to dissociate from the movement and that can be also observed beyond the rights of nature context.

The usual methods of ethnographic research (participant observation and informal conversations, semi-structured interviews, and analysis of a body of discourse) are used, with the mobilization of methods and reflections of visual anthropology to film and analyze the rituals, and the use of the Internet to study networks that are also widely deployed in virtual space.