Joining forces to meet the needs of (environmental) citizen science in conflict zones

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ECSA 2024, Vienna, Austria

Scope

Critically assess **gaps and opportunities** for **citizen science (CS)** in armed conflict, by reflecting on insights generated from environmental impacts of the war in **Ukraine**.

Objectives

- Present two CS projects deployed during the Russo-Ukrainian war (GROMADA, CitiObs);
- Reflect on gaps, opportunities & stakeholders involved in CS initiatives in Ukraine.
- Co-design action points to enhance potential of CS in armed conflicts, especially in relation to assessing environmental harm.

Plan of the workshop

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1. Intro, roles,

2. Video testimonials by Ukrainian partners

3. Table discussions: gaps and opportunities

4. Action agenda

Who we are

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The GROMADA project

The CitiOBS project

Why are we here?

The GROMADA project (2023-2025)

Environmental recovery + Law studies + Citizen engagement for Ukraine
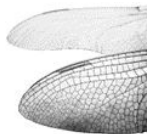
Aim: Strengthen cooperation between European universities to **support public and legal capacity for environmental recovery** in Ukraine.

How: By encouraging **community engagement** in environmental action and peacebuilding through **environmental citizen science!**

More info: https://gromada-erasmus.eu/

The CitiObs project (2023-2026)

Aim: Enhance **Citizen Observatories (COs)** for healthy, sustainable, resilient and inclusive **cities**.

How: By strengthening existing and new COs to engage citizens and marginalised communities; **co-create inclusive local actions** & **aggregate, standardize and validate data** of the COs.

10 countries involved, among them Ukraine!

CitiObs will implement its work in a total of **85 cities in three phases**: 5 Frontrunners, 30 Alliance Cases and 50 Fellow Cases!

More info: https://citiobs.eu/

CS in war-torn Ukraine: insights from the GROMADA report

Extract from the report by Berti Suman et al. (2024) -
https://gromada-erasmus.eu/publications/mapping-gaps-and-opportunities-wp2a1/

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As the UN reports (2023, p.109)
due to the Russia's war in Ukraine:

"**practically all environmental components—including air, water, soil, and biota—have been further impacted.**"

Image by Unsplash

The social dimension of CS in Ukraine

What to think of:

★ Local knowledge and co-design

★ Barriers to participation

★ (Human) Rights considerations

★ (Socio-Env) Justice discourses

★ The politics of monitoring

★ The recovery phase

Technical dimension of CS in Ukraine

What to consider:

★ Data gaps

★ Risks for community engagement

★ Existing monitoring initiatives: Activities of the State Environmental Inspectorate of Ukraine during the war and consequences for the environment; UNECE; CEOBS

Map produced by Zoi Environment Network, September 2022

The value of doing CS in conflict zones

- Social action

- Community empowerment

- New knowledge and practices generated for CS.

- Awareness raising on environmental damage in conflict zones.

- Expansion of existing frameworks on data ethics, citizen engagement and legal aspect of CS and its results.

Citizen science - some areas:

Technology, Meaning of life, Bigger picture, Climate, Statistics, extreme weather, Health, Universe, Cities, Physics, Architecture, Geography, Culture, Nature, Habitat, Map-making, Farming, Connecting to Nature, Water chemistry, Biodiversity

Citizen Science

Frits Ahlefeldt

Image by Frits Ahlefeldt

CS in armed conflicts: Reflection points from Ukraine

- Practising CS in conflict necessitates **greater collaboration** (sometimes also authorisation) **with formal institutions** (Ministries; the Army; etc.)
- **Place attachment, sense of belonging & security** is a crucial factor influencing community participation.
- CS communities can be part of the **decision-making process** for post-war recovery!
- The **diaspora** can act as trigger of community engagement and action!

Let's listen to the stories of CS shared by our Ukrainian colleagues!

On the spotlight: CS and CEM in Ukraine

Citizen Science (CS) (in GROMADA)

Focus on environmental CS

Understood as "activities in which non-professional participants contribute to data collection and in some cases to data analysis to advance scientific research in the environmental field." (p.10)

Civic Environmental Monitoring (CEM)

Understood as "the use by ordinary people of monitoring devices (e.g., a sensor) or their bare senses (e.g., smell; hearing) to detect environmental issues. **CEM may not entail a scientific component and thus differs from CS**, which always entails some scientific process." (p.10)

#2:Odessa State Environmental University

Video

#1: National Ecological Centre of Ukraine

Video 1(application of CS in local context)

Video 2 (community needs)

References

- Berti Suman, A. et al. (2024) Mapping gaps and opportunities for community engagement in environmental citizen science in Ukraine. GROMADA consortium. https://gromada-erasmus.eu/results/

- Conflict and Environment Observatory & Zoï Environment Network. (2024). The environmental consequences of the war against Ukraine. Preliminary twelve-month assessment (February 2022 – February 2023). https://tinyurl.com/uvxnnnts

- Zourou, K. & Oikonomou, S. 2022.Citizen science for environmental and health issues in conflict zones. European Citizen Science Association. ECSA Conference 2022: Citizen Science for Planetary Health, 5-8 October 2022 | Berlin, Germany.

Thank you!

GROMADA:

https://gromada-erasmus.eu/

CitiOBS:

https://citiobs.eu/