

**Biocultural Collection of the Entre Folhas – Medicinal Plants
Group, UFV, Viçosa Campus****ARTICLE****Alice Cristina de Sampaio e Silvaⁱ** 

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Abstract

The Acervo Biocultural of the Grupo Entre Folhas – Medicinal Plants was developed based on three decades of the Group's work in teaching, research, and outreach, in collaboration with rural communities and individuals. The Acervo serves as a space for welcoming and engaging in dialogue with Indigenous peoples and traditional communities, their biocultural memories, and their practices. This study aims to document and analyze the construction of this space. To this end, documentary research and the Epistemological Circle methodology were employed. The creation of the Acervo was collaborative, involving professors, students, researchers, and representatives from various communities through participatory methodologies. The establishment of the Acervo enabled the collective production of educational materials, training spaces, and Biocultural and Consultation Protocols, making these communities' knowledge visible, supporting the defense of their territories and of sociobiodiversity, and promoting intercultural and anticolonial popular education.

Keywords: Interculturality, biocultural memory, traditional knowledge.

**Acervo Biocultural do Grupo Entre Folhas – Plantas Medicinais, UFV,
Campus Viçosa****Resumo**

O Acervo Biocultural do Grupo Entre Folhas – Plantas Medicinais foi estruturado a partir de três décadas de atuação do Grupo em ensino, pesquisa e extensão, junto a sujeitos e comunidades do campo. O Acervo é espaço de acolhida e diálogo com povos originários e comunidades tradicionais, suas memórias bioculturais e suas práticas. O objetivo deste trabalho é registrar e analisar a construção desse espaço. Para tanto, foram utilizados a pesquisa documental e o

Círculo Epistemológico. O processo de criação do Acervo foi colaborativo, envolvendo professores, estudantes, pesquisadores e representantes de diferentes comunidades por meio de metodologias participativas. A constituição do Acervo possibilitou a produção coletiva de materiais didáticos, espaços formativos e Protocolos Bioculturais e de Consulta, visibilizando os saberes desses sujeitos, apoiando a defesa dos territórios e da sociobiodiversidade e a promovendo educação popular intercultural e anticolonial.

Palavras-chave: Interculturalidade, memória biocultural, saberes tradicionais.

1 Introduction

The *Entre Folhas – Medicinal Plants Group* (GEFPM) of the Federal University of Viçosa (UFV) has been developing teaching, research, and outreach activities since 1989 in the fields of medicinal plants, homeopathy, social technologies, and practices for self-management of health and quality of life. From its inception, the Group was under the responsibility of the Department of Plant Science, later being transferred to the Department of Education in 2020.

In 2020, GEFPM began to be conceived and structured as an educational space based on a proposal for dialogue among sciences, considering both the systematized knowledge of academia—the hegemonic knowledge—and the popular and traditional knowledge preserved in the biocultural memories of peoples of the countryside, the waters, and the forests, a dialogue that has existed since the Group's founding.

A milestone in this new stage of the Group was the creation of the course *Encontro de Saberes e Práticas Educativas* (Meeting of Knowledge and Educational Practices), which took place during the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic context ushered in a period of panic, fear, and countless deaths; moreover, it provoked discussions about the capitalist system and the colonality in which we are embedded, as well as their relationship with the socio-environmental crises we face, further revealing our rupture with nature.

According to Krenak (2020, p. 8):

For a long time, we were lulled by the story that we are humanity and alienated ourselves from the organism of which we are part – the Earth – coming to believe that it is one thing and we are another: the Earth and humanity. I don't perceive anything that isn't nature. Everything is nature. The cosmos is nature. Everything I can think of is nature.

Recognizing that an academic perspective alone would not be sufficient to support students amid the pandemic reality, the *Encontro de Saberes e Práticas Educativas* course aimed, from the outset, to think and reflect on life and its relationships, grounded in listening to the perspectives of masters and teachers of popular and traditional knowledge (Silva, 2020).

The development of this course, together with GEFPM's long-standing engagement with rural subjects and communities, has enabled the creation of the *Entre Folhas – Medicinal Plants Group Biocultural Collection*. Conceived as a space for traditional and Indigenous peoples and communities within the university—built in dialogue with representatives of partner communities—its purpose is to give visibility to the traditional peoples who form Brazil and to challenge knowledge production in universities and teacher education, from a popular and intercultural perspective on education.

The proposal stems from the recognition of the relevance of traditional wisdom for and about *sociobiodiversity* and life itself. Traditional communities possess knowledge about the natural environment and biodiversity, acquired through observation and intimate coexistence with nature over time. These groups carry what Toledo and Barrera-Bassols (2015) define as *Biocultural Memory*, representing the complex outcome of thousands of years of interaction between cultures and natural environments. This concept highlights the importance of the wisdom passed down by traditional and Indigenous communities, recognized as the primary guardians of biodiversity and the collective memory of humanity.

Here, traditional knowledge and wisdom are understood, following Toledo and Barrera-Bassols (2015), as “holistic, cumulative, dynamic, and open systems of knowledge, built upon transgenerational local experiences,” in which “knowledge is thus an essential part or fraction of local wisdom” (p. 138). Promoting dialogue between traditional and academic knowledge fosters the construction of new, more complex understandings that are crucial for addressing the severe imbalances we experience in this era of climate and humanitarian crisis.

In this work, we describe the methodology developed through collective efforts toward the creation of the GEFPM Biocultural Collection, as well as its main actions,

offering reflections and insights into its contributions. The analyses were carried out considering two key moments: the period of remote activities (during the Covid-19 pandemic) and the post-pandemic period with in-person actions. To this end, a documentary research approach was employed, based on minutes from mediated meetings of the Biocultural Collection and an analysis of the *Epistemological Circles* (Romão *et al.*, 2006) developed throughout the establishment of the Collection, outlining the timeline of its main stages. The *Epistemological Circle* is a mediated meeting proposal in which participants discuss topics of collective interest related to the research question and plan concrete actions for the development of collaborative initiatives (Romão *et al.*, 2006). The data were analyzed by identifying emerging themes.

2 The Biocultural Collection of the *Entre Folhas* Group

2.1 How the name of the Biocultural Collection came about

The term *Acervo* was adopted by GEFPM as a synonym for a collection of a bibliographic, artistic, photographic, scientific, historical, documentary, mixed, or any other nature (Acervo, 2021). The word “Biocultural” comes from the book *A Memória Biocultural: A Importância Ecológica das Sabedorias Tradicionais*, by Toledo and Barrera-Bassols (2015), which introduces the concept of biocultural memory.

Traditional communities possess information about the natural environment and biodiversity, acquired through observation and intimate coexistence with nature over time. This refined knowledge of environmental dynamics and carrying capacity is what is called systemic knowledge (Bottura *et al.*, 1998, as cited by Andrade and Casali, 2002). Today, there is much discussion about the importance of systemic, complex knowledge for broadening our worldview, understanding reality, and transforming it (Morin, 2000). However, the fragmented perspective that emerged with the advance of Western science often runs counter to the systemic view of traditional communities, which is so important for understanding and addressing the complex problems of reality (Toledo and Barrera-Bassols, 2015).

In the face of the ecological and social crisis of the contemporary world, it is essential to identify and recognize the biocultural memory of the human species, since it allows us to gain a broader historical perspective, reveal the epistemological, technical, and economic limits and biases of modernity, and envision civilizational-scale solutions to current problems (Toledo and Barrera-Bassols, 2015, p. 25).

Thus, we can understand biocultural memories as memories forged within the vast collection of local wisdoms, which take root and spread mainly through biological and linguistic diversity and through relationships with the land. This constitutes the historically originated biological–cultural complex and is the product of thousands of years of interactions between cultures and natural environments, given that we are not separate from nature, just as we are not separate from culture.

Memory enables individuals to recall past events, helps in understanding the present, provides elements for planning the future, and serves to reconstruct similar events that occurred previously and even unexpected or unlikely ones. Individuals, societies, and the human species each possess their own memory. The memory of the species makes it possible to reveal the relationships that humanity, in its diversity, establishes with nature—its support base and the reference point for its own existence—which goes back roughly 200,000 years (Toledo and Barrera-Bassols, 2015).

In this sense, the Biocultural Collection of the *Entre Folhas* Group is constituted as a space for recovery, collective recording, interaction, and making visible the biocultural memory of traditional peoples and communities, aiming at dialogue among forms of knowledge and the construction of more complex understandings that are necessary for life and its demands for transformation.

2.2 The experiences that culminated in the creation of the Collection

It is essential to mention the experiences directly related to the proposal for creating the Biocultural Collection in order to understand the path taken, the motivations, influences, and reflections that shaped the conception of this space.

It is impossible to think about the Biocultural Collection and its origin without considering the influence of the course *Encontro de Saberes e Práticas Educativas* (Meeting of Knowledge and Educational Practices), which emerged from reflections on the role of the university in relation to its students and to society in general.

The first edition of the course, with the participation of masters of popular knowledge as educators, gave rise to many questions and reflections. Among these, those concerning the role of the university toward traditional peoples and communities stand out, indicating that the university should be an open space where such peoples can freely access the knowledge necessary for their empowerment. This dynamic is understood as a necessary historical reparation, given the expropriation of traditional and popular knowledge experienced by these groups since the invasion and colonization of Brazil, which continues through colonialism, through the silencing and absence of such subjects within the academic environment, its dialogues, and its productions.

Another important reflection, brought by one of the masters, concerns the romanticization of traditional peoples and communities, which is entirely linked to a lack of knowledge about them. Just as invisibilization does, this can lead to prejudice and discrimination. Such romanticization can detach the studied or observed practice from the person or community in its entirety, creating idyllic images of people living in harmony, without contradictions or conflicts, or of practitioners of purely endogenous cultural activities, or even of highly politicized and militant subjects. When the encounter with reality fails to meet this expectation, the individuals and communities become devalued. Regardless of where ignorance leads, both processes are dehumanizing, as they conceive cultures as static, view Western culture as superior, and freeze such subjects in time, failing to understand them through the multiplicity of feelings, actions, and values that constitute human beings and social groups.

These perspectives were reflected upon by the team during the systematization of the popular education experience in the course and were fundamental to shaping the proposal for the Biocultural Collection.

Another relevant aspect is that the classes from the first two editions of the course were recorded, since they took place during the period of social isolation through the Google Meet platform. This resulted in an extremely rich collection of material for the production of intercultural educational resources on the theme of biocultural diversity.

The starting point for the production of these materials was the participation of the *Entre Folhas* Group in the 2021 *Troca de Saberes* (Exchange of Knowledge),¹ which also took place remotely. For this event, the documentary *Encontro de Saberes e diálogos com a vida: Construindo uma Universidade Popular* (Meeting of Knowledge and Dialogues with Life: Building a People's University) was produced, based on class recordings shared and discussed with the masters, and presented during one of the event's discussion circles.

The documentary was created with the intention of celebrating and expressing gratitude to the masters of popular knowledge for their contributions and experiences in the courses, as well as to place this experience in dialogue so that the process could continue. Producing the documentary required making the video available on the YouTube platform. It was at that point that, even before the Biocultural Collection had been formally established, a YouTube channel was created (available at: <https://www.youtube.com/@acervobioculturaldogrupoen4842>) for sharing the materials produced.

To understand the process that preceded and directly influenced the creation of the Collection, it is also necessary to consider the experience of the *Entre Folhas – Medicinal Plants Group* with rural communities and the changes that took place within the group in 2021. The pandemic, as well as challenges within the university, caused the group's activities to weaken – a natural process, since the Group's work had always been linked to offering courses, training sessions, and community outreach.

¹ An annual event held within the academic grounds of the Federal University of Viçosa, which fosters a rich exchange between popular and academic knowledge, encourages the appropriation of the university space by communities, and strengthens partnerships between UFV and popular social movements (Barbosa *et al.*, 2013; Lopes *et al.*, 2013).

During this period, the GEFPM headquarters came under the responsibility of UFV's Department of Education. At that time, a request had been made for the group's teaching, research, and outreach work to be formally recognized as a *UFV Science Space*. This raised an important question: a space for the popularization of which science? Or a space for the dissemination of both academic and popular sciences? It was then that the first inspirations for building the Biocultural Collection began to emerge. The university, however, denied the request for recognition as a *Science Space*, and GEFPM was instead registered as an Extension Program under the Department of Education at UFV.

It is important to highlight that the Department of Education, which hosts the *Degree in Rural Education* program, receives mostly students from rural areas who belong to traditional communities such as *quilombolas* and traditional farmers, as well as Indigenous peoples. In this context, it became increasingly urgent to strengthen the relationship between this educational space and traditional communities, promoting dialogue among forms of knowledge and responding to the needs of the peoples of the countryside, waters, and forests for a popular, territorialized, and diversity-embracing education. Thus, the proposal for the Biocultural Collection gradually and more clearly took shape.

Drawing from the *Entre Folhas* Group's long-standing experience with rural communities, its connection with the Department of Education at UFV—particularly with the *Degree in Rural Education* program—the prior involvement of faculty in dialogue with traditional peoples, communities, and social movements, the experiences made possible by the *Encontro de Saberes e Práticas Educativas* course, and the reflections shared by the masters on the lack of welcoming and visibility spaces for traditional peoples within the university, the proposal to create the *Biocultural Collection of the Entre Folhas – Medicinal Plants Group* emerged in the second semester of 2021.

The Collection is envisioned as a space that welcomes diversity, supports the needs of rural peoples, traditional communities, and Indigenous peoples, and also serves the *Encontro de Saberes e Práticas Educativas* course and its masters of traditional knowledge. It is conceived as a space that contributes to the documentation of traditional

knowledge, to the production of new knowledge, to the defense of communities and territories, and to the creation of educational materials for a territorialized and intercultural education.

2.3 Methodology for implementation and actions of the *Entre Folhas – Medicinal Plants Group Biocultural Collection*

As soon as the proposal for an initial meeting to discuss the Biocultural Collection arose, the need was identified to invite local representatives from traditional communities and groups, so that community representation would be at the center of the dialogue, with the understanding that, historically, because of a racist system, the voices of marginalized subjects are silenced and deemed invalid knowledge (Kilomba, 2019). As our esteemed master and partner Mayo Pataxó taught us, “Invite us to speak, do not speak for us” (*Acervo Biocultural do Grupo Entre Folhas, UFV, 2021, 50min41s*).

The first meeting of the Biocultural Collection took place on August 19, 2021, remotely via Google Meet, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This meeting brought together UFV students and professors, popular educators, and representatives of traditional peoples and communities who were part of the *Encontro de Saberes* course or who studied in the *Licenciatura em Educação do Campo* and who maintained a close relationship with the Group. Among them were Pataxó and Puri Indigenous people and *quilombolas* from the *Comunidade Quilombola do Buieíé* and the *Comunidade Quilombola Buriti do Meio*. After an opening *mística* and introductions, the proposal to create the Biocultural Collection was presented, followed by the “*Círculo dos Sonhos*” dynamic.

In this dynamic, space was opened for everyone present to express their dreams and expectations regarding the Biocultural Collection. Throughout the meeting, the contributions were systematized and, based on them, a visual synthesis was created. At the end, the synthesis, which we called the *Círculo dos Sonhos*, was presented and fostered a moment of reflection grounded in the dreams, hopes, emotions, and desires of all.

The meetings continued monthly and remotely throughout 2021, mediated by members of the Collection as proposed by the group, with priority given to participatory methodologies from popular education. The meetings always began with the *mística*, a popular education practice widely adopted by organizations and social movements.

The *mística* should be understood as the set of motivations that we feel in our daily lives and in organizational work, which propels our struggle forward. It is responsible for reducing the distance between the present and the future, allowing us to experience in advance the objectives we have defined and wish to achieve (MST, *A Questão da Mística no MST*, São Paulo, April 1991, p. 4).

The opening moment of the meetings, dedicated to the *mística*, consisted of artistic, political, and spiritual expressions from traditional communities and peoples, involving songs, poetry, videos, and music that related to the objectives of the Biocultural Collection and to the meeting agenda, with the intention of fostering reflection, motivation, and strengthening in the process of building and striving for a dialogical space between traditional communities and the university.

Based on the dreams raised at the first meeting of the Collection, a systematization methodology was developed, in which the dreams were considered as actions and their implementation was envisioned. Members of the Collection volunteered to take responsibility for shaping the proposed actions, forming small working groups focused on carrying out each of the desired actions.

As noted, the actions were organized into *Grupos de Trabalho* (GTs), then presented in slide format (Figure 1) for validation by participants in the Collection. The GTs were formed to deepen and plan the actions, with the objective that each GT would coordinate, carry out activities, and report back at the Collection's general meeting, which also became a place for gathering community needs and for collective planning.

It is important to emphasize that, at the first meeting of the Collection, we had the presence of Jaqueline Evangelista, a founding member of the *Entre Folhas – Plantas Medicinais* Group and of the *Rede Pacari*, active alongside social organizations of traditional peoples and communities, with a focus on documenting knowledge related to biocultural diversity, for example through Community Protocols. She was invited because

the actions of the *Entre Folhas* Group were moving toward areas close to those in which Jaqueline works.

Shortly after the first meeting, still in 2021 and again in 2022, research and outreach projects were approved. Their actions supported traditional peoples and communities by listening to these subjects and their needs, and by producing documents, books, and booklets that record *sociobiodiversity* for the defense of territories and access to rights. They also included training initiatives, dedicated spaces, and teaching materials based on the demands of the peoples and communities, as well as support for implementing the activities proposed in the meetings of the Collection in general.

Figure 1 – Actions of the *Entre Folhas – Medicinal Plants Group* Biocultural Collection



Source: Biocultural Collection (2021).

The approval of these projects marks an extremely important milestone in the history of the Collection, because it made it possible to obtain funding for the proposed activities and to establish a solid group committed to achieving the goals and targets set in the meetings.

In this regard, although we initially organized ourselves into GTs, we gradually realized the difficulty of keeping all of them active, since, as time passed, in-person activities resumed and many members ended up having less time to carry out the proposed actions. Thus, little by little, the teams from the approved projects became the coordinating

group that implemented all the activities proposed in the GTs defined in the early meetings of the Collection.

It is also important to note that, in the transition from 2021 to 2022, in-person activities had already fully returned, which led the meetings of the Biocultural Collection to be held at the *Entre Folhas* Group headquarters. Initially, we believed that in-person meetings would enhance the planning and implementation of activities. However, we depended on the participation of popular educators and members of traditional peoples and communities who did not live in Viçosa, Minas Gerais, which caused the meetings to dwindle.

This moment prompted significant reflection and instability, because, even while understanding the importance and potential of face-to-face encounters, we were clear that the presence of representatives of social movements and of traditional peoples and communities was essential. For this reason, the meetings returned to a remote format.

At the end of 2021 and throughout 2022, the actions proposed in the research and outreach projects began to be implemented, and the meetings of the Collection served as spaces for collective planning and identifying community needs. One of the first activities involved the creation of intercultural educational materials.

The production of such materials arose from the understanding that, for intercultural education to become more present in educational institutions—both in schools and universities—it is necessary to create tools that foster such practice, as Candau (2011) points out. After all, how can we expect teachers to work from this perspective if they lack the proper tools?

The proposal to create intercultural educational materials in collaboration with traditional peoples and communities led us to reflect on the need for preparation and training for this purpose, considering the historical context of disrespectful research developed within universities, carried out *about* such subjects, treating them merely as objects of study for data collection to serve academic production.

Grada Kilomba (2019) highlights the “inadequacy of dominant academicism in relating not only to marginalized subjects but also to our experiences, discourses, and theorizations” (p. 58).

In this sense, it became evident that members of the Biocultural Collection needed to undergo training in order to carry out ethical and respectful work that would be meaningful to the communities involved. Thus, at the beginning of 2022, we organized a workshop on “intercultural research.” The workshop was facilitated by a member of the Biocultural Collection who, at the time, was a student in the *Licenciatura em Educação do Campo* program and a Scientific Initiation fellow at UFV, as well as a *quilombola* from Buriti do Meio, São Francisco, in northern Minas Gerais.

Because the facilitator was both a member of a traditional community and a researcher focused on popular and traditional knowledge, his lived experience allowed him to offer deep and essential reflections on conducting research in collaboration with traditional communities.

During the workshop, the discussion centered on research ethics when working with traditional peoples and communities. The facilitator addressed topics such as the romanticization of these spaces, the need for profound listening to the voices of community members, and the principles that should guide research—from the initial approach to the community to the moment of returning after the publication of the work.

This knowledge has been, and continues to be, essential for developing the projects carried out through the Biocultural Collection. The workshop also led to the creation of the book *Onde nascem os saberes: a interculturalidade pelos olhares e vivências dos guardiões e guardiãs dos conhecimentos populares* (available at: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1orFFprpiF9LoavIxlCPI09qgF3TazQbX>), which allows a wider audience to access this knowledge.

From that point on, the creation of intercultural educational materials was carried out through collaborative methodologies, establishing dialogue with different groups. It is important to note that, although each project had its own scholarship holders responsible

for specific tasks, all projects were developed in an integrated manner and always in dialogue with participants of the Biocultural Collection.

Initially, during a meeting of the Collection, the projects and the proposal for the development of intercultural educational materials were presented (Figure 2). In this space, the best way to conduct the research was collectively designed. One of the methodologies chosen was the *Epistemological Circle*, inspired by Paulo Freire's *Culture Circle*, selected because it serves as a democratic space for dialogue.

Figure 2 – Summary of projects and collective proposals for the development of intercultural educational materials



Source: Biocultural Collection (2022).

We understood that identifying themes and needs for the production of intercultural educational materials should take place in spaces where members of traditional peoples and communities are present. In this sense, three *Epistemological Circles* were held: one during a meeting of the Biocultural Collection, another within the *Licenciatura em Educação do Campo* program at UFV, and a third at the *Escola Nacional de Energia Popular (ENEP)*². The choice of these spaces is justified not only by the presence of members of traditional peoples and communities and representatives of social movements—including those from

² ENEP is an educational space created by social movements for comprehensive human development, taking work (*popular energy*) as a formative principle. It functions as a space for dialogue between popular and academic knowledge aimed at developing creative solutions to improve quality of life (Gargano, Silva, and Andrade, 2021).

rural areas—but also by the relationship that GEFPM maintains with each of them. The same methodology was used in all of these spaces.

First, the chosen research methodology, called the *Epistemological Circle*, was explained. Then, participants were divided into groups and given time to discuss two guiding questions: based on your reality, which topics do you consider relevant to be addressed in schools and universities? How, or in what way, would you like to learn?

In the *Epistemological Circle*, all participants are recognized as active subjects in the investigative process, engaging in the construction and interpretation of knowledge from their own sociocultural contexts and experiences. Inspired by Freirean pedagogy, this methodology takes the diversity of knowledge as its starting point for dialogue. More than a data collection procedure, it constitutes a formative space in which the sharing of experiences provokes questioning, broadens critical reflection, and promotes the development of more complex understandings precisely because these arise from the interaction among different forms of knowledge and lived experiences (Accorssi, Clasen, and Veiga Júnior, 2021).

The *Epistemological Circles* were recorded and later systematized to identify and define themes considered relevant for building an intercultural education. Among the various themes raised, some were selected to guide the creation of intercultural educational materials. The productions include videos and documentaries accompanied by pedagogical guides designed to facilitate and support teachers in using these materials.

To this end, a training session on video editing was also conducted for the production of these materials. The session was taught by a member of the Collection and covered basic concepts and video editing software.

The videos produced, along with their corresponding pedagogical guides, can be found on the YouTube channel of the GEFPM Biocultural Collection. Their titles are as follows: “*Ancestralidade e ervas medicinais: saberes das matriarcas da Vila Clementina de Airões – Viçosa/MG*” (*Ancestrality and Medicinal Herbs: Knowledge of the Matriarchs of Vila Clementina de Airões – Viçosa/MG*), “*Encontro de Saberes e diálogos com a vida: Construindo uma Universidade Popular*” (*Meeting of Knowledge and Dialogues with Life:*

Building a People's University), “*Confluências: Encruzilhadas dos saberes de matrizes africanas e a formação de professores*” (*Confluences: Crossroads of African-Ancestry Knowledge and Teacher Education*), “*A Mata Atlântica e os povos originários*” (*The Atlantic Forest and Indigenous Peoples*), and “*Quilombo: berço de saberes e ancestralidade*” (*Quilombo: Cradle of Knowledge and Ancestrality*).

The development of the pedagogical guides was a collective effort carried out by the Biocultural Collection team, involving members of traditional communities and Indigenous peoples. It is important to note that the creation of these educational materials resulted from three scientific initiation projects and two undergraduate theses, one of which led to a scientific article titled “*Confluências: Encruzilhadas dos Saberes de Matrizes Africanas e a Formação de Educadoras/es Ambientais*” (*Confluences: Crossroads of African-Ancestry Knowledge and the Formation of Environmental Educators*). In addition, in 2022, a master's dissertation was written based on the course *Encontro de Saberes e Práticas Educativas* (Meeting of Knowledge and Educational Practices). Concurrently with the production of intercultural educational materials, other activities continued to be carried out. In May 2022, the first version of the *Artistic-Pedagogical Installation* (IAP)³ of the *Entre Folhas* Group Biocultural Collection was created.

The creation of the *Artistic-Pedagogical Installation* (IAP) of the Biocultural Collection was one of the dreams expressed during the group's first meeting. It arose from the need for the work developed in partnership with traditional communities to physically occupy a space within the predominantly hegemonic structure of the university, reaffirming the presence of these subjects and their knowledge within academia and allowing the themes that underpin the construction of the Collection to be made visible to visitors at the *Entre Folhas* Group headquarters.

Thus, in May 2022, within one of the rooms of the *Entre Folhas – Medicinal Plants Group*, the *Artistic-Pedagogical Installation* of the Biocultural Collection was created

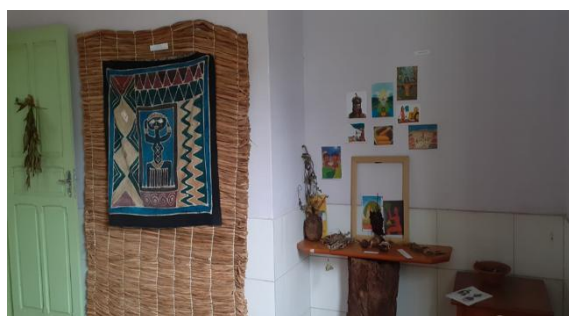
³ As IAPs são cenários com semelhanças às instalações artísticas que constituem lugares privilegiados de intercâmbio entre sabedoria popular e saber acadêmico, criando ambiência problematizadora e promovendo despertar de sensibilidades através da interpretação dialogada entre participantes (Alves *et al.*, 2011).

(Figure 3). In 2024, the IAP was restructured, gaining a folding screen that presents the experiences developed with traditional communities and groups of popular knowledge up to that point (Figure 4). This folding screen is also used to present the Collection outside the *Entre Folhas* Group headquarters. The IAP is intended to portray, archive, and make visible the biocultural memory of traditional communities concerning biodiversity.

Within the IAP, the focus is on the communities and groups that participate in the Collection's activities, incorporating their denunciations and affirmations. It includes artifacts, documents, and other creations produced by these groups. The IAP is one of the key moments of reflection during guided visits to the *Entre Folhas* Group house, encouraging curiosity and dialogue about biocultural memory and the exchange of knowledge, while also exposing the hegemony of academic science in schools, universities, and educational materials.

It is important to note that the *Artistic-Pedagogical Installation* of the Collection shares the same room as the *Library of Popular Knowledge*. Understanding that the actions of the Collection represent a form of contestation within the academic environment, we recognize that it is essential to ensure the presence of works (books, booklets, undergraduate theses, dissertations, and doctoral theses) authored by members of traditional communities—among them, the materials produced in collaboration with the Biocultural Collection.

Figure 3 – IAP of the *Entre Folhas* Group Biocultural Collection in 2022



Source: Biocultural Collection (2022).

Figure 4 – Folding screen illustrating the experiences developed



Source: Biocultural Collection (2025).

In addition to the physical works in the Collection's installation, a digital folder was also organized on Google Drive containing the produced materials, which are publicly accessible (<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1pBZnpRv4gbDdE5wICbsEnKNJ-JCDtORm>).

The purpose of the Collection is to support the production of such materials by members of traditional peoples and communities, to provide space for existing works within the academic environment, and to promote these materials on social media and in teacher education. The community-authored works are highlighted during visits to the *Entre Folhas* Group headquarters to encourage reflection on knowledge production within the university from a *pluriepistemic* perspective.

In addition to these activities, throughout 2022 the group began responding to the requests of traditional communities and popular groups to document their histories, knowledge, and practices as a way to strengthen their struggles and resistance. This consolidated the Collection's trajectory in supporting the development of *Biocultural and Consultation Community Protocols*. A subgroup of the Collection dedicated itself to researching the ethical and legal procedures that guide such research and productions.

Two training sessions were also held with extensionist and researcher Jaqueline Evangelista on *Biocultural Protocols*. In these sessions, she shared her experience in developing such documents alongside traditional peoples and communities. From these encounters emerged the demand for creating the *Biocultural Community Protocols* of the *Retomada Puri Group* of Viçosa, MG, and the *Carangolinha de Cima Community* of Divino, MG.

These construction processes required, and still require, significant effort from the members of the Biocultural Collection, as maintaining close dialogue with the communities is essential—both in planning the methodologies to be used and in the stages of gathering information for the protocols. This involves field trips, developing research methodologies, conducting interviews and meetings, audio and image documentation, transcription and systematization of collected data, and the writing of the *Biocultural Protocol*.

The implementation of the *Biocultural and Consultation Protocols* (accessible at <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1twU4mdemnBe7KuJiA6uaMBTZGtA73Ytl>) represents an important step for the Biocultural Collection. After the return of in-person activities post-pandemic, the meetings gradually became less attended, as many members of traditional peoples and communities could no longer participate regularly. Most frequent participants were members of the approved project teams and the communities directly involved in the development of the protocols.

Naturally, the meetings of the Collection evolved into spaces for reporting, evaluation, and planning of activities, coordinated by the project's technical team. After completing the educational materials proposed in the projects, it became clear that partnerships with traditional peoples and communities now materialized primarily through the *Biocultural Protocols*—a process that continues to this day, welcoming new demands.

During the development of the protocols, several training sessions were held, including a 2023 audiovisual workshop for members of the *Retomada Puri* and the Biocultural Collection, as well as a session with Jaqueline Evangelista on the production of *Biocultural Protocols*, which proved vital in strengthening the confidence of Collection members in carrying out this work.

Also in 2023, a *pedagogical guide* (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/16hk0k92egGNnQ7Xe4Xpuze4fhR1sVwRf/view?usp=sharing>) was finalized for use during visits to the *Entre Folhas* Group headquarters, promoting intercultural dialogue, with the *Artistic-Pedagogical Installation* of the Biocultural Collection serving as an essential element in this process.

In 2024, four new training sessions were conducted: one on *Social Cartography*, an important tool for strengthening social movements and traditional peoples; another on the *National System for the Management of Genetic Heritage and Associated Traditional Knowledge (SisGen)*, a platform created to assist the *Genetic Heritage Management Council (CGen)* in managing genetic heritage and associated traditional knowledge, in which the projects accessing *Associated Traditional Knowledge (CTA)* were registered.

Also in 2024, members of the Biocultural Collection participated in the *IV Meeting of the Observatory of Consultation and Free, Prior and Informed Consent Protocols*, which served as both a training opportunity and a space for initiating the construction of consultation protocols. This event was essential in the ongoing process of developing the *Consultation Protocol* for the *Carangolinha de Cima Community* and also strengthened ties between the Biocultural Collection and the Observatory. A partnership was established with researcher and coordinator of the Observatory, Liana Amin.

That same year, another training session was held with Jaqueline Evangelista on the development of *Community Protocols*, made possible through new projects of the Collection. These projects involve creating the *Biocultural Protocol of the Knowledge Holders and Practitioners of Popular Knowledge and Ancestral Healing Practices of Viçosa, MG*, aimed at these very subjects and conducted at the *Escola Nacional de Energia Popular* (ENEP). The training sought to clarify what a protocol is, how it is constructed, its functions, uses, and significance.

The proposal for the *Biocultural Protocol of the Knowledge Holders and Practitioners of Popular Knowledge and Ancestral Healing Practices of Viçosa, MG* is directly connected to the *Farmácia Viva* (Living Pharmacy) project and the implementation of the *Public Policy on Integrative and Complementary Practices* within the *SUS* (Brazilian Unified Health System). This effort supports community demands for the inclusion of popular healers who work with medicinal plants and integrative practices (such as *benzedeiras*, *rezadeiras*, and traditional healers) in the public health system, as well as the recognition of their customary right to practice, including in hospitals and municipal health centers, since these traditions are part of the local cultural heritage.

It is worth noting that, over the years, the Biocultural Collection has been actively involved in discussions regarding the *Farmácia Viva Project* in Viçosa, MG, through the participation of its members in related meetings. Members of the Collection took part in public hearings, meetings with the Municipal Health Department, and the development of the proposal submitted to the Viçosa City Hall to compete in the state call for the

implementation of the *Public Policy on Integrative and Complementary Practices in SUS*, which encompasses the *Farmácias Vivas*.

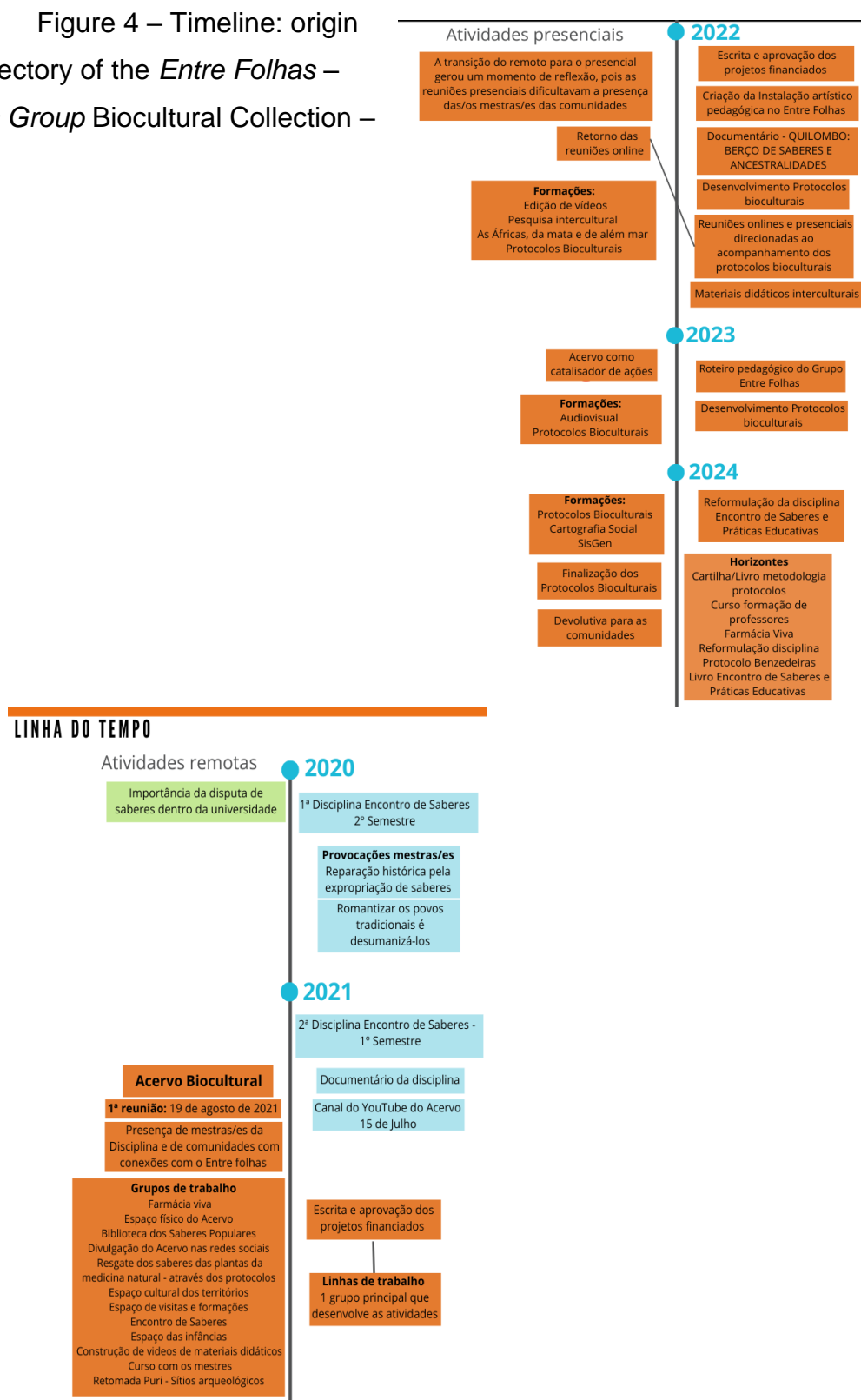
The group's advocacy efforts are inspired by the experience of the municipality of Rebouças, PR, which enacted Law No. 1.401/2010, known as the “*Lei das Benzedeiras*” (Healers’ Law), recognizing traditional popular health practices as complementary therapeutic instruments within public health. Under this law, holders of ancestral healing knowledge can request a *Certificate and Identification Card of Recognition as a Holder of Traditional Popular Health Practices* from the City Hall, which allows them to carry out their practices in strengthening the local public health system (Rebouças, 2010).

Medicinal plants are integral to ancestral healing practices maintained by these knowledge holders. In this context, health is understood as holistic, and the origin of the plants used in treatments is of great importance—it is essential that the plants be cultivated without substances harmful to health, such as pesticides. Accordingly, one of the Biocultural Collection's key demands in the *Farmácia Viva Project* in Viçosa, MG, is that agroecological and organic farming families play a central role in the medicinal plant production chain.

Currently, the group is in the process of completing activities initiated in recent years and planning the next steps. These include returning the *Community Protocols* to the respective communities along with an artistic piece representing the process of their creation; finalizing a booklet offering guidelines on the development of *Community Protocols* to support other community-led processes; completing a book based on the *Encontro de Saberes e Práticas Educativas* course; conducting a teacher training course on intercultural education and biocultural diversity; completing a master's dissertation; publishing three articles; and revising the *Encontro de Saberes e Práticas Educativas* course.

Next, we present a timeline (Figure 4) that compiles the moments and activities described.

Figure 4 – Timeline: origin trajectory of the *Entre Folhas – Plants Group Biocultural Collection* –



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UFV

Source: Biocultural Collection (2025).

It is important to note that all activities are supported by the UFV Research Ethics Committee and that traditional communities, as well as participants in discussion circles, interviews, and filmed recordings, signed the *Free and Informed Consent Form* and the *Image Use Authorization Form*.

4 Final considerations

The Collection arises from the urgent need to give visibility and recognition to *biocultural memory* and to the *dialogue of knowledges*. It is built and sustained through the presence of traditional and Indigenous peoples, as well as university students and professors, characterizing itself as a place of welcome and sharing that enables ethical, dignified, and respectful collaboration between the university and society, in the pursuit of building a *People's University* with a *pluriepistemic* foundation.

The collective construction and management of this space have been remarkable, driven by the will, creativity, and commitment of its participants, allowing for a praxis grounded in collective reflection and dialogue. Along this journey, some challenges have emerged. One is the fluid participation of members—especially students, scholarship holders, and volunteers—who are sometimes present but later move on after graduation to follow new paths. Another challenge is maintaining the participation of members and representatives of traditional peoples and communities, which we now understand to be realized primarily through the creation of *Community Protocols*, yet it continues to inspire reflection on how to encourage their participation and how best to welcome and address their concerns.

The methodology—popular, participatory, reflective, and dialogical—ensures that the process remains ongoing. In this sense, we understand that the Collection is in constant *construction/deconstruction/reconstruction*, in an ascending spiral. Over the lifetime of the Biocultural Collection, many actions have been initiated and completed, while others remain open, and new proposals continue to emerge.

It is important to emphasize that the group's work is multidisciplinary, with clearly defined political foundations and actions, aiming for social transformation through reflective and concrete initiatives that manifest in different spheres. Thus, we maintain a strong commitment to partnering with the traditional peoples and communities who have worked with the Group since its inception—amplifying their demands, affirmations, and denouncements, as well as their presence and authorship in the creation of educational spaces, teaching materials, documents, booklets, and books. The same sense of responsibility guides the work of the Biocultural Collection within the Federal University of Viçosa, in the ongoing struggle for recognition and appreciation of the *cosmoperceptions* of traditional peoples and communities.

Furthermore, recognizing the radical and transformative potential of *intercultural popular education*, the production of intercultural teaching materials, courses, and training spaces that embrace *biocultural diversity* through an *intercultural lens* has become one of the pillars of our activities.

From this, we conclude by reaffirming our commitment to work along the path of social justice—one that takes root and manifests in our actions—aimed at building a society that acknowledges its peoples, their histories, and their contemporary realities; that values their contributions to knowledge production; and that does so without denying the power relations, conflicts, and injustices that exist, but rather by confronting them continuously.

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