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# Hunter-gatherer-fishing societies of the south-eastern part of the Atlantic Coast of Tierra del Fuego Island (Argentina, South America): social strategies and shell midden formation

Myrian Alvarez\*<sup>†1</sup>, Ivan Briz-Godino\*<sup>2</sup>, Nélica Pal\*<sup>3</sup>, Maria Bas\*<sup>3</sup>, Adriana Lacrouts\*<sup>4</sup>,  
and Adriana Lasa\*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET-CADIC) – B. Houssay 200.  
Ushuaia, Argentina

<sup>2</sup>Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET-CADIC) – Argentina

<sup>3</sup>Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET-CADIC) – Argentina

<sup>4</sup>Universidad de Buenos Aires – Argentina

<sup>5</sup>Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas. – Argentina

## Abstract

Isla Grande de Tierra del Fuego (between lat. 53-55°S and long. 66-74°W) lies in the Subantarctic zone and constitutes the highest latitude landmass in the Southern Hemisphere populated by hunter-gatherer groups during the Early Holocene. The archaeological research carried out in this island has showed diverse historical trajectories along the shorelines in relation to both: fishing activities and the intensity of the human use of coastal landscapes. In this presentation we focus on the south-eastern part of the Atlantic façade. This region was occupied by hunter-gatherer-fishing societies who exploited marine resources without the development of sailing technology. The earliest evidences are dated around the 1500 BP and extent to the moment of arrival of European populations to the region. These human groups left a rich archaeological record which mainly includes shell bearing deposits of distinct size, extension and distribution which range from thin lenses of broken mollusks to variable accumulations of waste that form a raised dome. These differences do not seem to be related with process of settlement re-occupation. The faunal and technological assemblages, that encompass lithic and bone tools, also exhibit outstanding variations in terms of composition and frequencies.

The objective of this presentation is twofold. In first instance we intend to understand and to discuss the diversity of archaeological record exploring subsistence and technological strategies, and landscape use. In second instance, we aim to disentangle site formation processes and site occupation intensity using different proxies.

To accomplish this proposal we apply a multidimensional approach that includes technological and use-wear studies of lithic and bone tools, zooarchaeological analysis (taxonomic and quantitative studies) and geostatistic methods to unveil settlement patterns.

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\*Speaker

<sup>†</sup>Corresponding author: myrianalvarez@gmail.com

The final goal is to explore the role of marine resources in the social organisation of hunter-gatherer societies under study as well as to assess the significance of the method presented here to analyse occupation intensity.

**Keywords:** Shell midden, Hunter, gatherers, Tierra del Fuego, Variability, Site formation processes