



A tribute to Enrique J. Chaneton

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Enrique in the Argentinean pampas



Enrique Chaneton, renowned Argentinean ecologist and associate editor of *Biological Invasions*, recently passed away. Enrique was only 56 years old. In a moment of deep sorrow, we wish to celebrate here his prolific academic career. Enrique was a gem in the long and distinguished legacy of Rolando León in Argentina and John Lawton in the United Kingdom, his master's and doctoral advisers at the University of Buenos Aires and University of London, respectively. Well before conducting graduate studies, Enrique started to publish on factors controlling the structure and dynamics of plant communities in the Argentinean pampas, a system he mastered. He later applied his strong background in ecology and evolution to studying invasions. As early as 2001, Enrique began to explore how disturbance type altered the abundance of native versus non-native herbaceous vegetation, establishing a comparison that became popular only years later. Also, at a time when the field was still largely descriptive, Enrique pioneered the use of field experiments to assess invasions. Over the years, this work led to a substantial understanding of the invasibility of herbaceous plant communities in the pampas. Enrique

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also elucidated the drivers of tree invasions. In an example that illustrates particularly well his comprehensive research approach, he linked biogeography and community assembly theory to address a long-standing enigma in plant ecology, “the existence of grassy-treeless-vegetation where climate would permit forests,” in his words. His latest collaborative contribution to our journal shows that disturbance, resident plant community, and rainfall determine the invasion of non-native trees in the pampa grasslands of Argentina (Mazía et al. 2019).

Enrique is also well known for his contribution to understanding indirect interactions between species, including the role of fungal endophytes in insect host-parasite interactions and that of facilitation and apparent competition in tree seedling recruitment. This work was in part conducted in two other systems in which Enrique also had extensive experience, the Patagonian forest and steppe of southern Argentina. These studies depict the complexity of interspecific interactions so well that they provide inspiring and fascinating material for teaching ecology. Enrique was also part of an international team of prestigious researchers exploring fundamental ecological questions at a global scale.

For his thorough and solid research, charisma, and willingness to participate in international initiatives, Enrique played a leading role in advancing the field of biological invasions in South America. He always

found room to cultivate friendship among ecologists worldwide, and he was particularly eager to encourage collaborations between the ecological societies of Chile and Argentina.

To complete our picture of Enrique’s academic excellence, and as a demonstration of his thoughtful personality, we note that he was an outstanding teacher and mentor. He advised many students and taught popular courses at the Graduate School, College of Agronomy, University of Buenos Aires, where he served as Chair. Enrique collaborated in addition with several graduate programs in Argentina. Notably, mirroring his own experience upon earning a doctorate degree, he was instrumental in helping young Argentinean scientists to return home and establish research programs. Enrique still had much to contribute to invasion science and education. However, he leaves behind a life rich in achievements and service; a life worthy of emulation.

Reference

Mazía N, Chaneton EJ, Ghersa CM (2019) Disturbance types, herbaceous composition, and rainfall season determine exotic tree invasion in novel grassland. *Biol Invasions* 21:1351–1363. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10530-018-1906-x>

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