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Media as a collective strategy for Indigenous self-determination: a case of collective memory building by Ascuri Brasil

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Abstract

This paper examines how Indigenous peoples use digital media as a strategy for resistance in contemporary Brazil. The specific focus is on the Association of Indigenous Culture Directors Ascuri and its work in the Kaiowa and Guarani territories in the south of Mato Grosso do Sul. Our aim is to discuss Ascuri's work within the perspective of Indigenous self-determination and autonomy and we specially focus on the concept of tekoha. In Guarani language, tekoha combines two crucial concepts: life (teko) and place (ha). Structured as a case study, the paper examines Ascuri's work departing from reflections about the production of two projects developed by the Association: the project Mosarambihára (2014-2016) and the short-film Mokõi Kovoé (2021), both available on the platform YouTube. Additionally, we offer a description of Ascuri's presence on corporate media platforms (YouTube and Instagram), its own webpage (www.ascuri.org) and onsite events organized by Ascuri. The methods used in this article are observations (online and onsite) and dialogues between the authors, one of whom is an Ascuri member. The findings suggest important aspects of Ascuri's relevance to Indigenous territories: intergenerational proximity with older spiritual leaders and the attempted dialogues between different generations via media production. We observed that Ascuri's work combines online and offline efforts to build collective memory.

Keywords

Indigenous media, Kaiowa and Guarani, self-determination, collective memory, territory

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Introduction

The relationship between Indigenous peoples in Brazil and the so-called hegemonic media, Brazilian mainstream media, is problematic, as it is for Indigenous peoples in other areas of the world (Chen, 2019; McCallum & Waller, 2013). Since first contact, the communications produced by colonisers document their encounters with 'new' lands and peoples; in letters and documents Europeans describe first contact with Indigenous peoples in the areas today known as Brazil. These colonial representations have produced animalized and savage representations of Indigenous peoples (Limberti, 2012). More than five centuries later, those images are still socially, culturally and politically entrenched. This is because these representations have been reproduced for centuries in literature, school education and circulated on mainstream media. Academic research in different areas demonstrate that local newspapers have predominantly negative takes on Indigenous peoples. For example, in a recent article Silva and Raposo (2021) examined the most circulated newspaper in the Brazilian state Mato Grosso do Sul and found evidence of discourses excluding Indigenous peoples, in line with the agribusiness elite's interests.

In a similar way, Benites (2014) pointed out mainstream media's tendency to relate Indigenous issues with negative themes, such as violence and suicide, prefer landowners' perspectives, and represent stereotypical images of drunk, violent savages attacking each other and farmers. Cavalcante (2013) argues that mainstream media's role is to construct public opinion contrary to supporting Indigenous land rights. Foschaches (2012) analysed marks of racism against Indigenous peoples in newspapers, underlining the anthropological and historical superficiality of the articles. Lopes (2016) critically analysed discourses of media articles on the confrontation between Indigenous peoples and landowners in Mato Grosso do Sul, which resulted in an Indigenous leader's murder, published by the state's biggest newspaper. This research identifies a distinct and alarming lack of Indigenous voices in majority journalism's representations of Indigenous peoples.

Against this, access to the internet underpins increasing experiences of digital inclusion in Indigenous communities. The process of digital inclusion is still ongoing in the area where our study takes place: the Indigenous village Te'yikue, which is part of the Kaiowa and Guaraní lands in the south (known as Cone Sul, the southern cone) of Mato Grosso do Sul. The internet is still inaccessible or difficult to access in many communities in this area. Still, self-determined Indigenous media online initiatives have increased, which, although happening in diverse ways and at different speeds, seems to be a global tendency in the last few decades, as demonstrated in the work of Wilson and Stuart (2008) and Alia (2010). Similarly, Meadows (2009) notes that the development of Indigenous-owned media is a global trend, since Indigenous peoples recognise the potential to use media as means of cultural and political intervention (Cocq & Dubois, 2020; Dreher et al., 2016; Froehling, 1997).

The development of Indigenous media can be challenging for Indigenous peoples because of economic and logistic reasons. Despite this, online communication can provide accessible opportunities to amplify Indigenous voices. For example, Indigenous Peoples Rise Up: the global ascendancy of social media activism (Carlson and Berglund, 2021, p. 10), brings together global case studies showing Indigenous peoples "create

their own spaces of connection” using online communication, specifically social media platforms, in creative and innovative ways.

This article aims to present and discuss the work of a collective media initiative: the Association of Indigenous Culture Directors – ‘Ascuro’. Ascuro was founded by young producers from the Kaiowa and Terena peoples in the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso do Sul. Although Ascuro’s work is not restricted to those peoples and areas, this text focuses mainly on the Kaiowa and Guarani context. This focus will be explained further in the methodology section. Our goal is to reflect on the ways media production can perform a role in memory building by helping facilitate relationships between generations of Indigenous peoples. We consider that building collective memories can be a way of resistance, especially for Indigenous societies. In this sense, we discuss how media work can be understood in terms of resistance and self-determination. Two main questions guide this text:

1. How does Ascuro’s media production help in constructing processes of Indigenous self-determination in the Kaiowa and Guarani territories (territories)?
2. How do media activities assist in making a difference in intergenerational dialogue in the territories?

We build our reflection about the questions above drawing on conversations about two projects developed by Ascuro (videos available on YouTube). The selection will be justified in the following section. Our argument is that Indigenous media initiatives, particularly those that try to develop collective approaches to media making, have a fundamental role in many contemporary Indigenous communities. Media usage and production by Indigenous peoples can strengthen their visibility by building, echoing and amplifying Indigenous voices. To some extent, Indigenous media can construct a counter and dissenting voice to hegemonic mainstream media representations. Additionally, the development of media initiatives and work in Indigenous communities can reconfigure internal and external relations (Alia, 2010). The possibility of reframing relations is valuable for Indigenous communities, especially in the sense of valuing elders’ traditional wisdom and knowledge. In these terms, we contend that media work can foster Indigenous memory building. Further, we argue that the practices of media initiatives should extend beyond media work.

Methodology

In order to stimulate our reflections about Ascuro’s work, we looked at the collective’s audio-visual productions. We delved into the movies that are available on Ascuro’s page on the platform YouTube (Ascuro Brasil), examining the channel as a digital archive. We then selected two projects to discuss in this paper: two videos about the project Mosarambihára and the short movie Mokõi Kovoé. We chose those two productions as examples of Ascuro’s work because they are very different to each other. The first project Mosarambihára (Ascuro Brasil, 2016; Ascuro Brasil, 2019) aimed to help revitalise traditional knowledge in connection to the environmental recovery of Indigenous territories. The second, Mokõi Kovoé (Ascuro Brasil, 2021), is a short film about the origin story of the Kovoé bird, popularly known as Jaó and known as ‘Undulated tinamou’ in English.

This article offers reflections based on a dialogue between the authors. Eliel Benites is a Kaiowa researcher and speaker of the Indigenous language Guarani. He is one of the founding members of Ascuri and active in Ascuri's work. Camila Emboava Lopes is a non-Indigenous researcher who has been following Ascuri's work for almost a decade. Our positions powerfully affect our discussion in this paper and because of our proximity with Ascuri's experiences, albeit with different degrees of closeness, we make no claim to objectivity. Conversely, we want to offer an academic investigation that is situated as both Indigenous and allied. For that reason, we focus our discussion in the Kaiowa and Guarani contexts.

Eliel belongs to the Kaiowa People. He is from the Te'yikue community and he is a native Guarani speaker. He has deep knowledge of Kaiowa and Guarani concepts, combining his own lived experience with academic research (as his recent PhD demonstrates: Benites, 2021). The focus on the Kaiowa and Guarani allows us to strongly situate our discussions about media on their experiences. Further, the mixture of insider and outsider perspectives enriches our study. It is relevant to underline that our conversations have been in Portuguese: the colonial language in the area, which is Camila's first language and Eliel's work language. The paper was then written in Portuguese and later translated into English. In this sense, translations were also a central part of our writing process.

Considering the limitations for physical meetings in the period when we wrote this paper, the conversations between the authors happened mostly via WhatsApp voice messages, with eventual exchange of text messages and e-mails. The usage of asynchronous voice messages instead of calls was preferred due to our time difference, since one of us lives currently in Sweden and the other in Brazil. Although this was mainly a technical choice, this form of asynchronous communication allowed for more time and reflection in our dialogue, which we evaluate as a positive implication. However, our conversation and this paper were also informed by in loco talks between us in previous years, especially a recorded talk in Campo Grande during October 2019.

As explained above, this paper is strongly situated within a specific Indigenous context: the Kaiowa People and the Te'yikue community in particular. Therefore, in the next section we offer a very brief outline of the socio-historical background of the area.

A brief socio-historical contextualization

Mato Grosso do Sul is the Brazilian state with the second highest Indigenous population in the country (behind Amazonas). According to the last census carried out in 2010, approximately 77,000 Indigenous persons live in the area (Mato Grosso do Sul), belonging to seven different Indigenous peoples: Kaiowa, Guarani, Terena, Kadiwéu, Kinikinau, Guató and Ofayé (IBGE, 2010).

The Kaiowa and Guarani are the most numerous accounting for around 50,000 people, and live in an area known as the Cone Sul (South Cone), in the dry border with Paraguay. The Indigenous people known as Kaiowa in Brazil are called Pãi in Paraguay. The Kaiowa and Guarani are part of a bigger group, including peoples who speak the Guarani language, and are often collectively referred to as 'Guarani Peoples' or the 'Great Guarani People'. This bigger collective classification of Guarani Peoples also includes Indigenous

groups in Paraguay, Bolivia, and Argentina (Colman, 2015). Thus, the Guaraní Peoples are transnational and together have one of the highest Indigenous populations on the South American continent. Although it is difficult to provide an accurate estimation of the collective Indigenous population belonging to Guaraní Peoples, it is estimated to be more than 100,000 individuals¹.

The Guaraní language belongs to the Tupi-Guarani linguistic family and it is a language spoken in South America before the arrival of Europeans. It is hard to be precise on the estimations about the number of speakers. There are probably more than 80,000 Guaraní speakers in Brazil and 10 million in whole South America² (Lima, 2011). Further, there are many variants of the language, not always understandable to each other. Melià et al. (2008) as well as Lima (2011) point out to the cosmological relation of language use to the Guaraní peoples. Language is, hence, a crucial aspect of Kaiowa and Guaraní cultures.

The border area where the Kaiowa and Guaraní peoples live in Mato Grosso do Sul, has strong transnational mobility. The area is currently affected by processes of social transformation and environmental degradation due to the increasing number of soy plantations, cattle farms and other development projects, most of them connected with agribusiness (Grünberg, 2014; Colman, 2015). The federal government has removed many Kaiowa and Guaraní communities from their traditional territories. Between 1915 and 1928, it demarcated eight small pieces of land for the Kaiowa and Guaraní to confine their various settlements in. During the 1940s, the federal government provided land for non-Indigenous settlers coming from other areas in the country, transferring more Indigenous people to reservations and aggravating the situation of confinement (Brand, 2004). Brand (1997) emphasizes the term 'sarambi' in Guaraní language (spread or sputter) as the word used by Kaiowa and Guaraní to describe the process of fragmentation of their communities.

This process of fragmentation of communities and confinement of Indigenous Peoples was a process of maintaining colonial power (Quijano, 2000), that is, a continuation of colonization. Together with the loss of Indigenous territories, there are attempts to suppress Indigenous presence in the area. It is in this context that self-determined Indigenous media initiatives speak.

Theoretical and conceptual framework

This article is informed by research on media initiatives developed by Indigenous peoples in different parts of the world. It follows the emergence of diverse Indigenous media initiatives in different areas of the globe that centre self-determined approaches to media production. Academic research reinforces the prevalence of what has been defined 'the new media nation' (Alia, 2010). Valerie Alia has extensively researched media initiatives developed in different Indigenous territories, mainly in North America, but also in other

¹ To consult maps of the Guaraní Peoples in South America and per country see <https://www.campanhaguarani.org/guaranicontinental/>

² Guaraní is, together with Spanish, an official national language in Paraguay.

areas such as Sápmi (in parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia), Australia, Aotearoa (New Zealand) and some places in Latin America.

Alia's book, *The New Media Nation* (2010), points out important qualities that permeate Indigenous media initiatives, such as the relationship between media production and forms of resistance. Alia (2010) observes 'crossings', which describe the ways that Indigenous media initiatives reach across geographical borders (and territories) while also performing disciplinary crossings. That is, the format and messages mix art, journalism, film-making, music and so on. In this sense, the notion of crossings can be related to the idea of hybridity, extensively theorised and discussed by Bhabha (1994).

On the other hand, we contend that Ascuri's work can be better understood and examined when we consider concepts that are specific to the Indigenous peoples in the territories where Ascuri was founded and where its activities take place: the Kaiowa and Guarani territories and the Te'yikue village, specifically. Thus, the concepts of tekoha and ñande reko, which will be explained further, are crucial to this article. Additionally, previous studies by Foschaches (2015) and Galache (2017) were essential to understanding details of Ascuri's history and Ascuri's system of work. Therefore, those studies also inform our theoretical framework.

For the Kaiowa and Guarani, the territory is tekoha (Benites, 2014). This word, in Guarani language, encompasses two crucial concepts: life (teko) and place (ha). In this sense, tekoha is understood as a place where it is possible to live according to the Kaiowa and Guarani livelihoods. One of the most used definitions in academic research is developed by Melià: tekoha is the place where all the conditions for the Guarani ways of being co-exist. It is, thus a socio-political space, as noted by Colman (2015). Some researchers highlight the perspective that tekoha, beyond a territorial space, can also be understood as the network of relations between Kaiowa and Guarani parentelas, extended families (Pereira, 2016). Benites (2014) explains that tekoha is essential to the cultural and physical survival of the Kaiowa and Guarani. Additionally, the territory has a cosmological dimension to the Kaiowa and Guarani Peoples (Benites, 2014).

The Kaiowa and Guarani call their ontology and epistemology ñande reko (plural) or ava reko (singular). Such systems are, in a certain way, in opposition to the non-Indigenous system, called karai reko. Nonetheless, it does not mean that Kaiowa and Guarani cultures are static or frozen. For example, Benites (2009) emphasizes the dynamic character of ñande reko. The author contends that even in the historical situation wherein Kaiowa and Guarani Peoples are subject to negative colonial interferences and ideologies, they do not lose their worldviews. In line with Benites (2009), we consider that in the current context, the Kaiowa and Guarani extensive families construct their contemporary realities in multiple ways of being.

Our case: Ascuri Brasil

In this section, we provide a brief account of Ascuri. In our account, we try to reflect on the relationship between Ascuri and the Kaiowa and Guarani Indigenous context. How does the territorial context inform Ascuri's approach to media making? What does Ascuri

aim at doing differently from other media initiatives? What are the implications of Indigeneity to Ascuri's organisation as a media initiative?

The Association of Indigenous Culture Directors (Ascuri) was created in 2008. It was formally registered as an association in 2012. Ascuri is a collective of cultural producers and directors that uses new communication technologies. The stated aim of Ascuri is to empower Indigenous communities by making Indigenous traditional knowledge visible, foment knowledge exchange between Indigenous and non-Indigenous societies, and promote the participation of Indigenous communities in discussions about developing the sustainable use of natural resources and alternatives to end poverty (Ascuri, 2022; Corrêa, 2017). Ascuri has its own website³, a YouTube channel⁴ (1,830 followers) and an Instagram page⁵ (2,099 followers) (data from September 22, 2022).

Ascuri uses the social media platforms to circulate information about its projects and productions, including films. There is no pre-established frequency for posts on social media. The Association's strategy for the platforms is being constructed slowly. In the words of one of this article's authors and Ascuri member: those spaces are considered new, therefore Ascuri occupies them slowly and with caution. We see, thus, that the less systematized approach to a social media strategy has to do with the novelty.

We observed that Ascuri members use Instagram to make posts mainly when there are events organised by the Association. The social media platform is used to inform about and invite people to the activities. On the other hand, YouTube is used as a repository of the Association's audio-visual productions. Ascuri's own website, in a blog style, has general information about the Association, information about projects and text posts mainly about events. The website also has a tab with videos, which is connected to the YouTube page showing some of the videos produced by Ascuri. The website functions as a reference to Ascuri's work, but it is not frequently updated because the collective has been prioritising other kinds of activities.

The presence of the audio-visual productions on YouTube enables larger scale circulation for the productions. For example, *Mosarambihára* (Ascuri Brasil, 2016; Ascuri Brasil 2019) has around 3,000 views⁶ and *Mokõi Kovoé* (Ascuri Brasil, 2021) 1,000 views⁷ on the platform. The YouTube page also has the possibility of working as an interactive archive, where people can look for, watch, view and comment on the productions in different times and from different places. On the other hand, there is a collective understanding within Ascuri that internet connection is precarious in many Indigenous communities. Because of that, the Association organises movie screenings in communities. Hence, we have noticed that Ascuri's communication work circulates in diverse online and onsite spaces.

Ascuri carries out local activities in Indigenous communities through filmmaking workshops, workshops about cultivation of native plants, reforestation and seed

³ <https://www.ascuri.org>

⁴ https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_EvIOBMTbte94t3YtJWT_Q

⁵ <https://www.instagram.com/ascuriorg/>

⁶ The number of views of the two videos together in September 22, 2022.

⁷ Number of views in September 22, 2022.

collecting. Periodically, Ascuri organises, together with partners such as universities, a Forum of Digital Inclusion in Indigenous Villages (FIDA) which happened for the first time in 2009. It is an event where youth and elderly gather to discuss, face-to-face, the uses of digital technology and their possible implications for Indigenous communities. Ascuri also co-organises the workshop Cine Sin Fronteras in Indigenous territories, with filmmaking training. However, the frequency of FIDA and Cine Sin Fronteras events has decreased in recent years because of two reasons. The first is the unfavourable political and economic climate in Brazil, in relation to the difficulty of financing projects with public funds. The other, more recent, reason is the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions on physical gatherings. Having said that, during the time of physical isolation, Ascuri members participated in a number of livestream events on social media.

Concerning the history of the development of Indigenous media in Mato Grosso do Sul, prior to the creation of Ascuri and Indigenous-owned media initiatives, some projects directed towards the 'digital inclusion' of Indigenous communities organised by non-Indigenous people were carried out. These projects include Video Indio Brasil and Ava Marandu. Foscaches (2015) observes that such projects were crucial to provoking and increasing the interest of Indigenous peoples in media activities like filmmaking. However, Galache (2017) and Foscaches (2015) contend that these initiatives had significant limitations. They were not successful in creating spaces for Indigenous participants to reflect on the appropriation of new media technologies and its implications for their communities. Additionally, and importantly, the initiatives were not thought of in terms of their own sustainability, that is, they had the format of short-term projects and did not consider the need of continuity (Foscaches, 2015; Galache, 2017). In other words, there were limits in relation to Indigenous self-determination.

When Ascuri was created, one of the central concerns was that it should enhance a collective approach to reflect on the increasing use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in Indigenous communities. Such concerns relate to the notion of media as a means of resistance and self-determination. In the Kaiowa and Guarani contexts, the collective reflections would only make sense if in dialogue with the traditional spiritual leaders in Kaiowa communities called ñanderu and ñandesy, who are considered traditional knowledge keepers. Indigenous media production requires a local and heterogeneous approach.

The circulation and vitality of Indigenous traditional knowledge is a challenge. That challenge is also present in educational institutions. As Pereira et al. (2019) have noted, many Kaiowa and Guarani elders who are traditional knowledge holders consider these institutions uncomfortable and unwelcoming. This difficulty relates to the history of schools as tools for assimilation, which aim to eliminate Indigenous cultural practices such as languages in the logic of settler-colonial elimination attempts (Wolfe, 2006). A similar pattern occurs in media to education institutions with non-Indigenous media unfavourable towards Indigenous peoples (e.g. Silva & Raposo, 2021). For those reasons, Ascuri tries to find ways to construct media as spaces wherein traditional knowledge can circulate.

Kaiowa and Guarani live in different contexts with varying needs and perspectives. Many live in Indigenous reservations that consist of small areas that are densely populated.

There is also a significant number of Kaiowa and Guarani living in camps next to the roads, farms and urban peripheries. Many Kaiowa and Guarani struggle with the actions of the state in which settler colonial perspectives are predominant.

In this sense, Ascuri's media work promotes articulations between the different territorial figurations via media production. Tekoha—the territory—has a crucial role for the Kaiowa and Guarani, as we explained before in the theoretical and conceptual framework. Ascuri audio-visually registers cultural manifestations such as parties, dances (guaxiré), chants and traditional knowledge. In a complementary form, we note that Ascuri's projects aim to go beyond filmmaking. For example, many of the projects include local meetings and workshops in different areas of knowledge as native plant cultivation, seed collection, reforestation and mapping. We will further reflect on this aspect in the following section.

Memory building: media work to revitalise lands, relationships, and stories

In this section, we reflect on Ascuri's media making and the relationship between media work, resistance and self-determination. To keep a clearer focus, we centre our reflection on two projects developed by Ascuri in Kaiowa and Guarani lands. The first project, Mosarambihára, was developed between 2015 and 2016. The videos, available on YouTube, portray part of the project's activities and interviews with participants and organisers. The second project, Mokõi Kovoé, was developed between 2020 and 2021. The video, also available on YouTube, shows a cultural origin story. In different ways, both projects were directed towards memory building.

The project Mosarambihára was a way to try to use media making to help revitalise the land, with a direct impact on Indigenous territories. The word 'Mosarambihára' means "a way to plant and spread the seeds" (Benites et al. 2016, p. 30-35). It was a project to train Guarani and Kaiowa youth to contribute to the sustainability of their communities, especially concerning the recovery of their lands. The meaning of sustainability was questioned in discussions, and participants observed that what is nowadays called 'ecology' or 'sustainability' are new names for practices that Indigenous communities have been carrying out for thousands of years. In recent decades, some of those Indigenous practices and knowledges were discouraged because of settler colonialism and the advance of monoculture in the area, as we have pointed out in the previous sections.

Aiming at traditional knowledge circulation, diverse activities like video making, mapping, planting and agro ecology workshops happened in Guarani and Kaiowa territories during the Mosarambihára project: in Sassoró, Pirakuá, Jaguapiré and Te'yikue. The initiative was a partnership between Ascuri and Gati (Environmental and Territorial Indigenous Management) project, with support from the United Nations Development Programme in Brazil (PNUD Brasil) and the National Indigenous Affairs Foundation (Funai). Video making was an important aspect of both Ascuri's projects since it was the tool used to attract youths' interest in the activities and to mediate the interactions between youth and elders.

Mosarambihára used new media work to plant seeds for revitalising traditional knowledge. The project was an effort towards resistance and self-determination in the

sense that it responded to the processes of social transformation and environmental degradation in Kaiowa and Guarani territories. The activities had collective engagement from the communities. The elders, including traditional and spiritual leaders, had prominent roles in the workshops on traditional ways of dealing with the land. Reflecting on Mosarambihára, we understand that to construct memory in the territories literally means to re-plant, a reforestation. To revitalise traditional knowledge is to be part of territorial recovery.

The Mokõi Kovoé project was an experience of filmmaking for revitalising Indigenous cultural narratives. Mokõi Kovoé is a short movie about an old story of the Kaiowa and Guarani Peoples. It narrates the origin mythology of the Kovoé/Jaó bird. In a nutshell, the story is about a time when Ñanderu prepares the whole community and takes them to the kandire (the land without bad things). Two of his daughters, however, do not follow his commands and are left on Earth. Hearing their regrets, Ñanderu transforms them into to the bird who sings 'mokõi roikove' (meaning 'we both have survived' in Guarani language).

The movie was recorded at the Te'yikue Indigenous village and the retomada⁸ Te'yijusu with the collaboration of the residents. Part of Ascuri's team came from another Kaiowa and Guarani village in the area: Panambizinho. Research for the movie was carried out with the ñandesys and ñanderus. In this project, the collective of Ascuri was using media to echo and amplify cultural origin stories. It was also a way to value traditional storytelling and the elders as knowledge holders. Serber and Benites (2021) richly described in images and written text (in Portuguese) the communal process of production of Mokõi Kovoé.

The participation of traditional leaders in the making of Mokõi Kovoé was not restricted to research about the origin story of the bird. The ñandesys and ñanderus were regarded as guides and guardians during the production and offered their blessings before the filming stage and during the shooting. The inclusion of the community's primary teachers and the participation of the children, who played the characters before and during the shooting, was also crucial. As Serber and Benites (2021) outlined and we (authors) uphold with our reflection: communal and spiritual aspects were crucial to the development of the process.

Those two projects, although different to each other, follow discourses around language and translation. In both cases, as in all Ascuri's projects and productions, the Indigenous language is used. In our reflective dialogue about Ascuri's practices, we concluded that this is one of great importance. More information emerges through language when community members, especially the elders, hold conversations in Guarani language. Additionally, the information in Guarani is regarded as more 'true'. This is connected to the Kaiowa and Guarani cosmological relation to language.

The film projects include translation to a majority language (most often Portuguese but in a few cases Spanish). Such translation work is also important in terms of providing visibility and articulation to other Indigenous peoples who do not speak Guarani.

⁸ A *retomada* is a retaken piece of land demanded by Indigenous people for official recognition, but not yet demarcated.

Indigenous languages in South America are diverse; in the area corresponding to Brazil, for example, there are about 180 Indigenous languages spoken (Vieira, 2013).

Both projects extrapolate the specific ethics and cultural practices of the communities that create them. In each community and cultural context, there are specific ethics about what can be revealed and what should not be revealed concerning traditional rituals, parties and narratives. Agreements and conversations about topics such as traditional knowledge and narratives are done in culturally specific ways, according to tradition. This kind of dialogue about traditional subjects must be approached with cultural sensitivity and care.

For example, in the Kaiowa case, there is a first visit called *jovía*. *Jovía* is a pre-visit to talk: it is about letting someone know that you are researching or producing a work where one must ask permission to talk about the subject with them. After that, producers must wait for a response. If the *jovía* is done in the morning, producers can go back later in the afternoon, evening or even the following morning. In the meantime, the memory does its work. To follow cultural protocols like the *jovía* can be perhaps considered moving slowly by non-Indigenous media producers. However, they are very important, especially to elders. Despite the increasing use of digital communications, a text message would often not be considered enough contact before recording. In that sense, filmmaking is employed as a caring process and a way of straightening relationships.

Foscaches (2015, p. 201) has also observed in her research that Indigenous film producers want to value elders' stories because the elders are like libraries full of stories. We consider that memory building is central to self-determination. In that sense, Ascuri's work can also be strongly related to the idea of the relevance of Indigenous media in processes of building resistance, self-determination and autonomy.

Concluding reflections

This paper offered a reflection on the role of Ascuri, an Indigenous media initiative, in helping to construct collective memory in transnational Indigenous territories in South America. We relied on two different projects wherein media work was used to approach different and complementary aspects of Indigenous memory building. One of those aspects has to do with the circulation of traditional knowledge regarding land use; the other is the circulation of traditional narratives and storytelling. Therefore, we conclude that Indigenous media initiatives, such as Ascuri, have an important role in helping to build and foster Indigenous memory. The main argument of our reflection is that media initiatives become more important when the media work is extended beyond media activities. Collective engagement and collaboration between different generations are crucial to that process.

The process of colonisation, as well as the maintenance of the coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000) in Brazil and Mato Grosso do Sul, is a process of erasure for Indigenous peoples in the area. The hegemonic media, in different formats, becomes the main player of information processes and there is no alternative for media circulation for Kaiowa and Guarani knowledges. In that way, Indigenous media initiatives have been contributing to

recompose, revitalise and assist with re-connecting multiple Indigenous generations as well as amplifying the circulation of traditional knowledge.

The elders and cultural leaders of these communities are the main keepers of traditional knowledge (Benites, 2021). In response to this, one of the main roles of Ascuri is to connect people across multiple generations through their projects. One of the main outcomes of Ascuri's work is closely related to the collective construction of the communities' Indigenous memory. This process of memory building has implications for the territories, the tekoha. Foscaches (2015) also observes that the reconstruction of collective memories is one of Ascuri's potential.

Additionally, we have demonstrated the relevance of Kaiowa and Guarani concepts to understand the Indigenous media initiatives within that specific Indigenous context. We argue that building collective memory and making traditional knowledge is important to Indigenous self-determination and that media initiatives have a key role in this process.

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