

From arrow to algorithm: communication dynamics within the indigenous movement of the Brazilian Amazon in the 21st century

De la flecha al algoritmo: dinámicas de la comunicación en el movimiento indígena de la Amazonía brasileña en el siglo XXI

Da flecha ao algoritmo: dinâmicas da comunicação no movimento indígena da Amazônia brasileira no século XXI

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The article examines how Indigenous movements in the Brazilian Amazon combine ancestral and digital communication practices in the twenty-first century as part of their processes of organization, public visibility, and political contestation. To this end, it draws on an integrated analytical reading of previous empirical research focused on diverse communication initiatives developed by the Indigenous movement in Brazil. The findings indicate that, in this context, communication operates as a terrain of contestation, cultural resignification, and narrative sovereignty, helping to broaden the scope of debate on communication from a South-South perspective.

KEYWORDS: Ethnocommunication, indigenous communication, digital activism, territorialities, narratives of resistance.

El artículo investiga cómo los movimientos indígenas de la Amazonía brasileña articulan, en el siglo XXI, prácticas comunicacionales ancestrales y digitales en sus procesos de organización, visibilidad pública y disputa política. Para ello, se apoya en una lectura analítica y articulada de investigaciones empíricas previas centradas en distintas experiencias comunicacionales desarrolladas por el movimiento indígena en Brasil. Los resultados indican que la comunicación opera, en este contexto, como territorio de disputa, resignificación cultural y soberanía narrativa y contribuye a ampliar el campo de discusión de lo comunicativo desde una perspectiva sur-sur.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Etnocomunicación, comunicación indígena, activismo digital, territorialidades, narrativas de resistencia.

O artigo investiga como os movimentos indígenas da Amazônia brasileira articulam, no século XXI, práticas comunicacionais ancestrais e digitais em seus processos de organização, visibilidade pública e disputa política. Para isso, baseia-se em uma leitura analítica e articulada de pesquisas empíricas anteriores centradas em diferentes experiências comunicacionais desenvolvidas pelo movimento indígena no Brasil. Os resultados indicam que a comunicação atua, nesse contexto, como um território de disputa, ressignificação cultural e soberania narrativa, e contribui para ampliar o campo de discussão do comunicativo a partir de uma perspectiva Sul-Sul.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Etnocomunicação, comunicação indígena, ativismo digital, territorialidades, narrativas de resistência.

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CONTEXTUALIZING THE STRUGGLE OVER COMMUNICATION

For the Indigenous peoples of the Brazilian Amazon, as demonstrated by studies such as those conducted by Araújo (2021), Gomes (2024), and Pio (2025), communication transcends its merely instrumental dimension. It is also a territory –living, pulsating, and contested– where physical survival is intertwined with narrative sovereignty.

For centuries, external voices operating within the sphere of communication shaped discourses about traditional peoples that distorted identities, silenced cosmologies, and legitimized the dispossession of bodies and lands. Yet, well into the twenty-first century, managing communication flows and tools has come to mean more than a political strategy for the Indigenous movement; it has also become a form of vindication, a reclaiming and reinscription of Indigenous peoples' own existence in the world.

It is within this hybrid space, between the ancestral and the digital, that the resistance of traditional peoples is necessarily challenged, reinvented, and, at the same time, strengthened. This article therefore focuses on a fundamental question: how are the connections between Indigenous social movements in Brazil and communication being woven in the first quarter of the twenty-first century?

To address this question, we examine the movement –the crossings and recrossings– between ancestral communication practices, such as general assemblies, where the spoken word flows like a river, slowly but steadily growing in volume, reach, and significance, and community radio, which still functions today as an electronic campfire of orality, illuminating and connecting communities. All of this is interwoven with an increasingly complex, multilayered, and digital ecosystem. Within this new terrain, online platforms, social media, mobile applications, and artificial intelligence systems –including their hidden algorithms– become contemporary weapons in the struggle for rights, visibility, and autonomy, reshaping the very meaning of Indigenous presence in an increasingly digital public sphere.

To answer the central question posed here, this article weaves an analytical overview of the evolution of ethnocommunication within the

organized Indigenous movement of the Brazilian Amazon. To this end, it adopts as its methodological approach the analytical systematization of previous empirical studies examining diverse communication initiatives developed by the Indigenous movement in Brazil.

We begin with a historical reconstruction of the emergence of organizational communication practices within the Indigenous movement, situating them as a direct response to the developmentalist projects that, beginning in the 1960s, swept across the Brazilian Amazon like winds of modernization –winds that also carried deforestation, displacement, and silencing.

We further develop the conceptual framework of Indigenous ethno-communication by examining other practices that are now mediatized and focusing on its three most recurrent structuring principles: identity, territoriality, and ethnicity. These are understood not merely as analytical categories, but as genuine axes of organization and mobilization, capable of guiding other political practices, strengthening community ties, and re-enchanting the narratives they produce. This reveals, then, distinctive ways of deploying digital languages –sometimes as shields, sometimes as arrows– in the struggle for rights, visibility, and recognition. Finally, we critically examine this new communication landscape, synthesizing the transformations currently under way and highlighting the tensions that arise when ancestrality and technology become intertwined in the struggle over a shared narrative thread.

As we journey together along this path of Indigenous ethno-communication –from the face-to-face assembly, where the spoken word still breathes in rhythm with the forest, to the global algorithm that projects these voices beyond the territory’s physical boundaries– we uncover not only a trajectory of technological appropriation, but also a profound process of cultural and political resignification

We find that every media transition and every newly adopted tool carries brushstrokes of reinvention, reshaping contested ways of being through the very forms in which stories are told. To understand the impact of this digital present –so replete with both urgency and possibility– it is therefore imperative to remain mindful of the historical roots from which this ethnocommunicational struggle emerged.

METHODOLOGY

This article is based on an analytical systematization of previous empirical studies investigating different communication initiatives developed by the Indigenous movement in Brazil, with an emphasis on the Brazilian Amazon. The corpus was selected from research examining communication experiences situated across different historical periods, media, and platforms.

As a point of departure, the methodological trajectory engages with the horizontal production of knowledge proposed by Corona Berkin (2019) and with the collection *—catografi* (a Portuguese term that may be rendered as “collection-cartography”)— as formulated by Mendes-Guilherme (2022). As the interpretive process unfolds, however, the study moves toward an approach inspired by transmethodological cartography (Maldonado, 2019; Rosário & Coca, 2018) and by the theoretical and methodological principles formulated by Santi (2014), particularly due to their capacity to articulate territoriality, memory, mediations, communication practices, and disputes over meaning.

This foundation is also connected to the analytical tools employed in the studies examined, including content analysis (Bardin, 2011), discourse analysis (Benetti, 2007), and narrative studies, or narratology (Motta, 2013). These approaches enabled us to observe, across multiple layers, how meanings emerge, circulate, and come under tension within communication ecosystems traversed by historical, political, cultural, and territorial disputes.

Building on this foundation, the article analyzes three sets of communication practices developed on contemporary digital platforms: the institutional website of the Indigenous Council of Roraima (CIR), as discussed by Araújo (2021); the emergency activism campaign #ForaGarimpoForaCovid led by the Hutukara Yanomami Association on X, based on the findings of Gomes (2024); and the production of viral narratives surrounding #CadeOsYanomami, developed by the Urihi Yanomami Association on Instagram, as examined by Pio (2025).

These studies were selected because of their relevance to the article’s central argument: the historical transformation of the communication

practices of the Amazonian Indigenous movement, from institutional forms of public visibility to digital strategies involving networked activism, visual mobilization, and narrative sovereignty. Taken together, the cases provide a broad and sequential account of the expansion of Indigenous communication in the twenty-first century, revealing continuities, shifts, and reconfigurations across ancestral, territorial, and digital practices.

It is important to clarify that the methods mentioned—such as trans-methodological cartography, content analysis, discourse analysis, and narratology—were applied directly in the original studies used as the empirical basis for this article. The procedure adopted here consists of systematizing, cross-referencing, and critically reinterpreting their findings in order to map how the fundamental axes of Indigenous ethno-communication—identity, territoriality, and ethnicity—take shape, come under tension, and expand across a continuum extending from ancestral forms of communication to the contemporary digital ecosystem.

From general assemblies to radio waves

As Araújo (2021) argues, broadly speaking, the emergence of self-determined forms of communication within Brazil's organized Indigenous movement can be understood as an expression of “adaptive resistance” (Albert, 2004; Stern, 1990): a strategic response to the territorial encirclement intensified by the large-scale development projects implemented in the Amazon by the Brazilian military dictatorship beginning in the 1960s.

Highways such as BR-174 (Manaus-Caracas) and the Northern Perimeter Highway (BR-210), built during Brazil's military dictatorship in the 1970s, not only tore through ancestral Amazonian territories but also inflicted deep wounds. By promoting forced contact, they triggered disease outbreaks and fueled violent conflicts that led to the extermination of entire communities belonging to peoples such as the Kinja (Waimiri-Atroari) (Do Vale, n.d.), the Wai-Wai (Schuler Zea, n.d.), and the Yanomami (Albert, n.d.; Gomes, 2024; Pio, 2025).

Within this context of dispossession and genocide, Indigenous communities were compelled to reinvent their forms of political organization and, consequently, their communication practices. The

spoken word, previously safeguarded within communities and general assemblies, began to seek new pathways through which to circulate. The symbolic territory of communication expanded and became a vital space for the physical, cultural, and spiritual survival of these peoples. Thus, communication within the Indigenous movement of the Brazilian Amazon did not remain merely a tool; it became an integral part of a strategy of (re)existence in the face of forces that threatened to silence Indigenous voices and erase their very presence.

According to Araújo (2021), the main communication practice that consolidated this initial resistance was the Tuxaua assemblies –gatherings of Indigenous leaders from different Amazonian communities– which also began in the 1970s. Rooted in foundational orality and traditional forms of deliberation, these gatherings gradually expanded to become the primary forums for the political organization of the movement.

Initially supported by non-governmental Indigenous advocacy organizations –particularly the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI),² a Catholic Church organization aligned with liberation theology– this assembly model grew stronger as a space for dialogue in which leaders from multiple Indigenous peoples could share experiences, confront challenges, and identify common problems.

More than mere gatherings, these were foundational and shared acts of communication –moments in which the spoken word circulated, building bridges between worlds and serving as the mortar that bound alliances together. By embodying what Sodr  (2015) called “a common realm to be shared”, the assemblies enabled diverse ethnic experiences to become intertwined, giving rise to the very political subject of the Indigenous movement.

Thus, what had previously been fragmented –dispersed communities, different languages, and distinct histories– was transformed into a unified collective consciousness capable of emerging as a political force in the face of persistent external threats. Alongside the power of orality embodied in the assemblies, Ara jo (2021) and Pio (2025) also demonstrate that Brazil’s Indigenous movement has consistently shown

² Available at: <https://cimi.org.br>

a remarkable capacity for adaptation, appropriating different media to amplify its voices and strengthen its internal organization.

Along this trajectory, two initiatives stand out as particularly significant milestones. The first consists of printed newsletters and publications, among which the newspaper *Porantim*, founded by CIMI in 1979, is especially noteworthy (Conselho Indigenista Missionário, n.d.). *Porantim* quickly became a crucial counter-hegemonic outlet—a kind of fabric woven from paper and ink through which denunciations, political organizing, and narratives about Indigenous peoples circulated, despite the mainstream media’s persistent attempts to bury them.

In Roraima, at the northernmost edge of the Brazilian Amazon, where the forest draws close to the mountains of Venezuela, the newspaper *Anna Yekaré (Our News)* (Conselho Indígena de Roraima, n.d.b), launched by the Indigenous Council of Roraima (CIR) in 1990, played a similar role. More than a newspaper, it served as a gathering point where different communities could share information, nurture alliances, and keep the flame of resistance alive

With their strongly denunciatory tone, these print publications sometimes circulated almost clandestinely—like leaves carried by winds that refuse to heed borders—exposing violence perpetrated by large landowners and illegal miners and strengthening the struggle for the recognition and demarcation of territories such as the Yanomami Indigenous Land (TIY) (Terras Indígenas no Brasil, n.d.b) and, subsequently, the Raposa Serra do Sol Indigenous Land (TIRSS) (Terras Indígenas no Brasil, n.d.a.). As Araújo (2021) summarizes, they constituted “a means of communication by Indigenous people, for Indigenous people” (p. 157), capable of translating local realities into a language of political resistance that connected distant villages through a shared narrative thread.

If the word found shelter on the skin of paper, it later gained movement through radio waves. Given the vastness of the Amazon and the isolation of countless communities, radio became an indispensable channel of communication, crossing rivers, mountain ranges, and forests with the lightness of a messenger spirit. *Programa de Índio (Indigenous Program)*, created to “tame the white man” and conceived

in 1985 by leaders such as Ailton Krenak and Álvaro Tukano,³ was a pioneering initiative that opened a space for interethnic communication in Brazil, weaving bridges of sound between peoples separated by immense physical distances and distinct worldviews.

In Roraima, *The Voice of Indigenous Peoples*, a program broadcast by CIR on Rádio Monte Roraima,⁴ became firmly established as a vital channel for informing grassroots communities, coordinating mobilizations, and fostering a shared sense of identity and collective belonging. Its messages reached villages beyond the range of any other medium, functioning as a life-giving current of communication that helped keep the Indigenous movement cohesive and mobilized (Araújo, 2021).

These early practices –from general assemblies to print newsletters and radio programs– did not constitute merely the appropriation of “white” tools. From the outset, they were political gestures rooted in the principles of identity, territoriality, and ethnicity, which underpin the very philosophical foundations of Indigenous communication. Every gathering, every newsletter, and every voice carried over the airwaves conveyed more than facts or stories: each sustained other ways of understanding the world, other cosmologies that insisted on remaining alive despite external pressures.

This foundation gave rise to what the Indigenous movement itself would later call “ethnocommunicational practices” (Tupinambá, 2016). It is worth recalling, however, that even before a term existed to describe them, these actions already constituted distinctive ways of producing, circulating, and safeguarding narratives –narratives that spring from the territories and return to them as a form of resistance and existential affirmation

ETHNOCOMMUNICATION, IDENTITY, AND TERRITORY

Our research shows that the communication practices of the Brazilian Indigenous movement cannot be reduced to a mere repertoire of techniques appropriated from the white world; rather, they constitute a

³ See Krenak and Tukano (n.d.).

⁴ Available at Rádio Monte Roraima FM. (n.d.).

field of action that is philosophically oriented, geographically situated, and politically operative (Santi & Araújo, 2019). Every communicative gesture—whether an assembly, a newspaper, a radio bulletin, or a post on digital social media—is connected to deeper roots, anchored in territory and in worldviews that separate neither the word from the body nor the body from its land.

These principles, systematized through extended periods of lived experience and observation, underpin the concept of Indigenous ethno-communication, understood here as a field of communication practices that strategically mobilize an interdependent triad: the affirmation of identity, which springs from the collective memory of indigenous peoples; the struggle for territory, which ensures the continuity of physical and spiritual life; and ethnicity, which politically articulates these dimensions and projects them into the public arena (Santi & Araújo, 2019). This is a living conceptual framework in which identity, territoriality, and ethnicity coexist symbiotically, like three torches that, when brought together, illuminate—more brightly and more clearly—a single circuit of practices and forms of resistance.

One of the studies that most compellingly supports this relationship is Araújo's (2021) research, which demonstrates how the principle of identity is mobilized within the ethnocommunication practices of the Indigenous Council of Roraima (CIR) as a political tool for overcoming the fragmentation and subalternity imposed by the colonial process. Historically, in Brazil, the generic category of "Indian"—an invention of the colonizing gaze—operated as a homogenizing veil that erased differences and sought to reduce hundreds of distinct peoples to a convenient—and soulless—fiction.

The Brazilian Indigenous movement, however, not only rejected this reduction but also re-signified it. As Hall (2005) observes, identities function as points of identification and attachment that position us within the world. By politically embracing the identity of "Indigenous", these social movements transformed a colonial label into a mechanism of strategic unity capable of bringing diverse peoples together under a shared banner of struggle.

Centuries after colonial contact, what emerges, out of sheer necessity, is a transition from bounded ethnic identities—fragmented and

specific— to a multiethnic political identity, through a process of narrative construction that transforms a historical stigma into an emblem of resistance. It is as though, gathered around the same symbolic fire, different peoples came to recognize that their stories, although unique, are intertwined in the face of common threats, and that the strength of their voices grows when they are raised in unison.

Territoriality, in turn, constitutes a central and multifaceted principle of Indigenous ethnocommunication (Araújo, 2021). Our research found that the narratives produced by the Indigenous movement activate the concept of territory across at least three complementary dimensions—as theorized by Raffestin (1993) and Haesbaert (2004)—as though every layer of territory—the concrete, the symbolic, and the communicative—breathed alongside those who inhabit it.

The first dimension, “physical territory”, refers more directly to the material space in which the struggle becomes visible, as exemplified by the demand for the demarcation and formal recognition of Indigenous lands. It encompasses the tangible geography of rivers, mountains, mountain ranges, and forests, as well as boundaries threatened by invaders. Within this dimension of territoriality, as Santi (2025) observes, communication is both weapon and shield: it helps denounce illegal occupations, exert pressure on the state, and bring territorial claims into public view. This is where the soil speaks, where every tree safeguards the memory of the ancestors, and where the struggle to remain is inscribed first upon bodies and then upon maps.

“Symbolic territory”, in turn, transcends these physical boundaries. It emerges as a place of belonging, memory, and ancestry, a space where time folds upon itself and where the “land-forest” is also “home-spirit” (Albert & Kopenawa, 2023). Within this realm, communication acts as an evocative force: it creates and reinforces symbolic bonds through narratives that reaffirm the spiritual and cultural connection to territory, understood, for example, in Yanomami cosmology, as *Urihi*: the living forestland. In its symbolic form, territory articulates meanings of identity, memory, and ancestry (Santos, 1999; Zanetti, 2017), sustaining the affective ground upon which collective forms of existence are built.

The third dimension, proposed by Santi (2025), is “communicated territory”, which relates to the practices of inhabiting, narrating, and

imbuing space with meaning. Here, territory emerges as a condition of inhabited (re)existence, as proposed by Di Felice and Pereira (2017). It is within this realm that we address “media and/or mediated territorialities”, understood as symbolic spaces in which visibility, recognition, and power are contested territories defined not only by kilometers, but also by flows of meaning, the circulation of voices, and narrative persistence.

As Santi (2025, p. 38) observes, within this expanded perspective, “territorialities” come to refer fundamentally to the *sentipensante* – feeling-thinking– relationships that subjects, individually or collectively, establish with the territory. They therefore assume a dynamic and performative nature: they depend on what is done with the territory, how it is inhabited and imbued with meaning, and how it is constructed through identity.

In this sense, for the Indigenous peoples of the Brazilian Amazon, it becomes meaningful to speak of “multiple territorialities” –such as the home, the community, the ethnoregion, and the officially demarcated indigenous land itself: layers that overlap like affective and political maps of existence and (re)existence.

As Santi (2025, p. 39) summarizes, it is through this chain of relationships that “ethnomediatic territorialities” can be understood as narrated ways of inhabiting territories –whether physical, symbolic, and/or communicative. They may emerge through representations that activate collective belonging and distinct cosmologies; through the configuration of alternative meanings concerning ways of inhabiting and the habitat itself, thereby shaping forms of life and resistance; and/or through emerging territorial circumstances communicated and represented in contemporary media, particularly digital communication media. Territory and narrative thus become inseparable: wherever one communicates, one inhabits, and wherever one inhabits, one communicates.

These principles –identity, territoriality, and ethnicity– constitute the analytical lens through which the contemporary digital communication practices of Indigenous peoples cease to be interpreted as merely instrumental uses of external technologies. Viewed through this three-fold conceptual framework, these practices emerge as part of a political, cultural, and territorial strategy of resistance in which ancestral forms

of deliberation, memory, and circulation of the spoken word are reconfigured within digital environments

It is therefore a long thread that connects Indigenous assemblies, territories, and oral traditions with the platforms, networks, and accelerated temporalities of digital communication, keeping alive a logic of (re)existence that has guided the Indigenous movement in Brazil for decades. What at first glance might appear to be mere adherence to technological modernity constitutes, for Indigenous peoples, the expansion of a political, cultural, and cosmological project that has never ceased to pulse.

From a critical perspective, however, it is necessary to problematize the use of the term “ethnocommunication” in this context. Just as the generic category of “Indian” has been widely challenged because of its colonial, homogenizing, and reductionist character, the indiscriminate use of the prefix “ethno” may also reproduce –unless it is properly situated– a perspective that designates Indigenous peoples as a radical otherness: an “other” named through external frameworks of classification. The concept therefore demands theoretical caution, as it may both help bring Indigenous communication practices into view and reinforce the logics of subalternization that have historically shaped the relationship between coloniality, knowledge, and representation.

We therefore recognize that some of the practices analyzed here could also be understood through the notion of “interethnic communication”, particularly when the aim is to emphasize the internal heterogeneity of Indigenous peoples, their dialogical relationships with other social actors, and the multiple mediations that traverse their communication processes. In this article, however, Indigenous ethnocommunication is not employed as a closed, essentialist, or folklorizing category, but rather as a situated interpretive key capable of illuminating distinctive ways of producing, circulating, and contesting meanings from within territorialities, memories, cosmologies, and collective forms of existence.

Understood in this way, the “ethno” dimension –when invoked by Indigenous people themselves– does not narrow the debate; rather, it moves us toward a broader understanding of communication as a practice of symbolic, political, and territorial self-determination. Much like

the re-signification of the term “Indigenous” within contemporary processes of organization and struggle, ethnocommunication enables us to see beyond the simplifying dichotomies that prevail between ancestrality and technology, tradition and modernity, arrow and algorithm.

Within this framework, digital technologies do not appear as external devices passively adopted by Indigenous peoples, but as spaces that are appropriated, re-signified, and reterritorialized through their own strategies of argumentation, visibility, memory, and collective organization.

Indeed, this perspective becomes visible in contemporary initiatives, such as the trans-species net-activism of the Rede Wayuri (Melo et al., 2022), in which communication technology operates not merely as a tool for dissemination, but as a field of political organization, territorial defense, and the production of Indigenous presence within the digital public sphere.

When considered in dialogue with the concept of “interference” proposed by Cárcamo-Huechante (2021) in his studies of acoustic colonialism –without, however, making it a methodological axis of this article–, Indigenous presence in digital environments cannot be regarded as a simple assimilation into hegemonic modernity. Rather, it constitutes a form of critical intervention in the contemporary communication ecosystem, in which ancestrality exercises narrative sovereignty, destabilizes colonial regimes of audibility and visibility, and reconfigures the ways in which speech, territory, and existence are contested.

The digital turn and Indigenous activism in the twenty-first century

The studies conducted by Araújo (2021), Gomes (2024), and Pio (2025) demonstrate that the appropriation of digital communication tools by the Indigenous movement of the Brazilian Amazon marks a new and decisive stage in its strategy of “adaptive resistance”. By overcoming historical barriers to access and visibility, Indigenous organizations and leaders began using tools ranging from institutional websites to social media as the latest iteration of their struggle. Like a river that changes its course –without severing its connection to either its source or its mouth– this struggle adapts to intervene directly in a public sphere that is now global.

Whereas radio, in previous decades, functioned as a sonic camp-fire intended to reach and illuminate isolated communities, digital platforms extend that reach, making it possible to pressure political and economic elites and reconstruct Indigenous peoples' own narratives with unprecedented force. Here, we witness a communicative leap that transforms timelines into territories and hashtags into tools of demarcation, denunciation, mobilization, and identity affirmation.

Our research nevertheless shows that this shift does not occur without friction. Structural barriers to access across the Amazon's vast regions, for example, continue to create asymmetries and tensions between connected leaders and their community constituencies that remain offline. Yet we know that, between the "home-forest" and the "digital forest", complex dynamics emerge that effectively reconfigure who speaks, who is heard, and how narratives circulate –revealing that each technological advance can redraw the contours of the landscape of struggle.

Institutional communication on the CIR website

The official website of the Indigenous Council of Roraima (CIR)⁵ provides an exemplary illustration of the evolution of Indigenous institutional communication in the digital environment. Its trajectory, analyzed by Araújo (2021), reveals a process of maturation involving not only the strengthening of a lasting institutional identity, but also the assertion of increasing control over the symbolic territory of communication and information: the "communicative territory", where words, images, and narratives become instruments of self-determination (Santi, 2025).

During its initial phase, from 2003 to 2010, the CIR website operated as a focused activism platform, concentrating almost exclusively on the struggle for the demarcation of Indigenous lands, particularly the Raposa Serra do Sol Indigenous Land (TIRSS). According to Araújo (2021), the content produced during this period consisted primarily of documents, public statements, and letters of protest, positioning the website as a strategic repository that provided resources

⁵ Available at: <https://cir.org.br>

for political and legal mobilization. The identity communicated at that time was that of a movement in the midst of struggle: a collective body organized around an urgent and inescapable cause. It was as though every published text functioned as another arrow launched beyond territorial boundaries, seeking allies, raising public awareness, and putting pressure on the state.

Beginning in 2017, the website underwent a significant transformation (Araújo, 2021). It ceased to function solely as a site of memory, archival preservation, and denunciation and became a more dynamic communication outlet, regularly publishing news about Indigenous health, differentiated Indigenous education, territorial management, and Indigenous affairs policy. This change reveals the consolidation of a more complex institutional identity, marked by the creation of a Communication Department through which CIR asserted itself not only as part of a resistance movement, but also as a legitimate representative, autonomous administrator, and specialized producer of information about and for the Indigenous peoples it represents. In doing so, the movement carried out a genuine symbolic reterritorialization: the website became the primary source of information about its own agendas, occupying a space previously mediated –and frequently restricted– by external actors.

After 2024, however, we observe another shift within CIR's communication ecosystem. Although the website remains active, it has assumed a secondary role amid the significant growth of the Indigenous movement's presence on digital social media, particularly Instagram –a new arena for visibility, mobilization, and narrative construction. Episodes such as CIR's participation in COP30, for example, illustrate this transition (Conselho Indígena de Roraima, n.d.a).

Communication practices are no longer centered on the website but extend across digital platforms, where circulation is faster, reach is broader, and the struggle over meaning is more intense. The website nevertheless remains an institutional point of reference, while social media have become the new territory in which the struggle gains speed and global resonance.

Emergency activism on X

The next stage of this digital turn can be observed in the emergency activism practiced by Indigenous peoples on X (formerly Twitter), particularly through campaigns such as #ForaGarimpoForaCovid, led by the Yanomami people (Kopenawa, n.d.). Gomes' study (2024) demonstrates how this initiative transformed X into a platform for exerting political pressure, where each post operated like a rapid warning shot capable of crossing borders within seconds.

Led by Dário Kopenawa Yanomami, vice president of the Hutukara Yanomami Association (HAY), the campaign precisely articulated the denunciation of a dual crisis: the devastating presence of more than 20 000 illegal miners in the territory and the rapid spread of COVID-19 among Yanomami communities. The hashtag #ForaGarimpoForaCovid became a mobile digital signifier of a multiethnic identity in a state of emergency, bringing together the Yanomami, the Ye'kwana, and a broad network of supporters around a shared call to action.

More than merely informing, the campaign also enacted a symbolic reterritorialization by wresting the narrative from official channels that had remained silent and projecting it, on Indigenous peoples' own terms, into the global arena. The denunciation –previously confined to ignored reports and statements with little public impact– thus achieved worldwide circulation. It mobilized hundreds of thousands of signatures for an online petition and transformed the Yanomami emergency into an unavoidable issue in national and international public debate. It was as though, for a few moments, the Yanomami territory pulsed within the digital architecture itself, causing the “land-forest” –so distant to many– to materialize on screens around the world.

According to Gomes (2024), the analysis of Dário Kopenawa's posts made it possible to identify a set of recurrent discursive formations (DFs), all underpinned by an ideological formation (IF) centered on resistance and the defense of life. These DFs were organized around three main axes: first, the denunciation of violence, through posts exposing killings, armed conflicts, abuses, and environmental destruction. These statements activated the boundaries of ethnicity, separating the vulnerable Indigenous body from the invading forces, as though every word were a warning cry echoing through the forest and reverberating

across the networks. The second axis, the appeal to solidarity, consisted of messages calling on civil society, artists, influencers, and institutions to support the Yanomami cause. This DF functioned as a fabric of alliances, weaving an expanded network of solidarity that traversed physical territory and spread across symbolic, communicated, and digital territories. Finally, the combination of environmental and public health activism incisively connected the environmental degradation caused by illegal mining with the health vulnerability of the Yanomami, demonstrating that the destruction of the forest also means the destruction of the bodies that depend upon it.

In the #ForaGarimpoForaCovid campaign, the environmental crisis was narrated simultaneously as a health crisis, interweaving two discursive fields that frequently appear separate within the public sphere. By bringing them together, the campaign exposed the full depth of the threat: when the forest falls ill, so do the bodies that inhabit it. Woven like threads of the same fabric, these discursive formations produced a narrative of immense power, capable of turning the Yanomami emergency into a global issue. This movement revealed the fluidity with which Indigenous ethnocommunication moved between the “land-forest” and the “digital forest”, enabling the physical Yanomami territory –so remote to many– to pulse at the heart of social media and calling upon the world to see, listen, and act.

Although the #ForaGarimpoForaCovid campaign succeeded in breaking through media bubbles and reaching previously inaccessible audiences, it also exposed the ambivalent nature of digital visibility. Operating amid “polarized enclaves” (Sunstein, 2001), the Yanomami mobilization encountered not only the warm reception of solidarity-based ecosystems, but also the organized hostility of anti-Indigenous groups. Like an intense light that simultaneously reveals and blinds, digital exposure opened pathways of support while also attracting coordinated attacks, demonstrating that every advance into the communicative territory of social networks may bring new risks and disputes.

Viral narratives on Instagram

The studies by Silva and Santi (2025) and Pio (2025) also demonstrate how the @UrihiYanomami profile on Instagram reveals the power of

visual and viral ethnomedia to awaken empathy and mobilize concrete support (Urihi Associação Yanomami, n.d.). At the height of the Yanomami humanitarian crisis in 2023, the Urihi Yanomami Association used powerful photographs and videos to document child malnutrition, the spread of malaria, and state abandonment in its territories.

This strategy of “counterinformation” functioned especially as a political instrument for spanning multiple “ethnomediatic territorialities”. Here, mapping through images showed not only where the crisis was unfolding, but also who was bearing its human cost. Images of suffering children went beyond a merely documentary function and enacted a form of reterritorialization by setting the cold abstraction of extractivist narratives –which reduce the forest to statistics and illegal mining to figures– against the inescapable materiality of weakened bodies. According to Pio (2025), by presenting a decolonial point of view narrated from the perspective of those directly affected, Urihi endowed the denunciations with legitimacy, urgency, and emotional depth, humanizing the tragedy and engaging the public in direct actions such as donations, support campaigns, and volunteer work.

In parallel, the #CadeOsYanomami campaign, which linked illegal mineral extraction to human suffering, harnessed Instagram’s visual language to translate a complex crisis into a powerful and universally intelligible message, challenging official narratives and the superficial coverage provided by hegemonic media outlets (Silva & Santi, 2025). It is important to note that the hashtag #CadeOsYanomami, originally associated with the denunciation of a case involving violence and the disappearance of a community, expanded its scope to expose the severe suffering caused by disease and famine.

This raises an unavoidable ethical debate concerning the exposure of children experiencing pain and suffering. As discussions surrounding campaigns based on the “shock effect” have emphasized, using the exposure of human suffering to elicit solidarity walks a fine ethical line –a practice that has recently also been criticized in connection with the use of AI to produce images (Scott, 2014). Nevertheless, when communities resort to this format, paying the high price of exposing their own vulnerability, they do so as a survival strategy of last resort in the face

of systematic silencing, seeking to tear through hegemonic indifference by radically humanizing the issue.

The presence of Indigenous peoples on these digital platforms—each with its own logic, specific audiences, and distinct speeds—reveals a new stage in contemporary Indigenous ethnocommunication. At the same time, it underscores the need for an ongoing strategic assessment of their potential and of the contradictions inherent in their use, particularly as the “land-forest” begins to contend for space with the “forest of images”, algorithms, and affects.

Between the arrow and the algorithm

As further demonstrated by the studies of Araújo (2021), Gomes (2024), Pio (2025), and Silva and Santi (2025), digital platforms are far from neutral tools. They remain contested fields—arenas in which unprecedented opportunities for visibility coexist with structural challenges that reshape and sometimes strain the very scope of Indigenous political action.

In light of this, a critical assessment of Indigenous digital activism—considering examples such as CIR’s institutional communication practices; emergency activism on X through the #ForaGarimpoForaCovid campaign; and viral narratives on Instagram, as in the #CadeOsYanomami campaign—requires carefully weighing their transformative potential against the contradictions and limitations imposed by this new communication ecosystem.

Our research shows that, while social networks function as open pathways—routes that enable Indigenous voices to circulate rapidly across previously unreachable territories—they also carry the risks, filters, and disputes inherent in global technological architectures. Understanding this ambivalence is essential to analyzing the position occupied by Indigenous ethnocommunication between the “land-forest” and the “algorithmic forest”.

Among the strengths of Indigenous digital activism, its capacity for amplification and reach is undeniable. After all, social media enable denunciations—such as those concerning the Yanomami crisis—to cross geographical borders and bypass the selective filters of traditional media. A cause rooted in the forest can become an international issue

within a matter of hours, mobilizing support, exerting pressure on authorities, and awakening solidarity among a global audience. It is as though the Yanomami word, once constrained by territorial isolation, had found new territories within digital platforms—a mighty river along which to flow across the world.

This power, however, is counterbalanced by a major structural contradiction: persistent digital exclusion. Unequal access to Internet infrastructure in the Amazon continues to reproduce profound divides, including between connected leaders and communicators, on the one hand, and grassroots communities with limited or no access, on the other. This asymmetry creates tensions in political representation and restricts communities' full participation, as evidenced by the work of associations such as Hutukara and Urihi. We thus see that the same digital territory that amplifies voices can also deepen distances, revealing that not everyone can move at the same speed through the "algorithmic forest".

Another clear strength is the expansion of opportunities to construct counternarratives. Indigenous communicators are increasingly taking control of their own representation, using digital platforms to dismantle centuries-old stereotypes and present their cultures, ways of life, and struggles from their own perspectives. This breaks with the historical tutelage exercised by hegemonic media and creates space for narratives rooted in territory, memory, and lived experience. These are voices that, once filtered or silenced, now speak for themselves—and when they speak, they rearrange the world.

This power, however, coexists with an equally significant challenge: violence and hate speech. Greater digital visibility exposes Indigenous leaders and activists to coordinated attacks, disinformation campaigns, and systematic hostility. As we have already seen, the social media environment can easily become a collection of "polarized enclaves", where anti-Indigenous groups organize, amplify their aggression, and intensify symbolic conflict. Therefore, what expands reach also increases risk, revealing the shadows that accompany every form of light within the ecology of digital platforms.

Another evident strength lies in the rapid mobilization and capacity for networked coordination made possible in this environment. Digital

tools enable swift, large-scale calls to action capable of transforming dispersed attention into coordinated action. The petition launched by the #ForaGarimpoForaCovid campaign, which gathered hundreds of thousands of signatures, exemplifies this power: a gesture originating in the digital sphere that became a tangible instrument of political pressure. It is as though the Yanomami call, once confined to the immensity of the “land-forest”, could now cross continents at the speed of lightning.

Yet this power also coexists with the paradoxical struggle for genuine sovereignty within digital territories. What we see today remains the appropriation –necessary yet contradictory– of tools controlled by large corporations whose algorithmic, extractivist, and asymmetrical logics directly conflict with Indigenous worldviews grounded in autonomy, reciprocity, and care. Navigating these platforms in the age of data capitalism therefore means occupying a new territory while confronting its old colonial structure, embedded within the codes themselves.

Despite these profound challenges, a strategic presence on digital platforms appears to represent significant progress and a strengthening of Indigenous peoples’ communication autonomy. It is within this hybrid space, however –between rivers and fiber-optic cables, between ancestral chants and opaque algorithms– that a new battleground is taking shape for the Indigenous peoples’ movement in the Amazon. This is largely the field that may define the contours of the struggle for (re)existence in the twenty-first century.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Returning to the central question posed in this article, and drawing on the findings of the studies examined, we argue that the relationship between the Indigenous movement of the Brazilian Amazon and communication in the twenty-first century is characterized by a dynamic process of contact, technological appropriation, and cultural resignification. After all, global tools conceived in contexts far removed from Amazonian realities are appropriated, adapted, and reconfigured to become instruments for strengthening local and ancestral struggles.

In this process, the arrow and the algorithm cease to inhabit opposing worlds and become complementary artifacts within a single bow of resistance. Ancestral wisdom –woven from memory, territory, and spirit– comes to “inform” digital strategy, demonstrating that when Indigenous communication traverses global platforms, it does not become diluted; on the contrary, it expands, reasserts its strength, and charts new pathways of (re)existence.

The practices and concepts emerging from these mobilizations –particularly Indigenous ethnomedia– thus transcend immediate concerns. They make valuable contributions to communication and social movement studies more broadly by demonstrating how historically marginalized groups can subvert the power dynamics embedded within media ecosystems, construct their own narratives, and contest hegemony within the symbolic realm.

These innovative –yet traditional– experiences constitute a vital contribution from the Global South to theories for analyzing communication practices and social movements, revealing other ways of creating, narrating, and inhabiting the world. These ways emerge not from the metropolises, but from the riverbanks, the rivers, the communities, and the forests.

Looking to the future, it seems clear that continued innovation in Indigenous ethnocommunication practices –now digital– will undoubtedly be decisive not only for the defense of rights, but also for the physical and symbolic survival of Indigenous peoples and, by extension, of the Amazonian “land-forest” itself. In a world that is increasingly connected and contested through competing narratives, the ability to communicate one’s own truth becomes the final frontier in the struggle for (re)existence.

Ultimately, the experiences analyzed demonstrate that, where ancestrality and technology become intertwined, Indigenous communication reveals its greatest lesson: the word, rooted in territory and launched into the world, can cross distances, break silences, and redraw futures. Digital networks, when considered alongside Indigenous peoples’ fishing nets and “hammock-nets”, reveal how Amazonian communities transform technologies –whether ancient or global– into extensions of their cosmologies.

While the fishing net has long captured what flows through the rivers, and the hammock-net supports bodies, affects, and acts of listening, social networks capture allies, narratives, and solidarities, creating suspended spaces in which Indigenous presences are sustained and resist. Together, they form a symbolic tripod that demonstrates how Indigenous life has always known how to bind worlds together and connect forms of existence, weaving –thread by thread– the continuity of life itself amid the struggles of the twenty-first century.

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