

# The creative power of net-activism of native peoples in Brazil<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Studies show that the dissemination of discriminatory views and stereotypes by commercial media do not go towards defending the rights of native peoples in Brazil. However, there are few studies on how native peoples use technologies to communicate and deal with such discrimination. This article looks to fill this gap by presenting the results of a study on the subject, aimed at producing scientific knowledge about the indigenous network known as *Mídia Índia* and their presence on Instagram. We achieved this by conducting a narrative analysis of 31 posts from 2019 in response to stereotypes and hegemonic degrading views. The results suggest that this network differs itself by holding

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constructive dialogues about stereotypes and questioning them in order to generate serious thought and deconstruct the stereotypes.

**Keywords:** Native people. Indigenous people. Net-activism. Narrative. *Mídia Índia*.

## Introduction

The symbolic representations of native Brazilian peoples built by commercial journalism are increasingly becoming the object of study in the country. Using methodologies such as framing and discourse analysis, studies show how perceptions and stereotypes of prejudice and discrimination are disseminated and how these elements do not promote policies that secure rights.

There are even fewer studies on how indigenous peoples use technologies to communicate and deal with the discriminatory points of view about their struggles and demands in a democratic society. Many indigenous ethnicities organize social movements and activism with the aim of being included in the public debate, they have invested in creating, reactivating and circulating narratives across social networks.

This article is an effort to bridge this gap by presenting the results of a study on this very subject, dedicated to producing scientific knowledge about the presence of *Mídia Índia* on Instagram. *Mídia Índia* is a collective of indigenous people who differentiate themselves by conducting creative dialogues around the types of stereotypes circulating about them (including commercial journalism) and question them in order to generate serious thoughts and ultimately deconstruct these stereotypes.

The first section of this article describes the fundamental theories. The second section presents the research methodology and the third section presents the results and interpretation. The final considerations summarize the contributions of this study to the advancement of knowledge about digital communication of native peoples in Brazil.

## Fundamental Theories

The methodologies (BRAGA, 2011) used in the studies on the communication of native peoples benefit directly or indirectly from the concept of framing, which itself can be described as a selection of aspects from a given social, political and economic reality that determine a particular form of appropriating meaning, recognized as a narrative imbued with interpretations. The frames can either amplify or reduce the importance of ideas or views on specific subjects, helping people to think in certain ways about certain themes (ENTMAN, 2007).

The interpretations in the frameworks can form opinions as they tend to constrain the involvement of individuals with certain contents and situations, in addition to having an influence on everyday interactions (MENDONÇA; SIMÕES, 2012). Frameworks include and

exclude absent elements (identified through comparative surveys) which communicate as much or more than the present elements by revealing what is deemed unimportant (PORTO, 2004).

Articles from specialized journals identify the framing and representations in news coverage of the political demands of indigenous groups in Brazil. Studies suggest that stereotypes and pejorative points of view are most prominent. Silva and Raposo (2021) analyzed the *Correio do Estado* newspaper, the largest print media in Mato Grosso do Sul, which reported on 420 of the 947 homicides of indigenous people in Brazil between 1985 and 2014. Real violence seems to go along with symbolic violence. “These frameworks seek to legitimize arguments using stereotypes and prejudices, historically constructed and ideologically rooted in an identity discourse filled with moral judgments about the real Mato Grosso do Sul people” (SILVA; RAPOSO, 2021, p. 271), of which the indigenous were not included.

Silva, Meneses and Demarchi (2020) analyzed public communication from the National Indigenous Foundation (Funai), the Mato Grosso do Sul state government, and the Brazil Agency, then compared it to regional and national commercial media circulating between 2013 and 2017, seeking their frameworks on the issue of solid waste disposal on indigenous lands. The viewpoints of the indigenous people rarely appeared in the texts under study, which suggests their demands were undervalued and less protaganistic.

Mendes (2019, p. 404) studied the representations produced by journalism from Portal G1, in the state of Acre, and found that indigenous people are often presented as people who “live in poverty, do not have jobs, have no house to live in”, and are victims of prejudice because they are seen as being incapable.

Quintana and Santos (2019) analyzed newspapers from Campo Grande-MS about the indigenous and struggle to maintain the rights to their lands in that state. The results of their study showed a prominence of conflicts, hostility, and alleged illegal occupation of land by indigenous peoples, which would supposedly harm agribusiness.

Bezerra (2018) verified the symbolic representation of indigenous people in both Bahia media and national media and indicated that their coverage tends to naturalize the violation of rights and spread the idea that indigenous people are illegally occupying the land.

These views are reproduced on social networks. Bonin, Kirchof and Ripoll (2018) studied posts from Twitter users commenting on the *Acampamento Terra Livre* (Free Land Camp), an annual mobilization of the Indigenous Peoples of Brazil held at the *Esplanada dos Ministérios*, in Brasília, 2017. Many of these Twitter users accused the movement of invading public space and proceeded to ridicule its authenticity, claiming it was corrupted by their use of consumer goods, such as modern clothes and shoes, mobile phones, cameras and automobiles.

Whenever indigenous movements exploit technology to present their demands, they will encounter and need to deal with such stereotypes and pejorative views, either planned or not. The construction and placement of frameworks by social movements are examined in the specialized literature. Snow *et al.* (1986) observed the dynamics of appropriation of meaning

underlying the creation, recycling and projection of frames by social movements. The frames can create mechanisms and stimulus for individual and collective actions by participants or potential activists. Furthermore, they tend to be aligned with specific processes, such as extending symbolic elements to attract new members, creating bridges to help align distinct demands that were formerly disconnected, expanding certain viewpoints in order to encompass and adopt other social movements, and transforming frames when necessary to maintain the support of current members.

Where do all these reductionist views come from, once the social movements, particularly those linked to indigenous peoples, need to fight against? Through the eyes of colonizers, native peoples, their cultures and their social organizations are often labeled as different and disregarded as *others* (CALDERONI; URQUIZA, 2015), which tends to facilitate the dissemination of stereotypes, the spectacularization and silencing of indigenous voices by commercial media in Brazil. The difference, although often perceived as unstable and polarized, and ultimately dangerous, is essential as it is a signifier and expands the cultural base (HALL, 2016). The forced and artificial delimitation of difference is part of the basis used to separate that, which does not allegedly belong or fit in the supposed normality.

Identities are built and reconstructed in this flow of confrontation between sides who claim they have the right to define themselves. In this context, the net-activism of indigenous peoples can contribute toward developing political and intercultural dialogue, in addition to mobilizing, resisting, defending and recognizing rights (DI FELICE; PEREIRA, 2021; FRANCO; DI FELICE; PEREIRA, 2020).

Net-activism confronts media culture, which creates and spreads symbols and myths and influences views and values about class, race and ethnicity, favoring the imposition of authority through symbolic violence. The media culture embodied by social and political discourses follows dominant and oppressive ideologies, and crystallizes social hierarchies that encourage identity formations (KELLNER, 2001).

From an ethnocentric and colonial perspective, native peoples tend to be portrayed as being slow and instigators of social disturbances and savagery. These representations can be naturalized over time into a form of cultural violence (BRAGA; CAMPOS, 2013; CABRAL; SALHANI, 2017).

The culture of media considers the non-recognition and invisibility of indigenous people as a qualified social actor (RIBEIRO, 2019). This could start with media education, which would allow marginalized actors to face and resist media manipulation and demand fair treatment, in addition to being an active participant in the struggle for redefining their lands (KELLNER, 2001).

If content production on the internet were more active and allowed excluded groups to also be active politically, cyberspace would be a political mechanism for social conflict and a means for invisible groups to mobilize and seek social justice (PERUZZO, 2009; TAVARES, 2012a; 2012b).

Social networks have the power to be mediums for online engagement and a place where silenced voices can be heard, including those of Brazilian indigenous movements. The resistance, claiming rights and cultural specificities of native peoples could be more visible and generate public awareness and support for their causes. Digital content is used to build narratives and identities, where native peoples can hold discussions and debate about who they are and what places they occupy in society (DI FELICE; PEREIRA, 2021).

By structuring political groups and performing acts of activism against the injustices and systemic exclusions, social movements linked to indigenous peoples can be considered counter public in the broader landscape of digital democracy, able to generate critical-reflective spaces by disseminating counter-discourse (DAHLBERG, 2011).

The growing level of organization for resources and actors determines the “search for new forms of popular politics at a time of distrust in political institutions” (COULDRY; VAN DIJCK, 2015, p. 3). In order to further expand their representation, digital activists use social media as a space of conflict and power where hegemonies can be challenged by alternative actors (FUCHS, 2015). Opposition is exercised through resistance and efforts to change power relations and question issues that are not always transparent in governmental spheres (CASTELLS, 2013).

Obviously, the optimism that comes from the power of technology must be relativized, including for native peoples and their activism. It is worth reiterating the usual warning in the specialized literature, whether in terms of Fuchs’ internetcentrism (2015) – the power of the network needs to be continually questioned, once the digital participation does not generate enough social change – or in Couldry and Van Dijck (2015), where the media not only projects representations of social reality but also has political and economic interests, which, in turn, creates infrastructures for handling interaction on social networking platforms, particularly monetization strategies. Fuchs (2015) also highlights that social networking platforms support certain power structures in contemporary society. These platforms are vehicles of exploitation and oppression as they give visibility to the elites while the other groups fight unequally, competing for resources that can at least give them some authority.

Early studies tracked the results of these kinds of mobilizations. Pereira (2018) refers to a positive example of indigenous mobilization in Brazilian digital media with the Guarani Kaiowá people, in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, who, after being threatened with a repossession order to expel them from their traditional lands, published a letter of complaint on the internet. This letter got national attention and led to protests that ultimately helped suspend the repossession order.

This example should be reproduced, but it depends on solving problems such as “vulnerability and social marginality, which leads to a situation of digital exclusion” (PINTO, 2018, p. 111) in indigenous communities. Structural inequalities and a lack of public policies on technological literacy and digital access also act as obstacles to native peoples and their digital participation.

Despite being rarely studied regarding the demands of native peoples, these obstacles have been analyzed by specialized literature in Brazil on the rapid growth of digital activism in the country in various areas of public policy. Fonseca *et al.* (2019) sought to understand how public discussions and symbolic exchanges occur on the network, as well as possible repercussions and political implications. Their perspective is similar to previous studies which investigated the configurations and uses of social media for extending participation in public debate, given that “‘public opinion’, as a diffuse political actor in shaping public agendas. is also influenced by digital activism” (DESLANDES, 2018, p. 3135).

In Brazil, digital activism has been studied with an emphasis on its ability to generate informal conversations and deliberations. Altheman, Marques and Martino (2017) highlighted the political potential in the informality of online conversations, which promotes deliberative processes under a habermasian ethics of discourse and allows for actions in the digital environment to play out in real life mobilization. Maia and Rezende (2015) pointed to a variety of subjects, communicative forms, and platforms that can result in deliberative processes that allow conflicts and opinions to extend beyond the confines of an electronic device.

It is important to investigate how new meanings can come about through the creative exploration of symbols and narratives in order to question the existing meanings continually circulated by commercial media. Fonseca *et al.* (2019, p. 20) stated that “the internet has been used as a space for deconstructing and redefining identities”. In the next section, we shall discuss the methodology used in our study to describe the *Mídia Índia* collective and its actions on Instagram, which we believe to be an example of creative dialogue with hegemonic visions.

## Methodology

The type of methodology we used for this paper was the narrative analysis (BARTHES *et al.*, 1973; MOTTA, 2013; HALL, 2016). The corpus consisted of 31 posts published on the *Mídia Índia* Instagram page in 2019 ([www.instagram.com/midiaindiaoficial](http://www.instagram.com/midiaindiaoficial)). *Mídia Índia* is a collective of indigenous peoples from different communities and regions in Brazil that, according to their website, is “carried out by indigenous young people who are trying to break the hegemonic and non-participatory forms of communication” (MÍDIA ÍNDIA, 2021). We chose the year 2019 because it was the first year after Jair Bolsonaro was elected to the Presidency of the Republic, a period characterized by changes made to how public policies were managed for a number of social sectors, including indigenous people. We only included posts in our corpus that we considered clearly dialogue with stereotypes and hegemonic pejorative views. This means that we excluded posts that focused on publicizing events and criticizing specific aspects of the federal government, such as projects already in progress, land demarcation actions, management of reserves, etc.



The theories that use narrative analysis consider Instagram posts as vectors of giving new meaning, which underlie dialogues with the historical, social and cultural contexts. The sender, although not having absolute control of the reinterpretation of meaning, can suggest certain appropriations of meanings in order to promote particular viewpoints. Combining visual and textual elements from Instagram posts was seen as a unique way to construct meaning and question predominant views about indigenous people and their political and identity demands.

Silva (2014) points out the particular features of Instagram, such as continuous dialogue between users which can influence the interpretation of the meanings and form bonds of friendship. Moreover, Instagram posts contain words together with images, which can give new meaning to the context.

We adopted the methodological approach proposed by Motta (2013) in his reading of the specialized literature (BARTHES *et al.*, 1973; HALL, 2016). It is composed of three stages which attempt to identify, describe and understand the expression plane (language or speech), the story plane (content), and the metanarrative plane (background theme).

The expression plane corresponds to the surface of the object. It is the way in which the sender formulates the message using language strategies (images or figures of speech). Methodologically speaking, identifying the expression plane requires a description of what is visibly represented.

The story plane contains meanings that inhabit socially and historically constructed imaginaries and are evoked by the elements of the expression plane. Analyzing the story plane requires characterizing the possible interpretations mobilized by its elements.

The metanarrative plane corresponds to the broader scenario of interpretations raised by the story plane. In order to analyze this plane, it is necessary to discern aspects that go beyond the limits of the object and relate to the mobilized contexts behind the meanings that are looking to be established.

Due to the limitations of this article we shall present the three planes of only 12 posts that we believe best represent the corpus.

## Results and Discussion

In November of 2022, *Mídia Índia*'s Instagram profile had 185,000 followers and 9,073 posts, and follows 1,330 profiles. A post from January 14, 2019, which received 205 likes, depicts a cartoon of three women holding hands and standing around a Brazilian flag. These three women represent indigenous people, black people, and members of the Landless Workers' Movement (MST). They are ready to confront President Jair Bolsonaro, who is depicted wearing a cowboy hat and holding a chainsaw (Figure 1).

**Figure 1** – Image taken from the Mídia Índia Instagram profile, published on 01/14/2019<sup>2</sup>



Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BsnlAcLH32N>.

The image deals with the predominant view that indigenous people are alone when it comes to defending their causes, disconnected from other social demands, particularly from other discriminated segments such as women, black women, and landless workers. The segments represented in this image are taking a united front against Bolsonaro, who symbolizes the agribusiness industrial chains and their interest in deforestation.

Female and indigenous identities are also represented in a post from April 11, 2019, which received 561 likes. This post shows three indigenous women holding arms. Each woman is depicted as having two identities, or social roles (Figure 2).

<sup>2</sup> Text: Hands United! Comments: Resist to Exist.



Figure 2 – Image taken from Mídia Índia Instagram profile, published on 04/11/2019<sup>3</sup>



Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BwIfj-xH3ri>.

Different accessories, skin, hair and clothes suggest ethnic and cultural plurality and a diversity of social places, in contrast to the hegemonic perception that there are no significant cultural differences between indigenous peoples. The image contains urban and traditional elements, and the women are shown embracing their differences by joining arms at the elbow, which is a sign of harmony, respect and mutual support for these females as they face a common threat. The text accompanying the image reinforces this interpretation: “Where is our identity? (...) In resisting colonization”.

The role of indigenous women also appears in a post from the same day (04/11/2019), which received 519 likes and features a picture of a woman with a serious expression on her face. She is wearing a headdress and is raising the palm of her hand, which has the following sentence written on it: “Out of our way, we’re using body paint and headdresses”. The text that accompanies the post adds to the hand message: “Take your racism and conservatism out of here, we are using our body paint, our headdresses, our clothes and our identity” (Figure 3).

<sup>3</sup> Comments: We are genuine indigenous people because our resistance is not a lie. Where is our identity? Our culture defines what being indigenous is, but our identity lies also in resisting the colonization that tried to destroy part of our being, and when they couldn't end “our life” they tried to end our “way of life” because the way of life is what identifies us.

**Figure 3** – Image taken from Mídia Índia Instagram profile, published on 04/11/2019<sup>4</sup>



Source: [https://www.instagram.com/p/BwHr4I9H\\_mD](https://www.instagram.com/p/BwHr4I9H_mD).

The image shows the commitment indigenous women have to affirming identities and cultures by resisting and confronting stigmas of a racist nature that end up delegitimizing their social insertion and conflicts. Any practice or norm that colonizers feel contrasts their own is punishable by death and ultimately the elimination of values and beliefs.

The seriousness of the post in Figure 3 is in contrast with the previous one, from April 10, 2019, which seems to reject the ideas that indigenous people are looked at with wonder and strangeness in contemporary society. Yet another illustration shows an indigenous woman raising her eyebrows in an expression of dissatisfaction when posed the question “Are you

<sup>4</sup> Text: Move aside, we use body paint and headdresses. Comments: Wearing fewer clothes and covering our bodies in paint has never killed anyone, but your racism and ultraconservatism has already killed many of our ancestors, killed our bodies, and killed our identity when you imposed another culture and another faith on us, demonizing our way of thinking about religion. Take your racism and conservatism out of here, we are using our body paint, our headdresses, our clothes and our identity.

really indigenous?” She responds in an ironic tone: “No, I’m a mirage, and you, are you really white?” (Figure 4).

**Figure 4** – Image taken from Mídia Índia Instagram profile, published on 04/10/2019<sup>5</sup>



Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BwFklA3AaWh>.

Her facial expression and body posture show her dissatisfaction with structural racism. This post received 602 likes. The question is not posed to the white population as they are not forced to live with restrictions and forced to legitimize their belonging to society. This image is drawing attention to the contrast.

Another dialogue affirming identity was also featured in a post from March 19, 2019, which shows an image of indigenous men and women standing in rows wearing different

<sup>5</sup> Text: Are you really indigenous? No, I’m a mirage, and you, are you really white? Comments: That’s how it is most of the time! That’s true. I can’t take anymore. I’m mulato.



traditional clothes. The phrase written underneath reads “There are many Indians in Brazil” (Figure 5).

**Figure 5** – Image taken from Mídia Índia Instagram profile, published on 03/19/2019<sup>6</sup>



Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BvMtS1uAWyw>.

The image, which received 886 likes, is proud of the fact that there are various indigenous peoples who have their own traditions and live in harmony, as seen in the accompanying text “Our cultural diversity!” The statement “there are many Indians in Brazil” appears to be a response to the view that the indigenous population is indistinguishable and unstructured and has little to contribute to cultural diversity in the country. The colors and graphics used in the images suggest that this contribution exists and is easily observable if one looks at customs and practices.

Gender diversity is also an issue that appears on the *Mídia Índia* Instagram profile. The rights of the LGBTQIA+ population can be seen in a post from June 24, 2019, which received 847 likes. This post features a photograph of two women kissing in public, while a number of

<sup>6</sup> Text: There are many Indians in Brazil. Comments: Our cultural diversity!

people in the background are protesting down the street. The earrings they are wearing, the face paint and their hair styles suggest they are indigenous. One of the women is wearing a rainbow-colored flag which represents the gender group to which they belong (Figure 6).

**Figure 6** – Image taken from Mídia Índia Instagram profile, published on 06/24/2019<sup>7</sup>



Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BzE6Nsnnpv>

The text accompanying the post historically contextualizes the problem in indigenous communities: “the first victim of homophobia in Brazil was an INDIGENOUS person, Tibira, murdered in 1614”. The struggle for the rights of one group and another is inseparable, and in the practice of activism it is unified.

The issue of historical treatment was also found in a post from December 24, 2019, which received 1,394 likes and features an image of an indigenous person holding out the

<sup>7</sup> Comments: The first victim of homophobia in Brazil was an INDIGENOUS PERSON, in 1614 Tibira was murdered. Today, in 2019, we are Tibira, we are indigenous and we are LGBTQ; colonization can no longer kill us. We are not a mistake, we are not immoral, we are sons, daughters and children of nature, and she does not make mistakes. May we continue to live and learn that love and respect is what we need.

LGBTQIA+ flag. What really stands out in this image is his expression of satisfaction and pride while holding the flag (Figure 7).

**Figure 7** – Image taken from Mídia Índia Instagram profile, published on 12/24/2019<sup>8</sup>



Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/B6d9qu8HKuF>.

The meaning is clear: if indigenous homosexuals can be doubly discriminated against then activism requires a confrontation. The recovery of historical information underlies the struggle on both fronts.

The symbolic struggle for identity affirmation also occurs when the *Mídia Índia* Instagram profile seeks to dialogue with two often discriminatory views. The first is that the indigenous people do not have the right to higher education or a higher place in society and the

<sup>8</sup> Comments: “Did you know that the first case of homophobia in Brazil was against an indigenous person? In 1614, the French missionary Yves d’Évreux (1577 - 1632), of the Capuchin Order, issued the arrest, torture and execution of Tibira, from the Tupinambá tribe, under the pretense of ‘purifying the land of the abominable sin of sodomy’”, says Andre Bernardo. Tibira fled, but was captured by the French, with the help of some Indians. “He was tied at the waist to the mouth of a cannon, where they threw iron at his feet”, his body was torn apart.



second view is that they should not be allowed to use everyday technology in contemporary society, such as *smartphones* and *laptops*.

A post from May 11, 2019 received 2,481 likes and shows an image of an indigenous person holding a *smartphone*. The speech bubble on the left expresses his criticism: “My cell phone doesn’t make me any less indigenous!” while the speech bubble on the right contains the ironic statement “Your fake headdress doesn’t make you indigenous!” (Figure 8).

**Figure 8** – Image taken from Mídia Índia Instagram profile, published on 05/11/2019<sup>9</sup>



Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BxU-VEOHjhq>.

When referring to the fact that imitations of typical props can be used by anyone who intend to temporarily assimilate traits of a different identity without actually changing their

<sup>9</sup> Text: My cell phone doesn’t make me any less indigenous! Your fake headdress doesn’t make you indigenous!

Comments: Wow, there are so many people who need to understand this... If I could, I would put this drawing up on a giant billboard.

origin, the message in the image applies the same logic to justify why the use of the technology does not change the original identity of the indigenous.

A similar reasoning can be seen in a post from November 26, 2019, which received 2,101 likes, and shows an image of two indigenous people in a forest, one of them holding an Apple laptop while both of them are smiling, denoting a possible beneficial use of technology in their daily lives. The text accompanying the post reads: “Connected with the forest” (Figure 9).

**Figure 9** – Image taken from Mídia Índia Instagram profile, published on 11/26/2019<sup>10</sup>



Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/B5Vd9b7H23W>.

The post, which received 2,101 likes, criticizes the hegemonic view that indigenous people should remain on the fringes of civilization in order to maintain their identity, and are simply incapable of learning or using technology, even if they had access to it. The image however shows that not only are indigenous people capable of using technology, they also know how to choose the most expensive equipment, as evidenced by the Apple *laptop* which he is holding. The text that reads “connected with the forest” is about a connection with nature, which can also be seen as a stigma because it presumes isolation from society and as a connection with the world through technology, which is also a resource for exploring nature.

Empowerment through technology is forcefully represented in a post from May 1, 2019, which received 439 likes, and shows an image of an indigenous person holding up a *smartphone* to take a photograph. The image reads: “It’s time to demarcate the canvas! Communicate to

<sup>10</sup> Comments: Connected with the forest.

fight!”. The text is saying that technology is used “to monitor our territory, give visibility to our struggle, and tell our story the way it should really be told” (Figure 10).

**Figure 10** – Image taken from Mídia Índia Instagram profile, published on 05/01/2019<sup>11</sup>



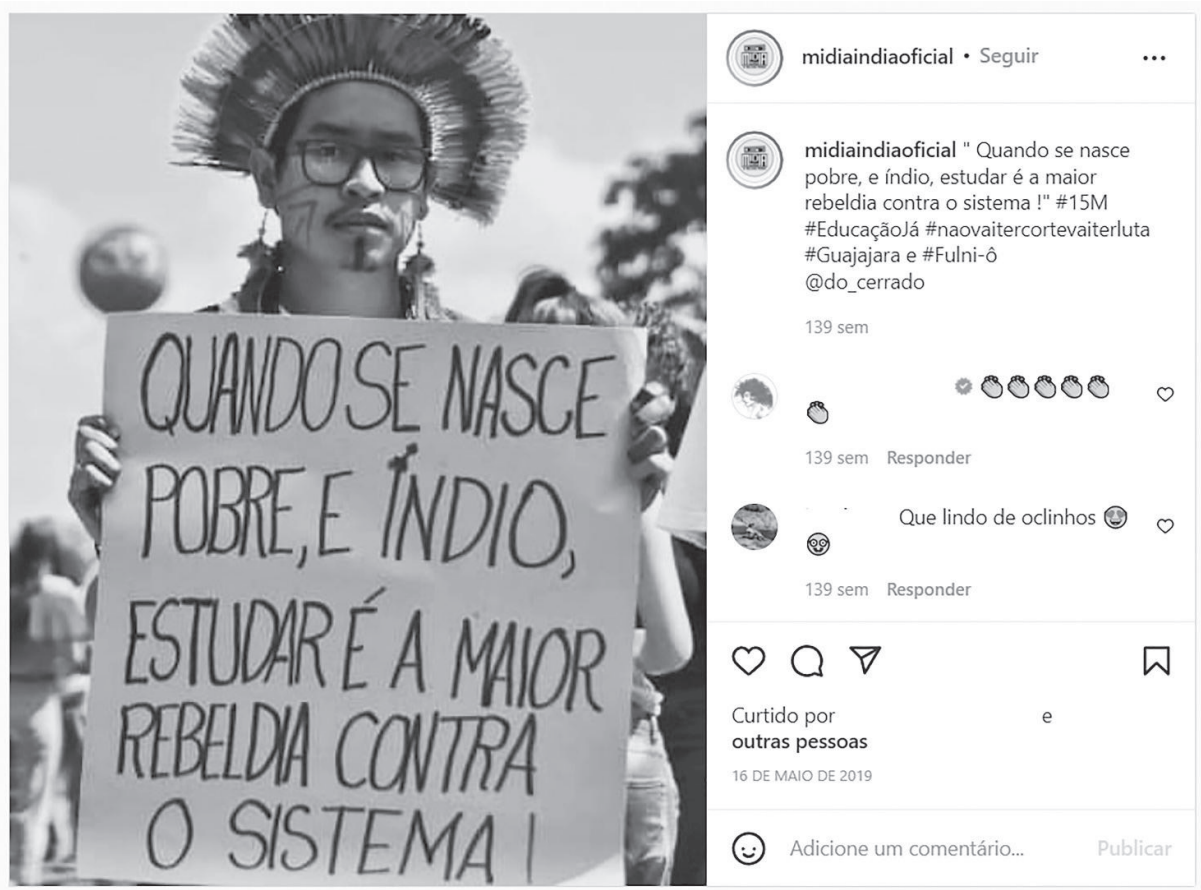
Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bw7sCbynobK>.

The play on words between demarcating the lands and “demarcating the canvases” undermines the idea that indigenous people should only be concerned with politics by suggesting that they should also be aware of how politics is symbolically represented, that is, they know that they need to “communicate to fight” and so learn technology to achieve this goal.

Lastly, the empowerment of indigenous people is the theme of the two remaining posts that defend their right to pursue an education, particularly at the higher level. The post from May 16, 2019 shows the image of an indigenous person (who appears to be of age to attend university) holding a sign that reads: “When you are born poor, and an Indian, studying is the best form of rebellion against the system”. The young man is wearing glasses and a serious expression on his face (Figure 11). This post received 2,414 likes.

<sup>11</sup> Text: It’s time to demarcate the canvas! Communicate to fight! Comments: New technologies allow us to monitor our territory, give visibility to our struggle, telling our story as it really should be told.

**Figure 11** – Image taken from Mídia Índia Instagram profile, published on 05/16/2019<sup>12</sup>



Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BxhhSJenyY6>.

The sign he is holding suggests activism. The fight is underway, and the indigenous people must confront the stereotype that both their ethnicity and their social class prevent them from studying and keep them ignorant about their rights. Education is, above all, a way of transforming the status quo, especially for them.

A post from May 21, 2019 that received 555 likes shows the image of a young indigenous woman holding a book in her hand. The cover of the book reads: “On rights”. There is a building in the background with a sign on it that says: “University” (Figure 12).

<sup>12</sup> Text: When you are born poor, and an Indian, studying is the best form of rebellion against the system.  
Comments: When you are born poor, and an Indian, studying is the best form of rebellion against the system.



Figure 12 – Image taken from Mídia Índia Instagram profile, published on 05/21/2019<sup>13</sup>



Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BxvYReHH2nk>.

This post suggests that indigenous peoples have a right to attend university without having to compromise their identity: the young woman is wearing jeans and a T-shirt, but she is also wearing face paint. The text next to the image gives information about a seminar on access and residence policies in Higher Education. The university welcomes them.

Stereotypes and pejorative views predominate in news reports on issues related to the rights of indigenous peoples in Brazil, as evidenced by studies of framing and symbolic representation (SILVA; RAPOSO, 2021; SILVA; MENESES; DEMARCHI, 2020; MENDES,

13 Text: University. Law. Comments: Santa Inês hosts seminar on indigenous education. Believing in the importance of education as a tool for transformation, empowerment and plurality in society, the Institute of Society, Population and Nature (ISPN) and the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Maranhao (IFMA - Campus Santa Inês) announces the “Seminar on Challenges and Perspectives of Access and Permanence of the Guajajara to University and Technical Education”, in concert with the third Indigenous Week, between the 22nd and 24th of this month. The seminar will bring together about 100 people, including youths and indigenous leaders, teachers, researchers.

2019; QUINTANA; SANTOS, 2019; BEZERRA, 2018), and the posts we analyzed suggest that indigenous digital activism has tried to confront them in creative ways.

The posts we examined show specific appropriations of meaning, which seem to address the discriminatory views that affect the struggle for rights. The dynamics of new meanings can be seen in three forms, as identified in specialized literature (SNOW *et al.*, 1986): the creation of bridges between different and disconnected demands and boundaries; the broadening of certain points of view in the search for embracing other social movements; and frame transformation.

In the analyzed corpus, bridges were built to connect movements that defend indigenous peoples, black people, women and LGBTQIA+ communities. The indigenous struggle was presented as being similar to struggles of other movements and frames of discrimination were contested and detailed, seeking to encourage a viewpoint that could change previous understandings of prejudice and discrimination. While these dynamics are identified in literature on digital activism (DI FELICE; PEREIRA, 2021; FRANCO; DI FELICE; PEREIRA, 2020), this study suggests that *Mídia Índia* has been successful in using them, reactivating and recycling current perspectives, questioning them in order to build innovative arrangements with the ability to strengthen the symbolic struggle (COULDRY; VAN DIJCK, 2015; FUCHS, 2015).

There are many reductionist perspectives that indigenous peoples need to fight. Their differences are often used as a reason for their exclusion; they are victims of the spread of stereotypes, spectacularization and silencing (HALL, 2016), which are rife in both journalistic frameworks (ENTMAN, 2007) and media culture (KELLNER, 2001).

By seeking to subvert such perspectives and expose their inconsistencies, the *Mídia Índia* posts on Instagram can bring about reflections and considerations that over time can help change public policies to uphold their rights and transform the symbolic perceptions of this reality (BOURDIEU, 1989).

## Final considerations

Being constructed and reconstructed by symbolic confrontation, net-activism gives the indigenous peoples the ability to establish a political and intercultural dialogue with various audiences, and organize movements in the search for recognizing the public policies that affect them.

In this article, we used a narrative analysis for a corpus of posts from the *Mídia Índia* Instagram page in 2019 that clearly communicate hegemonic stereotypes and pejorative views. This corpus was considered a vector of new meaning in a historical, social and cultural context, becoming an outlet for questioning predominant views on indigenous people and their demands. What stands out here is the creativity of the collective's communication, which mainly lies in the ability to generate current meanings, put them in check, shed light on their inconsistencies by incurring prejudice and suggest perspectives consistent with the affirmation of human rights. They are messages that make use of a social network which allows individuals to create clever



associations between image and word, thus encouraging reflection and possible re-examination of beliefs and values.

The study results suggest that the collective communicates in order to confront the ethnocentric and colonial perspectives that represent them as instigators of violence and disturbance and portray them as uneducated. Instagram was used as a space for online engagement and a place where silenced voices could be heard. The content on this social network projects the identities as being in opposition and resistance, using activism to fight injustices and exclusions.

The limits of the research design prevented us from expanding on the period of analysis and conducting netnographies with content producers and users. These limitations can be overcome through further research to broaden the scientific knowledge about net-activism for native peoples in Brazil.

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