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## **IMAGES, MEMORIES AND MEDIATORS: EXCHANGED VISIONS FROM NORTH TO SOUTH DOSSIER INTERSECTING GAZES**

### **ABSTRACT**

The access and domain of digital audio-visual technologies have enlarged the Guaranis' conceptions on the capture of their personal images, instituting the image of the indigenous movie maker, who gains an active role in the creation of their history's future. The present text tackles some senses indicated by the Guaranis concerning reproduction, utility and circulation of images and information throughout the communities and cities, concerning their own considerations on their role as mediators and their relation with the movie making process and equipment. Comments from the Guaranis and Innu movie-makers who participated in the partnership project and audio-visual exchange between the institutions La Boite Rouge vif (BRV), Centro de Trabalho Indigenista (CTI) and Laboratorio de Imagem e Som em Antropologia from the University of Sao Paulo (LISA/USP) were also included.

#### **keywords**

Image; capture; mediation;  
propagation; Guarani – Innu.

## INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of my work and research with the Guarani, I have noticed the reactions that photography, or better, the pictures produced in the indigenous and how they circulated among houses and relatives. The arrival of audio-visual technologies, especially of digital means, determined new forms of communication that were adopted by the indigenous, enlarging the transmission of knowledge and news through communities and distant places, including the speeches and narratives with the fullest eloquence of their oral expression. The daily use of image caption and reproduction, from paper to digital media, outfits itself in new meanings and brings about reflections on the future of their memory<sup>1</sup>.

The present text contemplates the relationship of the indigenous with audio-visual records and is constituted by the reflections and recollections derived from my professional experience at the Centro de Trabalho Indigenista, by means of which I had the opportunity of following, in different occasions, the photographic and movie records in Guarani villages in South and Southeast of Brazil. I intermixed in the collection of the notes some comments of the indigenous who participated in the project 'Exchanged visions: Audio-visual exchange between the Guarani and Innu nations', carried out through a partnership between La Boite Rouge vif (BRv), from Québec, Canada, Centro de Trabalho Indigenista (CTI), Laboratório de Imagem e Som em Antropologia da Universidade de São Paulo (LISA/USP), from Brasil, guarani artists (Rio Grande do Sul)

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<sup>1</sup> People of artistic tradition whose replication of forms are governed by their own canons, the Guarani seem to ascribe to the replication technologies the purpose of directly reinventing the "original": the person, his actions and his environment. Several aspects on the relationship of the indigenous with photography and the audiovisual remind me of the famous essay by Walter Benjamin "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", released in 1936 and that, albeit conceived in another era of technologies of reproduction, remains current. Although founding the notions of authenticity, aura, originality etc under the parameters stemming from the western artistic tradition, particularly the pictorial one, the author's approach on the technical reproduction, especially the photography, "kernel of cinema", calls for new readings and reverberates in fascination and in the possibilities that it creates within the indigenous, the copy/imitation and exhibition of its image. among so many others, I quote the following excerpt from Benjamin's essay that I believe to be pertinent: "(...) In the case of photography, it is possible to highlight aspects from the original that escape from the eye and are just apprehensible by objective lens that floats freely to obtain several angles of vision; (...) Simultaneously, the technic may lead to the reproduction of situations, where the original itself will never be found". (highlights by me).

and Innu artists (Quebec, Canada), from 2014 to 2016<sup>2</sup>. It is worth noticing that such project was the cause of the present article.

The experience I have with cinema is practically restricted to my condition of a cinema fan, keeping me away from the academic debate concerning the relationship between cinema and anthropology – which renews and recycles itself in the same proportion it deepens the indigenous audio-visual productions. As a matter of fact, more and more the indigenous with access to digital technology move themselves to behind the cameras, connecting to the role of observed the role of observer.

I would like to emphasize that many other questions with large cosmological resonance, which appear in some passages, concerning the production, reproduction and contemplation of images – more than its creation – that provide meaning and value to the art of ‘imitation’, will not be discussed within the limits of the present article.

## **WHEN THIS CONVERSATION DOES START – SOME MEMORIES**

At the end of the 1970's and 1980's, in communities in São Paulo, the photographic film already intrigued the Guarani for its capacity of keeping and hiding their souls and bodies in a rolled-up fashion. In the occasion of enlarged pictures being presented, new surprises appeared when the Guarani faced themselves standing motionless on the day of the photo session; pictures were able to stop time, and for that, they came to be memory keepers, versatile witnesses on which they could add movements and freely conceive versions of movements and captioned happenings, in step with memories, volatile, fluid and renewable. And, upon showing them, they shared events and added other characters and passages.

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<sup>2</sup> Due to the format of the project and the material conditions that did not make possible the joint participation of the team in all the phases, the perceptions on the work processes have been very diversified. In that sense, the comments presented herein come from a very partial vision derived from my very limited participation in the filming process and from the observations from the indigenous artists, mainly the ones from Brazil, which have been gathered during the joint activities. The project found an end in the “Trans-disciplinary Seminar”: anthropology, art and cinema, between the 17th and the 19th of October 2016 in the University of São Paulo, upon the participation of indigenous cinema makers, researchers, professors and the team of “Crossed Visions” (*Regards Croisés*). At that time, the videos produced in Innu and Guarani territories have been shown and, in an ample debate, indigenous cinema makers from different nations have exhibited and commented about their movies.

**figure 1**

For this ordered photo, the father, Jose Fernandes, then chief of the Barragem community, in Sao Paulo, dressed up, and the son, posing as if they were to leave or get home from a trip, in 1980. Photo: Inês Ladeira



Even if photography needed other apparatus – revealing and enlarging labs – to come up with materialities and immaterialities hidden in film boxes, photographic and analogic video cameras assigned enchantment powers to those who operated them. It was not without reason that a *xamoi*<sup>3</sup> in a festive celebration, at the Palmeirinha community in 1980, in the state of Paraná, did not allow a young leader, revolted by the unauthorised recordation, to destroy the film nor the photographer's camera, which contained the footage taken. After the incident, he revealed that without disenchanting himself from the film – avoiding his own revelation – his 'soul' would be endangered.

Although the photographic camera had already been used since 1970 in some Guarani villages, its use would only become more socially widened in the following decades. The records were made, at first, almost exclusively by some men, in the occasion of journeys to visit relatives that lived in distant communities, so that they could show such records to those who had stayed behind. Despite the variety of cameras at affordable prices in the market — dispensable and non-durable, which are characteristics of things produced by the *jurua* - the non-indigenous — the development of photos, that is, their revelation/enlargement, was expensive and the stores that provided this kind of service were far distant from the communities.

As far as the ephemeral quality or the low durability of the *jurua* things, issue that permeates the elderly speeches in their analysis and prophecies about the terrestrial world<sup>4</sup>, Ariel, a young Guarani movie maker, recently commented — during the evaluation of the 'Intersecting Gazes' project, referred to in the present article — how the elderly conformed themselves

<sup>3</sup> *Tamõi* and *jaryi*, respectively, grandfather, elderly, wise old man and grandmother, elderly, wise old woman, or spiritual guide. The particle *xe* at the beginning – *xeramõi* or *xamõi* and *xejaryi* - indicates the possessive pronoun in the first person of the singular tense, but, in its ordinary daily use, it does not imply exclusivity.

<sup>4</sup> In opposition to the divinity dwelling (Nhanderu Kuéry), *Yvy marã'ey*, where everything gets eternal upon the renovation of the cycles. I herein make a simplified reference to this conception, which variables have been contemplated in the ethnographic literature from Nimuendaju.

with the technological innovations. According to him, the *xamoi* and *xejaryi* know about the interest of the younger ones with 'passing things', non-durable, produced by the non-indigenous, such as electronic devices, but they also know that, in the same way as non-durable things in this world, this feeling of attachment to them is also ephemeral, inconstant. Furthermore, Ariel states that, due to the strong Guarani spirituality, the young ones that have distanced themselves from the village lifestyle, hence approaching the 'white' lifestyle, 'tend to always come back', or to reintegrate themselves, despite their new baggage, to the Guarani systems and lifestyle.

## MIRROR

In Pindoty village, in the state of São Paulo, *xamoi* Luis tells that, back in 1930, 1940, the first images he saw of his face were those reflected in the river waters. At dawn, when he went to wash his face or bathe, he would enjoy looking at himself in those waters, which movements and brightness modified his complexions. He would look himself sideways and front faced, playing with the distorted images in the water movements. He was already married when he first looked at himself on a mirror and could recognise, in the first photograph taken by a photographer in a village square, the place where he sold his artisanal work. The photographer told him he thought he was handsome and said he would like to put a 3x4 photograph of him on his picture gallery to attract customers. Mr Luis said he would not pay for that, that he would only accept it if it were for free. The photographer agreed and then gave him two pictures, for which Mr Luis did not care very much, and which he lost, after putting it in his wallet. Afterwards, he had to take his photo again for a document and once again did not enjoy seeing only his face indented.

In the 1970's and 1980's, because I had a photographic camera and the trust of the community, I was asked to take 'posed' pictures of families and children, so that they could display them, whenever they had an opportunity, to their relatives from distant communities (that was how I realised how extensive the Guarani territory is). I recall how the children cried copiously when they saw a camera pointed at them (nowadays, in those same villages, they pose and play around the camera) and how the elderly covered their faces, disturbed. Definitely, they did not enjoy spontaneous photograph. In this job, I was summoned to photograph them full body, that is, with hands, feet and head, mouth closed and without laughter (in vain I tried to capture spontaneous laughter, because when detected the camera, immediately their mouths were shut down). Without these attributes, the photo had no use. Several times, when preferring the half body pictures, in which their facial expressions and looks were enlightened, I insisted in this approach with cuts and zooming, however, those remained as a memory for me, ethnographer and amateur photographer that was not subjected to the divine sanctions.

**figures 2 and 3**  
Children posing  
for a photo in the  
Pindoty village,  
Vale do Ribeira,  
SP, 2006. Photo:  
Inês Ladeira.



**figure 4**  
Koeju, Rio  
Grande do Sul,  
in the setting  
of 'Exchanged  
Visions,' 2015.  
Photo: Wera  
Alexandre.



This understanding about the corporal image exposure was not exclusive to the São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro's communities, which I visited the most in those days. When encountered with one of the first video records about a well-known spiritual leader's speech, the Guarani of Boa Esperança's community, in Espírito Santo, found themselves worried and scared with their prophet's head moving by itself in black and white colours, from side to side of the screen. Fortunately, this record from the 1980's was kept<sup>5</sup>.

Recently, in Tenonde Porã's village, in São Paulo, a *xamõi* said that, until today, he does not enjoy taking photographs of himself, because they keep their image still, imprisoning it. In what concerns videos, for my

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<sup>5</sup> It has been kept, of course, by the camera man, Andrea Tonacci who, shortly before passing away, had realized the documentary value, and, for the indigenous, also sentimental worth, of his initial video works, and distributed copies of the material in some Guarani communities. I would dare say that, in a figurative sense, such vídeo is nowadays a *cult* among the Guarani, mainly because of its antiquity and the memory of the famous *xejaryi*.

surprise, he affirmed to like it and felt very much at ease, because, according to his reasoning, `my body moves and everybody sees my words and my body in motion, which strolls, walks together for everyone, and all of them see me and listen to me from wherever they are`. Nonetheless, he said to prefer it when he appears full body on the screen, when they do not indent his body and his words, but understands and accepts that the camera has its own dynamic of movement<sup>6</sup>.

## THE APPROPRIATION OF AUDIO VISUAL TECHNIQUES AND THE USE OF IMAGES AMONG THE GUARANI – SOME CONSIDERATIONS

The use of video equipment and movie language appropriation among the indigenous populations are relatively recent and restricted, such for its large amount of different populations<sup>7</sup> that live in varied socio-economic and environmental context, as for the historical colonisation process, which are still ongoing. Thus, in Brazil, the indigenous experiences with audio-visual media are deeply varied.

Amongst the Guarani population, whose traditional occupied territory is extended by a large geographical space<sup>8</sup>, the relations and ways of commu-

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6 During a meeting in the mentioned village, when some demonstrations, speeches, chants and dancing videos were presented, I kept a parallel conversation with this sir, that appears in several of them, because I was interested in his personal evaluation and in his feelings, having noted his words.

7 In accordance with the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística - IBGE's census in 2010 there were 896.917 indigenous in Brazil (324,834 in urban areas and 572.083 in rural areas), which corresponds to around 0,47% of the total population of the country. It has been estimated by the Institute around 305 ethnic groups and 274 languages.

8 Over the territory occupied by the Guarani the boundaries of the national states have been installed - Brazil, Argentina, Paraguai, Uruguai and Bolívia. The fragmentation of this ample territory arisen out of the historical processes of colonization of South America - wars, territorial disputes, jesuit missions, pioneering, community formation, forced integration, reserve confinement etc - has provoked the annihilation of thousands of sites and Guarani clusters, thus impacting the dynamic of mobility of such people. It is possible to mention that it is about the people which territory of historical occupation there has been the larger number of political-administrative divisions corresponding to each of the national states. Nowadays, a total of approximately 1.416 communities or family clusters spread over this large portion of the Continent host around 280 thousand people. In Brazil, between the years of 2012 and 2015, according to the official data and information gathering of the team that elaborated the Continental Guarani Map journal, formed by professionals from indigenist organizations from the countries that permeate the guarani territory, a population of 85.255 people were estimated in 11 states. For the Guarani Mbya the notion of territory is associated to the concept of *Yvyrupa* (*yvy*: earth; *tupa*: bed, seat) that presupposes a cosmologic order of the indivisible Earth in its essence where the dwelling are (*tata'ypy re* = place where to lit the fire) and communication

nication with the surrounding society is much variable between individuals and even between family clusters. Meanwhile, some, especially the current political leaderships, maintain a continuous relationship with some sectors of civil society and government institutions and express themselves without any difficulty with the national language, expressing themselves through the media and in the public space in defence of their people's rights, a considerable part, without mastering the official language, have their discursive and political expressions oriented towards their own communication and interaction media, constituting socio-political relations internally, that is, in what concerns the constitution of relatives.

The presence and expansion of new media in the villages involve questions concerning the communication between people, the diffusion of ideas, and, foremost, the emergency of production and exposition of individual images in social media. Undoubtedly, for the young indigenous, the access to these media results in the enlargement of their communication circuits through those they communicate, in many villages and cities, individualised/particularised characters (in contrast to the leadership images that are projected as 'public' people, that is, as mediators of social common interests). A brief parenthesis is due to mention the veiled critic of a *xamoi* about the exaggerated use of clothes, ornaments and hair colouring by the young ones – in other words, to dress up to the image of the *jurua* (non indigenous), and as such to represent themselves through social media. He said, furthermore, that in past days, the cult of physical appearance was not seen with good eyes. Physical appearance should not overshadow the soul, for it would become weakened. The body should be 'clean' so it would not outshine the soul, so the person – body and soul – could appear simultaneously, keeping the soul from dissociating or getting lost.

Due to the extensive use of social media mostly among the youngsters, especially *Facebook*, this form of communication and expression attains its own characteristic that has become object and source of several researches. However, what I observe is that, amongst the Guarani, the circulation of news from relatives and information in a general sense, including the

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and continuity links are created with Nhanderu retã, divine regents' dwelling (...). Earth surface without national or political-administrative boundaries that contain all the species diversity, the habits and customs, models and traditions. Notwithstanding the critical agricultural estate they live in due to the minimal extensions of available land, one can consider that the Guarani preserve, in general, a peculiar standard of usage of the space that prioritizes the extension of the geographic territory, that is, an amplitude of its terrestrial world. Such a territorial conception that prioritizes the whole area, so necessary for the upkeeping of their systems and their dynamic becomes explicit when, albeit the claims to guarantee the land they occupy, the preservation of the configuration of their ample territory prevails, so necessary for the practice of their moves and their freedom (Ladeira, 2008 [2001]).

relationships with the *jurua*, has not suppressed their own communication means and social and environmental interaction – which operates in visitations, dreams, rituals, and other medium – that have been interacting with new technologies in a ground-breaking manner.

The situation of indigenous people in Brazil, marked by territorial conflicts, and particularly the Guarani, who have for their own use very small portions of land for the reproduction of their way of life (and there is still a long and difficult way to go to guaranteeing the official recognition of their historical and territorial rights), is also and foremost communicated in political manifestations and by the mobilisation of their representative organisations. It comes to sight the varied range of influences and new mediations provoked and infused by the variable technological devices. In its majority, the records produced in video by the indigenous show intensively, and especially, an opposite situation to the confinement and disrespectful policies of constitutional rights, and to the stream of news, in a general way stigmatised and biased, about the indigenous populations, publicised by great media companies.

Notwithstanding the long history of ethnographical cinema in Brazil, it was only in the 1980's, with video and movie-making formation workshops for indigenous (then called *videomakers*)<sup>9</sup>, that the first indigenous productions came through, multiplied by the new technologies and digital equipment, making them more accessible recording and edition wise. It has become usual in the latest decades the growing expression of the production of indigenous cinema makers within the national cinema, diffused in significant ethnographical material that have aroused researches and specialised literature<sup>10</sup>.

The videos produced by non-indigenous movie makers, such as articles and ethnographic records, many of them already with the collaboration of indigenous, especially those about rituals, in the 1980's and 1990's, instigated the indigenous to produce the scripts, scenography, images and the editing of their own movies<sup>11</sup>.

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9 Promoted in a more intensive manner from 2000 onwards, though projects by the pioneer Video nas Aldeias, CTI, Pontos de Cultura e IPHAN – MINC – National Institute of Historical and Artistic Patrimony/Culture Ministry, among other initiatives.

10 In "Indigenous movies in Brazil: course, narratives and vicissitudes" (2016), the authors Nadja Marin and Paula Morgado present a thorough and commented retrospective about the production and new opened paths by the movies produced by the indigenous in the past 30 years, among movies till then produced about the indigenous populations, at times idealized and distorted, at times innovating.

11 The "passing" processes of the indigenous's filming techniques were inserted in the framework of the Video nas Aldeias's project, that in the 1980s and 1990s, were integrated

In what concerns the indigenous populations that live in situations of intense territorial conflicts, the audio-visual appropriation rapidly impressed a more effective form of claim and struggle instrument for the conquest of territorial and social rights. However, according to the comment of the Guarani photographer, Vhera Poty, during a meeting of the project “Exchanged visions”, the act of propagating the political struggles through audio-visual medias can go much further by giving visibility also to the “indigenous values, such as spirituality and the richness of traditional activities”. And, in his understanding, it is the indigenous cineaste, as a mediator, who will translate these values. In this direction, Patricia Ferreira emphasized the importance of the indigenous being the movie makers and documentarists in their communities, because the ‘knowledge of the elderly cannot be, in many occasions, properly transmitted to the non- indigenous’. As a movie maker, Patricia points out the possibility she has of taking the elderly’s messages ‘without mediations and without misguided interpretations’<sup>12</sup>. From that point of view, it comes in hand to add that, in an ideal situation, in the selection and editing process of the raw material – ethnographical records of daily activities and rituals, for instance – the decisions about what, who and when to show, what can and must be translated, the time of the words, in which places to propagate the films must be consensual. And, foremost, the authorisation of the *xamoi*.

It is common for different movies to arise from the same sequence or ensemble of images recorded. Short montages, to avoid tiring the non-indigenous public, and, to simultaneously catch their attention, by showcasing their ‘culture’<sup>13</sup>, more accordingly to traditional story telling rhythm

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with CTI. In this period, anterior to the emphasis given to the *videomakers* formation’s workshops, the project promoted a series of audio visual exchanges among indigenous populations. The indigenous participated actively in the realisation of the videos, among which the commented: *The lady’s party*, Carelli, 1987; *The TV’s spirit*, Carelli and Gallois, 1990; *Free mouth in Sararé*, Carelli, Longobardi, Valadão, 1992; *The Zo’e’s Arch*, Gallois and Carelli, 1993; *I was already you brother*, Carelli, 1993; *Sign doesn’t speak*, Carelli and Gallois, 1996; *Yākwá, The spirit’s feast*, Virgínia Valadão, 1995.

12 Vhera Poty (photographer) and Patricia Ferreira (cineaste) are Guarani artists who participated in the “Exchanged Visions” project. This talk took place in Quebec, in a meeting to shape the lines of the movie to be produced by the audiovisual exchange project between artists from the Innu and Guarani nations. A brief compilation of impressions and reflections deriving from the visits to the innu territory are contained in the travel report to Québec. Centro de Trabalho Indigenista (CTI), 2014.

13 The conscience of an own culture constitutes a relational phenomenon, emerges from alterity relations, in which the performatic exhibition of elements imbued with new meanings, even stereotyped ones, in the indigenous behalf, compose their political instrumental as subjects with historial and territorial rights. I evoke here the referential work of

(sometimes even advertising) of conventional cinema, an impacting imitation, to circulate in festivals. In a concomitant manner, productions of movies made to circulate in different circuits thrive, as those directed especially to the audience in the communities, with longer duration, foremost without the cutting editions of the ritual speeches, introducing scenes with bigger plans where people are recognized and met, contributing to a refreshment of memories and of longing of relatives. With a strong appeal of affection, the films go way beyond their utilitarian function as depositary and transmitter of knowledge to the new generations. Nowadays, both modalities produced by the indigenous movie makers have strong repercussion in the interior of communities.

Wera Alexandre's *Guaraka'i ja* – The otter's owner (2012) movie goes even further on these premises. Accomplishing the task of elaborating an audio visual for a project for Comissão Guarani Yvyrupa (CGY), in Pinhal community, Paraná, Wera encountered a situation that pulled him from the project, leading him inside the cinema world. He captured in the *Opy* (ritual house) the purification ritual of a young and unadvised hunter and his hunt, ethnographing, with involvement, the practice, speech and feelings. Shortly after, in a community in São Paulo, talking to a *xeramoí*, I asked him if he had enjoyed the movie, presented in movie festivals, and if he agreed that the scenes were broadcast to the *jurua*. He said "yes!", and added how he had enjoyed the movie, but that it missed a part: a scene of the hunter taking his hunt from the trap. And, even though he knew the movie maker had not witnessed the moment, he insisted that, after filming what he had in fact witnessed, he should have reconstructed the trap scene and put it in the beginning of the movie, so that 'everybody' could understand better the happening.

As the cameras are adapted and the techniques and movie language are mastered, the indigenous movie makers are seduced by the cinema potential of converting, in a circular perspective, the documentary into fiction and vice-versa, highlighting the inseparability and simultaneity proper of the cinematographic language. As there are no boundaries between fiction and documentary, so it happens in ethnographic movies, where there are no limits between the real and the imaginary<sup>14</sup>. With that said, by mastering the

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Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, *Culture with Quotation Marks* (2009), by using the same typographic resource for the remission of the discussion about the terms culture and "culture"

<sup>14</sup> In the article "Etnofiction: a bridge among frontiers", by Alexandrine Boudreault-Fournier, Sylvia Caiuby Novaes and Rose Satiko Gitirana Hikiji (2016), the authors are inspired by Jean Rouché's cinema to weave a careful approach and critic about the alluded distinctions and borders between fiction and documentary. From their experience with etnofiction and shared anthropology in the realisation of a short movie, *Fabrik Funk*, they deepen the fiction's specificities in literature and cinema, seeking a better understanding about the

audio visual, the indigenous movie makers inferred other intentions of their look towards the camera, putting themselves as characters and narrators of their films. At the same time, the mythical narratives occur in a privileged place in their cinema. From a cosmological perspective, attributing forms, colours, sounds and words to their mythical characters, the indigenous cineastes point out their properties of illusion, hence, becoming themselves `owners` of an illusion that the cinema propitiates. Tuned with this cinematic logic, the mythical characters deceive and are deceived. Being the misdirection, the imitation and thematic illusions constitutive of mythical narratives, its persuasive power, transferred from cinema to the indigenous movie maker, transforms him, in its creative process, also into a mythical character, that transcends the worlds and the arts of the non-indigenous. Ariel, talking about his new film in progress<sup>15</sup>, says that the `Guarani, in communities in general, enjoy fiction a lot and to tell stories that the non-indigenous consider myth, while for us is history, there are a lot of things that to show how they are, only fiction can showcase, where documentary have no value`<sup>16</sup>.

Another aspect that calls attention on the movies the Guarani have been producing in their trips is that such movies acquire repeatedly a reporting characteristic, as they narrate the experience, comment their impressions, and show themselves in unknown places by those who will watch them on the communities, and to whom they clearly are directed. In these films, in which the Guarani place themselves as reporter-actors and messengers, it is clear the ease in which this protagonism occurs and how they perform with great aplomb such roles.

Although not deepening the analysis about these productions, I mention an example in which I participated throughout the whole process. *Jaguata Pyau* – the earth on where we step (CTI, 1998), resulted from the records of a trip made by spiritual leaderships, *xamoi* and *jaryi*, from communities of the coast of Brazil to communities located in Argentina and Paraguay, in January 1997. The script was the trip`s route, with all the unexpected situations and obstacles, and in tow went the camera. The first records embarrassed and even made silent the interviewees, by the improper questions and by their disarmed exposure in front of the jurua`s camera. During the days that followed, the guarani visitors, already with

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“possibilities of etnofiction as a narrative strategy for anthropologists to make movies”.

15 In a speech on the Seminar “Transdisciplinarity in focus: anthropology, art and cinema” 2016, USP.

16 To put oneself as an actor in the role of a mythic being is an attraction for the indigenous. One of these movies, *Manoá – The Legend of the Jaws*, from the 1990s, features Carlos Papá Miri Poty as leading figure. Guarani actors act in several films versed in mythical narratives, directed or not by guarani movie makers. Also the elaborate creation process of the awarded *Secrets of the Forest*, by Gallois and Carelli, 1998, about tales of cannibal monsters involved the Wajapi in the costume and scenography areas, as well as in the narration and acting parts..

their microphone and recording devices in hand, conducted the scenes, expressed themselves with words of their sacred repertory, showed places and people they re-encountered and made public to their audience in the respective communities the "important things they saw" <sup>17</sup>.

Recently, in the movie produced throughout the project "Intersecting Gazes" by the Brazilian movie makers team, I observed the same journalistic ton about the experience, in the visual description of the food and in the explanations about what they saw and met, concerning the Innu nation. It seemed to me, that, with this movie, they were demonstrating, proving, to their communities what they did in foreign lands. Interesting to notice that the soundtrack chosen by the Brazilian team is a beautiful Innu song that permeates all scenes in Canada and even in Brazil, in the guarani communities, where they had not recorded any known children chants. In many aspects, they chose to show what was "different", adding, more than contrasting, in the same edition, different contexts in which live these populations, what gave a particular aesthetics to this audio-visual exchange. In the other hand, in the records from the Canadian team, it seems to prevail a more testimonial, personal ton, from the innu movie maker Waubnasse, while captioning the daily life in the guarani villages. We must consider that this filming experience, as pointed out by the teams, was executed under several conditioners – time, resources, structures, weather – that show throughout the movies.

**figure 5**

Vhera Poty Benites  
photographs  
in Betsiamites,  
Quebec, Canada  
– Oct. 13,  
2014. Photo:  
Inês Ladeira.



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<sup>17</sup> For them, the motivation for this journey was to participate in rituals conducted by the *xamõĩ* of the visited villages and to boost the philosophical discussions among their wised ones about the destiny of "this Earth", in face of the distruction of forests, promoted by the non-indigenous (*etava'ekuéry*, that are many). The emotional report of Mrs. Aurora, with recorder device in hand, walking through the Trinidad's ruins, in Paraguay, was striking. Due to the long speeches, the editing work was intense and collectively executed by two guarani travalers, to preserve its contents.

**figure 6**  
Mendy Bossum-  
Launière, Patricia  
Ferreira, Wera  
Alexandre,  
Ariel Ortega  
and residents  
of Cunha Piru,  
Misiones,  
Argentina,  
2015. Photo:  
Lucas Keese.



## PARTNERSHIP BUILDING EXPERIENCE, PARTNERSHIP FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A PROJECT

The different ways and fields of acting and expertise of the members of BRV, CTI and LISA, in the cinema, art and anthropology areas, were articulated by the building of a partnership. To BRV, proponent of the project, the exchange of experiences and the intersection of different domains of knowledge, including guarani artists from Brazil and the innu artists from Canada, could be used in a complementary way in the creation of an artistic project, reflecting its transdisciplinary character, aiming at the transmission of knowledges and competences between universities, indigenous communities and cultural and research institutes.

It wasn't, however, without some initial concern that CTI received the proposal to participate in a partnership project between institutions that, despite their research history on knowledge, arts, interests and rights of the indigenous/autochthone populations<sup>18</sup>, have different fields and line of actions. Likewise, there were different perspectives and expectations concerning the process and results of an exchange work involving indigenous and autochthone artists, whose territories are located in distant regions, in the extreme north and south of the American continent.

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<sup>18</sup> The terms autochthones and indigenous are used without discrimination of the historical and social processes by which each of these general designations were diffused, respectively, in Canada and Brazil, and were adopted as a differentiation mark, by the people that reside in the territories situated in the extreme north and south of the american continent, since before the arrival of the europeans.

Even though the physical distance to put in practice an artistic exchange among the guarani and innu could be overcome by digital means, the relative contrasts of lifestyles and artistic expressions of both populations, the environment and the political and socio-economical contexts in which each indigenous land were inserted in Brazil and Canada were considerable. The project's proposal seemed somewhat formal, more relatable to the operational mechanic of mediator entities than to the indigenous own initiatives. However, to all of those involved, the project meant a challenge and a unique opportunity to observe, through the 'vision exchange' and the dialogue in the artistic and shared creation process, that, even though the alterities were manifested in multiple manners, it was possible to find convergence.

During the discussions about the proposition of the project, the guarani movie makers said that, more than making visible their artistic expressions, what mattered was giving visibility to the realities of the Innu and Guarani people through their own visions<sup>19</sup>. This attitude, they affirmed, concerned compromise, from their audio-visual training to the use of camera as a tool in service to communal interests and necessities. And it was in this sense they sought to highlight and discuss the role of the indigenous movie makers as mediators of their community on the transmission, to others, of images and sounds that reflected their expressions, knowledges and informations, according to their own criteria and vision of the world. It seemed to me that, for them, the individualised notion of the indigenous artist, detached from its mediation efforts, had no sense, or better yet, the artist condition was not associated to the member condition of a people whose constant political struggle to guarantee their basic and emergency rights and to counter prejudices has taken over several areas of social life.

Once defined that the project would have as range the audio-visual exchange between guarani and innu artists for a video production (short film), the indigenous artists together elected the name 'exchanged visions' and pointed their respective perspectives, from where they could set out the laces and distances of their visions. The conscience about their mediator role in step with the environment of the community's social life<sup>20</sup>, led the indigenous artists to make explicit their perfor-

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19 Patricia Ferreira, Ariel Ortega and Wera Alexandre (guarani cineastes) and Vhera Poty Benites (photographer) participated in distinct steps of the project. Waubnasse Bobi-wash-Simon and Mendy Bossum-Launière formed the canadian movie maker's team.

20 The sense of "continuity" in this text matches de conceptions outlined by Joanna Overing in "Production aesthetics: the sense of community among the Cubeo and the Piaroa" (1991). In this article, the author discusses notions of freedom, work and personal autonomy and its inherent relation with the social, referentiated to not conditioned aesthetics,

mance in the footage and in the contexts in which they took place. In the passage below, extracted from the text of the `Exchanged Vision` project – the mediator`s role of the Guarani artists in Brazil and Innu artists in Canada`, presented by BRV and CTI, the following orientation from the indigenous artists – the photographer, Vhera, and the movie maker, Patricia – is highlighted :

These artists have a double duty of transmitting and the creative action has as goal an own paradoxical reality to this challenge: to be autochthone and to be an autochthone movie maker. In what concerns the exchanges, the guarani and innu cineastes emphasize the importance in analysing and expressing the inherent difficulties in the mediator`s role they play, in their nation`s similarity and differences, from north to south. From that emerges the idea of a common project, from the angle of mediation and exchanged visions. They proposed, from the start, to begin the production in three layers of reality: a) the intern reality of their communities; b) the mediator`s role of the cineaste in search of his/hers own aesthetics and at the heart of the knowledge of the medium that vehiculates it; c) the relation that connects the oeuvre to the spectators and its reception in the autochthones and allochthonous communities.

From this common conscience emerged a form in which its not entirely about documenting social realities from a community (the territorial loss and the conflict with governments, the political struggle for human rights, the conservation and valorisation of their own language, the realisation of ritual and traditional practices, the respect to the regulatory and pedagogical norms of activities such as hunting and spirituality), but also about documenting the cineaste as cultural mediator, from an exchanged look from one observed cineaste to the other working cineaste.<sup>21</sup>

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morality and beauty, to what is usually called as coercion and social control. Among the associated notion of “beauty”, so well distinguished by the author amongst the Piaroa and that resounds in other indigenous conceptions (amongst the Guarany, certainly), she says: “In the Piaroa’s aesthetics of sociality, the social side of cleanliness, beauty and contention all sings of mastering the interior productive forces – was manifested by the individual capacity of keeping ones relations to others in harmony.” (1991:24)”.

21 Contributions to the subvention request to the project *Intersecting Gazes: and audiovisual exchange between artists from the Innu and Guarani nations*, 2014.

**figures 7 and 8**  
Waubnasse  
Bobiwash-  
Simon and Vhera  
Poty Benites in  
Longue-Pointe-de-  
Mingan, Québec,  
Canada, October  
2014. Photos:  
Inês Ladeira.



During the trip that took place in the Innu territories in Quebec, Vhera Poty observed that the similarities pointed out by Waubnasse between the Guarani and the Innu came through, mostly, in the political struggles that involved the dispute over land right. In their conception, the governments, both Brazilian and Canadian, though recognizing the territorial rights of the autochthone populations are legitimate, refuse to guarantee its execution. As he perceived similarities regarding the political struggle, he also noted differences in the traditional and present lifestyles of both people and in the practices and strategies towards `the cultural strengthening`. By visiting museums, Vhera Poty commented the richness in the traditional knowledge of the autochthone people in Canada, but, due to the dynamics of the travel, was sorry for not getting to know better the daily activities in the Innu communities. Although he found it interesting for there to be a museum in an Innu village, Vhera observed that the autochthone monitors of the exposition passed most of their daily time working, `exposing and talking about the culture without having the opportunity of experiencing it`. That`s why he found that the essential in the partnership would be the possibility of reflection over the experiences, artistic daily activities and manners of life in their communities.

**figure 9**  
Longue-Pointe-de-  
Mingan, Québec,  
Canada, October  
2014. Photo:  
Inês Ladeira.



In an interview with an elderly innu in Mingan (Canada), Patricia was surprised by the level of urbanisation of the autochthone territories, and said she was amazed by listening to him talk about his eagerness to go back and live in the traditional innu territory, so that he could fish, hunt and live as his ancestors. Patricia realised that, for him, it wasn't about going back in the past and not living the present, but it was a matter of guaranteeing the reproduction and transmission of those knowledges and wisdom so important for the Innu life. As Vhera, Patricia resented not having been able to experience the traditional practices of the Innu in their daily life. She observed the valorisation of these practices only in the Cultural Centres visited and in the few interviews she witnessed. She also noticed the 'different realities' of the Innu and Guarani people nowadays, because, beyond their own cosmologies and world visions connected to each environment, the varied cumulative experiences of each people during the colonisation process, and consequential of the present politics, north and south of the Americas, were added up.

From the similarities and differences pointed out by the guarani artists, it was possible to notice that, for them, up to this moment, the diffusion of their cultural expressions is an interest of all collectiveness, the individual has no independent 'place', does not accomplish it alone. Hence, the question of being an autochthone artist (what, in some way, would put him/she in an individualised outstanding situation) does not exist. Even if the artists could attract esteem and distinguish themselves as cultural expression diffusers, among the Guarani the possible roles and senses of the movie maker's performance slips towards an interest and orientation mediation of the communities, in special, those announced/communicated by the *xam-oi* and *xejaryi* about the contents and intentions to be transmitted. Maybe it is a peculiar way to be an artist, where the authorship is not an exclusive, particular, possession, but belongs to the collectiveness. The artist, thus, is a mediator, he is the one that seeks to express and/or shape shared ideas, conceptions, yearnings and interests, that emanate from the collectiveness. The observations and questioning about the frontiers between artistic and cultural expression's creation and authorship, which, at times, reveal the individual or the collectiveness, arose in several steps of the project.

**figure 10**  
Patricia Ferreira  
is filmed by  
Waubnasse  
Bobiwash-Simon,  
Musée des  
Abenakis, Odanak,  
Quebec. Photo:  
Inês Ladeira.



**figure 11**  
Patricia Ferreira  
in Shaputuan  
musée inuu,  
Uashat, Quebec,  
October 2014.  
Photo: Inês  
Ladeira.



## THE CHILDREN

The video camera is not considered by the guarani artists as a particular good, although they do consider it to be their responsibility to look after it. As expressed Ariel, in the already mentioned Seminar ‘Transdisciplinarity in focus: anthropology, art and cinema’, the filming must respect the time of the community, and the camera, considered a person, also must be ‘purified’ during the footage. In some villages, some references were heard about the camera as a child, and so, as depository of the voices in the communities. This reference is present in a scene of ‘The beings of the forest and their life as people (*Nhandé va’e kue meme’...*)<sup>22</sup>’, in which Vhera Poty, screenwriter and narrator of the film, says:

Only the older ones know how to transmit to us (the knowledge about the beings of the forest), and I think that this camera, at the same time, is going to be a child, because it will be listening to everything, that is said, it will work as an eye and at the same time the ear of all of those behind this camera. It is going to be a child that will be listening to the words of its grandfathers and grandmothers. (Devos, 2010)

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22 By Rafael Devos, Federal University of Santa Catarina, Brazil, 2010.

Lucas Keese (2018), in 'Image and alterity in an audio visual exchange between the Guarani and Innu', (2016), translates Wera Alexandre, guarani movie maker who has been devoted also to the editing work, when he evokes the association between camera and children and distinguishes the caption and montage audio visual domain.

According to Wera Alexandre, the camera would be a child, that all observes and memorises, but is still capable of organising what it has experienced and reproducing to others in a manner that they can understand. To teach, demonstrate practices and make counselling speeches are the elderly's job, and the ancient men and women, those who already have a settled knowledge in their hearts and who can help others to reach it as well. This, compares Wera, is the montage's job: to organise knowledges and experiences in a manner that the circulation process among the youngsters – whose duty is to observe and listen – can go on.

In a certain sense, under the standpoint of digital means, everything resumes to the camera, which reproduces simultaneously, and to the computers and editing programs. The dissemination of their uses in the villages could compromise the caption magic, but not the fascination of the screen projections. In the same Seminar, the movie maker Takumã Kuikuru<sup>23</sup> made an interesting association during his presentation when saying that 'the big cinema screen becomes a people's village'; and, therefore, the indigenous producer can take to a 'bigger audience' unknown information about the indigenous populations.

This new dimension given to the projection, that what is watched in a big screen is better, as pointed out Takumã, because it gives the indigenous population and their environment more visibility to a bigger audience, also results, in a not less meaningful way, in varied repercussion among the indigenous not so familiarised with cinema. Since it provides a more extensive vision of the place where caption occurs or where you are recorded, when there is an opportunity of seeing in the screen what is seen behind the lenses, the eyes of the camera, with larger reach, reflecting images that human eyes do not see during footage, the movie projection fascinates and surprises. A *xamoi* that recorded, in a more or less put off manner, a statement in his community about his crops, when encountered with himself on the screen, with everything else around him, did not hide his satisfaction and surprise.

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23 Maker of the movie *ETE London – London as a village*, 2015.

## HOW WILL IT GO ON?

Even though still recent, the mastering of the audio visual language and its material supports (the technological devices in constant obsolescence), the indigenous productions match the transmission of oral memory and invoke the already consolidated cinematographic repertoire as they do not put in discussion (there would be no reason) dogmatical questions, not even the rupture (this questions is non-existent) between technique and art, fiction and documentary, improvisation and specialisation, contemplative and instrumental. By not bowing down to dogmas, concepts and aesthetic patterns of the 'non-indigenous cinema', currently present in the big cinema circuits, the indigenous movie makers and their films will continue to propose and offer new and endless developments to the language of cinema.

Considering that indigenous arts are not detached from social life<sup>24</sup>, not even the improvise, the selection and bricolage, concatenating symbols, artifices and exogenous materials, the indigenous cineastes re-establish a relative autonomy, extensive to new and other domains – as presented their acting space –, one of the present dilemmas with which they are faced in the communities and in the cities.

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<sup>24</sup> Although I did not mention with due attention the debate on 'indigenous art' theme, which I consider to be essential for the comprehension of the audio-visual production of the indigenous, I report, despite the delay, to Escobar Ticio and his book "La belleza de los otros" (2012, 1ª ed.1993), as an enlightening and instigating reference about the difficulties of defining the indigenous art. By saying that for the indigenous the aesthetic is not unconnected to a complex symbolic system that merges what we distinguish as art, science, religion, politics, law, he means that indigenous art does not separate itself from the intricate social ensemble and appears inbricated in the weave of its multiple forms and functions with which it is addled. "Pero la cultura indígena al mezclar y, aun, identificar significantes y significados varios, desorienta a los estudiosos del tema (...)". The indigenous art does not follow the colonialist logical conditions that impose the requisites of modern western art, such as individual geniality, groundbreaking rupture and unicity of the oeuvre. The indigenous art "ni es fruto de una creación individual absoluta (aunque cada artista reinterprete a su modo los inveterados códigos colectivos), ni se produce a través de innovaciones transgresoras (a pesar de que su desarrollo suponga una constante movilización del imaginario social, ni se manifiesta en obras irrepetibles (aun cuando cada forma específica debió haber conquistado su propia capacidad expresiva y estética)" (2012:29-31).

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