

# Indigenous Brazil Violated

Pilot study on indigenous use of social media



## Use of Social Media by indigenous people

A pilot study, based on use of Facebook by six indigenous organisations from 01/01/2016 to 30/04/2020.

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<https://lab.org.uk/indigbrazil/>

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### Aim

To analyse indigenous use of social media as a counterpoint to the Indigenous Brazil Violated (IBV) media analysis, which looked at their portrayal in the Brazilian print media from 01/01/2016 to 30/04/2020. This is not a comprehensive analysis; this pilot study aims simply to identify trends and make some proposals regarding a methodology, with a view to conducting more in-depth research at a later date.

### Methodology

I read Facebook content produced by six different indigenous organisations: the Articulação de Povos Indígenas Brasileiros (APIB), the Coordenação das Organizações Indígenas da Amazônia Brasileira (COIAB), Mídia Índia, the Conselho do Povo Terena, Aty Guasu, and the Comissão Guarani Yvyrupa. I maintained the same three study areas analysed in the IBV media analysis, namely the states of Amazonas, Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul. Content that did not contain some link to one or more of these three study areas was omitted.

The analysis for this pilot study consisted of three stages:

1. Scrolling through all content produced by each organisation in September 2020, without using any search terms. This had the advantage of being comprehensive, but the amount of content posted, particularly by the bigger organisations such as APIB and COIAB, rendered this method impractical for looking at looking at any longer period of time.
2. A keyword analysis for 2019, using the following search terms: "Vale do Javari"; "Invasores"; "Genocídio"; "Xingu"; "Guarani-Kaiowá" – "Invasores" and "Genocídio" being two more general terms, while "Vale do Javari", "Xingu" and "Guarani-Kaiowá" corresponding to Amazonas, Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul respectively.
3. An analysis of three separate online webinars which had come up in relevant posts from September 2020, as follows: 'As queimadas no Xingu e os impactos na saúde em tempos de pandemia do coronavírus'; 'LIVE SOLIDÁRIA | SOS POVOS INDÍGENAS ISOLADOS'; and 'Lançamento do Relatório Violência contra os Povos Indígenas no Brasil'.

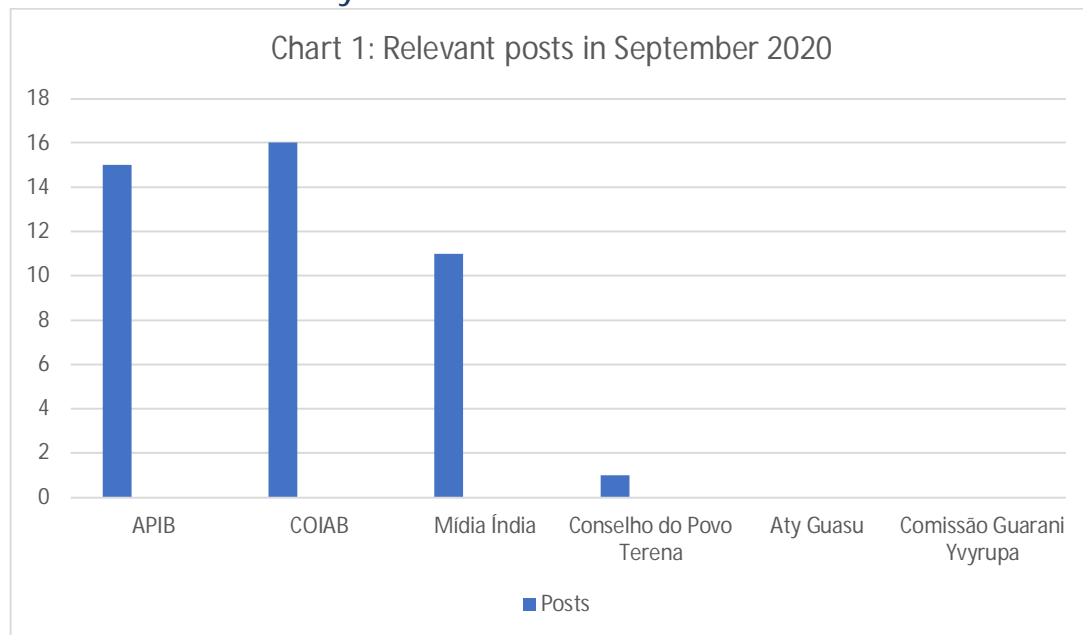
The main criteria for inclusion in the sample was reports of violence, either towards indigenous people themselves or those responsible for their protection and wellbeing. The definition of violence used here corresponded to the same broad understanding of the concept as employed in the IBV media analysis.

There is a good deal of material that is shared amongst these organisations, with the curators of the pages reposting content from elsewhere. However, I chose not to omit content that was identical or very similar across the different pages, given that repetition does not entail that the

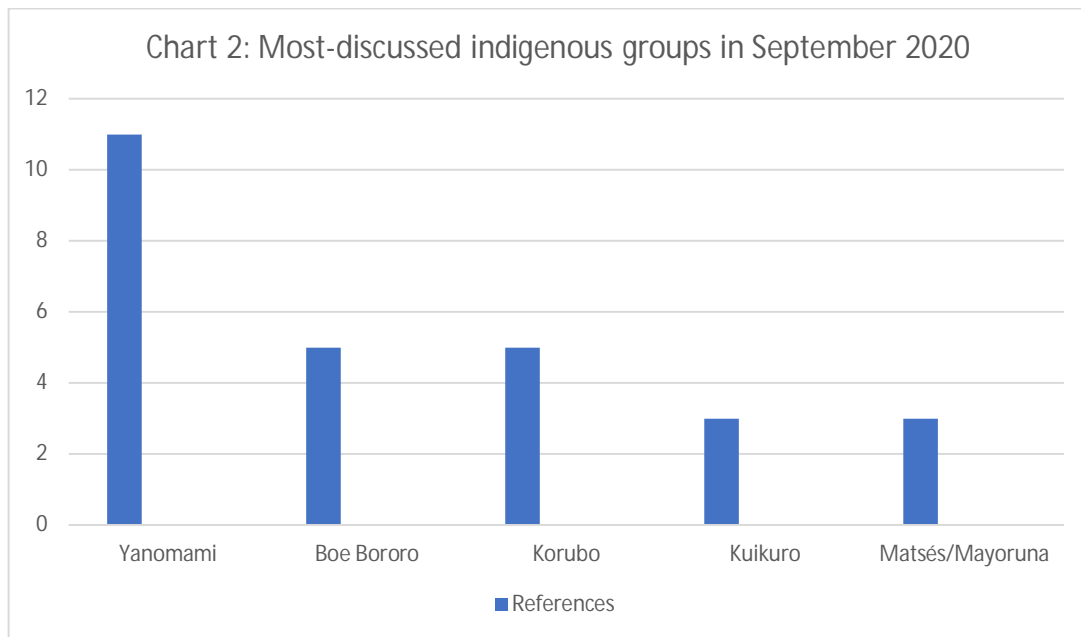
content is invalid or that the concern of an organisation with a particular issue is in any way inauthentic.

I also looked at Facebook pages for several other indigenous organisations in Brazil, namely the Articulação dos Povos Indígenas da Região Sudeste (ARPINSUDESTE), the Articulação dos Povos e Organizações Indígenas do Nordeste, Minas Gerais e Espírito Santo (APOINME), and the Articulação dos Povos Indígenas da Região Sul (ARPINSUL). However, none of these organisations generated any relevant content for the sample, mainly because they are focused on indigenous groups in areas of Brazil which do not correspond to any of the three study areas.

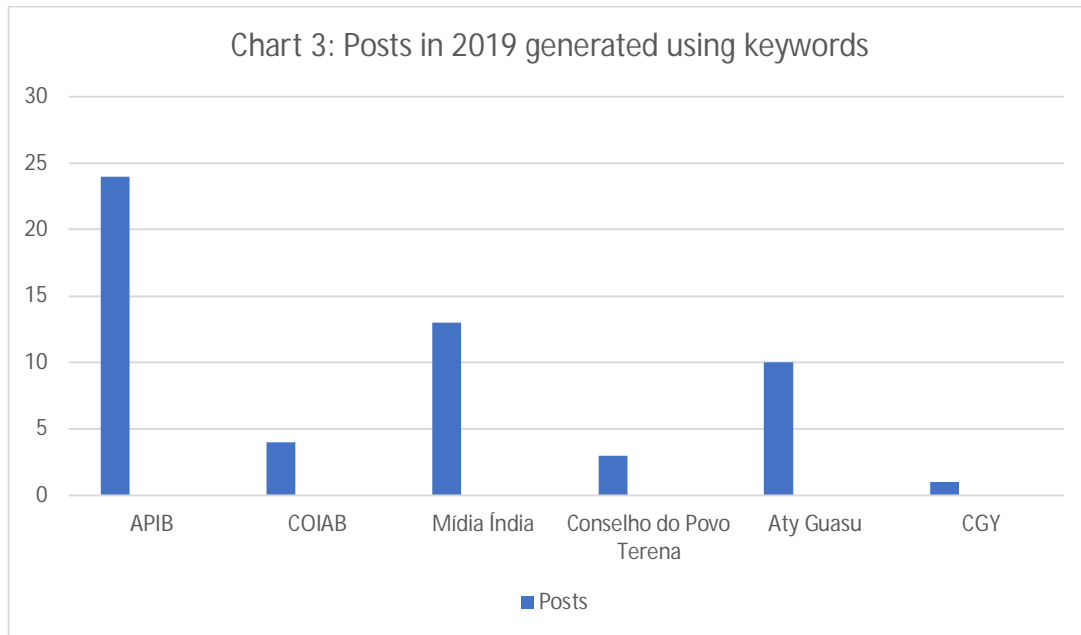
## Brief statistical analysis



As is clear, the number of posts produced by APIB, COIAB and Mídia Índia is far higher than for the other three organisations – no surprise, given that APIB and COIAB are umbrella organisations bringing together a great number of smaller local organisations, while Mídia Índia – unlike all the other organisations analysed in this pilot study – is a dedicated communications network staffed by young indigenous activists and communications specialists from all over Brazil. In contrast, the Conselho do Povo Terena, Aty Guasu and Comissão Guarani Yvyrupa are much smaller local organisations with a fraction of the capacity of the other three organisations, concerned mainly with issues in their states of origin (Mato Grosso do Sul in the case of the Conselho do Povo Terena and Aty Guasu, São Paulo in the case of Comissão Guarani Yvyrupa).



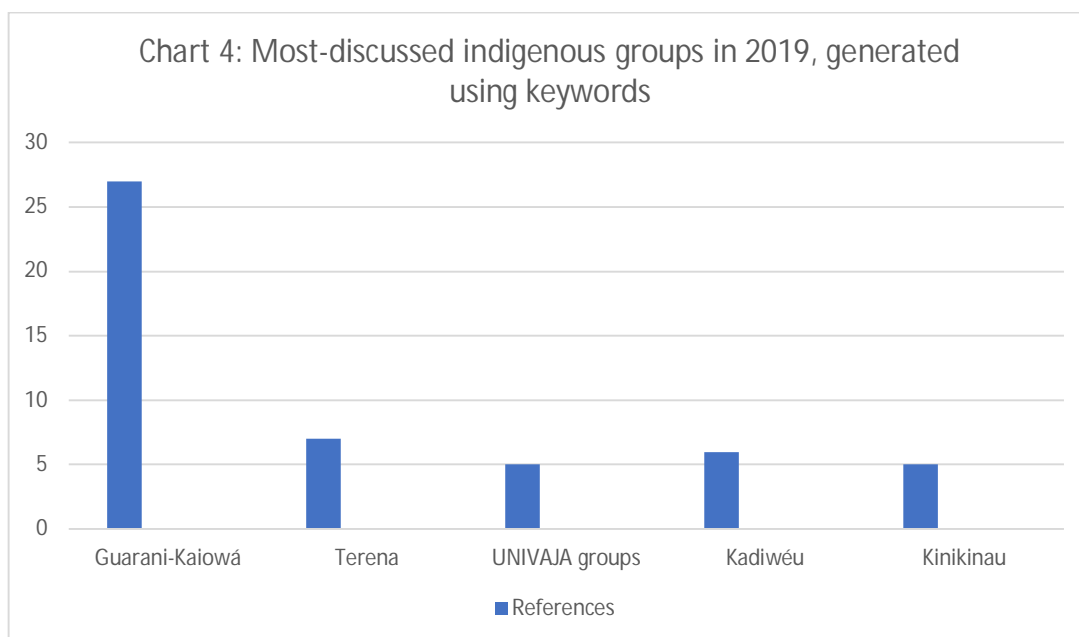
- The Yanomami were referred to in 11 posts across the six Facebook pages included in the sample, more than double that of any other group, with the coverage focused mainly on the interconnected phenomena of the spread of Covid-19 in their territory and garimpeiro invasions.
- The Boe Bororo – a much smaller group from the south of Mato Grosso – received coverage mostly related to the forest fires in the Pantanal (though one post also referred to the impact of Covid-19), with more than 100 Boe Bororo having been evacuated from the Tereza Cristina indigenous territory in September due to smoke.
- The Korubos came up with regard to two events:
  1. A story run by O Globo in which Ricardo Lopes Dias, then head of Funai's department for Isolated and Recently Contacted Indians, allegedly attempted to enter the Vale do Javari indigenous territory without having first completed quarantine, thus exposing the Korubos and other isolated groups to disease. Lopes Dias was also accused of working with evangelical missionaries in an attempt to proselytize the Korubos.
  2. A note published by the Vale do Javari Union of Indigenous Peoples (UNIVAJA) paying tribute to the sertanista Rieli Franciscato, following his death at the Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau indigenous territory in Rondônia.
- The Kuikuro appear in a single video which is repeated three times. The video is made on a phone or similar by a young Kuikuro man, showing forest fires in their lands in the Parque Indígena do Xingu in Mato Grosso.
- The Matsés (or the Mayoruna) are also referred to in the UNIVAJA statement, as well as in one of the posts about Ricardo Lopes Dias.



The most notable result here is the relative lack of content for COIAB. However, this is arguably an anomaly produced by the search criteria, not only the keywords but also the requirement that content relate in some concrete way to one or more of the three study areas. There was no lack of content produced by these keywords on COIAB in 2019, but much of it was generic, relating to the experience of the indigenous across the whole Amazon region or the whole of Brazil.

For example, there were a number of posts covering the Jornada Sangue Indígena delegation which toured Europe during October and November 2019. While the aim was to denounce violence towards the indigenous, the social media content was largely concerned with the details of the tour and where it referred to violence towards the indigenous in Brazil it was mostly generic, without any concrete references to cases of violence in the three study areas.

The other feature worthy of comment is the relatively high amount of content obtained from Aty Guasu – a page which generated no relevant content whatsoever for September 2020. This is obviously the result of using “Guarani-Kaiowá” as a search term, with most of the posts referring in some way to the longstanding and ongoing conflicts between landowners and the Guarani-Kaiowá in Mato Grosso do Sul.



The high result for the Guarani-Kaiowá is obviously a result of having used “Guarani-Kaiowá” as a search term. This is why the Terena, Kadiwéu and Kinikinau – all groups from Mato Grosso do Sul – also feature here. In six out of the nine cases in which these groups are referred to, it is in content which also refers to the Guarani-Kaiowá.

The other groups referred to here are those represented by UNIVAJA, namely the Marubos, Matsés, Matis, Kanamari and Kulina. In three of these posts, two other groups – the Korubos and the Tsohom-dyapa – are also cited as belonging to UNIVAJA, though in the post showing Beto Marubo speaking at the UN (duplicated on two of the Facebook pages analysed) they are absent. Again, the presence of these groups here is clearly a result of having used “Vale do Javari” as a search term.

## Qualitative analysis

The output varied widely, both across the different Facebook pages analysed and between 2019 (the search by keywords) and September 2020 (evaluating all content).

During September 2020, the three bigger organisations (APIB, COIAB and Mídia Índia) produced some high-quality original content including videos, photos, and podcasts. See, for example the [‘APIB SOMOS TODOS!’](#) video of 29/09/2020 (in fact excluded from the sample as it does not refer specifically to events in one of the three study areas, but still worthy of comment), with versions subtitled in both English and Spanish. In similar fashion, much of the content posted in 2019 covering the Jornada Sangue Indígena delegation (excluded from the sample for the same reason) included translations into English, French and Spanish, clearly indicating indigenous concern with international public opinion.

One particularly strong piece of original content produced by these organisations is the ‘COIAB Informa’ podcast, a collaboration between COIAB and Mídia Índia, presented by Erik Terena.

The main themes discussed in the three episodes included in the sample are the Covid-19 pandemic and the forest fires in the Amazon and in the Pantanal.

Each of the three episodes includes an update on the latest figures on Covid-19 within indigenous territories in the Brazilian Amazon, either at the beginning or the end. The podcasts also included interviews with healthcare experts, including Marcelo Alves Miranda (Sesai) and Ana Lúcia Pontes (Fiocruz), who discussed the particular challenges faced by the indigenous and the healthcare professionals who work with them in the context of the pandemic. Terena also highlights how a range of actors – loggers, evangelical missionaries, ranchers, *garimpeiros* and so on – have exploited the pandemic to increase their illegal activity in indigenous territories. He blames this on the Brazilian government, stressing that it has not formulated a plan to control Covid-19 amongst the indigenous, nor to remove invaders from indigenous lands.

Much discussion was also given to the forest fires in the Amazon, specifically in the Parque Indígena do Xingu (with the interviews taken from the webinar 'As queimadas no Xingu e os impactos na saúde em tempos de pandemia do coronavírus', analysed in more detail further ahead) and the Alto Rio Guamá indigenous territory in Pará. There is an interview with COIAB vice-coordinator Mario Nicácio Wapichana and practical advice from presenter Erik Terena on what to do when confronted by fire.

Interestingly, there is also coverage of demonstrations to mark the Dia da Amazônia outside Brazil, particularly the Extinction Rebellion demonstration in London outside parliament and the Brazilian Embassy. The podcast also touches on the support of Leonardo DiCaprio for the Defund Bolsonaro campaign, with Terena explaining why the support of figures like DiCaprio is important for COIAB and APIB. Once again, this shows these organisations as outward looking, concerned with events beyond Brazil's borders and keen to get international public opinion on their side.

In contrast, the keyword search for 2019 generated a far less varied range of content, with most posts consisting of either a basic Facebook post with an accompanying photo, or a photo with a link to an article external to Facebook. For example, on APIB, 13 of the 24 posts for 2019 included a link to an external source – whether APIB's own website or another media outlet altogether – while eight were basic Facebook posts, either on APIB's Facebook page or that of another indigenous individual or organisation. Just three included video content. This suggests that indigenous communicators have developed their ability to produce more diverse content over the last year or so, surely a consequence of having to operate within the restrictions imposed by the pandemic.

The external content linked to by these organisations in 2019 comes from a number of sources, ranging from local media (Campo Grande News), to mainstream national media (G1, UOL), to alternative or investigative national media (Agência Pública, De Olho nos Ruralistas, CartaCapital), to the Brazil services of international news outlets (BBC Brasil, El País Brasil).

Aside from APIB and Mídia Índia, the only other Facebook page analysed which generated significant content during 2019 was Aty Guasu. In this case, however, the content is largely limited to basic Facebook posts denouncing acts of violence against the Guarani-Kaiowá in Mato Grosso do Sul, usually with accompanying photos – which in some cases are graphic images of injuries they sustained. Just two of the posts contain links to external sites.

## Webinars in September 2020

I also analysed three webinars from September 2020: “As queimadas no Xingu e os impactos na saúde em tempos de pandemia do coronavírus” (13/09/2020), posted on APIB, COIAB, Mídia Índia and the Conselho do Povo Terena (a good example of the sharing of material between the different organisations); “LIVE SOLIDÁRIA | SOS POVOS INDÍGENAS ISOLADOS” (18/09/2020), posted on APIB and COIAB; and “Lançamento do Relatório Violência contra os Povos Indígenas no Brasil” (30/09/2020), posted on APIB, COIAB and Mídia Índia. The three videos amounted to approximately five and a half hours in total.

Of these three videos, the only one that actually appears in the sample is the first; the reason being that to determine inclusion in the sample I was analysing the text of the posts rather than the accompanying video content. Time constraints made it impossible to watch all the video content in order to determine whether it was relevant or not, though there were a number of other webinars uploaded in September 2020 which would likely have fallen within the scope of this research.

Nonetheless, the frequent use of webinars by the indigenous and their supporters in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic is significant and so I selected two other videos for analysis. “SOS POVOS ISOLADOS” was selected as I thought it likely it would include content on the Vale do Javari, while “Lançamento do Relatório Violência...” was chosen as it clearly corresponds thematically to the concerns of this research, even if the focus is not necessarily on our study areas.

‘As queimadas no Xingu...’ was the first webinar organised by the group Mulheres do Xingu. The discussion was led by Watatakalu Yawalapiti, with the other six participants all being women from different communities within the Parque Indígena do Xingu. The event had a dual function, being both a means for these women to connect and share their experiences of the forest fires and the Covid-19 pandemic, and a way of informing the wider public about events in the Xingu. The link was made throughout between the forest fires and Covid-19: how indigenous people who are suffering from the effects of the fires are more vulnerable to serious illness and death from Covid-19.

Watatakalu Yawalapiti made a point of correcting some non-indigenous preconceptions about the causes of the fires and the traditional slash-and-burn techniques used by some indigenous people (*queimada de roça*). An explicit distinction was made between fires started in this manner which subsequently got out of control and fires started deliberately by criminal intruders. There was also a recognition that changing climactic conditions have made this type of agriculture more dangerous, that the indigenous will have to adapt their practices to the new reality.

Kaianaku Kamaiura also made a direct appeal to non-indigenous people to support the indigenous, reminding them that it is not only indigenous areas that are burning.

This event was hosted on Zoom or similar and the quality was poor. The participants with weaker connections were often difficult to understand.

In contrast, ‘LIVE SOLIDÁRIA | SOS POVOS INDÍGENAS ISOLADOS’ was a far slicker, more professional event. Though it features on APIB and COIAB, it was actually produced by the magazine Xapuri Socioambiental. Ana Paula Sabino moderated and the



participants were Beto Marubo of the Vale do Javari Union of Indigenous Peoples (UNIVAJA), the *sertanista* Antenor Vaz and the lawyer Carol Santana.

Antenor Vaz gave a good historical overview of Brazilian state policy towards isolated indigenous groups, talking about his own experience as a *sertanista*. However much of his speech (and indeed the conversation throughout the webinar) was about the recent death of the *sertanista* Rieli Franciscato at the Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau indigenous territory in Rondônia. Beto Marubo also spoke at length about Franciscato, as they worked together in the Vale do Javari. Much of his speech was historical, discussing the problems in the Vale do Javari when it was ratified as an indigenous territory in 2001 and his experience of working with white *indigenistas*.

Around 44:15 Marubo provided a more contemporary analysis on why this kind of work is being suppressed. He sees it as part of a deliberate anti-indigenous agenda by the Bolsonaro government, and singled out Funai for criticism: "Funai today is nothing but a stooge of retrograde agribusiness, allied with religious fundamentalism." He went on to discuss the increasing role of religious missionaries in the Vale do Javari and within Funai itself (particularly in the figure of Ricardo Lopes Dias). He also touched on deforestation, particularly in the north of Mato Grosso, and the impact on isolated groups.

The Lançamento do Relatório Violência contra os Povos Indígenas no Brasil was organised by the Conselho Indigenista Missionário (Cimi), which produced the report in question. The event was moderated by Marline Dassoler and the participants were Dom Roque Paloschi, archbishop of Porto Velho and Cimi president; Dom Walmor Oliveira de Azevedo, archbishop of Belo Horizonte and president of the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops; Maryelza Apurinã, from the Valparaíso indigenous territory (AM); Wagner Krahô Kanela, from the Krahô Kanela indigenous territory (TO); Lenice Paulino Guajajara and José Maria Guajajara from the Araribóia indigenous territory (MA); Lúcia Helena Rangel, anthropology professor at PUC-SP and organiser of the report; Roberto Liebgott, Cimi missionary and co-organiser of the report; and Antônio Eduardo Cerqueira de Oliveira, executive secretary at Cimi.

This was the longest event of the three (at two and a half hours), so for reasons of concision I will include here just a handful of observations, prioritising content that relates to the three study areas.

According to Dom Roque Paloschi, the situation for Brazil's indigenous people has only got worse since the publication of the report for 2018. He lays the blame squarely on the Bolsonaro government: "Today, we're obliged to recognise that the greatest aggressor towards indigenous peoples and nature is the Brazilian government." He insists that it is the duty of the Church to defend the indigenous, a sentiment which is echoed by Dom Walmor, who also highlights the importance of indigenous knowledge, suggesting that Western culture has much to learn from the indigenous.

Of the indigenous participants, the only one who comes from one of the three study areas under consideration is Maryelza Apurinã, from the Valparaíso indigenous territory in Amazonas. This land has yet to be demarcated, and Maryelza relates how in the 1990s the Apurinã accepted a reduction of their territory in order to avoid conflict with local settlers. But the territory was never demarcated, the threats and invasions continued and have recently been increasing.

Valparaíso was badly impacted by the forest fires of 2019; one fire alone destroyed 600 hectares of forest.

Lucia Helena Rangel provides a statistical account of the report's findings. While there was a small drop in the number of murders of indigenous people from 2018 to 2019 (from 135 to 113), all the other indicators assessed were higher. Perhaps the most shocking statistic was that for child mortality: 825 indigenous children aged from 0-5 years old died in Brazil in 2019, an increase of more than 200 from 2018 (591). Amazonas is the worst-affected state, while Mato Grosso is also mentioned, with 100 deaths. In the Q&A session Rangel makes the point that most of these deaths are preventable and therefore a direct consequence of state neglect: in areas where indigenous people have access to some kind of healthcare, this problem does not occur to anything like the same extent.

Like Dom Roque, she blames the Brazilian government for incentivising invasions of indigenous lands and gutting the institutions responsible for protecting and supporting the indigenous population and their forests, such as Funai and Ibama. She says the only public institution which is sometimes responsive to the indigenous is the Public Prosecutor's Office (*Ministério Público*).

Roberto Liebgott's contribution contains an unequivocal accusation of genocide; he calls the increase in violence "a genocidal action on the part of the federal government". Finally, one point of interest from Antônio Eduardo's contribution is an explicit expression of support for the Brazilian press, highlighting their role in denouncing violence towards indigenous people and acknowledging that they have had their work curtailed, not only by the Covid-19 pandemic but also by acts of violence towards them.

## Technical problems

I encountered a number of problems with Facebook during the course of this pilot study. The methodology I used for September 2020 – of simply scrolling through the entire content for the month – was abandoned in favour of a keyword search, not only because the amount of content for the bigger organisations (APIB, COIAB, Mídia Índia) was so great, but also because Facebook is very demanding in terms of memory, meaning occasionally the page would auto-refresh and I would have to begin scrolling again from the beginning. There is also no way to jump back in time, rendering this method impractical for anything but recent content.

The keyword search is an improvement in that it provides a list of results to choose from, which don't auto-refresh or disappear. However, the search function is extremely basic, permitting a search by keyword and year but little else. Moreover, the search function also picks up the keywords when they appear in the comments below posts, meaning that posts may get erroneously included in the sample. It is also of little use when it comes to multimedia content, as it can only detect keywords when they appear in the text descriptions.

Finally, for some reason Facebook changes the destination for some of the hyperlinks. Some of the hyperlinks in the sample spreadsheet – that should link to the content analysed in this study – now link to irrelevant video content. This appears to happen at random and it seems pointless to go back to the spreadsheet and fix the broken links when they may soon become useless again.

To consult this content, copy and paste the text of the first line into the search box on the page of the relevant organisation.

## Conclusions and suggestions for further research

While the first search methodology was abandoned for the reasons outlined above, the keyword search was also somewhat problematic. The approach taken for this research was similar to the IBV media analysis, but throughout this study it became clear that the differences between newspaper and social media content necessitate a fresh approach.

It is not just that the formats are different: social media content has a different aim and seeks to address a different audience. It tends either to be brief, generic and superficial, providing a broad overview of a given issue (e.g., deforestation); or provides very brief information on a specific case (e.g., a report of an attack), without much context. In contrast, most newspaper content is far more sophisticated, providing detailed narratives on specific cases, situating them within the wider thematic context, and often providing multiple points of view on a given issue.

This ties into a broader point on the limitations of social media as a means of communication. There has been much discussion in recent years of the “echo chamber” effect of social media and this was clear to a large extent in this study. Much of the content seemed to be produced by indigenous Brazilians and their supporters, for consumption by a broadly similar audience. As such, it is unclear how much of an impact the content has outside of these networks.

To overcome this limitation and provide a more nuanced analysis, further research might look for continuities and disparities between indigenous social media communication and content on indigenous issues produced by other relevant parties, e.g., national and international press, government agencies (e.g., Ibama, Funai, Sesai), the Public Prosecutor’s Office, politicians, NGOs and so on. Obviously this would considerably broaden the scope of the research; to make the amount of content more manageable we could focus on a limited number of issues or stories.

Narrowing the focus in this manner would also help to filter out much of the superficial and generic content, allowing us to more easily select content that relates to one or more of our three study areas – this criterion was problematic throughout this study, with so much content posted without any geographical reference. By focusing, therefore, on a particular issue – say, *garimpo* in the Yanomami indigenous territory – and choosing keywords accordingly, we should overcome this problem.

The effectiveness of such an approach is shown by using the search term “Guarani-Kaiowá” in 2019, which generated a significant amount of relevant content relating to attacks on this particular indigenous group. This may be an exceptional case, given the extreme context of violence which the Guarani-Kaiowá inhabit. Nonetheless, it shows the importance of using specific keywords as much as possible. The generic keywords used (“Invasores” and “Genocídio”) tended to generate content that was less specific and not necessarily of use for the analysis.

Another potentially productive approach might be to look at specific outputs produced by the indigenous on their social media channels, for example, all the webinars in 2020 which deal with

the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, or all episodes of the “COIAB Informa” podcast series. Again, while narrower in focus, this would provide richer and more detailed content for analysis than a basic keyword search.

Another obvious direction for further research would be to look at other social media platforms; however, I am sceptical as to whether they would provide any better results than Facebook. While Twitter has an advanced search function, Instagram only has a basic search function allowing the user to search according to various categories (hashtag, user, location, keyword), but not to look for content within a particular Instagram account.

Moreover, with most tweets and Instagram posts being shorter than the average Facebook post, it is likely that content would be even more generic. And given the nature of social media coordination, it is probable that much of the relevant material on Twitter and Instagram has also been posted on Facebook, perhaps in a slightly longer form, meaning that analysis of these two platforms may well be of limited value. It might be more fruitful to analyse content uploaded to the respective external websites of these organisations, for example.

One final suggestion for more in-depth research might be to approach the communicators behind these Facebook pages – Mídia Índia might be interesting to talk to, for example – asking them in more detail about their social media strategy and their perceptions of its impact.