

On the waves of communication: Gypsies and Podcast

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Abstract: This article results from the integrated actions of the extension project “Gypsies and Podcasts: Anthropology as an Instrument for the Democratization of Knowledge,” carried out in collaboration with the Cultural Studies Group (GEC) of the Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB). It presents and reflects the effects of these actions among young gypsy participants. The project offered workshops for young people from the Gypsy community in Sousa-PB, integrating studies on Gypsy culture and identity with local knowledge, in addition to associating the practice of podcasts with the daily needs of the community. This research was qualitative and involved readings and debates on essential themes about the construction of Gypsy ethnic identities. Conducted over 12 months, the project unfolded in four phases: bibliographic research on Gypsy history and identities; exploration of fundamental concepts; active listening sessions and debates with the community’s youth; coordination with local institutions; digital media training; and podcast production. The data collected indicated a growing interest and engagement of young gypsies in the creation and dissemination of media that promotes knowledge and appreciation of their culture in society, facilitating the fluidity and mobility of identity boundaries between gypsies and non-gypsies. Furthermore, young Gypsies participating as “content creators” predominantly chose platforms offering higher visibility and monetization potential.

Keywords: gypsies; podcast; identity production.

1 Introduction

Exactly 13 years ago, at a time when broadcasting¹, as a means of mass communication, was to a great extent replaced by other more comprehensive and democratic means of digital technologies and social networks in Brazil, we had the opportunity, for a few months, to coordinate and promote a radio program of religious orientation by renting a specific time slot on Saturday mornings, on the almost onecentury-old radio program Rádio Jornal do

¹ It is essential to highlight the difference between radio communication, which basically involves transmission via TV (image and sound), and broadcasting, which only involves audio transmissions. Rádio Jornal do Comércio began its activities on July 3, 1948.



Comércio², in Pernambuco, broadcast through AM frequency (780KHz)². At that time, we were only responsible for the content we wanted to broadcast and the payment for using the company's gigantic radio infrastructure. Through the popular musical preferences of the audience, we were gradually conveying, not to say compelling others, to listen to our perspectives and specific ways of seeing the world.

At that time, other mass media and social networks had already emerged and become widespread³. Until then, we had never had direct contact with the world of radio broadcasting – or the styles of narration associated with it. Despite the lower sound quality of AM transmission compared to FM frequency due to technical interference, AM radio broadcasting had a much broader reach throughout the country's northeastern region. Besides, even though the Golden Age of radio broadcasting had long dissipated, it is still important to recognize the coverage and reception that the narratives produced by us would have among the listeners of that radio station. We were experiencing an accelerated transition period, if that is how we are going to name or classify it, between broadcast communications and those developed via the internet and digital media.

Unlike broadcasting, which requires a receiver device (radio), already very popular, and a vast production and transmission infrastructure built on a complex set of devices involved as the necessary technical apparatus, the means of communication via the internet emerged as instruments of the interconnection between the universe of content production and reception; the strengthening existing relations across borders; and, so to speak, the approximation of producer and consumers. Therefore, concerning the dissemination of information, which involves the individual and social narratives of many previously marginalized groups, new digital means of communication have made it possible to facilitate, if not speed up, production processes between users, streamlining communicative relationships and changing the world experience of those involved (Del Bianco, 2010). This is mainly due to the simplicity of the creation, which essentially, in some cases, only requires simple equipment, such as recording software and a microphone.

While the narratives of our voiceover echoed on the air of the radio program on the Pernambuco radio news station via AM frequency, in 2011, a new, recent, and disruptive form of communication (Dearman; Galloway, 2005) was already beginning to become popu-

² The construction and execution of the extension project, as well as the article's writing process, consider the experiences of two participants: a coordinating professor and a doctoral student in anthropology. This collaboration is evident in the article's writing, which employs a "we" form that reflects their intellectual backgrounds and developmental processes.

³ On average, social networks, as we know them today, emerged shortly after the 2000s, during the Internet 2.0 boom: Friendster (2002); MySpace (2002); LinkedIn (2003); Orkut (2004); Twitter (2006); WhatsApp (2009); Instagram (2010); Tiktok would only emerge in 2014.

lar among the media: the *Podcast*⁴. We were moving between worlds and waves, and we didn't even realize that in Brazil in 2006, Nerdcast and Café Brasil were among the first programs within this format of communication via the Internet. Podcasts, as means of communication and information dissemination, associate the possible forms of distribution of media content in audio format, which can also include video productions, with the possibilities of synchronous and asynchronous consumption, as well as the patterns of consumption and production on demand, representing a change from mass broadcasting to personalized media (Croftset al., 2005); which force other means of communication and their producers to reevaluate their procedures constantly, because:

Podcasting is not only a convergent medium (uniting audio, web, and portable media devices) but also a disruptive technology, which has already forced some radio professionals to reconsider established practices and prejudices about audiences, consumption, production, and distribution (Berry, 2006, p.144).

With the advent of podcasts, individuals previously limited by the radio infrastructure — characterized by complex authorizations and legal regulations for producing and broadcasting content—could now also become producers and distributors of information. Podcasts became a form of audiovisual content production that is, in a way, accessible, flexible, and free from immediate political regulations, narrowing and blurring the boundaries between those who produce and those who consume the demystification of the concepts and practices involved.

Furthermore, it is important to note that between the final years of the 20th century and the early years of the 21st century, programs that played fewer songs over a given period struggled to maintain audience levels compared to those that featured songs at increasingly shorter intervals. Considering the high acquisition costs of the sound devices available at the time, such as microsystems, walkmans, diskmans, and mp3 players, these became inaccessible to most of the poorest population. In most cases, people already had a portable radio in their homes: the famous battery-powered radio. Thus, the radio program met the need for entertainment and musical enjoyment among popular audiences, considering that, for a long time, “for many listeners, illiterate or not, the radio was often the only channel of information, knowledge and broader connection with universes far away from their community backyard” (Blois, 1996, p.15).

In this strain of thought, radio programs whose presenters resorted to long conversations or heated discussions, even if the topics were of public interest, generally quickly lost their audience. A clear example of this is that many radio programs at the time recurred to specific programs or schedules of “one hour of nonstop music.”

⁴ Emerged in 2004 (Bonini, 2020).

Interestingly, in contrast to previous mentions of broadcasting programs, *Podcasts* gained popularity and attracted more followers due to the engaging speeches and narratives featured in each episode. In podcasts, the narratives and debates prevail, compelling others to adopt the discourses and specific ways of seeing the world of the “*podcasters*,” who are the announcers of the episodes and their interviewees. Then emerged a new and intense wave of opinion formers from the most varied areas of social life, especially if radicalized: the social influencers.

Examining closer, we can perceive that, among other equally important factors, the success and the popular dissemination of podcasts relates to the fact that each episode can carry the “thingification” of the opinions of atomized individuals. This makes any human being - good at oratory or diction - a truthful and valued expert in pretty much everything, even when they are masters of almost nothing. In a society marked by the overlapping of the private over the public, and by growing social hypertrophies, this has resulted in the expansion of social spaces occupied by these digital media.

Paraphrasing Hannah Arendt (2012), who analyzed the social consequences of political totalitarianism in the 20th century, we could affirm that podcasts benefited from behavior patterns that arose because of broader social metamorphosis. These changes indicated alterations in how people interact with one another and the different types of environments, causing new behaviors to arise among consumers and within the diverse forms of cultural consumption. The one that stands out is the consumption of opinion.

Nevertheless, along with Bonini (2020, p.19), we believe that: (...) podcasting should be seen as a massive digital environment itself, not as an alternative to broadcasting, nor as a renewal of its form, with new emerging markets, business models, and a growing number of listeners and producers. Consequently, it is crucial to observe that a podcast is not simply a “radio program broadcast via the internet” but a communication space that carries within itself its specificities, which differentiates it from broadcasting. While a radio show requires a high level of human resources, materials, and complex infrastructures - inaccessible to most producers - a podcast can be produced by well-advised groups with cuttingedge equipment, or it can be put together with low technological resources and little personnel involved. This flexibility, in terms of productive characteristics, is one of the main factors behind its rapid and extensive popularization.

2 The Project gypsies and podcasts

From these premises, we developed the foundations for an academic extension proposal that connects the production of narrative meanings, dissemination of information through podcasts, and the culture of the Gypsy community in the State of Paraíba. Thus, this

article reflects on the implementation of an academic extension project titled “Gypsies and Podcasts: anthropology as a tool for the democratization of knowledge,” which was carried out in collaboration with the Cultural Studies Group at the Federal University of Paraíba (GEC-UFPB). The activity aimed to promote workshops for young people from the gypsy community in Sousa, PB. Through this partnership, the initiative integrated studies on gypsy culture with local knowledge, adopting an anthropological perspective. It also associated the practice of podcasting with the community’s needs. This exercise was part of an extension project focused on qualitative research, which involved readings and discussions about important topics related to the construction of gypsy ethnic identities.

Throughout the project, we developed an in-depth process of discussion and study of the cultural expressions of the gypsy community, in addition to digital technologies and the production and broadcasting of podcasts. This process was organized into four distinct but interconnected phases. The first phase involved conducting bibliographical research, which laid the theoretical groundwork for the project’s development. During the first phase, we conducted an online survey to explore the presence of other podcasts created by gypsy communities, as well as transmission channels and the equipment and software most commonly used for producing these podcasts. The second phase intended to hold listening sessions and debates with young people from the gypsy community of Sousa-PB, allowing the identification of their perspectives and specific needs concerning digital media. The third phase involved networking and establishing partnerships with local institutions, which was crucial to securing the support and resources needed to execute the project. Finally, the fourth phase focused on planning and producing the podcast, which served as a platform for the expression and dissemination of the gypsy culture.

It is important to highlight that this study focuses on the Calon ethnic group of gypsies residing in Sousa, Paraíba. According to information from Moonen (2011), this community is primarily composed of three groups that refer to themselves as “ranchos”. Ranches “A” and “B” are neighboring properties located right behind the Federal Agro-Technical School of Sousa and the Celso Mariz State Elementary School. Ranch “C” is situated about a kilometer away from the first two, next to the Animal Exhibition Park. Kinship ties unite these groups, with family serving as their primary network of support, where memories are created and activated from the past - referred to as “times from before” - until the present (Goldfarb, 2004). These communities reside in a neighborhood named Jardim Sorrilândia III, an area donated to them by local politicians in the 1980s and where they have lived for approximately 40 years.

We have adopted a qualitative research approach, which, according to Godoi and Balsini (1997), is a methodology for collecting data that focuses on understanding the complexity of relationships among people within a specific social context. Malhotra (2001, p.

33) defines qualitative research as “unstructured and exploratory research, based on small samples that offer insights into the context of the problem” being investigated. The research conducted in partnership with young gypsies had proactive actions and aimed to create spaces for debating and promoting academic production regarding their cultural diversity in Brazil and Paraíba. Additionally, it sought to provide essential tools for creating and broadcasting podcasts on leading platforms. The goal was to reduce prejudice and highlight the key demands of the gypsy community.

This research surveyed the main texts used in various cultural studies (Sant’Ana, 1983; Rodrigues, 1987; Locatelli, 1981; Mota, 1982; Pereira, 1985). These readings generated annotations that served as the basis for discussions in the podcast. Among the podcasts researched, within the time limits allocated for this part of the project, we did not come across any podcasts produced by recognized gypsy communities that, at the same time, addressed their identity and cultural expressions without limiting themselves to the strictly “spiritual” elements of gypsy culture. On the other hand, we found some podcasts produced by a group called “gypsies by Soul”⁵, which, for the most part, specifically addressed gypsy spirituality and religiosity⁶ linked to an alleged “gypsy magic” coming from Umbanda, Tarot, Búzios, among others, such as, for example, the podcast “Resenha Cigana”⁷. We also found several podcasts that, even though they dealt with gypsy themes, were not produced by gypsies, such as, for example, the podcast created by Maurício Meirelles⁸, entitled “What makes a person a gypsy? | cuts of guesses”⁹.

Regarding our research about programs, applications, and devices for producing and broadcasting podcasts — mainly those free of charge and available online¹¹ — we identified some of the most popular tools content creators use today. During the podcast production period, we used Photopea to edit banners and video covers, StreamYard to record and edit the first episode, and Camtasia to post-edit the master video. It is worth noting that most of these programs are designed for the Windows operating system. However, Linux operating systems offer several free-of-charge image and audio editing tools.

⁵ “Gypsies of the Soul” or “gypsies from the heart” are individuals who, for spiritual reasons or various other affinities, refer to themselves as gypsies.

⁶ Elements that also stood out in Goldfarb and Dantas’s (2019) research on social representations of gypsies in cyberspace.

⁷ Presented by an individual who identifies as a gypsy, priestess, medium and witch. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/@resenhacigana>. Accessed on February 30, 2024.

⁸ Reporter and comedian, owner of a channel with more than 585 thousand followers.

⁹ Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IP0E5PEpFV4>. Accessed on February 30, 2024. ¹¹ Many of these software programs are designed for Windows operating systems. However, it is important to note that Linux operating systems offer several image and sound editors free of charge.

- Paid recording and/or edition software: Adobe Audition, Logic Pro X, Cantasia, Hindenburg Journalist, Alitu, ProTools, Ringr, SondForge.
- Recording and/or editing Software free of charge: GarageBand, Audacity, Zencastr, Anchor, CapCut, StreamYard.
- Free image editing Software: Canva, Photoshop Web, Photopea, PicMonkey.

As the project progressed, we held regular meetings with team members to discuss the methodological approaches that would be used. We then conducted a listening phase with young people from the community, who were randomly selected based on a prior presentation of the project and their interest in participating. Following this phase, we organized debates to identify and prioritize their choices and demands on relevant topics.

The project involved a planning and organization phase tailored to meet local needs and community availability. For the workshops held in the city of Sousa-PB, we reached out to local leaders and the young population, who were the primary participants in the project. These young individuals were randomly selected from various groups within the community. While the focus was on the young population, older community members were also invited to share their insights on the discussed topics.

Later, we prepared a list of topics that were discussed during the workshops. Initially, we planned to hold two workshops in the city of Sousa; however, logistical challenges and associated costs led us to conduct them virtually instead. In the first workshop, we addressed the podcast model, defining titles, participants, external guests, and the use of digital tools for producing audio content. This stage also included training on how to use equipment such as cameras, recorders, and cell phones, along with guidance on achieving proper lighting for podcasts. We also adjusted the tools to match the needs and creativity of the group.

During the second workshop, we discussed the narratives, plots, stories, and themes that young participants would develop, emphasizing the importance of local knowledge, the stories of older generations, the memories of collective displacement, and the various forms of care amongst gypsy people. We focused on orality and group history, considering other narratives about life and the cultural boundaries that distinguish us and bring us together. Prominent topics presented included: the daily life of the gypsy community in Sousa, PB; the identity and lifestyle of this community; the relationship between gypsies and non-gypsies (gadjes or jurans); the suffering and poverty of gypsies, the lack of public policies for gypsies; their rich cultural heritage; experiences of prejudice; the scarcity of job opportunities for gypsies; the recognition of gypsies as a distinct people; the gypsy marriage; their mobility and traveling habits; the sedentarism and nomadism; the educational issues concerning gypsies; and the notable gypsies in Brazilian history. Regarding the concepts and categories that should be addressed in the podcasts, the following were collected: Identity, gypsyism,

prejudice, stigma, work, commerce, business, poverty, political neglect, “Buena Dicha”¹⁰, “times from before”, gypsy resident, traveler, faith, Saint Sara Kali, politics and rights.

The observations accomplished during the project's actions revealed a growing interest and engagement by young communities' gypsies in the creation and dissemination of digital content, a fact that corroborates what had already been observed by Goldfarb and Dantas (2019) among gypsies in Brazil who were users of social networks, blogs and other digital means of communication at the time. During the research and anthropological analysis concerning the social representations produced and propagated about gypsies in cyberspace, the authors were able to observe the engagement and activation of selected cultural traits selected by the gypsies researched within the scope of social networks.

The engaging of young gypsies in digital technologies as a means of communication and social visibility can not only promote knowledge about their culture but can also facilitate a more positive and assertive integration of gypsies into society in general. As a result, the project contributes significantly to the fluidity and mobility of identity boundaries between gypsies and non-gypsies, promoting a greater understanding and integration between the different ethnic groups involved.

3. Introducing the “communicative subjects”

Brazil is notoriously characterized by its immense sociocultural diversity, reflected in a wide range of genders, religions, ethnicities, and social classes. Among the least visible and often stigmatized ethnic minorities in Brazil are gypsy groups. Historical records, including literature and documents from the colonial period, indicate that these groups have been present in the country since the 16th century, as a result of exile policies imposed by the Portuguese crown - precisely the period of Brazil's colonization.

The portrayal of gypsies in Brazil and other parts of the world has been shaped by literary and artistic works that perpetuate negative stereotypes, such as vagrancy, poverty, idleness, roguery, and a general aversion to work. Such stereotypes have contributed to the creation of an image of marginalized individuals who are often voiceless. Consequently, such representations have served coercive political interests and helped legitimize laws that have further deepened the social stratification of these already very marginalized groups (Goldfarb; Dantas, 2020).

It should be stressed that, despite their long presence in Brazil since 1574, these groups remain largely invisible and still face stigma in the collective imagination. This situation raises questions about the current importance of the use of digital media and social

¹⁰ Type of palm reading mostly performed by gypsy woman.

networks by gypsies, which facilitates the production, resignification, and reproduction of positive representations more aligned with the gypsy identity in contemporary times.

We intend to say that the current representations that emerge in this new field of action, based on and fostered by gypsy culture itself, can appear in a way that is more detached from the stereotypes historically constructed in Brazil. Moreover, it reduces social and political invisibility, contributing to the increase of positive visibility of these communities. This is because we are not only addressing the social construction of this situation in political and social terms regarding gypsies in Brazil but, more importantly, the social production of negative portrayals that are much more harmful to a given ethnic group than its invisibility.

From a formal perspective, this invisibility started to be minimally addressed since the Federal Constitution of 1988, when the Brazilian State began to recognize, at least legally, the Gypsy people as a traditional community¹¹ and, therefore, worthy of their related rights. This is due to the fact that, historically, gypsies are culturally distinct groups with unique social organizations, reflecting their methods of territorial occupation, economic production, and traditions.

Gypsies can be considered ethnic groups that assert, either directly or indirectly, their forms of social distinction from national society. The term “gypsy” refers to a specific cultural group that identifies itself as different and is perceived as such by others (Barth, 1969). This term comes from the Spanish word “gitano” and the English word “gypsy”, having its probable origin in the Greek word “Atsingani,” meaning “untouchables”. This latter expression was used to refer to gypsies in the Byzantine period. “Gitano” and “Gypsy” come from “Egyptian” due to the initial belief that these people were originally from Egypt. On the other hand, these terms are considered pejorative by many gypsy activists, mainly when used by non-gypsy individuals, because of processes of historical erasure, silencing, and stigmatization of these groups. The many gypsy groups prefer to use their own classifications, such as Rom and Romani, or even their ethnonyms, terms that identify their various ethnicities: Rom, Calon, Sinti, and Kalderash, among others.

[...] by “gypsies” we understand a generic categorization that takes cultural traits into account, often not observed in certain groups, and that, because of situational and circumstantial settings, have been accepted and erroneously reproduced in the popular imagination, such as acts of wandering and begging, as well as illicit habits or an unruly life, that is, without rules or social norms that lead to more normative and legislated societal standards (Dantas, 2017, p.43,44).

¹¹ According to Decree No. 6040, dated February 7, 2007, traditional communities are groups that are culturally distinct and recognize themselves as such, having their forms of social organization and occupying specific territories and natural resources, which are essential to their cultural, social, religious, ancestral and economic reproduction, using knowledge, innovations, and practices that are generated and passed on through tradition.

We can see that, in contrast to the various negative stereotypes historically associated with terms like “laziness,” “unwillingness to work,” and “vagrancy,” —which are often viewed as natural and cultural traits of the gypsy people — the diverse community continues to use ethnonyms that reflect their occupational identities. These ethnonyms, which represent the names of their clans or groups, are intrinsically linked to the types of work they engage in. In many cases, the utilization of these ethnonyms reinforces the idea that working is a fundamental and integral part of their collective identity, reflecting the hegemonic way in which labor is perceived and valued by Gypsy communities (Goldfarb; Dantas, 2020).

In Brazil, gypsies are known by various denominations, such as Rom, Roma, Romani, Sinti, Kalderash, Matchuaia, Horachané, and Calon, among others, depending on their origin and cultural traditions. Most gypsies in Brazil are Calon¹², who have migrated from the Iberian Peninsula in the 16th century.

In most Brazilian states, including Paraíba, many gypsy groups and families are now settled, residing in the peripheral areas of cities and facing stigmatization and precarious infrastructure conditions. These communities also deal with the lack of essential services and high unemployment rates. Ethnographic studies show that these locations are often stigmatized and marginalized (Borges, 2007; Goldfarb, 2013; Bareicha, 2013).

The gypsy community in Sousa, Paraíba, is situated in Jardim Sorrilândia, located 440 km from the capital, João Pessoa, at Km 463 of BR-230, and 3 km away from the city center. The settling processes began in that territory during the 1980s. It started to be explored in the 1990s by Frans Moonen (1993) and Maria Patrícia Lopes Sulpino (1999), who initiated the first ethnographic research about the matter, which later reverberated in several scientific publications (Goldfarb, 2013; Goldfarb; Toyansk; Chianca, 2019; Goldfarb; Batista, 2019). According to Moonen (1993), in January 1993, there were 445 gypsies residing in Sousa/PB, even though the 1991 IBGE Census made no reference whatsoever regarding gypsy populations in Brazil, nor did it address the gypsy populations in Sousa, PB. The 2011 IBGE Census was the first to provide concrete data on gypsies living in camps across Brazil, although it did not include data about settled gypsies.

From the public civil action¹³ of special collective urban usucapion, implemented by the Public Prosecutor’s Office in the city of Sousa-PB via the Federal Public Ministry in 2021, we noted that the gypsy community of Sousa consists of 522 families related by kinship ties. These families use the territory in accordance with their customs, traditions, and practices.

¹² We are applying the Convention for the Spelling of Tribal Names (1954), which was approved at the 1st Brazilian Anthropology Meeting in 1953. According to the convention, “tribal names [...] will not have Portuguese inflection for number or gender, whether used as nouns or adjectives” (ABA, 1954, p. 152). For instance, it is written as: the Rom, the Calon, the Sinti, and the Kalderash, among others.

¹³ Civil Inquiry No. 1.24.002.000443/2017-404 (Brazil, 2021).

With a total population of approximately 1,845 people, divided into four communities, each group has its leader and a registered Association: (1) the community of Pedro Maia, consisting of 155 families (480 people), represented by the Pedro Benício Maia Association, whose president is Bozano (Francisco Lacerda de Figueiredo); (2) the Otávio Maia community, consisting of 157 families (489 people), represented by the Otávio Maia Association, whose president is Maninho (Cícero Romão Batista); (3) the Vicente Vidal de Negreiros community, consisting of 98 families (429 people), represented by the Vicente Vidal Association, chaired by Sidney (Francisco Alfredo Maia); and (4) the Manoel Valério Correia community, consisting of 112 families (447 people), represented by the Manoel Valério Association, whose president is João Viana de Alencar, known as Eládio (Brasil, 2021, p. 14).

We aimed to identify individuals who had affiliations or contacts with digital media, audiovisual programs, computer graphics, manipulation of applications, or computer programs related to the production of images, sound, and text. Additionally, we recognized those who were familiar with accessing, producing, and reproducing narrative or informative content, which could facilitate the technical training process for the participants involved. Based on this mapping, we found that a specific group of young gypsies had begun creating homemade recordings for a YouTube channel focused on “Calon humor.” These recordings revealed communicative abilities among the youngsters, who uploaded their first videos in December 2020 during the COVID19 pandemic, an event that ravaged the world and triggered a significant increase in media productions and internet access, as many people experienced social isolation. In the young gypsies’ YouTube channel, with its 1,780 (one thousand seven hundred and eighty) subscribers, the available videos typically contain less than 10 minutes of content and, on average, have around 400 views each. The highest number of views for a single video on their channel is 4,400.

The channel mentioned earlier, announced as one produced by a “non-sense crew with the mission of making you smile” and which already had more than 400 videos uploaded, sought to disseminate in an essayistic way the cultural aspects of the daily activities of the community and the points of view of those involved in the recording and the addressed topics. In short, the content produced did not follow a formal or methodological standard, flowing more like a spontaneous demand without further formalities.

Even without an apparent script or line of argumentation observed in the video’s scripts – a recurring fact –, the narrative content of the recordings moved between humor, jokes, analysis of everyday events in gypsy communities, easy-going criticism, freedom of speech, emerging information, survival tips, demands for rights and public assistance; as well as the presentation of culture, singing, and dancing. We also observed the affirmation of an imminent *gypsiness*: the Calon community was the largest settled gypsy group in Brazil. Despite this, the usage of parody and performative simulations of what they per-

ceive as humor is particularly notable. In the blend of the underlined elements, the group subtly presents the cultural aspects of the Calon community, based in Sousa, delimiting its identity boundaries in the flows of digital media and demarcating the place of the other – “non-Calon” – considering the rhetoric and the narratives present in the humorous polls and social satires, which are addressed in their Youtube channel’s episodes in a relaxed and informal way.

Nevertheless, the rich performances of cultural content found in the videos, mixed with partially controlled and unpredictable irreverence, along with a relaxed production atmosphere, can have an effect that is precisely the opposite of that declared and expected by the community, which we believe to be the expansion of positive social visibility of this socially marginalized group. This could have an antagonized effect precisely because of its informal and casual nature: it could validate the negative stereotypes historically reproduced about the gypsy populations of Brazil. This is mainly because - apparently - there is no concern about what they (non-gypsies) will think of this.

In other words, the digital media produced for the promotion of cultural content and the exposure of the gypsy way of life often reflects interethnic relations and the construction of group identities. However, this content is frequently created in a random and uncommitted manner. As a result, the reception of this media by a society that already holds negative representations of these ethnic groups cannot be easily predicted or controlled, resulting in outcomes that are, in most cases, negative ones. However, regarding such an approach, which requires a more in-depth scientific study, we cannot dwell on the brief words of this work.

Fortunately, those videos contain not only potential risks but also potentialities and agencies that have not yet been elaborated and improved. The group exuded inventive capacity and a desire to discover new grounds on the waves of digital communication. For this reason, it became our most viable option for protagonists to produce podcasts. Thus, we chose, from that group, two of the young gypsies.

4 In the virtual world of digital communication, not everything navigates “good waves”

Thinking about preserving the privacy of the individuals involved in the actions of the extension project - out of respect for the culture and individualities involved - we renamed the actors so that we can ethically maintain the core of the research and the data collection information contained in the descriptions of this article, specifically, descriptions of the setbacks that occurred during the development of the project among the young people of that community. The two people chosen for the project, both young Calon gypsies from Rancho de Baixo’s community, based in the city of Sousa, Paraíba, had different experiences con-

cerning studies and professional development. While the youngest was still a high school student, the second one had already graduated from a college education and obtained a specialization degree.

Despite one of the participants having an academic background that we believed would facilitate the planned bibliographic studies for our theoretical meetings, we were unable to engage the two young gypsies in reading and discussion sessions focused on central texts by renowned researchers and gypsy experts. We occasionally rescheduled the study meetings to accommodate the timings and needs of the two young gypsies, which had no effect whatsoever, as there was always some momentary impossibility on the part of the two young gypsies. Due to this impossibility, which was repeatedly present, we continued the studies solely with the university members of the Cultural Studies Group – GEC/UFPB.

After overcoming this phase, we continued with the audiovisual techniques workshops, which covered sound equipment, lighting, and transmission on digital platforms such as YouTube, StreamYard, and Instagram. We also finalized the details for creating and producing our first podcast, including selecting the episode's date, guests, and topics. Despite some challenges that affected the frequency of our discussions and workshop meetings, the project managed to hold two sessions.

After several discussions and arrangements, the young gypsies chose a name for their podcast: "Ágora TalkCast." The name references ancient Greece and a local called Agora, a central marketplace that served as a gathering place for community assemblies. We overlooked something significant: a well-structured podcast made by non-gypsies and named "Ágora Talks". This podcast is broadcast on a YouTube channel with over six thousand followers and over 400 well-produced posted episodes.

"Ágora Talks" is designed as a space for relaxed conversations with experts rather than solely interviews. The aim is to create a contrast between philosophy and humor, blending learning with enjoyment. However, we discovered at least four other podcasts with the same name on Spotify. This finding happened only toward the end of the project's validity period.

Those days, believing in the innovation of the name, we organized several meetings. These meetings aimed to define the themes for each episode, develop a structured script, select our guests, and ultimately determine the channels for publishing the podcast. At first, there was a refusal to use predetermined scripts or any element that tied them to something beyond their momentary sensibility. They preferred to adopt an approach marked by informality and improvisation, perhaps influenced by cultural features historically associated with "times from before" (Goldfarb, 2004) or the golden age of nomadic travel and territorial transitions.

Regarding the broadcast channels, despite the technical problems faced in simultaneous broadcasting on different platforms — due to the lack of specialized, specific, and paid programs — the young gypsies insisted on preferring to broadcast via Instagram, as they considered that the platform offered more significant views potential. In contrast, the project’s technical team advocated direct recording (live) for the YouTube channel, with subsequent editing for Instagram broadcasts. This impasse ended up dividing opinions among the young gypsies, leading them to opt for different paths. The division was evident during the first episode of the podcast, marked by the absence of the youngest gypsy, who announced his unavailability shortly before the start of the recording.

The selection of broadcast channels marked a significant moment for the young gypsies involved, as it was closely tied to their self-identification as “content creators.” While this activity is not yet regulated by the Brazilian legal system or the Consolidation of Labor Laws (CLT), it was officially included in the Brazilian Classification of Occupations (CBO) on February 23, 2021. This document governs the recognition, naming, and coding of occupations in the Brazilian labor market. It also enumerates and describes the various types of work in the country. In the CBO Online consultation, the creators, generators, and producers of digital content are classified as digital influencers based on code 2534-10, and are described as those who

manage social networks, monitor social media, and relationship activities with the public/followers. They create strategic digital marketing planning and develop content production. They manage influencer marketing and performance evaluation results (Brazil, 2023).

The simplified use of elementary equipment, such as recording software and microphone for the creation of digital content, associated with the goal of “going viral”¹⁴ and its consequent monetization¹⁵, contributed to the rapid and exponential growth of “content creators” in all age groups, social classes and throughout the world. Analogous to that, the desire for rapid social ascension - often associated with influencers who manage to go viral - has become a significant motivation among the poorer social strata, including the Calon youth located there. Informally, since most of the content that goes viral on social media is

¹⁴ “Going viral” refers to a phenomenon characterized by a rapid, substantial, and extensive rise in views that a specific digital production achieves within a brief period after its release.

¹⁵ Monetization is the process of converting produced content into revenue, benefiting content creators, companies, and platforms in the digital media landscape. The ways to monetize digital content vary depending on the policies of each platform or publishing channel. For instance, on YouTube, monetization occurs through the display of ads during videos, with revenue generated based on the number of views. On Instagram, monetization typically happens through promoting products or services from other companies and brands, which can include views and product sales.

related to elements like ridicule, embarrassment, unusual responses, brutal or unexpected actions, moments of lost or found tenderness, and uncontrolled fun — behaviors that are often unpredictable —, the spreading of this random content has become a life goal for many Brazilians, including many young gypsies.

When selecting platforms to share their productions, young gypsies prioritized those that could reach the largest audience. This strategic choice reflects a strong understanding of digital dynamics and the importance of maximizing the visibility of their cultural productions. By utilizing these digital platforms—equipped with algorithms that increase content reach—they not only enhanced the spread of information about gypsy culture but also empowered young gypsies to actively promote and preserve their cultural identity in the contemporary world, also representing an opportunity for income generation.

Despite the challenges faced during the project, we managed to create spaces for the debate and promotion of academic production work within the local Gypsy community. We also provided essential tools for developing and disseminating their first podcast, which was made available on major broadcasting platforms, achieving its main objectives. In this context, we produced an episode of “Ágora TalkCast” titled “18 Years Since the Creation of the Gypsies’ National Day in Brazil.” This episode featured a panel that included a Calon gypsy doctor and professor from UEFES, a Calin (the feminine form of Calon) pedagogue who is a representative of a Gypsy Association, and a young Calon marketing consultant who represented the gypsy community in Sousa-PB.

In this episode, the guests shared their life stories and professional experiences, discussing the main challenges faced by gypsies in contemporary society. Among the topics addressed were structural racism, stigmatization, difficulties in accessing education and citizenship, lack of recognition, and the lack of public policies to reduce prejudice and discrimination against this ethnic group. Cultural aspects were also emphasized and appreciated, such as gypsy dance and music, along with the Juninhar Festival, promoted by the State of Paraíba since 2022, which the Calon de Sousa considers a vital celebration of gypsy traditions, bringing together members of the community from different regions.

5 Final considerations

At the beginning of this article, which synthesizes the research, observations, and actions of the “Gypsies and Podcasts” project — aimed at presenting and reflecting on the effects of its initiatives among young Calon gypsies from the town of Sousa/PB —, we explored a personal experience that moved between worlds and waves, illustrating the birth of a new means of mass communication: the podcast. Over the years and with the rapid

advancement of digital technologies, the podcast has established itself as a communicative space with its own characteristics, distinct from the traditional broadcasting system.

In the context of these disruptive transformations, we present the foundations and methodologies that guided the development of the project's four phases. In the same section of the article, we highlight the main results of the research conducted to make the extension project viable, including the literature and texts used in the studies with the gypsies, the key software necessary for producing podcasts, and the themes, concepts, and categories they preferred to address in the episodes.

Regarding our communicative subjects, who were both the object and the participants of our studies, we present a brief history of the Calon gypsies, highlighting some essential characteristics of the gypsy population in the city of Sousa/PB. This community, mobilized by the extension project, has striking specificities as Calon gypsies, living in a structurally precarious area of a city located in the backlands of one of the states in the Brazilian Northeast. Some of these specificities may have contributed to the fact that, in the virtual world of digital communication, not everything flows in "good waves", and because we consider this to be of great importance, we have emphasized some of the setbacks faced during the project. These challenges reflect the circumstances rather than the individuals.

After the first podcast, produced and broadcast by young gypsies, we held a meeting to evaluate the project. During this evaluation, we observed a significant increase in interest and engagement among these young people in creating and sharing media that promotes and values their culture within our society. This phenomenon contributes to the fluidity and mobility of identity boundaries, facilitating the integration between gypsies and non-gypsies. However, while the data indicates greater involvement of young gypsies in digital media production as "content creators," they showed a clear preference for digital platforms that offered higher visibility and better monetization opportunities.

The experience gained over the 12 months of executing the project revealed the challenges that extension or research projects often encounter. The setbacks we faced reflected the rigid demands of academic bureaucracies rather than the cultural characteristics of the participants involved. We recognized the need for university extension projects, particularly in their formal requirements, to better accommodate the challenges of interaction between universities and civil society, which requires a level of flexibility that aligns with the shifting identity boundaries of those involved. We learned a great deal about the existing gaps between academia and traditional gypsy communities. However, we acknowledge that this topic deserves further exploration in a future article.

The gypsy community evaluated the initiative of this extension project positively, noting that it provided greater visibility for their engagement on social media through the organization and promotion of discussions about their needs and rights as a traditional Brazilian

community. In addition, it increased active participation in choosing topics and in the podcast's production, resulting in content that resonated with a broader audience. This effort demonstrated how university extension programs can enhance the understanding of the life experiences of social protagonists, such as gypsies, by combining their cultural knowledge with an educational perspective. It also created a space for exchange and connection between UFPB students, gypsies, and the surrounding society.

It is crucial to stress the importance of conducting more in-depth studies on how young gypsies have assimilated and reinterpreted the use of social networks, both as mechanisms for cultural dissemination and as sources of income. These sources, which were initially complementary, can evolve into primary means of material and social advancement, especially in the "content creators" realm.

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