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Podcasting collaborations and ontological relationships of being ‘here’ and ‘there’ in the lower Marañón River in Peru

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Abstract

This article is about podcasts and mobile phones not only as “daily technologies of life” but also as ways to convey personal stories and to do ethnographic research. However, we do not romanticize the use of digital technology for anthropological research. We use podcasts as a form to write our ethnographic work with our collaborators, and also as a way to keep in contact with our collaborators while in a global pandemic. For podcasts, we had to do several interviews and later edited them as both dialogues and individual stories. Interviews were mostly done by other digital devices such as WhatsApp, Facebook messenger, and telephone calls. The stories in our podcast series are mostly about an Amazonian indigenous community struggling to survive the global pandemic after several oil spills and other epidemics. Podcasts create a sort of intimacy and co-presence stimulating a multimodal, sensorial experience. However, power relations do not disappear, nor did they become invisible. Rather, power relations are accommodated in the new audio/digital scenario.

Nosotros también queremos informar y no tenemos cómo informar, no tenemos ninguna calidad para poder informar. Usted que estás allá, nosotros que estamos acá así tal vez sí puede saber el Estado qué necesidad tenemos acá. (…) tal vez hacen algo por nosotros así también.

We also want to inform, and we do not have a way to inform, we have no quality to inform. You are there, we are here, so maybe the State can know what we need here (…) Maybe they do something for us as well.

Marlita Salinas, moradora in the lower Marañón[1]

The Covid-19 pandemic challenged the way we do field research in Anthropology and in other social sciences and humanities. Since there was no possibility for doing in-person fieldwork, new challenges emerged in the use of digital technologies and social media. Remote fieldwork has already been used. For instance, Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict did it during World War II (Postill 2017). Remoteness only becomes a problem when fieldwork is purely defined as a place and presence is limited to in-person research (Postill 2017). It is a misinterpretation to suggest that something is necessarily missed in research mediated by a screen, or that digital ethnography is always less in quality compared to in-person ethnographic studies. Still, there is a shared common sense that there is something intrinsically different between online and offline in qualitative research; sometimes online and offline research are even dichotomized.

However, Boellstorff (2016) has written about the ontological and dynamic relationships between online and offline. Online-offline is not a polarity, rather it is a flux of relationships. One of the problematic issues that Boellstorff discusses in regards

[1] Conversation by phone with Marlita Salinas, April 27th 2020.

to online-offline is precisely the way anthropological studies depart from difference rather than from similarity. Discussing with Gupta & Ferguson (1997), for whom the main argument is that the field is somewhere different from home, Boellstorff (2016) argued that in digital ethnography, the sites and places of research intermingle. And, more often it is from this closeness and similarity that the problem emerges. Mediated by a screen, doing research using online social media has its challenges and requires constant reflexivity, as Ardévol (*et.al.*, 2003) recommends.

In early 2020, we were doing field research in the lower Marañón river basin in Loreto in the Peruvian Amazon when the COVID-19 global pandemic started. We were researching the relations between the Kukama Kukamiria people and the State after the oil spill in 2014. The event was caused by the rupture of North Peruvian Pipeline,[2] a long piece of infrastructure that transports oil from the Amazon to a Northern coastal port in Peru for distillation and export. The spillage of 2,358 barrels of oil in the Cuninico stream, which is a tributary of the Marañón River, caused severe damage and significantly altered the family and communal life in Cuninico community and its neighbouring communities. The relation with the State changed as well as the communities organized in the Federación de Pueblos Cocamas Unidos del Marañón (FEDEPCUM, Federation of United Cocamas Peoples of the Marañón) and started to participate in meetings, lawsuits and protests claiming for their rights. Our initial plans to finish our *in-situ* research were postponed several times as the pandemic became more aggressive in the region. In his message to the nation on Sunday, March 15th 2020, President Martin Vizcarra stated that we were in a health emergency and declared quarantine and curfew for 15 days, which later turned out to be many more

[2] The North Peruvian Pipeline was built in the 1970s and runs across indigenous territories, including those of the Kukama Kukamiria people. It runs through a significant part of the Amazonian territory starting at Station 1 in San José de Saramuro, in the lower Marañón (Loreto region), to the Bayóvar Terminal on the northern Peruvian coast (Piura region). The rupture in 2014 happened in Section 1 of the pipeline.

months. During these months, we never stopped "phoning the field" (Norman, 2000), communicating with the women and men with whom we were collaborating.

The *field* in fieldwork is not always *in situ*. The discussion brought up by *Writing Culture* (Clifford & Marcus 1986) opened the debate about the field not only as a place but always as a site under construction that requires reflexivity and positionality. Since then, the expansion of globalization and the development of new technology have informed field research in hybrid forms. We could travel to do research in the Northern Amazon region and continue with our research by phone and instant messaging. Or, we could do more interdisciplinary and collaborative field research designing para-sites (Elhaik & Marcus 2012: 103) – that is, designing methodological contexts for qualitative ethnographic research. The field was both there and with us, as we transitioned between online and offline realms and related to these spaces and presences in many different ways. It is this ontological dimension that we will explore in this paper following the path of the stories people from Cuninico told us about Covid-19.

This article is about podcasts and mobile phones not only as "daily technologies of life" (in the terms described by Gómez & Harindranah, 2020) but also as ways to convey personal stories and to do ethnographic work. However, we do not romanticize the use of digital technology for anthropological research. We use podcasts as a form to write our ethnographic work with our collaborators, and also as a way to keep in contact with our collaborators while in a global pandemic. For podcasts we had to do several interviews that later we edited as both dialogues and single stories. Interviews were mostly done by other digital devices such as WhatsApp, Facebook messenger, and telephone calls. The stories in the podcast series are mostly about an Amazonian indigenous community struggling to survive the global pandemic after several oil spills and other epidemics. Podcasts create a sort of intimacy and co-presence stimulating a multimodal, sensorial experience. However, power relations

did not disappear, nor did they become invisible. Rather, power relations were accommodated in the new audio/digital scenario (Cook, 2020).

Nuestras historias desde Cuninico. El Podcast was born as an initiative to give an account of the stories that people shared with us. Marlita, vice president of the *Asociación de Mujeres Indígenas de Cuninico* (ADMIC, Association of Indigenous Women of Cuninico), asked us to help them "to communicate" what happened during the initial moments of the global pandemic because she was "here," meaning in Cuninico community and, we were "there." That is, in Lima, the coastal city and capital of Peru. Peru is a very centralized state and most of the government decision-making takes place in Lima. Therefore, the podcast was born to help raise the voices of those whom we were working with in the field. Maggio (2007), based on Spivak's proposal, explains that the question about the voice is not if the subaltern can speak, but "Can the subaltern be heard?" He pointed out that the problem is in the capacity to translate and interpret in order that people can listen. But, as Appadurai (1988) writes, in ethnography, the problem of the voice is also the problem of multiplicity and representation where ventriloquism is always present. In this article, we also reflect on the dilemmas of making the voices of Cuninico being heard. Whose voices do we hear? How, by listening to these voices, is distance problematized?

In many ways, podcasts resemble radio and renew their storytelling forms (McHugh, 2016). And the radio is still one of the most important media communications in Peru, especially in remote areas where connectivity is scarce. It is used by indigenous peoples to get information for themselves about the state policies, but also to make their voices heard. By situating the role of the radio in the lower Marañón River basin along with its uses by indigenous populations, we will provide some contextual information about the pandemic in the area, and the ways in which a group of Kukama Kukamiria in Loreto survived the hard days of Covid-19, mostly with their own knowledge. We will discuss how we recorded the podcasts and their contents

paying attention to the ethnographic research, as well as to the different mediating screens.

Sharing uncertainty and deafness from different positions

In April 2020, the heads of United Nation agencies issued an open letter stating that humanity faced one of the most difficult challenges since World War II. They warned that people would require humanitarian aid and supplies to fight against the "invisible enemy," Covid-19.[3] Latin American countries like Peru became critical areas due to structural conditions of poverty, inequality, and precarious institutions. In these countries, indigenous people, specifically the elderly and indigenous women, considered as vulnerable populations, were the ones affected and the last being helped by the States.[4] In Peru, the first intercultural policies to attend to them were approved two months after the government issued a declaration of health emergency and quarantine with strict confinement measures.[5] The first plan and strategies to protect the indigenous peoples[6] were based on prevention, but the Covid-19 pandemic had

[3] *WHO*, April 20, 2020. "Los organismos de las Naciones Unidas lanzan un llamamiento urgente a financiar el sistema mundial de suministros de emergencia para combatir la COVID-19". <https://www.who.int/es/news/item/20-04-2020-un-agencies-issue-urgent-call-to-fund-the-global-emergency-supply-system-to-fight-covid-19>

[4] *United Nations*, July 2020. "Informe: El impacto del Covid-19 en América Latina y el Caribe". <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/ES SG-Policy-brief-COVID-LAC.pdf>

[5] On March 15, 2020, Supreme Decree 044-2020-PCM was published, which declared the State of National Emergency, and Emergency Decree 026-2020, which imposed mandatory quarantine for fifteen days with a curfew included. These measures have been extended with periodic modifications to the present day.

[6] *Estrategia Multisectorial para protección de los pueblos indígenas u originarios en el marco de la emergencia sanitaria por el COVID-19*. Legislative Decree 1489, *El Peruano*, May 10th 2020; and *Plan de intervención del Ministerio de Salud para comunidades indígenas y centros poblados rurales de la Amazonía peruana*. Ministerial Resolution 308-2020-MINSA, *El Peruano*, May 22nd 2020.

already spread throughout cities like Lima and Iquitos, the capital of Loreto region, and began to spread towards Amazonian indigenous communities.

In Lima and other major cities, we saw the news every day on cable television or the Internet about how hundreds of people got sick and died around the world. Governments announced very diverse measures, warning that they could vary because Covid-19 was an unknown virus. We all felt uncertainty and vulnerability in the face of this situation. In the communities of the lower Marañón river, watching television or having a telephone (cell phone) or Internet connection is expensive. It means paying for oil to turn on motors in each house for electricity. Still, it is the only way to listen to the news and talk to relatives, and in this case also with us. In a telephone conversation with Natalia Teagua, member of the Organización de Mujeres Indígenas del Marañón (ORDEMIM, Organization of Indigenous Women of Marañón) in May 2020[7], she told us that listening to the world news about the virus in Cuninico made her feel truly sad. "Watching the news of what is happening in Lima, sometimes we start to see it on the Internet. And then we are thinking, seeing that so many people die, sometimes it makes me want to cry…" Almost without thinking, one of us answered: "Yes, it is hard. Sometimes, the truth is that it also makes me want to cry. I've already cried."

Brazilian anthropologist, Aparecida Vilaça (2020) says that for the first time, a pandemic makes us all indigenous because it makes us feel despairing and fragile because we are facing an unknown ailment against which we have no antibodies or cure. Vilaça describes how indigenous peoples, like the Kukama Kukamiria and others, experience the Covid-19 pandemic from a historical perspective. Their lives are marked by successive epidemics such as flu, cholera, smallpox, among others. These epidemics can be traced throughout history, since the first contact with the western world. Moreover, the alteration of the ecosystems due to the exploitation of their territories has prevented them from fleeing into the forest. These epidemics are

[7] Telephone interview with Natalia Teagua, May 6th 2020.

lived memories for themselves and these are what they relate to in order to explain about Covid-19. Throughout these years and epidemics, they have seen their families getting ill and dying to the point of extinction for the entire peoples.

Marlita Salinas[8] told us that in Cuninico people were afraid. Even she felt depressed, as she told us: "Oh I felt bad, dying, oh no, I don't know, I didn't feel like anything. Oh no, I don't know, ideas came to me." We asked her "but, what ideas came to you?" She answered: "The idea [that] came to me is that we are going to die because, I was more worried about my grandson, my daughter-in-law in the city, what he is going to eat when, when the entrance closes, where they are going to live? All that worried me." Marlita explained to us that her brother lives in Lima. And, when she felt depressed she thought her family would die and she would no longer see her brother or the rest of her family. That's when she decided to read the Bible.

Expressions of depression and solitude were common in our conversations and these were feelings that we all felt in common. However, we don't have the same histories and conditions to access state services *vis a vis* we don't live under the same circumstances. As Judith Butler (2020) states, the virus does not discriminate, but humans do, shaped by intertwined power relationships such as racism and capitalism. It seems that there is a hierarchy between those who at all costs will be protected and those whose lives are considered not worth protecting from disease and death. The people in Cuninico realized that. Indigenous people perceived themselves as being left behind from the main decision-making during the health emergency.

Indigenous organizations called for health attention from the beginning of the pandemic using social media such as their fan pages on Facebook or institutional webpages as well as local radio and television. The indigenous leaders not only accused the State of abandoning the indigenous population and denounced the illness and death of indigenous elders, but instead presented their proposals to improve

[8] Telephone interview with Marlita Salinas, April 27th 2020.

healthcare and prevent the spread of Covid-19. So one of the actions that caused them more outrage were the press conferences and "messages to the nation" given by the President and the ministries from the government palace in Lima, transmitted by television, radio, and social networks. In those first events, indigenous peoples were not mentioned, the questions from the press about plans or actions for indigenous people were avoided, or the issue was referred to in a general way. The national indigenous organization *Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana* (AIDESEP, Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest) considered that an "unacceptable silence, which reveals that… the Amazonian indigenous, once again, is invisible for the State, and therefore, it is responsible for continuing the historical national racism…"[9]

The silence of the State caused AIDESEP and other representative indigenous organizations to sue the central and regional governments during the next months for ethnocide by omission and discrimination in national courts and international organizations.[10] Indigenous organizations claimed that there were no statistics about contagions in their communities and that the State did not properly consider their situation of vulnerability — for instance, endemic and pre-existing diseases, extreme poverty and remoteness, and lack of health centres with personnel and biomedical equipment. In Kukama Kukamiria communities located in the lower courses of the Marañón river, oil pollution increased their vulnerability. The medical staff of the

[9] AIDESEP. April 20th 2020. "Denuncia al Estado del Perú ante el Sistema Internacional de Protección de los Derechos Humanos". http://aidesep.org.pe/sites/default/files/media/noticia/Denuncia%20AIDESEP%20ante%20la%20%20ONU.pdf

[10] On April 20th 2020 AIDESEP sent a letter to the international human rights organizations denouncing the Peruvian State. Then, on May 29th, the Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas (ONAMIAP) initiated a legal action against the main ministries for putting the lives of indigenous people at risk by not implementing a differentiated health policy during the pandemic. On July 17th, the Organización Regional de los Pueblos Indígenas del Oriente (ORPIO) did the same including the Regional Health Directorate of Loreto and the Regional Government of Loreto.

health centre in Cuninico that provides care to several communities did not have equipment for the treatment of illnesses caused by oil pollution or for the prevention and care of respiratory conditions brought on by the pandemic. The health care plans for those affected by oil spills in Peru involved epidemiological and sanitary surveillance. It was implemented by mid-2020 when most people in Cuninico, like in other indigenous communities in Loreto, had already been infected by Covid-19.[11]

Several indigenous organizations like the *Organización Regional de los Pueblos Indígenas del Oriente* (ORPIO, Regional Organization of the Indigenous People of the Eastern Amazon) explained that the Ministry of Health and the Dirección Regional de Salud (DIRESA) in Loreto "...do not provide communication spaces via radio and telephony to transmit recommendations from doctors to consultations of community members, considering the absence of the State..."[12] Some initiatives by the Ministry of Culture were criticized for their delay and cultural inadequacy. For instance, among the programs criticized were the translation of preventive measures and recommendations about care into 21 of 48 indigenous languages through mini programmes and radio spots, and the set-up of a system of remote translation and interpreting, known as the Translation and Interpreting in Indigenous Languages Hub (CIT) in public services, that some research (García, Haboud, Howard, Manresa & Zurita, 2020) considered suitable. The initial words of Marlita, that they need us because they do not have "quality to inform" society and the State, summarizes all that was happening. The use of the Internet by indigenous organizations made evident the inability and unwillingness of the State to listen to indigenous people, and let

[11] *Documento técnico "Modelo de Atención de Salud Integral e Intercultural de las Cuencas de los Ríos Pastaza, Corrientes, Tigre, Marañón y Chambira en la Región Loreto 2017-2021".*Ministerial Resolution 594-2017/MINSA, July 24th 2017; and *Plan Integral de intervención para la atención de las personas, vigilancia epidemiológica y vigilancia sanitaria en las comunidades nativas de Cuninico, Nueva Santa Rosa, San Francisco y Nueva Esperanza – de la Micro Red de Salud Maypuco, región Loreto 2018 -2021*. DIRESA Loreto, September 9th 2019.

[12] ORPIO, July 23rd 2020. "ORPIO interpone acción de amparo en contra de Ministerios, Diresa y GOREL por no atender a indígenas con COVID19". http://www.orpio.org.pe/?p=1961

them activate national and international networks to act collaboratively and influence the State.[13]

Kukama Kukamiria voices and stories and the radio

For years the request of indigenous organizations for the use of radio and telephony was constant and generalized. There is a lack of communication and internet connectivity in native communities in the Peruvian Amazon. The Kukama Kukamiria people live in the lower courses of the Marañón, Ucayali, Amazonas, Huallaga and Nanay rivers, but also in cities like Nauta, Yurimaguas, and Iquitos. In 2017, 25.9% of 216 Kukama Kukamiria communities nationwide had access to public telephone service and 6.0% had a connection to cable or satellite TV. To a lesser extent, communities had Internet (5.6%), radio (5.6%), a radio station (2.8%), and cell phone service (1.4%). About 61.1% did not have any communication service (INEI, 2018: 39). Even with those limitations, national and regional organizations used Facebook, web pages, and social media to get support from their allies' institutions and to advocate with the State during the pandemic. Telephones were usually used for communication and coordination of actions between families and communities. The radios, especially the local ones, were also widely used by indigenous communities to find out about the measures given by the State, to report on their situation, and to make complaints about state inaction.

The radio has been the primary means of communication for Amazonian indigenous people for many decades. In Loreto, radio stations of the Catholic Church developed a central role during the pandemic for indigenous peoples, including those living in

[13] Indigenous people use the Internet as a tool for political actions like the defense of their rights. Espinosa (1998) describes their use by Asháninka peoples who created their website to strengthen their ethnic identity, to articulate their political actions with other indigenous organizations and institutions, and to make their problems and interests visible to more people.

the basin of the Marañón river. One of them, *La Voz de la Selva*, was born in Iquitos, capital of Loreto, and pioneered in rural areas (Verea, 2015).[14] The radio filled the gap of information and the limited range of national and private radios. Even in the last decades, indigenous communities listened to foreign broadcasters even from Washington, Germany, and the African continent with their battery-powered radios, together with the national stations (Sánchez, 2020). When television stations appeared in the 1980s, the radio still continued to be the main means of communication.

Indigenous people have appropriated the radio due to its accessibility, breadth of coverage, and oral communication (Ramírez Colombier, 2016). The emergence of local and community radio stations allowed indigenous peoples to learn more about their use.[15] *Radio Ucamara*, a community radio that also belongs to the Catholic Church[16] and is located in Nauta, similarly became very important during the pandemic. Most of the broadcasting programs stopped. But, *Radio Ucamara* continued providing information to prevent contagion and also provide care for the population. It was a nexus between local communities and organizations and state institutions,

[14] *La voz de la Selva* was founded in 1971 by the union of Radio Mariana of the Vicary of Iquitos and Radio San José of the Vicary of San José de Indiana. The radio belongs to the Instituto de Promoción Social Amazónica (IPSA), whose directory is composed of two vicars. Since the 1980s it has operated in Modulated Frequency (FM).

[15] As Espinosa (1998) states, radio has played an important role in strengthening indigenous political, ethnic identity and political action related to the State. The experience of the Shipibo people in Perú with local and community radios shows that radio lets people receive information in their language, connect people between distant places sending messages and listen to their stories, myths, and history. And also they can share their needs and everyday problems, call meetings and denounce the encroachments on their territories and nature. The Awajún and Wampis also got involved in radio programming (a radionovela) for placing indigenous worldviews at the same level as Western ones to prevent conflicts in the future, after the *Baguazo*, a violent confrontation with the State in opposition to extractivism (Smith, 2020).

[16] *Radio Ucamara*, born as *La Voz de la Selva-Nauta* in 1992, accompanying the pastorate of the Parish of Nauta and addressing issues related to Christian reflection, combining music and short-term news (Tello, 2014).

like the Ombudsman's Office, police, or DIRESA Loreto. The radio also interacted with national and foreign media. Some leaders of indigenous communities and organizations became correspondents and informed about what was happening in their localities. They were interviewed by telephone or sent their audio to the radio station by Whatsapp. Flor de María Paraná, who is the "indigenous mother," a communal authority in Cuninico, denounced by radio that some bank agents in Maypuco, capital of the district of Urarinas, embezzled part of the economic aid given to them by the government.[17]

Radio Ucamara's work is inserted in the actual process of revitalization of the Kukama Kukamiria language and culture, as well as in the defence of Kukama Kukamiria territories, especially the rivers (Tello, 2014a; Ramírez Colombier, 2016; Angulo, 2019; Calderón, 2020) in the basins of the Marañón, Ucayali, Huallaga and Amazonas rivers. For decades Kukama Kukamiria people became "invisible" to both society and the State because they have to remove their visible cultural features (language and material culture), *mestizarse* (become mixed), migrate from their territories to protect themselves from colonization, exploitation, and discrimination (Stocks, 1981; Rivas, 2014), or become "ex-comama" (people who considered themselves not to be Kukama anymore) to integrate to the regional market (Gow, 2003). The radio challenges Eurocentric and historic representations of indigenous people as "savages," or the Amazonian territories as empty, that are used to justify exploitation, limit indigenous rights, and name and define indigenous people (Ramírez Colombier, 2016; Calderón, 2020).

Since 2006, *Radio Ucamara* has addressed issues that affected the lives of indigenous peoples that are not necessarily relevant for regional and national media, and less relevant for State institutions (Tello, 2014a; Angulo, 2016). The station's intercultural

[17] Instituto Bartolomé de Las Casas. June 17th 2020. Denuncian entrega de la mitad del bono efectivo a indígenas en Maypuco. Interview to Leonardo Tello: http://bcasas.org.pe/loreto-denuncian-entrega-de-la-mitad-del-bono-efectivo-a-indigenas-en-maypuco/

proposal highlights local knowledge, elder's knowledge, and broader comprehension of socio-environmental problems (Tello, 2014a; Calderón, 2020). The participation and articulation of the communities and organizations are at the basis of their schedule (Calderón, 2020). It works intensively in gathering and sharing individual and collective memories and cosmovisions of the Kukama Kukamiria people. Experiences about the Covid-19 pandemic are intertwined with memories about past experiences of the exploitation of indigenous people and territories, like the period of rubber exploitation in the early twentieth century, the recent oil spills, or previous epidemics. These stories also speak about the silence and absence of the State. But, at the same time, these stories also make visible people's agency to confront those situations.

Narrations and songs[18] from the Ikuari School (Escuela "Aprender"), where elders teach children the language and stories about their people were key in the work of the station. From that intergenerational perspective, children reaffirm their individual and collective identity and shape it according to their interests and plans (Galli, 2014). Songs and stories are also used to describe the importance of rivers for the Kukama Kukamiria people and the threats of oil pollution and other forms of exploitation (Angulo, 2019; Calderón, 2020). But they are also a way to make visible the ontological relations and senses of the Kukama Kukamiria with the river and their territories to promote their recognition in the developed models and narratives of the State (Calderón, 2020). During the pandemic, children, adults, and young students composed and sang their worries and hopes.

Leonardo Tello is a member of the Kukama Kukamiria (and Achuar) people and also the director of *Radio Ucamara*. His writings guided us to a new form of understanding of the stories from Cuninico and other communities. He says that both the "individual and collective memory of Kukama people are implicit in personal biographies and

[18] See *Radio Ucamara* channel on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCkSfG0xv4mAHKv-be3_0Qag

collective stories, told from peripheral places, places that are not only locations but also spaces for the senses" (Tello, 2014a:36, our translation). His reflection also confirms the powerful voices and memories of indigenous people on the radio. He continues, "When memory goes by the radio it gains strength in all actions, it becomes visible, it is made explicit and helps to understand what happens in our populations in the same logic of indigenous thought, placing these discourses in other spaces and allowing them to be thought and understood by other political and social actors." These memories had been spread through live interviews, an interactive web page, and documentaries that had received national and international recognition (Angulo, 2019; Calderón, 2020).

The purposes and activities of *Radio Ucamara* are based on oral narration, inherited from the ancient custom of indigenous communities to tell stories for explaining or to create their symbolic universe (Ramírez Colombier, 2016:1). Stories have a central place in the way the Kukama Kukamiria people explain and describe their worldview, their history, their memories, and their origin as a people. Rivas (2011) who has been researching about Kukama Kukamiria cosmovision for decades, states that even when it is possible to identify some myths of origin, the Kukama Kukamiria is not a "mythomaniac" people, but a "singer" because it is fertile in stories that are expressed in songs, words or speeches. Their imaginary proliferates through them. But also, stories are used to address political issues.

In *Radio Ucamara* programmes, people raise political concerns that are transcendental in cities and communities starting from the narration of their daily problems (Ramírez Colombier 2016; Galli, 2014; Calderón, 2020) and their cosmovision (Tello, 2014b). In that sense, Ramírez Colombier (2020) states that particular stories of families and communities converge to build a collective memory. Those stories express cosmologies in continuous change and inform the history and the experiences of violence that the Kukama Kukamiria people try to process. They should be analysed and understood in a context where they are claiming their identity and fighting for

the recognition of territorial rights in defence against oil exploration and other damages against nature. These researchers, as well as the radio experiences and the conversations with the Kukama Kukamiria people, help us to analyze the first intuitive use of podcasts to share the stories of Cuninico during a global pandemic.

Podcasts and fieldwork in the intersection of the digital and the analog

The comparison between radio and podcast storytelling has been explored in social science and communication studies. There are several debates about what is new about podcasts in comparison to radio. Some of them highlight podcast's intimacy with listeners, their more casual and experimental style, the relationship they form with a smaller community of interested listeners, their cheaper costs of artisanal production, and also the way pieces in a story are put together as listeners wait to the end to complete the story (McHugh, 2016; Cook, 2020). But the podcast is more than just a radio disruptor, it is a platform that revitalizes established forms and tropes (Markman, 2015). For us, podcasts convey new radiophonic ways for people to make their voices heard inside and out of their communities. From our experience, working with the Kukama Kukamiria people, we've seen the need for people to talk by themselves and to be listened to, and how that process relates to their ancestral practice of narrative. One of the most interesting innovations of podcasts around the world has been their potential as an outlet for marginalized groups' voices and stories, such as those of black minorities (Florini, 2015) or women (Piñeiro-Otero, 2021).

The podcast offers the possibility of choosing some elements of radio and repackaging them for the digital, separating the medium of "radio" from the delivery technology of broadcasting (Jenkins, 2006). For instance, podcasting emphasizes recreating the life experience in an asynchronous platform, based on its deep roots in live broadcast radio (Markman, 2015). Located in the midst of the digital and the analog, podcasts are therefore interesting ways to convey stories. Following Hine's internet approach

as extended corporeality, Lundström & Lundström (2021) propose the use of podcasts for ethnographic purposes, and conducting ethnography by using podcast materials. As a methodology these authors claim a three-step process for exploring podcasts as ethnographic materials, engaging them with ethnographic reflexivity, and examining podcasts with analytic criteria.

However, we use podcasts methodologically for ethnographic purposes as ways to register information by interviewing. But also, it was a very interesting way to convey and create stories collaboratively with women and men from Cuninico. Long hours of conversations and interviews by telephone calls or Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp instant messaging were later edited into a 15-minute program. Podcasts are multitemporal as conversations in synchronous and asynchronous exchanges. They have their rhythm and flow but the most important thing is their analog characteristic: voices speak directly to the person who listens (Lundström & Potelli 2020).

Podcasts combine in interesting ways the digitality of technology and the sensorial dimension of experience. Pink (*et.al.* 2016) claims that the digital has become part of the material, sensory, and social worlds we live in. Following this approach for understanding the "digital" in ethnography, we move from *in situ* fieldwork to continue our research using digital technology. We use mostly what people in Cuninico have in their daily lives, like telephone calls and Facebook.[19] The oil spill in 2014 has already accelerated technological innovations in the Cuninico area. For

[19] The studies about communicative uses of cellphones in indigenous communities explain their increasing appropriation and innovation as "daily technologies of life." There are some Kichwa Saraguro communities, in the Amazon of Ecuador, that use cellphones for traditional usages in intra and extra community relations and activities: to summon the community for political and festive matters, and to maintain community ties with relatives in distant countries (Martínez, 2017). The Shuar communities, also in the Ecuadorian Amazon, use cellphones to strengthen their community ties, spread their cultural traditions and get information as well as visibility in the public sphere, in the context of delocalization, hyperconnectivity and digital nomadism (De Salvador & Martínez, 2014). Both articles give account of geographical, economic and intergenerational differences.

instance, a big, new telecommunication antenna stands on one side of the community. Migration in search of work in environmental remediation and the subsequent increase in monetary income also had a correlation in the acquisition of cell phones (smartphones) and televisions. Stores began selling chips, recharge cards, and even basic cell phones. Nowadays, each family has at least two cell phones and the number of televisions is increasing. However, to buy a cellphone, use the Internet and watch TV is expensive. Cuninico still does not have an electric service. Families watch television and recharge their cellphones at night for no more than four hours because they have to pay for using oil to turn on motors for electricity. Only some houses have an electric motor.

As connectivity improves with the antenna, people have access to different forms of digital technology and media communication. The use of cell phones is no longer limited to essential activities, like coordinating with relatives and institutions or looking for information for school assignments. They are now also a means for audiovisual recording: the school anniversary, or the funeral of a person. Communities access the Internet on their cell phones to get information but also to talk to relatives. In a way, the phone and digital media such as WhatsApp are also for caring about loved ones. But, also, cell phones and social media helped them to send information beyond their communities. Local authorities and leaders documented the oil spill, the impact on the stream, and the deficiencies of the remediation using cell phones. They will post images and news on their social media and local partners like the Catholic Church will then re-post the information.

These images, alongside public testimonies and claims, were used as evidence in the judicial processes that Cuninico and the FEDEPCUM, initiated against Petroperú, the national company in charge of operating the North Peruvian pipeline and maintaining

it, and other state institutions in national courts.[20] These images and testimonies got the attention of national and international media, state institutions like the Congress of Republic,[21] and international organizations such as the Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos[22] that visit Cuninico and other indigenous communities affected by oil pollution. Recently, authorities have been using Zoom to have meetings with their lawyers and some state representatives. We have participated in some of these meetings.

During the pandemic, indigenous people made daily reports in their social media about the protocols designed by communities to prevent Covid-19 contagion in their villages; they also did reports about the sufferings, about ill community members, and about the actions of local state officials. We have attentively followed this news on social media. And that is how we learned that in the lower Marañon River, Facebook is very popular because of its reach: it is free, and it allows people to communicate and network with allied institutions and persons. Cell phone calls were used to learn about the situation of family and friends who stayed in the cities, while WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger were used to send documents and images relevant for political action. We used these social media and networks to communicate with people in Cuninico as the pandemic spread in the Amazon. Accessing these spaces was also another way of entering the "field.". Or, as Howlett (2021) writes, these

[20] Cuninico and their neighboring communities have filed four lawsuits for environmental remediation, health care and compensation for spillage, maintenance of the North Peruvian Pipeline, and payment of oil easement.

[21] The investigations into the spills in the Amazon gave rise to the *Informe Final de la que resulten responsables por los derrames de petrólero ocurridos en el Oleoducto Norperuano*, of the Congress of Republic., November 2nd 2017. https://leyes.congreso.gob.pe/Documentos/2016_2021/Informes/Comisiones_Investigadoras/INFORME FINAL.PDF

[22] After a visit to Cuninico in July 2017, the Inter-American Commission issued Resolution 52/2017, December 2nd 2017, granting precautionary measure No. 120-16 in favor of the residents of the Community of Cuninico by the violation of their rights to life and health. https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/decisiones/pdf/2017/52-17MC120-16-PE.pdf

social media platforms and mobile devices become other lenses to look into the field and to be in the field. It is a different form of embeddedness as we interact with our interlocutors in casual conversations and daily instant messaging. We share images and we share our personal experiences of facing the global pandemic.

Our work with the podcast as well as the cell phone calls let us construct a field of multiple connections and ontological relationships, online and offline (Boellstorff, 2016), that flowed between different times, places and people. Kukama Kukamiria people bring their stories from the past to the present to explain what it is like to live and survive in a pandemic after an oil spill. We also experienced the simultaneity described by Postill (2017), living the pandemic with communities and their families, and at the same time experiencing it in our lives and city. We also had to deal with the asynchrony of different waves of the pandemic along the territory. While in Lima the first wave reached its highest peak, in Iquitos and the Marañón it was already ending. Furthermore, we found ourselves amid Kukama Kukamiria living in the city and the Marañón River. Some people in Iquitos asked us about the situation of their parents in Cuninico and some people in Cuninico asked us for help to communicate some events and complaints in Lima. And the dynamics and perceptions of people changed intergenerationally. As this flux of relations grew spontaneously, it also oriented our work and the design of *Nuestras Historias desde Cuninico. El Podcast.*[23]

"Building" the field in multiple connections and relationships

The proposal of using a podcast to communicate what was happening in the indigenous communities in the Marañón River came naturally to us, but the concept itself was built gradually with people in Cuninico. We had many doubts about the content, the design, and even the title of the podcast. Wadson Trujillo, the *apu* of

[23] Listen and see *Nuestras Historias desde Cuninico. El Podcast* on https://www.facebook.com/Nuestras-historias-desde-Cuninico-117582996749472

Cuninico — the main formal authority — said that the title should be Stories "from" Cuninico, and not "about" or "in", making clear the position people want to take. The protagonists will be women because of their increasing leadership since the oil spill, but men also should participate to complement the stories of the community, both individual and collective. But that was not all. In a personal conversation with Flor de María Paraná about her complaint against some bank officials in Maypuco in *Radio Ucamara*, she explained: "We work with the radio because.... we can speak and people can know, are listening to us. When you speak about the reality of your community, the truth about how you live, the State officials don't want to listen to you. I have looked at them, I have felt them, I have listened to them."[24] The emphasis on "reality" and "truth" of their stories is linked with previous experiences of the Cuninico and other indigenous communities with the State and people who live in Iquitos and other cities during the oil spills.

When some Kukama Kukamiria communities claimed that oil spills were caused by the Nor Peruvian Pipeline rupture due to corrosion, their words were questioned. Senior Petroperú state officials had been developing the narrative of the "sabotage" that was reproduced by the media (León & Zúñiga, 2020). It attributed the several ruptures of the pipeline that have increased in the last decades to acts of vandalism by members of the local communities, without proof. They supposedly were seeking economic benefits from compensation for the damage and the hiring for working in the remediation works. Flor de María, together with the leaders of the communities, came out in the media denying what the Petroperú officials said. In the first episode of *Nuestras Historias desde Cuninico. El Podcats*, Flor de María emphasized, "A scoundrel is the State for affecting the communities, instead of us being more cared for. Because indigenous communities are like caretakers, vigilant of the Pipeline,

[24] Conversation by phone with Flor de María Paraná, June 30th 2020.

because it passes through our community, through our land. It seems that we are useless, we do not live, we are not people like them."[25]

In Cuninico, as well as in other Kukama Kukamiria communities, the oil spill stream produced diseases and substantial changes in everyday life and in relationships between people (Berjón & Cádenas, 2011; Grados & Pacheco, 2016; Amnesty International, 2017; Delgado & Martínez, 2020) and with nature (Urteaga, Segura & Sánchez, 2019), even in the cosmologies (Aquituari, 2011). Although later the Environmental Assessment and Control Agency (OEFA,), ascribed to the Ministry of the Environment, stated that the principal problem was the lack of maintenance of the Pipeline in more than thirty years, women and men feel the need to explain over and over again that they are not lying.

When we talked to Marlita about the pandemic before it arrived in Cuninico, in April 2020, she told us with irony: "I think people have already forgotten about oil pollution because it doesn't kill quickly. At least it will let you live a little until the disease takes over your body. Instead, Covid will take you in one."[26] The references to these oil spill experiences were repeatedly mentioned by the people of Cuninico in our conversations and in the podcasts. As Cepek (2018) explained, there is an imminent presence of oil in the lives and stories of indigenous communities affected by pollution. Its presence converged with the stories that bring memories about the pandemic. People used to name both oil and Covid-19 as *pests* (plagues and pests). These memories of suffering were also connected to memories about their knowledge and practices that allowed them to survive.

Wadson, the *apu* of Cuninico, and César Mozombite, *viceapu*, explained in the first podcast, how the communities of the lower Marañón River organized themselves. In Lima and most of the cities, social distancing and isolation decreed by the State as a

[25] Podcast 1. Flor de María Paraná: I am going to tell you what happened in Cuninico, September 17th 2020.

[26] Conversation by phone with Marlita Salinas April 27th 2020.

preventive measure made us lock ourselves in our homes with our families. In the Marañón river area, isolation has always been collective and the pandemic was not the exception. Communities "closed" their borders. But foreigners and *moradores* (as people called the residents of their communities in the lower Marañón) returning to the community needed permission from local authorities to enter and had to follow strict sanitary protocols approved in the general assembly. Previous experiences such as first contacts, Catholic missions, rubber and wood exploitation, as well as previous epidemics like the flu, smallpox, measles, chickenpox, and others, taught people to seek refuge in the woods (Maroni, Magnin & Zárate, 1988; Ribeiro & Wise, 2008[1978]). Thus, it was not a surprise to confirm that some people moved to their *chacras* (farms) or isolated themselves in the *monte* (the deep forest).

Simultaneously in Iquitos, several hours away by boat and road, some Kukama Kukamiria people got Covid-19. Others had to stay there for the quarantine period. Some Kukama Kukamiria people live permanently in Iquitos, others are migrant workers and live there for periods of time, others even migrate to study or to visit relatives. The overcrowding of hospitals in Iquitos appeared in the local, national, and foreign press. We constantly read the news when Agnita Saboya, President of ORDEMIM, sent us numerous pictures by WhatsApp of her sons in their armchairs and of her in bed with a serum probe, all very sick. Then, she posted those pictures on Facebook. Whatsapp is a semi-public form of communication rather than only technology for private conversations (Gómez & Harindranah, 2020). But WhatsApp also allowed us to have some presence in the intimacy of Agnitas's family. "Yesterday I talked to my parents in Cuninico by phone, but I did not say anything. Please, if you called someone in Cuninico, do not say anything. I do not want to worry them," Agnita requested.[27] We remained in silence.

Agnita needed medical treatment, but she was afraid to go to the hospital. "Hospitals are too cold because of the air conditioning, and they put oxygen on you, which is

[27] Conversation by phone with Agnita Saboya April 27th 2020.

cold. The Covid is like the flu and ¡they cool your body more!" We gave Agnita some medicine, but most of her treatment was some pills such as ibuprofen and paracetamol, injections, and, mostly, *"vegetal"* medicine (natural medicine). Her story circulated on Facebook and WhatsApp between families and friends in cities and communities all over the country. After Agnita and their children got better, she decided to stay in Iquitos to continue requesting medicine and financial support for the communities from the regional government and Dirección Regional de Salud of Loreto. The pandemic had already reached the communities. In the fourth episode of the podcast, Agnita shares her experiences of surviving the pandemic far from her community.

In the lower Marañón, women use *"vegetal"* (natural) medicine too. Marlita told us about her long conversations with her mother about how the sick were cured in previous epidemics with natural medicines. When we told her that some relatives were sick, she and other women shared the treatments: a beverage prepared with lemon, honey, onion, *sacha* garlic (*mansoa alliacea*) to "raise the defense" (strengthen the immune system); plasters of *malva* in the head to reduce fever; extract of *condoncillo* (*piper aduncum*) or vaporization with menthol and eucalyptus leaves to improve breathing. Pills were used in a complementary way. After having bathed and "*sobar"* (rubbed, massaged) the body of the sick with menthol, women give them the beverages. Some of these treatments were also used during the oil spills. But, as Galo Vásquez, the president of FEDEPCUM,[28] explained to us, they did not work very well for the diseases caused by the presence of heavy metals in the blood. Also, because of the contamination of the environment, some plants are scarce in the gardens and houses and women have to look for them in their *chacras* (farms).

The "*antiguos"* or elders led people to reassess their knowledge as well as their cultural beliefs. We thought that the voice of Marlita should be accompanied by the voice of her mother in the second podcast. She was excited and helped us to interview her.

[28] Telephone interview with Marlita Salinas, May 12th 2020.

Marlita exclaimed "the *natural* medicine of our grandparents is our guide," giving the title to one episode of the podcast. Phrases like that were published after each podcast with the photographs of each participant in "light green", as Marlita suggested when we sent her an initial design by WhatsApp, "like the plants, like the forest."[29] When we asked Marlita to interview her mother, we realized that digital technology also invisibilized those who are not familiar with it or those who do not have access to it. Marlita became the intermediary between us, the podcast audience and her mother, otherwise, we wouldn't have been able to listen to her stories.

As Covid-19 made its path into Cuninico and more people got sick, kinship and community relationships were articulated to help care for those who were ill. Also, these networks became important for economic survival. Social distance and isolation measures recommended by the government health officials were no longer followed. The Cuninico health module does not have enough medicines or Covid-19 tests. The district municipality prevented the entrance to Maypuco where the health center is located. People only have each other to survive. Some women told us that they did not feel afraid anymore, because they have to collectively beat the disease. Here in Lima, we knew that some friends and relatives were sick, locked in their homes, or admitted to hospitals alone. We could not visit them "to give them *fuerza* (strength)", as Kukama Kukamiria women did. Talita Paraná, president of ADMIC, stayed next to her sister, day and night, caring for her. She also cared for other sick families who called because she is a community health agent.

Talita had received training by the Catholic Church and by medical doctors in local health centers for decades. Like her, there are others trained as health agents. But this expertise was not initially recognized in the State policies. AIDESEP and ORPIO strongly insisted that health officials should coordinate with health agents in native communities. No matter what, health agents worked alone. Galo called some priest friends to the Catholic Church when a group from an Evangelical Church gave

[29] WhatsApp communication with Marlta Salinas, September 16th 2020.

injections of Ivermectin for veterinary use to prevent Covid-19 contagions. Some people published pictures on Facebook that we saw. César called us by phone to tell us what was happening. We sent a document to the *viceapu* of Cuninico about the prohibition of ivermectin uses and he informed the community. We also informed a journalist who spread the news internationally in the media.[30] The Ministry of Health issued a communication reaffirming its measure. In this way, we also made "participant observation" and interviewed the online and offline fields.

"The disease and the cure are collective" was the title of another episode of our podcast. Survival is a collective effort. Marlita said that communities had "returned to the time of the *antiguos*" that they forgot because of the oil spills. Families shared harvested fruits from their farms, animals from the *mitayo* (hunting), and fish. People also did *mingas* and *mañaneos* in the fields — collective forms of work. Once the use of money spread in Cuninico, people stopped giving gifts and started selling their products or requesting payment for their work. But the pandemic brought back some of these other forms of reciprocal exchanges, although we don't know for how long. Social immobilization, the decree by the State, prevented the transference of people and things by the river. Trade, temporary jobs in remediation and construction work in communities declined. People had to return to fishing and agriculture, the main activities among the Kukama Kukamiria, as well as hunting and gathering, activities that also have been central in their identity as people (Stocks, 1981; Rivas, 2004). But it was not the same. People did not recover from the pollution, nor from Covid-19 when the first wave finished. Natalia said: "The Covid leaves us like the oil spill, we can no longer work, we are not as before when we were healthy."[31]

[30] Fowks, Jacqueline. (2020). "Un grupo evangélico peruano inyecta un medicamento veterinario a miles de personas para la covid-19", *El País*, June 19th 2020. https://elpais.com/sociedad/2020-06-19/un-grupo-evangelico-peruano-inyecta-un-medicamento-veterinario-a-miles-de-personas.html

[31] Podcast 3. Natalia, Talita y Lidia: The disease and the cure are collective, October 5th 2020

Sarah Vásquez, president of the *Organización de Mujeres Nativas del Marañón* (ORGAMUNAMA, Organization of Native Women of Marañón), and her family explained to us how the pandemic affected their economy. The government distributed cash transfer aid to indigenous communities. But, these funds were not enough, because families were numerous and the prices of food and other products increased. And some people did not even receive the aid. Even these issues were more complex. Wadson told us that the State did what it could and Marlita said, "What can we ask our poor State?" Opinions about the State differed depending on the economic situation of the families. We were trying to include a diversity of voices, though we were aware that our main interlocutors were the leaders. Digital and remote work also have their limitations, and these are not only geographic and economic, but are also related to gender and age.

Sarah's daughter, Teresa, shared with us her concerns about feeding her children. With tremendous preoccupation, she said: "When the pandemic arrived, fish had to last us two days. We could only use it to give flavor to eat with rice. We had to save money. It was something worrisome!"[32] This was one of the most shocking phrases that appeared on the Facebook of *Nuestras Historias desde Cuninico. The Podcast*. Guido Ríos, Teresa's husband, went fishing and hunting farther and farther. Animals, fish, and the quality of crops declined due to pollution. Guido confessed feeling depressed. He said: "I felt sick, but I do not know what I have. I went to the *monte* and I did not find anything other than some *majaz* (*agouti paca*, a rodent). You tell me: What can I do? I can just plant bananas and cassava, bananas and cassava. I will just eat that with fish perhaps."[33] He returned to the forest again, but we could not talk to him because there was no phone signal in the deep forest. Even when women were the

[32] Podcast 6: Sara and Teresa: The economic crises after an oil spill and a pandemic, February 28th 2021.

[33] Conversation by phone with Guido, August 10th 2020

protagonist of the podcast, men's voices complemented their stories and were powerful. These stories touched us in many different ways.

We talked to Guido some days later, when he returned with his sons from their farm. His sons did not go to school or university. He was happy because they helped him to "librar" (to cut the weeds to cultivate) the *chacras* and with the *mitayo* (the hunting of animals). The same happened to other families. But as time passed, parents and children began to worry about missing the school year. Marielita Salinas, former president of the Cuninico Parents Association (APAFA), complained about the educational policy during the pandemic. In the beginning, the Ministry of Education stated that classes must be blended: media lessons (television or radio) with a teacher accompaniment online. But, the limitations with Internet connectivity and electricity in the lower Marañón access made it impossible for the students to follow classes. A few children studied at home with their school books and guidance from their parents who had basic education. Then, the regional government approved the strategy of Itinerant Teacher. "[Teachers] returned in September with the story of the remote classes, 'lightning classes' I call them, but they were only here for two days. They hand out the brochures and children solve them and return them. Through that, teachers evaluate how the students are, like an exam. How are they going to learn like that?"[34] The school principal explained that teachers were also worried, but being far from the community, they could only make their best effort. In the middle of the year, the Ministry of Education ordered that all Peruvian students will pass their school year. Students felt disappointed.

We dedicated our last podcasts to the youngsters and their expectations about education and their future. Four students participated in a group phone interview with the help of the principal and their teacher. Janice, Bil, Gilia, and Pamela explained how they live the tension between migrating to the city and achieving a better future while not forgetting the customs and traditions of their community. The

[34] Telephone interview for podcast 6 with Marielita Salinas, October 17th 2020

oil spills and the pandemic are milestones in their lives, but their perceptions differed from those of the adults. On the one hand, the youngsters feel that the State has forgotten their community. On the other hand, they have learned about their rights as a community, and as women, and how to use them to be recognized and claimed by the State. They learned to fight to receive some attention for their lives, even if it means having to travel to the cities for work because their parents do not have enough money to pay for their higher education. "I would like to go out more than anything to support my parents, improve myself more, and set an example for the children who are staying here," said Janice.[35]

But these adolescents do not want to forget their communities. In fact, Bil explained that they want to know more about their history and learn their language: "We have been educated as Kukama Kukamiria because our ancestors speak the language. But, it can no longer be learned because they are gone, the elders are dying." And the only teacher that taught Kukama Kukamiria was moved to another community because, in some communities, such as Cuninico, people do not speak it. That is why some children like Vaiolet, Marielita's daughter, continued learning some words with a dictionary. We can perceive the hope and the uncertainty in their voices. The perceptions about oil's impact are diverse inside the community, the families, and generations. An intergenerational analysis is important to consider in order to understand the damage (Cepek, 2018). It is the same for Covid-19 pandemics.

The generational use of media was also different. When the adolescents sent us their pictures, we started to think more about the uses of media, voices, representation, and identity. Most of the pictures we use in *Nuestras Historias desde Cuninico* came from previous fieldwork of one of the authors and were initially taken only for registration of people's daily life, especially women. Some photographs were sent by the participants by WhatsApp or downloaded from their personal Facebook with their

[35] Podcast 7: Janice, Bil, Gilia and Pamela: migrate in search of a future without forgetting the community, August 11th 2021.

permission. However, the pictures sent by the students were selfies, very colourful, alone with a neutral background. That is how we learn a little more about the relevance of working from an intergenerational perspective, from which other experiences, such as *Radio Ucamara* have already been working. There are still so many stories to tell, and many voices to listen to.

Some final reflections: who listens to the podcast series

After posting our last episode of *Nuestras Historias desde Cuninico. El Podcast* on Facebook, Marlita's request as well as Flor de María's comment comes to our minds. Some questions about working online and offline and with podcasts came to us: Who listens to the podcasts? How clear is the voice of women and men? How much did we "translate", "interpret" or edit their voices? There are experiences of collaborative work using podcast and audio by WhatsApp to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in Amazon indigenous communities in Brazil. These authors study podcasts and WhatsApp audios as types of orality that spread indigenous knowledge and, at the same time, promote the idea that non-indigenous people should respect it. And the relevant thing is not only what is said, but "the possibility of listening, of listening to something and recognizing oneself in this listening", as it happens when indigenous peoples use oral and narrative forms (Chagas, da Cruz & Viana, 2021:13).

We do not know yet how much the podcasts and our ethnography helped to bring Cuninico's voices to be heard by the State or beyond their communities. And also, we do not have information of how they interpreted their voices. As Smith pointed out, referring to the use of the radio by indigenous peoples in Perú — which is also applicable to podcast — the interpretations of programmes "are mediated by listening practices developed outside Amazonian context that may present obstacles for hearing all that [they] communicate" (2020:13). Many of them are permeated by the colonizing conceptions and imaginaries. But, the Cuninico people told us that they

felt happy that their voices could be heard and read, and they could also be seen in their photographs, even within their community. For instance, the *apu* sent us a message by Whatsapp: "We, the population, are infinitely grateful to all the people who help us to spread the reality in the media. Receive a big hug from the population. We will move on."[36] The fact that the podcasts are hosted on Facebook, as a para-site, provides the possibility that stories and voices could be here, there, and in other places.

Women, and also men, of Cuninico could tell their "truth", "the reality" in these podcast stories. They explain why some of the State policies could not work in Kukakama Kukamiria communities. They describe the impact that a pandemic has on their territories and communities after oil pollution and the lack of attention of state institutions. For them, some recommendations given by state officials were not followed, not because indigenous people do not want to or because they do not understand, but because of their social, economic, geographic, and cultural inadequacy. And they could also explain how they appealed to their knowledge and practices to survive Covid-19, such as memories of isolation, *"natural"* medicine, collective work and family and other extensive networks, online and offline. In that way, the podcast also contributed to the idea that Kukama Kukamiria people became less "invisible" to the State, and questioned some State and society imaginaries, in which they are "saboteurs", or "savages," and "opponents of development" (Espinosa, 2009; Campanera, 2012).

As has been shown, online and offline relationships are as fluid as the oil spill and the waves of the pandemic; so too are the uses of digital technologies by indigenous communities. State officials seldom listen to indigenous people or let them participate in institutional spaces where policies were designed and approved, for example, the Covid-19 Operations Command of Loreto. That's why they have to create their spaces/places as indigenous communities. Some of those places were offline, such as

[36] WhatsApp communication with the *apu* Wadson Trujillo, September 16th 2020.

the *Comando Covid-19 Indígena de Loreto* (Covid-19 Indigenous Command of Loreto) whose creation was promoted for ORPIO, ORDEMIM, and other indigenous Kukama Kukamiria organizations.[37]

As other spaces/places went online, such as press conferences and Zoom meetings, they published their news on Facebook. Indigenous people speak from those spaces/places in different forms and some of them are podcasts. When in the middle of the production of the podcast series, we realized that the *Organización de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas del Perú* (ONAMIAP, Organization of Andean and Amazonian Indigenous Women of Peru), which has a Kukama Kukamiria organization as one of its basis in Loreto, has also been using radio series, that they also called a podcast,[38] we felt that we were on the right track.

Even when podcasts have the virtue of simultaneity and the possibility of people speaking by themselves, there are always some risks in collaborative work. We chose the questions, even when the central issues were previously decided with authorities and leaders. We edited the podcast: selected some parts and eliminated others. We chose the music and the order of the phrases. Even when only the voices of the protagonists appeared, some interpretation and translation were there. However, we aimed not to capture the exact reality according to the voice of the people. These podcasts were initially conceived as a devolution of our ethnographic findings, and the means of collaborative work to guide our path. After all, a podcast is a dialogue and ethnography is dialogic. We wrote an introduction and some conclusions to accompany the podcasts series. We wrote our reflections about what we've learned

[37] Comando Covid-19 Indígena de Loreto. June 8th 2020. Convocatoria a Comando COVID Indígena de Loreto. Oficio 001-2020- CCIL. http://www.orpio.org.pe/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/CONVOCAROTIA-COMANDO-COVID-INDIGENA.pdf

[38] Listen the "radial serie" or podcast: "Saberes de mujeres indígenas para enfrentar la pandemia" http://onamiap.org/2021/04/lanzamos-serie-radial-saberes-de-mujeres-indigenas-para-enfrentar-la-pandemia/ and "Mujeres indígenas por la defensa de nuestros bosques" http://onamiap.org/2020/09/podcast-estrenamos-cuarta-temporada-de-mujeres-indigenas-por-la-defensa-de-nuestros-bosques/

about podcasts and how the podcast series dialogues with other productions like those of *Radio Ucamara* — to make our position clear.

The places and platforms selected by the podcast condition who is listening. At some point, we discussed who was the public of the podcast. Depending on that, we debated if the podcast should be on Spotify, which is widely used in Lima and other cities, or Soundcloud, which is more accessible on Facebook in the Marañón River. Unfortunately, both consume a lot of gigabytes and the Internet is very slow, and some people told us that they listen to the podcast less than they want to. So we share the audios for Whatsapp or Facebook Messenger. But we know that they were listened to because they offered likes and shared the audio in their Facebook accounts receiving comments of some *moradores*, leaders of indigenous organizations, and state officials.

The podcast has also had unforeseen uses.[39] But, as Markman (2015) states, podcasting gives the freedom of releasing an audio into the Internet and seeing what happens. In Cunnico, some women used some podcasts to promote their organizations before the state and some institutions. A *morador* asked us for the podcast where they appeared several times because they want to use it for their campaign to run for the election of the new communal board. The principal of the school wanted to share the podcast of their students and discuss them. Some people asked us insistently when their podcasts will appear on Facebook. We try to inform them from time to time to time. Podcasts keep us in touch. The pandemic taught us that isolation and social distance existed before they became disease prevention norms. Social distance is not new and sometimes as in Peru, which is a very centralized and hierarchical society, it is more than a matter of physical distance: it is political, economic, and cultural.

[39] As we mentioned, the uses of virtual and communication technologies by indigenous people are very diverse. For instance, Correa (2006) studied the use and impact of those technologies, such as Asháninka virtual spaces, contemporary identities related to these technological developments, and the changes in traditional leadership and their forms of negotiation.

Podcasts are about bringing people closer, shortening the distances of being “here” and “there.”

María Eugenia Ulfe and Roxana Vergara, “Podcasting collaborations and ontological relationships of being ‘here’ and ‘there’ in the lower Marañón River in Peru”, *New Area Studies* 2:1 (2021), 74-114.

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