

# KEEP IT SIM- PLE MAKE IT FAST!

AN APPROACH  
TO UNDERGROUND  
MUSIC SCENES (VOL. 4)  
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***Keep it Simple, Make it Fast!***

An approach to underground music scenes (vol. 4)

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## 5.1. The Struggle for a differentiated education: The 'I Am Bilingual' project in Lábrea/AM

**Claudina Azevedo Maximiano<sup>116</sup>**

**A b s t r a c t**

The indigenous presence in the Amazonian cities causes tensions related to the right to the city. The Brazilian legislation, based on the 1988 Federal Constitution, guarantees specific rights to the indigenous peoples. However, the State limitations to provide public policies in indigenous lands, as well as the wish to access the "facilities" that urban areas offer, such as market for handicrafts, shopping, entertainments, causes temporary and / or permanent indigenous people to the cities displacement. In this text, I bring the Middle Purus region as reference, and I highlight the "I Am Bilingual" Program and the "Paumari Language Championship", actions carried out by the Paumari People in Lábrea municipality, Amazon southern – Brazil. I present these experiences as these people's political mobilization strategies in order to create their own / specific educational methodologies, inserted in the ethnic self-affirmation struggle before the stigmatization process lived by them, mainly in the city urban area.

**Keywords:** *Differentiated education, specific methodology, political mobilization, indigenous language.*



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## 1. Introduction

The indigenous presence in the Amazonian cities has intensified in the last decades. This process presents some tensions linked to the right to the city. Based on the 1988 Federal Constitution, the Brazilian legislation guarantees specific rights to indigenous peoples. However, the access to such rights is restricted to Indigenous Lands. Indigenous people living in the city cannot access these rights. Brazilian State's limitations itself to provide public policies in Indigenous Lands, as well as the wish to access the "facilities" offered by the city, such as the market for handicrafts, shopping, entertainment, among other possibilities, lead to a temporary and / or permanent indigenous' displacement to the cities. There are numerous social situations that corroborate to an intense dialogue between the village and the city. The access to education is a constant in the indigenous people's speeches as the main reason which led them to the decision to leave the village and go to the city.

The indigenous presence in the cities causes / impresses a new 'ethnic physiognomy' on the cities (Almeida, 2008), at the same time, in which a denial process of this presence is perceived. Institutions, such as the school, the Basic Health Units (UBS), do not emphasize the presence of indigenous people as interlocutors. In the UBS case, especially in smaller cities, care is denied and it is pointed out that it is the Special Secretariat of Indigenous Health's (SESAI) responsibility, through the Special Districts of Indigenous Health (DISEI). However, the DSEI has in its specificity, reserved the service to the indigenous in the village and / or community. In relation to schools, there is a "silence" from the Municipal Secretariats, State and the Federal Network of Teaching about the enrolled students.

Such institutions receive these students however they do not perform any actions that meet the specificities and / or help to minimize the impacts suffered by the students in the daily school life. There are reports of symbolic violence, rejection and bullying<sup>117</sup>. Such situations affect directly the teaching-learning process, and in the person formation, since the majority are indigenous children, adolescents and young people who are daily provoked to face this situation. This 'silence' reinforces the stigmatization process in the city, which is embodied in prejudiced attitudes and speech, as well as in the constitutional rights denial. To illustrate it, I bring the school daily example, where the indigenous peoples' theme appears *frozen* in the Brazilian history content and it is related to the Europeans' arrival period and the Brazilian literature. I also bring to the discussion the Law 1145 of March 2008, which forces to teach the Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous history and culture, which is often quoted in the teaching plans, but not concretized in the classrooms context, and does not cause consistent reflections that culminate in changes in everyday relationships, related to the ethnic diversity present in urban schools. This reinforces the 'silence' and accentuates the stigmatization process, experienced by the natives living in the city.

*So far when my sister is studying. I also have other sisters who study outside the village and sometimes they come and say " I am not going to study anymore. Even the 14 years old sister, who lives with Fausto, she says she will not study anymore, because people call her "too much indigenous and say that the indigenous space is in the forest not in the city.*

<sup>117</sup> [...] It is an English term (bully = "aggressive") which refers to all verbals or physical, aggressive forms, intentional and repetitive attitudes that occur without obvious motivation and are practiced by one or more individuals, causing pain and suffering, with the aim of intimidating or assaulting people who do not have possibility or ability to defend themselves, attitude which is carried out within an uneven forces or power relationship. <http://brasilecola.uol.com.br/sociologia/bullying.htm>.

*Sometimes I see people calling: "Hey, indian!", even when I go outside, they say "Hey, indian!", when I am not there, I get upset sometimes. It is one thing weird because it seems that the person who called us "indian" does not have indigenous blood. But when people say: "Hey, indian!" again, the person gets... we are not used to.* (Fascicle: 20, p. 8).

The indigenous people social situation in the city causes an individual and collective effort to break with the stereotypes and conditions that affect individuals and the community. This situation instigates the natives who live in the city and also the *Indigenous Movement*, in order to insert a new point on the demands list. The permanence / residence right in the city is still in discussion, which includes respect for indigenous citizenship, regardless the locus where they live. Indigenous people living in the city suffer from the stigmatization effects, the denial of the right to movement freedom and, above all, the permanence in the city and the access to what it allows. In this sense, I present the attempt to mobilize the Paumari People, through the 'I Am Bilingual Intercultural Program', a program that originate the 'Paumari Language Championship', as political mobilization strategies in order to break with this inequality and prejudice relationship, especially in the city.

What I am considering as strategies are political actions organized in a specific way, based on specific social situations, which when analyzed together, produce a forces agglutination process that point to a mobilization process related to the issue of the *Right to City*. These actions have in their core different motivations that base the decision to live in the city. The decision to live in the city breaks with the idea that "Indian place" is in the village, and with the popular crowd "in the forest." In the narratives heard during our stay in the Amazon countryside such as São Gabriel da Cachoeira, Santa Isabel do Rio Negro and Lábrea, it is very common to hear people say that a certain indigenous person is no longer "so indigenous", since this person already lives in the city and speaks Portuguese well. In this sense, indigenous identity is associated with the "exotic" idea, the distance. The native ethnic identity of living in the city is questioned all the time. At the same time, they suffer from various types of discrimination and prejudice. Regarding the idea of social rights, the discourse is reversed, because as they live in the city, "they are not so indigenous." Such situations challenge especially the indigenous leaderships, new leaderships begin to emerge in the indigenous movement scenario, claiming for the indigenous people's right to live in the city.

This mobilization process in order to the right of residence in the city is not dissociated from the traditions and / or distance from the communities of origin. An indigenous leadership in Labrea, who lives in Caititu Indigenous Land, said in a meeting: "I have a house there (village) and here." This speech was based on a critical narrative about the question of not being served at the municipal hospital. The issue is about a self-assertion natives' movement who live in the city and through actions and differentiated claims are making public the indigenous' right to live in the city. It is a 'silence' disruption process, the 'invisibility', and the 'denial of identity', experienced by the indigenous people that left their villages and communities for many reasons and now live in the cities. Gradually, a political agenda is set by the indigenous people who live in the city. This agenda is a serie of demands that presents itself as a 'new' demand for the indigenous movement.

Before these prerogatives there is an effort to present this “new agenda” in the agenda of the indigenous movement, which has been taking place in recent decades. This effort breaks the idea of dichotomy and polarities between village/community and city and points to the relationships complexity and connections established by these social agents, in which the condition of living in the city must be included. This dynamism points to the “ethnic reconfiguration now underway in the Amazon” process (Almeida, 2008, p. 13). This agenda has been made as a result of an indigenous insertion decade's process in the city. The individual experiences, the suffering, produced an approximation process of confluences on indigenous from the same area, that produced the formation of specific communities.

The process of forming new collectives is becoming a strategy for indigenous people self-identification and mobilization in the city. In these new collectives, which will guarantee the space occupation, and the “invisibility” break, that is still noticed when it comes to the indigenous thematic in the city. The city that appears as an opportunity place, presents itself as a great challenge to these social agents. The overcoming of the barriers faced in the daily life will require some city occupation strategies. From this perspective, the collectives have been built, according to the social situation specificities. So, I present the program “I Am Intercultural Bilingual”, which has as result the “Paumari Language Championship”, as an expression of the differentiated Education struggle in Amazon south, more precisely in Lábrea municipality.

## **2. The ‘I Am Bilingual project’: a mobilization political strategy**

The ‘I am Bilingual Intercultural’ Program, is a Paumari people’s initiative, which I consider, in this reflection, as one of the indigenous mobilization strategies who live in the Amazonian cities. The seek of formalize/legalize the mother tongue, as part of mobilization strategies in order to live in the city. The speech is retaken as a facing criteria of the stigmatization process live by the indigenous people in the city.

*For more than two centuries, after the severe pombalino Law prohibitions of 1758, the indigenous languages and the nheegatu were kept in the national society margin, without a definitive legal .... they persisted, entrementes, praticed hidden almost whispered, as so low the voices sounds, denotating submission and fear. Persisted as domestic languages, spoken mainly in the houses and aldeias borders , in the family life or in the assobradados backs or in the kitchens. Speaking the indigenous language or make its use did not asserue someone to the citizen condition. (Almeida, 2007, p.12)*

The exclusion condition, the non recognisement situation, the prejudice with the speakers and non consideration with one peopels language condition, intigates this mobilization. The linguistic factor is accionated as one of the mobilization process fundamentals. A singular event of this process occurs in 2002, with the co-oficialization in three indigenous languages, Tukano,

Baniwa and Nheengatu, in São Gabriel da Cachoeira – AM. The number 145 law approval of 11th December, 2002, is highlighted in the indigenous mobilization scenery, as a mark in the use of the indigenous languages relations in the urban context. The use of the indigenous languages in amazonian cities is something and in many cases of the language speakers are prejudice and injury victims. The three languages co-officialization in the upper Rio Negro, breaks officially with the non – official condition. However, the status of one peoples' language, is something to still be conquered. Therefore, even in São Gabriel da Cachoeira, is still necessary that this law 145 must be applied. The law establishes that:

***Art. 2º The status of non official language, conceded by this object, forces the municipality to:***

***S 1º Serve the basic public services in the public departments in the official language and in the co – official language, orally and written.***

***S 2º Produce the public documentation, as well as the institutional publicity campaigns, in the official language and in the three co – officials.***

***S 3º Incentivate and support the co-official languages use and learning in the schools and in the media.***

There are another indigenous languages in São Gabriel, so it is in the article 6<sup>th</sup> that: "The use of the others indigenous languages spoken in the city will be guaranteed by the estadual and federal legislation". According to the Rio Negro Indigenous Organizations Federation, in the city (FORIN):

***There is a huge linguistic cultural diversity with more than twenty languages belonged to four linguistic families: Tukano Oriental, Aruak, Maku e Yanomami. Some of this languages as the tukano and baniwa have many speakers. However, as others as the tariana and the dow, are spoken by few people. (FORIN site).***

Taking São Gabriel da Cachoeira's experience as a reference, we will have a dialogue with another experience, the program 'I Am Bilingual' in Lábrea-AM. Designed by the Paumari People, the program has the young leadership, Edilson Paumari as reference, and it is part of the respect for language struggle, and also a recognition guarantee of the differentiated and bilingual education right. The teacher Edilson Paumari says in his narrative, that after studying outside the village experience and understanding the value of the mother tongue, he got motivated to begin a Paumari language strengthening process, since some young people in the city were no longer speaking the language, and many were already speaking Paumari, "with the Portuguese language intense 'mixture' in the villages, according to him. And, even



though, the elderly people were no longer counting their traditional stories. The dances and the Paumari music were getting lost. It was in this intense dialogue context, between the village and community that the 'I am bilingual' project was born, and as a continuity of the differentiated education issue, the "Paumari Language Championship" was born too, broadening horizons in the indigenous school education perspective. According to the author of the project, the objective is to help the Paumari people to make this dialogue between the two worlds: The Paumari world and the non-indigenous world.

*In this school environment where the indigenous identity is identified and recognized by the surrounding society mainly through the language, the Bilingual Program emerged. Formally, the action began in 2011, starting with Edilson Paumari's initiative, a Pauamari indigenous who had a long relationship and training in Pauamari linguistics with SIL missionaries. Edilson went to FUNAI with a request from Paumaris' students, who were enrolled in formal education schools in Labrea, and after reporting some embarrassing situations in formal schools, they would like to have a space to speak and learn more about their language in a complementary way, as the Portuguese language received at the formal school. (Meneses & Bruno, 2014, p.10).*

The 'I Am Bilingual', is produced in a context of insertion of the natives in the city. The proposal is based on the use of the mother tongue as a strengthening of ethnic identities, having as reference the discourse of suffering, denial of collective identities lived by indigenous people in the city. A social suffering, according to Bourdieu (1998) of the social world contradictions, lived in social dramas form. The narratives express the drama and suffering experienced by the natives living in the city.

*Living in the city is hard because there is a different language to ours, and we have to dress and behave differently, in the village we do different things. [...] So, we are living on this way and it is about twenty-five years that I arrived in Lábrea's suburb. My children were still small, did not study there and came to study in here. So, I did not how to live anymore because we enrolled our children at school and my wife also had interesting in their education then decided not to come back. I still wanted to return to the village like the others who are still there but she thought better to stay and we stayed in the city, even suffering .[...]*  
(Fascículo, 43, 4 PNCSA).

*The individual sufferings that 'touch' the collective. In facing strategies context, the search for alternatives to deal with the social problems*



*lived in Lábrea, the 'I Am Bilingual' project is produced and in 2012, turns to I Am Bilingual Program, developed by the Municipal Department of Education of Lábrea Municipality. In 2012, FUNAI contacted the Secretaria Municipal Department of Education and Culture (SEMEC) and requested collaboration to continue this activity. SEMEC agreed to provide its space to the classes and also hire the teachers [...]. (Meneses & Bruno, 2014, p. 12).*

According to the Indigenous School Education coordinator of the municipality, the 'formalization' of the 'I Am Bilingual Program' process, was based on an agreement between the Mayor at the time, Jean de Barros, and the Education Municipal Secretary, Valdinei Vital de Lima, who decided to include three indigenous teachers, in 2012, for language teaching: Paumari and Apurinã. Since then, teachers: Edilson Paumari, João Baiano Apurinã and Francisco Pereira Apurinã, have become part of the Francisca Mendes Municipal School payroll, where the program classes take place. It should be noted that no legal instrument was created to formalize this program in the Education Municipal Secretary. However, the municipality Indigenous Education coordinator, affirms that in the Municipal Education Plan, recently approved by the Lábrea Municipality, a goal was elaborated and approved, which includes the diversity issue, the natives cultural valorization in the city. This goal was created in order to guarantee the continuity of the "I am Bilingual" Program. However, the teachers were not hired by the city hall in 2017, and the program was not working. Lábrea's Municipal Education Plan (2015 - 2025) in dealing with Indigenous School Education states:

*SEMED also attends Indigenous Education with the elementary education first stage (from 1st to 4th grades) and has gradually implemented the fundamental education final years, based on the Federal Constitution in its article 210, 2 paragraph: Regular primary education will be taught in Portuguese, also ensuring the indigenous communities their mother tongue uses and own learning processes and to this it is developed capacitation programs to the teachers, just to emphasize that the teacher who teaches there is part of this community and ethnicity.*

And among the objectives:

*14. To ensure the differentiating schooling attending to the indigenous populations who live in the urban area, respecting their specificities and their area or nucleus demands.*

And Goal 2:

*To universalize the nine year- primary education for the entire population from six to fourteen years-*

*old, and ensure that at least 60% (sixty percent) of the students achieve this stage in the recommended age, until this PME<sup>118</sup> last year validity term.*

As the goal strategies presented above:

***2.15 To strengthen and expand in collaboration system with institutions and State programs the indigenous culture valorization, living in the municipal headquarters.***

The Municipal Education Plan is still in the implementation phase. The objectives and goals presented above can be considered advances in the Indigenous School Education line, produced from the indigenous struggle. Lábrea's municipality adhesion to the "I am Bilingual" project was the result of the Paumari People's struggle through the teacher Edilson Paumari, the leadership Agenor Paumari and the teacher Joel Paumari, indigenous people who live in the city and are Paumari people's leaders.

The project proposal is to strengthen children, adolescents and young Paumari and Apurinã people, who face suffering everyday in the city, as an exclusionary social situation result, that devalue and ridicule indigenous people and traditions. In the daily school life, indigenous students are victims of various aggressions. Many students do not assume their ethnic identity at school as a way to "protect" themselves from bullying. Learning the mother tongue makes the younger people aware of their traditions, listen to their stories, and make them to appropriate themselves of values and traditions. In this way, the program can be understood as a confrontation form. It implements a mobilization strategy built in the urban context in dialogue with the village.

The 'Paumari Language Championship', which, as we have already affirmed, emerges from the 'I am Bilingual' Program, as an action to strengthen the Paumari language and traditions in a direct dialogue with the villages. Such event happens in a previously chosen village and involves the Paumari who live in the villages and in the city. The first 'Paumari Language Championship' was held in São Clemente village, Lake Maraha Paumari Indigenous Land, in 2014. The championship is a competition between communities, which is carried by the presentation of Paumari's dance and history. Each community prepares itself throughout a year for that moment. The idea of the competition is connected to the moment of the team's formal presentation. The presentations happened on the event last day. However, the event is much more than a competition. The older ones enjoy singing and dancing and there is an involvement from the whole community, young people and children participate, actively. The championship is a reunion time, political meetings, articulation, dating and various exchanges. During the event, everyone who knows the songs is invited to sing.

The songs are accompanied by dances that involve all people. In the houses, people paint, talk, exchange information about the paintings and the stories are told and passed to the young ones. It is a pedagogical process that follows the Paumari's rhythm, in an intense information flow, which is materialized in a teaching-learning process. And this process is fundamentally communal, where there are a deep elderly's listening and the attention of children and young people. The 'Paumari Language Championship', is a great research process, carried out collectively, the community seeks information

and creatively elaborates the presentation throughout a year. The story is a attentive listening exercise result of the elderly's memory, searching to bring to the event a story according to the Paumari's narratives elements.

The 'Paumari Language Championship' is a Paumari's themselves creative reflection process, on his traditions in dialogue with their current experienced situations. One of the main objectives of this event is to produce didactic material for the Paumari' schools. In the 'I Am Bilingual' Program context, the 'Paumari Language Championship' is a Paumari people collective effort to build an Indigenous and Differentiated Education process. And in the city, 'I Am Bilingual', replies to the need to work on Indigenous Languages, answering the question of the ethnic identity denial in public schools in Lábrea city. The indigenous students enrolled in public school schools in Lábrea are inserted in the formal education logic. However, there is no pedagogical action to dialogue with these students' origin. Even at the Amazon Education, Science and Technology Federal Institute, (IFAM) and at the Amazon State University (UEA) where there is a policy of access for indigenous students through access quotas, there is no specific diversity policy. Indigenous students who are regularly enrolled in these technical institutions and higher education are not considered in their origin specificity context. Considering the public education networks context in Lábrea, there is no policy of attending to the diversity in the urban context. The indigenous presence, especially of the Apurinã, Paumari peoples in large numbers, and the Jarawara and Jamamadi in a smaller number, receive no other specific assistance than the "I Am Bilingual" Program, during this program period, which worked in the municipal schools contraturno.

### **3. Final considerations**

The expansion of Paumari's people's project, to a program a city hall project, even with the legal weaknesses presented above, the Apurinã peoples involvement, demonstrates the ongoing mobilization process in Lábrea city, where the linguistic, as Almeida (2007) states is one of the most outstanding social foundations, related to the self-affirmation of these subjects, directly, in the urban context.

The 'movement', the indigenous people's concern about living in the city, in terms of confrontation and social intervention, is noticed to guarantee their rights and life quality. To break with the stereotypes, the struggle for equal rights, even through the pressure for the Brazilian State recognition of the differentiated condition, in specific rights line, ensuring them by the Brazilian legislation, as well as in confronting prejudice by non-indigenous. In the last decades the indigenous "movement" has strengthened itself, the native's mobilization process in the city has presented advances, mainly in the education line. As example, Manaus may be cited, where approved in the Education Goals Plan the Indigenous Education implementation in 2005, and created the Indigenous School Education Center as the indigenous movement struggle result, in Manaus, in 2006. The 'I Am Bilingual' Program was effectived in Lábrea, in 2011.

These initiatives reveal the indigenous movement strengthening in the city, which, through diversified strategies, establishes itself in the political scenario of the municipalities. The natives' self-assertion various strategies coincide with the silence "breaking" imposed on these people, as well as giving them visibility in the city. Such strategies make possible the social stigmatization

process breaking, which is experienced by indigenous people in the city. And, in this process, the language learning and / or strengthening, the language use in the various social spaces, in particular the school occupation, a formal teaching institution, knowledge space, teases the society and guarantees visibility to the indigenous who are living in the city (Guerra & Lisboa).

Initiatives in education public policies line existing in Manaus and in Lábrea, cannot be read as isolated cases. They are based on the social mobilization context, on ethnic reconfiguration (Almeida, 2008) that has been happening in the Amazonian cities. These initiatives express the indigenous movement strengthening in the city, which is gaining shape in each new conquest. Despite the process fragility presented above, the indigenous movement struggle in the city is materialized through facing strategies which guarantee the of the indigenous self-assertion movement solidity in the city.

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