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Territorial mediation, participatory action research, and regional development in the Tururukari-Uka Indigenous community—Amazonas, Brazil.

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Abstract

This article proposes a methodological framework for intervention based on sensitive listening and participatory action research (PAR) for the cultural and socio-environmental valorization of the Tururukari-Uka Indigenous community, located in Manacapuru, in the Western Amazon. The central argument is that such processes can be better understood in light of the concept of regional development, understood not as simple economic growth, but as a process of social change that is complex, multi-actor, multiscalar, and multidimensional. Based on a collective and dialogical construction, a protocol of actions was developed committed to respecting the way of life, traditional knowledge, and political autonomy of the Omágua/Kambeba people. The study contextualizes the community within the Amazonian territory, analyzes its traditional subsistence practices and symbiotic relationship with the environment, and reflects on the challenges imposed by external pressures such as deforestation, illegal mining, and climate change. The research assumes that knowledge is produced through horizontal interaction between researchers and community subjects, highlighting the importance of knowledge dialogue, mediation, and the construction of preservation strategies grounded in lived experience, alterity, and epistemological symmetry. By recognizing the strength of cultural resistance and Indigenous protagonism, the article contributes to debates on ethical and transformative methodologies in research in traditional territories and to a broader understanding of regional development in Amazonian contexts.

Keywords: regional development. extension. participatory action research. traditional peoples. dialogue of knowledges.

Resumo

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Este artigo analisa a potencialidade da investigação ação participativa (IAP) como estratégia metodológica de mediação em territórios indígenas amazônicos, tomando como referência a comunidade indígena Tururukari-Uka, localizada em Manacapuru, no Amazonas. Parte-se da compreensão de que, na Amazônia Ocidental, as comunidades indígenas enfrentam pressões territoriais, ambientais e sociopolíticas que exigem formas de pesquisa e intervenção eticamente comprometidas com a autonomia, os saberes locais e os modos de vida comunitários. O objetivo do texto é refletir sobre a construção de uma proposta metodológica de mediação fundamentada na escuta sensível, no diálogo de saberes e na participação comunitária, articulando-a ao conceito de desenvolvimento regional. Adota-se uma abordagem qualitativa e reflexiva, apoiada em revisão bibliográfica e documental, aproximação exploratória com a comunidade, escuta ativa e interlocução com instituições parceiras. O argumento central sustenta que a IAP, quando compreendida não apenas como técnica de pesquisa, mas como processo de construção compartilhada do conhecimento, pode fortalecer capacidades territoriais, ampliar a agência comunitária e contribuir para processos de desenvolvimento regional territorialmente situados. Ao reconhecer a comunidade como sujeito ativo de resistência, memória e produção de alternativas, o artigo contribui para os debates sobre metodologias participativas, mediação e desenvolvimento regional em contextos indígenas amazônicos.

Palavras-chave: desenvolvimento regional; investigação ação participativa; mediação; povos indígenas; Amazônia Ocidental.

1 Introduction

The Western Amazon encompasses one of the most complex combinations of sociocultural diversity, ecological richness, and increasing territorial pressures in the world. In this region, Indigenous communities maintain historical ways of life deeply rooted in their relationships with the land, forests, rivers, and traditional knowledge systems. At the same time, they face growing threats resulting from deforestation, illegal mining, the expansion of predatory economic activities, the weakening of public policies, and the impacts of climate change. Within this context, Indigenous issues cannot be understood solely as cultural or identity-related matters; rather, they involve concrete struggles for territorial rights, autonomy, recognition, and socio-environmental justice.

It is within this setting that the Tururukari-Uka Indigenous Community, located in the municipality of Manacapuru, in the state of Amazonas, Brazil, and inhabited by the Omágua/Kambeba people, is situated. The community represents a significant intersection of collective memory, territoriality, cultural resistance, and efforts toward community strengthening. Its subsistence practices, its close relationship with the forest, its forms of social organization, and its processes of ethnic and cultural affirmation demonstrate that Indigenous presence in the Amazon is not merely a remnant of the past. Rather, it constitutes a contemporary experience of sustaining life, defending rights, and envisioning collective futures.

This reality highlights the importance of research approaches that move beyond extractive models of knowledge production and recognize Indigenous peoples as active subjects in the construction of knowledge about their own

territories and lived experiences. In this regard, participatory action research emerges as a methodological and political approach capable of fostering dialogue among different forms of knowledge, strengthening local capacities, and contributing to socially engaged and territorially grounded processes of regional development.

Building upon this context, the present article addresses the following central research question: how can participatory action research, articulated through processes of mediation and dialogue among different forms of knowledge, contribute to the development of ethical and territorially grounded strategies for community strengthening in Indigenous territories of the Amazon? More specifically, the study seeks to understand how this methodological approach can be conceived as a means of enhancing the relationship between universities, research, and communities, while avoiding extractive practices of knowledge production and fostering more horizontal, reflexive, and socially engaged processes.

The objective of this article is therefore to analyze the potential of participatory action research as a methodological strategy for mediation in Indigenous territories of the Amazon, taking the Tururukari-Uka community as its empirical and analytical reference. Rather than merely presenting a set of technical procedures, the article reflects on the construction of a methodological pathway grounded in listening, alterity, respect for traditional knowledge, and the political autonomy of the community. In this regard, the study discusses the development of an action protocol built in dialogue with the Tururukari-Uka community, seeking to demonstrate that research, when guided by participation and epistemological symmetry, can contribute to broader processes of territorial and community strengthening.

The central argument advanced here is that participatory action research, when understood not merely as a data collection technique but as a process of shared knowledge construction, can constitute a relevant strategy for mediation and for strengthening territorial capacities. This approach is particularly fruitful for thinking about regional development in Indigenous Amazonian contexts. From this perspective, regional development should not be reduced to economic growth, productive modernization, or market integration. Rather, the article adopts the understanding that regional development is a multidimensional, multi-actor, and multiscalar process of social change, involving struggles for recognition, the valorization of knowledge systems, the strengthening of collective autonomy, and the creation of conditions for the dignified reproduction of life within territories (Deponti, 2023).

This article is structured into four sections. In addition to this introduction and the concluding remarks, the second section discusses the theoretical-conceptual foundations that support the relationship between participatory action research, mediation, and regional development. Particular attention is given to the contributions of authors who have reflected on participatory methodologies, knowledge co-production, and the role of communities in research processes. The third section presents the methodological procedures adopted in the study, emphasizing the construction of a participatory action protocol developed in collaboration with the Indigenous community. Finally, the fourth section discusses the main outcomes and reflections arising from this experience, highlighting both the

potential and the challenges of implementing methodological approaches committed to dialogue, participation, and social transformation.

From a methodological standpoint, the essay is based on a qualitative approach and relies on bibliographic and documentary research, supplemented by the analysis of materials generated throughout the participatory process. More than presenting empirical results in the conventional sense, the article aims to contribute to methodological debates within the field of Regional Development, emphasizing that the production of knowledge in Indigenous territories requires ethical, political, and epistemological commitments that create conditions for the possibility of research conducted with communities, rather than merely about them, thereby fostering more just, dialogical, and transformative relationships.

The relevance of this study is therefore articulated on two interconnected levels. First, it contributes to discussions on the Amazon and Indigenous peoples by considering the Tururukari-Uka community as a living territory and a space for mediation. In doing so, it broadens understandings of regional development in contexts marked by cultural diversity, environmental challenges, and historical disputes over territory. Second, it contributes to methodological debates in the field of Regional Development by highlighting participatory action research as a means of strengthening local capacities and promoting socially engaged research practices.

Furthermore, the study is aligned with the principles of the Regional Development Graduate Program, as it recognizes the Tururukari-Uka Indigenous community as a strategic context for investigating the relationships among territory, mediation, social participation, and the reproduction of community life. These dimensions are understood as central to the study of regional development, especially within Amazonian contexts. The research also engages with contemporary theoretical and methodological discussions in the field by proposing the development and implementation of a participatory action research protocol. In doing so, it contributes to the advancement of innovative approaches capable of strengthening dialogue among universities, communities, and territorial development processes.

This theoretical framework is pivotal to the article. By incorporating the concept of regional development, this study aims to prevent the discussion surrounding the Tururukari-Uka community from being confined to a merely localized narrative or an abstract methodological reflection. What is at stake is the understanding that, within Amazonian indigenous territories, regional development encompasses safeguarding territorial permanence, strengthening traditional subsistence practices, expanding collective organization capacity, valorizing local memories and knowledge, and establishing institutional mediations that do not compromise community ways of life. In other words, development within these contexts is achieved less through the imposition of external solutions and more by expanding the agency of the territorial subjects themselves to interpret their reality, define priorities, and actively participate in shaping paths for their own future.

From a methodological standpoint, the article is grounded in a qualitative and reflexive approach, supported by a literature and documentary review, exploratory fieldwork, active listening, and the co-construction of dialogue with the community and partner institutions. The empirical material mobilized stems from an initial approach to the Tururukari-Uka community and the progressive development of a

participatory action-research (PAR) protocol, which is guided by the principles of dialogue of knowledges, community feedback, and collective construction. Therefore, rather than presenting the conclusive results of a concluded process, this article focuses on elucidating the foundations and possibilities of a methodological trajectory still under construction, critically examining its assumptions, potentialities, and challenges.

The relevance of this text lies, therefore, across three articulated dimensions. First, it contributes to debates on the Amazon and indigenous peoples by framing the Tururukari-Uka community as an active territorial subject rather than a passive object of intervention. Second, it offers a methodological reflection on participatory action-research within indigenous contexts, highlighting the centrality of mediation, alterity, and responsive listening. Third, it aligns this discussion with the field of regional development, arguing that participatory, territorially rooted, and epistemologically symmetrical processes can strengthen local capacities and contribute to more ethical and plural forms of knowledge production regarding development in Amazonian contexts.

2 Indigenous Communities in the Western Amazon: Territory, Way of Life, and Regional Development

The Western Amazon is located in the northern region of Brazil, encompassing the states of Acre, Amazonas, Rondônia, and Roraima. This area constitutes part of the vast Amazon basin, which comprises the world's largest tropical rainforest, covering a significant portion of the Brazilian territory. It is a region characterized by profound cultural and ecological diversity, harboring numerous indigenous communities whose ways of life are deeply interconnected with the natural environment. These communities, which include groups such as the Huni Kuin, Ashaninka, Yawanawá, and Yanomami, among others, possess a long history of occupation and sustainable natural resource management.

The earliest inhabitants of Manacapuru belonged to the Mura and Torá indigenous ethnic groups, who migrated from the Madeira River region. The city's name is of indigenous origin—specifically derived from a Tupi word composed of two roots: *Manacá*, meaning flower, and *Puru*, meaning multi-colored or tinted (Silva, 2012). This research proposes a study centered on Manacapuru, a municipality located in the state of Amazonas, in the Northern region of Brazil. It is situated approximately 100 km west of Manaus, on the left bank of the Solimões River, one of the primary waterways in the Amazon. Manacapuru is renowned for its rich biodiversity and the presence of riverside (*ribeirinha*) and indigenous communities that coexist in harmony with the forest.

The economy of Manacapuru is primarily driven by fishing, family farming, and extractive activities, with a particular emphasis on the production of jute, a plant fiber used in manufacturing sacks and other goods. Ecotourism has also gained prominence, attracting visitors interested in exploring the Amazon rainforest, its river systems, and local cultures. Furthermore, Manacapuru is famous for the *Festival de Ciranda*, a popular cultural manifestation that celebrates local heritage and

traditions through dance performances, music, and competitions between rival *ciranda* groups.

The Tururukari-Uka indigenous community is located within the territory of Manacapuru and is formed by the Kambeba people. According to Silva (2012), the Omagua/Kambeba constitute one of the most significant indigenous groups established between the Solimões and Negro rivers, near the Amazon border. Silva highlights that they possess a relatively rich historical and ethnographic documentation, primarily due to their cultural particularities—such as physical appearance and distinct attire compared to neighboring ethnic groups—and their adaptation to a specific and geographically constrained environment: the floodplain (*várzea*) of the Upper Amazon.

The Omagua/Kambeba people, who centuries ago inhabited part of the Upper Amazon floodplain, represent one of the populations that were nearly decimated following initial contact with non-indigenous society (*homem branco*). Consequently, the Indian Protection Service (SPI), established in 1910, and later the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI), created in 1967, adopted a policy of removing indigenous peoples from areas of capital interest and relocating them to Indigenous Parks or "Refuge Areas," such as the Xingu Park (established in 1951) and the Aripuanã Indigenous Park (established in 1968). This policy of isolation and protection of indigenous peoples had devastating consequences for the Omagua/Kambeba and other groups; it frequently confined them to small areas lacking adequate survival conditions, prevented contact with other communities, and hindered access to basic services such as health and education. Furthermore, the constant pressure of colonization and this ongoing process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization experienced by the Omagua/Kambeba led to the loss of their traditional territories, profoundly impacting their culture and way of life. However, these factors were insufficient to completely erase this population from the Amazon region. Though silenced and fearful, the Omagua/Kambeba sought new strategies for survival. By reclaiming their songs, dances, and myths, they have gradually emerged from the invisibility to which they were confined during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Silva, 2012).

The name Tururukari-Uka translates to *Tururukari*—the figure of the primary leader who was a major defender of the Omagua/Kambeba and played a fundamental role in the people's history. The name Tururukari was revered by the indigenous people of his era as a "god," and this sentiment of veneration and pride was passed down to his children and grandchildren, which is why the village bears the name of this paramount leader. Tururukari was, therefore, not only a great leader but also an influential political figure, chief leader (*tuxaua maior*), organizer, and defender of the people and the territory in question. His name represented power and strength, hence his status as a "god." The name *Uka* means house.

The Tururukari-Uka community, formed by the Omagua/Kambeba people, concretely expresses this relationship between territory, culture, and the reproduction of life. Their traditional subsistence practices—slash-and-burn agriculture (*agricultura de roça*), fishing, extraction, and craftsmanship—are not merely economic strategies, but forms of social and ecological organization deeply connected to the Amazonian territory. Concurrently, the pressure from activities such as mining, extensive cattle ranching, wildfires, and deforestation directly

threatens these conditions of reproduction, affecting not only the material base of the community but also its memory, culture, and political autonomy.

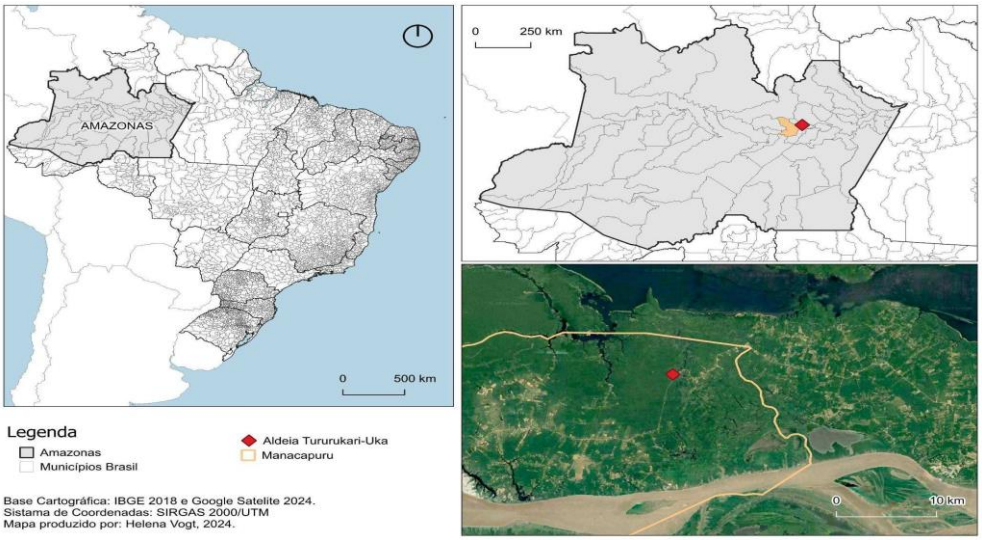


Figure 1 - Location of the Tururukari-Uka Community - Manacapuru-AM

Source: Prepared by the author (2025).

The expansion of activities such as illegal deforestation, wildfires, mining, and large-scale agribusiness poses a constant threat to the community's territory and way of life. Territorial loss directly impacts subsistence capacity and cultural preservation. Furthermore, altering climate patterns in the Amazon directly affects agricultural and fishing practices, compelling the community to adapt its livelihood strategies to these shifts. Preserving the Amazon is also critical to mitigating the impacts of climate change across the region. The conservation of the Amazon rainforest not only contributes to maintaining global ecological equilibrium but also safeguards the livelihoods of communities that depend on the region's natural resources.

It is precisely here that the concept of regional development becomes analytically fruitful. If regional development is understood as a multidimensional social change, then the community's situation cannot be interpreted merely as an isolated environmental, land-tenure, or cultural issue. Rather, it constitutes a regional matter because it encompasses complex intersections among territory, power, public policies, knowledge systems, modes of life, and capacities for collective action. From this perspective, the permanence of the community within its territory, the preservation of its ways of life, and the strengthening of its autonomy constitute substantive dimensions of Amazonian regional development.

3 Traditional Subsistence Practices, Socioterritorial Diversity, and the Reproduction of Life

This community, like many others in the region, maintains traditional subsistence practices, such as slash-and-burn agriculture (*agricultura de roça*), fishing, and extractive activities, while also preserving its indigenous culture and modes of

life. The indigenous communities in the region of Manacapuru, including that of Tururukari-Uka, play a significant role .in the conservation of Amazonian biodiversity and in the maintenance of cultural traditions that are passed down from generation to generation. The interaction of these communities with the natural environment is deeply rooted in their traditional knowledge, which includes sustainable practices for forest and natural resource management.

The social structure of the Tururukari-Uka community is based on a family and community organization in which the collective plays a pivotal role. Leadership is exercised by *caciques* (chiefs) or spiritual leaders—*pajés* (shamanic figures)—who are revered for their traditional wisdom and capacity to guide the community in social and spiritual matters.

Figure 2 depicts Wuika Kambeba, also known as Dona Teca, a *pajé* of the Tururukari-Uka community, a position she has held since the age of eighteen. She highlights that tourism was the primary source of income (prior to the COVID-19 pandemic); however, they also sell traditional indigenous crafts, herbal teas, and medicines to nearby regions. Daily subsistence is derived from hunting and fishing, and some community members receive *Bolsa Família* government welfare assistance. Their native language, used in daily life, originates from the Tupi linguistic stem and Kambeba, though they are also fluent in Portuguese. They dress in cotton garments and handcrafted ornaments made by themselves, and they do not use feathers, as they do not accept the killing of birds for this purpose.

Figure 2 - *Pajé* of the Tururukari-Uka Community, Wuika Kambeba (Dona Teca)



Source: Marie Claire Magazine (2021), available at https://revistamarieclaire.globo.com/EuLeitora/noticia/2020/07/me-aliei-natureza-para- expulsar-o-coronavirus-da-minha-aldeia.html

The language spoken by the community constitutes one of the most significant aspects of its cultural identity. Beyond language, the transmission of knowledge, myths, rituals, and traditional narratives plays a crucial role in the education of younger generations. Spiritual practices, such as rituals associated with the forest, hunting, fishing, and agriculture, are a fundamental dimension of

community life. This spirituality is generally intertwined with nature, where each natural element holds a distinct symbolic meaning.

The Kambeba of the Tururukari-Uka village have consistently strived to preserve and maintain the traditions and customs transmitted by their ancestors. They valorize their language, songs, dances, the cultivation of the plot (*roçado*), craftsmanship, and the attire that and trace back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Concurrently, they have sought to secure their agency within the surrounding society. The pursuit of formal education has become a priority for many Kambeba, with several members entering universities. Furthermore, they have fought for their land rights and for respect and recognition as an indigenous people. These struggles exemplify the resilience of the Omagua/Kambeba over the years, demonstrating their determination to reconcile ancient traditions with modern challenges. This stands as a testament to the cultural and identity-based vitality of the Kambeba people (Silva, 2012).

The community relies on traditional subsistence practices that include slash-and-burn agriculture (*agricultura de roça*), fishing, extraction, and craftsmanship. The *roça* is a shifting cultivation system wherein small areas of forest are cleared and cultivated for a period before being left fallow for regeneration. This method is sustainable and adapted to Amazonian conditions, enabling the production of food such as cassava, maize, bananas, and other traditional crops. Meanwhile, fishing and extraction occur predominantly in the Solimões River and nearby creeks (*igarapés*), serving as an essential source of protein and a staple of their daily diet. In addition, the gathering of forest products, such as fruits, nuts, and medicinal plants, contributes to the nutrition and health of the community.

Such practices are not remnants of the past, but contemporary forms of life and territorial management. The *roça*, for instance, is presented as a shifting cultivation system adapted to Amazonian conditions; fishing and extraction guarantee sustenance and health; craftsmanship preserves material culture and can also generate income. The relationship with the forest is described as one of interdependence and respect, sustained by traditional ecological knowledge that guides natural resource management.

Craftsmanship is produced using local materials such as straw, seeds, and plant fibers. It serves not only as a means to preserve material culture but can also represent a source of income for the community through sales at regional fairs and markets.

Figure 3 - Craftsmanship of the Tururukari-Uka



Source: Research (2023)

These practices reveal that the community's relationship with the forest is one of interdependence and reciprocity. The forest is not framed as an inert stock of resources to be exploited, but rather as a space of life, spirituality, memory, and collective continuity. This relationship, sustained by traditional ecological knowledge, guides management practices that have historically contributed to the conservation of Amazonian biodiversity. Consequently, when addressing regional development in the Amazon, it becomes insufficient to rely on conventional indicators centered solely on economic growth, monetary income increases, or market intensification. In territories such as Tururukari-Uka, development must also be understood through the capacity to sustain territorially rooted modes of life, protect ecosystems, strengthen community bonds, and guarantee conditions for cultural and political reproduction.

At this point, territorial permanence assumes centrality. For Indigenous peoples, territory is not merely a physical base for housing or production; it is a condition for collective existence. It is within the territory that productive practices, kinship ties, forms of authority, knowledge systems, rituals, memory, and the socialization processes of new generations are organized. The loss, fragmentation, or precarization of territory does not only affect the community economy, but compromises the material and symbolic foundations of collective life.

Thus, territorial permanence must be understood as a substantive dimension of regional development, as it guarantees the conditions for the community to continue producing its own way of living, deciding, educating, caring, and existing within the Amazonian space.

In the Amazon, this is even more evident because territorial conflicts are not marginal; they structure a significant part of regional dynamics. The advancement of deforestation, illegal mining, extensive cattle ranching, forest fires, and the private appropriation of natural commons does not merely represent an external pressure on Indigenous areas, but a competing model of land use. In terms of regional development, there is a clash here between distinct rationalities: on one hand, a predatory,

concentrating, and exogenous logic; on the other, forms of occupation and management that combine biodiversity, community reproduction, and cultural continuity. Therefore, defending the community's permanence in its territory is not merely defending a specific right, but asserting an alternative conception of development for the region.

Indigenous education must also be understood as a substantive dimension of regional development. In the case of Tururukari-Uka, the school cannot be reduced to an institutional facility or a mechanism for formal inclusion. It operates as a space for identity strengthening, linguistic transmission, the valorization of memory, and mediation between tradition and contemporaneity. When guided by the interests and culture of the community itself, Indigenous school education contributes to the formation of subjects capable of moving between different worlds without severing their territorial and cultural belonging. This means that education does not act merely as a complementary social policy, but as a mechanism of historical continuity and for strengthening the collective capacity for interpretation and decision-making.

From a regional development perspective, this is decisive. Regions do not develop only when they expand infrastructure or economic activities; they also develop when they enhance the capacity of their subjects to produce knowledge, interpret their context, formulate priorities, and contest future projects. In Indigenous contexts, differentiated education enables precisely this: strengthening the community so that it can engage in dialogue with external institutions, defend its rights, record its memory, qualify its forms of organization, and construct its own responses to the transformations that affect it. In this case, education is development because it expands community capacities, sustains cultural reproduction, and strengthens territorial agency.

Therefore, biodiversity and regional development are not opposing terms. On the contrary, in the Amazon, biodiversity must be understood as a structural component of development, provided that the latter is conceived through a territorially, ecologically, and socially situated lens. Conservation cannot be seen as an obstacle to development, nor can Indigenous peoples be viewed as a barrier to progress. In many cases, it is precisely these peoples and communities that sustain more durable, resilient, and balanced forms of relationship with the environment. From this perspective, biodiversity ceases to be a mere background and becomes a concrete dimension of the region's territorial capacities.

Community autonomy is another central dimension. The Tururukari-Uka community does not appear in this article as a group in need of external wardship, but as a collective subject that interprets its reality, organizes its social life, preserves knowledge, constructs mediations, and formulates strategies for its continuity. Autonomy, in this sense, does not mean isolation, but rather the capacity to decide on one's own paths, define priorities, negotiate with external institutions, and produce responses based on their own cultural and political frameworks. In contexts historically marked by wardship, imposition, and subalternization, strengthening Indigenous autonomy is a condition for any development process that aims to be ethically legitimate.

In this direction, Saquet's contribution (2015; 2018) allows for a deeper understanding of regional development in Amazonian contexts by highlighting that territory should not be interpreted merely as a material base for public policies or a

physical support for economic activities, but as the historical result of social practices, power relations, and collective processes of the production of life. By emphasizing the role of popular knowledge and territorial praxis in the constitution of counter-hegemonic territorialities, the author demonstrates that traditional communities and Indigenous peoples do not occupy territory merely as a space for housing or subsistence, but as a field of cultural, political, and ecological reproduction of their collective existence. From this perspective, territorial permanence, differentiated Indigenous education, the protection of biodiversity, and the strengthening of community autonomy constitute central dimensions of territorially situated regional development processes, insofar as they express unique forms of social organization and environmental management that challenge exogenous and homogenizing models of development. Thus, recognizing the protagonism of territorial subjects and the centrality of their knowledge implies understanding regional development not as a subordinate adaptation to external dynamics, but as a process constructed from concrete, historically situated social practices guided by the collective capacity to interpret, defend, and transform the territory.

From a regional perspective, this means recognizing that development is not achieved through the mere subordinate integration of Indigenous communities into external agendas, but rather through the strengthening of their capacity for collective action, their political voice, and their control over the processes that affect their territories. When the community expands its organization, consolidates associations, strengthens its school, valorizes its memory, and constructs its own protocols for relating to the university and other institutions, it is also producing regional development. This is not because it adapts to an exogenous standard of modernization, but because it expands its capacities for permanence, decision-making, and the reproduction of life on its own terms.

Thus, territorial permanence, Indigenous education, biodiversity, and community autonomy do not appear here as parallel or complementary themes. Together, they constitute substantive dimensions of regional development in the Amazon, as they pertain to the concrete social, ecological, cultural, and political conditions of territorial subjects. Thinking about regional development from the standpoint of Tururukari-Uka therefore requires shifting the focus from a vision centered on aggregated economic indicators toward an understanding that values the capacity to sustain living territories, plural ways of life, preserved ecosystems, and collective subjects endowed with voice and agency.

In this direction, the community's traditional practices are not remnants of backwardness, but expressions of complex territorial rationalities. The search for formal education, the recognition of rights, and broader political articulation, in turn, demonstrates that tradition and change are not mutually exclusive spheres. On the contrary, the experience of Tururukari-Uka indicates that territorial strengthening can occur precisely through the capacity to articulate cultural continuity and strategic openness to the outside world. In Amazonian contexts, regional development does not mean homogenizing, commodifying, or de-indigenizing territories, but creating conditions so that peoples and communities can continue to exist with dignity, autonomy, and recognition on their own terms.

4 Mediation, alterity, and participatory action-research as foundations of regional development

The Tururukari-Uka Community, like many other Indigenous communities, is a repository of traditional knowledge that has been accumulated and transmitted across generations. This knowledge encompasses not only agricultural, fishing, and forest management practices, but also a deep understanding of natural cycles, medicinal plants, and the survival techniques that enable the community to live sustainably within the Amazon rainforest.

This knowledge is fundamental for the conservation of Amazonian biodiversity, given that the community's traditional environmental management practices are aligned with the preservation of ecosystems. At a time when deforestation and environmental degradation threaten the Amazon, the traditional wisdom of the Tururukari-Uka and other Indigenous communities offers a model of harmonious coexistence with nature.

According to Viveiros de Castro (2002, p. 2), anthropological knowledge is immediately a social relation, for it is the effect of the relations that reciprocally constitute the knowing subject and the subject they know, and the cause of a transformation (every relation is a transformation) in the relational constitution of both. Even when the anthropologist and the native share the same culture, the relation of meaning between the two discourses differentiates such a community: the relation of the anthropologist to their culture and that of the native to theirs is not exactly the same. The anthropologist usually holds an epistemological advantage over the native. The discourse of the former is not situated on the same plane as the discourse of the latter: the meaning established by the anthropologist depends on the native meaning, but it is the anthropologist who holds the meaning of this meaning — it is they who explain and interpret, translate and introduce, textualize and contextualize, justify and signify this meaning. To look at them with a distanced and empathy-lacking gaze, to construct them as an exotic object, to diminish them as a primitive not coeval with the observer, to deny them the human right to interlocution — we know the litany. It is nothing like that. Quite the contrary, I think.

This quotation from Viveiros de Castro resonates as a mantra for the researcher committed to the territory where they conduct their study. In this sense, a protocol was developed for action alongside the community. Within this protocol, the activities and steps to be carried out or followed are delimited to ensure respect for and the non-alteration of their way of life and culture.

Based on the reflections presented so far regarding the territorial, historical, and sociocultural context of the Tururukari-Uka community, and considering the contemporary challenges faced by Indigenous peoples in the Western Amazon, it becomes necessary to explicitly state the methodological path adopted in this research. The construction of strategies for cultural mediation and the valorization of socioterritorial diversity requires not only ethical sensitivity, but also a commitment to methods that recognize local subjects as protagonists of the investigative process.

In this sense, the next section presents the methodology developed, grounded in participatory action-research, detailing the protocol constructed in dialogue with the community, the theoretical frameworks adopted, and the techniques utilized for listening, analyzing, and providing feedback on the knowledge produced.

At the theoretical-methodological core, mediation appears as a central category. Drawing from Viveiros de Castro, the text problematizes the relationship between researcher and community, rejecting the position of epistemological superiority of the former over the latter, and emphasizing the necessity of shared lived experience (*vivência*), alterity, and listening. Next, the research presents the construction of a protocol for action alongside the community, delimiting activities and procedures aimed at respecting their way of life, culture, and local autonomy.

Mediation constitutes a negotiation process between the parties that is neither top-down nor bottom-up, but rather one of encounter, interface, and hybridization between diverse knowledges. It is a long-term, contradictory endeavor with small short-term results, requiring openness, flexibility, reflection, analysis, and decision-making on the part of the mediated subjects. The quality of mediation resides precisely in its capacity to transform the mediated into subjects of the development process. In this reading, alterity, sensitivity, and agency become constitutive elements of intervention aimed at regional development.

This formulation dialogues directly with the participatory action-research adopted in this article. The described methodological protocol — preliminary assessment, formation of an institutional network, exploratory visit, active listening, presentation of the proposal, systematization of knowledge, action planning with children and youth, use of qualitative techniques, and continuous reflection-action-reflection cycles — expresses precisely a way of constructing knowledge *with* the community, and not *about* the community. In this case, the research does not end with data production, but intends to act upon social reality, strengthening protagonisms and dynamizing local development processes.

Thus, PAR can be understood as a methodology coherent with an expanded vision of regional development. It recognizes that development is produced through horizontal interaction among subjects, the valorization of local knowledge, the shared construction of diagnoses, and the collective formulation of strategies. More than a research technique, PAR functions as an apparatus for territorial mediation and for strengthening community agency.

The choice of Participatory Action-Research in this study aligns with the notion of territorial praxis proposed by Saquet (2015; 2018), by recognizing local subjects not merely as sources of information, but as protagonists of the production of territory and of the knowledge about it. From this perspective, territory is understood as the result of historically constructed social relations, crisscrossed by disputes, knowledges, and forms of collective organization that express themselves in daily practices of the reproduction of life. Thus, the investigation is not guided by a logic of external application of techniques onto a previously defined reality, but rather by

a process of relational and situated construction of knowledge, in which listening, the dialogue of knowledges (*diálogo de saberes*), and community participation constitute structuring elements of the methodological path. By dialoguing with the notion of counter-hegemonic territorialities formulated by Saquet, Participatory Action-Research allows for the understanding that knowledge production in Amazonian Indigenous contexts must contribute to strengthening territorial capacities, valorizing local knowledges, and expanding the autonomy of subjects in interpreting and conducting their own regional development processes.

5 Status of empirical material and methodological path of the investigation

The construction of the methodological path of this research is anchored in Participatory Action-Research (PAR), understood not only as a set of qualitative techniques, but as an epistemological and political perspective of shared knowledge production in socioterritorial contexts marked by historical asymmetries between academic institutions and Indigenous peoples. This methodological choice dialogues directly with the argument developed in the previous sections, according to which regional development in the Amazon cannot be interpreted solely through economic indicators or exogenous dynamics of modernization, but must be understood as a territorially situated process, sustained by collective practices of permanence, education, biodiversity protection, and community autonomy.

In this direction, the investigation was built from an initial movement of territorial approach alongside the Tururukari-Uka Indigenous community, which belongs to the Omágua/Kambeba people and is located in the municipality of Manacapuru (AM). The empirical material mobilized in this article results from two exploratory visits, more than four dialogue meetings (*reuniões de interlocução*) with community leaders, and several planning meetings with partner institutions operating in the region, constituting a fundamental relational stage for building bonds of trust and for the collective agreement (*pactuação*) on the conditions under which the research would be developed. Rather than a mere preliminary moment of data collection, this approach allowed for the identification of priority territorial demands, the recognition of local forms of social organization, and an understanding of the centrality of Indigenous education, biodiversity protection, and territorial permanence as structural dimensions of community strategies for the reproduction of life. This choice stems from the understanding that, in Amazonian Indigenous contexts, research cannot be conducted as an external data collection procedure, under penalty of reproducing extractive logics of knowledge historically associated with the subalternization of the territory's subjects. On the contrary, the methodological path had to be constructed relationally, respecting rhythms, dialogues, institutional mediations, and the community's own temporality.

The first movement of this path consisted of a literature and document review concerning the Western Amazon, the municipality of Manacapuru, the Omágua/Kambeba people, and the Tururukari-Uka community. This stage did not serve a merely introductory function. It was important for historically situating the territory, recognizing processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization

experienced by the Kambeba people, and identifying issues already highlighted in previous studies regarding identity, community organization, Indigenous schooling, and associationalism (*associativismo*). Furthermore, dialoguing with authors linked to the Latin American tradition of Participatory Action-Research, such as Fals Borda, Ramírez, Moreno and Espadas, Pestaña, and Alcázar, contributed to theoretically sustaining a methodology committed to shared lived experience (*vivência*), critical participation, and the co-production of knowledge.

When clarifying the status of this empirical material, it is important to emphasize that the article is based on an ongoing research process. Following the exploratory conversation with the local leader mentioned above, an initial in-person visit was conducted with the participation of this leadership and families from the community. In this first stage, a presentation of the Project was made to the community, followed by its adaptation to the community's own needs and demands.

In parallel, meetings were held with institutions in the municipality of Manaus to explore potential partnerships, such as: the Coordination of Indigenous Peoples of Manaus and Surroundings (*Coordenação de Povos Indígenas de Manaus e Entornos* - COPIME)[1]; the Association of the Kambeba (*Associação dos Kambeba* - ATIK); and the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (*Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária* - EMBRAPA), which contributed to the construction of an institutional support network for the research. In addition to these organizations, the Secretariat of Science, Technology, and Innovation, and the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (*Serviço Brasileiro de Apoio às Micro e Pequenas Empresas* - SEBRAE) were also visited. The constitution of this network was not secondary (*acessória*), as it played an important role in the initial mediation of contact, in creating conditions of trust, and in adapting the methodological path to the specificities of the territory. In the case of EMBRAPA, for instance, its participation was relevant in enabling the initial approach between the researcher and community leaders, favoring a less invasive and more respectful entry into the field. These activities enabled the production of preliminary records regarding the community's socioterritorial organization, its modes of subsistence, its strategies for cultural valorization, and its demands related to territorial permanence and differentiated education.

Online workshops, telephone conversations with local interlocutors, a presentation of the Project to the community's youth, and two *in loco* visits were conducted, which allowed for the refinement of the institutional approach and the building of bonds with the community, strengthening listening and the recognition of demands.

In clarifying the status of this empirical material, it is important to emphasize that this article is grounded in an ongoing research process. Following the exploratory conversation with the local community leader mentioned above, an initial field visit was conducted with the participation of this leader and members of the community. During this first encounter, the research project was presented to the community, and discussions were held to ensure that its objectives and proposed activities were aligned with the community's own needs and priorities.

Concurrently, meetings were held with institutions in the municipality of Manaus to explore potential research partnerships, including the Coordination of Indigenous Peoples of Manaus and Surrounding Areas (COPIME)[1], the Kambeba Association (ATIK), and the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA). These interactions contributed to the establishment of an institutional support network for the research. Additional meetings were also conducted with the Municipal Secretariat for Science, Technology and Innovation and the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (SEBRAE).

The establishment of this institutional network was not merely ancillary to the research process. Rather, it played a crucial role in mediating initial contacts, fostering relationships of trust, and adapting the methodological pathway to the specific characteristics of the territory. In the case of EMBRAPA, for instance, its involvement was instrumental in facilitating the researcher's initial engagement with community leaders, enabling a less intrusive and more culturally respectful entry into the field. These activities generated preliminary records concerning the community's socio-territorial organization, its livelihoods, its strategies for cultural preservation and valorization, and its demands related to territorial permanence and culturally differentiated education.

In addition, online workshops, telephone conversations with local interlocutors, a presentation of the research project to the community's youth, and two on-site field visits were conducted. These activities strengthened the process of institutional engagement and relationship-building with the community, enhancing both attentive listening and the recognition of emerging territorial demands. It is important to note that the continuation of systematic participatory workshops, the development of expanded social cartography, and the organization of ongoing cycles of collective reflection remain under negotiation with the community, in accordance with its own decision-making processes, organizational dynamics, and forms of participation. This methodological stance reaffirms the study's commitment to a participatory and dialogical approach, consistent with the principles of Participatory Action Research, which emphasizes the co-construction of all stages of the research process and recognizes community autonomy as a central dimension of territorial intervention strategies.

This clarification goes beyond a merely formal methodological concern; it reflects an ethical and epistemological commitment consistent with Participatory Action Research. In Amazonian contexts, the field cannot be understood as a reality

[1] The Coordination of Indigenous Peoples of Manaus and Surrounding Areas (COPIME) is an Indigenous organization operating in the Médio Solimões region of the state of Amazonas, Brazil. Its primary mission is to articulate, represent, and defend the rights of Indigenous peoples living in the region. COPIME plays a significant role in promoting Indigenous citizenship, protecting traditional territories, strengthening cultural heritage, and fostering dialogue with public agencies and partner institutions, including the National Foundation for Indigenous Peoples (FUNAI), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and universities.

that is readily available for external observation. Rather, it is progressively constituted through relationships built upon listening, dialogue, and methodological negotiation with territorial actors. From this perspective, conducting research requires recognizing the territory as a lived, politically contested, and symbolically constructed space. Such an understanding demands a shift from an extractive model of research toward a relational approach grounded in the collaborative production of knowledge.

The methodological approach was therefore structured around three interrelated principles. The first concerns the centrality of territorial listening as the foundation for constructing the research field. The exploratory visits and initial meetings with the community revealed that territorial permanence, Indigenous education, biodiversity, and community autonomy are not isolated dimensions but rather interconnected elements that shape the everyday organization of community life. The second principle is the co-production of knowledge, understood as a continuous process of methodological negotiation with community leaders and residents, in which tools such as dialogue circles, narrative records, and participatory mapping are conceived as mechanisms of intercultural translation rather than merely techniques for data collection. The third principle concerns the ethical commitment to community autonomy, guiding the research to respect local temporalities, collective decision-making processes, and culturally specific forms of social organization, while ensuring the return of research findings to the community and transparency regarding the use of the information produced.

Accordingly, the methodological protocol developed in this study should not be understood as a fixed intervention framework but rather as an open, context-sensitive structure for the collective production of knowledge. Drawing on the contributions of Fals Borda (2008), Ramírez (2020), Moreno and Espadas (2002), and Pestaña and Alcázar (2000), the research process is organized into successive cycles of reflection–action–reflection, in which community members actively participate in defining research priorities, interpreting the knowledge generated, and formulating strategies aimed at strengthening the community's territorial capacities.

This clarification is essential to reinforce the methodological integrity of the study. The protocol encompasses both activities that have already been carried out and others that remain planned for subsequent phases of the research. It is therefore necessary to distinguish clearly between the empirical material that has already been generated and the prospective actions that constitute future developments of the ongoing research process.

By integrating Participatory Action Research with a regional development perspective, the methodological approach adopted here reaffirms that knowledge production is itself a process of building territorial capacities. From this perspective, the research is not limited to understanding local realities; it also contributes to strengthening collective memory, socio-territorial identity, community participation, and political autonomy. In the Amazonian context, these dimensions constitute fundamental elements of territorially grounded processes of regional development.

Table 1. Characteristics of a Participatory Action Research Diagnostic Process

Actions and Activities	Methodological Devices
Establish clear and transparent communication with community members.	Prioritize dialogue among different forms of knowledge, encouraging participants to express their perspectives, experiences, and voices.
Clearly define the relationship between researchers and participants.	Adapt language and pedagogical approaches to privilege participants' perspectives and cultural contexts.
Develop a socio-productive and cultural inventory (which may take the form of a community memorial).	Systematize reflections, collective action plans, and processes of shared appropriation of information.
Foster a multidimensional understanding of the territory by considering the ecosystem as an integrated whole.	Employ methodologies that are clear, concise, context-sensitive, and useful to the community.
Review previous studies and experiences, emphasizing the construction of relationships based on trust and critical reflection.	Ensure that the diagnostic process clearly identifies key components and integrative dimensions of the territory.
Avoid decontextualized exercises, conflict-oriented topics, and value judgments.	Promote experiential learning, empathy, and alterity throughout the research process.

Source: Adapted from Ramírez (2020)

It is precisely at this point that **Table 1**, adapted from Ramírez (2020), acquires its analytical significance. The characteristics synthesized therein demonstrate that participatory diagnosis cannot be reduced to a technical stage of data collection. Rather, it involves the establishment of clear and transparent communication, the explicit definition of the relationship between researchers and territorial actors, the collaborative systematization of socio-productive and cultural information, and the pursuit of a multidimensional understanding of reality. By emphasizing the dialogue among different forms of knowledge, the adaptation of language, the contextualization of methodological procedures, and the practice of alterity, Ramírez argues that participatory diagnosis consists of creating the ethical and methodological conditions necessary to understand the territory *with* its inhabitants rather than merely *about* them. This perspective reinforces the conceptual shift advanced in this article: instead of presenting a fixed and prescriptive protocol, the study proposes an open, reflexive, and territorially grounded methodological process.

Accordingly, the methodological protocol adopted here is organized as a cyclical process of reflection–action–reflection, in which each stage of the fieldwork is critically revisited, discussed with community members, and reformulated in light of the knowledge generated throughout the research process. This iterative dynamic not only strengthens the agency of local actors but also enhances the analytical depth of the study by recognizing knowledge production as a relational, situated, and inherently unfinished practice. Ultimately, this methodological pathway demonstrates that, in Amazonian Indigenous contexts, strategies of engagement

and inquiry become both ethically legitimate and scientifically robust only when they integrate attentive listening, reciprocity, analytical rigor, and a sustained commitment to the territorial autonomy of the communities involved.

6 Conclusions

This article aimed to analyze the potential of Participatory Action Research (PAR) as a methodological strategy for mediation in Amazonian Indigenous territories, taking the Tururukari-Uka Indigenous community, located in Manacapuru, Amazonas, Brazil, as its empirical and analytical reference. Based on the research undertaken, it can be concluded that this objective has been achieved insofar as the study demonstrates that PAR, when grounded in attentive listening, the dialogue among different knowledge systems, and the relational co-construction of knowledge, constitutes a productive pathway for strengthening the relationship between universities, research, and Indigenous communities. More than a methodological approach, PAR emerged in this context as an ethical and political stance committed to recognizing the community as a producer of knowledge, memory, decision-making, and resistance.

One of the principal findings of the study is that regional development in Amazonian Indigenous contexts cannot be reduced to economic growth, infrastructure expansion, or subordinate integration into markets. The experience of the Tururukari-Uka community demonstrates that regional development in these territories must instead be understood through substantive dimensions of collective life, including territorial permanence, Indigenous education, biodiversity conservation, and community autonomy. Rather than representing secondary or parallel concerns, these dimensions constitute the foundations of the community's social, cultural, ecological, and political reproduction.

A second key finding concerns the role of mediation. When detached from paternalistic practices and understood as a process based on trust-building, negotiation, and alterity, mediation strengthens territorial capacities and enhances community agency. A third contribution of the study is to demonstrate that the collaborative production of knowledge does not weaken scientific rigor; on the contrary, it enhances the ethical, analytical, and territorial robustness of the research process.

Another important contribution concerns the methodological status of the research itself. Throughout the investigation, it became evident that, in Amazonian Indigenous contexts, the field is neither given nor immediately accessible to external observation. Rather, it is progressively constructed through relationships developed over time, attentive listening, mutual trust, and respect for the community's own forms of organization and decision-making. From this perspective, methodological transparency becomes an integral component of research quality in Participatory Action Research. Acknowledging that the research process remains ongoing—and clearly distinguishing between activities already completed and those still under

negotiation with the community—does not weaken the study. Instead, it reinforces its epistemological coherence and scientific credibility.

At the same time, several limitations should be acknowledged. The principal limitation concerns the still preliminary stage of the fieldwork. Several methodological strategies originally envisioned—including systematic participatory workshops, expanded participatory mapping, and continuous cycles of collective reflection—have not yet been fully implemented, as their development depends on agreements established with the community and respect for its own temporalities, decision-making processes, and forms of participation. Furthermore, the article is based on preliminary empirical material derived from exploratory field visits, institutional meetings, and initial dialogues with community members. Consequently, it is not yet possible to draw more comprehensive conclusions regarding the concrete impacts of the proposed methodological protocol on community strengthening. Additional limitations stem from the inherent complexity of conducting research in socio-territorial contexts where relationship-building, intercultural mediation, and the continuity of collaborative actions require time, sustained presence, cultural sensitivity, and long-term institutional commitment.

As a future research agenda, the study highlights the need to deepen the empirical work already initiated by expanding opportunities for dialogue and the co-production of knowledge with the Tururukari-Uka community. This includes continuing participatory workshops, developing community-based participatory mapping, strengthening initiatives involving children and young people, and implementing systematic feedback processes that enable the community itself to interpret, critically assess, and redirect the course of the research. Future stages should also investigate how this methodological approach may contribute more directly to strengthening Indigenous education, community organization, local associations, and strategies for territorial permanence. More broadly, comparative studies involving other Amazonian Indigenous territories could contribute to consolidating a research agenda committed to more plural, context-sensitive, and emancipatory approaches to regional development.

Finally, this article argues that understanding regional development from the perspective of Amazonian Indigenous territories requires a double shift. The first is theoretical, rejecting narrow and homogenizing conceptions of development. The second is methodological, recognizing that legitimate knowledge production is impossible without attentive listening, reciprocity, and respect for the autonomy of territorial actors. The ongoing experience with the Tururukari-Uka community demonstrates that research can also become an act of careful mediation, shared learning, and commitment to sustaining life in all its diversity. It is precisely in this understanding that the study's principal contribution resides: demonstrating that, in the Amazon, both regional development and social research acquire meaning only when they are shaped by the territory, its peoples, and their own ways of living, resisting, and imagining the future.

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