

Research Space

Conference keynote

Maya women contest online narratives in action: creating equality through horizontal communication

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Maya Women contest online narratives in action: Creating equality through horizontal communication

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Maya Women creating equality through horizontal communication

Indigenous Horizontal Communication in exceptional pandemic circumstances

This study is an online ethnographic exploration on the strategies of organisation and communication used by the National Movement of Midwives '*Nim Alaxik*' in Guatemala.

This will lead to a better understanding of how indigenous women sustain their communities, while adapting to the changing circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic, and if these create a fairer society.



How Maya Midwives represent their narratives of culture and identity in Facebook in relation to their knowledge, world-views and philosophies?

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Key Theories:

Feminism from a Maya perspective, Emma Chirix

Decolonisation: Aura Cumes, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui.

Maya Social organisation: Gladys Tzul Tzul.

Horizontal communication: Beltrán, Mattelart, Freire.

Methodology:

Narrative analysis, qualitative analysis of ideas, critical ethnography from feminist and decolonisation perspectives.

Guatemala a divided society

Asymmetrical relations of power

Historically, social injustice has been prevalent in Guatemala. A legacy of a divided social system traceable back to colonial times.

Land tenure patterns and labour market differences between the *ladinos* (mestizos of Spanish descent) and the indigenous population have led to extreme inequalities preserved by state systems of governance.

(Gert, 2001)



'Painting of castes' Museo Nacional de Virreinato, Tepozotlan, México

Narratives Contested by Mayan Voices Defining Their Own Identities

Three Maya Women Scholars

Emma Chirix

Bodies Power and Policy



Gladys Tzul Tzul

Systems of Indigenous Communal Government



Aura Cumes

Mayanisation and Quotidian Life



Guatemalan Indigenous Population

- 2002 census, 45% of the population identified themselves as indigenous
- In the 2018 census 43.56%
- Unofficial statistics for 2018 calculate the figure is closer to 60%



Lina Barrios, *The Face and Being of the Four Peoples of Guatemala*

Online Presence and the Covid-19 Pandemic

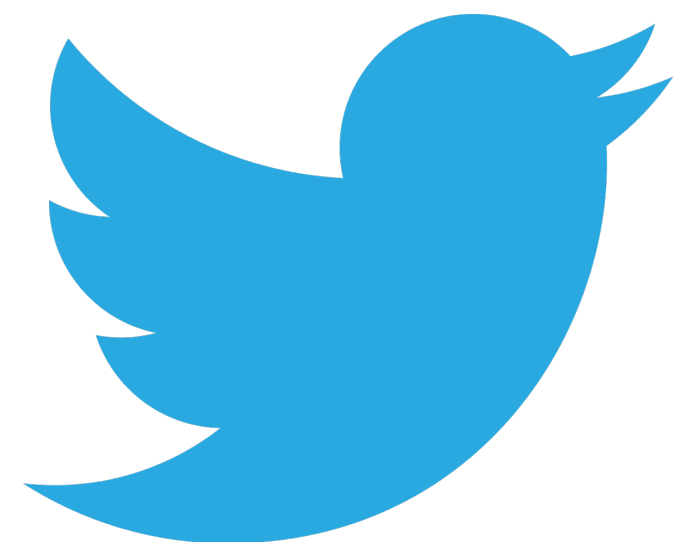
Gladys Tzul Tzul, Maya K'iche thinker, writer and activist



Resistance, insurgency and fights in times of extermination.

CLACSO TV, 27 of may 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQ08llpL9YM>

Horizontal Communication in Social Media



Methods

Non-participant online ethnography and participant observation of live conferences, for more than one year, from May 2020 until the present day.

- Documentation of their posts, videos and watched their live transmissions, observing and recording live comments.
- Attended *Nim Alaxik's* online press conferences. Transmitted live in Zoom and Facebook.
- Attended the international online 'Forum for the Acknowledgment and Defence of Traditional Midwifery', transmitted live in Facebook with participation of *Nim Alaxik*.

The image shows a screenshot of a Facebook profile for the 'Movimiento Nacional de Abuelas Comadronas Nim Alaxik' community group. The profile header includes the group's logo, name, and a 'Send Message' button. Below the header, there are navigation tabs for 'Home', 'Reviews', 'Live', 'Videos', and 'More'. The 'About' section is visible, featuring a map of Guatemala with a red location pin on Chimalango. The text in the 'About' section describes the group as a community of midwives from various linguistic communities in Guatemala. It also shows that 3,888 people like the page and 4,089 people follow it. The contact information includes a phone number (+502 7790 5454), an email address (nimalaxik17@gmail.com), and a 'Send message' button. The 'Open now' status is set to 09:00 - 17:00. The 'Community group' label is also present. On the right side of the page, there is a 'Create Post' button and a post from the group titled 'Ch'umilal K'at' with a video thumbnail and a description about listening to an episode from 'Las Energías del Calendario Maya' on Spotify.

National Movement of Grandmothers Midwives *Nim Alaxik*

‘A community of Grandmothers Midwives from diverse linguistic communities of Guatemala’.

The term Grandmother is a sign of respect that does not relate to age or having grandchildren, but to knowledge.



Nim Alaxik 2020

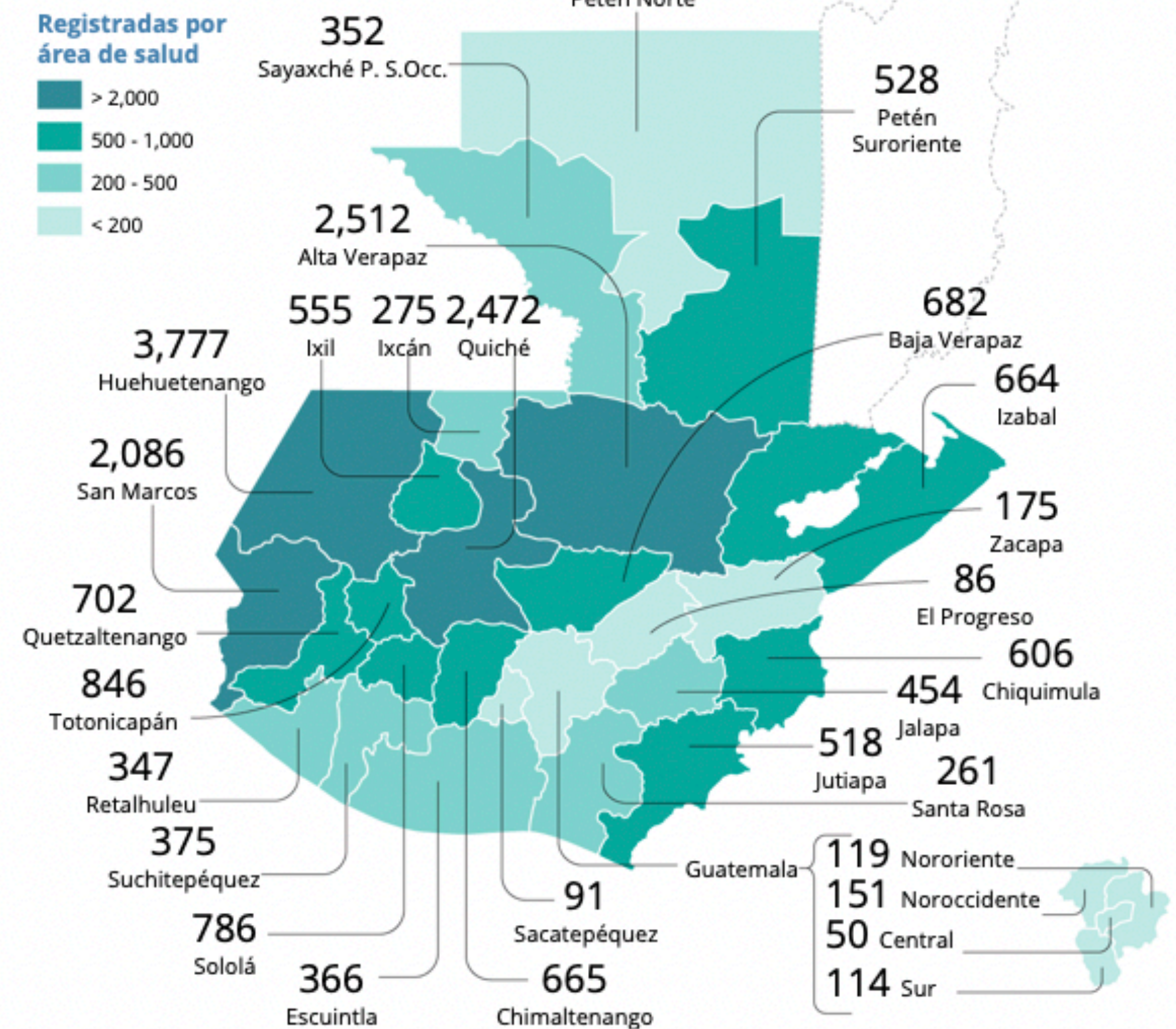
Health from the Community Covid-19 Pandemic

- There are more than 20.000 indigenous midwives registered in the country (2021).
- They attend other health needs in the communities.
- Despite their work and silent effort, they are often discriminated and their traditional knowledge is not recognised.
- In 2015 the Midwives National Movement presented an appeal against the Health Ministry to end the racism, discrimination, physical and psychological violence, that they suffer at the hands of doctors and nurses in hospitals.

Salud desde la comunidad

Las comadronas están en donde el sistema de Salud Pública no llega. Más de 20 mil están registradas para atender a las mujeres en salud integral, pero su labor se extiende a toda la comunidad.

PRENSA LIBRE



Infografía: Diego Sac

Fuente: Ministerio de Salud Pública y Asistencia Social

PRENSA LIBRE

Findings



National Movement of Grandmothers Midwives *Nim Alaxic*
FB Cover photo

- They have communal organisational and communication strategies that differ from Western individualism.
- Inclusive participatory system which overcomes access to the online information.
- On their live transmissions, they are not depending on established media, they control it.
- They are proud of their cultural knowledge.
- They led a national successful campaign to gain recognition.
- They coordinate with the government sexual education campaigns.
- More midwives want to be part of the movement.

Recognition of the Maya Culture

Sacred Maya Calendar Cholq'ij

Nawal, day meaning, FB post

09 SEPTIEMBRE 2021

Lunes	Martes	Miércoles	Jueves	Viernes	Sábado	Domingo
Luna Nueva Dia 04, Hora: 18:52	Cuarto Creciente Dia 13, Hora: 14:39	1 Ajmaq	2 No'j	3 Tijax	4 Kawoq	5 Ajpu'
6 Imox	7 Iq'	8 Aq'ab'al	9 K'at	10 Kan	11 Kame	12 Kej
13 Q'anil	14 Toj	15 Tz'i'	16 B'atz'	17 E	18 Aj	19 I'x
20 Tz'ikin	21 Ajmaq	22 No'j	23 Tijax	24 Kawoq	25 Ajpu'	26 Imox
27 Iq'	28 Aq'ab'al	29 K'at	30 Kan	Luna Llena Dia 20, Hora: 17:55	Cuarto Menguante Dia 28, Hora: 19:57	

Movimiento Nacional de Abuelas Comadronas -**Nim Alaxik**-

Movimiento Nacional de Abuelas Comadronas Nim Alaxik
8h · 🌐

Iq' simboliza el espíritu vital, el relámpago, la tempestad. Iq' simboliza las corrientes del aire, la limpieza y la pureza del cristal. En este día nació el viento y así se origino la vida. Iq' es el purificador del cuerpo, de la mente y del espíritu.

Este día es para pedir por la renovación, para pedir nuevos vientos que alimenten nuestra mente y nos purifiquen. También sirve para curar personas con problemas psicológicos, quitar pasiones, odios y depresiones.

IQ

Las Energías del Calendario Maya

Las Energías - Nawales del Calendario Maya
8h · 🌐

[#07Septiembre2021](#) | Iq' simboliza el espíritu vital, el relámpago, la tempestad. Iq' simboliza las corrientes del aire, la limpieza y la pureza del cristal.
E... See more

Findings: Ethics, Tradition and Knowledge

The Midwives' Call

'A midwife is born not made.'

A Maya midwife does not receive a salary, they receive a donation for their work.

This can range from a monetary contribution, to animals or provisions.

Many of them come from a lineage of midwives, others were born in a day propitious in the *Cholq'ij* Calendar to take this mission.

'I love my work , I love to be a midwife.'

Verónica Ixcot



Findings: Social Media Presence



Horizontal Communication



‘In colonialism there is a very particular function for words; they do not name, they mask.’

Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui

