

## Popular health surveillance in traditional fishing communities and the ecology of knowledges in the fight against COVID-19

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**Abstract** *Considering the public health emergency of international importance caused by COVID-19, artisanal fishing workers, engaging in a dialogue with Brazilian leaders and scholars, created an Observatory on the impacts of this pandemic on fishing communities in March 2020. The purpose of this article is to analyze the experience of popular surveillance of fishermen and fisherwomen's health through daily reports produced at the Observatory. It is a monitoring process that allowed broadening the recognition of the diversity of vulnerable populations' ways of life that intertwine health, environment and work. The study used a qualitative, horizontal and emancipatory methodology and sought approaches to the practice of the ecology of knowledges, with the following results: shared construction of information and knowledges based on heterogeneous social experiences; practice of collective ombudsman with the appreciation of knowledges built in social struggles); joint assessment of public health inequities, territorial conflicts, and environmental, structural, and institutional racism; guidance of social leaders and fundraising through public notices. Thus, the dynamics and horizontality of learning based on solidarity and social emancipation from inter-knowledge are revealed.*

**Key words** *Health, COVID-19, Surveillance, Fishing*

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## Introduction

COVID-19 is an infectious disease, characterized as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) in its severe form, identified in December 2019 in the city of Wuhan, China, with rapid spread worldwide, generating one of the greatest socio-sanitary crises of modern times. Until May 14, 2020, there were 4,248,389 infected individuals and 294,046 deaths in the world. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic, requiring rapid responses from countries and international health authorities<sup>1-3</sup>.

The WHO recommended a set of public health strategies, both to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to reduce the burden on health systems, including its most strict form, the lockdown, that is, restricted social distancing, with total or partial blocking of circulation, including sanitary barriers and reduced contact between people<sup>4</sup>.

Brazil is a country with a history of colonialism which, in addition to the temporary severe sanitary crisis of COVID-19, faces permanent political and economic tensions, with the worsening of social vulnerabilities. This results, particularly, in the inability of the public health system to maintain itself as a social project of social transformation, overcoming inequities in health, considered unnecessary, avoidable and unfair.

According to Santos<sup>5</sup>, colonialism is a type of modern domination that imposes itself through the invasion of territories and submission of peoples due to ethno-racial reasons, practiced by economically and politically dominant groups, seen as “conquerors”. It persists to the present day, taking on new forms such as internal colonialism or neocolonialism. One of the main strategies is the institutional establishment of colonial power structures responsible for the reproduction of several violence practices, such as racism, real estate speculation, land eviction, mega-mining, trafficking, slave labor, among others. Thus, they materialize the so-called “zones of not-being”, supported by social privileges resulting from the expropriation of human dignity.

The current living and working conditions of most people make Brazil the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest income concentrator in the world, second only to Qatar, resulting in the increase of absolute poverty<sup>6</sup>. According to the National Household Sample Survey (PNAD, *Pesquisa Nacional por Amostragem de Domicílios*) in 2019, the average monthly income of 1% of the Brazilian population is 33.8-fold

greater than the income of the poorest 50% of the population<sup>7</sup>. The number of unemployed individuals for more than two years has increased from 17.4% (2015) to 24.8% (2019), a total of 3.3 million unemployed people<sup>8</sup>.

The African descendants are historically the most affected part of the population, as it is more exposed to the practices of racism and coloniality, which overlap by taking on structural, institutional and environmental forms, intensified in pandemic contexts. The spread of the new coronavirus follows the trajectory of social inequalities, represented by one of the first registered victims in Brazil, a 63-year-old black woman, a domestic employee, infected by her employer who, upon being diagnosed with the disease, did not prevent the risk of contamination. A higher number of black, brown and poor people has died, accounting for 51.3% of deaths from the disease, while white people were 46.5% of the victims. However, a higher number of white people were admitted to the hospitals with 54.8%, compared to 43% in the first group<sup>9</sup>.

The Brazilian Unified Health System (SUS, *Sistema Único de Saúde*), which has been the national public health structure since 1990, assumed the State’s responsibility to social movements, the commitment with the health recovery, protection and promotion of the entire population. Currently, more than 70% of the Brazilian people depend exclusively on SUS; however, underfunding has dried up the proposal, restricting the capacity to respond to the pandemic, especially for populations under social insecurity conditions<sup>10</sup>.

At the initial monitoring of the spread of COVID-19, the SUS Surveillance System stood out, with the production of strategic information, recommending ways to mitigate transmission, as well as preventing subsequent deaths. Additionally, it highlighted the need to improve the relationship between surveillance and health in times of crisis. But as of May, the federal government changed information about the spread of the disease in the country, making it difficult to face the problem and providing the population with misinformation about the severity of this pandemic.

This article analyzed the practice of popular health surveillance of fishing communities in the presence of COVID-19, considering, on the one hand, the consequences of social inequalities aggravated by the pandemic, in different scenarios in the country and with daily threats to their existence. On the other hand, the confrontation of the

health crisis was considered, based on the knowledges produced in social and political struggles.

Artisanal fishing workers are the subjects of this study and represent the heterogeneity of the populations of the waters: beach workers, raftsmen, *caiçaras*, *quilombolas*, indigenous people, Azoreans from different regions of Brazil. In general, they are poor and non-salaried workers who depend on their daily toil, and many rely only on fishing for their livelihoods. According to the records of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply/Aquaculture and Fisheries Secretariat, in 2011, there were 1,041,000 (one million, forty-one thousand) registered fishermen, 99% of which were artisanal workers and distributed across the regions of the country as follows: 54.7% in the Northeast, 45% in the North, 10% in the Southeast, 7.5% in the South and 2.2% in the Midwest regions<sup>11</sup>.

Regarding work, there are many fishermen and fisherwomen who severely wear themselves out in their work activities, expose themselves to different risks of injuries, illnesses and work accidents. They are invisible to health surveillance and practically do not have any guarantees of social protection or even food and nutrition security.

The fishing activity is still a constituent of national culture, establishes a way of life and sociability, involves the knowledges of the peoples of the waters transmitted from generation to generation; they are guided by community solidarity and ancestry that transcend into the territories. Studies such as those by Pena and Martins<sup>12</sup> and Callou<sup>13</sup> consider the country's social debt to these water workers, who are historically subjected to social conditions of domination that compromise their welfare.

The aim of the study was to follow Brazilian fishermen and fisherwomen regarding the popular surveillance of COVID-19 in their communities, considering information production processes and emancipatory data, with the possibility of experiencing the ecology of knowledges in overcoming the challenges brought on by the pandemic.

## Method

The present research is part of the field of Collective/Public Health and is a qualitative, horizontal and emancipatory study<sup>14,15</sup>, aimed at analyzing COVID-19 popular surveillance reports in fish-

ing communities. For Minayo<sup>15</sup>, the qualitative research allows an in-depth understanding of the social experience, requires theoretical, empirical and relational knowledge, which indissolubly approximates theory and methodology, as well as using historical aspects, meanings, beliefs, values, practices and knowledges of the different social actors.

In a complementary manner, Berkin and Kaltmeier<sup>16</sup> refer to the horizontal qualitative methodology as a means to establish dialogues between social subjects; a type of exchange based on horizontality and reciprocity between researchers and their speakers, understood as bearers of varied knowledges and protagonists of their stories. The production of knowledge is assumed as a political commitment, based on theories, practices, methods, and experiences.

Therefore, we sought to contribute to the discussion on popular health surveillance based on the analysis of information, here called reports, produced in collective and collaborative manner, based on the free narratives of different social actors of artisanal fishing and scholars, from different Brazilian states, interacting on the social network. The proposal turned to the exercise of the ecology of knowledges which, according to Santos<sup>17</sup>, points to collective constructions of learning from the relationship between different subjects, such as: scholars, social leaders and artisanal fishing workers, aiming at intersubjectivity and the inter-knowledge. Therefore, conversations are established, which value the heterogeneity and autonomy of social knowledges and practices.

Within a virtual space, the participants published messages in different formats such as: texts, audios, images, reports and technical legal and health information – related to COVID-19, which supported the preparation of the reports. From the messages, categories of expressions that were significant for the understanding of the texts were highlighted. Thus, the following categories of analysis were constructed: guidelines for social movements, government and community actions, and emergency aid. The messages produced between March 21 and May 31, 2020 (shared twice a day with the group) were analyzed. The interpretive study disclosed an understanding of the complex effects of diseases on the fishermen and fisherwomen.

The investigation was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Faculdade de Medicina da Universidade Federal da Bahia.

## Results and Discussion

The COVID-19 Impact Observatory in fishing communities was created on March 17, 2020, by social and academic leaders, aiming at preparing the traditional fishing communities and territories to face the pandemic.

An interaction group, created on the social network through the WhatsApp platform brought together artisanal fishermen and fisherwomen, leaders of fishing movements, researchers and students from different states in Brazil. Five social movements are represented in the group: *Comissão Pastoral da Pesca*; *Movimento de Pescadoras e Pescadores Artesanais do Brasil*; *Comissão Nacional de Fortalecimento das Reservas Extrativistas e Povos e Comunidades Tradicionais Extrativistas Costeiras e Marinhas*; *Articulação Nacional das Pescadoras*; e *Coordenação Nacional de Comunidades Tradicionais Caiçaras*. The scholars come from five Federal Universities: Paraná, Pernambuco, Recôncavo Baiano, Bahia and Pará.

Until May 25, there were 179 participants representing 23 Brazilian states, which characterized the national coverage and significant participation in the Observatory, with posting events that increased from 293 in March to 567 in April. Reflections and actions are shared on the platform with proposals for solving the problems that affect the communities regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.

Collective management also stands out as a mobilizing factor in the relationship between diverse, traditional and academic knowledges and the use of technologies. Newsletters, actions, projects, documents are produced in a participatory manner, based on the exchange of ideas between fishermen and fisherwomen, popular surveillance agents, and researchers, as suggested by the ecology of knowledges<sup>17</sup> by Santos. The social reality was analyzed in a critical, dynamic and collaborative way, starting from the lessons arising from popular struggles and resistance in defense of health that aim to overcome inequities, with the protagonism of fishermen/fisherwomen and shellfishermen/shellfisherwomen of this Observatory when engaging in self-knowledge, integration with the environment, organization of political struggle and the systematization of their knowledges and methodologies, seeking to face the sanitary challenges that have historically prevented their welfare.

The dialogue between scientific and popular knowledge is materialized in the production of VPS (popular surveillance of fishermen and fish-

erwomen's health) reports and analyzed in this study. The reports briefly record the scenario of the COVID-19 pandemic in traditional fishing communities in different parts of Brazil and are shared daily at two moments: first, around 7 PM, in a provisional format, so that within a 2-hour period the participants can present their contributions; then, the definitive version is published. The daily newsletters describe the contents of the Observatory's messages, which are taken up monthly in analytical reports. Until May 31, 72 daily and 3 monthly newsletters had been produced.

The report consists of four analysis categories that emerged from the free posts, namely: i) guidelines for social movements, ii) government actions, iii) community actions and iv) emergency aid. In *Guidelines*, it highlights important topics for the expansion of the organization of fishing social movements, discloses the unique and diverse needs of the group and its territories, with emphasis on the historical and cultural pluralism, related to the collective identity. These aspects dialogue with the perspective of social emancipation defended by Boaventura Santos, who considers the social contradictions disclosed by social vulnerabilities, reinforced by the knowledge production systems, typical of the modern times, which make it difficult to bring social theories and practices together, dismissing the traditional knowledge of the peoples of the waters.

The *Guidelines* reveal several daily threats to the dignity of the people of the waters, mainly in terms of social rights, which were made more evident by the pandemic. Most of the posts (838 of a total of 1,259) address this category and reveal effects of COVID-19 for traditional communities and their workers, such as the social lack of protection, public health fragility, denial of citizenship rights, in addition to increase in fake news and conflicts to which these populations are subjected, aspects that have become more complex over the analyzed months.

In March, the participants disclosed historical paths of struggle for the recognition of artisanal fishermen as non-salaried workers. With the expansion of COVID-19, preserving life demands guaranteeing the right to quarantine accompanied by social protection.

The fishermen denounced irregularities regarding the transfer of social benefits at certain periods, such as the *Seguro-Defeso*, which is a permanent and specific unemployment benefit paid to artisanal fishermen. Another benefit cited as irregular, despite its temporary nature, was

the Oil Aid (*Auxílio Óleo*), intended for workers affected in September 2019 by the oil spill, especially on the coast of the Brazilian Northeast. This tragedy triggered a socioenvironmental crisis, with loss of income and damage to the health of fishing communities, in addition to the environmental contamination.

The General Fishing Registry (RGP, *Registro Geral da Pesca*) was appointed as a means of legal recognition of artisanal fishermen as workers; however, it remains outdated and does not include part of this population, especially the elderly, hindering their access to labor rights.

The Observatory platform allowed community initiatives, such as offering the product through social networks, home delivery, and negotiations with local City Halls for the purchase of fish as an item of the 'Basic Food Hamper' offered to low-income families by the government. As of May, fishing workers were encouraged to return to work, as they did not have sufficient social protection, and assumed the risks of contamination in the face of food and social insecurity.

With the Observatory's guidance, production was encouraged in smaller groups, keeping the distance between the boats and the wearing of face masks. However, other health observatories in the state of Amazonas denounced the existence of passenger agglomerations on boats in the fluvial dislocation between cities as a means of the new coronavirus spread<sup>18</sup>.

The fake news related to COVID-19 also worried the members of the Observatory during the analyzed months, due to the intense flow of false information among fishing communities that caused disinformation and misunderstandings. The interactions in the Observatory provided educational attitudes to ratify the reliability of the news and recognize the manipulation of information. Thus, the orientation towards the ecology of knowledges disclosed possibilities to face problems based on inter-knowledge and interculturality that enable shared analyses and reflections, the systematization of social experiences and collective constructions to respond to both the unique and heterogeneous needs of the fishing communities. A space for dialogue, monitoring and denouncement is thus established, including fake news that cause misinformation, and which has the capacity to strengthen references of trust, political mobilization and social participation.

The need to protect the traditional communities in the presence of frequent conflicts, especially territorial ones, and which are exacerbated

by the pandemic, becomes a relevant issue for the group. With the advance of the disease in the interior of the country, indigenous villages, riverside populations and *quilombolas* in isolated communities are progressively affected. Reports have revealed the violence of institutional racism practices, environmental and social injustices that threaten the existence, the dignity and life of peoples and their water territories.

During the month of April, tourists and vacationers disrespected the social isolation measures in fishing territories, disrespected local populations, carried out predatory fishing, ignored community health barriers, crowded the beaches, in spite of the precariousness of local health services. The tourists exacerbate individualistic attitudes and consider themselves to be on vacation. The month of May saw an increase in the reports of the arrival of buses (even illegal ones) in certain places, some carrying people with COVID-19. There were also reports of invasions of indigenous lands and *quilombola* territories were threatened by the interests of demarcating traditional land and expelling the indigenous peoples.

These facts suggest the scarcity of governmental measures and made it clear the disrespect for the articulation of the local community in relation to the attempts to protect themselves against COVID-19, thus revealing the non-existence of a supportive social fabric.

Workers' protection, the right to information and respect for traditional peoples are health issues. However, reports from fishermen indicated negative aspects directly related to health services, such as weaknesses in preventive and infrastructure guidelines, many of them prior to the pandemic.

In April, the emphasis in the Northeast and Southeast regions was the need for sanitary barriers, access to services, in addition to the management problems, which made testing assistance to detect contamination inefficient and the increased demand for emergency care services. Also added to the reports of unequal conditions of basic sanitation, water supply, decent housing and safe work, which persist as rights that are denied to fishing communities across the country.

In May, concerns were related to the issue of underreporting of contamination and fatality cases, especially in the interior of the country and in the Northern region, where they were not included in the official records. At the end of that month, the federal government changed official information, compromising the transparency in

relation to the evidence of the velocity at which the disease was advancing in the country and the exponential increase in the number of victims, making community monitoring challenging, in addition to necessary.

At the Observatory, free reports narrated, in April, the first 2 suspected cases, 2 confirmed and 1 death by COVID-19 among artisanal fishermen. On the last day of May, there were 24 cases of contamination and 15 deaths.

With the severe manifestations of the disease being closer to people's daily lives, the fear of even seeking health services increased. These quickly signaled, in the North and Southeast regions, the overload and collapse of the health care network, making them synonymous with disregarded suffering. In some locations, far from urban centers, contaminated health professionals arrived at the site and, even after confirmation of the diagnosis of COVID-19, they did not provide guidance to the population, as it occurred with indigenous and *quilombola* communities in the North and Northeast regions of the country, characterizing violent practices of structural and institutional racism<sup>(19)</sup>.

Overall, the contents of the Observatory messages disclosed the importance of understanding the social character of the disease, inequalities in the public health sector, institutional disregard and disrespect for those who depend exclusively on public health actions. Therefore, the ecology of knowledges constituted an invitation to the shared construction of new knowledges, expanding the horizons of possibilities and encouraging the positive movement.

*Government Actions* constitute the second category that comprises the VPS (popular surveillance of fishermen and fisherwomen's health) report that records some of the government initiatives to contain and fight the outbreak through public policies. COVID-19 has generated more demands for governmental instances; however, it also disclosed the political incapacity to support and assist a large part of the Brazilian population.

As early as March, at the beginning of the pandemic, some social restrictions were adopted and "Stay at home" became a mandatory measure for the collective good, which led localities to decree social distancing, with the suspension of non-essential activities, such as classes, commerce, among others. The beaches were closed, sanitary barriers were installed at the entrance of the cities, restrictions on internal and inter-city travel were implemented, as well as the adoption of a curfew in some locations. Artisanal fishing

was banned in many regions, although it was soon permitted again.

The Northeast region stood out in terms of adopting measures to protect the health of the population, through the 'Northeast Consortium', mentioned in the Observatory as a promising initiative to ensure better living conditions, and because it congregated political decisions among the governments for the region as a whole. The agreement between local governments was put into effect as of February 2020 and, to deal with the pandemic, a Scientific Committee was created with the production of informative materials, legal technical and health guidelines.

Until mid-April, social distancing was maintained by most municipal managers. Then, at an early stage, the gradual suspension of restrictive measures started, despite the rise in contamination and death rates and the occupation of hospital beds.

Although the governments implemented health care measures, such as the opening of field hospitals and new ICU beds, purchase of ventilators and the mandatory use of face masks, for traditional communities, the government actions remained insufficient, increasing the population's distress.

Contrary to the initial postures and assistance investments, the beginning of May was characterized by the adhesion of local managers to the flexibilization of isolation measures, despite the exponential evolution of COVID-19. The priority was redefined, to defend the economy over life, as if these were opposite dimensions. The disease then started to manifest itself more intensely among the poor, precisely those who faced the bureaucratization and the fragility of plans to fight the pandemic. The relaxation of isolation measures was extended, contrary to the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations.

The Northeast region maintained the isolation measures, whereas the North of the country implemented the flexibilization of restrictions in the analyzed period. This flexibilization led fishermen to denounce the disrespect for sanitary barriers and collective protection measures.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic also required collective actions of mutual support and solidarity. The fishing movements took the lead in the political processes in defense of the dignity of communities and their workers.

The category *Community Actions* described the group's ability to rethink and reinvent social struggles, towards the joint construction of specific resistance strategies for fishermen and

fisherwomen, considering the strong culture of collective management found in traditional populations, which are motivated by popular knowledges and practices.

The main community actions highlighted the formation of articulated and independent solidarity networks or in partnership with the government. In March, there were reports of community sanitary barriers that revealed themselves in the restriction of access to localities. They used chains, tree trunks, boards and burnt tires to ensure the closing of entrances and exits to traditional territories. In Canavieiras, state of Bahia (BA), the population created a community decree on protection against SARS-CoV-2 and had the support of government agencies to apply it.

Social organizations and movements in the Northeast and Southeast regions have shown to be active regarding initiatives to support communities, promptly responding to their needs, such as the collection and distribution of food and hygiene products among the poorest population, food exchange networks and sales of products between community members, in addition to the production of political pressure instruments (letters of notification, lives, podcasts etc).

It can be stated that the first victory of the VPS actions at the Observatory was Bill n. 873/2020 with the legal inclusion of the category among those receiving the Emergency Aid provided by the government. During the month of April, the actions of the Fishermen's Colonies and the fishermen's movements in maintaining support to the fishing market and carrying out registrations for access to social benefits were highlighted. Also important were the partnerships implemented with some segments of the press to publicize the situation of vulnerability, considering the advance of COVID-19 in some locations, and with Universities, through research and extension activities.

During the month of May, articulations between fishing movements from different parts of the country were highlighted. The women took part in food distribution actions, making and donating protective face masks made of cloth and, above all, in the political articulation with national and international movements.

The organization of the communities represents the strength of the fishermen/fisherwomen's struggles that currently use technological resources to produce video and audio recordings, in addition to their participation in diverse spaces that promoted discussion of dilemmas and challenges that were overcome through group

involvement and the gathering of resources in public notices to organize means of defense and protection of the populations, territories and artisanal fishing groups. They also defended social organization focused on sustainability, against racist practices and violence against women.

*Emergency Aid* is the category that emerged as of April 23<sup>rd</sup>. It was directed to the social benefit aimed at informal and low-income workers to ensure a minimum income during the pandemic. Many difficulties were reported by fishermen and fisherwomen to understand the eligibility criteria for registering and receiving the three installments planned by the end of May, given the lack of official information.

In this category, monitoring and denunciations regarding misinformation, controversial information, registration difficulties and, especially, crowds of people at the doors of bank branches, trying to check the registration status of the benefit were recorded. This scenario resumed welfare practices that submit workers to humiliating situations, restoring benefits in substitution for rights. By the end of April, the topic had mobilized many discussions at the Observatory. In May, when some received the cash transfer benefit, there was a reduction in the approach on the subject; however, they reported at all times that there were people in need who did not receive the benefit, whereas they learned that others received it, who did not really need it, such as politicians and people who resided abroad.

## Conclusion

The experience of the Popular Surveillance, with the daily reports in a Health Observatory, allowed us to monitor the diverse effects of the sanitary and social crisis of COVID-19 in traditional fishing communities, as well as realizing the expansion of the concept of surveillance as one of the central pillars of public and collective health.

Dilemmas arose around choices between contamination and subsistence for those who have fundamental rights without health care guarantees. Social inequalities between those who can protect themselves and those who need to work were reaffirmed.

Throughout the first month of the pandemic, expectations of preventive confrontations of the problem were expressed. Then came the suffering with the information about deaths and the increase in the number of cases at uncontrolled rates, increasing the vulnerabilities of artisan

workers who have been experiencing social inequalities for a long time. Fishermen/women survive in search of the guarantee of a minimum income to prevent hunger, exposed to precarious working conditions, emotional distress and risks of contamination.

At the same time, COVID-19 disclosed the strangulation of public policies, especially health-related ones, and their actions were resumed, as a matter of urgency, to respond to the great adversity of this pandemic<sup>17,20</sup>.

The Popular Health Surveillance showed *guidelines for social movements* that portrayed ways of life and work that were specific to fishing communities, which are historically invisible. These guidelines indicated the need for approaches based on the social determination of the disease processes in dialogue with culturality, considering health equity and respect for the symbolisms and meanings cultivated by traditional peoples in their sacred territories.

At the Observatory, information on the characteristics of fishing communities, which vary from one region to another, were contemplated by the participants. In terms of health, particular needs were observed, which must be included in therapeutic plans when taking into account issues such as ancestry, tradition, knowledges about society and biodiversity.

The Observatory systematically recorded complaints of health inequities, social and environmental conflicts that affect fishing workers, as well as the damage caused by the practices of racist violence. The context of the pandemic has led to disconnected government political decisions that do not differentiate gender, class and ethnicity of the people who are most at risk, and thus institutionally define who will become sick and die. Although the government's practices have failed to protect the life of the fishing workers' population with dignity and have shown incapable of reparation, the need for the resumption of the Democratic State becomes evident every day as essential to confront inequities in health.

The exercise of Popular Surveillance triggered emancipatory processes, even in the presence of the health crisis. Solidarity actions stood out in the narratives and disclosed the resilience of artisanal fishing workers, who, by dialoguing in an intercultural manner, exchanged experiences and implemented networks of solidarity, favoring the community's political organization aimed at fighting COVID-19.

Thus, the Observatory has consolidated itself as a political space for speaking and listening, with the production of daily reports that record the power of the collective management of fishing communities around everyday problems, with the possibility of prompt responses based on the articulation between traditional knowledges and modernity resources.

Popular Surveillance enhances the ecology of knowledges by promoting prolonged dialogues between traditional and academic communities, and also indicates social emancipation from an inclusive space, providing encouragement to denounce discriminatory racism practices.

In this experience, projects for the decolonization of knowledges were developed in defense of the democratization of health and welfare. The possibility of emancipation enhances the protagonism of fishing workers based on collective identities and care for each other<sup>17</sup>.

The emancipatory processes promoted by the Observatory also favor the political development of the individuals from practices based on popular education and solidarity, with possibilities for critical understanding of the pandemic context, as well as the defense of social projects such as the SUS.

As a challenge, the Observatory showed the need to denounce 'fake news', ensure the democratic participation of several people in the group, reconcile qualitative and quantitative methods of information production, as well as establish partnerships, especially with Community Agents and Popular Health Agents in the localities, who are considered crucial actors for Popular Health Surveillance.

The present analysis verified the Observatory's advances in view of the platform's developments, which indicated the possibility of the space becoming permanent in the post-pandemic period, in defense of a popular health policy; it also observed that the VPS reports, an instrument of this Observatory, inspired the production of information on the health situation in several fishing communities.

To date, the Observatory has been cited in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO-UN) as the only action in the setting of international fishing related to the monitoring of the pandemic among fishing workers in Latin America.<sup>(21)</sup>



## Collaborations

AAM Trindade worked on the study conception, design, data analysis, article writing and approval of the version for publication. PGL Pena worked on the study conception, design and final writing of the manuscript. MAG Lima worked on the study conception, design and critical review of the manuscript. MCS Freitas and KL Araújo worked on the critical review of the manuscript.

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