Decolonizing methods to study digital culture: a proposal from Latin America

Descolonizando los métodos para estudiar la cultura digital: una propuesta desde Latinoamérica

Métodos de descolonização para estudar a cultura digital: uma proposta da América Latina

Edgar Gómez- Cruz, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Estados Unidos (edgar.gomezcruz@ischool.utexas.edu)

Paola Ricaurte, Tecnológico de Monterrey, Ciudad de México, México; Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society, Harvard University, Cambridge, Estados Unidos (pricaurt@tec.mx)

Ignacio Siles, Universidad de Costa Rica, San José, Costa Rica (ignacio.siles@ucr.ac.cr)

ABSTRACT | This paper makes an epistemic-political intervention in three parts. First, we elaborate a critique of the theoretical-methodological logics usually reproduced without considering the differences between the place where the methods originated and the place where they are applied. Specifically, we problematize the idea of novelty, which has been predominant in the study of digital phenomena. Second, we discuss some elements of the so-called decolonial turn that we consider inspiring to account for the relationship between methodologies and research on digital culture. Third, we advance a series of specific proposals to develop methodologies that respond to the specific contexts of Latin America and digital culture.

KEYWORDS: methods, Latin America, Decolonization, Digital culture

RESUMEN | *Este texto realiza una intervención epistémico-política en tres partes. En la primera, elaboramos una crítica a las lógicas teórico-metodológicas que suelen reproducirse sin dar cuenta de las diferencias del lugar donde se originan los métodos y en el que son aplicados. Problematizamos especialmente la idea de novedad, que ha sido preponderante en el estudio de los fenómenos digitales. En la segunda parte discutimos algunos elementos del llamado giro descolonial que consideramos inspirador para dar cuenta de la relación entre metodologías y la investigación sobre la cultura digital. Finalmente, en la tercera parte, exponemos una serie de propuestas para desarrollar metodologías que respondan a los contextos específicos de Latinoamérica y la cultura digital.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *métodos, Latinoamérica, descolonización, cultura digital*

RESUMO | Este texto faz uma intervenção epistémico-política em três partes. Na primeira parte elaboramos uma crítica das lógicas teórico-metodológicas que são frequentemente reproduzidas sem ter em conta as diferenças entre o local de origem dos métodos e o local onde são aplicados. Em particular, problematizamos a ideia de novidade, que tem sido predominante no estudo dos fenómenos digitais. Na segunda parte discutimos alguns elementos da chamada viragem descolonial que consideramos inspiradores para dar conta da relação entre as metodologias e a investigação sobre a cultura digital. Finalmente, na terceira parte avançamos uma série de propostas específicas para o desenvolvimento de metodologias que respondam aos contextos específicos da América Latina e da cultura digital.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: métodos, América Latina, descolonização, cultura digital

INTRODUCTION

This article proposes an epistemo-political agenda for the study of the digital from a critical perspective and identifies the challenges in the study of digital culture. This agenda is inspired by decolonial work to propose a methodological task aimed at conducting research that is responsive to different realities, i.e., as an exercise of epistemic repair that allows the center of academic work to be shifted to the knowledge, experiences and voices of people who have often been invisibilized and excluded by the processes of traditional academic production. What does it mean to pursue studies of the digital in a historical moment in which algorithmic mediations help to reinforce epistemic omissions? What role do methods play in the study of datification? How can we use methods to counter tendencies of epistemic inequality?

Although similar ideas have been expressed in proposals to de-westernize communication studies (Glueck, 2018) or critical digital humanities, our proposal is in dialog with two literatures that have rarely been explored together: Latin American critical thinking and calls to decolonize research methods.

To begin elaborating this intervention, we first discuss some of the main trends in academic research on the digital. We show how there is a mercantilist logic in academia that focuses on the new and tends to silence voices that do not fit the parameters of certain methodologies. To counter this logic, in the second part we turn to decolonial thinking and its emphasis on deconstructing configurations of power/knowledge. The final part of the article develops a working agenda located at the intersection of the decolonial and the digital. After systematizing some lessons from previous research, we offer seven elements to contribute to this reflection. This text is more than a methodological article, it is an invitation to an epistemo-political intervention that encourages the development of methodologies for the study of technologies, data and algorithms that provide a clearer response to the problems we face in Latin America.

A hegemonic methodological logic in the study of the digital

Since their inception, interest in digital technologies has been accompanied by discussions about the need to develop new methods for researching them. The most frequently recurring version of this narrative is that existing methods need to be adapted or new ones created to capture phenomena that seem radically different from those previously studied. The premise of these projects is that digital media inevitably require new methods. Thus, since the first era of studies on the so-called new technologies in the 1990s, methodological texts have become common, attempting to explain how to elaborate new studies on the Internet (Jones, 1998).

How is the craft of academic research on digital technologies learned and performed? At least three trends can be identified in answering this question. First, methodological texts that attempt to explain part of the research process (from the creation to the execution of projects on digital objects or phenomena) and guides to data collection techniques such as surveys, interviews or focus groups are recurrent (Sloan & Quan-Haase, 2017). Rarely do these texts devote meta-reflection to the methodological process and how a specific epistemology underlies the processes of knowledge production, techniques of data collection, analysis and interpretation.

For example, little is said about the fundamental problem of what knowledge is valid, by whom and through what processes it is validated, which has been reflected in the distancing and creation of hierarchies between academics and other knowledge producers. In another sense, it is also often overlooked how the choice of methods and techniques can contribute to reproducing structural differences between those who are able to study, collect and analyze a phenomenon with a certain point of view and positionality, in a certain context and situation (usually with privileges), and those who experience this phenomenon from a (usually) different context. Another consequence of this rupture is the lack of formal processes of communicating findings to communities and data collection as a form of academic extractivism.

Second, other methodological texts present strategies for studying particular platforms or discuss how devices and platforms can be used for research (e.g. WhatsApp for interviews or Zoom for group sessions). A clear example of this trend is the discussions on the practice of archiving for the study of digital phenomena, which enables the creation of a digital infrastructure. In many cases, these texts are about novelty, whether in the study of an object or the innovation of a process, rather than establishing the relevance or otherwise of a particular method to the study of that object.

A third trend has focused on the development of pedagogical tools that enable learning techniques specifically designed for the study of digital phenomena. Examples of this approach include the walkthrough method (Light et al., 2018) or the scrollback technique (Robards & Lincoln, 2017), which aim for a deeper understanding of the experience that characterizes the appropriation of digital devices.

Taken together, these approaches suggest that methods for researching the digital have unsuccessfully attempted to replicate the rate of innovation of the technologies they sought to study, a problem that exists even in the Global North, where access to technologies and the capital required to use them is generally more

widespread than in regions such as Latin America, compounding the problem of applying certain methods. Another common factor in these approaches was the tendency to emphasize their novelty. The presentation of certain methods as innovative, as well as the time at which they were systematized through publications or events, has favored the consolidation of some proposals as the predominant ones in the study of phenomena with certain digital technologies, although this relationship has varied at different times. An example of this is the so-called digital methods (Rogers, 2013).

The dominant methodological discussions in the study of the digital, including recent discussions of datafication and the critical study of algorithms, point to the operation of a logic, a rationality that involves certain ways of seeing the world and also a way of doing research (Christin, 2020). This logic has often been presented as an outcome or celebration of novelty itself, rather than a creative response to the challenges of empirical work in particular contexts, to the theoretical development that accompanies the emergence of objects and artifacts in the world, or to the epistemological dilemmas that arise when one claims that the new must be studied against the old.

Analytical implications of the search for methodological novelty.
In methodological proposals where novelty predominates, the aim seems to be to give a name to a new approach rather than to provide a critical account of the elements necessary to improve our understanding of certain empirical phenomena. Texts that propose themselves as methodological prescriptions seem to be more common than those that report on the process by which a particular research required a certain method. There are few texts that place methodology within a process of situated reflection.

The logic of methodological innovation as an objective functions like the design of technologies themselves and conforms to criteria that appear mercantile rather than academic, especially when elaborated by or in proximity to for-profit corporations. This results in a major intellectual problem that is not well documented: the uncritical reproduction of certain methodologies without translating, adapting or recreating these proposals to the places, objects and issues for which they are developed.

An example of this tendency are the methodological sections in which the use of a particular method is postulated as if it were a purely logistical choice among several given options. In this way, methodological reflection could be dismissed as a creative process that emerges in dialog with the questions the research seeks to answer, the field to be studied, the objects to be discussed and the people to be worked with. It is common to refer to methods without taking into account

the reflexive process through which certain methodological choices were made for collecting, analyzing and constructing the data and the research object. For example, researchers point out that their research uses digital methods, as if naming a method were enough to make explicit the epistemological choices made during the research process and why they are most appropriate for the research object or why they are useful for answering the research questions. Some tools were not only developed in other latitudes, but are often obtuse in their procedures for those who use them. This mechanical notion of methods as something completely finished and ready to use, exacerbated for example by the introduction of automated tools for data collection, analysis and presentation, contradicts a notion of research as a living, non-linear, iterative, dialogic and specific process.

Another effect of reproducing this logic is the loss of the heuristic value of the methodology. One of the problems with the reproductive use of methods, as if they were interchangeable building blocks, is that they obscure rather than clarify processes that should be critically constructed, i.e. in terms of a genuine methodological logic. Viewing methods in this way has two further consequences for the study of the digital. On the one hand, it indirectly contributes to reinforcing the visions and discourses promoted by technology companies. On the other, it simplifies research findings by ascribing explanatory causes to supposed technological novelty, thus rendering invisible the profound epistemic reflection on processes, institutions, phenomena or encounters and misunderstandings between people and technologies in specific contexts and with specific historical trajectories.

The problems of logic that we have discussed are not reduced to a question of methods, but extend to the use of certain theoretical constructs. The production of knowledge requires a reflection that articulates ontological, epistemic, theoretical, methodological and thus also ethical-political presuppositions. Reflecting on theories and methods requires other logics that express our conceptions of reality, the way we assume that knowledge is produced, the questions asked, the field studied, the place where the research is located, and the impact that the knowledge produced has on reality and society. We will return to this topic later.

To summarize, the operation of methodologies that reproduce the mercantile logic of the technologies they seek to study raises three problems: 1) the tendency to use methodology as a formula to be followed rather than a proposal to be discussed, which can be modified and built upon and adapted; 2) the consolidation, domination, visibility and reproduction of certain methodologies that originate from the centers of power knowledge; and 3) the naturalization of certain methodologies (and

theories) as the only valid ones, which is exacerbated as a problem when they are used uncritically in places other than where they originated.

What is at stake in the reproduction of this logic is the nature of the knowledge produced and in whose service this knowledge is placed. This legitimization through institutions, classrooms, publications, conferences or evaluation systems that privilege certain structures and methodologies turns the people who do research into beings who cannot think or produce knowledge outside of certain theoretical-methodological constructs, who use this or that methodology or publish and participate in certain forums. The decolonial perspective offers numerous possibilities for denaturalizing these issues.

Decolonizing methodologies

The decolonial approach to scientific and academic work has gained ground in recent years. It is important to first recognize that the decolonial approach implies genealogies and nomenclatures of a heterogeneous ethico-political and epistemic proposal that is not free of tensions and contradictions. To trace these genealogies from the territory of Abya Yala[1] and anchor them in a horizon of methodological possibilities, we propose to locate decolonial thinking as a set of theoretical-political assumptions that, from a critical perspective, raise the need to reverse the coloniality of power (Quijano, 2007), which is particularly linked to epistemic violence that legitimizes social domination, forms of knowledge, and representation. The decolonial approach implies a political practice, a task that makes it possible to advance the material and epistemic decolonization of subjectivity, intersubjective relations, institutional forms, materiality and symbolic productions that reproduce social oppression.

The decolonial proposal is fundamental to a rethinking of methodology for two reasons. First, it clarifies the often violent origins of certain ways of thinking (and feeling and being), including academic thinking, thus revealing the constellations of power involved in establishing what is considered natural, including methods and theories. Second, it makes visible the politics that underlie certain forms of knowledge. Theories, and thus methodologies, can be means of oppression when they obscure or hide ways of knowing and thinking that differ from those in the centers of power/knowledge.

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1. Abya Yala, land in full maturity or land of lifeblood, was the name by which the Guna people referred to their territory in pre-Columbian times. Today, the term is used among indigenous communities as an alternative to the colonial name for America or Latin America.

Reversing the argument presented in the previous paragraph, one could also argue that both decolonial theories and methodologies offer possibilities for resistance (Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021). This is the argument of Tuhiwai Smith (2016), who suggests that Indigenous methodologies have been suppressed by theory, referring to Anglo-European theory. Tuhiwai Smith formulates the following starting point to reverse this process:

> Decolonization [...] does not mean the complete rejection of all Western theories, research or knowledge. Rather, it is about centering our concerns and worldviews and coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes (2016, p. 69).

Although her proposal is situated in the struggle to make indigenous epistemologies visible, it can also be extended to other, traditionally suppressed or marginalized forms of epistemology. Key to her thinking is a commitment to focus on questions and objects, but more importantly gazes and approaches, from "our own perspectives and for our own purposes" (Tuhiwai Smith, 2016, p.69). De Sousa Santos (2018) also refers to this with the concept of epistemologies of the South. Based on this premise, various movements have contributed to "destabilizing the dominant ontological assumptions and epistemological commitments of modernity" (Fúnez-Flores, 2022, p. 2) by developing a decolonial practice from autonomous feminism (Galindo, 2020; Rodríguez & da Costa, 2019), queer theory, environmentalism, anti-racism or *buen vivir*. This decolonial turn leads to numerous discussions about research practices and the methods with which they are carried out (Ewing, 2020; Castro-Gómez, & Grosfoguel, 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018).

Decolonial reflection also opens up possibilities for the development of a Latin American way of thinking about digital culture, a task that needs to be accomplished.

THE DIGITAL IN A DECOLONIAL KEY: SOME BACKGROUND

Some previous works have examined the case of the digital from a decolonial agenda. These works represent a wider variety of voices that have been interested in the decolonization of social research methods in recent years (Bejarano, et al., 2019; Hlabangane, 2018), particularly those used to study the digital and the algorithmic (Bernal, 2021; Tironi & Valderrama, 2021). Although this is not the place to expand the definitions of these terms, we understand the digital in its broadest sense as online communication, digital culture and algorithmic automation processes. Most authors define algorithms as materializations or logics of power that seek to intervene in the behavior and practices of users of technological systems (Abiteboul

& Dowek, 2020). Other definitions focus on the ways in which algorithms represent epistemic, cultural and social processes that reconfigure the relationships between subjects, subjects and objects, as well as the objects themselves (Ricaurte, 2022; Siles, 2023; Siles et al., 2022b).

In theoretical terms, we believe that a decolonial perspective can be useful to situate the study of digital culture in knowledge genealogies other than those of the Global North. This demand does not imply an a priori rejection, but an active recognition of the multiple ways of thinking and feeling that must be taken into account in order to establish a genuine dialog that provides pluriversal contributions (Escobar, 2020) from our realities. It must be emphasized that decolonization for the academies of the Global North has become a reflection on their privileges, sometimes embedded in discussions of historical reparations, while decolonization in the Global South is and has been a question of epistemic survival and theoretical independence.

Several studies have made it possible to problematize some of the principles on which research on the digital was built. A number of works have focused on highlighting the role of people and movements that are usually invisible in the history and operation of technological infrastructures. These studies have shown that many of the most common narratives about technological innovation tend to focus on heroic figures who are usually male, white, young and educated, at the expense of indigenous peoples, women and people from the Global South (Chaar López, 2022; Hicks, 2017).

Moreover, previous decolonial work has shed light on the objectivist and positivist presumption (overt or covert) that not only reproduces certain, often stultified, forms of power knowledge, but also prevents the possibility of methodological innovation that is responsive to different and diverse realities. This is a particularly difficult obstacle for Latin American academies, where access to resources is generally scarcer. This covert presumption is consolidated by theoretical and methodological means that are usually taken for granted. For example, it has become common in digital research to reproduce the premise that analyzing large amounts of data (big data) provides accurate results based on correlation (Chun, 2021). The assumption is that correlation is an objective means of providing a transparent and direct view of people's behavior. It is therefore assumed that data speaks for itself, an assertion that has been critically deconstructed from various angles (Dourish & Gomez Cruz, 2018; Leurs, 2017).

The underlying discussion, both in the calls to decolonize technologies and in the proposals to decolonize methods, is not only about who can develop technologies and knowledge and who benefits from them, but also about who can and who

cannot create, facilitate and propose the use, narrative and practices with certain technologies (Kwet, 2019). And furthermore, who can study them and what are the right ways to do so. This discussion becomes clear in a decolonial approach through three questions: Who is doing the research and what technologies are being studied? Who is the researcher and who is the researched? What are the theoretical-epistemic frameworks in which a particular research is situated? Research methods not only overlap the three questions, but may also be the key to some of the answers.

We therefore suggest that a decolonial approach is not only useful but essential to develop alternative visions to the dominant discourses on technologies. What would a decolonial methodology mean for the study of digital culture? Some of the elements that most decolonial methodologies have in common are:

1. Visualization and intervention in the power relations between researchers and participants. That is, the separation between the researcher and the researched is more permeable, and it is common for researchers to actively reflect on their own positioning.

2. The prevalence of data collection and construction techniques in which non-academic participants play a greater role and control the research process.

3. The recognition of ways of knowing and thinking that arise directly from the territories where the research is carried out.

As this discussion shows, the decolonial approach is not unknown in communication studies in Latin America (e.g., through studies on subalternity and popular culture or approaches such as participatory action research). However, there are still many opportunities to build an agenda that uses it as a basis for the study of digital phenomena. In the following section, we develop working elements for this purpose.

TOWARDS A DECOLONIAL APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF DIGITAL CULTURE AND ALGORITHMS IN LATIN AMERICA

The ideas developed below are part of a proposal that we have been working on individually and collectively for years and that has three objectives. First, to make visible the problems and obstacles that the study of the digital has brought with it in Latin America (Gómez Cruz, 2022). Second, to emphasize the political dimension of research on digital culture (Ricaurte, 2019). Finally, to propose new theoretical and methodological avenues for the study of digital culture and algorithms in everyday life in, from and for Latin America (Siles et al., 2022a; Siles et al., 2019;

Siles et al., 2020). A task similar to that undertaken by various researchers, which ultimately seeks an epistemological emancipation (Flores-Márquez, 2021), i.e., "a reflection and a practice in search of new models of communication, of new ways of understanding the very notion of communication" (Kaplún, 2019, p. 72).

Thus, we propose seven elements to contribute to the development of decolonial-inspired methodologies that, while not necessarily limited to the study of the digital, we believe should be urgently deployed. These elements are not meant to be a recipe or a set of steps to follow, but a set of epistemic orientations that each researcher can creatively develop in their own methodologies.

Visibilize

A first important element for the development of decolonial methodologies is the focus on objects, phenomena and people that are traditionally underrepresented in the literature on technologies. Research on digital platforms and algorithmic processes often examines the practices and ideas of young people who have cultural and technological capital and access to technologies. On the one hand, this may be because this group can provide clues to trends that will later spread to the majority of the population. On the other hand, it may be because this group is usually familiar with academic research processes, e.g., if they are students, or because they are easier to recruit.

Although the studies with these groups provide essential elements for understanding the relationship between technologies and people, they tend to reinforce certain ideas that tend to be universalizing, taking their cue from those of technology companies or from the results of research in the Global North. Above all, they run the risk of rendering invisible certain practices, strategies and tactics that do not respond directly to ideas or theoretical proposals from this part of the world. Considering the technological practices of different and diverse people could reveal the limits, omissions and true scope of certain theoretical constructs. Thus, it could form the basis for theoretical proposals that make a real contribution to the discussion in dialog with those from the North (Fals Borda & Mora-Osejo, 2004).

Therefore, it is important to also consider groups, phenomena, technologies, communities and collectives that do not directly correspond to the prevailing notions of power users or cutting-edge technologies. The decolonial approach can be useful for learning about and understanding the digital and algorithmic cultures of people who are older, marginalized, with unstable connections, with different capitals and histories, with different worldviews, and with different genealogies of technology use.

Although the results of this research are not suitable for universal generalization, we will be able to qualify many of the narratives elaborated about digital technologies by considering, for example, the elements that are specific to a locality (Leal, et. al., 2021b). Insights that can serve to contrast, build, discuss and refine the knowledge generated in other epistemic geographies.

Intervene

A second element is to develop questions and objectives that respond to the needs of the populations and territories in which the research is conducted. The decolonial approach decimates the research objectives (and even the figure of the central researcher) by prioritizing the problems of the people with whom we do research over academic premises. A path that has been taken by various approaches, from participatory action research to grounded theory. Some guidelines are given from research with Indigenous peoples that can be useful, suggesting respecting and honoring the "ways of knowing, being, and doing" and using "informed by, resonate with, and are driven and supported by Indigenous peoples" (Rix et.al., 2018, p. 225). The methods can also go further and be co-constructed so that the outcomes for a particular community contribute to its own conditions.

For example, from the perspective of the good life, Urquijo and Díaz state that it is necessary that technology "helps us to live better together and facilitate the resolution of our daily problems, enabling the growth of people, the common good, the sustainability of life and the enrichment of the wisdoms that lead to a good life" (2018, p. 58). This also implies rethinking the relationship between the one who researches and the one who is researched, and therefore helps to develop methodologies that are not extractivist and that place the needs of the people and territories in which we research at the center of the research work (Leal et. al., 2021a). In other words, the focus is changing and we are not doing research for them, but with them.

Although one might naively think that the goals of academia and society are broadly aligned, this is not always the case, especially in a neoliberal era where educational institutions have adopted systems of metrics that further entrench certain hierarchies, practices and research topics. To counteract this inertia, we need to develop questions in dialog with people, rather than simply using them as a source for data extraction. In this way, we can avoid what Leal and colleagues (2021a) have termed community fetishism. This would encourage the creation of horizontal relationships (Portugal & Giebeler, 2019) in which the distinction between researchers and researched would be much more nuanced. One possible way to traverse this perspective is to put ourselves in what Zemelman (2021) refers to as thinking (as opposed to theorizing), as he puts it:

> It is not a matter of saying: I have the terms and construct a closed discourse full of meanings; rather, it is a matter of starting from the prior doubt that precedes this closed discourse and formulating the question: How can I place *myself in front of* what I want to know? (2021, p. 235-236).

To this we suggest: next to the people we want to meet. This raises the discussion about methods to an epistemic, but also to a political and ethical terrain.

Learn

A third element is to use resources, strategies and techniques that arise from the practices of the people you want to meet. It is not just about thinking with them, but also learning from them, rather than imposing a vision on them, for example, and one that is proposed as superior. Kaplún points out that the coloniality of power "makes those who are different appear inferior –women, Indians, black people, the poor– and relegates their knowledge to the background as 'non-scientific'" (2019, p. 78). One strategy to develop decolonizing methodologies is to acknowledge the ways in which the people we work with construct knowledge and place them on the same level as those developed in the academy. For example, storytelling (Cunsolo Willox et. al., 2013) or knitting (Lozano Lerma, 2016).

This is not only a political and ethical question, but also a question of activism and epistemic humility. What Chela Sandoval calls a methodology of the oppressed, i.e., a methodology of renewal, social reconstruction and emancipation (2013). At the same time, it is also an important source of methodological creativity. In this way, the knowledge generated by these methodologies will have the possibility of responding more clearly and precisely to the forms of knowledge peculiar to the people with whom we work. Therefore, the results can also be useful for the collective processes and the problems they face and will not be reduced to academic contributions only.

Experience

Experimentation beyond academic formats and disciplines is a fourth element to consider. Linked to the previous point, we need to expand our repertoire, from the design of research projects to the collection of data or the presentation of research findings. There are two elements to problematize at this point. One is that disciplines –and their theories and methodologies– have traditionally been built around views that are "antagonistic to other belief systems or lack a methodology for dealing with other forms of knowledge" (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 74). On the other, that the consolidation of certain academic forms (the scholarly article, the monograph) also responds to a system of power/knowledge that should at least be questioned.

Methods that aim to generate knowledge from a decolonizing position therefore use a very broad and creative repertoire of techniques, from theater to performance, podcasts, interactive documentaries or graphic novels (Hamdy & Nye, 2017).

An upcoming task is also to envision a renewal of existing academic formats. For example, to rethink academic work from a decolonial logic. Incorporating other narratives, other structures, other data, other elements.

The decolonial approach often plays with different artistic techniques and proposes to put the vision, idiosyncrasies and practices of people with different perceptions, feelings and experiences of the world back at the center and to have a better dialog with them. In their meta-analysis of methodologies used in Indigenous research, Hammond and colleagues (2018) found that these methods promote participant interest, relationship building, Indigenous knowledge creation, skills development and community action. Therefore, to develop decolonial methodologies, we need the opportunity to do what Bernal (2021) calls radical experimentation.

Dialogue

The fifth element is to advance a regional theorization in dialog with a global theorization. There is an extensive and significant tradition of authors who have made important theoretical contributions from Latin America. Although these works have been widely read and cited in communication studies, they have been less utilized in digital and algorithmic research, where voices from the global North predominate. Fals Borda and Mora-Osejo, who problematize theoretical Eurocentrism, criticize the fact that in Latin American countries "the validity of scientific knowledge originating in Europe is accepted", going so far as to "also consider it sufficient... to explain reality anywhere in the world" (2004, p. 2).

There are some texts that can provide indications of the possible contribution of Latin American thought to a global discussion on technologies. In his ethnography on the use of technology in Brazilian favelas, Nemer (2021) draws on the thinking of Freire and Brazilian sociologists and anthropologists to explain people's use of technology. Although he engages in a dialog with (and is framed by) current debates in the global North, his theorizing responds more to a Brazilian genealogy, and this is one of the book's great successes. Another example is the attempt to create a dialog between Latin American popular theory and critical studies of algorithms. In another essay, we argue that this dialog can produce other ways of thinking about the problems associated with datification by drawing attention to the remixes of cultural practices, imaginative solutions to everyday problems, forms of cyborg resistance, and ambiguous forms of agency that are central to the operations of algorithmic assemblages today (Siles et al., 2022a).

Collectivize

A sixth element that can inspire decolonizing methodologies is the development of activist, collective and collectivizing research. In Latin America, there are proposals such as communication for development and participatory action research (Fals-Borda, 1985), which since the 1970s have started from an anti-capitalist position, working with marginalized and exploited people –workers, peasants, indigenous peoples– with the explicit aim of bringing about social change. However, there is still little research on the digital and algorithmic in Latin American academia that engages with decolonial proposals, with some exceptions (for example, the special issue edited by Trere & Milan, 2021).

Most studies on the digital and the algorithmic have been descriptive and analytical, but now a transformative stance is called for. From a decolonial position, it is not enough to look critically at the practices of using digital technologies, but it is necessary to improve the living conditions of the people with whom we do research. In some cases, this might mean using less technology rather than more, or in other cases, developing technologies with the explicit aim of achieving more equitable forms of technology use, access and knowledge (Costanza-Chock, 2020). As with each of these elements, there is also a component of reflection on academic endeavor.

Leal and colleagues (2021a) propose activist research that recognizes, among other things, the fact that we build and advance our academic careers on many occasions by using the experiences and experiences of others without giving anything in return.

Another element is the collective nature of knowledge construction. Not only is it increasingly common for informants to become co-authors of articles and books (Bejarano et. al., 2019), but research with a decolonial approach is also often collectively produced. It is symptomatic, for example, that many texts that have a decolonizing basis are signed by multiple authors (the bibliography of this text contains several examples of this). In a world where academic productivity is determined by measurement systems that are increasingly oriented towards capitalist logic, decolonizing research is about recovering a sense of community and collectivity, collaboration and solidarity rather than competition and individuality.

Position

Against the notion that there is objective knowledge, Dona Haraway posits in her text that "all knowledge is a condensed node in an agonistic power field" (p. 577), so that we need simultaneously an explanation of historical contingency "for all knowledge claims and knowing subjects, a critical practice for recognizing our own 'semiotic technologies' for making meanings, and a no-nonsense commitment

to faithful accounts of a 'real' world" (p. 579). In the context of critical feminism, Haraway refers to this as situated knowledge. Researchers must therefore always make visible the place of enunciation from which they speak.

Positionality is important not only as a site of methodological enunciation (why do we make the decisions we do from where we are and who we are?), but also as a form of resistance to a supposed objectivity. Equally, it represents an intervention into the structures that govern academic work, such as the absurd insistence of certain academic publications to only evaluate texts written in the third person or those that work with hypotheses because they consider these to be the only form of academic writing.

CONCLUSIONS

This text is based on a collective discussion reflecting from and for Latin America on the challenges and opportunities presented by the methodologies used to study digital culture. Although there are similar reflections and the decolonial turn is increasingly present in the social sciences of Latin America, its connection to the methodologies used to study digital phenomena is still scarce and increasingly urgent. In this text, we present some elements to stimulate the development of methodologies that take into account not only novelties but also continuities, and that critically position and create forms of knowledge rather than reproducing existing ones. A final relevant point for the development of methodologies and theories that answer the decolonial call therefore has to do with the creation and consolidation of epistemic solidarities and horizontal theoretical connections. One way to realize these solidarities is to recognize the reflections of more authors from Africa, Asia and, of course, from all over Latin America and the Caribbean. Although we agree with Waisbord and Mellado (2014) that these initiatives should serve to "shake up all parochialisms, reflect upon the conditions of intellectual work, and diversify the conceptions, evidence, and analytical frameworks in the study of communication" (p. 370), there is also a political responsibility outside the academy.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

EDGAR GÓMEZ-CRUZ, associate professor in the School of Information at the University of Texas at Austin. He has published widely on various topics related to digital culture, specifically in the fields of material visual practices, digital ethnography, and critical approaches to digital technologies.

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0055-9966

PAOLA RICAURTE, associate researcher at the Department of Media and Digital Culture at the Tecnológico de Monterrey, associate professor at the Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University and co-founder of the Tierra Común network. She coordinates the Latin American and Caribbean node of the Feminist Network for Research in Artificial Intelligence, f<A+I>r, and the Communication, Cultures and Politics working group of CLACSO.

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9952-6659

IGNACIO SILES, professor at the School of Communication and researcher at the Center for Communication Research (CICOM), both at the University of Costa Rica. His research work focuses on the social, political and cultural implications of the use of technologies such as social networks and algorithms. His recent books include *Living with Algorithms: Agency and User Culture in Costa Rica* (The MIT Press, 2023) and *A transnational history of the Internet in Central America (1985-2000)* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9725-8694