RETHINKING AND REDESIGNING A SAFE AND INCLUSIVE METAVERSE

An exploratory study from the global south

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An exploratory study from the global south
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

The accelerating expansion of digital technologies raises emerging and specific challenges around inclusion, non-discrimination and digital violence, particularly for populations historically marginalized by interconnected systems of oppression such as colonialism, racism and patriarchy. This exploratory intersectional and decolonial study, conducted in 8 Latin American countries, seeks to understand how current legislation addresses these issues in the digital sphere and examines the perceptions of affected communities regarding the use of digital technologies and the construction of identities in virtual spaces. The analysis focuses on the potential of the metaverse as a new digital sphere that, designed from inclusive and decolonial perspectives of the Global South, could offer opportunities for the representation and active participation of these communities.

The theoretical framework draws on key concepts such as intersectionality, gender coloniality and the matrix of domination, and proposes a critical analysis of technology-facilitated violence from a perspective that recognizes the confluence of multiple vulnerability factors. Through a qualitative methodology that includes listening spaces, in-depth interviews and a review of the legislations of the selected countries with respect to the subject matter of this research, this work aims to identify opportunities for digital inclusion and mitigation of digital gender-based violence in the design and development of the metaverse.

This analysis reveals that, despite legislative efforts to address digital violence and promote inclusion, there is still a critical need to integrate intersectional and decolonial approaches into public policy and technology design. Highlighting some good practices and regional experiences, it argues for the development of metaverses that not only contemplate the cultural and gender diversities of Latin America, but also incorporate the voices of their communities in the creation and design processes, as a path towards fairer and more equitable digital futures.

KEYWORDS: *intersectionality, metaverse, gender, diversity, digital violence, Global South.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the perspectives and experiences of people throughout Latin America. This regional approach, with data from more than 85 people from 8 countries in the region, places this research in an exploratory position that seeks to rethink technological design and development through an intersectional perspective. While these recommendations are the result of specific cultural and social contexts within Latin America, their relevance can be extended beyond these borders. In turn, they seek to provide a framework that can be adapted to various global contexts, emphasizing the importance of incorporating diverse voices in the development of digital environments that seek to ensure an inclusive and equitable approach from a human rights perspective.

- **Establishing an inclusive governance:** Based on the development of specific governance frameworks for each of the metaverses developed and taking into account their specificities, these should be thought out and built in conjunction with the various stakeholders, especially involving historically marginalized groups of people in order to ensure that their voices and concerns shape these policies.

"We need to ensure that decisions are made based on listening to a diverse set of voices, particularly those who are often excluded from technological spaces due to lack of access and who are often the ones who draw the shortest straw. Inclusion is much more than symbolic representation. There is no point in letting me choose my skin color for an avatar if, beyond that, there are no inclusion policies"

Afro-descendant person, Brazil

- **Creating awareness and training programs on inclusion and diversity:** These programs designed to raise awareness and provide training on inclusion, bias and cultural sensitivity should be led and facilitated by individuals from diverse cultures and historically marginalized groups to ensure that those with lived experiences are the ones developing best practices in diversity and inclusion. It is crucial that these programs work in a bidirectional way: not only do they educate the people who use the technology about its use and invite them to adapt it to their needs, but they also educate those who develop and design it about the specific situations of the people for whom it is intended. This reciprocal approach enriches the technology development process by making it more inclusive and responsive to the variety of contextual applications and challenging the traditional top-down method of imparting knowledge, in which privileged individuals often dominate conversations about diversity and inclusion.

"I believe that training and education are the first steps toward true inclusion. If you don't know my history, my culture, the particularities of my environment, how am I going to feel comfortable with the product that is imposed on me? I think it is much more difficult to make a technology your own if you don't know it and don't understand how it can help you or facilitate something in your life and that only seems to be created to generate profits for people who are completely alien to our reality"

LGBTQI+ educator, Argentina

- **Design for accessibility:** Accessibility should be developed in collaboration with people with diverse functional abilities to address a broad spectrum of needs, not only those with visual impairments, but all types of functional diversities. This approach includes exploring immersive experiences that utilize multiple senses, not just sight, which would foster inclusion across multiple identities, abilities, and geographic locations. It is recommended to involve local groups working with functional diversity in the development and adaptation of accessibility standards to ensure the specific needs of these populations are met. In addition, technological design should reconsider the needs associated with the natural aging process. To ensure inclusiveness, design processes are urged to integrate tools and updates that address changing needs due to aging, such as some transformations in sensory capabilities, and that enhance community building among older populations. Technology should enable people of all abilities to engage in everyday activities and to fully participate in the life of the community, thereby challenging prevailing ableism norms and fostering an environment where diverse experiences enrich virtual worlds.

> "I believe that accompanying the elderly is extremely important because it is what I already see today: the loneliness and lack of networks that the elderly experience is something regrettable, also ageist. So, I think it would be very interesting to investigate, how do I imagine, for example, applications or elements that allow an accompaniment. Although they already exist, they should be much more democratic and reach all starting classes, because it is not possible to pay for a caregiver..."

Older woman, technology user, Peru

> "As a woman with disability, I discovered that on the Internet I have found a way in which I and many other people have been able to express and begin to make community, protest and demand our rights, deconstruct ableism and many other violences. For people with disabilities, it has become a tool for work, entertainment and the visibility of our existence"

Woman with motor functional diversity, Mexico

- **Empowering local creators and fostering economic and community development:** The promotion of content created by artists, developers and designers from the Global South is essential to enrich the cultural landscape of the metaverse, with an emphasis on its economic and community benefits. In addition, it is valued to implement policies that economically incentivize and promote local content, ensuring that profits support community development rather than being predominantly earned by the platforms. This approach suggests the monetization of local skills and the promotion of community ties through virtual spaces that prioritize collective experiences over corporatist dynamics. In turn, it is recommended to adopt models that encourage exploration, knowledge sharing and the creation of diverse communities in virtual environments to adopt a more inclusive and public welfare-oriented approach.

"What would a network or technology that fosters encounter, dissidence, self-knowledge and empathy over corporate profit look like?"

Queer person, Argentina

"For me the video game development industry is something that is ruled by males. If I develop something different, that seeks to position other values and representations, it is not market-able, it becomes very difficult. Projects that are known to have immediate profits are priori-tized much more and not those that promote other types of coexistence or experiences"

Lesbian video game developer, Argentina

- **Promote diverse representation:** Through the development of avatars and virtual identities that reflect the multicultural and multiethnic richness of Latin America, we seek to promote diversity in representation and to recognize and work on concerns about the homogenization of physical appearances in virtual spaces and the coloniality of the body. In addition, enabling users to use, customize and design avatars and environments that allow them to explore identities beyond their physical appearances, including diverse cultural expressions and aspirations is valued. Thus, this highlights the importance of enhancing virtual spaces in which it is possible to dynamically express these identities, including the various non-normative body types and functionalities, to promote an inclusive space that goes beyond mere visual representation.

"Can you imagine that, for example, if there are people in wheelchairs in the metaverse, ramps would have to be made? What will happen if I don't want to be what exists as a possibility within an avatar? I don't think they will make ramps in the metaverse, but it could be a flying or aquatic chair, not everything has to be so literal"

Visually impaired gay person, Paraguay

"What I fear most about technological advances in the coming years is the breakdown of public and private space. I fear that virtuality will do away with individual experience and may further flatten subjectivity. I also fear placing too much trust in technology companies, which could 'commercialize' aspects of my social existence. Colossal challenges if we want to inhabit them on an equal footing"

Trans woman, Brazil

"The mere possibility of having this other world and that it's a video game. I would love to be able to have similar things in this life. Like being able to say: today I want blue hair, I have blue hair; today I want purple eyes, I have purple eyes; today I don't want breasts, I don't have them today; today I want to have wings; today I want to be able... That freedom. It is something that I would really like very much"

Lesbian woman, Paraguay

- **Foster a secure environment that respects acquired rights:** Today's digital technologies pose challenges such as increased violence, bias, lack of transparency about the use of personal data and the proliferation of surveillance tools, so the integration of local legal frameworks and applied social norms in the design of moderation tools for these technologies would seek to ensure that they are effective and culturally appropriate. In this sense, it is important to incorporate legal measures developed in conjunction with multiple stakeholders from an integral perspective in the design and development of the metaverse. To carry out this process, the various legal frameworks identified as good practices would be used as a basis and adapted to address technology-facilitated violence, establish clear and accessible legal mechanisms for users within the governance of the platforms, and ensure a safe, inclusive and respectful virtual community for all forms of diversity.

"I would create a metaverse that allows people to free themselves from any shackles they feel in the real world, that gives them the possibility to live a fuller and happier life, but that at the same time, allows that virtual reality to be transferred to the analog life as well. It is important to understand the metaverse as an accompaniment to analog life and not as a replacement for it. I imagine such a safe space with quick reporting channels and clear rules known to everyone. I imagine a space where people have their data protected, especially their images, and where it is not so easy to copy and paste an image with a person's face, to avoid unwanted uses with artificial intelligences. I imagine a metaverse where children and teenagers can ask artificial intelligences for the algorithm to teach their homophobic parents about gender and diversity issues so that they can change little by little. Many times, children who suffer violence just want it to stop and don't want to face legal proceedings. I also hope that the metaverse won't generate a lot of gas emissions or that it will be carbon neutral, and that it will allow global warming to be brought to a standstill."

Lesbian women, Peru

- **Promoting sustainability and environmental awareness in design:** In pursuit of minimizing the ecological impact of technological development and ensuring that production and use practices are sustainable and that the metaverse serves as a space to reinforce, not replace, the connection to the physical and natural world, those in charge with the design and development of technologies should incorporate principles of environmental justice into their creations. In addition, it is substantial that technologies and virtual environments are produced that incorporate an aesthetic that reflects the richness of biodiversity existing on our planet, both in terms of flora and fauna.

"I think it is necessary that in these virtual scenarios human rights are not left aside and that they are respectful of the environment"

Gay man, Colombia

"I imagine a very detailed aesthetic of biodiversity in fauna and flora. Lots of vegetation, animals, culture, non-violence"

Woman researcher of digital technologies, Colombia

- **Fostering mental health and interpersonal relationships in the metaverse:** Certain designs and policies in virtual spaces would be able to prioritize mental health and foster healthy social interactions. This would include creating tools that help users maintain a balance between their digital and offline lives, so that virtual spaces not only reproduce social dynamics of systemic inequality, but also provide opportunities for self-awareness, empathy and authentic expression of identities without fear of addiction or isolation.

"It gives me disbelief, anguish, a feeling of not believing. I don't think I would enjoy being in a metaverse. I'm afraid that people will spend more time there, in their alternate life, and not living their real life. I imagine that in matters of coexistence there will also be problems and chaos, the human chaos of emotions"

Male migrant, Costa Rica

"I am afraid of the remoteness of interpersonal relationships, of becoming so immersed in the digital era that one is unaware of the real one and the emotions that are transmitted in it, also the loss of closeness with the other. I assume that another fear is the loss of identity in real life"

Woman, Colombia

"So, I would think that, make it inclusive, but what do we want it to be inclusive for? For people to go there to reproduce distinctions, let's say, of status, but now they will have another dimension in which they will feel they have nothing"

Afro-descendant woman, Costa Rica

INTRODUCTION: THE METAVERSE. FROM SCIENCE FICTION TO REALITY

The transition of the metaverse, from its conception in science fiction to its emergence as a real technological horizon, marks a turning point in how we understand and project the future of human interaction and coexistence in virtual environments. After the end of World War II, skepticism towards utopian narratives intensified and pushed them to take refuge in science fiction. With the end of the Cold War, this genre began to exalt the future as a continuation of the present, with ideas such as cyberpunk, as mentioned by Alejandro Galliano (2020). In this context, the word "metaverse" appears for the first time in the science fiction novel Snow Crash (1992) by Neal Sthepenson. The protagonist, Hiro, is a pizza delivery boy in his "normal life" and a samurai prince within the metaverse which, in the play, is presented as a space of fusion between the "real" and the "virtual", facilitated by virtual reality (VR) technologies that allow access to this new dimension. Considering the articulation between the fictional antecedent and its subsequent materialization, and as Flavia Costa (2021) points out, it is possible to account for how art and culture are as constitutive of our world as other spheres of social life that we tend to imagine as "hard" or "structural" (economics, politics, etc.), and how these elements not only represent, but also model and prefigure the structure of our coexistence.

Currently, several technology companies are immersed in the conceptualization and development of the metaverse and see it not only as an extension of the present, but as a vast field for the deepening of experiences in digital environments through immersion, as well as the imagination and reconfiguration of our social, political and economic relationships. In the emerging and dynamic landscape in which the metaverse is still under construction, it is essential to approach its design and development from a critical and conscious view of the complex social, cultural and political realities, especially from the perspective of the Global South. This approach makes it possible to reconsider traditional power dynamics, proposing a space of egalitarian potential where historically marginalized or relegated voices can find a place of expression and recognition.

The perspective of the Global South, and particularly Latin America, is fundamental in this process, as it calls for the inclusion of diversified visions and experiences in the design and development of the metaverse. This research raises questions about its future and the role that Latin America will play in its evolution. How will virtual spaces be conceived and what types of bodies and identities will inhabit them? How will this technological development impact the daily lives of users? As an approach to answering these questions, this exploratory intersectional and decolonial study, rooted in Latin American feminism, addresses the challenge of rethinking the design and development of an inclusive and safe metaverse that responds to the needs and realities of historically marginalized communities and embodies the principles of social justice and human rights in a global context dominated by technological visions developed in the Global North. The research is based on the recognition of the matrices of oppression that intersect gender, race, class and other categories of social differentiation, and how these are reproduced and potentially amplified in digital spaces, as well as offering a field of possibilities for the reimagining and transformation of our shared realities.

From a qualitative methodological approach, perceptions and experiences of the use of digital technologies in 8 Latin American countries are collected to understand how identities are manifested and affected in immersive virtual environments. At the same time, an analysis of the existing legal framework in these countries regarding inclusion, non-discrimination and gender-based violence in the digital sphere is carried out, with the aim of assessing to what extent the current legal provisions contemplate the complexities of technology-facilitated violence and whether they effectively promote digital inclusion.

This introduction lays the groundwork for a theoretical framework that dialogues with the contributions of Latin American feminists and decolonial theorists, placing special emphasis on the concepts of gender coloniality and matrix of domination, to understand how historical power systems shape contemporary digital experiences. It also raises the need for a technological design that is not only aware of these power dynamics, but actively seeks to subvert them, involving marginalized communities in the creative process. This approach seeks not only to address the challenges of digital violence and inclusion, but also to imagine new futures for the metaverse that are genuinely representative of the diversity and cultural richness of the Global South. Having this in mind, the following section presents the methodological approach that guides this research with the objective of rethinking and redesigning the metaverse from intersectional and decolonial perspectives from the Global South.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

At present, several companies are betting on the future construction of a metaverse, a concept still in the process of definition, which implies that the initiatives of accompanying, co-constituting and prefiguring are not exclusively limited to people working in the design areas of these technologies but extends to those who use and experiment with them. Thus, the exercise of imagination, crucial for conceiving non-predefined futures, can become a powerful tool for fostering resistance among those in disadvantaged situations within the matrix of domination, even when the imagined ideas are not yet feasible. This is why this work is based on the idea that Latin America is capable of projecting its future and the common future in order to rethink and redesign an inclusive metaverse. In the emerging and dynamic scenario where this is still under construction, it is essential to approach its design and development from a critical and conscious view of the complex social, cultural and political realities, especially from the perspective of the Global South.

This methodological section presents the qualitative approaches used to investigate the design and impact of metaverses from an intersectional and decolonial Latin American perspective. Two main data collection techniques were implemented: listening groups and semi-structured interviews, designed to capture a broad spectrum of experiences and opinions about immersive digital environments. In addition, an analysis of legal documentation was conducted to formulate a regulatory framework that reflects the needs of diversity and inclusion in 8 Latin American countries, ensuring that each method provided complementary perspectives for an exploratory analysis.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

The main objective of the research is to rethink and propose elements to redesign an inclusive and safe metaverse from an intersectional and decolonial perspective from the Global South.

With the purpose of accompanying the development of the general objective of the research, a series of specific objectives are proposed that address different elements of the Latin American context such as the role of identity, representation, effective and respectful inclusion of cultural and gender diversity, among others.

Each of these specific objectives seeks to explore the functioning and current shaping of the regional matrix of dominance[1] in relation to digital technologies at a general level, as well as how these components intertwine with the perception and projection of experiences with immersive technologies such as the metaverse. By contextualizing the dynamics and relationships between users and the social, political and economic contexts with immersive technologies in the region, we seek to reflect and provide information to facilitate decision making by key actors related to the development of these immersive virtual worlds. It is important to mention that this analysis has a relational approach, i.e., each of the proposed elements is subject to the other and considers that the processes are complex, changing and constantly intermingling.

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1   The matrix of domination, for the purposes of this research, is a concept that refers to the assumptions of Hill Collins, in which he points out that thinking about a matrix of domination (Cubillos Almendra, 2015, 124) seeks to remove the focus centered on each particular differentiated category (gender, class and race in the case of African American women) and shifts the focus to how these categories are intertwined within a matrix of domination. The development of this concept can be found in the first part of the theoretical framework.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- Explore and analyze current and potential practices of inclusion and creation of safe spaces in the metaverse and learn from successes and failures in existing virtual environments.

- Identify how identity and representation through avatars in the metaverse can foster effective and respectful inclusion of cultural and gender diversity.

- Analyze and compare the normative provisions of Latin American countries in relation to gender-based violence, gender identity, discrimination (including racism and xenophobia) and disability, especially regarding their application and relevance in digital and technological contexts.

- Propose strategies to ensure that the design and governance of the metaverse focuses on human rights and considers the perspectives and needs of the Global South.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Among the questions guiding this research are:

- How can existing experiences and practices of inclusion and creation of safe spaces from an intersectional and decolonial perspective in Latin America enhance/complement the design of a safe and inclusive metaverse?

- How can the identity of people belonging to groups in situations of historical vulnerability and their representations in digital environments through avatars be used to promote inclusion and respect for diversity in the metaverse?

- How are issues of gender-based violence, gender identity, discrimination and disability being addressed in the regulatory provisions of Latin American countries, and what is their applicability in the context of digital environments that can serve as a guide for a metaverse governance?

- What strategies can be implemented to ensure that the design and governance of the metaverse aligns with human rights principles and the specific needs of the Global South?

- What challenges and opportunities does the metaverse present for historically vulnerable communities, and how can policies and practices be developed that counter existing structures of oppression and promote equity?

Each of these questions is based on the conceptual development addressed in the theoretical framework of this research, a section worked on with the purpose of outlining the elements to be explored from the development of the listening groups and, in this way, to establish the fundamental lines of analysis for the collection and systematization of the information obtained in each of these spaces. These questions, as well as the key concepts of the theoretical framework, guided the development of the data collection instrument for this research described in the following section.

COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS[2]

Listening groups in eight Latin American countries

The first methodological strategy employed was to conduct listening groups or focus groups, organized in 8 Latin American countries. These groups were designed to facilitate a space for dialogue and reflection on the practices and experiences of metaverse users, to identify both challenges and opportunities to promote inclusion and safety. The analysis indicators developed for this technique seek to interpret how the dynamics of oppression and resistance manifest themselves in virtual spaces, and how these can be transformed into more just and equitable environments. The main findings, presented by country, allow us to discern regional particularities and resounding themes among the participants. The selection of countries was carried out considering areas that present significant differences in historical and political terms. Chile was the only country in which data collection was carried out in a city other than the capital. This decision was made based on the alliance generated with the organization with which it was possible to hold the meeting in the city of Concepción, considering the advocacy work done in pursuit of digital and reproductive rights from a gender and human rights perspective. The selection of these countries was intended to provide a wide diversity of experiences located throughout the Latin American region. The following countries and cities were selected: Argentina (Buenos Aires), Brazil (São Paulo), Chile (Concepción), Colombia (Bogotá), Costa Rica (San José), Mexico (Mexico City), Peru (Lima) and Paraguay (Asunción). The selection of the people who were part of the 8 listening groups was carried out through the development of 10 user profiles[3] and representatives of the different gender, ethnic, sexual orientation, migrant status and functional diversity groups addressed by this study. A total of 92 people participated in the listening groups: 27 cisgender women, 12 trans women, 8 men who define themselves as gay, 7 people who self-identified as having some functional diversity, 10 people who self-identified as Afro-descendants, 13 people who self-identified as lesbians, 10 people who identified as queer or non-binary and 5 people who self-identified as migrants.

Semi-structured interviews

the justification for conducting semi-structured interviews lies in the need to investigate experiences in detail from the accounts and representations of the people involved in these collectives and organizations, emphasizing the importance of them being the ones to speak out about their experiences and thus avoiding placing them in a subordinating position. The first-person account helps to deepen the understanding of the practices and strategies of these groups and organizations to generate experiences of inclusion, development and sustainability of safe spaces.

Also, when exploring the development of inclusive and secure digital environments, it is crucial to consider existing good practices outside the digital realm, particularly from a Global South perspective. This approach recognizes the diversity of experiences and challenges faced by historically vulnerable communities and offers examples and references for the creation of virtual spaces that promote inclusion and security. The importance of this approach lies in its ability to identify effective strategies that address the roots of exclusion, discrimination and different types of violence, adapting them to the context of metaverses to promote the design and development of digital environments from a human rights perspective. However, limitations of the qualitative methodology used for this research have been found, as detailed below:

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2   For a detailed description of the structure of the collection instruments, see the Annex.

3   For a more detailed description of each profile and its specific characteristics, please refer to the Annex.

- The difficulty of knowing the representativeness of the sample due to the exploratory nature of the research, which complicates addressing broad profiles resulting in the need for more detailed research in the future.

- The perception of ineptitude to comment on technological developments on the part of some people, who felt that their experiences were not valid.

- The limited access to different types of technological developments and the socio-political context in many of the countries addressed increased the fears and uncertainties about these issues among the participants, who placed more emphasis on the issues that generated fear and anxiety than on those that allow a more proactive imagination for the future.

- The difficulty of finding certain profiles in smaller countries such as Paraguay and Costa Rica, due to the lack of access to certain more advanced technological developments and specific skills. Moreover, in these countries, the reluctance of some people to talk openly about their sexuality was also noted, probably due to the lack of protective legislation and the discrimination prevalent in these contexts.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: CONCEPTS FOR RETHINKING A SAFE AND INCLUSIVE METAVERSE

CONCEPTUAL KEYS

This study adopts an intersectional and decolonial perspective to explore the complex dynamics of oppression and exclusion in the digital realm, particularly in the development and use of immersive technologies. Through this approach, we seek to understand the variety of life experiences of people interacting in these virtual spaces. Recognizing that they come from multiple collectives, and that each faces specific inequalities within their unique contexts, we explore the possibilities for creating a more inclusive, secure and equitable digital future.

Intersectionality, matrix of domination and patriarchy

the analysis of the following concepts and their interrelations allows us to understand how historical and social power structures determine the positions that individuals and groups occupy within the system, recognizing the uniqueness of each experience. At the same time, this approach underlines the need for an inclusive perspective in the design of digital technologies such as the metaverse to promote virtual spaces that reflect and respect the diversity of human life.

First, the paradigm of intersectionality coined by Kimberlée Crenshaw (1989) and rooted in the Afro-descendant feminist struggles of the 1970s, challenges the invisibilization of specific experiences and knowledges by recognizing the inherent complexity of oppressions that people may face due to the interplay between gender, race, class and other categories of social differentiation. This approach emphasizes that these do not operate in isolation, but as a complex system of structures that affect the lives of individuals at different levels (Cubillos Almendra, 2014). On this basis, Crenshaw investigated how intersectionality operates on two planes: the structural and the political. The first one accounts for the interconnectedness of various systems of discrimination that impact on people's lives. The second refers to how, by wanting to intervene in only one dimension of inequality, one ends up marginalizing people whose situation is subject to several of these exclusion systems (Cubillos Almendra, 2015, p. 122).

Secondly, the concept of the matrix of domination, developed by Patricia Hill Collins (1990), complements this intersectional approach. In it, she analyzes how these forms of oppression are articulated together and proposes a more integrative and complex vision than the one formulated by Crenshaw. Hill Collins stresses the importance of considering the varied experiences of oppression and resistance over time and in different socio-cultural contexts and emphasizes that oppression should not be understood as the sum of individual discriminations, but as an interwoven system that shapes people's life experience at different levels: personal, community and institutional. In his theory, there are three levels[4] from which a matrix of oppression is structured: 1) that of personal biography, i.e., life history; 2) that of the cultural context of the group or community; and 3) the systemic level of social institutions. These levels are at the same time of domination and possible

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4   For further details, refer to the Annex.

resistance. At the level of personal biography, she refers to women of African descent in the United States as an example. She indicates that in them "internalized oppression represents domination at the personal level" (1990, p. 225). As for the second level, she notes that African American communities served to maintain a collective Afrocentric perspective in a dominant Eurocentric cultural context. Finally, regarding the third level, "that of social institutions controlled by dominant groups," she mentions schools, churches, the media and other formal organizations (1990, p. 225).

Third, it is noteworthy how both theoretical concepts are rooted in the critical analysis of patriarchy and its manifestations in society. Patriarchy, a central concept in feminist analysis, is defined in general terms, as a structure based on sexual politics that grants power and decision-making in diverse spheres to a particular male subject, positioned as the universal in modern ideology (Uriona Crespo, 2012; Cubillos Almendra, 2014, 2015). The fact that the feminine occupies a peripheral place does not exclude that other types of subjectivities, unrelated to gender, also do so (Cubillos Almendra, 2014, 2015). It is argued that feminist proposals that work on the mutual production line between technology and gender must be developed on the understanding that patriarchy is a system that is organized both in the macro and the micro, giving importance to the reorganization of the symbolic. In addition, the constant interrelation and intertextuality implied by communication technologies can serve to promote a logic of differences (Reverter Bañón, 2013, p. 458).

Gender coloniality or the colonial/modern gender system

The analysis of coloniality offers an enriching perspective on previously established notions of intersectionality and matrix of domination, focusing especially on the complexities and particularities specific to Latin America and the Global South. María Lugones (2018) critically addresses gender coloniality, arguing against a racist and Eurocentric modernity that imposed a binary and hierarchical gender system, simplifying and oppressing the diversity of human identities. This theorist extends intersectionality to encompass the colonial dimension and highlights colonialism's imposition of a profound and dehumanizing division between "humans" and "non-humans," relegating the colonized to the category of racial inferiority.

Lugones (2018) details how a social organization was established in the colonies that segregated people into "humans", identified with Europeans[5], and "beasts", reducing the colonized to beings without rights or dignity. The author argues that the gender dichotomy, like the racialization imposed in the colony, operated within a similar hierarchy. Coloniality not only created a distinction between human and non-human, but also denied gender identity to people considered non-human, assigning them a sex, but depriving them of a gender. Thus, while "humans" were recognized as men or women, the colonized were seen as genderless entities, reduced to "instruments" destined to be exploited in a rationalized economic system (Lugones, 2018, pp. 86-88).

This critical approach stresses the need to dismantle the matrix of binary and hierarchical domination rooted in coloniality, in which the various categories (gender, class, race) have been universalized and essentialized, dehumanizing and limiting the expressions and realities of certain groups of people. Instead of perceiving these categories as fixed and universal essences, the author sees them as interdependent and dynamic, and suggests that each is defined in relation to the others within a complex and contradictory system. Through this decolonial perspective, this work invites people to reconsider and rethink the dominant logics, promoting the recognition and valuation of the voices and perspectives of those historically marginalized by the colonial/modern gender system.

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5   The use of the masculine is intentional, since female identities were not considered in the same category as male identities.

Categories for the matrix in this research

By considering together the concepts of gender coloniality and matrix of domination, this exploration assumes a critical stance towards the complexity and intersections that shape people's reality, as well as the different levels at which power and oppression manifest themselves. The following are the categories selected for this matrix, incorporating contributions from researchers in the field of gender coloniality and oppression.

a. Gender

The concept of gender, understood in a universal way, merits a thorough critical review in the context of this research. The homogenizing condition of gender not only hides the diversity of experiences, but also ignores the complex realities of women in postcolonial regions, who have been subjected to processes of racialization and redefinition under Western parameters (Mendoza, 2010). This critique leads us not only to question the category of gender itself, but to seek its re-politicization and increasing complexity.

This need to increase the complexity of gender arises from recognizing how dominant narratives have simplified and, in many cases, distorted its understanding, overlooking the social, cultural and colonial influences that shape it. Therefore, in this research we propose to rethink gender beyond an imposed male/female duality and examine how these categories are intertwined with other dimensions of oppression and resistance. Following Parra (2021), the objective is not to discard the concept of gender, but to recontextualize it in a way that reflects the multifaceted and often invisible realities that lie behind this category. The problematization of gender in this study, therefore, seeks not only to unravel the power structures that perpetuate inequality and exclusion, but also to foster a more inclusive and representative understanding of the diversity of identities and experiences. The ultimate aim of this approach is to make visible and value the different realities that have been marginalized or neglected by a limited and essentialist understanding of gender.

b. Race

Within the framework of this research, the category of race is approached from a critical perspective, influenced by gender coloniality. Racialization, imposed during colonization, has created a deep division between those considered fully human and those who have been denied this fullness, relegating them to a position of inferiority. This process, particularly affected indigenous and black women, who under the colonial gaze, were stripped of their gender identity, unable to fit into the molds of femininity by the West (Lugones, 2012). Race, then, serves not only as a marker of difference, but also as a tool of social stratification that perpetuates hierarchy and exclusion.

This analysis conceives race not as a static or essential category, but as a complex and dynamic social construction, which interacts with other social categories such as gender and class, in a web of power and domination (Cubillos Almendra, 2015, p. 131). Reconceptualizing it implies recognizing its central role in the configuration of identities and in the articulation of power systems that cross and reconfigure the boundaries of gender, class and other social categories. This approach allows for a richer and more nuanced understanding of how coloniality continues to impact people's lives in the present.

c. Class

The category of class is critically examined through the prism of the coloniality of power and the coloniality of gender. This approach reveals that the capitalist structure, with its emphasis on the capital/wage ratio, does not fully encapsulate the complexity and variety of human labor, especially when viewed through the lens of colonial and gender oppression. In the global capitalist-patriarchal-colonial system, paid work has historically been reserved for white European elites, excluding or marginalizing other forms of work (Lugones, 2008, p. 79).

This paper proposes to go beyond the traditional conception of class as a system based solely on the market economy to include the problematization of the division of labor, which is not only racialized, but also geographically differentiated, which perpetuates inequalities in access to paid and recognized work both within nations and globally. This analysis aligns with the argument that the capitalist division of labor conceals and undervalues reproductive labor, relegated mainly to the domestic sphere and disproportionately performed by women, particularly those from racialized communities and in postcolonial contexts (Gago, 2019, pp. 43-44).

By focusing on class from a decolonial perspective, it recognizes the need to value and make visible all forms of work, including those that sustain daily life and enable social reproduction, such as domestic care and other reproductive labor. This vision challenges the historical and political invisibilization of domestic work, which, despite being fundamental to the functioning of the capitalist system, has been systematically excluded from dominant economic narratives.

d. Functional diversity

functional diversity emerges in this study as a critical category that challenges ableism norms and traditional conceptions of functionality and disability. This perspective rejects the reductionist view that categorizes corporealities outside certain parameters of "normality" as deficient or marginal. Reflecting the evolution in the understanding of disability, from marginalization and medical-rehabilitative models to more inclusive visions, the category of functional diversity focuses on the richness that the variety of human capabilities brings to society (Guzmán Castillo, 2012). All persons, regardless of their physical, sensory, intellectual or psychosocial abilities, have the right to participate fully in society on an equal basis. This paradigm shift implies not only a transformation in terminology, but also in social attitudes, policies and practices towards people with disabilities.

e. Sexuality

The category of sexuality, within the context of this research, is analyzed under the light of coloniality and the norms imposed during and after the process of colonization in Latin America. This perspective highlights how the "colonizing mission" not only focused on territorial and economic domination, but also sought to control and regulate sexuality, establishing a specific order that favored the perpetuation of its objectives (Cubillos Almendra, 2014). The importance of addressing sexuality lies in recognizing how, during the construction of Latin American nations, the need emerged to shape a citizenry based on "healthy" and "productive" individuals, pathologizing any sexual manifestation that deviated from the standards defined by the hygienist paradigm imported from Europe.

This model brought with it a series of categorizations and classifications that sought to identify and marginalize what was considered abnormal in the sexual sphere (Figari, 2010, p. 226). In response, in the 1960s, the social and political context led to the organization of sexual diversity movements in Latin America. However, the unification of the struggles under the figure of a homogeneous "homosexual subject" limited the breadth of the claims, focusing them on specific demands that did not always reflect the diversity of experiences and needs within the LGBTQI+ communities.

The emerging critique of transvestites and black lesbians highlighted the limits of these demands, questioning the universalization of identities and rights. Black lesbians highlighted how dominant discourses on sexuality and citizenship ignored the intersections of race, gender and sexuality, while transvestites pointed out that their needs transcended the right to identity, also encompassing access to housing, health and education (Figari, 2010).

In this research, we propose an exploration of sexuality that goes beyond the restrictions imposed by colonial and postcolonial norms. It seeks to challenge the essentialization and pathologization of sexual practices, understanding sexuality as a dynamic and changing social construction that reflects the complexity of human interactions.

f. Geographical location

The category of geographic location in this paper is examined under a critical lens that recognizes the importance of spatial dimensions in shaping relations of power and oppression. Centralist logic, deeply rooted in colonial and neocolonial dynamics, creates a distinction between territories considered centers of power and development and those labeled as periphery. This distinction not only reflects economic and political inequalities, but also influences the perception and valuation of the cultures, practices and knowledge associated with these geographical areas (Cubillos Almendra, 2014, p. 271).

This approach implies a recognition of how spatial hierarchies, such as the center/periphery or urban/rural dichotomy, contribute to the marginalization and exclusion of entire groups, limiting their access to resources, rights and opportunities. Moreover, these hierarchies perpetuate a worldview that prioritizes the narratives and productions of the Western Global North over other perspectives, minimizing or ignoring the contributions of those outside these hegemonic centers.

By focusing attention on geographic location as a significant category within the matrix of oppression, this study seeks to question and challenge the power structures that sustain these spatial divisions. Recognizing the influence of geography on these structures also implies exploring the possibilities of spatial reconfiguration and decentralization of power, promoting greater balance in the distribution of resources and the representation of diverse voices and perspectives.

METAVERSE: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

The metaverse, as currently discussed, does not correspond to a single, widely accepted concept or technology; in fact, its meaning varies according to the perspective adopted. In this research, we understand the metaverse as an immersive virtual space[6] where the offline and online worlds are integrated, inhabited by avatars that represent the users. These avatars can interact and participate in various activities within this virtual space (dIVersoLab, 2023). However, this definition is considered provisional (Therrien, 2022, p. 7).

Particularly from Latin America, it is imperative to proactively consider what implications the emergence of the metaverse brings. It is not a matter of adopting a passive stance, but rather of constructively and critically addressing the new opportunities and challenges that arise. It is crucial that the design and development of the metaverse incorporate and reflect Latin American and Global South perspectives, championing the interests of these regions (Therrien, 2022, p. 10; de Perdigão Lana, 2022), to avoid marginal inclusion and ensure that the voices and contributions of communities beyond the Northern Hemisphere are respected. These are just some of the challenges that underscore the urgency of developing mechanisms and governance that promote metaverses focused on human rights, inclusion and user safety.

Metaverse in Latin America

Therrien (2022) warns of the danger that Latin America and other regions of the Global South could end up as mere producers of cheap, background content for the metaverse, which could be described as a form of "digital neocolonialism". If these regions do not promote effective contracting mechanisms, intellectual property and adequate public policies regarding this development, the already existing gap between the Global South and North could widen even further. Furthermore, it is critical to consider who controls the physical infrastructures essential for data transmission and storage in the metaverse, as this largely determines who holds power and influence within these new virtual spaces (Therrien, 2022, pp. 13-16).

In this sense, it is important to remember that the colonial superiority of the Global North was legitimized based on an ontological order, an epistemic order and a socio-technical order[7], from which the conditions of deprivation are also sustained and re-actualized (Ricaurte Quijano, 2023, p. 13). For example, Ubuntuland, presented as the first African metaverse, promises that anyone can be "one of the first settlers" and accumulate wealth, as well as having other problematic representations that refer to the continent's colonial history. At the same time, owning a plot of land there requires USD 300, a cost unaffordable for most people in Africa, making access difficult (Nangle, 2022). Thus, it becomes clear that the difficulties represented by the metaverse for the Global South are composed of a complex intertwining in which various elements encompassed by the matrix of domination have an impact.

Beyond the challenges, the metaverse could offer significant opportunities for Latin America and the Global South, especially if approached from a proactive and constructive perspective. Some authors suggest that it could contribute to improving the Internet infrastructure and offer significant advances in areas such as health and education. Among other possible positive impacts of the

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6   Virtual worlds can be defined as three-dimensional immersive environments, which allow people to communicate with each other and perform activities like those in the offline world (Stendall et al., 2011 in Saker and Frith, 2022).

7   It refers to the existing interrelationship between technical systems and social systems (Hevia Martínez, 2019).

metaverse on democracy in the region, the possibility of improving access to information, fostering intercultural environments and expanding opportunities for new forms of popular participation and political innovation stand out. However, it is crucial to recognize that obstacles such as structural inequality and systemic racism can compromise the effectiveness of these initiatives (Therrien, 2022, p. 14), so it is essential that these benefits are supported by the development of appropriate legislative frameworks and the formulation of international agreements that ensure equitable and accountable implementation (de Perdigão Lana, 2022, p. 13).

Furthermore, considering the points mentioned above, when exploring future opportunities for Latin America in the context of the metaverse, the proposal arises to reconsider relational ontologies, which imply thinking about new modes of coexistence and being in the world. This idea connects with concepts such as the pluriverse, which seeks to build a space where "all worlds fit," a vision aligned with the principles of the Zapatista movement. This approach emphasizes the need for broad and diverse inclusion in the design and development of the metaverse, ensuring that this new virtual space reflects the plurality and cultural richness of our societies (Escobar, 2012, p. 49). In this way, it could represent an opportunity to think a pluriverse where the worlds marginalized by the colonial-patriarchal-capitalist system also fit. This idea has been previously proposed by Perdigão Lana (2022), in line with other proposals of Latin American thinkers and experiences, especially that of Arturo Escobar (2012).

Metaverse and latin american feminisms: situated knowledge and production

A second crucial question to address is how Latin American feminisms can contribute to a constructive conceptualization of the metaverse. To the previously discussed, we add the important concept of situated knowledge, which recognizes that the objectivity with which knowledge and technology are produced is not neutral. This approach considers the person from whom knowledge is to be obtained not as a passive agent, but as an active participant in the production of knowledge (Torrano and Fischetti, 2020). In addressing emerging technologies such as the metaverse, it is important to recognize that they develop from specific geographic and cultural contexts that influence their characteristics and applications. Technologies are not neutral: they embody values and, if they are not critically questioned, there is a risk of perpetuating the inequalities present in the matrix of global domination. Therefore, in this work it is considered imperative that the metaverse be conceived with a feminist perspective that also considers the sociotechnical context of production (Torrano and Fischetti, 2020).

One of the biggest challenges lies in the development of an appropriate governance structure for the metaverse. Such a structure should be able to address the differences between the traditional regulations, rules and agreements of the offline world and the new realities enabled by the metaverse. In addition, it should consider the wide diversity of audiences that will be attracted by its mass use, ensuring that all voices are considered in this expanding space (Dwivedi et al., 2022). Thus, Latin American cyberfeminisms[8] offer valuable lessons that can be crucial in pursuit of these objectives. These movements succeeded in creating robust networks that facilitate the production and circulation of alternative knowledge, discourses and practices that challenge the prevailing

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8   Cyberfeminism, a set of feminist theories and practices of technology that emerged in the 1990s, recognizes different aspects. The first wave, with Sadie Plant as a leading exponent, celebrates women's opportunities for ICT empowerment, which was later described as extremely optimistic. On the observation of limits to circumvent the exclusion and invisibility of women, more critical contributions and new input will follow (Vergés Bosch, 2013). Likewise, Torrano and Fischetti (2020) indicate that in Latin America theorganization TEDIC, an NGO that defends digital rights and promotes the use of free technologies and calls itself cyborgfeminist, stands out in Latin America. "This digital platform shares information, research, events and projects where gender and technologies intersect. The cyborgfeminists of TEDIC question the neutrality of technology and advocate for one that serves to liberate us from patriarchal domination and violence" (Torrano and Fischetti, 2020, p. 62).

technological hegemony (Torrano and Fischetti, 2020, p. 56). Latin American cyberfeminists have deeply explored concepts such as technological autonomy, the development of independent infrastructures and networks, free software and open cultural practices, promoting horizontal, decentralized, cooperative and self-managed organizational structures, which could serve as a model for a human rights-focused governance of the metaverse (Torrano and Fischetti, 2020, pp. 62-63). Feminist experiences in the region[9], particularly in offline environments, can also inspire and guide the structuring of governance in the metaverse that prioritizes human rights.

Design and spatialities: diversity and participation

The metaverse design is characterized by its open nature and its current state of continuous development and definition. This situation offers the opportunity to imagine alternative experiences and realities that can extend beyond existing configurations (Seidel et al., 2022, p. 67) and enable new ways of conceiving what is already established (Ríos Llamas, 2022, p. 140). However, there is an inherent risk in this design process: if the life experiences of subaltern people are omitted from consideration, the resulting products may perpetuate biases and exclusions (Kapor Capital Founders' Commitment, 2015, cited in Costanza-Chock, 2020c, p. 2). In this context, the people in charge of technology design and development exercise considerable decision-making power. Therefore, in envisioning the future of metaverses, it becomes imperative to encourage broader and more diverse participation that is not restricted to design professionals alone.

a. Avatars: coloniality and bodies

in the aforementioned novel Snow Crash (1992), by Neal Stephenson, the term metaverse appears for the first time to describe a fusion of physical and virtual reality, in which avatars appear as representations of the people connected to this space. These illustrate the potential decoupling between body and subject in the digital environment, a phenomenon that opens new possibilities for self-understanding and social interaction (Featherstone and Burrows, 1995, p. 11). According to Ramirez et al. (2023, p. 5), the human body is conceptualized as a crucial vehicle for both self-perception and social dynamics. In turn, when Mark Zuckenberg, Meta's owner, presented the next stage of his company, he named it a transition from the "social internet" to the "embodied internet" (Lupinacci, 2022, p. 2). The embodiment approach, often translated into Spanish as "corporizado" or "encarnado" (Ríos Llamas, 2022, p. 137), emphasizes that avatars not only represent the users who wear them, but also allow them to experience the virtual environment in a more immersive way.

However, it is relevant to note that these concepts are tainted by colonialist biases. In the realm of representation, the coloniality of power and gender perpetuate stereotypes that reflect and reinforce the canons of Western modernity (Masson, 2020, cited in Luna Montalbetti, 2022). The supremacy of whiteness, seen as a racial capital, sets standards for social and human valuation (Gonzaga and Da Costa Junior, 2020, cited in Luna Montalbetti, 2022, p. 11). For example, the algorithms of augmented reality beauty filters illustrate this problem by tending to "whiten" and homogenize the aesthetic features of users (Riccio and Oliver, 2023).

In the presence of these challenges, the following critical question arises: what types of bodies will be considered legitimate in the metaverse? Beyond designing a diversity of body forms that reflect colonial varieties, it is essential to contemplate how the categorizations imposed by coloniality tend to affect and homogenize users. Within categories such as women, indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants, certain subjects prevail to the detriment of others. Although the intersectional

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9   For a more detailed description of these experiences, please refer to the legal section and the section on best practices.

approach[10] seeks to make visible groups that are often marginalized, such as Afro women who are invisible within the general categories of "Afro" and "woman" (Lugones, 2008), this visibility is not without its challenges.

Emergence from disadvantaged positions can expose certain individuals and subaltern groups to significant risks. Therefore, data collection on these communities should be carried out carefully and with the active participation of all individuals or groups involved, facilitating that the visibility gained is beneficial and desired (D'Ignazio and Klein, 2020, cited in Yang, 2022, pp. 55-56). In designing future avatars, the relationship between biological dimorphism and gender binarism must be questioned (Lugones, 2008). The production of binary gender categories, the result of colonial processes, makes many people invisible and contributes to the control of reproductive and sexual practices, as well as to the erasure of community knowledge in Latin America (Lugones, 2011, p. 108). This binary view of gender not only persists over time, but is also reflected on the Internet, where platforms and systems often reinforce binary frameworks, limiting expressions of identity for non-cisgender people compared to cisgender people (Freeman et al., 2022, p. 3). On the other hand, many users who identify as non-cisgender mention having been able to introduce, discover, and rediscover their bodies through the experience of using avatars in virtual reality (Freeman et al., 2022, pp. 11, 13).

In this sense, extended reality (XR) can be conceived as immersive technologies that link embodied experiences between offline and online worlds, using the body as a bridge (Díaz Sabán, 2022, p. 25). The metaverse design, therefore, can be seen as an infrastructure where these experiences are interconnected and enriched (Seidel et al., 2022, p. 6699). In addition, Díaz Sabán (2022) criticizes the Western preeminence of vision in the construction of self-awareness and suggests a more multisensory approach. The relegation of the other senses limits the approach to the sensible world. In relation to this point, the author rescues Iñarritu's (2017) multisensory proposal entitled Carne y arena. This focused on filling a facility with sand, which viewers had to enter barefoot to watch a short film about Mexican migrants who had to cross the desert to reach the United States.

However, as Rouse (2021) points out, while it is tempting to posit that technology could help bring the marginalized experiences of subalternized subjects and groups to the forefront, one cannot ignore the long and troubled history of white people putting themselves in the place of people belonging to historically vulnerable groups. The idea that the use of immersive simulation technology allows us to better understand the perspective of those individuals or groups facing disadvantage within the dominance matrix paradigm is a myth that can have harmful consequences. A first step in combating this is to acknowledge the reality that there is no such thing as neutral design and that all people start from a cultural and political position of their own (Rouse, 2021, pp. 8, 14).

b. **The immaterial and the relational, beyond physical spaces**

the metaverse as a virtual space is not limited to representation but is also a creator of new spatialities. This raises questions about new spatial possibilities that could be conceived from an intersectional perspective. Within the metaverse, the capacity to generate numerous alternative realities is recognized, thus, the people in charge of the development and design of these virtual spaces have the opportunity to influence the temporality of the experiences lived within them, which opens new opportunities for experimentation and the reconfiguration of time and space (Seidel et al., 2022).

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10   In the recommendations and best practices section, proposals to address these complex challenges are explored.

It is important to consider how spaces and societies are evolving towards hybrid realities, in which technology is increasingly merging the offline and online worlds (Parrilla Huertas et al., 2022, p. 188). These hybrid spaces include metaverses as new ways of inhabiting digital environments. To approach these territories from an intersectional perspective, they must be conceived as places of intimacy and protection, where social and family ties are fostered and reproduced (Colectivo Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo, 2014, cited in García-Torres et al., 2020, p. 24).

An emblematic case is Emilia Yang's project (2022) on the design of the interactive art book AMA y Construye la Memoria (2021), developed as an augmented reality extension of "AMA y No Olvida, Memory Museum Against Impunity". This project was conceived in Nicaragua to honor the victims of the state repression of April 2018. The design of the book was done in collaboration with members of the community, using collective and participatory methods that combined art and design with social research and pedagogical actions, all done in a clandestine manner. The result was a tool that allowed the stories of the victims to transcend the restrictions imposed by government repression, transforming public and private spaces into sites of collective memory through digital intervention. According to Yang (2022), the design of the book focused on ensuring access to the content without decontextualizing the lives of the victims, inviting users to create a reflective space for their use.

On the other hand, Latin American feminisms have emphasized the inseparable relationship between body and territory through the concept of body-territory (Gago, 2019; Ricaurte Quijano, 2023; García-Torres et al., 2020). This approach highlights the interdependence of subjects within a structurally colonizing, patriarchal and capitalist system. The body-territory is understood not only in terms of physical spatiality, but also in an immaterial and relational sense. This concept extends its application to the digital sphere, where the mechanisms of dispossession and extractivism are also present. In particular, the extractivism of the body-territory is often justified through narratives that separate digital technology from the material resources necessary for its production (Ricaurte Quijano, 2020). In this framework, avatars in the metaverse could be considered as an extension of the body-territory, which underlines the importance of designing safe spaces in virtual worlds for those people or groups that are disadvantaged within the matrix of domination. It is crucial to assess whether the metaverse perpetuates the (re)patriarchalization of territory through extractive logics, including data extractivism (García-Torres et al., 2020, p. 25).

In this line, Lefebvre contemplates the creation of an alternative mode of spatial production that implies self-management, starting from the decision to reject the conditions of existence to which the users are subjected (Yang, 2022, p. 129), so they should not think of themselves as passive and subjected to the spatiality of metaverses. Therefore, it is important that the design of virtual spaces is done in collaboration with the people and communities facing structural disadvantages within the matrix of domination. Moreover, effective access to these spaces, or lack thereof, depends crucially on the consideration of their accessibility for these groups. It is also important to reflect on how the creation of new spatialities could generate specific social behaviors that challenge our current conceptions of what constitutes safe spaces (de Vries, 2011, cited in Ríos Llamas, 2022).

Decolonial safeguards in the face of technology-facilitated violence

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) is a term for many forms of violence that combine platforms, digital tools, and hardware (Bailey and Burkell, 2021), and are updated as technologies change and advance. This concept is understood as a continuation of the gender violence suffered by women and other historically violated identities in face-to-face spaces (García and Sequera, 2021)), and which has unique features that differ from that which takes place offline. The NGO TEDIC has identified, so far, 21 types of digital violence, including non-consensual dissemination of images, doxing, harassment, mobbing, identity theft, among others (Sequera and Acuña, 2023, p. 10). Based on the aforementioned notions, in this research, the conceptualization of technology-facilitated violence was chosen with the intention of emphasizing how digital violence expands beyond what happens in virtual spaces to other aspects of life.

Shariff et al. (2023), in Misogyny in the metaverse, suggest that TFGBV be studied empirically in the metaverse under the intersectional paradigm to pay attention to how to identify factors in users' experiences (p. 111). It is impossible to analyze technology-facilitated violence from Latin America without thinking about how the coloniality of power and the coloniality of gender inaugurated a new system in the use of violence in the region (Rodríguez, 2020). Thus, as previously indicated, people of African descent and indigenous peoples were considered as non-human or quasi-human, as beings without gender, on whom a supposed civilizing mission was exercised (Lugones, 2011, p.108, cited in Rodríguez, 2020). "Colonial governance" is an instrument for the exercise of power and the construction of subjectivities in pursuit of supposed Western superiority. By considering the colonized subjects as inferior, the logic of the difference between the colonized and the colonizer and the rule of assimilation was imposed (Ramos Miramontes, 2019). Without understanding this, it is not possible to examine technology-facilitated violence from an intersectional and decolonial perspective.

Coloniality as a concept exceeds colonialism, as a phenomenon inherited from it. It permeates the power structure after having been apprehended and then perpetuated beyond the time of the colonies (Quijano, 2014, cited in Ramos Miramontes, 2019). Today, the violence exercised from coloniality is being updated and extended to the Internet. An example of this is provided by Soshana Zuboff with respect to big data, stating that the use of big data by technology companies "does not erase its origins in an extractive project founded on the formal indifference of the populations that understand both its data sources and its end goals" (Zuboff, 2021, p. 7, cited in Tello, 2020, p. 95).

Following this line, Bailey and Burkell (2021, pp. 1, 3-7) point to useful ideas for thinking about technology-facilitated violence in a structural and intersectional way in relation to the metaverse, with a particular focus on gender-based TFV, namely:

- If one chooses to think of TFV primarily in terms of relationships between individuals, it tends to make structural violence invisible. It will also affect the understanding of the complexity of the violence that is exercised from the matrix of domination.

- The structural and intersectional approach is indispensable if the actors, collectivities, systems and intersections that perpetuate TFV are to be identified. When laws created to combat violence tend to focus on criminalization and are of the reactive type, they concentrate on identifying individual bad actors rather than adopting a proactive approach focused on structural causes.

- The psychological, cultural and economic importance of digital spaces is becoming increasingly important. Thus, exclusion from these spaces represents a new form of structural violence. The digital divide primarily affects poor women in the Global South not only in the use of technologies, but in the creation and participation of their design.

- Structural violence may also exist when certain groups are introduced to the use of technologies, as in the case of indigenous peoples, who may see their own technologies weakened or displaced by the arrival of Western technologies.

- It is important to keep in mind that processing large amounts of data to categorize and predict behaviors or outcomes often exhibits biases, and these algorithmic biases in many cases are of the cultural or social type.

- To address the structural biases facilitated by technology, it is also necessary to address the structural biases that exist in traditional offline power systems.

- The law must be considered as an element within a multifaceted solution vision, thought beyond legal remedies oriented to individuals.

- State intervention is important to counterbalance the concentration of power by corporate conglomerates.

- State-funded support to community-based organizations that address issues related to TFV could prove to be important to address them in a structural way.

c. **Thinking everyday life, questioning coloniality**

the discourse on decolonization often starts from a critique of the Western imposition of binary dichotomies that structure social hierarchies. However, the influence of coloniality goes beyond this, permeating everyday life and daily practices. The challenge of rethinking spaces, experiences and corporealities implies questioning the imposed categories and the coloniality inherent to them.

If we think that the metaverse offers a unique opportunity to expand our conceptions of space, experience and corporeality, this leads us to ask ourselves the following question: What will users be able to create and imagine? How will everyday life be shaped in these immersive virtual spaces? What will be the predominant activities and what inequalities could be reproduced? It is crucial to recognize that the violence that could arise in the metaverse is already inscribed, at present, in everyday life.

The importance of considering everyday life arises from conceiving it as a place that articulates existence, where, through a series of repetitions, the future is foreshadowed, with its particularities for each person (Cruz Hernández, 2020). On this point, on the one hand, feminism in its various expressions, as a political, theoretical and practical movement, puts this idea under discussion, making it appear as a terrain of reproduction and transformation to think about the existing (Migliaro González et al., 2020). On the other hand, with respect to digital technologies, the process of their introduction into everyday life has been accelerating, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. Considering these two processes, it is necessary to question what kind of social practices, including new everyday life, will emerge from the imminent massification in the adoption of metaverses.

This digital transformation seeks to enrich everyday experiences, but also faces the risk of creating an "ideal type" of user, defined primarily by their economic utility. It is therefore essential to adopt a critical approach that questions the naturalization of normative ideals and technological interactions (Lupinacci, 2022, p. 2), given that, in designing and developing the metaverse, everyday experience could be simplified and exploited for its economic value and encapsulated based on utility to a system.

METAVERSE AND POSSIBLE FUTURES

This section explores various theoretical concepts proposed by authors that seek to facilitate future directions for the development of metaverses. The goal is to think about how these immersive virtual spaces can be designed in an inclusive and safe way, fully integrating a human rights perspective. These approaches provide a critical and proactive framework to ensure that metaverses are not only technically advanced, but also ethically grounded and accessible to all users, regardless of their location in the dominance matrix.

Design, intersectionality and the matrix of domination

In her text Design Justice (2020b), Sasha Costanza-Chock explores how design practices can be reconsidered through the paradigm of intersectionality, using the tool of the domination matrix. The author argues that the designs produced within and reproducing this matrix often cause subalternized people to experience a persistent feeling of alienation, as if they were living in a world that was not designed with them in mind. This raises a critical question: how can we reconfigure the relationship between design and metaverse to avoid perpetuating these feelings of constant estrangement? Costanza-Chock advocates a decolonized approach that privileges collaborative and situated practices, recognizing the interdependence between people, other beings and the earth (2020b, p. 30).

The author goes on to emphasize that design not only reproduces ways of being and knowing, but also ways of acting in the world. This entails the need to give greater recognition to subalternized design practices that have been historically racialized, feminized, or marginalized in ways that have made them perceived as less valuable or even unworthy of consideration (Costanza-Chock, 2020d, p. 6). These practices, when properly recognized and valued, can contribute significantly to a more inclusive and representative metaverse.

In addressing the matrix of domination, Sasha Costanza-Chock proposes ten strategies for rethinking design processes that are geared toward a more just and equitable metaverse:

- We use design to sustain, heal, and empower our communities, as well as to seek liberation from exploitative and oppressive systems.

- We centered the voices of those who are directly impacted by the outcomes of the design process.

- We prioritize design's impact on the community over the intentions of the designer.

- We view change as emergent from an accountable, accessible, and collaborative process, rather than as a point at the end of a process.

- We believe that the role of designers should be that of facilitators rather than experts.

- We believe that everyone is an expert based on their own lived experience, and we all have unique and brilliant contributions to bring to a design process.

- We share design knowledge and tools with our communities.

- We work towards sustainable, community-led and controlled outcomes.

- We work towards non-exploitative solutions that reconnect us to the earth and to each other.

- Before seeking new design solutions, we look for what's already working at the community level. We honor and uplift traditional, indigenous, and local knowledge and practices (Costanza Chock, 2020a, p. 6).

A strategic futurization

Approaches to conceptualizing futures, or the lack thereof, are varied and rich in perspective. Ezequiel Gatto (2022) suggests several dimensions to frame an analysis that not only describes, but also politically orients the type of future one wishes to project[11]. According to the author, there are three crucial dimensions to a contemporary analysis of the future that can help shape our approach to the metaverse and other emerging technologies: imagination of the future and digital technologies, design and improvisation.

In the first dimension, the imagination of futures in the context of digital technologies is understood as part of a sociotechnical fabric that significantly influences the ways in which we project future possibilities, recognizing how technology and society intertwine to shape concepts and expectations of what is to come. According to Gatto (2022), digital technologies act as the printing press did in its time, serving as infrastructures of the imagination that facilitate the emergence of new ways of conceiving the future (p. 5). In his development, the author distinguishes three main approaches to this relationship:

- **Technophilia:** Technology is seen as a necessary solution to all of society's problems. Eugeny Morozov (cited in Gatto, 2022) describes technological solutionism as an extreme view within this position, in which problem solving always involves the application of technologies.

- **Technophobia:** Here, technology is perceived with distrust and as something alien to human nature, potentially harmful to the body and society. Visions such as primitivism or the enslavement of the human being by the machine are examples of possible negative consequences of this approach.

- **Technopragmatism:** This position accepts the necessity of technical objects for human existence but recognizes their ambivalent character. Technical objects are not defined solely by their positive or negative uses, nor are they determinants of human destiny. They act as conditioners of possible futures but are interconnected with other entities and processes that allow for a broader spectrum of possibilities. This invites critical reflection on how technology is produced in our world (Gatto, 2022, pp. 7-8).

Moving on to the second dimension, this one highlight how design plays a fundamental role in the way we think and imagine. It functions as a bridge between production, use and the expectations we have about objects and technologies, establishing general orientations about our relationship with the world.

In particular, the nexus between the design of metaverses and the visions of the future that are built upon them underscores the importance of recognizing that these images of the future are not inevitable destinies. Far from being mere projections, these visions can be powerful tools that allow people to imagine and speculate about future possibilities. In this context, it is emphasized that people are technical beings, immersed in an environment full of technical objects. Beyond understanding the uses and functions of these, it is crucial to be aware of and able to manage the unpredictability inherent in invented technologies.

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11 Galliano (2020) indicates that "Gatto distinguishes 'futurization', as futurity towards a pre-established point of arrival, an image of the future that organizes all social practice, from 'futurability', a concept borrowed from Berardi that points to a starting point, an image of the present that can be futurized or not, a contingent vector that can alter the path towards the future. 'Futurization' would be a post-figurative residue in our prefigurative culture, present in all utopian projects. That is why Gatto proposes a post-utopian inventiveness, a political futurability. That does not mean renouncing the futurization of utopian images, but projecting into the future in a contingent way, including uncertainty, multidisciplinarity, contradiction, improvisation and possibility" (p. 55).

Following this line, by going beyond a top-down approach of the visionary in developing a design, the possibility of active participation of various people in the process is contemplated. This involves creating links between materials, manufacturing, intended uses and ethical considerations, thus shaping a design policy that favors inclusion and equity. Adopting a design policy also means contemplating the feasibility as an essential component that redefines how the design process relates to the future (Gatto, 2022, p. 11). The reflections of Bolivian mediactivist Imilla Hacker illustrate how just principles can be integrated into design to benefit communities in Latin America and the Global South: "How do indigenous communities communicate in a time of resistance? How are they organized? Is the Internet necessary in contexts of limited energy resources or would other, perhaps more analog, technologies be more appropriate? (...) I believe that appropriation begins first by understanding the specific needs and then by strengthening the management capacities of the communities; if there is no community that appropriates the tool, it is absolutely useless" (Barrera, 2018, cited in Tello, 2020, p. 73).

In addition, it is important to remember that the design does not have a definitive end but must be conceived as a continuous and open process, always susceptible to adaptations and improvements. This process approach should be guided by a commitment to fairness in design (Gatto, 2022, p. 9).

Finally, the third dimension considers improvisation, an approach that invites us to question how to act in the absence of a predetermined destination. How are the metaverse and its components designed and planned when unpredictability is incorporated? Improvisation should be understood as a process and a set of actions in which it is impossible to anticipate a specific outcome. By acting in the present, it allows us to conceive an unfinished future that is constantly under construction. Thus, elements that initially seem to lack purpose may be unexpectedly vested with meaning (Gatto, 2022, pp. 12-14).

The emergence of the unforeseen has the potential to alter the narrative of linear and unchallenged time. This can open the way to new trends and redefine what is considered possible. Improvisation differs from spontaneity, arbitrariness or self-consciousness. Gatto (2022) defines it as a process that integrates elements of the past and present that are projected into a future that is not clearly defined. Rather than being static, this process is always open to emerging opportunities and remains in constant interrogation of possible ways of inventing, living and coexisting (p. 15).

In conclusion, based on these three approaches, it is essential to consider how the relationship between the future and the metaverses is constructed. This analysis helps us to better understand the different ways in which we can approach the development and integration of digital worlds into our lives, ensuring that their implementation is ethical and sustainable.

NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR THINKING ABOUT INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY IN LATIN AMERICA

Inclusion, non-discrimination and violence in the digital sphere are recent challenges facing societies because of the accelerated expansion of the use of new technologies. For populations immersed in cross oppression matrices[12] that determine colonial, racist, ethnocentric and patriarchal thinking, the challenge is greater due to the historical exclusions caused by these systems of domination to groups that are a priority for policies, as pointed out by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR).

> The IACHR has identified certain groups or sectors of society that suffer discriminatory treatment due to a particular condition or situation of historical discrimination. Some of them, such as indigenous peoples, women, migrants, refugees, stateless persons, victims of human trafficking and internally displaced persons, children and adolescents, human rights defenders, Afro-descendants, persons deprived of liberty, gay, bisexual, lesbian, trans and intersex persons (hereinafter LGBTI persons), persons with disabilities and the elderly, were identified as priority groups in the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan. (IACHR, 2019, p. 43)

In order to examine whether the various oppression matrices are contemplated in the legal provisions related to inclusion, non-discrimination and gender-based violence in general and specifically in the digital sphere, and whether they make digital inclusion and technology-facilitated violence possible, this section analyzes the regulatory framework in eight Latin American countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Paraguay and Peru) with an intersectional approach[13], considering the following definition of the IACHR:

> Case law of the Inter-American system uses the concept of "intersectionality" to examine discrimination, taking into consideration those cases where there is a cross-cutting convergence of many factors of vulnerability and risk of discrimination associated with a series of specific conditions, such as, for example, the condition of children, women, and persons living in poverty and persons living with HIV. An intersection of identities and risks can aggravate human rights violations against persons, groups, and communities living in situations of historical vulnerability and discrimination in the Hemisphere. (IACHR, 2019, p. 38)

First, the provisions on inclusion, non-discrimination and violence in the digital sphere of some key bodies of the international normative framework and of the Inter-American system for the protection of human rights will be analyzed. Secondly, the regulations of the 8 countries studied that deal with gender-based violence and general or specific discrimination, such as racism or discrimination against disabled people, will be reviewed. In these, we will seek to identify the space provided by explicit provisions for addressing digital violence and the incorporation, or not, of the perspectives of intersectionality and interculturality in their content, with the consequent obligation to operationalize these approaches in the implementation of legal provisions and public policy.

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12   For theoretical references regarding the concept of cross oppressions and oppression matrices, see the theoretical and conceptual framework section.

13   For more information on the intersectional approach, see the theoretical framework.

In this sense, the obligatory nature of the norm would imply, in operational terms, participatory processes in its application, with the historically invisibilized sectors own voices and decision-making capacity as part of the supposed universal subjects of the processes of domination, as well as specific mechanisms that account for the subjectivities at stake in these implementations.

INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Since the end of the first decade of the 21st century, various areas of the international human rights system have expressed concerns and issued recommendations or guidelines on technological inclusion, non-discrimination and technology-facilitated violence. Key documents in this regard are those issued by the Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), separately or jointly with other similar bodies. One of the most recent in this regard is the Joint Declaration on Media Freedom and Democracy by the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Organization of American States (OAS) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa. This document was issued in 2023 and refers in several paragraphs to the digital realm and the obligation to maintain human rights standards in this space, as well as to establish appropriate mitigation, evaluation and reparation measures[14].

There are other important special documents from these mechanisms such as the *Standards for a Free, Open and Inclusive Internet*, from the Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (2016), which indicates that pluralism and diversity must be preserved in the digital environment and no changes should be introduced in the network that limit voices. It further notes:

> In the digital environment, the obligation of nondiscrimination implies, in addition to the aforementioned duties of access and pluralism, the adoption of measures, through all appropriate means, to ensure that all persons – especially those belonging to vulnerable groups or who express criticism with regard to matters of public interest – are able to disseminate content and information under equal conditions. (IACHR, 2016, para. 8)

From the specific international spheres linked to technologies, different documents also warned about the need to address violence, for example the Global Internet Report 2017: Paths to Our Digital Future, which placed among its recommendations the importance of "making the Internet a safe place where everyone is free from online violence and harassment, forge basic norms of behavior for users to feel safe using the Internet, and that large platforms should take greater responsibility for addressing issues of online violence and hate" (p. 115). Other relevant instruments within this field are those developed by the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), such as the document *Feminist Principles of the Internet* (2016)[15] and *Framework for the Development of a Gender-Responsive Cybersecurity Policy: Regulations, Rules and Guidelines* (2023)[16], among others developed by feminist experts in the field.

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14 https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/expresion/showarticle.asp?artID=1274&lID=2

15 https://www.apc.org/sites/default/files/Principios_feministas_para_internetv2-0.pdf

16 https://www.apc.org/sites/default/files/ciberseguridad-normativas_1.pdf

In terms of the main mechanisms of the conventions of the international human rights system, although sexual orientation, identity, race, language, origin, disability, migratory status, among other categories, enable differential types of technology-facilitated violence at crossings that exist on specific populations, it was mainly women's rights organizations that issued specific provisions on these forms of violence, on the premise that women are disproportionately affected and suffer extremely serious consequences.

Among the most recent provisions, the CEDAW Committee (Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) in its General Recommendation No. 35[17] of 2017 expresses, in the introduction, that gender-based violence against women "manifests itself on a continuum of multiple, interrelated and recurring forms, in a range of settings, from private to public, including technology mediated settings and in the contemporary globalized world it transcends national boundaries". (para. 6). In addition, it subsequently specifies:

> Gender-based violence against women occurs in all spaces and spheres of human interaction, whether public or private, including in the contexts of the family, the community, public spaces, the workplace, leisure, politics, sport, health services and educational settings, and the redefinition of public and private through technology-mediated environments, such as contemporary forms of violence occurring online and in other digital environments. (CEDAW/C/GC/35, para. 20)

Likewise, among its prevention recommendations, this organization establishes:

> (d) Adopt and implement effective measures to encourage the media to eliminate discrimination against women, including the harmful and stereotypical portrayal of women or specific groups of women, such as women human rights defenders, from their activities, practices and output, including in advertising, online and in other digital environments. Measures should include the following: (i) Encouraging the creation or strengthening of self-regulatory mechanisms by media organizations, including online or social media organizations, aimed at the elimination of gender stereotypes relating to women and men, or to specific groups of women, and addressing gender-based violence against women that takes place through their services and platforms; (ii) Establishing or strengthening the capacity of national human rights institutions to monitor or consider complaints regarding any media that portray gender-discriminatory images or content that objectify or demean women or promote violent masculinities. (CEDAW/C/GC/35, para. 30)

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17   https://www.acnur.org/fileadmin/Documentos/BDL/2017/11405.pdf

Then, in 2020, CEDAW issues its General Recommendation No. 38 (2020)[18], on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration, which has a section on the use of digital technology in which it states the following:

> Digital technologies offer new possibilities for having a positive impact on society. At the same time, they pose new security challenges at both the individual and State levels. The use of electronic currencies offers tools for hiding personal information, such as the identification of the parties involved in the transaction and their location, and allow for making anonymous payments, without even disclosing the purpose of the transaction, all of which facilitates trafficking. Demand channels, through social media, the dark web and messaging platforms, provide easy access to potential victims, thereby increasing their vulnerability. The use of digital technology for trafficking poses special problems during global pandemics. In the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, State parties face a growth in trafficking in cyberspace, including increases in recruitment for sexual exploitation online, in demand for child sexual abuse material and in technology-facilitated child sex trafficking. (CEDAW/C/GC/38, para. 36)

Also in 2017, the Follow-up Mechanism of the Belém Do Pará Convention (MESECVI), in its *Third Hemispheric Report*[19], points out a key aspect for thinking about technology-facilitated violence by expressing that "the spirit of the Convention is to reiterate that it is not the physical space where violence takes place that defines it, but rather the power relations that occur and the nature of the interpersonal relationships between victims and their aggressors." This mechanism also published, in 2022, jointly with the UN Women Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean, within the framework of the Spotlight Initiative, the document *Cyber-violence and cyber-bullying against women and girls in the framework of the Belém Do Pará Convention*[20], which provides an important account of this issue.

For her part, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women presented in 2018 the *Report about online violence against women and girls from a human rights perspective*[21], in which she expresses:

> Emerging forms of ICT have facilitated new types of gender-based violence and gender inequality in access to technologies, which hinder women's and girls' full enjoyment of their human rights and their ability to achieve gender equality (…). It is essential that the different forms of online violence against women and girls be addressed through legislative and any other measures necessary to combat and prevent such violence, while upholding the right to freedom of expression, including access to information, the right to privacy and data protection, as well as the rights of women that are protected under the international human rights framework. (A/HRC/38/47, para. 14)

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18 https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/324/48/PDF/N2032448.pdf?OpenElement

19 http://www.oas.org/es/mesecvi/docs/tercerinformehemisferico.pdf

20 https://lac.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/MUESTRA Informe Violencia en linea 2.1 (2)_Aprobado (Abril 2022)_0. pdf

21 https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G18/184/61/PDF/G1818461.pdf?OpenElement

It cautions, however, that "online pornography and virtual manifestations of violence in video games, or violent interactive environments are outside the scope of the present report" (A/HRC/38/47, p. 7).

There is also an international instrument dealing specifically with cybercrime, the Council of Europe Treaty Series No. 185: Convention on Cybercrime (Budapest Convention), signed in 2001 and in force since 2004, which includes provisions relating to content-related offenses, such as child pornography. The 2003 Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime, concerning the criminalization of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed through computer systems, promotes mutual assistance in the harmonization of criminal legislation against racism and xenophobia on the web, establishing regulatory measures to prevent the dissemination of racist and xenophobic material, to prevent racist or xenophobic threats or insults through the web, and to prevent the use of computer systems to deny or justify genocide or crimes against humanity. The Budapest Convention has been ratified by 7 of the 8 countries analyzed: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Paraguay and Peru[22].

The aforementioned instruments, issued by organizations recognized by the countries by virtue of the ratification of the corresponding conventions, establish important international normative bases for countries to include in their legislation and public policies the corresponding definitions, mechanisms and measures for inclusion and non-discrimination, as well as special measures for historically excluded sectors and to address the various forms of violence that take place in the digital world. Some of them, although referring to women and gender inequalities, address key aspects of inclusion and violence prevention such as the elimination of stereotypes and the promotion or defense of supremacy of any kind, as well as violent attitudes, especially violent masculinities.

It is also important to mention that the term metaverse has not been found in any of the international provisions mentioned above and as will be seen later, neither in the national regulations. This could mean a legal vacuum that needs to be addressed even though there are instruments, such as the IACHR's rapporteur for freedom of expression, that address the importance of broadening the interpretation of what is already written, as the 2016 report points out when mentioning that Articles 1.1. and 24 of the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights are applicable both offline and online (para. 65).

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22 A new international treaty is currently being discussed at the United Nations (UN) to combat cybercrime. The UN is proposing the creation of what would be the first convention of its kind in the international system to complement the Budapest Convention. This proposal is being questioned by civil society think tanks and seeks to include content-related offenses and the criminalization of activities and expressions against governments in the online space. For more information, see Joint Statement on the Proposed Cybercrime Treaty Ahead of the Concluding Session (TEDIC, 2024). Available at: https://www.tedic.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Joint-Statement-on-the-Proposed-Cybercrime-Treaty-Ahead-of-the-Concluding-Session-3.pdf

LEGISLATION ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION IN LATIN AMERICA

At the same time as the global and regional debate, the countries of Latin America have been developing provisions that today make up a regulatory corpus in the region with specific laws or regulations, and some have already been recognizing certain aspects of the phenomenon in the first half of the 21st century. Argentina, for example, incorporated media violence into its 2009 law on violence against women and has recently approved much broader legislation on the subject, as will be seen below. However, although the number of countries that include some provisions in this regard has been increasing, most of them are restricted to digital gender-based violence and, in this context, to the dissemination of non-consensual intimate images, leaving aside other forms of manifestation of this type of violence documented by several organizations in the region[23].

For the purposes of this research, four types of legal regulations that deal with general or specific discrimination and violence are highlighted:

- Laws on gender-based violence or violence against women.

- Laws on gender identity, sexual and gender diversity and LGBTIQ+ rights.

- Laws against discrimination in general or specific (racism, xenophobia, among others).

- Disability laws.

This section addresses the regulations corresponding to these categories in each country included in this study, identifying whether they have provisions related to inclusion, non-discrimination or technology-facilitated violence, with intersectionality and intercultural approaches[24].

Laws on gender-based violence or on violence against women

All the countries analyzed have third-generation laws addressing gender-based violence, some recent and some older but amended. Third-generation laws expand the first- and second-generation laws that began to be established in the region in the 1980s, which initially included only provisions related to domestic and family violence, and were later developed to include other forms of violence and sanctions. In the second decade of the 21st century, third-generation or comprehensive laws expanded, including the responsibility of the state to prevent, address and eradicate gender-based violence and the recognition or classification of femicide.

In this sense, third-generation laws on gender-based violence entail key changes and acknowledgments. Their scope does not imply, however, that they all incorporate the conceptual aspects or devices to qualify digital violence or its occurrence in the metaverse, perhaps because these categories began to be worked on more recently. In some of the countries, the legislation mentions this form of violence, while in others the possibility is provided by definitions in the criminal codes, by

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23 See, for example, *Violencia de género en Internet en Paraguay - Un estudio exploratorio* (Gender-based violence on the Internet in Paraguay - An exploratory study) (García and Sequera, 2021). Available at: https://www.tedic.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Violencia-Digital-TEDIC-WRO-2021-ES-v01.pdf. And *Digitalización de las mujeres en América Latina y el Caribe: acción urgente para una recuperación transformadora y con igualdad* (Digitalization of women in Latin America and the Caribbean: urgent action for a transformative and equal recovery) (Vaca Trigo and Valenzuela, 2022). Available at: https://repositorio.cepal.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/332d0a20-bdcf-4173-88df-50aa636e2992/content

24 For more information on the concepts mentioned, see the theoretical framework section.

more general laws related to the digital sphere or by different more specific regulatory instruments, as in the cases of Brazil and Mexico. The only country that does not have a legal reference on digital violence is Costa Rica, but there is a draft law presented at the beginning of 2023.

Thus, **Argentina's** norm on gender violence is Law 26485 "on comprehensive protection to prevent, punish and eradicate violence against women in the environments in which they develop their interpersonal relationships"[25], of 2009. This law recognized media violence in Article 6, subsection f) by expressing: "Media violence against women: The publication or dissemination of stereotyped messages and images through any mass media, which directly or indirectly promotes the exploitation of women or their images, insults, defames, discriminates, dishonors, humiliates or violates the dignity of women, as well as the use of women, adolescents and girls in pornographic messages and images, legitimizing unequal treatment or building socio-cultural patterns that reproduce inequality or generate violence against women". This law has a non-discrimination approach and was recently modified to include digital violence.

In turn, to combat cyberbullying against children, Argentina has the so-called Mica Ortega Law, No. 27590, "National program for the prevention and awareness of grooming or cyberbullying against children and adolescents"[26]. It was sanctioned in 2020 under that name following the case of Micaela Ortega, a 12-year-old girl who was duped over the Internet and later murdered.

In July 2023, two bills on digital violence were submitted to the Argentine Parliament: the Olimpia Law, which emulates the Mexican law in name, and the Belén Law, following the suicide of Belén San Román, whose ex-partner disseminated intimate images without her consent after the relationship ended. The Olimpia Law basically consists of the amendment of Article 6 of the current law on violence against women and the incorporation as a crime of obtaining, reproducing and disseminating, by any means of personal data, real or simulated digital material, intimate or nudity of women, as well as the possibility of ordering digital platforms to remove such content. Meanwhile, the Belén Law seeks to punish these crimes with the corresponding definitions in the Criminal Code.

Then, in October 2023, Law 27736 was sanctioned and enacted by Decree 542/2023, which incorporates violence against women in digital environments into Law 26485 as a modality of gender violence. Thus, it is established that digital or telematic violence is "any conduct, action or omission against women based on their gender that is committed, instigated or aggravated, in whole or in part, with the assistance, use and/or appropriation of information and communication technologies, with the purpose of causing physical, psychological, economic, sexual or moral harm, both in the private and public spheres, to them or their family group". The following items are included as digital violence: 1) conducts that violate the integrity, dignity, identity, reputation, freedom, and against the access, permanence and development in the digital space; 2) conduct involving the collection, reproduction and dissemination, without consent, of real or edited digital material, intimate or nudity, attributed to women; 3) the reproduction in the digital space of misogynist hate speech and sexist stereotyped patterns; 4) situations of harassment, threat, extortion, control or spying on virtual activity, unauthorized access to electronic devices or online accounts; 5) theft and non-consensual dissemination of personal data insofar as they are not conducts allowed by Law 25326 and/or the one that may replace it in the future; 6) actions that threaten the sexual integrity of women through information and communication technologies; 7) any cyber-attack that may arise in the future and affect the rights protected by this law. In addition, it provides for a series of precautionary protection measures that include ordering digital platforms to remove content that generates violence.

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25   http://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/150000-154999/152155/norma.htm
26   https://www.argentina.gob.ar/normativa/nacional/345231/texto

Brazil, for its part, has the Maria Da Penha Law, No.11340[27], on violence against women, with a focus on non-discrimination, which has been amended several times since its enactment in 2006. In 2018, this and the Criminal Code were amended by Law 13718 on Sexual Importunity,[28] which defines crimes known as sexual importunity and criminalizes the unauthorized disclosure of scenes of nudity or sexual acts of an intimate and private nature and images of rape.

In addition, this country has other regulations that make up an important legal battery related to digital violence:

- Law 12737 of 2012 (Carolina Dieckmann Law)[29] criminalizes the unauthorized invasion of an electronic device to obtain personal data or information, including non-consensual pornography.

- Law 12965[30] of 2014, or the Civil Internet Framework Law, obliges Internet provider companies to remove intimate content at the victim's request.

- Law 13642[31] of 2018, known as Lola Law, attributes to the Federal Police the responsibility for the investigation of digital crimes with misogynistic content, defined as those that propagate hatred or aversion to women.

- The General Data Protection Act, No. 13709[32], of 2018 regulates the protection of sensitive data of individuals, including data relating to sexual life, and protects privacy, freedom of expression, inviolability of privacy, honor and image.

In turn, in December 2023, the Chamber of Deputies of this country approved a bill that increases the sentence for those who expose manipulated or unauthorized intimate images on social media.

On the other hand, **Chile** has the Law 20066 on Domestic Violence[33], of 2005, which does not mention digital violence. In 2019, Law 21153[34] incorporated into the Criminal Code the crime of unauthorized capture and dissemination of "images, videos or any audiovisual record of the genitals or other intimate part of the body of another person for purposes of sexual implication and without their consent". In August 2022, the Chamber of Deputies approved in general the bill that "outlaws, criminalizes and punishes digital violence in its various forms and grants protection to the victims thereof"[35] and referred it back to the Security Committee for a second regulatory report. However, as of December 2023 it was still under study[36].

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27 http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2004-2006/2006/lei/l11340.htm

28 http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2015-2018/2018/lei/L13718.htm

29 https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2011-2014/2012/lei/l12737.htm

30 https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2011-2014/2014/lei/l12965.htm

31 http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2015-2018/2018/lei/L13642.htm

32 https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2015-2018/2018/lei/l13709.htm

33 https://www.bcn.cl/leychile/navegar?idNorma=242648

34 https://www.bcn.cl/leychile/navegar?idNorma=1131140

35 https://www.camara.cl/legislacion/ProyectosDeLey/tramitacion.aspx?prmID=14490&prmBOLETIN=13928-07

36 https://www.camara.cl/cms/noticias/2023/09/05/prosigue-estudio-de-proyecto-que-sanciona-la-violencia-digital/

In 1996, **Colombia** passed Law 294[37], which "develops Article 42 of the Political Constitution and establishes norms to prevent, remedy and punish domestic violence". Likewise, in 2008, Law 1257[38] was enacted, with a focus on non-discrimination, which "establishes rules for awareness, prevention and punishment of forms of violence and discrimination against women, reforms the Criminal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure, Law 294 of 1996 and other provisions". In 2015, this country sanctioned Law 1761[39], Rosa Elvira Cely Law, "whereby the criminal type of femicide is created as an autonomous crime and other provisions are enacted" and the intersectional approach is incorporated with specific provisions. For example, in Article 3, when determining the aggravating factors, it establishes in paragraph d) "When it is committed against a woman in a situation of physical, mental or sensory disability or forced displacement, socioeconomic condition or prejudice related to ethnic condition or sexual orientation".

Likewise, in 2022, the bills of Law 241 were presented, "whereby the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure are modified, the chapter 'On the violation of personal privacy through the use of information and communication technologies' is created, the crime of digital gender violence is defined and other provisions are enacted", and Law 256, "whereby measures are adopted for the prevention, protection, reparation and criminalization of digital violence and other provisions are enacted". Both bills are being studied simultaneously, they have passed the first parliamentary debate and are awaiting the second debate.[40].

For its part, **Costa Rica** has Law No. 7586[41] on Domestic Violence, of 1996, and its amendment by Law 8925 of 2011, and also Law 8589[42] on the Criminalization of Violence against Women of 2007. Although this country does not have provisions on digital violence, in February 2023 a bill was submitted to Parliament seeking the criminalization of new modalities and amendments to articles of the Criminal Code.

Mexico has had, since 2007, the "General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence"[43]. Then, in 2018, the "Olympia Law"[44] was sanctioned, which includes a set of legislative reforms, such as changes to the law on violence and the Criminal Code in the different States to incorporate provisions on digital violence and punish crimes that violate the sexual intimacy of individuals through digital media. This bill results from the fight of Olimpia Coral Mello, since 2014, after a sex video containing her image was disseminated on social media without her consent. In 2021, the Federal Criminal Code and the "General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence" were amended to recognize digital violence and criminalize the offense of violating the sexual intimacy of individuals through the non-consensual distribution of intimate sexual material.

37 https://oig.cepal.org/sites/default/files/1996_col_ley294.pdf

38 https://oig.cepal.org/sites/default/files/2008_col_ley1257.pdf

39 http://www.secretariasenado.gov.co/senado/basedoc/ley_1761_2015.html

40   https://leyes.senado.gov.co/proyectos/index.php/proyectos-ley/cuatrenio-2022-2026/2022-2023/article/256-por-medio-de-la-cual-se-modifica-el-codigo-penal-y-de-procedimiento-penal-se-crea-el-capitulo-de-la-violacion-a-la-intimidad-personal-mediante-el-uso-de-las-tecnologias-de-la-informacion-y-las-comunicaciones-se-tipifica-el-delito-de-violencia-digital-de-genero-y-se-dictan-otras-disposiciones

41 http://www.pgrweb.go.cr/scij/Busqueda/Normativa/Normas/nrm_texto_completo.aspx?param1=NRTC&nValor1=1&nValor2=27926&nValor3=0&strTipM=TC

42 https://www.acnur.org/fileadmin/Documentos/BDL/2007/5206.pdf?view=1

43 https://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/LGAMVLV.pdf

44 http://ordenjuridico.gob.mx/violenciagenero/LEY%20OLIMPIA.pdf

In turn, **Paraguay** has Law No. 1600[45] on Domestic Violence, from the year 2000, and in 2016 sanctioned the "Law for the comprehensive protection of women against all forms of violence", No. 5777[46], which protects the right to privacy and image, recognizes telematic violence as a modality of violence against women and defines it as follows:

> l) Telematic violence is the action by means of which messages, photographs, audios, videos or others that affect the dignity or privacy of women are disseminated or published through current information and communication technologies, including the use of these media to promote the objectification, submission or exploitation of women. "Objectification" shall be understood as the action of reducing women to the condition of a thing. (Art. 6)

Despite being contemplated in Law 5777, there is still no specific criminal offense that considers the non-consensual dissemination of these images. On the other hand, this 2016 law assigns to the current Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies (MITIC), which assimilated the then Secretariat of Information and Communication Technologies, the responsibilities of "carrying out permanent awareness campaigns directed to the general population and mainly to women on telematic violence and prevention measures" and to "develop and implement protocols for the detection and prevention of new forms of violence against women in the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)" (art. 15). Subsequently, in October 2023, the "Bill to prevent, punish and eradicate universal cyberbullying in Paraguay" was presented in the Senate[47], which, although necessary, should be subject to adjustments, since it contains ambiguities and lack of legal precisions that may generate conflicts, as indicated by TEDIC[48].

Finally, **Peru** has Law No. 30364[49] "to prevent, punish and eradicate violence against women and members of the family group", of 2015, which has non-discrimination as one of its principles and conceptualizes very clearly the approaches of intersectionality and interculturality when expressing:

> **Intercultural approach:** Recognizes the need for dialogue between the different cultures that are integrated into Peruvian society, in order to recover, from the different cultural contexts, all those expressions that are based on respect for the other person. This approach does not accept discriminatory cultural practices that tolerate violence or hinder the enjoyment of equal rights between people of different genders.

> **Intersectionality approach:** Recognizes that women's experience of violence is influenced by factors and identities such as their ethnicity, color, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, heritage, marital status, sexual orientation, HIV-positive status, immigrant or refugee status, age or disability; and, where appropriate, includes measures targeted to specific groups of women. (Art. 3)

45 https://www.pj.gov.py/images/contenido/secretariadegenero/marcolegal/LEY-1600-2000.pdf

46 https://www.bacn.gov.py/leyes-paraguayas/8356/ley-n-5777-de-proteccion-integral-a-las-mujeres-contra-toda-forma-de-violencia

47 https://silpy.congreso.gov.py/web/expediente/129408

48 https://www.tedic.org/es-momento-de-una-ley-sobre-violencia-digital-contra-las-mujeres-en-paraguay/

49 http://www.mimp.gob.pe/files/transparencia/ley-30364.pdf

By Legislative Decree 1410[50], of 2018, Peru incorporated in the Criminal Code the crimes of harassment, sexual harassment, sexual blackmail and dissemination of images, and its Computer Crimes Law, No. 30096[51], of 2013, already had some provisions related to "sexual indemnity and freedoms" (Chapter III).

Laws on gender identity, gender and sexual diversity and LGBTQI+ rights

Of the countries studied, only four have legislated on LGBTQI+ rights, gender identity or sexual and gender diversity. **Argentina** enacted in 2010 Law 26618 or Equal Marriage Law; in 2012, the Law on the Right to Gender Identity, No. 26743, and created in 2019 by Decree 7/19 amending the Law of Ministries (Law 22520) the Ministry of Women, Gender and Diversity. In this country there is extensive institutional work for the rights of LGBTQI+ people.

Brazil, for its part, issued resolutions from various competent organizations for the recognition of the rights of LGBTQI+ persons, including Resolution 175, of 2013, of the National Council of Justice, which prohibits authorities from refusing to celebrate civil marriage between persons of the same gender; in 2018, the Supreme Federal Court (STF) recognized the right to gender identity by Resolution 4275, and, in 2019, it established that homophobic and transphobic acts may be criminalized as racism.

Chile sanctioned in 2018 Law 21120[52], which recognizes and gives protection to the right to gender identity, and in 2021 Law 21400[53], which amends various legal bodies to regulate, on equal terms, same-sex marriage. In turn, **Colombia** has several Constitutional Court rulings that enable rights such as equal marriage and the right to gender identity. In **Mexico**, the right to equal marriage has been approved in all 32 states, and 20 states have passed the Gender Identity Law. Meanwhile, in **Peru**, the Constitutional Court recognized in 2016 the right to gender identity and in 2017 Legislative Decree 1323 was issued, which punishes discrimination, incitement to discrimination and hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation and gender identity. That same year, an attempt was made to repeal the article of this regulation, but it is still in force.

Laws on discrimination in general or specific laws on racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination

Of the eight countries analyzed, six have regulations on discrimination: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru. Costa Rica and Paraguay have not yet enacted legislation prohibiting all forms of discrimination. **Argentina** has Law 23592 of 1988 on Discriminatory Acts and its amendment, Law 24782 of 1997. For its part, **Brazil** has Law 8081, of 1990, which establishes the crimes and penalties applicable to discriminatory or prejudicial acts based on race, color, religion, ethnicity or national descent, carried out by the media or publications of any kind, and Law 7716, of 1989, which defines crimes arising from prejudice based on race or skin color. In turn, **Chile** sanctioned Law 20609[54], in 2012, which establishes measures against discrimination, also known as Zamudio law. **Colombia** enacted Law 1482 in 2011, which criminalizes acts of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, political or philosophical ideology, sex or sexual orientation,

50 https://busquedas.elperuano.pe/dispositivo/NL/1690482-3

51 https://www2.congreso.gob.pe/sicr/cendocbib/con5_uibd.nsf/C5F98BB564E5CCCF05258316006064AB/$FILE/6_Ley_30096.pdf

52 https://www.bcn.cl/leychile/navegar?idNorma=1126480

53 https://www.bcn.cl/leychile/navegar?idNorma=1169572

54 https://www.bcn.cl/leychile/navegar?idNorma=1042092&idVersion=Diferido

disability and other discriminatory grounds. On the other hand, **Mexico** has the Federal Law to Prevent and Eliminate Discrimination[55], of 2011, which defines as discrimination "promoting hatred and violence through messages and images in the media" (art. 9). Finally, in 2000, **Peru** passed the Law against Acts of Discrimination, No. 27270[56].

Disability laws

All the countries analyzed have regulations on persons with disabilities, some of them quite old. **Argentina** has had a framework law on disability since 1981, Law 22431; **Brazil** sanctioned in 2015 the Statute of the Person with Disabilities; **Chile** has had since 2010 Law 20422, which establishes rules on equal opportunities and social inclusion of disabled persons. In turn, **Colombia** has Statutory Law 1618, of 2013, "whereby provisions are established to guarantee the full exercise of the rights of disabled persons", and **Costa Rica** has the Law on Equal Opportunities for Disabled Persons, No. 7600, and the National Policy on Disability (PONADIS), which refers to the protection of disabled people against exploitation, violence and abuse. On the other hand, Mexico has had since 2018 the General Law for the Inclusion of Disabled People. **Paraguay** passed Law 4720/2012 in 2012, "which creates the National Secretariat for the Human Rights of Disabled Persons (SENADIS) and its regulatory decree 10514/13". Finally, **Peru** has the General Law for Disabled People No.[57] 29973. However, none of these laws establish provisions on digital violence; in fact, all of them predate the second decade of the 21st century, when the debate on this issue was not yet widespread.

55 https://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/LFPED.pdf

56 https://alertacontraelracismo.pe/sites/default/files/archivos/normas/Ley-Contra-Actos-de-Discriminacio%CC%81n-Modificacio%CC%81n_0.pdf

57 https://leyes.congreso.gob.pe/Documentos/Leyes/29973.pdf

GOOD PRACTICES IN ADDRESSING INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, NON-DISCRIMINATION AND TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED VIOLENCE FROM A DECOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE

In this section, we present some good practices and experiences of individuals or organizations linked to the approach of inclusion, non-discrimination and violence that challenge systems of oppression and can contribute to think about applications to the virtual world in general and the metaverse in particular.

Through a process of mapping initiatives and conducting three semi-structured interviews, we identified these processes related to historically subalternized groups, which act with their own voices, generating reconceptualizations about their inclusion, about the violence they experience, about the necessary approaches when dealing with their realities, and building demands and proposals that incorporate other perspectives. These are experiences that promote liberating, decolonial practices, that emerge from places of expression from the margins or from the autonomy of these sectors, or that are proposed from institutional spaces with a perspective of the rights of excluded sectors.

Three spheres that are part of everyday life were specifically examined: entertainment, education and public policy, under the consideration that within these areas it is possible to find a wide spectrum of experiences and practices that can be analyzed and reimagined for the digital context.

To present the data from the three interviews, a detailed analysis of each will follow, highlighting how the experiences and practices narrated by the interviewees relate to the objectives of building an inclusive and safe metaverse. Each interview will be addressed individually, beginning with a description of the interviewee's profile and the context of their work or activity, followed by a summary of the strategies implemented to promote inclusion and create safe spaces. Next, the challenges faced and how they inform the needs and opportunities within the metaverse would be identified. This approach allows us to directly connect the findings to the theoretical framework of the research, highlighting the importance of the Global South perspective in designing inclusive digital futures.

INCLUSION AND CREATION OF SAFE ENTERTAINMENT SPACES

Amanda Mussi, a DJ and music producer with a track record of more than ten years in the electronic music scene in Latin America and Europe, is recognized for her active involvement in promoting inclusion and creating safe spaces for the LGBTQI+ community within the entertainment industry. The interviewee approaches the development and management of these spaces from a political approach, highlighting in an interwoven manner the right to the enjoyment and appropriation of these areas by historically marginalized or excluded communities or groups, as well as the active search for the creation of a community in which these groups can feel that they are part of a physical and emotional space that recognizes and cares for them.

The community plays a leading role in the planning and development of inclusive and safe spaces. The interviewee mentions that a first step for the development of a community is the establishment of clear communication with rules that govern coexistence in these spaces:

> There is a very clear, written, visual communication of what safe spaces are for us…. There are signs in place and a digital communication where they say things like "we do not accept discrimination of any kind, no transphobia, no machismo, no racism, no discrimination against disabilities," and all that. And we always leave a contact person from our awareness team there.

Communication includes the non-acceptance of discrimination of any kind and the availability of an awareness team to deal with any incident, both at the time of the event and outside of it. The demarcation of clear rules of coexistence and the availability of face-to-face and virtual channels that people can approach to report any type of violence or discrimination generates a sense not only of community and care, but also of safety for those who attend these events. At the same time, the interviewee mentions the centrality of representativeness in addressing the mission of developing inclusive and safe spaces:

> It is important for a woman to see another woman being a DJ, so that one day she will understand that she can be one too, or for a black person to see another black person in a position of status so that they will understand that they can do it too.

For Mussi, inclusion does not only imply that people from historically vulnerable communities participate in her events: the producer mentions that true inclusion represents not only participation and visibility, but an active effort to train and empower these people, fostering an environment where they can see themselves reflected and feel empowered to go down the same path.

While the interviewee mentions the importance and desire for more active participation of people to ensure the development of safe and inclusive spaces, she identifies as one of the main challenges the need to build strong alliances among the various vulnerable communities, overcoming the internal divisions that weaken the movement for equality:

> The greatest difficulty is to break these patterns (of oppression and discrimination). Everyone is pointing fingers at each other and is also disagreeing and causing a division and wanting to weaken the cause (of the equality movement).

The interviewee also emphasizes the importance of education and the deconstruction of prejudices among those with greater privilege, which could facilitate more significant change and the creation of stronger alliances. Locating responsibility in the individual blurs the existence of systemic historical and social processes, articulated through a matrix of domination, which places different groups and individuals in more or less privileged positions when it comes to making decisions and having agency. Behind the main challenges lies the need for literacy from a perspective of equality that contemplates the complexities of the intersection between gender, race, sexual orientation, etc., and that, ultimately, could, according to Mussi: "… try, first, to fix what was damaged, which would be that discrimination, that oppression, exclusion of those people. Hopefully one day that can be eradicated."

When questioned about specific actions that had or have a positive impact on building and maintaining these safe and inclusive spaces, the interviewee mentions the importance of a constant focus on training and maintaining a knowledgeable and diverse security team, including queer people, women and trans people who are known by their community and that, in this knowledge, more empathetic and trust-based bonds can be built. She also mentions certain actions such as the creation of a database of trans attendees to exempt them from the entrance fee, as well as offering and facilitating employment opportunities within these spaces.

As mentioned above, it is not only a matter of including and hiring people from historically vulnerable communities, but also of providing training and opportunities for them to develop educationally and professionally. The future of these safe and inclusive entertainment spaces should focus on intensifying these training and opportunity creation efforts to further strengthen safety and inclusion for all people.

Recommendations for the construction of an inclusive metaverse

The experiences and practices recounted by the interviewee offer valuable lessons for the design of an inclusive and safe metaverse. Clear communication about the values and principles of inclusion, representation in roles of power and visibility, and the implementation of specific security measures with explicit rules of coexistence are strategies applicable to virtual environments. In addition, the challenge of building strong partnerships and the importance of training and educating the people who are part of a community are crucial aspects of fostering a metaverse that is truly open and reflects the diversity and richness of experiences. From this analysis, the following recommendations emerge to apply the points taken into account when thinking about inclusive, safe and violence-free digital entertainment spaces:

- Training of specialized security personnel and teams to be able to adequately handle situations of discrimination or harassment.

- Raising awareness of internal divisions to combat them and promote education and awareness of inclusion and respect.

- Creating safe spaces with a multi-faceted approach that encompasses clear communication, representation and incident preparedness.

- Insisting on the importance of community and active participation in the continuous improvement of spaces.

GENDER PERSPECTIVE AND DIVERSITY IN THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY

Mariana Maresca works as a narrative designer for videogames, a role equivalent to that of a script-writer in this field. Together with her friends, she founded a video game production company whose particularity is the inclusive and diverse orientation in its narrative, which created a difference in an industry that often places greater emphasis on other aspects, such as gameplay, fashion themes, economic benefits or simply highlighting the graphic component over the stories being told.

Through her work, the interviewee mentions that she seeks to challenge the prevailing norms and hierarchies in this industry, in which leadership and creative roles are centered on cisgender white men with a certain amount of privilege. The production company strives to offer an alternative to this dynamic, creating video games that reflect the diversity of genders, sexualities and experiences, and working with people who share an inclusive vision. Both Maresca and her team focus on telling deep and meaningful stories, many of which are based on their personal experiences as people who belong to the LGBTQI+ community: "We try a lot to touch on themes that also have to do with our personal experience, such as being a queer person.... I feel like the video game industry in general is not such a safe space."

This statement underscores the relevance of creating content that reflects the experiences of historically vulnerable populations and of disrupting the established norms of the video game industry. The interviewee and her team prioritize collaborating with people who share the same values, which is fundamental to building an inclusive and safe work environment:

> We try to make sure that they share the same values, which means that we wouldn't make a project with a libertarian, let's say, or with someone who is a facho or..., because it would simply not be a safe space, because this person might say: "Come on..., stop talking about bullshit." I feel that the world of videogame narrative is already a more indie world, which may also be different from these capitalist videogames of "let's make a shooting game that doesn't say anything", you know? I feel that the genre itself is already disruptive and we generate safe spaces in the content, making content like this for the world, and we express ourselves through the content and ourselves by working with people who share the same values, who are part of the community.

On the other hand, one of the main challenges identified in the creation of these safe and inclusive spaces is the difficulty of selling and promoting this type of content in a market and a society that still show resistance towards disruptive narratives that move away from the norm, which makes it difficult for these productions to reach more people:

> The challenge is that it is generally not something that is easily marketable.... There is not so much predisposition to say "okay".... It is somewhat more disruptive, and it might not be to everyone's liking. Whether it's the content itself or the way you move, it's not something that's one hundred percent accepted, because it's not functional to how everything else moves. For me, the industry and video games is a world that is 100 percent ruled by cis males and it's not a place that's comfortable or that's easy because there's really no representation.

This resistance illustrates the complexity of inserting issues of inclusion and diversity in a context where traditional structures and exclusionary hierarchies prevail. To meet these challenges, the strategy focuses on the careful selection of contributors and the development of narratives that reflect the experiences of, for example, queer people. For this reason, the importance of intersectionality and the need to create spaces that welcome a wide range of identities and experiences, beyond simplistic categorizations, is pointed out. The strategy of generating sub-communities with shared values and norms emerges as a practical approach in the face of the difficulty of changing broader structures, although the risk of fragmentation that this may imply for the broader movement of inclusion in the technological and creative circle is recognized.

The interviewee acknowledges the complexities of ensuring equitable and respectful representation and participation and stresses the need to build trust and empathy among people in the community, as well as structures for moderation and dialogue to address conflicts and disagreements in a constructive manner. The relevance of continuous and conscious work to maintain safe and inclusive spaces in the face of power and exclusion dynamics that can be perpetuated even in environments that seek to be disruptive, is highlighted.

Finally, thinking about the future of these spaces in video game development, Maresca emphasizes the desire and importance of a greater diversity in leadership and projects, as well as a wider access to technologies and creative platforms, aspiring to an environment where the defense of inclusion is not necessary due to a generalized acceptance and appreciation of the plurality of experiences, which suggests a long but potentially transformative path towards more inclusive and representative spaces in the videogame industry.

Recommendations for the construction of an inclusive metaverse

The experiences and strategies shared in this interview provide some ideas, detailed below, for fostering the design and development of an inclusive and safe metaverse. In this case, narrative emerges as a primary and powerful tool to foster inclusion and representativeness, while the creation of safe spaces demands an alignment of values and an active engagement with diversity. Following these guidelines, it is proposed:

- Inclusive narrative approach to develop content that reflects a wide range of experiences and perspectives, allowing diverse identities to be represented in the metaverse.

- Selection of people and teams aligned with inclusive values, who share a genuine commitment to inclusion and diversity, and ensure that the development environment is safe and heterogeneous.

- Promotion of mental health and collective well-being by implementing practices that value the emotional care of all people, both those who create and those who will make use of those creations, fostering an environment of mutual support.

DEVELOPMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE PUBLIC POLICIES

The interview with Claudia Garcia, general coordinator of the Centro Ciudad Mujer (Woman's City Center) in Paraguay, provides a multifaceted and institutionalized perspective on creating safe and inclusive spaces in non-digital contexts. The experience of Ciudad Mujer, a government project focused on offering a wide range of services aimed at the empowerment and protection of women, from comprehensive health and education to support in situations of violence, presents us with a series of resources and examples of good practices that could be extrapolated to the design and development of safe and inclusive digital environments.

This Center, noted for being the largest public sector service offering exclusively for women, is structured in six main modules, each designed to address different needs and stages in the care and development of those who come to this space. Among these, the economic empowerment module plays a crucial role by offering courses, workshops and lectures in collaboration with various governmental and non-governmental institutions. In turn, the module on prevention of violence against women and the module on sexual and reproductive health are essential to address and support women in situations of vulnerability and need.

Among the main challenges mentioned by the interviewee is the inherent complexity of creating and maintaining safe and inclusive spaces for women in societies that are structurally sexist and unequal. Coordination among multiple public institutions is a significant logistical challenge, requiring careful management and integration of services in a coherent manner for effective operation. As the general coordinator of Ciudad Mujer points out, this effort ranges from initial orientation to the provision of specialized services in health, economic empowerment and violence prevention, illustrating the importance of a cohesive and quality service offering.

Another important challenge is education and awareness-raising, which are necessary to change patterns of discrimination and violence against women. This implies constant management work, which includes mainstreaming the gender perspective in all possible areas, from the training of the people who work at the Center to the socialization of information and resources to those who come to receive these services. Garcia emphasizes that one of the objectives of the courses and workshops, as well as the treatment offered in the services provided at the Center, is to promote a real change in values based on discursive activism, supporting not only the material needs of women, but also a broader socialization in terms of their rights.

> The staff are all women, so this also creates a more trusting environment for women and makes it easier for them to access services. They say: "I prefer to come here because they are all women or I prefer to come here because they treat me better, because I feel better". So, in terms of the atmosphere we generate, the truth is very positive. The training, for example, of female employees, that is, the human factor, require more training or require more frequency to maintain the quality and the modality that the Center model intends. We must insist on habits, that is, we must insist on being faithful to the model, so I believe that the human factor is very important because we must remember what objective we are working for, what are the characteristics that the service we are providing must have, understand and raise awareness of vulnerability, because each woman brings a story, each woman brings a special circumstance, regardless of whether she manifests it immediately or later on.

Service customization is another outstanding challenge, underscoring the need to maintain a human approach that is true to the project's objectives. The interviewee mentions that each woman brings with her a unique history and special circumstance, which requires a service that, ideally, is tailored to her particular needs. This humanized approach is reinforced by the implementation of differentiated protocols for women with disabilities, the provision of spaces that contribute to generating an environment of tranquility and trust in the long term, and the promotion of the Center as a place where women can access not only particular services, but also a community of care and support.

> So, for me they are the best example, and one of them even says: "I didn't have friends, I came to the Center and made a lot of friends who do different things and I have friends everywhere". That, for example, I thought it was fabulous when she said it, because it was something I had not even had in mind, that is, if you have also made friends, it means that you have made your life very rich with the experience you have at the Center. Now, there are women who come and still do not understand, or they are new users and come only for health treatments, so what we are establishing is a series of activities where we can offer them talks and spaces as well... Last year, as we have a very nice patio, we implemented picnics on different topics: leadership, financial education, dating without violence, health, adolescent health.

Among the ways to address these challenges is the importance of listening to and learning from the experiences of the women who use the Center's services, encouraging direct feedback to adapt and improve the services offered, and ensuring that they respond effectively to the needs of the people who come to the Center. A collaborative and responsive approach is critical to overcoming barriers and moving towards creating safe and inclusive spaces for all women.

> So, I started to talk to them, to listen to them, and I decided to talk to them at least every other day, if I could not talk to them every day, and I took my notebook, and they described each thing to me and gave me proposals and criticisms. From their feedback I drew the first twenty measures that I had to change for the Center to respond to the original model. They are the ones who gave me the most diverse and complete information, and I think the most passionate, because if there is something women also have is a lot of passion. So, I take criticism, complaints and claims, always with an argument, because I think there is always an argument behind it. For me, the spaces that can be created for women are very important, so that they can make their voices heard, so that they can put their perspective and so that all services, if we speak in terms of service, not to mention all public policy schemes, can really be in line to provide an efficient, comprehensive and complete response for the exercise of women's rights.

In addition, the interviewee highlights the security challenges involved in maintaining a safe and trustworthy space for women, especially in the prevention of violence and harassment. For this reason, the Center has implemented strict measures, such as access control through a police booth and the restriction of entry for men, except in specifically controlled circumstances, such as in cases where accessibility must be guaranteed for women with disabilities of any kind. Garcia mentions that the Center is working together with other institutions to guarantee a comprehensive design of accessible solutions for all users, this being one of the main inclusion strategies they are currently working on.

Finally, the coordinator reflects on the potential for growth and improvement of the Ciudad Mujer Center, aspiring to a more direct and personalized communication with the women who visit the center, the expansion of services through digital tools and the promotion of environmental awareness and sustainability of the space where the Center is located. It also highlights the need for continuous dialogue and adaptation to the needs of women to ensure an efficient, comprehensive and complete response in the exercise of their rights:

> It is necessary to complete the services that each of the modules has. I believe that there is a communication strategy that is not fully developed, and I would like the Center to have direct communication with the user, to have more direct channels with the users, because as we talk to them, in reality, the programs, plans, projects, activities that the Ciudad Mujer Center can have are infinite, that is, there is no ceiling, they themselves suggest them. For example, a user told me: "I come for my medical checkups", because during Pink October we also opened on Saturdays. We extended the schedule, because we know that it is difficult for those who work, because they work, and for those who don't, because they are at home. So, we open on Saturdays as well. For example, she told me: "I take care of my two elderly parents, and I even had to organize my activities to come this Saturday to have my screenings done. Can't you have virtual chats or themed virtual blogs where I can access as well, and you put the information we learn here on the page?" And I replied, "Wow, I'd love that." We are not yet developing all the tools, tips that today would allow you an even unlimited reach, so that the Center can reach women outside its walls.

Recommendations for the construction of an inclusive metaverse

The creation of Ciudad Mujer Center, a physical space dedicated to the integral empowerment of women, highlights the importance of designing inclusive and safe environments that respond to the specific needs of its users. In the metaverse, this vision could be translated into the need to develop virtual environments that are not only accessible and welcoming, but also offer resources and services tailored to particular needs. Attention to diversity, inclusion and safety must be integrated into the design and development of these virtual spaces from their conception, so the following recommendations are offered for their implementation:

- Developing metaverse designs incorporating diverse perspectives from the outset to ensure that the needs of a wide range of people are addressed and promoting equity and representation.

- Creation of digital spaces that, like Ciudad Mujer, which has adapted its facilities to be accessible to women with disabilities, respect accessibility features that allow all users to participate fully, regardless of their physical or sensory abilities.

- Promotion of education and awareness through the development of programs and tools within the metaverse that educate about diversity, inclusion and respect, similar to Ciudad Mujer's workshops and courses, but adapted to the virtual context.

- Fostering support communities within the metaverse, where people can find support, share experiences and foster community empowerment.

- Implementation of security and privacy measures, like Ciudad Mujer's access restrictions and security protocols, to ensure that users feel safe and protected. This includes mechanisms to prevent and respond to situations of digital harassment or violence.

- Use of feedback from users to effectively assess, adapt and meet inclusion and safety needs, and ensure the evolution of the metaverse.

MAPPING OF BEST PRACTICES BY COUNTRY

Based on the experiences gathered in the interviews from the world of entertainment, video game development and comprehensive public policies, and considering the non-discrimination, non-violence and inclusion actions addressed in each of the cases, this section describes the different good practices associated with these values and applied in concrete proposals in each of the 8 countries surveyed in this research.

In **Argentina**, there is the Interactive Map of Harassment and Abuse (MIAA), a collaborative mapping initiative[58] of situations of gender-based violence in public spaces that began in the city of Mar del Plata in 2017 and was later extended to other cities, such as Santa Fe, La Plata, Cipolletti, Olavarría, Carmen de Patagones, Viedma, Salta, Rosario and even to cities in other countries, such as Bogotá and Popayán in Colombia. They started as autonomous initiatives (in the case of La Plata, by two female architects; in the case of Rosario, by three female friends) and what they do is the geolocation of harassment and abuse situations by filling out an anonymous Google form (Google Forms, Google My Maps[59]) by the person who experienced the situation. In addition, they inquire into what the experience entailed at the time of the event and today, and collect data on locations, times and types of violence. With this information, artistic actions are generated in the mapped place and what happens in these interventions is also uploaded on the map as a form of symbolic reparation. Thus, it is interpreted that a mapping[60] of these characteristics of digital environments/ spaces/networks/games could contribute to counteract discrimination or violence facilitated by technology and generate creative actions of reparation in the virtual world.

In **Brazil**, on the other hand, there is the platform *O que você queer?*[61], which exists since 2015 and was created by artists Ana Luisa Santos and Fernanda Branco Polse from their artistic experiences as queer performers, to seek a "reappropriation of a pejorative term that meant 'strange', 'weird' and was equivalent to 'queer', 'lesbian'. Queer also functions as a means to criticize the conservative way of including an agenda of respect for otherness without a real transformation of society for all people and not only for those subjects and bodies accepted within the aesthetic and moral standards of a consumer society. Queer is not."

O que você queer? defines itself as a "genderless action in favor of research, creation and debate on the experience of living in the now with a performative openness to making politics. It is to think of the world as a place where strangeness is our habitat, where all familiarity becomes suspect. The aim of the poetry we make is to remove the film of familiarity that covers the world. It is a wake-up call poem. Words are like printed bodies, tattoos of what is written, generated, dyed on the skin on paper and in the memory of action and image. The strategy of expansion of whatever is queer is to pour fanzines into magazines to cross borders, to dialogue about dramaturgies of life and the scene to open possibilities of exchange and political activity". Thus, this experience can be looked at for replication at the digital level in the form of games that include queer-related artistic activities.

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58 https://miaacipolletti.wixsite.com/miaacipolletti

59 https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1r4BGL3OWz2WlYhL8kc760k4pUfI&shorturl=1&ll=-34.9146474560006%2C-57.9 5177673128852&z=15

60 https://miaapopayan.home.blog/

61 https://cargocollective.com/oquevocequeer

Also, in December 2023, the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies[62] approved a bill establishing a protocol that obliges establishments in which alcoholic beverages are sold, nightclubs, discos, indoor music shows and shows in general, as well as sporting events, to adopt measures to support women in situations of violence (harassment, physical violence or other events). This includes expelling the aggressor from the premises and having specific codes in restrooms for women who are asking for help. Facilities must also designate a person from the staff to handle protocol. It is also known as the "No, means No" Law[63].

In turn, **Chile** has the Feminist Movement for Universal Accessibility (FEMACU)[64], an organization that defines itself as integrated by activists with functional diversity and sexual dissidents. It campaigns and promotes rights with various tools, among them, the video series Nosotres: más allá de la norma (We: beyond the norms) and Derecho a decidir desde la diversidad funcional (Right to decide based on functional diversity), where they express the following: "These are the titles that are part of a series of videos with the purpose of questioning and questioning ourselves what normality and diversity are in relation to sexualities, desire and being desired. Other videos in the campaign also seek to question stereotypes about the sexuality of women with disabilities".

This country also has the initiative "Seguras en la Música" (Safe in Music) from the Ministry of Women and Gender Equity of Chile[65] with the aim that the event "Rock in Conce", which brought together 200,000 people in January 2023 for 2 days, would be a space free of gender violence. In coordination with the regional government, messages were disseminated through the festival's giant screens and the emergency numbers of emergency services. In addition, a stand was set up to disseminate material on gender violence, and security personnel and police covering the festival were trained to provide initial attention to those experiencing gender violence.

In **Colombia**, #Mujeresnegrashablandode (#Blackwomenspeakabout), a series of podcasts on various issues raised by Afro-descendant women, is being developed, with episodes on how to make effective the enjoyment of cultural rights of ethnic communities and racial and economic justice. It is a campaign produced by Ilex Acción Jurídica[66], an organization integrated by Afro-descendant lawyers that acts through legal mobilization actions, research and strategic communications with an intersectional approach, based on the leadership of black-Afro-Colombian people. The main objective of the campaign is to contribute to the effective enjoyment of the rights of Afro-descendant communities and people of African descent.

Costa Rica, in turn, has two initiatives: *Diálogos entre grannies* and *Machista en rehabilitación* (Chats with grannies and Machistas in rehab). The first consists of dialogues with grandmothers[67] for the transmission of generational knowledge about ancestral medicine and the uses and benefits of medicinal plants. It is developed by the Afro Women's Center with the objective of "making visible the intangible heritage that Afro-Costa Rican women have preserved for generations through the use of plants and other natural elements for their own social and cultural development

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62 https://www.camara.leg.br/noticias/1023661-camara-aprova-protocolo-de-prevencao-a-violencia-contra-mulhe-res-em-shows-e-casas-noturnas/

63 https://www.swissinfo.ch/spa/brasil-violencia-machista_c%C3%A1mara-brasile%C3%B1a-aprueba-leyes-contra-el-aco-so-a-mujeres-en-bares-y-su-exposici%C3%B3n-en-redes/49041606

64 https://www.facebook.com/femacu1/

65 https://minmujeryeg.gob.cl/?p=49554

66 https://ilexaccionjuridica.org/

67 https://afrodescendientes.org/proyectos/cultura-afrocostarricense-desde-las-mujeres-dialogo-entre-grannies/

in Costa Rica, through the exchange of experiences and knowledge among different generations of women, youth, and children of African descent". On the other hand, *Machista en rehabilitación* is an interactive virtual platform[68] created in 2016 by the National Institute of Women (INAMU) and has didactic and informative resources, videos, self-administered tests and others. Its objective is to generate awareness and discussion on sexist attitudes and behaviors, mainly on the most subtle and deep-rooted ones.

In **Mexico**[69], they have initiatives called *Puntos Seguros* (Safe Points) for women in entertainment venues and mass events. In Sonora in 2018, the state started with the installation of these Safe Points with the aim of ensuring that entertainment spaces are prepared to protect women against aggressions. It included image campaigns[70] with prevention and warning phrases in the bathrooms of nightlife establishments, dissemination of a safety protocol exclusively for women, and staff training.

Another important initiative is that this Safe Points[71] are deployed at the National Fair of San Marcos in Aguascalientes[72], an event that takes place in a perimeter of about 90 hectares with the attendance of almost 10 million people for 3 weeks. In 2019, 250 Safe Points were arranged for women, where, if a woman claimed to be in danger, establishments had to allow her to enter their establishment, use a table, a telephone or call the police or a taxi, and make sure she boarded it. Safe Points continue to be implemented in each edition of the fair.

On the other hand, the *Red Naranja* (Orange Network) project[73] is an initiative of the Women's Secretariat of the State of Mexico (federal entity), where there is an articulation between governmental organizations, commercial establishments and the citizens to create the Orange Centers[74], which provide legal and psychological counseling, orientation and accompaniment services for women who experience violence and their children. Citizens or establishments can register safe businesses to be part of the Network. They have a free app that allows the user to link to various gender violence care institutions to receive immediate help in case a woman finds herself in a situation of violence.

Paraguay also has *Abriendo Caminos*, a platform[75] for dialogue and learning between indigenous women and the public sector, with the aim of identifying strategic aspects that should be included in the approach to violence against indigenous women and in the services that institutions should provide. It includes dialogue and training sessions with an intercultural approach, in which organized indigenous women sit at working tables with public entities of the critical route of violence against women to discuss and reach consensus on the actions to be implemented in different organizations and written in protocols and manuals. This case may be an interesting example of the necessary dialogue processes with historically excluded groups to design inclusive instruments in the digital sphere.

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68 https://www.educarenigualdad.org/machistaenrehabilitacion-la-web-costarricense-que-derriba-mitos-machistas/

69 https://www.debate.com.mx/mexico/proteccion-a-mujeres-restaurantes-centros-nocturnos-hermosillo-sonora-estado-violencia-de-genero-20180324-0065.html

70 https://www.facebook.com/AztecaSonora/videos/1222523121184706/

71 https://www.elsoldelcentro.com.mx/local/250-puntos-seguros-para-mujeres-3342965.html

72 https://www.lja.mx/2023/04/se-contara-con-puntos-seguros-para-mujeres-en-la-fnsm-de-aguascalientes/

73 https://semujeres.edomex.gob.mx/red_naranja

74 https://www.milenio.com/politica/comunidad/que-es-la-red-naranja-en-el-edomex

75 https://www.fiiapp.org/noticias/mujeres-indigenas-paraguay-contra-la-violencia/

In addition, the Ministry of Women of Paraguay approved in 2022 a Unified Protocol for the Comprehensive Care and Protection of Women in Situations of Violence [76], which details general and essential aspects for the care and protection of women in a situation of violence, such as the profile of the staff and inter-institutional coordination, as well as the steps of the entire process of care and comprehensive protection, which includes the following services offered by the Ministry of Women's Affairs: Hotline 137 (SOS Mujer), Women's Attention Service (SEDAMUR), Regional Women's Centers, Shelters for women in situations of violence and human trafficking.

Finally, **Peru** has the project *Después de la Ley* (After the Law)[77], developed by the organization Hiperderecho. This is a work to support the needs of women and LGBTQI+ people who have experienced harassment, sexual harassment, sexual blackmail and dissemination of intimate images without consent while surfing the Internet. It works on care routes for people who experience online violence and complaints to the justice system, with care and support methodologies. This could be an interesting example to apply to the metaverse, since it would make it possible to identify the forms and routes of violence in this space and to generate reporting mechanisms and supporting those who experience violence and discrimination in this area.

In addition, there is the *Búscalas* campaign[78], developed since 2020 by the Flora Tristán Peruvian Woman Center, in partnership with Amnesty International and the organization Mujeres Desaparecidas Perú, to ensure that the problem of missing women and girls is identified as a form of gender-based violence and that the systems for searching and investigating cases are improved. Thus, the use of digital spaces and the commitment of platforms to develop tools to search for missing women can be a key contribution to the fight against trafficking and the disappearance of women and girls.

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76   This protocol is only available in paper format.

77   https://hiperderecho.org/despuesdelaley/proyecto

78   https://www.flora.org.pe/campanas/campana-buscalas/

DATA ANALYSIS: APPROACHING AN INTERSECTIONAL METAVERSE FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Considering the importance of conducting research from an intersectional perspective, and following Sasha Costanza-Chock (2020) in her analysis of the design of technologies based on the matrix of domination, the questions that guided the data collection for this study focused on identifying perceptions regarding digital and immersive technologies, as well as exploring the different experiences of integration, assimilation and design of these technologies by users belonging to historically vulnerable populations in Latin America. For the selection and profiling of the listening groups, priority was given to people belonging to these groups, with the purpose of delving into the particularities of their experiences and highlighting specific needs and actions that can contribute to the construction of a more inclusive, diverse and safe metaverse. It is important to mention that these listening groups are not representative of the entire region nor of the totality of the populations to which the participants belong.

To structure both the planning of the listening spaces and the subsequent process of systematization of the information gathered, several indicators were developed (see Annex). Its central purpose is to achieve the research objectives by identifying and classifying elements that outline the relationships and interactions between users and immersive digital technologies in the Latin American region. Each of these indicators is linked to the key concept that structures this research, the matrix of domination, in conjunction with theories that position this work from an intersectional and decolonial perspective, with the objective is to provide a comprehensive view of the issue in Latin America from a human rights perspective that respects the diversity of culture, capabilities, sexual orientation and gender of individuals, taking into account the specific needs of the Global South.

The main findings of each listening group, divided by country, are presented below. This structure makes it possible to distinguish particular characteristics of each country and to highlight the main themes that resonated most with the participants.

After presenting the main findings of the listening groups, the analysis of the three semi-structured interviews conducted will be developed. Then, the conclusions of both data collection strategies are included, whose purpose will be to function as indicators and suggestions for the development and design of immersive digital environments from an intersectional and decolonial perspective with a focus on the users' human rights.

FINDINGS OF THE LISTENING GROUPS BY COUNTRY

The findings developed in this section arise from the analysis of data collected with the collection instrument in 8 countries belonging to the Latin American region between June and October 2023. For the systematization and analysis of the data collected, analysis indicators were generated with the objective of exploring themes focused on the life history of the people, contextual elements of each locality, as well as the conformation of social institutions in connection with digital technologies. These are divided into the following categories: intersectionality, everyday life and coexistence, design processes and hybrid reality. Each of these indicators is related to the concepts of domination matrix and gender coloniality.

The transcripts of the listening sessions used for data analysis were anonymized to maintain the confidentiality of the experiences shared by the participants, due to the sensitive and intimate nature of the information.

It is important to highlight some of the challenges presented during this research. In the data collection in Costa Rica and Paraguay, a different collection instrument was used compared to the other countries; however, the central objective and the configuration of the listening spaces remained consistent. Having clarified this point, the data obtained in the 8 listening spaces were analyzed using the same indicators, with the necessary information to ensure consistency in the evaluation process.

ARGENTINA

The listening space in Buenos Aires took place at the end of October 2023 at the premises of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, in partnership with the feminist media LatFem. The group was characterized by the participation of profiles interested in the use and development of video games and had a large majority of people belonging to LGBTQI+ populations and a visually impaired participant, which guaranteed the diversity of perspectives and visions.

a. Coexistence and collective environments

One of the central themes present in the listening space in Argentina was the discussion on elements to take into consideration when designing coexistence environments between people using digital technologies. At the end of the listening space, participants were encouraged to share a purposeful writing exercise on how they envision the development of immersive technologies in the future and how they would like to interact through them. People shared their visions of a possible configuration of a metaverse designed around their needs, desires and fears. They highlighted the possibilities that immersive technologies offer to build new forms of coexistence, as opposed to what digital technologies currently allow. They expressed the hope of having immersive spaces in which interactions do not follow a corporatist logic, highlighting the preference for those that are guided by alternative dynamics of exploration, knowledge and encounter among users. At all times, the emphasis was placed on the desire to form virtual communities, prioritizing collective ties over individual experiences. Among the responses from participants that support these visions are: "Imagine a future without binarisms where technology is a form of expansive exploration", "Environmentally friendly and diversity friendly", and "Public good logic instead of corporate". In addition, one of the participants posed the following question: "What would a network or technology that fosters encounter, dissent, self-knowledge and empathy over corporate gain look like?"

Another concern expressed by the participants is related to the possibility of exploring their gender identity and new ways of bonding through the use of other senses, and not only sight, within these immersive spaces. From what we have shared, we can point out an important interest in coexistence with people who are different in relation to their identity, functional diversity, gender and geographic location.

In relation to political exchange and coexistence between users belonging to different communities, concern was expressed about the peaceful and safe cohabitation between people with different ideological and political positions in the same immersive digital environment, highlighting a certain reluctance to experience it within these spaces due to fears of being victims of some type of violence facilitated by technology. The following are some reflections that outline expectations regarding interaction in these spaces: "I visualize a coexistence that is both respectful and pleasant, but I recognize the need for political and social regulation to support it," expressed one participant. Another person added: "Instead of promoting polarization and secluding ourselves in bubbles formed by those who share our visions, we should promote and encourage encounters with experiences and perspectives different from our own". Lastly, another person expressed fear about the collective being diluted due to the prominence of individual experiences, although hopeful that this will not happen and that the collective will continue to prevail. They also expressed curiosity about the possible new leadership that may emerge around technology in the future. Individuals illustrate the above with the current emergence of new public figures on platforms such as Instagram or YouTube, which may not only represent significant voices in political moments, but also constitute the creation of new paid career paths.

When inquiring about the ideal type of interaction in the metaverse, a strong desire for regulation to ensure violence-free coexistence in immersive digital environments is evident. This is relevant when considering integrating the perspectives and projections of users in the design processes of these inclusive and safe digital environments.

In addition, one of the fears that emerged throughout the conversation is the possible loss of emotional and social capacities, both individual and collective, due to a generalized perception that individual experiences are now prioritized over collective ones. Although this statement reflects the participants' concerns regarding their current social networking experiences, the recommendation to design and develop immersive virtual spaces from an inclusive intersectional approach could provide an opportunity to focus on the collective rather than the individual. This suggestion is justified by recognizing that an inclusive approach could counteract the fears expressed, thus strengthening connections and collective participation in virtual environments.

b. Relationship with the environment

Regarding the link between online and offline experiences, participants questioned the relationship between the advancement and development of technologies and the deterioration of the environment. When asked about their wishes for the future in this regard, they expressed: "Let it not be destructive: we need biodegradable technologies", "Regarding what would be happening outside (of immersive virtual worlds), I think above all about the environment. Will there be a way for our time in the metaverse to generate energy and not only consumption?" These answers show the relational notion that the participants have regarding the existence of a hybrid reality, mentioning and evidencing that the development of technologies has repercussions in the physical world and that this, in turn, conditions the digital world.

There is concern about the deterioration of our physical world as technological development progresses, which could influence people's desire to experience immersive virtual worlds. In this sense, the participants, when asked about their future wishes for an inclusive metaverse, mentioned an interest in the design and development of immersive realities that contemplate the preservation of natural environments. That is, the notion of an "inclusive metaverse" also denotes a desire for such a concept to include not only the diversity of human experiences, but also the link between these experiences and the environment.

c. **Hybrid reality and body impact**

In one of the moments of the listening space, the question about the impact that digital technologies have on our corporeality was addressed. In this regard, many people expressed fears that immersive technologies will take us away from physical contact between people and contact with the offline world. One of the participants mentioned: "I worry about not touching people, losing physical contact, not feeling smells and sensations in my body". Another participant noted, "I think I am concerned about the impact of these experiences on our bodies. If I have all the experiences available there, what do I do outside the metaverse - is there an 'outside'?"

In reviewing concerns about the link between offline and online, with an emphasis on immersive, it is possible to account for a shared concern that experiences outside the metaverse may be relegated or marginalized over more stimulating experiences within it.

In line with this, participants also mentioned a dissatisfaction about the need to be always present and connected to electronic devices. Among the feelings they mention experiencing when constantly interacting with digital technologies are guilt, fatigue and anxiety.

Based on the analysis of sensations and desires regarding the impact of technologies on bodies, it is suggested that the design of an inclusive metaverse should take into consideration the diversity of experiences and the impact of technologies on the mental health of users. This would involve exploring time limits for the use of these technologies and employing other strategies that promote mental well-being.

Furthermore, it is crucial to consider how the inclusion of corporealities with functional diversities is addressed in the development of technological devices, especially under the analysis of the concepts associated with the matrix of domination. This leads us to reflect on the need to adapt immersive technologies to make them fully accessible to people with visual impairments, given that these environments are not experienced in the same way by everyone. The importance of this consideration is highlighted in the testimony of a visually impaired person who participated in this listening group. This person shared his expectation of the inclusive design of the metaverse by mentioning the desire for:

> developments that contemplate the diverse corporealities. I always feel that I am privileged because I can access a lot of things when there are people who can't even get past the door of their house. Technology may improve that; when you think of accessible solutions, you must think in multiple formats.

The discussion on the need for an inclusive design in the metaverse, especially when considering people with functional diversities, becomes even more relevant in view of the arguments presented by Díaz Sabán (2022). These highlight how the cultural hegemony of the West has prioritized sight in the formation of our self-awareness, suggesting that immersion in digital environments has been conceived primarily for those with full visual capacity. This perspective highlights the inadvertent exclusion of other forms of sensory perception, which limits the participation of people who rely on different sensory abilities. Based on this analysis, it is recommended that the design of a truly inclusive metaverse incorporates a wide range of access formats. This would allow exploring and facilitating diverse ways of interacting with these hybrid realities, ensuring that immersive technologies are accessible to all corporealities.

d. Identity building

Within the framework of this research, the importance of the inclusive representation of identity in immersive technologies is highlighted as one of its specific objectives. During the various listening sessions, the participants' experiences with avatars and profiles in social media, virtual forums and video games were explored. Some noted that, as they deepen their use of digital technologies, they find that their identity is increasingly reflected and constructed through their online profiles and postings. A participant from the LGBTQI+ community shared, "For me, social media is a space for personal exploration; what happens there nourishes my being." This commentary underscores the value that avatars and digital representations have in the exploration and affirmation of identity, especially for people belonging to sexual diversity.

In the same vein, another participant mentioned that, in their experience in open source metaverses, they have observed the presence of trans communities. Based on the above, it is possible to consider that the metaverse has the potential to provide safe immersive spaces for the expression of dissident identities, such as that of trans people, as the shaping of plural and diverse environments.

In addition, a young participant of about 19 years old, highlighted how they live their identity in a unique way in the digital space, using usernames as extensions of their online identity and referring to others by their virtual identities rather than their real names. This practice highlights the fusion of offline and online worlds, creating new layers of meaning in the construction and expression of identity.

BRAZIL

In São Paulo, the listening space was held in October 2023 at the premises of InternetLab, an independent research center dedicated to deepening discussions on legislation and technology, with a particular focus on Internet policy. This meeting brought together a diverse group of women and dissidents, including racialized women, sexual dissidents, and a broad spectrum of ages ranging from 20 to 60 years old, and all shared their experiences within the different categories of the matrix of domination.

a. Identity construction

The relevance of identity in digital spaces, especially in immersive technologies, was highlighted as a crucial issue in the Sao Paulo group. Participants explored how identity representation significantly impacts those situated at intersections of oppression, including racialized people, sexual dissidents, and women. One participant recounted how her experience with virtual communities of women of African descent sharing tips on curly hair care evolved from an aesthetic issue to a political statement, highlighting the power of community and collective identity.

In addition, others shared experiences on how their own gender transitions and exploration of their sexuality were facilitated and enriched through the use of digital technology. One participant described the Internet as a space of freedom to explore aspects of her identity that, in other contexts, might be considered forbidden, such as pornography, which even inspired her academic path towards a PhD on the subject:

> For me it was a space to discover my sexuality and also to play with this a little bit, to go after what was forbidden, like pornography, and then I ended up doing a career on that, a doctorate on pornography on the Internet.

Discussions also focused on how immersive technologies could foster the expression of plural identities in the future. In the exercise of imagining an ideal inclusive metaverse, people mentioned desires for one open to the diversity of existences, including black people, indigenous peoples, among others. They expressed the desire for this space to serve for self-exploration and self-discovery, free of binary and heteronormative norms: "I imagine a space more open to plural existences", "People, diverse beings, native peoples, quilombola communities and ethnicities", "Appearance of black people, over 35 years old, long curly hair, medium height", "I imagine that I am similar to what I am in the real world, almost by extrapolation, but also because it can favor self-discovery".

The conversation in São Paulo also highlighted the ability of digital technologies to serve as powerful tools for self-assertion and resistance. Technology, in this sense, is not only a means for recreation or communication, but an essential platform for the empowerment of marginalized communities. The discussion emphasized the need for designers and developers of immersive technologies to work collaboratively with these communities to ensure that new digital spaces are truly inclusive and accessible to all people. This group highlighted the importance of integrating the voices of historically disenfranchised communities into the design process of immersive technologies. In doing so, one could aspire to create a digital future that not only reflects the diversity of the real world, but also offers new possibilities for the exploration of identity, encounter and solidarity between people. This collaborative and conscious approach to metaverse design would not only make it possible to enrich the digital experience for all people, but also foster a sense of belonging and community within virtual worlds.

b. Imagining a possible coexistence in the metaverse

In the context of the São Paulo listening group, the dialogue on the metaverse and immersive technologies revealed a duality of perspectives: optimism about their pedagogical potential and concerns about their social implications. Several participants highlighted the educational value of the metaverse, appreciating the possibility of enriched learning experiences through virtual coexistence and immersive interactions: "I aspire for the metaverse to be a space that fosters deep and meaningful educational interactions," "I am excited about exploring events, art, and historical records of extinct civilizations," "I long for universal access to education and more interactive and immersive teaching methods."

This valuation of the metaverse as an environment with educational potential suggests a space defined by freedom of choice and diversity of collective experiences, where autonomy and the variety of forms of existence are fundamental: "In the metaverse, I imagine a liberated existence, with the ability to assume diverse appearances and make decisions autonomously", "I imagine that we will be able to live with more possibilities of connection between people, which can give rise to collective organizations of various kinds, such as political movements", "I want it to be a space to share experiences and emotions and not depend on money", "I am hopeful that technology can offer a way out of diseases or difficulties such as aging", "I would like the metaverse to have the power to be an example to the outside world, making the Internet a safer place, giving new meaning to pain".

Similarly, there is a yearning to integrate environmental diversity, fauna and biodiversity into the metaverse, reflecting a desire for harmony and respect for nature, both for enjoyment and learning: "I wish to see more nature, environmental diversity and protected life forms in harmony, without exploitation".

However, the conversations also revealed concerns about the commercialization of social interactions and fears of over-reliance on technology:

> What I fear most about the technological advances of the coming years is the breakdown of public and private space. I fear that virtuality will do away with individual experience and may further flatten subjectivity. I also fear placing too much trust in technology companies, which could "commoditize" aspects of my social existence. These are colossal challenges if we are to inhabit them on an equal footing.

In addition to concerns about over-dependence on technology, there are concerns about the authenticity of long-term interactions. Several people mention that, nowadays they observe how society is increasingly linked to technological devices, which generates concern not only because of social and psychological dependence, but also because of the potential impact on mental health: "I am very concerned about the growing social and psychological dependence on devices and the impact of the purpose of their use on minds, such as increased anxiety due to stimuli, especially among teenagers", "What scares me is the high dependence on systems, excessive and massive surveillance, high levels of user behavior, large data volumes, monopolies and concentrations of power", "My fears are that there will be more alienation from real essences, from the world, from nature, and more violence", "I believe that climatic and environmental conditions will be worse than they are today, and that this will affect our own life in the metaverse. I am afraid of the addiction to technology and the mental health problems caused by digitization."

These reflections on the metaverse as a space for learning and interaction, in the face of concerns about the technologization of life, underscore people's desire for a balance between harnessing its educational benefits and attention to the ethical and social implications of its implementation.

c. Design and technological futurization

During the final part of the listening space in São Paulo, the devices needed to interact with immersive technologies and the first approaches to the metaverse were discussed. The conversation that ensued underscored the importance of testing and experimentation to ensure accessibility and usability of these new technologies.

Participants highlighted the relevance of implementing pilot tests that allow adjusting and improving future experiences in digital environments: "It is crucial to test it with a group that can show us how it really works", one of the participants mentioned, emphasizing the idea that errors or unwanted aspects should be easily modified or eliminated, which reflects a flexible and evolutionary vision of technological development.

The discussion also addressed the need for educational processes adapted to all ages to navigate the Internet and immersive environments, highlighting the shared responsibility in facilitating access and understanding of these technologies: "Internet education has been neglected, and this represents a challenge for both young and old," expressed another participant, suggesting that technology training should be inclusive and consider different life stages and skill levels.

These learning gaps are marked by accessibility, which can be understood with the three levels of articulation in which the matrix of oppression is structured: 1) that of personal biography, that is, life history; 2) that of the cultural context of the group or community; and 3) that of the systemic context of social institutions. Given the way in which older people employ digital technologies, the question arises as to how the design of the metaverse might be accessible for appropriate use by this demographic.

Regarding the design of devices to access the metaverse, a desire was expressed for solutions that are cable-free and more integrated into everyday life: "I envision devices that do not rely on cables, as this would facilitate their continuous and unrestricted use," shared one of the people, projecting a future in which battery charging is a thing of the past.

This vision extended to concerns about energy sustainability and the impact of technology on the physical and mental well-being of users. Constant connectivity poses significant challenges, such as constant surveillance and sensory overstimulation: "The pervasiveness of devices and constant surveillance are of concern, as is the impact of continuous exposure to stimuli on our well-being," noted one participant, highlighting the importance of considering the long-term consequences of uninterrupted use of immersive technologies.

> There will be no time to sleep, no time to charge the devices. It is an investment. In a short time, while you sleep, you will be doing something else, and you'll be done. So, if you think about evolution…. Charging the cellphone and sleeping will become obsolete. And the same thing with the headsets. In reality, as they get smaller, they will be used all the time. And it is also a matter of constant vigilance.

This segment of the listening space emphasized the need for a holistic approach in the design of immersive technologies that not only considers technical innovation, but also accessibility, education, ethics and the impact on the health of users. The discussion underscored the importance of anticipating future challenges and designing with an inclusive and considerate perspective towards the diversity of experiences and needs.

CHILE

In Concepción, in southern Chile, during October 2023, the listening space was held in collaboration with the NGO Amaranta, a feminist organization that addresses issues of gender, technology, diversity and human rights. Eleven people participated in this space, mainly young people from the LGBTQI+ community at university level, and the participation of people with neurodivergences was highlighted. This meeting focused mainly on the interaction of people with digital technologies within a complex political context.

a. Security mechanisms

In the context of Chile, characterized by its political complexity in the wake of recent social outbursts and the COVID-19 pandemic, participants of the listening space in Concepción highlighted how these events have redefined interactions within digital spaces. They recognize that the cultural and political context, a key component of the matrix of domination, significantly influences individual and collective development, delineating power dynamics and resistance strategies:

> With crisis situations, I believe that the Internet or social media have saved us a lot, even in the earthquake that took place at some point here, with the communication problems, because everything went down. But, when it started to be reestablished, it was already starting to bring us closer to the people. Also, with what happened in 2019 here with the revolt, we had to download instant messaging applications that were encrypted and did not give option or chance for them to spy on you. Because there was a lot of espionage, according to what was known and what people said. That also served a lot in organization, to organize cultural or countercultural meetings.

This testimony was shared by a participant who was present in the processes of political articulation in Chile, since at that time this person was part of university spaces. The exchange of these experiences allows us to identify the emerging needs that people are facing based on their context, as well as the role of the various technological platforms in these processes. It is important to highlight that the participants clearly point out the importance of considering these contextual elements for the generation of more accessible immersive technology design processes that take into account the adequacy of security mechanisms.

In response to crisis situations, such as those previously mentioned, the participants mentioned the development of various strategies to facilitate coexistence, as well as political exchange and articulation between people in distant locations, even in other countries. They emphasized that during significant historical moments, such as the Pinochet dictatorship, common strategies such as community kitchens played a crucial role. They also emphasized that the advance of digital technologies makes it possible to amplify the possibilities of political organization, but also the increase of risks associated with these practices of exchange and articulation. These historical accounts allow us to identify the importance of the cultural context of a group and its role in shaping an identity and historical memory, and how it continues to be reproduced in different ways today and occupies a relevant space within digital environments. Generating accessible tools that allow people to capture these historical elements, such as the construction of diverse and changing identities, expands the possibilities of individual and collective appropriation, as well as the assimilation of new immersive technologies into everyday life.

In addition to the above, one of the elements most frequently mentioned by the participants is the high level of hostility found on digital platforms, particularly on issues of identity and politics, which directly impacts safety and well-being. This hostility limits the expression of identity and leads to significant emotional repercussions. The participants point out that there is very little openness to dialogue between different groups and that these groups tend to generate prolonged dynamics of aggression:

> Regarding my unpleasant experiences in the use of digital means, in this curiosity and coming out of the closet, somehow, I discovered the worst of men: a lot of violence, a lot of cyber-violence; first verbal and then physical.

In terms of security, people are aware of the risks of inhabiting immersive virtual worlds. This hostility prevents people from being able to embody their identity and emphasizes the emotional and bodily repercussions derived from these interactions.

Within this listening space, there was a wide diversity of professional occupations: students focused on video game development, teachers, journalists and content creators. Each of these profiles told a particular perspective on the most relevant social and political events at the national level. One of the most mentioned elements by the majority of people was, that they know that putting their corporeality in the digital space carries a high risk, since in that space they will surely find people who will constantly harass them:

> When I started working professionally as a digital journalist, I immediately heard the bad part. I work and have worked for almost 12 years in..., which is one of the most widely read digital media in Chile. At the beginning, I worked in the press area, that is, judicial, police cases and politics, and the comments posted on the Facebook news stories and all were brutal. I think... [this social media] is characterized by its brutal users. One of the hardest things about that job is not writing news, is the pressure of dealing with that [the comments] on a daily basis and having to publish every day, all day long, all negative things and then people insulting your work. The truth is that, after a few years, you get used to it, but there are many people who do not last in this type of work (...). But the worst experiences I've had historically in terms of negative comments on social media is when I talk about issues of demisexuality. In fact, in the last few months, in the last year, I have avoided doing it precisely because I didn't feel I was in an emotional state to endure that. But I used to upload some videos to TikTok talking about me being bisexual and demisexual to inform people, because demisexuality, especially, is not very well known. The comments were brutal, from men and women of all ages, because some people imagine only young people on TikTok and that's not the case. I was talking mainly on TikTok, and they were brutal, so it made me not want to talk about it anymore. Anyway, I want to talk more in the future because I think it is very important, but the truth is that the public scrutiny to which one is subjected to is very hard.

Derived from the risks and negative experiences previously mentioned, the participants point out the importance of designing different digital platforms to facilitate processes to generate security and protection strategies at a personal and collective level. They stressed the responsibility of both the platforms for the creation of mediated coexistence dynamics to prevent situations of violence and of the community of users to generate other forms of communication. Some examples of platforms that have facilitated the exchange of security and support strategies were mentioned, such as Discord, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants indicated that they consider it valuable to establish a clear coexistence agreement in virtual interaction spaces, as these provide a sense of certainty and security.

As a recapitulation, this listening space pointed out the importance of implementing mechanisms for mediated coexistence in digital environments to avoid the reproduction of violence facilitated by technology, such as hate speech and dynamics in general that alienate people from immersive digital spaces. It was indicated that they are necessary mainly in spaces linked to the media and spaces for the exchange of opinions on political junctures such as elections. The different repercussions of these dynamics on users' mental health were also pointed out, underlining that Chile is a country with high levels of illnesses such as depression and a high suicide rate. For most people in this space, technology is perceived as a tool that has a lot of potential to worsen mental health crises, but at the same time has the potential to improve the current situation, especially in relation to issues such as widespread loneliness in the population. In this sense, it could be argued that the design processes of immersive virtual worlds should contemplate the impacts they have on the body and emotions of the users, as well as the contextual elements that can generate new needs for security, protection and mediation.

b. National and regional political exchanges

During the meeting in Concepción, participants highlighted how digital technologies serve as catalysts for the formation and expansion of political movements. They underlined the relevance of access to information on political contexts at different levels (national, regional and international), which acts as an inspiration by generating a perception of proximity and connection with shared experiences and struggles. This phenomenon is identified as a key component in the third level of the domination matrix, related to the structure of social institutions and their impact at the regional level.

This panel emphasized that digital interaction platforms, such as blogs, chats and social media like Facebook and Instagram, play a significant role in the dissemination of new narratives and methods of political action, facilitating the exchange of experiences among people who aspire to drive change in their communities. The ability of these tools to connect people from different locations and countries enhances the reach of political initiatives, extending their influence to and from Chile throughout the region. Student movements, organized responses to natural disasters and workers' protests are some examples that people in this group mention of how connectivity has empowered and diversified forms of political activism, demonstrating the transformative power of technology in the contemporary social and political fabric.

> For example, what happened with Las Tesis, which was also something that was born here, but that expanded all over the world, I feel that it became part of the Internet. The Internet allowed that performance, which at one point was already like, "Who doesn't know that song, right?" to expand to such a level that today everyone knows who Las Tesis are and what they meant. Besides, it just happened to be related to the revolt here in Chile, so it was super-political. It was super-political and that was enabled by the Internet. It happens to me that, besides articulating, it allows me to maintain hope, because, I don't know, all of a sudden I am like: "Hey, in Chile everything is getting more and more expensive, inflation", but I find out that in France or Colombia there is a mobilization at the same time, and that makes me happy because I believe that there are people mobilizing, that you are not the only one, that you are there and that something is happening. Also, because before I thought, for example, that what was happening with my family was happening to them alone, not that it was happening in Chile, but then suddenly you realize that you are not alone, and I think that is a way to resist, to keep hope from knowing what is happening elsewhere.

Continuing with the previous topic, participants highlighted the crucial importance of digital connectivity for people located in small cities, where access to spaces for exchange and political organization is limited. Digital spaces emerge as valuable meeting places, facilitating the inclusion of these communities in broader debates and contributing to the diversification of discussions on public issues. This dynamic promotes an effective decentralization of political activity, enriching the spectrum of voices and perspectives in public discourse.

Despite the negative implications of expanding the public space for political discussion through the development of technology, people perceive that the development of a metaverse or other digital platforms should focus on facilitating exchanges for more diverse communities and driving political agendas that seek to protect historically discriminated populations, as well as the environment.

c. **The role of care in building the future**

in this listening group, care emerges as a central element in the construction of the future in relation to technology, especially when considering functional diversity within the matrix of domination. The ableist logic, present in current design processes, is challenged by this category, which stresses the importance of addressing the needs derived from various capabilities and the natural aging process. The dominance matrix reveals how the binary paradigm of normality-health/disability-illness contributes to the marginality associated with aging, and participants express significant interest in technological developments to accompany and facilitate these processes.

This is exemplified by a strong concern derived from the adaptation of future technological devices to the needs that are developing because of aging, such as the loss of senses, mainly sight and hearing. The aim is for technological developments to provide people with adaptation and updating tools, so that they are not only not excluded from digital spaces, but also have the tools and possibilities to integrate these devices into their daily lives and allow them to perform daily activities at the individual and community level with greater ease, such as movement and other physical activities that may be hindered by age or various types of motor disabilities. Another concern related to these aging processes is isolation and the lack of spaces for the creation of community networks among the elderly.

> I believe that the accompaniment of the elderly is extremely important because this is what I already see today: the loneliness and lack of networks that the elderly experience is something regrettable, also ageist. So, I think it would be very interesting to see, as I imagine, for example, applications or elements that allow an accompaniment. Although they already exist, they should be much more democratic and reach all classes, because it cannot be that from paying a caretaker...

The textual quotation reflects the concern about loneliness and the lack of support networks for the elderly, emphasizing the importance of accompaniment networks. In addition, there is a need for applications or elements that facilitate a more democratic and accessible accompaniment to all social classes, that allows overcoming economic and social barriers, and that ensures that technological solutions do not exclude in the different intersections of the matrix of domination.

The importance of care extends to the arena of immersive technologies and artificial intelligence. The insistence on ethical and transparent design processes highlights the concern for security and privacy. Transparency becomes a concrete expression of care for users, allowing them to understand how the technology is built and ensuring that technology developers follow clear ethical protocols. This emphasis on ethics and transparency is directly linked to care by facilitating more complete integration and adaptation processes, in which trust, and respect are fundamental to technological development. In short, care stands as an essential guiding principle in building the technological future, addressing diverse needs and ensuring ethics and transparency in the design and development of emerging technologies.

COLOMBIA

In Bogota, the listening space was held in September 2023, in collaboration with the Karisma Foundation, an organization dedicated to the promotion of human rights and social justice through the design and use of digital technologies. The participants represented a wide range of profiles that reflect the diversity of the dominance matrix considered in this study and illustrate the research's commitment to the inclusion of multiple perspectives and experiences. It also highlights the participation of a majority of people working with digital rights and technology development.

a. **A collectively constructed reality**

The participants in the listening space in Bogota shared their views on the aspects they consider essential to incorporate in immersive virtual environments, with particular emphasis on the protection of human rights within the metaverse. They expressed significant concern to ensure that these new virtual worlds are free of discrimination, regardless of race, social class, sexuality or economic status. The possibility of the metaverse becoming a reflection of the violence and inequalities of the physical world was a recurring concern, underscoring the importance of designing these spaces with principles of equity and social justice.

> The consciousness space should be general, that is, that there are no gaps that sexualize gender, social spaces or emotional interaction with others. The identity of who we are in real life can be shaped at will in the face of these interpersonal solutions. I am thinking of environmental, social and cultural care regulations for the prioritization of the other and the self.

From these reflections, it is possible to highlight a shared longing for spaces within the metaverse to respect the freedoms of choice from diverse perspectives, as evidenced by the following compiled responses: "I visualize myself in a metaverse where freedoms are respected and where there is neither hatred nor violence, something similar to what some religious people would describe as the Garden of Eden", "I feel fear of authoritarianism, but also a search for change in the paradigm that guarantees rights, and a curiosity for the hacking of the future", "I long for a world where we are all free and unafraid to be who we want to be".

These imaginaries about freedom of choice and guaranteed rights are connected to another participant's shared account of discovering their sexual identity through the use of the Internet. After exploring this facet of their identity virtually, they made the decision to openly express their sexual orientation. This story underscores the potential value of digital spaces as safe places for self-exploration and identity affirmation.

At the same time, a strong desire was expressed for the richness of biodiversity (flora and fauna), especially relevant in the Colombian context, to be well represented in the metaverse. This interest reflects the importance of preserving and highlighting natural diversity. Comments from participants emphasize the hope that immersive digital spaces can be environments where the environmental heritage of the real world is celebrated and protected: "I think it is necessary that these virtual scenarios do not neglect human rights and are respectful of the environment", "I imagine a very detailed aesthetic of biodiversity in fauna and flora", "Lots of vegetation, animals, culture, non-violence".

This dual vision, which encompasses both the faithful representation of nature in the metaverse and the conscious use of technologies that do not harm the natural environment, highlights a fundamental dimension of Latin American feminisms. This critical perspective on coloniality emphasizes the need to preserve the environment as a vulnerable and frequently exploited space and reflects a deep commitment to sustainability and ecological justice.

b. **Pedagogical use of immersive technologies**

Participants highlighted the relevance and regional particularities of digital technologies in educational contexts, focusing on how access to knowledge is mediated by these tools. They observed that social class and geographic location are determining factors within the matrix of domination that directly impact the effectiveness of digital pedagogical processes. These elements create specific barriers that hinder the inclusion and effective use of technologies in education throughout the region. Thus, while metropolitan areas offer greater access to technological resources and the knowledge necessary for their use in educational environments, rural communities face significant disadvantages in this regard. A testimony shared by one of the people illustrates this reality: "For example, I dropped a project in the rural area because the children did not have the fine motor skills to double click. So, it's not just access to technology, but also fine motor skills, experience."

Related to this testimony, another participant, who was an elementary school teacher, shared the difficulties faced by students when attempting to use smart devices and participate in virtual classes during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the course of the discussion on accessibility to new technologies, a key concern emerged: to prevent the metaverse from becoming an exclusive domain, accessible only to those already favored by technological advances. The intention is that it should not be a space restricted to populations that have traditionally had greater access to technological resources.

In addition, within the conversations, the importance of coexistence within the metaverse was highlighted, especially regarding the educational opportunities it can offer. Participants stressed the need for it to promote inclusive and diverse learning, creating an environment where exploration of different realities and interaction with history are possible. This approach points towards a virtual space that fosters curiosity and the exchange of knowledge through shared experiences, as reflected in some of the expectations expressed by people regarding what they would like to find in immersive environments: "I would like spaces that are purely recreational, playful and cultural. I think among them, what I would like to see would be the reality of reality itself, a multiverse in another multiverse", "I would like to see greater access to education or educational environments", "Knowing or interacting with other possible worlds or, why not, knowing about the past".

In this inclusive pedagogical setting, the diversity of experience and knowledge is valued and celebrated, thus creating an environment conducive to the flourishing of learning and understanding. Both dimensions underscore the relevance of learning processes, both in the initiative to eliminate gaps and address the complexities of access and in the learning opportunities that can be explored through the design and development of immersive digital technologies.

c. Futurizing about offline and online life

During the final reflections, participants shared their concerns about the potential impact of immersive technologies on everyday life. There is a palpable fear that the intensified focus on virtual environments may detract from the value and importance of physical world experiences and the fundamental human connections that develop there. This perspective reflects an inclination towards technophobia, where technology is perceived with distrust and as an alien entity, capable of causing adverse effects on people's physical and emotional well-being: "Fear of losing the physical by having an ideal world in the digital", "Fear of not being able to interact with another person physically", "Living conditions on the planet will be very difficult because of environmental problems. The importance of the physical world and the digital world is real", "The physical to the virtual and I hope that in the future this will be privileged", "It gives me disbelief, anguish, a feeling of not believing. I don't think I would enjoy being in a metaverse, I'm afraid that people will spend more time in there in their alternate life and not living their real life. I imagine in coexistence that there will also be problems and chaos, the human chaos of emotions", "I am afraid of the remoteness of interpersonal relationships, of becoming so immersed in the digital era that the real one and the emotions that are transmitted in it become unknown, also the loss of closeness with the other. I assume another fear is loss of identity in real life."

Within this debate, there is a marked inclination towards the view of technology as a factor of social alienation, which arouses significant fear among the participants. In addition, concerns were expressed about the possible rise of totalitarian and violent groups in these digital spaces, along with the urgency of creating environments that are peaceful and respect the fundamental rights of individuals.

In the face of skepticism about the directions that emerging technologies might take, a proposal emerged from the dialogue: the creation of "spaces for discussion about the implications of the metaverse." This idea suggests establishing areas within immersive digital environments designed for reflection and discussion, allowing users to occasionally "pause" to contemplate and discuss their experiences and concerns. This proposal for dialogue and meeting is presented as a counterpoint to the concerns previously expressed and points out the need to develop control mechanisms on content, coexistence rules and security.

In San José, Costa Rica, the listening space was held in June 2023 in cooperation with Sulá Batsú, a cooperative focused on several areas, including especially digital technologies for development. This meeting was distinguished by the variety of profiles of the participants: migrants from Central America, people of sexual diversity and people interested in gender, feminism and technology. Although it was one of the first groups to be developed and, therefore, a different data collection methodology was applied, the findings were integrated into the general analysis using the same indicators as in the rest of the sample, highlighting the importance of approaching these issues from an inclusive and diverse perspective.

a. Access and security

During the discussions in San Jose, participants delved into the debate about access to the devices needed to enter the metaverse and the training required to navigate it effectively. This conversation raised critical questions about the true purpose of making the metaverse accessible, and it was noted that interaction within this environment will not only be determined by the ability to acquire technology, but also by understanding and navigating its complexities. This dialogue highlights the need to go beyond the simple availability of devices, addressing the deeper and broader dimensions of what it means to access and coexist in the metaverse. The importance of looking at accessibility from a holistic perspective that includes both the technical means and the skills and knowledge to fully participate in these new virtual realities was discussed:

> So, I would think that, for it to be inclusive, but what do we want it to be inclusive for? For people to go there to reproduce distinctions, let's say, of status, but now they will have another dimension in which they will feel they have nothing.

The concerns raised in San José about inclusion and access are closely linked to a central question of this research: how can experiences and practices of inclusion and creation of safe spaces, from an intersectional and decolonial perspective in Latin America, contribute to the development of a safe and inclusive metaverse? Reflections on technology as an intermediary of experiences and the situations in which this mediation is insufficient were revealed as critical aspects. One participant raised questions about the allocation of responsibilities: does it reside in the design of the technology, in the users or in the context in which these technologies are developed? This questioning triggered a manifestation of distrust towards those who manage data on digital platforms, especially regarding the future of immersive technologies. One testimony illustrates this tension: "I don't wish to share my data because I don't know how it will be used; however, without full knowledge of my identity it is impossible to achieve an authentic representation". This comment highlights the dilemma between the need to protect privacy and the desire to contribute to the diversity of the metaverse. In addition, along with distrust in data handling and storage, there is the question of whether the metaverse is genuinely a safe space.

> How dystopian is it to think about a safe space? It is still good to ground the exercise back. As a user what I want is information, an example of what they are going to do with the data. The worst-case scenario is already set, isn't it? So how capable are we of making decisions? That's the question. It is a challenge.

In this context, there is a noticeable interest on the part of this listening group in strengthening deeper cybersecurity literacy processes. This interest arises from the need to guarantee that the security of users is duly backed up, thus avoiding the overexposure of personal information, as well as its improper use by companies or other organizations. From what has been shared, it can be noted that the understanding of cybersecurity and personal data protection is not only presented as a defensive measure, but also as a means for users to build a sense of trust that facilitates a more positive and secure approach to digital technologies.

b. Construction of identity

the participants developed different concerns around the theme of identity in relation to digital technologies. First, the need for a wide diversity of identities represented in the metaverse is repeatedly highlighted. This aspect is especially emphasized when participants with trans identities raise the possibility that this virtual space can become a safe and liberating environment to live, explore and express their identities. From this, it is observed that the metaverse has the potential to be an important environment for people from historically vulnerable populations by providing a safe space during stages of development and construction of their identities.

Two people who identified as non-binary trans tell us that in their case the metaverse could "help and be beneficial" by providing a space that allows for dissidence, where multiple identities can be explored freely and safely. Along the same lines, the importance of representing racial diversities as well as people with functional diversity is discussed, focusing on how avatars should incorporate elements that allow people to identify with the characteristics they wish to represent in immersive virtual spaces.

On the other hand, participants raised questions about how representation can become a genuinely inclusive policy that goes beyond the superficial inclusion of historically vulnerable groups. They emphasized the importance of considering these aspects beyond simple visual representation, reflecting on how inequalities existing in the physical world can be replicated in the metaverse. This discussion underscores the need to incorporate a deep understanding of diversity into the design of these technologies, ensuring that the representation of different populations transcends the superficial and authentically reflects the complexity of the experiences and needs of people using immersive technologies.

c. Mediated coexistence

In this group, various concerns were expressed about how the metaverse might alter the perception of spatial proximity, emphasizing potential changes in society and collectivity, especially in terms of the sensory experience of physical proximity to other bodies. In addition, a significant distrust was expressed towards the development of immersive technologies, not only because of their impact on the bodily experience, but also because of the risk of perpetuating inequalities and discriminatory practices. Within this framework, community organization and articulation emerge as a perceived mechanism to face these challenges, generating debate on the transformation and continuity of community cohesion within the digital universe of the metaverse:

> Thinking about it from spatiality, metaverses, pluriverses, even multiverses, we will begin to lose the notion of space and how we move in those spaces. Because, if we are going to be connected to different devices, our mobility is going to change, our feeling in space is going to change; how we also approach other people, other groups, is going to change. It is already changing, and we saw it happen with the pandemic, when we were doing activism digitally and we met via Zoom.

This reflection demonstrates a recurring concern in several listening spaces, related to the impact of losing physical contact due to spatial transformations and the increasing distance between people. This phenomenon is seen as a challenge to intimacy and bonds in communities whose cohesion is based on physical proximity. The testimonies collected reveal how technology can be seen both as a factor that enhances the distance between people and as a tool that facilitates connection and community organization.

In conclusion, the information obtained from the listening spaces suggests a marked distrust of the coexistence and diversity that could be achieved in the metaverse. People with trans identities especially highlighted the need for spaces that promote freedom and exploration within immersive digital technologies. In addition, a deep caution was evident when considering the possibility of actively participating in the metaverse, whether due to barriers to access, fear of expressions of violence, or concern that social interaction is influenced by economic factors.

MEXICO

In Mexico City, the listening space took place in August 2023 and was organized in collaboration with Luchadoras, a feminist organization committed to the promotion and protection of digital rights. This meeting was characterized by the participation of thirteen people of varied ages, identities and backgrounds, which enriched the session with a wide range of contrasting experiences and points of view and offered a diverse perspective on the topics discussed.

a. Transformation of identity through technology

In the matrix of domination, personal biography constitutes one of the fundamental pillars and incorporates affective, social, economic and political elements that shape individual and collective identities and significantly influence the adoption and use of immersive digital technologies. Participants recounted how their interaction with these technologies has facilitated a broader and more fluid exploration and construction of identities. One participant reflected on this experience saying: "Hi5[79] was my introduction to the code, through which I was able to express my identity. It was not an image of my face, it was a manifestation of my appearance and personality." This story illustrates the impact of digital platforms on the exploration of identity during adolescence, allowing users to experience and define their personality in a technology-mediated way.

Participants mention various possibilities that digital technologies offer for the construction and representation of their identities, from maintaining anonymous profiles that facilitate the expression of ideas to the creation of avatars in online video games, which can take human or animal forms. People emphasize that these tools not only allow for free expression of identity, but also become a means of resistance against social and gender norms, particularly in less urbanized environments. An intersectional analysis reveals that the perception of these processes varies significantly among different groups, reflecting a diversity of experiences and perspectives. Participants from a wide range of ages, from 19 to 40 years old, including those from historically vulnerable communities such as LGBTQI+ and people with functional diversity, shared their experiences, highlighting the transformative role of technology in the construction of their identities:

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79 Hi5 is a social network founded and launched in 2003 that, by the end of 2007, had more than 70 million people registered, mainly from Latin America. At that time, it was one of the 40 most visited sites in the world. As of 2010, it went from being just a social network to focus on social games.

Being a woman with a disability, I discovered that, on the Internet I have found a way in which I and many other people have been able to express and begin to build community, protest and demand our rights, deconstruct ableism and many other forms of violence. For people with disabilities, it has become a tool for work, entertainment and visibility of our existence.

Participants stressed the importance of establishing technological accessibility mechanisms that recognize the existence of historically vulnerable groups in the design stage of new technologies. Most people mention that they currently perceive that the spaces dedicated to listening to the needs of these populations are limited and that the analysis processes often have significant biases that do not take into account local and regional specificities. From this, it can be observed that the needs and concerns expressed by the participants highlight the urgency of contemplating and including people from different groups in the processes of design, development and testing of new technologies.

It is also important to promote the construction of diverse coexistence spaces with protection mechanisms so that users can generate coexistence dynamics that avoid reproducing or receiving violence facilitated by technology. Along these same lines, in the normative section of this research, the lack of current legislation with public policy proposals and regulatory frameworks that integrate some of these elements is discussed in greater depth.

b. Security and appropriation processes

Participants in the study emphasized that the development of digital technologies has introduced new dynamics in different spheres of daily life, not all of them positive. Negative experiences such as online harassment, identity theft and the constant pressure to maintain an active presence on social networks were repeatedly mentioned. The group pointed out that the lack of knowledge about protection tools and the absence of supervision in their first approaches to technology, especially at an early age, have contributed to the constant experience, in some cases, of this type of unpleasant situations and episodes of anxiety derived from them.

It was mentioned that this technology-facilitated violence is often directed at historically discriminated groups, and that the risk increases for children and adolescents. This panorama of negative experiences finds significant connections with fundamental concepts in feminist theory and the matrix of domination. Intersectionality, which examines multiple interlocking oppressions, highlights how technology-facilitated violence disproportionately affects specific groups, especially women. The lack of supervision and guidance at early ages reveals an important element at the level of personal biography, where the unique life history of each person intersects with oppressive structures and allows the reproduction of these violences, which have a significant physical and emotional impact. One participant notes the following: "Technology is bittersweet: la jaula (the cage)[80]; that was a nightmare for me, the fact that they talked about me there when I was 16 years old was horrible".

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80 A website that existed in Mexico in the 2000s.

Likewise, gender coloniality and the perspective of functional diversity provide other nuances. From the experiences shared by the women participants, we can observe how gender coloniality reproduces hierarchical and binary dynamics that directly affect them and increase technology-facilitated violence towards them. Additionally, women participants with disabilities highlight the importance of considering functional diversity from a gender perspective in the design of immersive technologies. They recognize the richness that diversity can bring to the creation of safer virtual worlds.

This group also notes that geographic location plays an important role in the processes of appropriation and generation of security mechanisms. A generalized discontent is expressed about the existence of hegemonic narratives, promoted by various social institutions, which hierarchize urban centers over the peripheries. For the participants, the existence of these narratives has a direct impact on the access of users in different locations to technologies and related knowledge.

This situation deepens the spatial disparities in the construction of spaces for political exchange, as well as in the recreational, educational and professional uses of digital technologies. Some participants not only did not grow up in the Mexican capital, where the listening group was held, but also migrated from other countries due to situations of precariousness or political violence. In these cases, they emphasized that one of the main motivations for migrating was to be able to develop in a space where the creation and consumption of content and narratives related to digital technologies is more diverse. This shows the importance of decentralizing design processes, based on recurrent listening and learning mechanisms that take into account the needs of different identities and localities. In this way, access to and appropriation of living spaces in immersive virtual worlds such as the metaverse could be facilitated.

c. Impact of technology on culture and communication

The participants emphasize that, in Mexico, the irruption of digital technologies has significantly transformed communication formats and culture. They mentioned how cultural elements, such as memes, stickers, videos and digital characters, have changed the way people relate and express themselves online.

These cultural products are not only accessible and adaptable to different contexts but can also be important tools to show, in a simple way, the complexity of Mexican social and political reality. As a result of the exchange of experiences, we observe the existence of new languages that arise from the appearance of specific contents, which, upon reaching wide audiences, are appropriated, modified and integrated into people's daily lives. One participant mentioned the following about creating stickers on WhatsApp: "We customize them a lot. They have a tinge of humor. You can tell when the sticker is foreign or domestic. I use them a lot to complement my written communication. The language of digital communication is passed on to 'real life'."

These types of experiences highlight the importance of recreational uses of digital technologies and the ability to create personalized communication elements as tools for exchange. These practices are important not only because they facilitate the appropriation of platforms, but also because they enable more personalized experiences. This potentially generates a higher level of involvement and a sense of closeness among users of immersive technology platforms. By going through a process of appropriation, these elements also become tools of resistance to different types of structural violence and a way of expressing the needs of historically discriminated communities.

This cultural and communicative phenomenon is intertwined with exercises in the imagination of the future in relation to the creation of immersive technological worlds. Gatto (2022) argues that digital technologies act as infrastructures of the imagination, shaping representations of the future. The classification of technological futurizations into technophilia, technophobia and technopragmatism reveals the various attitudes towards technology in the construction of the future. While some adopt an enthusiastic stance that sees technology as a solution to all problems (technophilia), others reject it, fearing its possible negative consequences for the human body (technophobia).

In the midst of these extreme positions, technopragmatism emerges, which recognizes the ambivalence of technical objects and seeks to reflect on technological production in a more open way. Participants mention that they find in humor the hope of building more plural technological languages in the future, which gives rise to more technopragmatic postures that open the possibilities for the creation of more diverse metaverses.

From the above, we can point out that the impact of digital technology on culture and communication in Mexico is not only limited to the transformation of everyday practices, but also influences the way in which people imagine the future at an individual and collective level. The massive adoption of digital cultural products and the diversity of sources from which they originate indicate the capacity of technology to democratize the expression of different types of socio-cultural and political phenomena, expanding the number of voices and languages within digital technologies.

In this context, the challenge lies in promoting appropriation tools that allow the construction of imaginative and diverse futures within immersive digital worlds such as the metaverse. Integrating cultural diversity and multiple forms of social expression into technology design is crucial. In addition, the participants point out that, within these creation processes, education about digital technologies and their ethical implications should be a priority to provide people with tools for responsible security and appropriation.

From this, we can point out that the connection between the impact of digital technologies on culture, communication and the imagination of the future emphasizes the need to build design processes of immersive technologies that allow different forms of appropriation by users.

The Lima listening group was held in October 2023. The organization and convening of the participants were carried out with the support of the Peruvian organization Hiperderecho. The twelve participants were of diverse profiles in terms of age, place of origin, sexual orientation and gender identity. In this space there was a majority of people belonging to the LGBTQI+ community and people with functional diversity. The age range was from 21 to 50 years old.

a. Identity exploration

The exploration of identity was a central theme among participants, who highlighted the profound impact of religious beliefs, narratives and practices on historically vulnerable communities, especially the LGBTQI+ population, in Peru. The interplay between personal biography, cultural context and social structures highlights how religious elements affect identity on multiple levels and complicate the lives of people with dissident identities in this country: from facing social persecution to the reinforcement of discriminatory political institutions.

Against this backdrop, people point out that the experience of identity construction in digital environments is presented as a unique opportunity for those who face discrimination and fear of rejection in the material reality. Participants belonging to the LGBTQI+ community mention that the identity they are often able to display online differs significantly from the one they feel safe to reveal in everyday life, especially during early stages of their development. It is mentioned that the constant fear of rejection, both from people close to them and from society in general, has led them to limit the expression of their identity to physical environments.

Taking into account the above, they also note that digital spaces, both local and regional, have played a key role in providing a safe environment to explore, discover and express their identity, despite knowing that there are also risks of violence facilitated by technology. One of the participants shared his experience on Facebook, a platform where he tried to capture his identity as a gay man by posting pictures of Madonna and later pictures related to his membership in the LGBTQI+ community:

> Then, also when I went to my first gay parade, when I was 14 or 15 years old, and I uploaded pictures… it was terrible, wasn't it? Because I was in school and there were people who commented on my posts, "How is that possible!". Mentioning the church, the children and all that bullshit.

Despite this initial negative experience, the participant notes that digital environments offer him the possibility of exploring and showing his identity in different ways, as well as generating spaces for exchange with people like him.

In this listening group, it was mentioned that access to cultural products through digital platforms is fundamental in the processes of self-discovery, given that they offer greater personal understanding and the possibility of connecting with other people. However, the reproduction of binary gender norms in the creation of digital profiles and avatars was criticized, highlighting the need to overcome these limitations to authentically reflect the diversity of identities.

Regarding the future of the metaverse, participants emphasized the importance of allowing free expression of identity and promoting security and authenticity through content controls and data protection. They envision a metaverse as a complement to real life, not a substitute, with focuses on privacy protection, gender and diversity education, and environmental sustainability, and providing a space for full inclusion and acceptance of diversity in society:

> I would create a metaverse that allows people to free themselves from any bondage they feel in the real world, that gives them the possibility of living a fuller and happier life, but that, at the same time, allows this virtual reality to be transferred to analog life as well. It is important to understand the metaverse as an accompaniment to analog life and not as a replacement for it. I imagine such a safe space with quick reporting channels and clear rules known to everyone. I imagine a space where people have their data protected, especially their images, and where it is not so easy to copy and paste an image with a person's face, to avoid unwanted uses with artificial intelligences. I imagine a metaverse where children and teenagers can ask artificial intelligences for the algorithm to teach their homophobic parents about gender and diversity issues so that they can change little by little. Many times, children who suffer violence just want it to stop and do not want to face legal proceedings. I hope that the metaverse will also not generate a lot of gas emissions or that it will be carbon neutral, and that it will allow global warming to be brought to a standstill.

b. **Individual and collective safety mechanisms**

Concern about technology-facilitated violence in digital environments was a recurring theme among the participants in this space, who shared varied experiences such as sexual harassment of women, identity theft and online discrimination. These situations stood out for their complexity, especially among users. Gender and age intersectionality play a crucial role in shaping these unique experiences of online violence. In response, women in particular stressed the need to develop and share security mechanisms and emergency response strategies, highlighting the importance of incorporating gender perspectives in the design of digital security policies for immersive environments.

The matrix of domination is evident in the various manifestations of violence within digital platforms, where the creation of multiple digital identities emerges as a tactic of self-protection. This behavior reflects how people, when faced with violence and discrimination, adopt adaptation and resistance strategies online. The conceptualization of digital platforms as forums for expression and resistance is aligned with the dynamics of oppression that operate at structural, cultural and systemic levels, restricting the freedom and development of certain historically vulnerable groups. Several people criticized how digital technologies can perpetuate stereotypes and hinder integration in spaces for personal and professional growth. Depending on the distinctive features of each platform, users can adapt their behavior to reflect different aspects of their identity.

A person belonging to the LGBTQI+ community shares the following:

> I think making a safe space on social media is still going to depend on the platform, isn't it? A long time ago I participated in a small TED talk on YouTube. My TED video is on that platform, where I talk about trans people's orientation. And that TED talk was something very small, but it meant a lot to me. And no, I can't watch that video now because I can't; I don't really like to share it either because there are so many transphobic comments on that same link.

People point out that these risk situations require protection mechanisms on the part of different types of institutions, whether governmental or private, to facilitate users' access to clear care routes in the event of experiencing situations of discrimination and violence. The constant pointing out of the need for mechanisms on the part of governmental or private institutions reflects the awareness and intentionality, on the part of the participants, that digital security goes beyond individual actions.

c. The role of technology in educational processes

discussions also addressed the significant impact of digital technology on the evolution of educational processes in the Peruvian context. It was pointed out that technological progress is not distributed equitably, particularly in regions where education systems are marked by deep economic inequalities, a characteristic feature of Latin America. The interaction between the categories of social class and geographic location proved to be crucial for the participants, as the additional complexities they face in this environment became evident. In the Peruvian educational system, there is a marked discrepancy between the pace of technological evolution and the capacity of educational institutions, especially those dependent on public funds, to adapt.

Participants who have experienced this disparity shared that, upon entering college, they developed specific technology skills that, over time, are at risk of obsolescence in the short term. This situation creates a gap between the knowledge acquired and the constantly changing needs of the labor market. It was emphasized that this mismatch not only impacts recent graduates, but also people of different ages who may be marginalized from lifelong learning opportunities, with a notable crossover of gender factors. Women face additional obstacles in accessing certain areas of knowledge. One participant, who attended university in the 1990s, shared her experience illustrating how these dynamics disproportionately affect different groups within Peruvian society:

> At school, sometimes you don't have that accessibility to technology. I was already working, and I don't remember having a computer before. In other words, when I realized it, I started working. And since they can't give it to you (a computer) because they're afraid that you're going to make it and not them. For television you must know how to edit or you're out. You need to pay for it so you can have the same and do what you want with it, edit what you want, download all my games. That's the only way you can have access. Because they are always thinking that one can't do it. Yes. Because most of the editing courses, cameras, everything has always been for men, right? Now women are finally editors too.

To address this access issue, it is important to consider the limitations of the educational systems in the locations where immersive technologies are to be integrated. On the other hand, curriculum planning must adopt a more dynamic approach that allows constant adaptation to the advances of digital development, considering continuous learning spaces that facilitate access to these immersive technologies for different types of populations. Likewise, it is necessary to establish mechanisms on the part of the State, as well as the private sector, to encourage the continuous updating of skills, even after people have completed their formal education. This approach would contribute to reducing existing gaps by ensuring that these technologies are not an obstacle, but an inclusive tool that benefits users. Ultimately, the synchronization between technological development and the educational system is essential to build a future where the acquisition and application of knowledge through new immersive technologies is available to all people, regardless of their age, gender or place of origin.

PARAGUAY

The listening session in Asunción was held at the end of May 2023 at TEDIC facilities. This space had particular characteristics, since, at the beginning, a different data collection methodology was proposed to the rest of the areas. Despite this, there was a wide variety of profiles that meet the objectives of the research instrument, including people of sexual diversity, people interested in gender, feminism and technology, and people with functional diversity. The findings were integrated into the general analysis using the same indicators used for the rest of the sample, highlighting the importance of approaching these issues from an inclusive and diverse perspective.

a. Construction of identity

During the focus group, the importance of avatar creation and its influence on identity formation was emphasized. Participants shared concerns about how the coloniality of the body and the tendency towards homogenization may affect the representation of bodily diversity in virtual environments. In addition, the complexity of identity in the metaverse was examined, highlighting how the choice of avatars may not correspond to actual physical appearance, but represent an aspiration of how users wish to be seen and perceived online. It was recognized that this ability to shape identity in virtual environments offers them the opportunity to explore different aspects of themselves, try on new identities, and express themselves in ways that might not be feasible in the physical environment.

However, the importance of finding a balance between freedom of expression and responsibility was stressed, considering that choices about virtual representations can impact social norms and expectations on digital platforms. It was argued that identity in the metaverse should be understood as a dynamic construct that transcends mere physical appearance and encompasses cultural elements, functional diversity and individual preferences. One of the participants shared their perspective on this topic, highlighting the need for a more inclusive and representative approach in the configuration of digital identities:

> The mere possibility of having this other world and that it's a video game. I would love to be able to have similar things in this life. Like being able to say: today I want blue hair, I have blue hair; today I want purple eyes, I have purple eyes; today I don't want breasts, I don't have them today; today I want to have wings; today I want to be able... That freedom. It is something that I would really like very much"

On the other hand, the participants point out the following when the representativeness of functional diversity in the metaverse is mentioned:

> Can you imagine that, for example, if there were wheelchair users in the metaverse, ramps would have to be built? What will happen if I don't want to be what exists as a possibility within an avatar? I don't think they will make ramps in the metaverse, but it could be a flying or aquatic chair, not everything has to be so literal.

From this exchange among the participants, it is possible to highlight the need for people to have tools that make it possible to personalize both the avatars and their digital environments. We can point out that there is a search for flexible instruments that allow for a dynamic expression of identity. The construction of immersive environments that guarantee diversity, from body to language diversity, is a shared desire.

Regarding the cultural aspects of identity in these environments, a recurring concern arose about the risk of cultural segregation within the metaverse. Although this platform promises to be a space of free expression for all people, there are fears that it may actually encourage further segregation. Geographic location is identified as a critical factor, especially in Latin America, a region characterized by its rich diversity of cultural expressions. However, it is recognized that indigenous communities may be at a disadvantage, as their multiple cultural traditions are most at risk of being homogenized and assimilated into a Western narrative of modernity.

Participants reflected on the ethical complexity of integrating cultural values into immersive virtual spaces, highlighting the need to investigate how the metaverse can promote diverse cultural expression and facilitate enriching cultural exchange. Emphasis was placed on the opportunity that this space represents for users to learn about cultural practices different from their own, while sharing and preserving their own traditions. Therefore, it is important to have tools that allow users to contribute to the creation of virtual environments that faithfully reflect their traditions, languages and cultural values.

It is recognized that cultural inclusion in the metaverse involves certain risks, which led participants to ask several key questions: Is it necessary to implement regulations to prevent cultural appropriation? How can cultural differences be managed to avoid conflict? How can cultural misunderstandings and misinterpretations be resolved? How can cultural stereotypes be circumvented in the creation of avatars, environments and activities within the metaverse? Addressing these questions is fundamental to developing practices that are ethically sound and responsible, ensuring that respect for the cultural diversity of users is a priority in the design of immersive virtual environments.

b. Security, transparency and privacy

safety emerged as an overriding theme among participants, who repeatedly stressed the importance of feeling protected and supported in virtual environments, whether participating in recreational, social or commercial activities. The need to reimagine the design of these spaces with a conscious focus on multiple forms of oppression reflects the presence of the matrix of domination in these interactions. In terms of digital security, this means considering how certain factors, such as gender, race, class and other categories, influence the perception of security of users from historically vulnerable groups.

The members of this group stressed the need for a careful review of the terms and conditions of use on digital platforms, advocating their presentation in accessible and understandable formats for all people. A thorough understanding of the rights and responsibilities linked to the disclosure of personal data is key to strengthening users' trust in these platforms. Privacy concerns are reflected in the demand for terms and conditions to be presented in a clear and simple manner, making it easier for individuals to make informed decisions about the level of access to the data they are disclosing. This aspect intersects significantly with gender issues, evidencing that familiarity with this knowledge is often concentrated in male-dominated environments, creating a considerable information gap.

> I think that for me, be that as it may, something that gives me a lot of security is to feel that I have control over what I want to upload or not, or how far I want to publish, or why, or when I want to take it down. Feeling that I have a choice, that there is some kind of transparency or control over my things or my information, helps me feel safe.

In addition, the importance of establishing clear limits and protection mechanisms from the outset to deal with adverse situations, such as verbal aggression or the risk of physical persecution, was emphasized. Participants highlighted the importance of undertaking comprehensive learning processes to prevent the perpetuation of technology-mediated violence. This would ensure that, even in the absence of sanctions by the platforms, violence is not reproduced by the simple lack of punishment.

Similarly, a recurring security concern is the management and use of data collected by platforms developing new technologies. The coloniality of information becomes evident when considering the rights and obligations linked to the disclosure of personal data. For participants, protecting their privacy and demanding transparency becomes an act of resistance to colonial structures that have exploited and violated specific communities. It is crucial to recognize and understand these rights through inclusive and accessible socialization methods to challenge the logic of digital colonization and promote equitable practices in the handling of personal information. One participant raised pertinent questions regarding this topic, highlighting the need to address these critical issues:

> To what extent is there a decision? I mean, there is, but it is very small, there is a very small margin of decision and I think that, if these things are imposed. In certain spaces there is not going to be much possibility of saying, yes or no, I am not going to be there, even when it is not such a safe space or yes, or it is not well known what is happening with my data.

In general terms, this dimension of security encompasses not only data protection and content control, but also the creation of a secure virtual environment in a comprehensive manner that promotes positive and respectful interaction between users and is actively mediated by developers who can implement constant, but non-invasive, updates to meet the needs of users.

c. **Adaptability of immersive technologies**

In this listening group, participants highlighted how society evolves over time and the crucial role of technology in shaping the dynamics of interaction and connection between people. Digital technologies play a fundamental role in the three levels of the matrix of domination and are especially significant in the third level, related to the system of social institutions, where they can play a role in mitigating or exacerbating existing inequalities.

A recurring concern is that, with the advancement of the metaverse, people will be required to fully adapt to technology, rather than technology adapting to human needs, especially considering functional diversities and aging processes. For people in this listening group, the priority should be for technology design processes to focus on integration and accessibility for end-users. One participant addressed how mobility and the perception of proximity are being transformed by technological development, emphasizing the need for inclusive design that accommodates all users, regardless of their abilities or age.

From the above, we can point out that people see body changes linked to aging as a possible obstacle to the integration of immersive digital technologies in the future. There is also concern about the changes in the dynamics of exchange and corporal approach that these technologies may cause, therefore, it is important to maintain design processes that consider and prevent negative impacts on people's corporeality.

On the other hand, there is also the concern that these technologies may not allow users themselves to repair or transform them when a failure occurs. The opportunity to identify, point out and be able to fix a fault or error allows those who use these technologies to appropriate, adapt and integrate them in a deeper way. Therefore, it is necessary to have communication channels with the development platforms so that users increase their active participation in the improvement of the virtual environment they seek to inhabit.

CONCLUSIONS

Addressing the future of metaverses from an intersectional and decolonial Latin American perspective is a complex task, especially given the persistent limitations imposed by a hierarchical structure where the Global South is at a disadvantage vis-à-vis the North. This situation is the result of historical, cultural and social conditions that perpetuate an unequal world order. In this context, subalternized people, situated in disadvantaged positions within the matrix of oppression, continue to face structural violences that are extensions of the patriarchal-colonial-capitalist system, even within digital environments, where it expands and reaffirms itself.

Countering these forms of violence must be guided by principles of just and decolonial design that specifically address the needs of the historically vulnerable. Moreover, conceiving the future of immersive digital environments should not be a passive act; rather, it should be seen as the active creation of a horizon that opens up possibilities for new forms of existence. As Ezequiel Gatto points out, although the relationship between the metaverse and the future is not predetermined, it is crucial to adhere to principles that promote a more just and inclusive one, and people who have suffered violence within the matrix of domination possess valuable knowledge that can contribute to this design. Following Costanza-Chock's line of thinking and Erick Von Hippel's observations on innovation, many significant improvements in technology are often made by end-users, who bring unique perspectives based on their direct experiences.

In turn, feminists from the Global South recognize that decolonization is an ongoing process, operating within the tensions between coloniality and resistance, so that the design of a metaverse that aspires to overcome structural inequalities and historical violences must be conceived in collaboration with the people and communities of Latin America, ensuring that these regions, traditionally marginalized in the realms of conventional technology, are adequately represented.

Taking into account this context and considering the particular matrix of domination in the Latin American region, in this research the analysis of the data collected from an intersectional perspective reveals a consensus among the participating countries on the critical needs related to the advancement of immersive digital technologies. The experiences shared highlight the importance of addressing issues of security, privacy and the representation of diverse identities, as well as the inclusion of cultural elements and environmental diversity. These concerns, emerging from the Global South through a non-representative sample, underscore the relevance of incorporating multiple perspectives in the development of digital and immersive technology. These aspects are deeply linked to the social, political, economic and historical contexts that determine preferences, future visions and access to these technologies in each country, emphasizing certain categories over others. Consequently, it is crucial that the design processes of immersive digital technologies take into account regional inequalities, from the gender access gap to the scarcity of technological infrastructure in vast areas of Latin America and the absence of institutional digital protections and updated legislation.

Regarding this last point, although all the countries analyzed in this paper have laws on gender-based violence, two of them have the most advanced legislation on digital violence, specifically gender-based violence: Brazil and Mexico, with important regulatory batteries. Argentina, for its part, has recently approved the so-called Olimpia Law, which includes a series of aspects of digital violence and provisions that refer to digital platforms. On the other hand, Paraguay recognizes in its regulations against violence against women some of the actions linked to new technologies under the name of telematic violence, but it does not address all the aspects involved nor does it have specific penalties and sanctions. In Chile, Colombia and Peru, the criminal codes include definitions on aspects of digital violence. Costa Rica is the only country that so far does not recognize it in any regulation. However, there are specific bills on digital violence in Chile, Colombia, Paraguay and Costa Rica, in different stages of parliamentary study. It is important to point out that, although almost all countries' legislation on gender-based violence includes definitions of digital or Internet crimes in special laws or criminal codes, most of them only address non-consensual dissemination of intimate images and not other types of violence such as surveillance and monitoring, stalking or harassment on networks, impersonation, disclosure of personal information, among others[81].

In the bills or the existing laws, it is not possible to recognize explicit references to violence that takes place in the metaverse. The inclusion of technology-facilitated violence in laws does not identify the virtual space as a concrete space in which gender-based, racist, xenophobic or other discriminatory types of violence can occur, so that the commission of violence and discrimination in digital environments could be in a legal vacuum. And although the regulations may allow some action in this regard, in terms of considering this specific type of violence, it would be necessary to think of a clear approach that would make it possible to act in the face of possible aggressions and discrimination such as the one recently reported[82]. In this sense, it is possible to contemplate the responsibilities of the platforms in establishing adequate mechanisms to prevent this type of violence from occurring, as indicated in the international instruments mentioned above.

Regarding the conceptual recognition of interculturality and intersectionality in the regulations of the countries analyzed, several of them explicitly incorporate them as principles, as is the case of Peru. Other countries mention them when referring to the specificities of indigenous women and other groups, as does the Mexican law. In addition, the inclusion of provisions that aggravate penalties, as in the feminicide law in Colombia, has been observed. In the rest of the countries, the reference is made within the framework of the non-discrimination approach or the human rights approach.

From the analysis of other important regulations to address technology-facilitated violence, such as general or specific discrimination laws, laws related to the rights of LGBTIQ+ persons and those linked to the rights of persons with disabilities, some relevant aspects emerge. Of the eight countries studied, only two do not have laws against all forms of discrimination (Costa Rica and Paraguay), and of those that do, only Mexico includes the dissemination of images or messages in the media as a form of discrimination. In none of these regulations have we found specific references to technology-facilitated violence. However, it is important to note that violence protection provisions in general can provide a framework for addressing this type of violence.

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81 See research and documents such as La violencia de género en línea contra las mujeres y niñas: Guía de conceptos básicos, herramientas de seguridad digital y estrategias de respuesta (OAS/ s.f. Ser.D/XXV.25), and La violencia digital de género a periodistas en Paraguay (Sequera and Acuña, 2023). Available at: https://www.tedic.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Violencia-Genero-Periodistas-TEDIC-2023-web-2.pdf

82 https://www.lavanguardia.com/tecnologia/20220203/8032429/escandalo-metaverso-mujer-violacion-virtual-nbs.html

The conclusions indicate that it is necessary, on the one hand, to think about specific provisions and mechanisms related to the metaverse and processes that allow the possibility of its construction from the viewpoints of subalternized identities in order to overcome invisibilities in the norms. This would imply incorporating specific measures of inclusion and non-discrimination, as well as measures to mitigate, address and provide adequate reparation for racist, xenophobic, ableist or gender-based violence. In this sense, provisions that induce platforms to promote knowledge of human rights, the elimination of stereotypes and supremacist actions or violence due to different discriminatory variables, as well as to establish early warning mechanisms in the event of possible violence and reparatory measures appropriate to the digital environment, become important.

On the other hand, regarding the design and implementation of immersive technologies, and the use of these technologies by users, the importance of considering the intersections of gender, race, class and functional diversity when facing regional complexities is highlighted. The discourse on technological development in Latin America is symbolically assigned to certain populations, particularly in terms of age and gender. Therefore, it is essential to develop continuous and comprehensive learning processes, and to apply prevention and transparency strategies that enable both developers and users to forge richer and more tangible experiences in various digital environments. At the same time, all countries emphasize the need for an inclusive approach that recognizes inequalities in the design and implementation of technologies, ensures equitable access to them, and considers a commitment to environmental sustainability in a region that has suffered from the exploitation of its natural resources and is now in resistance. Finally, the influence of users in the modification or customization of devices should be facilitated, thus establishing structural limitations that restrict the integration of new technologies in daily life.

Furthermore, this research reveals how the listening groups proved to be enriching spaces, where participants were able to share their experiences with technologies, imagine desirable futures, and collectively reflect on their technology interactions, both rewarding and challenging. A key finding was the need for dialogue about technology use, and the usefulness of these meetings in fostering exchange between people with different levels of technological skill and experience is highlighted. The creation of these spaces, where such diversity could interact and dialogue, was a significant achievement, possible thanks to the joint effort of all the organizations involved in the 8 participating countries: Luchadoras in Mexico, Sula Batsu in Costa Rica, Amaranta ONG in Chile, Hiperderecho in Peru, Karisma Foundation in Colombia, InternetLab in Brazil and LatFem in Argentina.

Thus, the construction of an inclusive metaverse, from the experiences and reflections obtained in this work, appears as a possibility to reimagine the development and design of virtual spaces that not only reflect the diversity of human identities and experiences, but also promote security, privacy, accessibility and respectful and enriching interaction among all users. From this approach, rooted in an intersectional and decolonial perspective, we invite a critical reimagining of digital environments, in which inclusion transcends mere visual representation to address in a profound way the dynamics of power, privilege and oppression that structure our societies.

This reflection on a desired future of immersive technologies highlights the importance of considering how these can be designed to be truly accessible to all people, emphasizing the need for the metaverse to be a space that allows, from its very conception, all users to explore, interact and contribute without barriers of any kind. Interaction in this environment should encourage the construction of diverse and plural identities, providing a safe haven for the expression of dissident identities and promoting respect for diversity in all its forms.

In addition, we believe it is important to highlight the relevance of incorporating strategies that ensure the security and privacy of users in the metaverse, addressing critical concerns about technology-facilitated violence and the use and management of their personal data by platforms for surveillance purposes, training of artificial intelligence systems or commercialization of these. In addition, the challenge of creating an inclusive and safe metaverse also involves reflecting on the ways in which these immersive technologies can impact our mental health and well-being, suggesting the exploration of boundaries in their use and strategies that promote a balance between digital and offline life.

We think of a metaverse that is not only a space for technological advancement and innovation with economic gains for the people and platforms that develop it, but also, and mainly, a means to promote social justice, inclusion and respect for human diversity in these immersive digital environments. The design and governance of the metaverse should focus on human rights principles, considering the specific perspectives and needs of the Global South, and ensuring that this new digital horizon is accessible, safe and enriching for all people.

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