Transforming Digital Media and Technology in Latin America

Cheryl Martens, Etsa Franklin Salvio Sharupi Tapuy, and Cristina Venegas

La capacidad de hacer nuestro implica no sólo la tarea de ensamblar, «sino la más arriesgada y fecunda de rediseñar los modelos para que quepa nuestra heterogénea realidad.»

Martín Barbero (2002, 17)

Our ability to make something our own involves not only the task of assembling, “but also the riskier and more fruitful act of redesigning models that match our heterogeneous reality.”

Martín Barbero (2002, 17)

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, media and technology have been at the heart of political and cultural struggles in Latin America. Major battles over media power between government and corporate media corporations (Artz 2017; Follari 2014) have led to widespread public debate and media reforms across the region (Waisbord 2010; Martens et al. 2014). Community media organizations, across Latin America and beyond its borders, have been at the forefront, challenging power configurations and legislation concerning media and technology.

Latin America possesses a lengthy history of community media organization and activism. The foundations of community radio date back to Colombia and Bolivia earlier in the twentieth century (Rodríguez 2001; Santiago García Gago, this volume). Community media have also played key roles in providing alternative sources for the preservation of language and customs (Beltran 1983). In addition, Latin American scholars and activists led analyses of media power and hegemony in the 1970s and 1980s (Dorfman and Mattelart 1972; Beltrán and de Cardona 1980), while many other parts of the world focused on studies of media effects.

Research on media in Latin America draws attention to the potential of policy approaches and social movements in relation to media democracy and collective communication rights, which goes beyond geographical and structural understandings of community media, to include translocal mobilizations of communities of interest and communities of practices (Carpentier 2007). Much recent work on digital media and technology concerning communities and civil society, however, focuses on the role of civil society and activists in relation to media policy reform (Heintz 2014; Waisbord 2010, Segura and Waisbord 2019). There is also an extensive literature on the uses and appropriation of digital technology by specific communities (Crovi et al. 2011; Laudano 2018; Natansohn and Paz 2018). Scholarship, however, is increasingly beginning to examine data activism as a form of resistance in relation to data capitalism, surveillance, and the commodification of cultural goods within Latin American contexts (Segura and Waisbord 2019).

Despite the long trajectory of community media and activism in Latin America, the wider and overlapping ecologies of communities, media,
communication, and technology remain under-documented, as do community-based strategies and approaches that challenge and reconfigure dominant uses and understandings of media and technology. The chapters in this collection seek to address this gap, from both academic and activist perspectives. This edited collection aims to go beyond analyses of uses, reception, and appropriations of technology by communities. It focuses on some of the ways Latin American communities are engaged in redesigning and transforming media and technology locally and transnationally in culturally situated ways, through activism and sustainable approaches to communication. On a micro level, this includes local decolonial, activist, and Indigenous approaches to journalism and technology, such as community-led designs and approaches to technology. On a macro level, multi-country regional approaches such as community radio networks and Open Access database mobilizations by academic communities provide examples of how technology is being reconfigured with communities and sustainability as part of their code.

This book first took shape at the Connected Communities Conference in Quito, Ecuador, in July 2017. The conference brought together Indigenous and community media activists and academics from across the region to share their experiences, theoretical and methodological approaches for community media, and the digital documentation of Indigenous languages and cultures. As the book project evolved, the conversations that began in Quito expanded to include a broader range of experiences and approaches from Mexico, Argentina, Ecuador, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Oaxacan Indigenous California, which speak to the concerns of practitioners and scholars alike.

The past two years have seen an intensification of what many commentators are referring to as the “Latin American Spring” with post-commodities boom countries at the center of social protests. Economic and political fractures across Latin America are making visible the profundity of the inequality that lies at the root of the conflict (Vivares 2019). While specific protest demands differ, social actors and communities across the region, both online and on the streets, are questioning cultural, political, and economic frameworks as well as structural inequality. Digital technology and social media are playing central roles both on the ground in mobilizations on the street and in online ideological struggles between governments, political parties, and social movement actors. While there is a growing global literature on digital activism, strategies, and methodologies in relation to the changing landscape and tools, the lack of training and access to information remain key concerns for activists (Freedman and Obar 2016).
Bringing into dialogue the work of scholars and activists, the case studies in this collection seek to address this gap and raise important questions concerning media, communication, and technology across online and offline spaces. Latin American communities, transnationally and translocally, are not simply appropriating digital media and technology, but also challenging Western technological rationality (Martens 2017) and profit models of global communication through collaborative communication networks. These counter-hegemonic frameworks are evident through such practices as community-led designs of solar canoes (Vila-Viña et al. this volume), which put sustainability before profit considerations and autonomous mobile telephone communication networks that allow for communicational priorities and strategies to be autonomously defined by communities (Loreto Bravo, this volume).

This collection also seeks to build on the rich trajectory concerning media, communication, technology studies, and activism in Latin America in conversation with international scholarship, which remains dominated by Eurocentric rationalist traditions at universities in the Global North. Most contributors to this book are established Latin American academics and activists who bring with them a diversity of epistemological and ontological approaches relevant to global debates concerning media and technology studies.

The chapters here bring into conversation decolonial, Indigenous, feminist, political economy, Science and Technology Studies (STS), and critical theory approaches. The next section will explore some of the more salient concerns of each of these diverse perspectives as they relate to media, communication, and technology in Latin America, followed by an overview of the book. The chapter will conclude by considering some of the implications of the strategies and reimagining of media and communication for understanding new modes of production, resistance, and activism within Media and Communication Studies.

**APPROACHING MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION RESEARCH IN LATIN AMERICA**

This collection begins with the overarching premise that media and technology are not separate to but historically situated and intrinsically part of social processes that can be redefined and reconfigured. We draw on the work of Martín Barbero, who asks us to reconsider how we formulate our questions (2002, 29). This redefinition requires looking beyond Western
rationalist frameworks, which rely on logical certainty and dichotomies such as the individual and society to draw on a diversity of conceptual and methodological approaches that make up Latin American contexts. It also demands considering how digital and other communication technologies in Latin America are embodied in material and immaterial work and the role they play in the processes of exchange and social reproduction.

Key to this exchange and social reproduction are media systems, shaped by dictatorships and elitist democracies, which have prevented participation of other actors the media systems in Latin America and US hegemony is more widespread than in other countries (Lugo-Ocando 2008). Global relations of power led by US media and technology interests are part and parcel of these media structures. Robert McChesney argues that the digital market concentration is taking place at unprecedented speed, with US digital giants sitting at the top of the global digital political economy and poised to continue (2013, 130–131), leaving other actors at the periphery.

Drawing similar attention to the inequalities produced by current global communication and technology, Ramesh Srinivasan (2018), director of the University of California Digital Cultures lab, critiques global political economy structures. He argues that powerful commercial interests are responsible for “a highly asymmetric diffusion of digital tools and systems” (1) that treats billions of people as passive users of technology. Srinivasan’s work, however, also focuses on the agency of actors and the potential for reimagining alternatives from the Global South that reflect a diversity of communities, cultures, and users in their design. Drawing on Angela Davis’s “tyranny of the universal,” Srinivasan argues for an alternative, situated approach to communication and technology. He writes,

We cannot simply trust our gateways to the digital world as if they were democratically designed platforms, because they are not. Instead we can imagine alternatives that are non-commercial, public and conscious of cultural diversity. By uncritically evangelizing language such as “cloud, “open” or “Internet freedom” we block inquiry into what may be. Across the world, we can consider alternatives around how networked technology can better support our families, communities and cultures. (p. 2)

Governments and enterprises in the region and organizations such as the Latin American Development Bank and Telefónica have invested large sums in “digital transformations” to provide access to technology (Agudelo 2016). Although the digital gap in Latin America remains especially evident in rural and peri-urban settings, digital media, communication, and
technology are now widely integrated into Latin American economic, social, cultural, and political life and the emphasis on access in Latin America is beginning to wane (Bloom 2019).

Access, however, does not guarantee its equal distribution or use within communities. Recent studies (Gray et al. 2017), for example, argue that differences in media use between men and women are responsible for a gendered digital divide in Latin America.

Second, providing access to data and infrastructure does not address the interrelation of capitalism with colonialism. Couldry and Mejia argue that “The exploitation of human life for profit through data is the climax of five centuries’ worth of attempts to know, exploit, and rule the world from particular centers of power. We are entering the age not so much of a new capitalism as of a new interlocking of capitalism’s and colonialism’s twinned histories, and the interlocking force is data” (2019, xii).

Digital activists in Latin America and social movements for free and open knowledge, Indigenous rights, cyberfeminism are taking the lead in questioning Western models of technical rationality, ownership, and data rights and their reliance on profit models and extractivist tactics. These interventions, however, go beyond the debates of media concentration and infrastructure, uses and appropriations. Technopolitics in Latin America can also be seen with regard to its impact on the architecture, design, ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies of communication networks, and ways of working with technology.

Decolonial Approaches and Indigenous Cosmovisions

Decolonial and Indigenous perspectives offer alternative paradigms to modernity and contemporary capitalism on political, economic, cultural, ecological, and social levels. While decolonial and Indigenous frameworks remain marginalized in many Latin American contexts, their impact can be seen in policies pertaining to knowledge management and communication, approaches to education, intercultural relations, and the questioning of concepts such as “development” and “progress,” as well as the constitutional rights of nature.

In contexts such as Ecuador and Bolivia, the respective governments of Rafael Correa and Evo Morales appropriated the Indigenous concept of sumak kawsay or “good living”, which was incorporated into the constitutions of both countries. Many commentators initially viewed this as a possibility for imagining new logics, rationalities, and sociocultural ways of living. It was also expected to transform colonial orientations in relation to
Indigenous groups historically denied rights and subordinated, and provide an alternative to the traditional constitutional materialization of the colonial developmental regime and its superimposition of global financial interests over the interests of local communities (Walsh 2012, 69).

However, as María Antonia Carcelén points out, recent configurations of *sumak kawsay* are based on generations of interlocking patriarchies, both Indigenous and colonial, and contaminated by Eurocentrism (2016). Serving the purposes of political powers, many now associate the term with the failure of twenty-first-century socialism in Latin America rather than the materialization of Indigenous cosmovisions of the good life and well-being.

In addition, decolonial perspectives demonstrate that Eurocentrism and the dualities of racial discourses have had profound economic implications. Patterns of colonial power have generated the processes of capitalist accumulation articulated in hierarchies whereby certain “races” and ethnic groups are destined to well-paid jobs, and others to coercive jobs, based on dichotomies such as “development” and “underdevelopment”, and “barbaric” versus “civilized” (Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel 2007, emphasis ours).

Against the backdrop of significant racial and class tensions, Indigenous cosmovisions have more in common with the ontologies and the ethics of the Commons of knowledge and information sharing than current capitalist models concerning communication and technology. Vasquez, for example, states that,

> the geopolitics of Commons opens up a new front in the battle against cognitive capitalism, which is done by connecting codes from Amazon communities with Ecuadorian neighbours, academics from the Americas and Europe, urban and rural occupation movements, as well as hackers, activists, communication specialists, until we became a network of over 1,500 people, discussing problems related to the exploitation of creativity of difficulties of knowledge access. (2015, 19)

This resistance to cognitive capitalism, however, involves more than rethinking creativity knowledge access. Decolonial ontologies and Indigenous cosmovisions foreground sustainability of communication and technology frameworks as environmental welfare is not considered separate to, but as a relational part of the code as it is developed. Despite debates concerning the term sustainability and its polysemic appropriation, we concur with Geoffrey Craig, that sustainability remains an important term “because of the way it can be used to prioritise environmental
welfare while also insisting on understanding the way that economic and social life are dependent upon the maintenance and nurturing of the environment" (2019, IX).

Etsa Franklin Salvio Sharupi Tapuy of the Amazon-based digital journalism network, *Lanceros Digitales*, asserts that for the first nations of *Abya Yala*, communication has become a tool of struggle and resistance. Virtual tools are not separate to, but co-exist with Indigenous philosophies, with the power of nature and the jungle, allowing communicators to share this knowledge via social networks and the web.

It is especially important, as he argues in chapter “Practitioner Perspective. Digital Communication Strategies for Strengthening and Empowering Amazonian Peoples and Nationalities: Community Radio and the Quijos Nation”, to share *Abya Yala’s* First Nations sentiments and knowledge through social networks and the web. There is an urgent historical need to pass on Indigenous ideas, languages, ontologies, and other aspects of identity in order to be fully part of communities and societies, narrating and writing on virtual platforms, that are both used and managed by Indigenous community communicators.

In addition, Indigenous research and methodologies done by and for Indigenous people provide possibilities for greater relational accountability. Cree scholar, knowledge keeper and seeker, Shawn Wilson, argues that “research is ceremony, which aims to build stronger relations or bridge the distance between our cosmos and us. The research that we do as Indigenous people is a ceremony that allows us a raised level of consciousness and insight into our world” (Wilson 2008, 137). By stepping beyond dominant views of knowledge and doing research, Indigenous and decolonial research approaches make room for new agendas facilitating how research analysis and presentation of information is communicated.

**Critical Theories of Technology and STS**

Science and Technology Studies (STS) and critical theory of technology highlight the inherent contingency and complexity of technical artifacts often hidden by the dominant technical explanations. The development of STS and its emphasis on specific case studies has been important in developing relational definitions and understandings of technology historically and in society, which emphasize technology’s constitutive entwinement in a variety of social networks.
Critical theorists share many of the constructivist premises of STS but place greater emphasis on how technology is socially embedded within technical politics and social struggles over the code (Feenberg 1999; Gravante and Poma 2019). Critical theories of technology are especially concerned with capturing the multiple and varied social approaches to transforming technology, information, and knowledge.

Critical theories of technology emphasize underlying power relations of the technology-society nexus (Feenberg 1999; Kirkpatrick 2008, 2020). Technology philosopher Andrew Feenberg points out that, “The design and configuration of technology does more than merely accomplish our ends; it also organizes society and subordinates its members to a techno-cratic order” (1999, 17). For Feenberg, the shaping and implementation of technology is carried out through uneven power relations and the hegemony of technological rationality. Feenberg argues that technology is performed through a scripted activity or technical code, whereby people and objects co-produce designs and reproduce power structures and dominant ideologies concerning technology. Feenberg examines user interventions, from a wide range of actors, from activists to healthcare patients, that challenge the power structures embedded in the prevailing technological rationality as “democratic interventions” (1999, 93).

Anti-hegemonic struggles, however, cannot be universally categorized. Social theorists, such as Graeme Kirkpatrick, argue that “aesthetics, democracy and expertise are not easily assigned to ‘sides’ in an agonistic struggle against technical expertise over the shape or meaning of future technology” (2020, 200). His argument is that when we change technology, it becomes entwined in the production of diverse, unpredictable social outcomes. This makes it possible to draw on a larger vision rather than having ‘faith’ in certain rational outcomes, such as making technology more democratic will result necessarily in specific outcomes. Incorporating the cosmovision into technology design and making new technologies—rather than symbolically appropriating them—goes beyond ‘democratisation’ and socialist appropriation of indigenous ideas and practices, to create space for something different and anti-universalist, whereby equality is not conceptualized on in human terms but also in relation to species and nature.

While it is important to consider the significance of battles pertaining to technical codes, in relation to resources such as the Internet, it is also important to go beyond universalizing methodological approaches. Sierra
Caballero, Leetoy, and Gravante (2018) argue that this struggle for the code also requires re-thinking research processes in order to take into consideration a heterogeneous range of social actors, uses of knowledge, and information:

Now we know, for instance, because of the revindication of the new net activism … that the exercise of citizenship and good government are necessarily and increasingly conceived as the construction not only of a process of inclusion and digital socialization in response to the intensive processes of change, but especially as a process of struggle and appropriation of diffuse resources like the Internet, of the struggle for the code, which requires greater permeability and cognitive openness of research processes in order to encompass or perceive the multiple uses and variety of information and knowledge by social actors. (14, our translation)

This multiple and varied use of information and knowledge is part of the rich cultural, linguistic, and socio-political diversity of communities in Latin America. It is also why looking more closely in methodological, ontological, and epistemological terms at transformations in relation to technology led by communities and activists provides us with key sites of analysis for alternatives to communication and technology. What make these alternatives stand out is that these are aligned first and foremost with community objectives and values, rather than needs created or imposed by market forces.

**CYBERFEMINISM**

Cyberfeminism’s counter-hegemonic interventions within technological and scientific spaces expand the work of critical perspectives through feminism to counter male-dominated and masculinist network space. Cyberfeminist approaches make spaces for occupying positions in the public digital domain, empowering and occupying orientations toward information and communication. To do so involves intervening with key tools to address policies and rights.

Cyberfeminism, however, is less about access to information about policies and rights and more about the codes of information that make it possible to participate in decision-making, develop alternatives, and priorities in relation to rights. For cyberfeminists, cyberspace is also integrated with theory since it is a heterogeneous and encompassing movement,
ranging from netopia, within the liberal current to dystopia and resistance (Reverter-Bañon and Sales 2019).

Cyberfeminism also seeks to build democratic spaces which free bodies from gendered physical contexts, thus impacting on constructions of sex, gender, and sexuality. At the same time, it serves as a form of resistance that fosters greater reflexivity and self-determination, amid cultural, social, biological, or political logics. Latin American cyberfeminists point out that technologies such as the internet are marked by their military, male, white, American and European origins. They also point to the digital gaps, including gender, class, race, and generation in the production, circulation and uses of technology. They also draw attention to digital gender violence, digital crimes, invasion of privacy, surveillance, monitoring and control of bodies, which are feminist issues as women are the most affected (Natansohn and Paz 2018). However, going beyond victimization and technological determinism arguments, cyberfeminism opens paths through heterogeneous approaches to socio-technical networks, creating new options for action and social change. Binder argues that cyberfeminist activism in Latin America is based on politics concerning technology and provides a means to reconfigure and reshape society:

Latin American cyberfeminists understand that their activism is a way of seeing life, a political position from which to think and act. It is a manifestation of prefigurative politics, in the sense that activists put into practice those ideals that will shape the society they want to build. (Binder in Benítez-Eyzaguirre 2019, 5)

Cyberfeminist practices and alternative communication therefore are not simple appropriations of media as a system of production or information and economic flows. Cyberfeminist perspectives and actions also provide opportunities for the recodification of identities, signs, and codes created, breaking with the passive acceptance of identities that are often imposed by external actors and structures.

**AN OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK**

This volume aims to speak to the major transformations, challenges, and resistances concerning digital media and communication within the context of communities in and beyond Latin America’s borders. The widespread availability of Internet technologies and smartphones alongside the
expansion of free and open access movements and digital activism has been especially important for Indigenous and other community media efforts.

While access to the Internet and communication systems remains a site for activism for many communities, this book aims to take discussions beyond media development perspectives that focus on the uses of communication and technology. The contributions here explore how Latin American community activists within Latin America, transnationally and translocally, are not simply appropriating media but also transforming it through a wide range of projects and epistemological frameworks.

It also explores questions, such as what type of Internet and communication systems may best meet community needs and who has the power to decide what these needs are. The chapters provide tangible examples of how we move about in mediated spaces and participate in decision-making and transformations of digital media, data, and sociotechnical processes.

The collection is organized into four parts each including academic and practitioner perspectives: The first part of the book focuses on digital territories and how the digital world is lived out in specific local contexts through hybrid experiences and multiple sites, beyond borders to include the experiences of transnational communities. Part II presents case studies and debates concerning free and open knowledge and the Commons. Moving beyond earlier discussions about uses of free and open source, the work presented here explores narratives and situated approaches to constructing knowledge and communication. Digital media and social networks have become key to the work of community activists, movements of local, and international resistance which is explored in Part III. The case studies in this section highlight a wide range of ways in which activists from Brazil, Chile, and Ecuador are countering oppression from a range of actors, including the state and corporate media, and bring to the fore discussions concerning online activism and its relation to grassroots movements and the offline work of social movements. Part IV presents further approaches in the development of strategies for documenting, representing, and strengthening Indigenous languages and cultures. Although this section focuses on Latin American contexts, the approaches and subsequent discussions around media and technology are transnational and relevant to scholars and activists elsewhere, interested in participating in conversations that address issues of structure and agency and the mapping of key issues concerning digital activism internationally.
The chapters in Part I explore some of the ways in which communities are rethinking relations between territoriality, community, and digital life. Carlos Jiménez in chapter “Radio Indígena and Indigenous Mexican Farmworkers in Oxnard, California” documents the creation and development of Radio Indígena and the Mixteco/Indígena Community Organizing Project (MICOP) by Indigenous Mexican Farmworkers in Oxnard, California. Documenting community FM broadcast and online experiences, Jiménez demonstrates how a transnational Indigenous community has created safe spaces for learning and engagement in mediated communication, transforming experiences of marginality by drawing on communication resources that create awareness and address important social issues and change. The community’s roots in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico, provide an understanding of how technological needs and media practices develop as individuals migrate for work. His piece highlights the importance of considering Latin American community media beyond political borders to include transnational experiences brought about by migration.

In their discussion of the implications of creating sound mapping trajectories in an urban neighborhood in Quito, Elena Pinos and Cristina Venegas in chapter “Sounds of the Neighborhood: Innovation, Hybrid Urban Space, and Sound Trajectories” argue that technological appropriation at the community level provides possibilities for strengthening cultural identity to approach the urban environment and sites for social, community innovation. Challenging the influence of colonial spatial mappings of communities, digital sound mapping also provides opportunities for community-centered representations, new social memories, and dynamics. Pinos and Venegas argue that the recording of sound trajectories and sound mapping is not just about advocating the conscious listening to everyday sounds, but also concerns new ways of moving and interacting within space and territory.

Wayna Tambo Diversity Network founder Mario Rodríguez in chapter “Practitioner Perspective. Digital Networks in Bolivia: Territory, Community Collaboration, and the Wayna Tambo Diversity Network” presents a practitioner perspective of the case of digital networks in Bolivia in relation to territorial, face-to-face spaces. Rodríguez delves into the important question of how to integrate digital networks within the fabric
of our lives and our existence without doing away with nourishing social and community networks in our everyday lives. Rodríguez argues that digital networks need to be understood as sites of contested meanings and practices. His chapter highlights ways of re-inhabiting these spaces. He argues that, although this resistance may take place through protest, it is increasingly happening through the creation of alternative lifestyles that shape and revitalize work in territories and communities. This chapter in highlights how digital networks can simultaneously act as sites of protest online and foster sustainable lifestyles offline.

**PART II: APPROACHES TO DECOLONIZING KNOWLEDGE AND COMMUNICATION**

Digital media and technology are important sites for struggles concerning the future of knowledge, decolonialization, and sustainability. These struggles include battles over mobile and Internet access, equality online, digital rights, and sustainable communications systems. The chapters in Part II consider macro contexts such as regional community radio networks and their interaction with free and open-source communication and discussions concerning Open Source academic databases in Latin America. The cases here also explore two specific micro contexts focused on sustainable communication: a solar communication network in the Amazon and mobile telephony in Oaxaca, Mexico. Both examples provide evidence of new narratives and approaches to constructing knowledge and communication.

These narratives and approaches are philosophically grounded and at the same time practically oriented. Juan Manuel Crespo, David Vila-Viñas, and Cheryl Martens in chapter “Open Knowledge, Decolonial, and Intercultural Approaches to Communication Technologies for Mobility: The Achuar Kara Solar Project” present the case of the Achuar Kara Solar Canoe Project in the Ecuadorian Amazon. They examine how this project brings decolonial, open knowledge, and intercultural approaches into conversation with sustainable approaches to communications for mobility. The Achuar Kara Solar Project involves a wide range of actors. What makes this case unique is the way in which Indigenous knowledge about millennial technology concerning canoe construction and communities’ values are not sidelined but form the foundation for work with external agents.
Questioning the construction of knowledge and communication in Scientific Communities in Latin America, Maximiliano Salatino in chapter “Open Access in Dispute in Latin America: Toward the Construction of Counter-Hegemonic Structures of Knowledge” examines the history and debates regarding the regional Open Access Scientific communities. Salatino argues that tensions between regionalization and the internationalization of scientific communication and the perpetuation of neo-colonial and Eurocentric practices affect Open Access in scientific communities in Latin America. Salatino’s chapter urges us to reconsider open knowledge production and how this is connected to the democratization and access to scientific research, as well as its distribution, an issue affecting countries internationally.

Also concerned with sustainable regional networks, Santiago García Gago in chapter “Narratives for the Defense of the Digital Commons” examines Community Radio and Free Software Network in Latin America and its transition from analogue to digital media, the legislative advances and setbacks affecting community media, and the Network’s demand for spectrum reserves. He proposes a rethinking of narratives around communication rights. This chapter points out the political nature of technologies and argues against net neutrality and in favor of the digital commons, which includes the collective management, maintenance, and governance that can be applied not only to infrastructure and hardware but also to code and content.

The activist contribution in this section (chapter “Practitioner Perspective. Autonomous Infrastructures: Community Cell phone Networks in Oaxaca, Mexico”), by Loreto Bravo presents the case of autonomous mobile networks in remote regions in Oaxaca, Mexico, in the Zapotec community of Talea de Castro in the Sierra Juarez of Oaxaca. This project, which involves community ownership and technology policy, demonstrates the possibilities for telecommunication autonomy of communities and sustainable networks of mobile communication that counter hegemonic systems of mobile telephony worldwide.

In pursuit of other collective futures, the spaces and approaches to media and technology presented in this section provide a window onto situated approaches to sustainability, open access, and decolonializing knowledge. They also point toward possibilities and the need for further consideration of how we might reconceptualize ethical futures in communication and technology.
PART III: DIGITAL ACTIVISM AND RESISTANCE

The digital activism explored in Part III explores how activists are working with and transforming digital media to address community needs. This section examines digital activism and its challenges in relation to territorial and equality struggles in Brazil, Chile, and Ecuador. Andrea Medrado, Taynara Cabral, and Renata Souza, in their case study (chapter “Favela Digital Activism: The Use of Social Media to Fight Oppression and Injustice in Brazil”) of social media in fighting injustice in Brazil, argue that “marginalized communities search for new media territories where they can prevail and produce their own accounts in relation to territorial struggles” (Medrado et al., this volume).

This work also highlights how through the mediation of the neighborhood, using methods such as mapping and augmented reality of favela streets, it is possible for residents to share alerts in real time, bringing online and offline worlds together in highly relevant ways for residents, impacting on neighborhood safety and solidarity.

Diana Coryat’s discussion of transmedia activist practices of the Yasunidos social movement in chapter “Jiujitsu Moves, Radio Bemba, and Other Transmedia Practices: Social Movement Strategies Counter Statist Media Power” demonstrates the example of digital activism and its social impact in the challenging of messages in mainstream and state media in Ecuador. Countering neo-extractivist discourses and politics concerning drilling for oil in the Amazon, Coryat argues that Yasunidos transmedia practices combined with on-the-ground strategies impact national and international public opinion and interrupt hegemonic meanings of development.

Focusing on the relations between online and offline Mapuche activism, Salvador Millaleo in chapter “Digital Activism and the Mapuche Nation in Chile” considers how the contours of limitations of Mapuche digital activism impact on Chilean public opinion. He draws on several case studies to explore the relationship between street mobilization and online digital content and argues that digital activism is limited by the overall mainstream media environment, the coordination of digital activism online in relation to the Mapuche movement, and protests on the ground.

Writing from a cyberfeminist academi-practitioner perspective, Natalia Angulo Moncayo in the final chapter of this section “Feminist Cyberactivism in Theory and Practice” explores bringing feminist theory and cyber
activist practice together. She points out how cyberfeminist practices provide new possibilities through feminist knowledge, digital communication, and the embracing of difference and dissidence. She also reflects on technology not only from a biopolitical perspective, in terms of control and segmentation of users, but also as a site for recoding technology, at once subversive and empowering.

**PART IV: STRATEGIES FOR DOCUMENTING, REPRESENTING, AND STRENGTHENING INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE AND CULTURE**

The Internet and digital media can be considered main sites for the recording and storage of historic and visual records (Prins 2001), fomenting alliances, and settling land claims and the right for self-determination (see Salazar 2009; Belton 2010) for Indigenous peoples. Local community activists, transnational media and journalist networks, intercultural communicators, and Indigenous journalists in Latin America are not simply making use of digital media recording devices and social media as part of their work, they are also questioning dominant power structures, and media and technology paradigms.

Some of these reorientations challenge hegemonic and often stigmatizing representations. Iria Puyosa, Belén Febres-Cordero, and Juan Diego Andrango in chapter “Re-presenting Indigenous in Ecuadorian Media: A NewsFrames Approach” write about the reframing of stories, whereby Indigenous communities and nationalities in Ecuador critically engage and break with hegemonic media structures in the positioning of the subject by creating new spaces and possibilities for sharing experiences, knowledge, and practices that recuperate historic memory and increase possibilities of self-representation. This case demonstrates the importance of developing skills in digital tools and methods that promote collaboration and collective production, self-representation, community mobilization as well as group identity integration.

Also concerned with countering asymmetries of power and knowledge, Javier Jiménez Becerra, Mónica Bustamante Salamanca, and Ángel Gutiérrez Pérez in their chapter “Challenging Asymmetries of Power and Knowledge Through Learning Communities and Participatory Design in the Creation of Smart Grids in Wayúu Communities” analyze learning communities and participatory design methodologies in the creation of
smart grids in Wayúu territories in Northeast Colombia, and the interactions that took place between Wayúu leaders, a private energy company, and a faculty of engineering. One of the objectives of the project was to challenge power-knowledge relations associated with colonialism. In the design and discussion process, Wayúu community needs were put first to orient the technology and design used for smart grids.

Another important way in which Latin American Indigenous communities and journalists have been reconfiguring media and technology is by taking control of cultural and informational production, through national and regional news production and alliances. Belén Albornoz and Gema Tabares in chapter “Indigenous Journalism in Ecuador: An Alternative Worldview” examine the role of the Network of Bilingual Intercultural Communicators of Ecuador (REDCI), an intercultural Indigenous journalist network in Ecuador. Through the practice of collective rather than individual journalism, work at REDCI laid the groundwork for countering mainstream journalistic practices and creating alternative news channels and structures by foregrounding Indigenous cosmovisions and methodologies. The chapter discusses how REDCI’s digital platform became a technological framework for the interaction of a wide range of Indigenous languages, cultures, and territories, whereby multidimensional realities and cosmovisions could come together, challenging many commonly held Western premises concerning media and technology.

Part IV concludes with the practitioner perspective of Etsa Franklin Salvio Sharupi Tapuy, who reflects on the strategies used by the Quijos nationality in the Ecuadorian Amazon. With linguistic and cultural roots pre-dating the arrival of the now dominant Amazonian Kichwa, the Quijos first received official state recognition in 2013. Sharupi Tapuy in chapter “Practitioner Perspective. Digital Communication Strategies for Strengthening and Empowering Amazonian Peoples and Nationalities: Community Radio and the Quijos Nation” discusses how digital communication strategies together with offline tactics such as strategic alliances are contributing to a Quijos linguistic and cultural revitalization.

**CONCLUSION**

The heterogeneous theoretical, epistemological, and methodological approaches of this collection provide an exciting range of perspectives concerning strategies and methods of collaboration that put communities at the center of media, communication, and technology. The frameworks
and the work outlined here provide possibilities for new intersections of theoretical and practical tools for rethinking media, communication, and technology in the context of Latin America and globally, as we confront many of the same media and technology concerns in relation to the well-being of our communities.

Further evidence of the strategies and approaches discussed by activists and academics throughout the book can be seen in communicators’ responses to the wide range of protests in 2019–20 in Chile, Bolivia, Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador and elsewhere in Latin America. Many of these protests have grown alongside the coronavirus pandemic, as economic and social inequality take center stage. Communities are now using a wide range of “jiujitsu strategies” (Coryat this volume) to harness their opponents’ power to challenge political and economic frameworks via social media and on the streets. At a time where employment is scarce people are finding ways to meet family and community needs through alternative cooperative practices and systems of exchange promoted via social media. Others are turning to autonomous, low-cost information-sharing. All of these tactics demonstrate technopolitical responses that put communities ahead of profit margins.

Wayna Tambo Diversity Network in El Alto, Bolivia, used, for example, its social networking space to convene dialogue between affected people and communities in the aftermath of the political coup in November. It is now using its platforms to address community needs in relation to the coronavirus. In addition, the response from media activists in the historically significant political protests in Ecuador, which Sharupi Tapuy defines as the second rising of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), has had an international impact and continues to grow despite lockdown measures. During the protests, and throughout the coronavirus pandemic, the independent journalists of Lancers Digitales share coverage through Instagram and Facebook pages, often at odds with local and international mainstream media, which maintain a narrow range of media narratives. The struggles and protests of Indigenous people in Bolivia, brothers and sisters in Haiti, Colombia, Argentina, and beyond in France and Taiwan have all become inter-connected via webs of transnational support, education and information sharing through social media online.

Indigenous websites and Facebook pages are open, free, and continuously engage in updating events not given depth or visibility elsewhere. Community information networks transmitted via Facebook Live or
through text messages both use and bypass traditional forms of news media reporting. Across these sites of protest, wireless communication systems, though regulated and governed from elsewhere, are combined with the logic and needs of communities whose concerns and rights are often misrepresented, or worse, left out of the picture altogether. The transmission of alternate views, especially around moments of intense political struggle in the midst of economic and health crises, demonstrates the material contours of local and global media infrastructures, signal regimes, and how they are in turn politicized.

Lessons learned from the efforts of Indigenous community media include developing ways to bring this work together with visionary practices—such as drinking sacred ayahuasca and tobacco—before joining the protests in cities such as Quito, Tena, Coca, Macas, or Puyo. Indigenous community media are part of several Indigenous movements and of other organizations across Latin America. They are also behind the production of content on websites, the data of the community, relating events that can be cited and archived, making it possible to study these sites of information to better understand Indigenous, worldviews, philosophies, and perspectives.

The sharpness and accuracy of the Amazonian lances of *Lanceros Digitales* aims to continue during and beyond moments of conflict and their reporting can be seen, taken up, and shared by masses in Latin America and beyond. The contribution by local media practitioners reporting events on the ground and the new perspectives arising therein provide substantive material to be considered in the writing of new policies. The debates and issues emerging from these conflicts are informed by the now important role of Indigenous community media in the hybrid contexts we have discussed here. In another location and in the context of extreme US anti-immigration policies, Radio Indigena in Oxnard, California, continued to advocate on behalf Mixteco and Mexican worker’s rights and well-being, amassing content and contact with ever expanding community networks.

Given that digital and wireless technologies are embedded in our daily lives, the ubiquity of mobile and social media circulation, the expansion of mobile data networks (5G), and the growing political and economic impact of big data, future work must consider new questions emerging from this reality. How does the availability of faster technology and increased data raise the potential for discrimination, or widen the gap of the digital divide? In what way might we also imagine and create new
opportunities for social justice and cyberfeminist responses? How do wide-ranging community media networks continue to expand their potential to co-create spaces for vital collaboration and what will these collaborations look like post-pandemic? How do Indigenous and activist communicators bring together local and global media epistemologies across widely situated movements to impact sociotechnical relations and policies?

As the contributions throughout this collection attest, the assumed centrality of media narratives from dominant positions, governments, or institutions is under fire and being challenged from multiple perspectives, modes of doing and thinking. This has implications for media policymaking and activist interventions for understanding new modes of production, resistance, and activism in Latin America and the Global South. It opens spaces, theoretically and methodologically, for rethinking interfaces, media regimes, activism, and sustainability concerning the aims, rationality and uses of media, communication, and technology.

**Note**

1. Blurry cellphone videos revealed stark confrontations on the streets, and acts of deception by police. Coverage included CONAIE and CONFENIAE leaders as well as official coverage of the Indigenous agreement with the government.

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