

Reflections from the Classroom and Beyond: Imagining a Decolonized HCI Education

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[Link to the paper](#)

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WHO ARE WE?



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HCI and Social Transformation

Worldwide, the field of HCI is increasingly seen as a powerful discipline for **social transformation** ^{1,2,3}

Students from the **Global South** are increasingly interested in pursuing an HCI education in the **Global North** as a way to drive social change in their countries ^{4, 5}

1, 2, 3: Erete, 2015; Lopez et. al 2019; Namara et al. 2018
4, 5: Alabdulqader et al. 2018; Zong et al., 2018

THE PROBLEM

HCI education in the Global North tends to position South-centric contexts at the **margins** of mainstream HCI. Further, it promotes concepts, practices, and applications historically defined by and for the Global North.

This highly complicates the **education** of students from the South who seek to use HCI in the South.



OUR GOAL

To explore how the field can foster educational spaces that go **beyond** the North vs. South dichotomy by reflecting on our experiences as HCI learners from the South in the North





Latin American Decolonial Thinking

A Lens for Guiding our Reflections

LATIN AMERICAN DECOLONIAL THINKING



Marisol De La
Cadena



Arturo Escobar



Anibal Quijano



Gloria Anzaldúa



Walter Mignolo

- Denounces Eurocentric **universal** forms of knowledge that subordinate the periphery
- Rejects **postcolonialism**' "post" positionality for it prevents a detachment from Eurocentrism
- Argues that, as long as we strive for **modernity**, we reproduce the inequities of **coloniality**
- Proposes to move to *ni lo uno, ni lo otro, si no todo lo contrario* for creating a **pluriverse** where contradicting ontologies and epistemologies can co-exist without needing to align with each other.

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DECOLONIAL CONCEPTS WE USE

Partial Connections

via a relational form conceived as intrinsic to the entities that I bring to the fore, partial connections enable the analysis of how they appear with each other and at the same time, remain distinct:

Marisol De La Cadena, *Earth Beings*, 2015

Mestiza Consciousness

is developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity.... Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else [...] a new consciousness [...] that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm

Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands: la frontera*, 1987

Colonial Differences

the difference between center and periphery, between the Eurocentric critique of Eurocentrism and knowledge production by those who participated in building the modern/colonial world and those who have been left out of the discussion

Walter Mignolo, *The geopolitics of knowledge and the colonial difference*, 2002

OUR COMMITMENT

- The reflections we present in this work describe our personal experiences
- We do not seek to generalize the HCI educational experience of all members of the South in the North
- We talk from where we stand
- We do not write these experiences lightly
- Our solidarity has translated into a safety net, and that has encouraged us not only to reflect but also to try to do something with being uncomfortable



Our Reflections

- On **translating** HCI knowledge
- On **participating** in HCI classrooms
- On **producing** HCI knowledge



OUR REFLECTIONS | Translating HCI Knowledge

- Our first contact with HCI felt foreign and out of our own context

My thinking, and more importantly, my perception of what was feasible, relevant, and even desirable technology- and socially-wise, was entirely shaped by my experience growing up in Ecuador, a country where street crime is pervasive.

Marisol

- Fully understanding of the concepts demands a deep translation of words and terms and ground knowledge of a foreign context
- More plurivocal perspectives can allow all of us to see we are **partially connected**, thus illuminating how translating is not equating but accepting that our mutual understanding is full of gaps



OUR REFLECTIONS | Participating in HCI Classrooms

- Students' participation in the classroom defines them later as researchers
- Linguistic and interest-based differences, however, hinders participation

Just the cognitive load of being in the classroom was stressful for me. I had to follow the discussion of my classmates while taking notes and think of ideas or questions to make. Also, I did not feel in my skin when speaking English, every time I had to speak in public, I felt like my heart sped up, and my face turned red.

Adriana

- Through the support of our professors and our own explorations into the differences that caused our struggles, we developed a type of **mestiza consciousness**: a tolerance for conflicting views from which a different space for participation could emerge.



OUR REFLECTIONS | Producing HCI Knowledge

- The most impactful HCI literature is produced in the North. This shapes:

What a relevant and interesting HCI research topic is

What methods to use for exploring it

How to write and talk about it

Reproducing Northern-centric views, some members of the research community expressed concerns that my studies' results would not apply to a broader audience and requested me to recruit more Northern, White, participants to contrast my findings

Javier

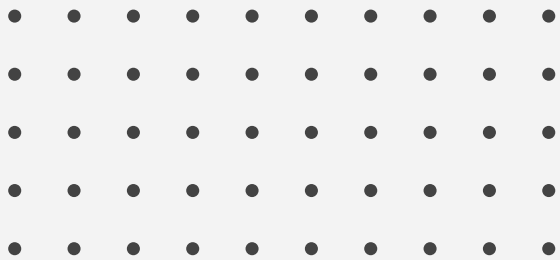
- By identifying at the **colonial difference** within our experiences we managed to break away from these norms.

- How can instructors, venues, and other students work with us in identifying and acting on these colonial differences?



Discussion: Decolonizing HCI Education

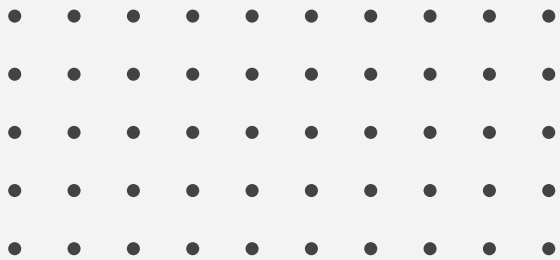




Our experiences with language influence our understanding, participation, and practice within the HCI community because our language identity is at the center of how we understand, communicate, and exchange ideas.

Language

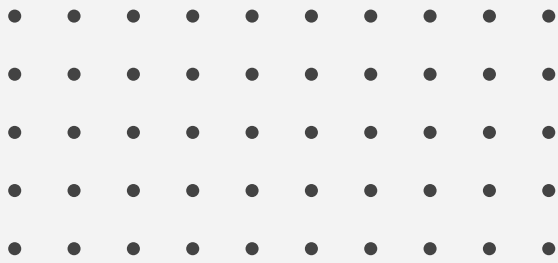
HCI learning spaces could draw from language justice and translanguaging spaces initiatives for shifting power dynamics so that diverse languages can be seen as a source of knowledge rather than a hassle.



Our experiences suggest that more efforts are needed for encouraging students to reflect on the topics they discuss in the classroom and how they discuss them.

Content

HCI educators could **leverage** and **emphasize** all students' experiences, allowing them to build connections across their experiences. For example, build a living curriculum, which is a class curriculum that addresses the multidisciplinary and ever evolving nature of HCI, thereby responding to changes in technological trends, user types, and use contexts [16]

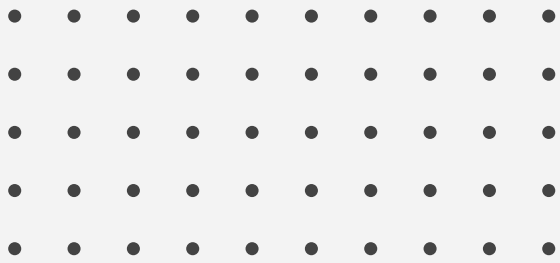


Having to constantly justify our research topic and audience as well as bearing the responsibility for adapting our research methods, increased our insecurity about the validity and relevance of our work.

This, in turn, has prevented us from sharing our participants' recruitment practices and the culturally-appropriate protocols we follow with the wider HCI community

Knowledge Production

We believe that the **design** and **deployment of technology** should be **locally accountable**, and this begins with HCI education. Instructors can propose research and design projects that locate students in contexts of practice culturally distant to them. In doing this, students will be able to analyze the colonial differences they experience approaching these contexts.



My world was included in the world that my friends inhabited and vice versa, but their world could not be reduced to mine, or mine to theirs ... our being together joined worlds that were distinct and also the same. And rather than maintaining the separation that the difference caused, we chose to explore the differences together.

De la Cadena, Marisol. *Earth beings: Ecologies of practice across Andean worlds*

**FOR FURTHER
REFLECTION**



Uber in Mexico



Taxi drivers take part in a protest against the private taxi company Uber for alleged unfair competition, in Mexico City on May 25, 2015. Yuri Cortez—AFP/Getty Images



No sólo en México
fenómeno es global



Sexual Harassment in Public Transportation - Guayaquil

- In Guayaquil, 63% of women report having been sexually harassed by strangers. A lot of solutions have been explored.
- Our CS classrooms are male-dominated. Students deny this problem exists.
- How do we engage our students and the community to discuss this issue, with a *pluriversal perspective*, so that differences in perception are not disregarded and diminished?





O que acontece no Brasil?