

## SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND DIGITAL APPROPRIATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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### ABSTRACT

The article explores the dynamics of digital appropriation by social movements in Latin America and the Caribbean. It highlights how, in recent decades, information and communication technologies have transformed the political and social landscape of the region, providing new opportunities for organization, mobilization, and citizen participation. These digital tools have provided social movements with new forms of dissemination of information, allowing the creation of networks of solidarity and resistance at the local, national, and even international levels. Through strategies such as cyberactivism and cyberfeminism, social movements have used digital platforms to challenge the status quo and promote social justice. However, the challenges and obstacles they face, such as digital divides, online censorship, and the influence of extremist anti-rights groups, are also addressed. Despite these challenges, social movements have demonstrated a remarkable ability to adapt and leverage digital tools to pursue their goals of social justice and political change. The transformative potential of digital appropriation is highlighted, reflecting the region's socioeconomic, political, and cultural realities. The diversity of approaches and strategies social movements use shows the region's complexity and richness of social struggles. Addressing structural inequalities and promoting collective action to build more just and equitable societies is ultimately emphasized.

### KEYWORDS

social movements, digital appropriation, digital mobilization, technological resistance, technological justice

## MOVIMENTOS SOCIAIS E APROPRIAÇÃO DIGITAL NA AMÉRICA LATINA E NAS CARAÍBAS

### RESUMO

O presente artigo explora a dinâmica da apropriação digital pelos movimentos sociais na América Latina e nas Caraíbas. Destaca como, nas últimas décadas, as tecnologias de informação e comunicação transformaram o panorama político e social da região, proporcionando novas oportunidades de organização, mobilização e participação cidadã. Essas ferramentas digitais proporcionaram aos movimentos sociais novas formas de disseminação de informação, permitindo a criação de redes de solidariedade e resistência nos níveis local, nacional e até internacional. A partir de estratégias como o ciberativismo e o ciberfeminismo os movimentos sociais têm usado plataformas digitais para desafiar o *statu quo* e promover a justiça social. Por outro lado, o artigo também aborda os desafios e obstáculos que os movimentos sociais enfrentam, como as clivagens digitais, a censura online e a influência de grupos extremistas. Apesar desses desafios, os movimentos demonstram uma capacidade notável de adaptação, tirando partido das ferramentas digitais para avançar nos seus objetivos de justiça social e mudança política. O potencial transformador da mobilização digital é destacado, refletindo as realidades socioeconômicas, políticas e culturais da região. A diversidade de abordagens e estratégias utilizadas

pelos movimentos sociais evidencia a complexidade da região e a diversidade das lutas sociais. Por fim, destaca-se a importância de abordar as desigualdades estruturais e promover a ação coletiva, para a construção de sociedades mais justas e equitativas.

#### **PALAVRAS-CHAVE**

movimentos sociais, apropriação digital, mobilização digital, resistência tecnológica, justiça tecnológica

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In the contemporary era, marked by the omnipresence of digital technology, social movements in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) find themselves at a crucial turning point. The rapid expansion of information and communication technologies (ICT) has radically transformed how people organize, communicate, and exercise their political agency. In this context, digital appropriation by social movements has emerged as a central topic of analysis and debate. The ability of social movements to harness digital tools and adapt them to their specific needs and objectives represents both a challenge and an opportunity for collective action in the region.

Digital appropriation refers to the process by which people and social groups integrate and use digital technologies daily, including participation in social movements and political activism. This phenomenon involves access to technology and the ability to understand, use, and transform these tools to advance your interests and goals. In LAC, digital appropriation has acquired increasing importance in the context of the social and political struggles that characterize the region.

This work addresses the opportunities and challenges that social movements in LAC face in their relationship with digital appropriation. It analyzes how the expansion of ICT has impacted collective action and citizen participation and the obstacles social movements face in using digital technology. It will also examine how social movements have used digital tools to amplify their voices, build solidarity networks, and promote regional social change.

Additionally, the diversity of approaches and strategies that characterize digital appropriation in LAC will be considered, from cyberactivism and hackfeminism to digital platforms for community organizing and the defense of human rights. The paper will explore how these approaches intertwine with the region's socioeconomic, political, and cultural realities and how they have shaped the political and social landscape in recent decades.

Ultimately, this exploration of digital appropriation in social movements will provide a better understanding of the dynamics of power, resistance, and transformation that characterize the region in the digital age. By analyzing the challenges and opportunities social movements face in their relationship with digital technology, innovative strategies, and practices can be identified that strengthen collective action and promote social justice.

## **2. SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND DIGITAL APPROPRIATION: IMPACT ON SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION, GLOBAL CHALLENGES AND POTENTIALS**

In recent decades, social movements have proliferated globally in response to the crisis of the neoliberal system and growing social precariousness, challenging political and economic elites. These movements seek a more participatory democracy, expressing themselves through occupations in public spaces and street demonstrations. They have raised specific demands throughout history, including the labor movement, feminist, pacifist, environmental, civil rights, and anti-globalization movements, seeking political and social changes (Sola-Morales & Sabariego, 2020). They play a fundamental role in social, political, and cultural transformation by introducing new issues, discourses, and public agendas. These collectivities, made up of people and organizations, are human, communicative, and historical networks that operate on global and local scales. They significantly impact people's daily lives and can materialize in both emancipation and self-governance projects, expressing the demands of various groups or social sectors (Peñuela, 2016).

Social movements have been classified into old and new: the former emerged during the development of capitalism in the context of industrialization, while the latter emerged in times of crisis of modernity, pointing out contradictions, inequalities, or consequences of industrial society and reacting to injustices that affect broad sectors of society. Sometimes, new social movements present characteristics similar to old ones, becoming considered a restoration of the latter or a reinterpretation of their ideas (Sola-Morales & Sabariego, 2020). Current movements are usually driven by feelings that generate pain, claims, action, struggle, and hope. They differ from those based on affinities to those whose identity is at the center of their existence (Bossio, 2020).

According to Sola-Morales and Sabariego (2020), in the research of social movements, the United States has prioritized analyzing organizational aspects and raising resources. At the same time, Europe has focused on understanding the motives and origin of the movements. However, in recent decades, the need has emerged to integrate both perspectives to offer a more complete analysis that covers aspects such as identities, culture, emotions, political processes, and opportunity structures. Likewise, it is crucial to recognize that the predominant approaches in global studies of social movements are biased towards countries in the global north, limiting the understanding of structural inequalities and violence in other regions. Regarding digital social movements, the fact that the Internet can perpetuate discriminatory practices on its platforms is overlooked, and its potential to generate commercial benefits is underestimated (Avellaneda & Velázquez, 2021). The limited attention to social movements outside the global north has also created a gap in the literature on these movements in much of the world, focusing predominantly on collective identity in European movements. Additionally, this situation is exacerbated by the hegemony of publications in English, which excludes Latin American academics and reflects an imbalance in academic representation, evidencing practices of reproduction and maintenance of hegemony in indexing (García-González & Bailey, 2021).

Due to the continuous transformation of political action, questions are raised about its meaning in current conditions, promoting reflections on how society adapts and gets involved in the political sphere (García, 2017). Contemporary social movements seek to modify agendas, cultures, imaginaries, practices, and political structures through protest and criticism. In recent decades, they have adopted a participatory and horizontal approach and an active political strategy. Challenging communication as a research and political project driven by technology, these movements have integrated diverse forms of communication, organization, and collective action online, extensively using technologies such as social networks, digital media, and private messaging services (García, 2017; Peñuela, 2016; Sola-Morales & Sabariego, 2020). They tend to organize themselves informally, promoting the equal participation of all people without hierarchies or external impositions, seeking consensus to respect the individual will of people (Bañuelos, 2010; Valadés, 2011).

The strategic role of digital technology in recent global social movements has demonstrated its transformative capacity, its influence on collective action, and the questioning of representative democracy. The appropriation of social networks has reconfigured the landscape by amplifying agendas excluded by traditional media and challenging the democratic system, making extensive use of digital technologies and employing them in communication, strategy, and identity construction (Sola-Morales & Sabariego, 2020). These social movements on the Internet are emerging political spaces that are critical tools for mobilization and collective action in various social sectors. Its adoption enhances participation and facilitates articulation with local, national, and global mobilizations, thus strengthening community practices and collective actions (Peñuela, 2016).

Information, especially on the Internet, becomes a vital resource, allowing the communication, organization, and dissemination of messages quickly and effectively, which can significantly facilitate dissemination beyond national borders (Valadés, 2011). However, it must be considered that what happens on digital platforms is not the cause but the consequence of an established socio-historical context. Therefore, some perspectives perceive them as mere amplifiers, while others recognize their innovative capacity and social reconfiguration, highlighting their mobilizing potential (Chiliquinga-Amaya, 2020). Since they facilitate the development of protests and the creation of activist networks, promoting less dense and more decentralized organizational structures (García-González & Bailey, 2021). The Internet has revolutionized communication by unifying formats such as radio, television, and written text, leveraging advancements in technology (Peñuela, 2016).

Two fundamental aspects characterize contemporary social movements. Firstly, they have a generational character, where young people with higher educational levels are prominent protagonists, challenging stereotypes and assuming significant political roles, especially in Latin American student movements. Secondly, they present a digital character marked by the use of the Internet as a fundamental tool for citizen protest, generating an international cycle of mobilizations and a global community that demands against precariousness, neoliberalism, and the recovery of democracy. This aspect has

sparked a debate about the potential of the Internet as an organizational, participatory, and empowerment tool in social movements (Sola-Morales & Sabariego, 2020).

While face-to-face activism remains valuable and essential for promoting a cause, the online world offers several significant benefits that cannot be ignored. Today, social movements are increasingly linked to ICT, and they use the rapid dissemination of information and symbolic techniques to communicate their message and challenge established structures (Valadés, 2011). This is evident with the increased political and social use of social media platforms such as Instagram, X (former Twitter), and YouTube (Bañuelos, 2010). Likewise, technological development has introduced practices, generating tools and forms of protest such as netstrike and electronic civil disobedience (Peñuela, 2016). This contributes to forming a collective political identity and allows organizations without a physical presence to have a transnational reach. That is how online tactics challenge the informational dominance of the extensive media and seek to influence the media agenda (Chiliquinga-Amaya, 2020).

Various forms of mobilization in the digital sphere increasingly stand out for promoting safe online spaces and advocating for a free Internet. These digital appropriation manifestations demonstrate ICT's relevance in social mobilization and collective action. Hacktivism, rooted in the fight against censorship and civil disobedience, leverages hacking techniques and digital tools to organize resistance and defend social justice online. For its part, cyberactivism focuses on the production and dissemination of information to influence the public agenda. At the same time, technopolitics addresses the different forms of mobilization on the Internet, seeking to generate counterpower towards hegemonic structures and promote social change (Avellaneda & Velázquez, 2021).

Also, digital commons are incorporated as a fundamental tool in the context of the social movement in the digital sphere since they are spaces of knowledge, information, and culture managed collaboratively and accessible to all people. Its importance lies in challenging the logic of privatization and profit that characterizes many aspects of the digital age, promoting instead the democratization of access to online resources. These spaces allow content to be shared and distributed freely, encouraging citizen participation in producing and managing said resources. By fostering a culture of collaboration and solidarity online, digital commons significantly impact the digital social movement by promoting equal opportunities, diversity of perspectives, and user empowerment. Furthermore, challenging the traditional intellectual property model, they construct a more inclusive, equitable, and participatory digital environment for all people (González-Véliz & de Andrés del Campo, 2023a).

### **3. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR CASE SELECTION**

The selection of cases in this study on social movements and digital appropriation in LAC follows a methodology based on contextual representativeness and diversity in technological use. The chosen movements reflect geographical breadth in the region and thematic diversity, encompassing struggles for gender rights, indigenous rights, and

resistance to neoliberal policies. This approach captures how digital technologies are appropriated across different sociopolitical and cultural contexts, enriching the understanding of collective action in LAC. Additionally, the selected movements demonstrate variability in digital tools and strategies, from decentralized structures to integrating traditional practices with technological innovations. Cases with significant public impact and documented evidence of digital activity were prioritized to avoid biases. While this selection provides meaningful representation, it is acknowledged that the analysis is partial and could be expanded to include other regions or less visible movements, offering new insights into the influence of digital technologies on activism in LAC.

#### **4. RESISTANCE AND MOBILIZATION: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND ONLINE CITIZEN MOBILIZATION IN LAC**

Social struggles in LAC are rooted in diversity and historical memory. They show persistent resistance over time, challenge conceptual schemes that reduce their adversary solely to the State, confront multinationals, and advocate for a broader vision of social transformation (Peñuela, 2016). The region, marked by a history of violence since the colonialist invasion and the imposition in the construction of identities, continues to confront various forms of domination and violence in contemporary times (Mendiola-Vásquez, 2022). In recent decades, there has been a sequence of protests and intense mobilizations motivated by the devastation caused by neoliberalism, the economic crisis, and the mismanagement of state resources. These events have sparked a reevaluation of representative democracy and traditional political parties. Also, they have fought for the rights of women, indigenous peoples, and socio-environmental conflicts. They have mobilized various groups and social movements throughout the region (Lago et al., 2021).

In recent periods, new forms of political participation have emerged, led by groups and citizen movements of various ages, driven by the massive use of digital social media devices and platforms. Although technologies are not the leading cause of these changes, they are used strategically to enhance their impact. The appropriation of these tools shapes perceptions, interactions, and social relationships, especially in LAC, where digital social networks have been intensely used for political intervention actions and expression of popular demands. These dynamics reflect a new power structure in the contemporary context, where the expansion of political practices through the formation of networks and the profound use of digital technologies highlight the influence and interconnection of these tools in the configuration of current political action (Bossio, 2020; Lago et al., 2021).

Digital technologies have become fundamental for social movements and are being adopted, adapted, and instrumental in their objectives. They have fostered cooperation between diverse groups, fusing emerging technologies with traditional ones such as radio and television. These tools facilitate the communication and circulation of content and are central to the movements' strategies and identity. The street mobilizations of the last decade rely on digital platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X, and YouTube, spreading viral messages that amplify citizen participation. The widespread use of smartphones

has taken these technologies beyond the personal or work sphere, integrating them into the public sphere and attracting both groups and individuals committed to their objectives (Lago et al., 2021).

The cyberactivism of the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional in 1994 marked a milestone in networked social movements in LAC. Using the Internet, they spread their message and fight against globalization, establishing contact with people worldwide and making their demands visible through web pages and communications. This example has been followed by other similar movements in the region (Avellaneda & Velázquez, 2021; García-González & Bailey, 2021; Puyosa, 2015).

The most significant student movements include the Mexican collective #YoSoy132, which emerged in May 2012, and the student mobilization in Chile in 2011. They used technologies as critical tools, including the Internet and social networks, to build a digital space for political struggle. Both movements were organized around four main areas: cyberactivism, physical demonstrations, assemblies, and artistic expressions. Although they used social networks to coordinate and disseminate actions, decision-making was centralized in the assemblies, seeking horizontal and political equality. Although #YoSoy132 did not achieve its objectives, it established a horizontal organization. At the same time, the Chilean Student Movement, rooted in pre-existing student structures, had a more extended mobilization rooted in national politics. Despite their differences, both influenced political participation and social organization, promoting inclusive and diverse participation in a political legitimacy crisis and highlighting the need to reflect on new forms of politics and the role of citizens in the political future (García, 2017).

These student movements have led to numerous rebellions in the region, showing the capacity of youth to organize and mobilize both online and in public spaces (Lago et al., 2021). Furthermore, they were crucial to developing a new paradigm in activism and citizen participation, largely thanks to information and communication technologies, especially social networks on the Internet and private messaging services (Sola-Morales & Sabariego, 2020).

#### **4.1 ARGENTINA: STUDENT PROTESTS AND MOVEMENTS #NIUNAMENOS, #FUERAMONSANTO AND #SINZOO**

In Argentina, digital technologies have promoted student movements in years such as 2010, 2013, and 2016, facilitating online articulation and counteracting the censorship of traditional media. The #NiUnaMenos rallies, started in 2015 by human rights and feminist organizations, have been replicated annually, evidencing the persistence of social movements. These events are supported by pre-existing organizations, which underlines their continuity and consolidation. Examples include the #FueraMonsanto movement, born in 2012 during the World Days of Struggle against Monsanto, and the animal rights organization #SinZoo, founded in 2014. Both use the Internet to disseminate information, coordinate actions, and mobilize social support, demonstrating how digital platforms strengthen citizen participation and amplify the impact of collective

actions. These cases illustrate how the Internet becomes an interactive space that transcends traditional communication channels and enhances the construction of mobilization networks (Lago et al., 2021).

#### **4.2 BRAZIL: MOVIMENTO DOS SEM TERRA AND PASSE LIVRE TRANSFORMING SOCIAL PARTICIPATION**

In Brazil, two movements exemplify the capacity of social mobilization to bring about significant change: the Movimento dos Sem Terra and the 2013 Porto Alegre protests. The Movimento dos Sem Terra, with decades of struggle, has focused its efforts on making visible the deep social inequalities, violence, and criminalization of landless peasants. This movement has not only denounced injustices but has also proposed alternative modes of social organization and resistance, highlighting the importance of land and widespread agrarian reform in the struggle for social justice (Castillo-González & Flores, 2021; Chaguaceda & Brancaloneo, 2010). On the other hand, the Porto Alegre protests, initiated by the Movimento Passe Livre against the increase in public transport fares, transformed into a vast national movement that attracted more than one million people. These demonstrations criticized transport policies and addressed issues such as government corruption, public spending, and the quality of urban services. Both movements have effectively used digital technologies to coordinate actions, disseminate information, and mobilize citizens, demonstrating how digital platforms can empower political participation and collective action in Brazil (Lago et al., 2021).

#### **4.3 CHILE: STUDENT MOBILIZATIONS FROM THE REVOLUCIÓN DE LOS PINGÜINOS IN 2006 AND THE SOCIAL OUTBREAK OF OCTOBER 2019**

The student mobilization in Chile, which began in 2011 and demanded the end of market education, abusive credit systems, and the selection filter, was rooted in the country's long history of social protest, dating back years with milestones such as the penguin revolution in 2006. It stood out for an aestheticized protest that included music, dance, theater, and audiovisual production in the streets, taking full advantage of the Internet and digital social networks. Students used YouTube to spread their demands and call for protests, evidencing a growing use of digital technologies as young people's technological learning advanced. In 2006, Fotolog was a valuable tool for disseminating demonstrations, while in 2011, the massive emergence of social media platforms expanded the possibilities of planning and developing dissemination techniques. These mobilizations had broad citizen support, which generated significant political and institutional changes in the country. Several spokespersons and leaders of the 2011 movement even reached Congress and later the Government, such as the president, Gabriel Borich Font, and the Minister Secretary General of Government, Camila Vallejo Dowling.

Furthermore, these mobilizations initiated a public debate that led to significant changes in educational legislation, such as the free education law, which had remained unchanged since the Pinochet dictatorship. Organized mainly through the Confederation



of Students of Chile and student assemblies, it adopted an arborescent structure with rotating leadership and spokespersons, showing notable organizational diversification. This form of organization lasted beyond the mobilizations, becoming a stable movement and organization (Chiliquinga-Amaya, 2020; García, 2017; Lago et al., 2021; Sola-Morales & Sabariego, 2020).

The Social Outbreak in Chile, which occurred in October 2019, was a momentous event in the country's history since the end of the dictatorship. Starting in Santiago, it soon spread to all regions, evidencing the deep social cracks at the national level. Triggered by the increase in metro fares in the capital, this event was much more than a simple protest over transport fares: it represented the malaise rooted in decades of economic and political inequalities, as well as in the perception of distance between the political class and citizens (Garretón, 2021; SpyerDulci & Alvarado, 2023). This led to the emergence of new social actors who, together with historical social movements, demanded structural changes. A notable change was marked, with young people from popular sectors leading demonstrations in the streets and on social networks. The dissemination of information about these protests focused mainly on digital platforms, eclipsing traditional media. The use of social networks facilitated this phenomenon. Under the slogan #ChileDespertó, millions expressed dissatisfaction with decades of policies that mainly affected the middle and working class. The emblematic #LaMarchaMásGrandeChile brought together more than 1,200,000 in the Plaza de la Dignidad, thus validating the movement before the country and the world (Cuadra, 2020; Jiménez-Yañez, 2020). In this context, digital technologies played a crucial role in facilitating, activating, and disseminating these demonstrations, promoting constant coordination at the national level and consolidating a social movement unprecedented in the digital era (SpyerDulci & Alvarado, 2023). Paradoxically, the solution came from the same rejected political class through the Agreement for Social Peace, which opened the door to a constituent process, which marked a significant break from the past by offering the opportunity to draft a new constitution by citizenship, contrasting with that imposed during the dictatorship. This resulted from the attempt to address the social and political demands of the outbreak (Garretón, 2021; Jiménez-Yañez, 2020).

#### **4.4 COLOMBIA: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AS AGENTS OF CHANGE AND GENERATORS OF KNOWLEDGE**

Social movements in Colombia face a series of challenges that include the presence of paramilitary guerrillas and large-scale mining projects. These movements are actors of social change and knowledge generators, highlighting their ability to offer unique perspectives on Colombian reality. With a diverse social base encompassing different ethnic, class, gender, and generational sectors, they recognize the importance of interculturality and the struggles against colonialism that date back to the 17th century. Social mobilization driven by the Internet has created numerous groups and organizations in both rural and urban areas, characterized by flexible information agendas influenced by young people and social movements over time. Furthermore, digital communication has

opened opportunities for interdisciplinary dialogue between academics, activists, and advocates for human rights. This highlights the importance of recognizing social movements as knowledge producers and agents of societal change (Peñuela, 2016).

#### **4.5 ECUADOR: MOVIMIENTO INDÍGENA ECUATORIANO AND THE PROTESTS AGAINST ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENT IN 2019**

In October 2019, Ecuador was rocked by widespread protests in response to economic adjustment measures announced by the government. The Movimiento Indígena Ecuatoriano emerged as a leader in the resistance, taking advantage of social networks to coordinate actions and disseminate information. After days of mobilization and pressure, the government agreed to negotiate with the Movimiento Indígena Ecuatoriano, culminating in repealing the controversial decree 883, which had eliminated fuel subsidies as part of a broader economic adjustment program tied to an International Monetary Fund agreement. This movement, rooted in the historical struggle for equality and against neoliberalism, adopted tactics such as marches, road blockades, and symbolic occupations, demonstrating solid organizational capacity and social leadership. Despite state repression and the media siege imposed by traditional media, the Movimiento Indígena Ecuatoriano maintained a prominent digital presence, using strategic hashtags and live broadcasts to counter the official narrative. The mobilization, which paralyzed the country for eleven days, represented a historic triumph and an example of how the digital repertoire can be a powerful resource in the social and political struggle, challenging the hegemony of conventional media and giving voice to popular demands (Chiliquinga-Amaya, 2020).

#### **4.6 MÉXICO: THE #YOsoy132 MOVEMENT AND MEDIA REFORM IN MEXICO**

The #YoSoy132 movement, initiated by students from the Universidad Iberoamericana, emerged in response to the lack of democratization in the media in Mexico. Its reach extended to other educational institutions, demanding equitable media coverage. It sparked widespread public debate about the deficiencies of the Mexican communications system, gaining strong citizen support and resulting in communications reform. Although it maintained a traditional political structure with assemblies as central bodies, it functioned as a rhizomatic and bifunctional organization, fusing the digital with the in-person. It advocated a politics of the self in pursuit of real democracy, distancing itself from conventional political divisions and rejecting the influence of the media (García, 2017; Sola-Morales & Sabariego, 2020).

#### **4.7 PERÚ: RESISTANCE AND MOBILIZATION AND THE ROLE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS IN POLITICAL CHANGE**

In November 2020, a massive mobilization in Peru, led mainly by young people, managed to overthrow the government imposed by Congress after the presidential

vacancy. Social media played a crucial role: hashtags like #MerinoNoEsMiPresidente spread widely, debates took place on Twitter (now X), and influencers endorsed the protests. In addition, K-pop groups countered adverse hashtags with fan cams. Fake news emerged to discredit the protest, orchestrated by both the Government and its supporters to associate it with terrorism. The mobilization knew how to adapt and appropriate the available technologies, which generated a sense of identity and solidarity among the participants. They learned from the mobilizations in Chile during the social outbreak of 2019, occupying various spaces in the city to disperse the repression and learning to deactivate tear gas bombs thanks to contacts with people from the Global South and videos on digital platforms. This protest revealed the influence of media and global culture, shaking the established power in Peru (Bossio, 2020).

#### **4.8 CYBERFEMINISM IN LAC: DIGITAL RESISTANCE AGAINST GENDER VIOLENCE. THE #NIUNAMENOS MOVEMENT IN THE REGION**

Cyberfeminism has emerged over the last three decades as a term that links feminism with digital technologies to promote gender equality and female participation in the public sphere (Soria, s.d.). It includes two overlapping currents that today exist simultaneously: the first, which emerged in the 1990s, celebrated the connections between women and technology, using the Internet as a tool of expression and activism to challenge gender stereotypes, and the second, emerging in the 2000s, adopted a more distinct political and social stance, engaging in broader struggles against gender inequalities and social exclusions, promoting a politically committed and critical cyberfeminism (González-Véliz & de Andrés del Campo, 2023b).

Cyberfeminism uses the Internet to establish links and alliances, focusing on women's critical positioning and training. These alliances seek to create spaces for collaboration and solidarity, promoting women's empowerment and active participation in various areas (Zafra, 2018). Four cyberfeminist manifestations address various dimensions of gender inequalities in technology. Cyberactivism uses social networks to disseminate information and mobilize society, challenging the hierarchy of power on the Internet. Hackfeminism questions patriarchy through the creation and use of technology, promoting free software and active participation in technological development. Technofeminism focuses on the inclusion of women in the technological field and challenging the norms that perpetuate gender exclusion in this field. Finally, data feminism seeks to use data science to address social, political, and economic inequalities from an intersectional perspective, challenging dominant narratives and promoting gender justice and equity. These manifestations reflect the diversity of approaches and strategies within cyberfeminism to transform gender relations in the technological environment (González-Véliz & de Andrés del Campo, 2023b).

In Latin America, cyberfeminism has become a dynamic and constantly evolving practice where women explore the intersection between gender, technology, and society from contextualized experiences. Social problems and power dynamics have been

identified and critically analyzed. They generate significant changes through various actions, thus promoting a more equitable society for everyone (Blinder, 2017). A notable case is the Ni Una Menos movement, which has played a crucial role in denouncing violence against women in the region, making the most of ICTs as instruments of organization and resistance. The region faces situations of violence, mainly directed towards women, with worrying rates of femicides. Femicide, as a form of genocide against women, originates in historical conditions that facilitate violent attacks against their lives and integrity. Although it was an academic concept initially, its understanding has spread through digital technologies (Mendiola-Vásquez, 2022).

The Ni Una Menos movement has emerged as a forceful response to the chilling reality of femicides and deep-rooted sexist violence in the region. Through digital technologies, such as social networks and cyberactivism platforms, this movement has managed to amplify its voice and make gender violence visible in an unprecedented way. In countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, Peru, El Salvador, and Mexico, activists have used hashtags such as #NiUnaMenos and #NiUnaMenosBolivia to disseminate information, call for mobilizations, and raise awareness about the urgency of addressing the structural roots of sexist violence. In addition, they have utilized social networks to publicly denounce cases of femicide, demand action from the government and authorities, and promote solidarity between feminist groups and civil society organizations. However, despite these efforts, violence against women persists, underscoring the urgent need for profound cultural and legal change to guarantee the safety and rights of all women and girls in Latin America (Mendiola-Vásquez, 2022).

Cyberfeminism seeks to change technological narratives and practices through various strategies, such as using social networks and forming online communities. However, it faces challenges such as digital divides that exclude women from full participation in the digital age. Overcoming these gaps and achieving technological sovereignty is essential to promote regional inclusion and equality. Despite the challenges, cyberfeminism in the region continues to evolve, adopting new strategies and expanding its scope to address the complexities of gender inequalities in the digital age (González-Véliz and de Andrés del Campo, 2023b).

## **5. THE INFLUENCE OF THE INTERNET ON MIGRATORY SOCIAL MOVEMENTS**

In the new millennium, migratory movements have grown due to improved connectivity and communication. Technology has blurred borders, allowing instantaneous closeness between places. That has created a new migration era characterized by rapid and dynamic flows (Peñaranda-Cólera, 2011). International migration is a growing phenomenon with significant economic, social, and political impacts worldwide. According to United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2020, p. 5) estimates, in 2020, 281,000,000 people lived outside their countries of origin, representing 3.6% of the world's population. The North American region hosted the majority of Latin American and Caribbean migrants, followed by Europe, where Spain

was the main destination. Between 2000 and 2020, Latin America and the Caribbean experienced the most significant relative growth in intraregional migration worldwide. However, migration to the United States from Mexico and Central America continues to be the main migratory feature of the region (Cecchini & Martínez Pizarro, 2023).

Migrants face several challenges when trying to settle in a new country. These challenges include difficulty accessing decent jobs, social protection, healthcare, education, and housing. These barriers are aggravated by the complexity of regularizing their immigration status and the lack of institutions that facilitate their integration into the workforce, contributing to the shortage of decent jobs in the region. Mixed flows characterize international migration, including people in irregular and vulnerable situations. In transit to the United States, mobility in caravans and migration of unaccompanied children is observed in Central America and Mexico. Other irregular routes in South America, such as the Colchane border crossing, have resulted in loss of life. Despite these challenges, orderly and regular migration can benefit economic development by increasing labor supply and sending remittances. Although progress has been made in rights-respecting migration management, delays and restrictive policies persist. It is crucial to guarantee the safety, dignity, and rights of migrants and promote their integration to fully make the most of their potential, as they are often not perceived as full members of the receiving community, which highlights the need to work on inclusion and recognition of their contributions (Cecchini & Martínez Pizarro, 2023; Morales & Rodríguez, 2008).

Internet access has expanded opportunities for online participation, becoming a fundamental tool for those who do not require specialized computer knowledge. This has allowed migrants to remain connected across multiple geographically distant contexts. Moreover, it facilitates the creation of transnational networks by connecting people worldwide, including global diasporas, providing unlimited and diverse access from any connected device. In addition to providing access to information about the destination before migrating and providing security during the process, ICT allows access to media and cultural products in the mother tongue. They facilitate connection with family, friends, and social networks in both places, influencing the construction of migrant identity and mitigating nostalgia due to separation. Likewise, they transform cultural uses by enhancing the fluidity of emotional ties and reducing the feeling of rupture caused by distance (Melella, 2014, 2016; Peñaranda-Cólera, 2011).

Also, the expansion of the Internet has streamlined the coordination of social movements, such as the one triggered by House of Representatives 4437 (2005) in December 2005 in the United States. This legislation, known as the Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act, caused an unprecedented mobilization in the American Latino community. Pro-immigrant organizations confronted the anti-immigrant offensive with marches and boycotts in 250 cities, demonstrating remarkable unity. Student mobilization complemented traditional leadership, and a binational civil society emerged, led by Mexican communities. During the spring marches, Hispanic students demanded the DREAM Act of 2011. At the same time, undocumented workers

challenged racism and conservatism. The broad participation, especially of young people, underscored the potential of undocumented migrants as a social force. Backed by unions, churches, and Spanish-language media, the migrant movement led the mobilization, attracting other organizations and institutions and creating a network of movements. The convergence of these forces explains the forcefulness of the movement, which led to the only national strike of workers in the country's history (Santamaría, 2007).

In 2023, the number of undocumented migrants in the United States was estimated to be approximately 11,7 million (Warren, 2024). In 2012, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (<https://www.uscis.gov/DACA>) was implemented. It has benefited approximately 700,000 young people, allowing them to obtain social security, state identification, legal access to education and employment, and reside without fear of deportation for at least two years. However, this only reached one-seventh of undocumented young people, sparking controversy and criticism in the community. Mobilizing through digital tools to strengthen their collective action and increase their political presence, they have grouped themselves into movements such as Undocuyouth. These movements not only seek the recognition of citizenship but also the recognition of their importance in society and the right to a dignified life.

Additionally, some people have Advance Parole, an early re-entry permit, used for academic internships, and share their experiences in digital projects such as *Undocutravellers*. Despite the risks and criticism, they continue to motivate others online. Pro-migrant organizations make visible the extensive use of digital tools, from Google to social networks and messaging applications, for communication, coordination, and fundraising. Ultimately, the challenge for many undocumented migrant activists is learning to use digital tools strategically to take advantage of their potential without overly exposing themselves (Sánchez de la Vega, 2021).

## 6. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF DIGITAL APPROPRIATION IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN LAC

The social appropriation of information technologies allows people to use Internet platforms for activist purposes, challenging authoritarian and imposing stances. This appropriation gives meaning and usefulness to technologies, adapting them to the needs and objectives of each person. With the proliferation of smartphones and social networks, these platforms have become central for organizing and disseminating activities and demonstrations in public spaces. People not only use them as dissemination tools but also adapt them and create personalized digital mechanisms for their purposes, including preserving their security and privacy. These links with technologies are central to their action repertoires, organizational strategies, and identity, thus expanding their collective action (Avellaneda & Velázquez, 2021; Lago et al., 2021; Valadés, 2011).

With this, the Latin American social movements of recent decades show a strong mobilization of technologies influenced by the cultural and daily environment of people. This appropriation manifests when they attribute a sense of belonging to technological

tools, valuing them and using them to satisfy individual and collective needs and interests (Lago et al., 2021). However, it is important to consider digital gaps when analyzing the genuine opportunities for digital uses in the region (Bañuelos, 2010). Inequalities in access and use of digital technologies are not neutral and can exacerbate social exclusions, especially during crises. In order to avoid new processes of exclusion and strengthen collective action, it is crucial to understand and address these gaps. The persistence and deepening of inequalities represent a significant challenge for collective action and collaboration (García-González & Bailey, 2021).

Furthermore, it is essential to recognize that digital appropriation encompasses both social movements and extremist groups, who find the Internet a means to perpetuate discrimination and violence against vulnerable groups. They can gain prominence in recommendation algorithms, attracting individuals without a prior political inclination to extremist spaces. It is essential to avoid utopian or dystopian views of technology and understand its role within its appropriate context. The Internet does not always generate positive transformations since some digital spaces reinforce hate speech and maintain the status quo. Recognizing this complexity implies avoiding a deterministic approach to the impact of technology on society (Avellaneda & Velázquez, 2021).

For its part, it is important not to overestimate the transformative power of ICTs since they do not generate revolutions or change political regimes. Instead, they amplify and disseminate information that mobilizes citizens. It is essential to avoid idealizing them; they should rather be seen as instruments that enhance new political participation from existing social dynamics. Social movements have achieved a global character with them, redefining terms, means, and ends of social struggles, especially in the Global South (García, 2017; Sola-Morales & Sabariego, 2020).

The paradigm of digital social movements demands a reevaluation of political and communication models toward a participatory inclusion of citizens in decision-making and knowledge production. Despite digital divides and authoritarian traditions, LAC has a trend towards practices closer to deliberative democracy, with actions aimed at building more just and egalitarian social environments. However, the predominant influence of the logic of the market economy in communication and information in the region, with little social responsibility on the part of the extensive media and legislation that favors media monopolies, hinders the promotion of diversity and equitable access to information (Avellaneda & Velázquez, 2021; Bañuelos, 2010).

Therefore, it is crucial to consider that the influence of the Internet on social movements can generate tensions and conflicts due to power dynamics and economic interests. The belief in egalitarian transformation through the web could be complex since factors such as censorship and manipulation can hinder this process (García-González & Bailey, 2021; Peñuela, 2016), especially in the era of fake news, where authoritarian movements emerge that hinder open dialogue (Sola-Morales & Sabariego, 2020). Therefore,

recognizing the underlying interests in Internet platforms, especially social media, is essential to understand their function as tools and recognize how they can promote specific interests instead of general well-being (Valadés, 2011).

Therefore, it is crucial to reflect on digital skills, types, and forms of digital appropriation and adopt a critical awareness of online practices and their impact on the digital sphere. Likewise, confront the challenges inherent to the digital divide, the influence of extremist anti-rights groups, the danger of overestimating the transformative power of ICT, the predominance of market logic in digital communication, and the possible generation of tensions and conflicts online due to power dynamics and economic interests. Only by recognizing and addressing these challenges is it possible to fully harness the potential of the digital space as a tool for social mobilization and citizen participation.

## 7. FINAL THOUGHTS

Analyzing digital appropriation by social movements in LAC reveals a complex interaction between digital technology and collective action. Throughout this work, the challenges and opportunities that social movements face in their relationship with digital technology have been explored, as well as the strategies and practices they have developed to maximize the potential of digital tools in promoting social and political change in the region.

First, it examined how the expansion of ICTs has transformed the political and social landscape in LAC, providing new opportunities for organization, mobilization, and citizen participation. The proliferation of digital platforms has allowed social movements to amplify their voices, build solidarity networks, and make visible issues previously marginalized by traditional media. They use various digital strategies to challenge the status quo and promote social justice in the region.

However, this analysis has also highlighted social movements' challenges and obstacles in their relationship with digital technology. Digital divides, online censorship, online hate discourse, information manipulation, and state surveillance represent severe obstacles to collective action and the defense of human rights in the region. Despite these challenges, analysis of digital appropriation also reveals significant transformative potential. Social movements' ability to adapt and use digital tools creatively and strategically has allowed the construction of more inclusive, diverse, and resilient movements in the region. From promoting gender equality to defending indigenous and environmental rights, social movements in LAC are using digital technologies to expand the reach and effectiveness of their struggles.

Furthermore, it has been observed how digital appropriation reflects the socioeconomic, political, and cultural realities of the region. The diversity of approaches and strategies that characterize digital appropriation reflects the complexity and richness of social struggles. From rural communities to urban centers, from student movements to



labor unions, digital appropriation is diverse and multifaceted, reflecting the plurality of experiences and perspectives.

Ultimately, the analysis of digital appropriation in LAC underscores the importance of addressing the structural inequalities that underlie collective action in the region. Digital divides, the concentration of power in the hands of a few actors, and the influence of economic and political interests represent severe obstacles to constructing more just and equitable societies. However, by recognizing and addressing these challenges, it is possible to strengthen collective action and promote social justice.

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