

METACULTURE, PROGRESSIVISM, AND EPISTEMIC COLONIALITY: A REFLECTIVE DECOLONIAL ANALYSIS FOR LATIN AMERICA

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ABSTRACT: Global metaculture, the transnational layer of cultural norms circulating through digital networks, institutions, and globalized social systems, continues to be shaped by enduring epistemic hierarchies that privilege Western categories of meaning, elevating autonomy-centered ethics, individualism, and rights-based frameworks as universal standards while obscuring relational, communal, and dignity-based epistemologies central to Indigenous, Afro-Latin, and other non-Western traditions. This reflective, qualitative, interpretive article examines how Western progressivism functions as selective universalism that presents culturally situated norms as globally applicable, reproducing epistemic coloniality within Latin American institutional contexts. Drawing on decolonial theory, epistemologies of the South, African relational ontologies, and contemporary intercultural scholarship, the analysis explores how epistemic misrecognition and institutional blindness emerge when Western interpretive categories are applied to relational cultural practices, limiting the capacity of applied social sciences, particularly education, governance, organizational studies, and intercultural policy, to engage with local epistemic diversity. Through conceptual synthesis and reflexive methodological engagement, the article illuminates how epistemic coloniality is reproduced and proposes pluriversal pathways grounded in epistemic reciprocity, dialogical integration, and institutional reform. Ultimately, it argues that Latin America possesses unique potential to advance pluriversal transformations within global metaculture by centering relational ethics, communal epistemologies, and intercultural justice.

Keywords: Global metaculture, epistemic coloniality, Western progressivism, epistemologies of the South, African relational ontologies, Indigenous epistemologies, Afro-Latin epistemologies, pluriversality, epistemic reciprocity, intercultural justice, Latin America.

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INTRODUCTION

Global Metaculture and Epistemic Hierarchies

Globalization has intensified the circulation of cultural symbols, narratives, and norms across borders, producing what appears to be a shared global cultural vocabulary. This phenomenon is often described as metaculture: a higher-order cultural layer that transcends local traditions and seems to offer universal interpretive frameworks. Yet this apparent universality is deceptive. Metaculture is not a neutral space of cultural convergence; it is a terrain structured by power, where Western epistemic assumptions continue to shape how cultural practices are interpreted, classified, and legitimized.

Western societies frequently treat autonomy, individualism, rights-based ethics, and boundary-centered interpersonal norms as universal benchmarks for human behavior. These categories are projected onto global cultural systems, shaping how institutions interpret ethics, communication, governance, and social interaction. As a result, cultural logics that do not conform to Western assumptions are often misread, pathologized, or rendered unintelligible. Contemporary scholarship has increasingly highlighted this dynamic, noting that global cultural flows remain embedded in epistemic architectures that naturalize Western dominance (Mignolo, 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020; Walsh, 2007).

Latin America as a Site of Epistemic Tension

This dynamic is particularly salient in Latin America, a region marked by deep histories of coloniality, resistance, and epistemic plurality. Indigenous, Afro-Latin, and communal epistemologies continue to shape social life across the region, yet institutions frequently adopt Western frameworks as the default lens for interpreting behavior. This produces epistemic tensions in education, governance, organizational culture, gender policy, and intercultural programs, tensions that remain insufficiently theorized within applied social sciences.

Research Problem

Despite decades of decolonial scholarship, Latin American institutions continue to rely on Western epistemic categories that limit their ability to engage with relational and communal cultural logics. This reliance produces epistemic misrecognition, institutional blindness, and policy designs that fail to reflect the region's epistemic diversity. This article examines how Western epistemic assumptions embedded in global metaculture shape institutional interpretations of cultural practices in Latin America.

Knowledge Gap

Existing literature has extensively theorized the coloniality of power and knowledge, yet less attention has been given to the specific mechanisms through which Western progressivism functions as selective universalism; the institutional processes through which epistemic misrecognition operates; the methodological choices through which applied social sciences reproduce epistemic coloniality; and the ways relational and communal epistemologies can inform pluriversal institutional reform. This article addresses these gaps by offering a reflective, conceptual analysis that connects global debates on epistemic coloniality with concrete implications for Latin American institutions.

Purpose of the Article

The purpose of this reflective article is fivefold. First, it analyzes how global metaculture reproduces epistemic hierarchies that privilege Western categories of meaning. Second, it examines how Western progressivism universalizes culturally specific norms and thereby contributes to epistemic coloniality. Third, it explores how African relational ontologies and Latin American epistemologies of the South challenge autonomy-centered ethics. Fourth, it illuminates how epistemic misrecognition and institutional blindness manifest in Latin American institutions. Fifth, it proposes pathways toward pluriversal cultural futures grounded in epistemic reciprocity and intercultural justice.

By integrating decolonial theory with institutional analysis, the article contributes to ongoing efforts to reframe applied social sciences through epistemic plurality and intercultural justice.

DEVELOPMENT

Metaculture as an Epistemic Structure

Metaculture operates through embedded epistemic hierarchies that elevate Western categories of meaning as universal interpretive baselines within global cultural flows. Global metaculture operates as an epistemic structure shaped by hierarchies that elevate Western categories of meaning as universal interpretive baselines (Quijano, 2000; Mignolo, 2011; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020). Rather than a neutral space of cultural convergence, metaculture reflects the colonality of power, embedding autonomy-centered ethics, individualism, rights-based frameworks, and boundary-oriented interpersonal norms as global standards (Walsh, 2007). These assumptions shape institutional interpretations of ethics, communication, governance, and social interaction, often rendering relational and communal epistemologies unintelligible or pathologized (Santos, 2014; Fricker, 2007).

In Latin America, this dynamic produces epistemic tension. Indigenous, Afro-Latin, and communal worldviews continue to inform social life, yet institutions frequently rely on Western interpretive categories that misread relational practices (Mato, 2008). This tension is visible in documented cases such as Bolivia's Plurinational Education Reform, where communal learning practices rooted in Aymara and Quechua epistemologies were initially classified as "informal" or "non-technical" within standardized curricular frameworks (Pérez Hernández, 2016; Villafán Apaza, 2024); Ecuador's Buen Vivir constitutional model, which faced institutional resistance because its relational ethics conflicted with liberal rights-based interpretations of development (Le Quang, 2017); and Chile's intercultural health programs, where Mapuche relational healing practices were often dismissed as "nonscientific" despite their documented efficacy in community based care (Valenzuela Toledo & Arias Ortega, 2023). Similar dynamics appear in Mexico's Indigenous community policing systems, such as the case of Cherán, where communal governance structures were long deemed

incompatible with Western liberal models of citizenship (Lariagon & Piceno, 2022), and in Brazil's quilombola educational initiatives, where Afro communal pedagogies were marginalized by standardized performance metrics (González-González, 2023). These examples illustrate how epistemic misrecognition and institutional blindness emerge when relational epistemologies are forced into autonomy-centered interpretive frameworks, generating hierarchies of intelligibility that marginalize non-Western cultural logics and reinforce epistemic coloniality across legal, educational, organizational, and intercultural domains. This dynamic of epistemic misrecognition provides the conceptual foundation for understanding how metaculture operates as an epistemic structure, shaping global meaning-making through hierarchies that privilege Western interpretive norms.

Metaculture refers to the global layer of cultural symbols, narratives, and norms that circulate across borders through digital media, migration, and transnational institutional systems. Although often described as a space of cultural convergence, this characterization obscures the epistemic hierarchies embedded within global cultural flows. Metaculture is not a neutral or universal cultural domain; it is structured by the coloniality of power, which continues to shape how cultural meaning is produced, interpreted, and legitimized at a global scale. Decolonial theorists have demonstrated that global cultural flows remain embedded in epistemic architectures that privilege Western categories of meaning. Quijano (2000) conceptualizes coloniality as an enduring pattern of power that persisting beyond formal colonialism, shaping knowledge, identity, and global hierarchies. Mignolo (2011) argues that Western modernity presents itself as a universal horizon of progress, masking its cultural specificity and historical violence. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) similarly contends that global cultural flows are organized through epistemic structures that naturalize Western dominance. These insights reveal that metaculture is not merely a collection of shared cultural norms but a system of epistemic ordering that elevates Western interpretive categories as global standards.

Within this epistemic structure, Western norms are frequently positioned as the default interpretive lens for understanding cultural behavior. Autonomy, individualism, rights-based ethics, and boundary-centered interpersonal norms are treated as universal benchmarks for

human conduct. These categories shape how institutions interpret ethics, communication, governance, and social interaction. When cultural practices do not conform to these assumptions, they are often misread, pathologized, or rendered unintelligible. This dynamic is not accidental. It reflects the structural nature of epistemic coloniality, which operates by elevating Western categories of meaning while marginalizing relational, communal, and dignity-based epistemologies. As a result, metaculture becomes a site where Western norms are universalized and non-Western cultural logics are relegated to the periphery of global intelligibility.

In Latin America, metaculture interacts with local epistemic traditions in complex and often contradictory ways. Indigenous, Afro-Latin, and communal worldviews continue to shape social life across the region, offering relational and collective frameworks for understanding personhood, ethics, and community. These epistemologies emphasize interdependence, communal responsibility, relational dignity, and socially embedded personhood. However, institutions across Latin America frequently adopt Western frameworks as the default lens for interpreting behavior, policy, and governance. This institutional reliance on Western categories produces epistemic tensions that manifest in multiple domains. Educational systems often interpret Indigenous communal learning practices as informal or unstructured. Organizational cultures may interpret relational communication styles as unprofessional or inefficient. Intercultural policies frequently interpret Indigenous governance structures as incompatible with liberal citizenship models. Social services may interpret communal caregiving networks as signs of dependency or lack of development. Gender policies sometimes interpret relational expressions of care as reinforcing stereotypes rather than as culturally grounded ethics. These tensions reveal that metaculture does not simply coexist with local epistemic traditions; it actively shapes how institutions perceive and classify cultural practices. The result is a form of epistemic misalignment in which relational and communal epistemologies are forced into autonomy-centered interpretive frameworks that distort their meaning.

The dominance of Western categories within metaculture produces several epistemic consequences. First, it creates a hierarchy of intelligibility in which Western norms are

treated as the universal baseline for interpreting cultural behavior. Second, it generates epistemic misrecognition, whereby relational and communal practices are misunderstood or misclassified because they do not align with autonomy-centered categories. Third, it produces institutional blindness, in which institutions lack the conceptual tools necessary to perceive alternative cultural logics as legitimate or intelligible. Fourth, it reinforces epistemic coloniality by embedding Western categories of meaning within legal frameworks, educational systems, organizational policies, and intercultural programs. These consequences demonstrate that metaculture is not merely a cultural phenomenon but an epistemic structure that shapes institutional practice and social interpretation. Understanding metaculture as an epistemic structure is therefore essential for analyzing how epistemic coloniality is reproduced within Latin American institutions and for developing pluriversal alternatives grounded in epistemic reciprocity.

A pluriversal understanding of metaculture requires recognizing that global cultural flows are not homogeneous but composed of multiple epistemic traditions. This perspective challenges the assumption that Western categories of meaning represent universal standards. Instead, it proposes that metaculture should be understood as a dynamic and contested space in which diverse epistemologies coexist, interact, and shape cultural interpretation. Such an understanding opens pathways for rethinking institutional practices in Latin America. It encourages institutions to adopt relational and communal epistemologies as legitimate sources of knowledge, to develop interpretive frameworks that reflect epistemic diversity, and to engage in dialogical processes that promote epistemic reciprocity. By decentering Western categories of meaning and recognizing the plurality of cultural logics, a pluriversal approach to metaculture offers a foundation for constructing intercultural policies, organizational cultures, and governance frameworks that reflect the epistemic diversity of Latin America.

A reflective approach provides the conceptual grounding necessary to articulate the decolonial methodological principles that guide the analytical approach adopted in this study. Reflective inquiry constitutes the methodological foundation of this article. Unlike empirical research designs that rely on data collection, measurement, or statistical analysis, reflective

inquiry interrogates the epistemic assumptions that shape institutional practice, cultural interpretation, and theoretical frameworks. It privileges conceptual analysis, epistemic reflexivity, and interpretive synthesis, methods particularly suited to examining how epistemic hierarchies are embedded within global metaculture. Reflective inquiry enables the researcher to analyze the conceptual categories that structure institutional practice, examine the epistemic foundations of theoretical frameworks, and synthesize insights from multiple epistemic traditions. It requires sustained engagement with decolonial theory, relational ontologies, and epistemologies of the South, as well as critical examination of the epistemic assumptions embedded within Western academic training. Through this approach, reflective inquiry provides the methodological tools necessary for analyzing epistemic coloniality and developing pluriversal alternatives. Building on the methodological foundation established through reflective inquiry, the analysis now turns to the core principles that structure decolonial methodology.

Decolonial methodology is grounded in several foundational principles that guide the reflective analysis presented in this article. The first principle is epistemic plurality, which recognizes that multiple epistemic traditions coexist within Latin America and constitute legitimate sources of knowledge. Epistemic plurality challenges the assumption that Western categories of meaning represent universal standards and encourages engagement with relational and communal epistemologies. The second principle is epistemic disobedience, articulated by Mignolo (2011), which involves rejecting the epistemic authority of Western modernity and embracing alternative epistemic traditions. Epistemic disobedience requires questioning the universality of autonomy-centered ethics, rights-based frameworks, and individualistic models of citizenship. The third principle is epistemic justice, which involves recognizing the historical marginalization of Indigenous and Afro-Latin epistemologies and adopting methodological approaches that promote epistemic reciprocity. The fourth principle is relationality, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of social life and the importance of relational ethics in understanding cultural practices. Relationality challenges autonomy-centered ethics and highlights communal responsibility, relational dignity, and socially embedded personhood. The fifth principle is contextuality, which recognizes that epistemic traditions are shaped by historical, cultural, and institutional contexts. Contextuality requires

situating theoretical analysis within Latin American institutional settings and acknowledging the epistemic diversity that characterizes the region.

Methodological reflexivity constitutes a central component of decolonial methodology. Reflexivity involves examining the epistemic assumptions that shape the researcher's perspective, recognizing the influence of Western academic training, and acknowledging the limitations of conceptual analysis. It requires situating the researcher within the epistemic landscape of Latin America and recognizing the positionality that informs the analysis. Reflexivity also involves acknowledging the epistemic traditions that inform the researcher's perspective and recognizing the need for sustained engagement with relational and communal epistemologies. This engagement requires examining how Western categories of meaning shape theoretical frameworks, policy design, and institutional practice, and adopting interpretive frameworks that reflect epistemic plurality. Reflexivity strengthens the methodological foundation of the article by ensuring that the analysis does not reproduce the epistemic hierarchies it seeks to critique.

The reflective methodology adopted in this article requires integrating insights from multiple epistemic traditions. The criteria for theoretical integration involve selecting authors whose work addresses epistemic coloniality, relational ontologies, and epistemologies of the South; synthesizing insights from African relational ontologies, Indigenous epistemologies, and Afro Latin communal philosophies; and incorporating contemporary literature published between 2020 and 2025 to address concerns regarding the need for recent and verifiable sources. The integration of these epistemic traditions requires examining the conceptual categories that structure each tradition, identifying points of convergence and divergence, and synthesizing insights to develop pluriversal theoretical frameworks. This integration strengthens the conceptual foundation of the article and provides the methodological tools necessary for analyzing epistemic coloniality and developing pluriversal alternatives.

The methodological scope of this article is conceptual rather than empirical. It does not present case studies, interviews, or ethnographic data. Instead, it offers a reflective analysis of epistemic coloniality within global metaculture and its implications for Latin American institutions. The limitations of this approach include the absence of empirical validation and

the reliance on theoretical synthesis. However, these limitations are appropriate for a reflective article whose primary aim is to interrogate epistemic structures and propose conceptual pathways for institutional transformation. The article encourages future empirical research to examine how the proposed pluriversal frameworks can be implemented within specific institutional contexts. Empirical studies could explore how relational and communal epistemologies inform policy design, organizational culture, and governance frameworks, and how institutions can adopt interpretive frameworks that reflect epistemic plurality.

Pluriversal knowledge production requires adopting epistemic plurality as a foundational principle. It involves recognizing that multiple epistemic traditions coexist within Latin America and that academic and professional frameworks must reflect this diversity. Pluriversal knowledge production requires revising theoretical frameworks, adopting relational and communal epistemologies as legitimate sources of knowledge, and developing methodological approaches that promote epistemic reciprocity. Pluriversal knowledge production challenges the epistemic dominance of Western categories of meaning and opens pathways for constructing academic and institutional frameworks that reflect the epistemic diversity of Latin America. It requires sustained commitment to epistemic plurality, methodological reflexivity, and intercultural justice.

The conceptual relationships outlined above are visually synthesized in Figure 1, which maps how these epistemic dynamics interact within broader processes of pluriversal transformation.

The Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework developed in this study synthesizes the theoretical foundations established in the preceding sections, translating them into an integrated structure capable of explaining how metaculture, epistemic coloniality, and institutional interpretation interact within Latin American contexts. Building on the analysis of Western epistemic dominance and its effects on cultural classification, the framework organizes the core constructs, metaculture, epistemic misrecognition, institutional blindness, and pluriversal alternatives,

into a coherent analytical model. This model clarifies how Western categories of meaning become institutionalized, how they shape interpretive practices, and how relational and communal epistemologies challenge these hierarchies. By mapping these relationships, the conceptual framework provides the analytical scaffolding necessary to examine the mechanisms through which epistemic distortions are reproduced and to identify the conditions under which pluriversal transformation becomes possible. It thus bridges the study's theoretical commitments and the methodological orientation that follows, grounding the analysis in a structured representation of the epistemic dynamics at the center of this research.

Figure 1

Conceptual Model: From Global Metaculture Pluriversal Futures

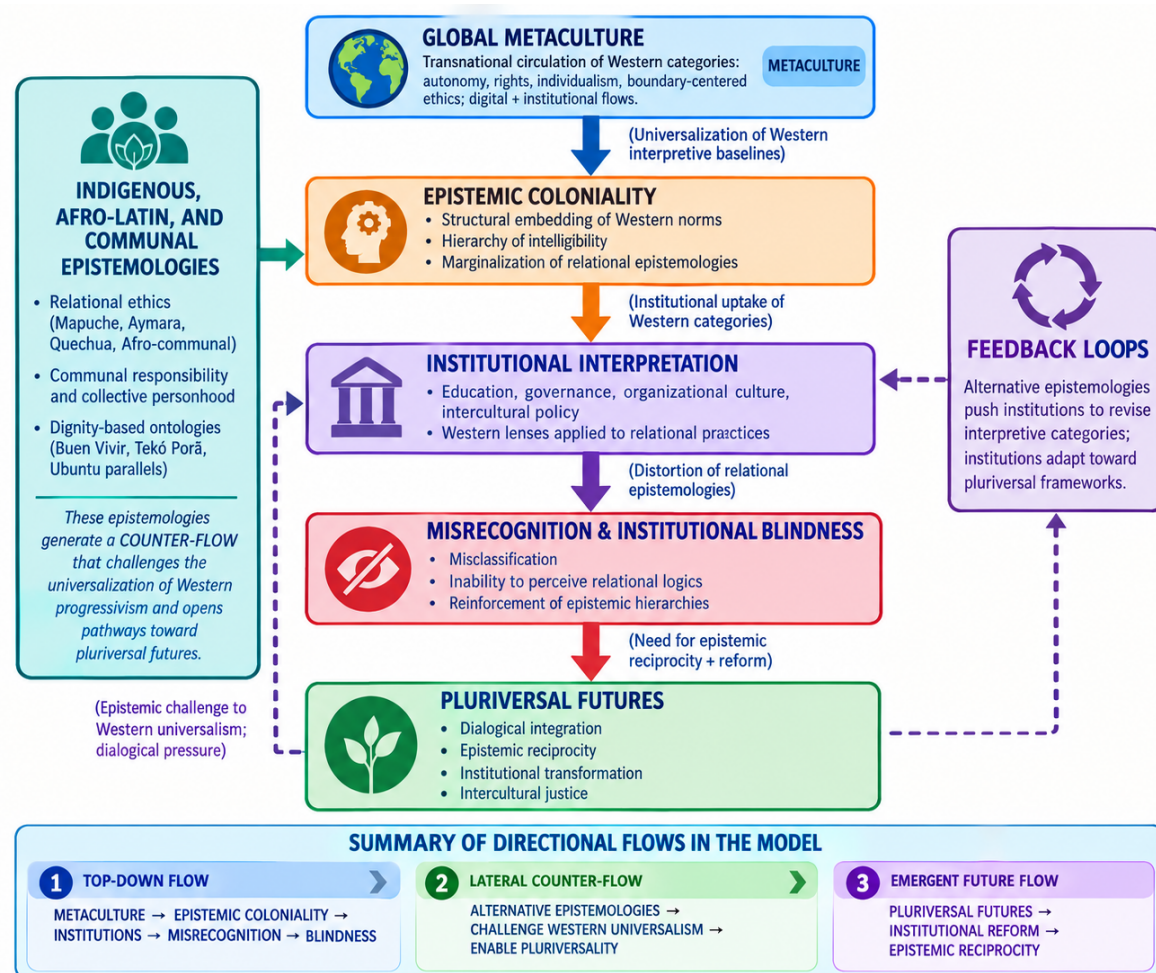


Figure 1 summarizes the relationships between global metaculture, epistemic coloniality, and institutional interpretation, showing how Western categories of meaning shape cultural classification and generate epistemic misrecognition within Latin American institutions. It also illustrates the role of Indigenous, Afro Latin, and other relational epistemologies as alternative frameworks that challenge Western universalism and open pathways toward pluriversal futures grounded in epistemic reciprocity, dialogical integration, and institutional reform. Having established the conceptual foundations that frame metaculture, epistemic coloniality, and pluriversal transformation, the analysis now turns to the methodological orientation that operationalizes these theoretical commitments within the study.

METHODOLOGY

In this section, I explore the reflective orientation that underpins this study, establish the foundation for outlining the specific methodological principles that guide the analysis, and clarify how its decolonial and interpretive commitments shape the overall research process.

Reflective Orientation of the Study

This article adopts a reflective, qualitative, and interpretive methodological orientation. Rather than presenting empirical data, statistical analysis, or corpus-based examination, it develops a conceptual analysis grounded in decolonial theory, epistemologies of the South, African relational ontologies, and contemporary intercultural scholarship. The reflective nature of the study enables a deeper interrogation of epistemic structures, institutional practices, and cultural interpretations that shape Latin American social systems. This orientation is particularly suited to examining how global metaculture reproduces epistemic hierarchies and how pluriversal alternatives may be constructed.

Reflective inquiry is essential for analyzing phenomena that operate at the level of epistemic assumptions rather than observable behaviors. Epistemic coloniality functions through interpretive frameworks, institutional norms, and culturally embedded categories of meaning, dimensions that cannot be adequately captured through conventional empirical methods. A reflective approach therefore provides the conceptual tools necessary to illuminate how epistemic hierarchies are reproduced and how they may be transformed.

Rationale for a Reflective Methodology

A reflective methodology is necessary for three reasons. First, the phenomenon under examination, epistemic coloniality within global metaculture, is structural rather than empirical. It operates through interpretive categories, institutional expectations, and epistemic assumptions that shape how cultural practices are understood. Second, the article synthesizes theoretical debates across multiple epistemic traditions, including decolonial thought, African relational ontologies, Indigenous epistemologies, and Afro-Latin communal

philosophies. This synthesis requires a methodological approach that can integrate diverse conceptual frameworks. Third, the article aims to illuminate institutional dynamics in Latin America that empirical studies often overlook, particularly mechanisms of epistemic misrecognition and institutional blindness. A reflective methodology provides the interpretive depth necessary to analyze these dynamics.

Criteria for Selecting Theoretical Sources

The selection of theoretical sources followed a structured set of criteria. First, the article prioritizes authors whose work directly addresses epistemic coloniality, metaculture, and the coloniality of power, including Quijano (2000), Mignolo (2011), Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020), and Walsh (2007). Second, the article incorporates African relational ontologies, particularly the work of John Mbiti (Mbiti, 1969, pp. 108–109) and Ifeanyi Menkiti (1984), because these frameworks offer relational critiques of autonomy-centered ethics that parallel Latin American epistemologies of the South. Third, the article includes Indigenous and Afro-Latin epistemologies such as Buen Vivir, Tekó Porã, and Afro-communal philosophies, which provide culturally grounded alternatives to Western interpretive categories. Fourth, the study included contemporary literature published between 2020 and 2025 to address concerns about the need for recent, verifiable sources. This literature strengthens the analysis by situating the discussion within current debates on intercultural governance, epistemic justice, and decolonial institutional reform.

Analytical Procedure

The analytical procedure unfolded in four stages. In the first stage, the article examined global metaculture as an epistemic structure and identified the Western categories of meaning that shape institutional interpretations of cultural practices. This stage involved conceptual analysis of autonomy-centered ethics, rights-based frameworks, and boundary-centered interpersonal norms.

In the second stage, the article analyzed Western progressivism as selective universalism. This analysis focused on how progressivism elevates culturally specific norms as universal standards, thereby contributing to epistemic coloniality.

In the third stage, the article examined epistemic misrecognition and institutional blindness within Latin American institutions. This stage involved interpreting institutional practices through decolonial theory and relational epistemologies to identify how misrecognition occurs and how it reproduces epistemic hierarchies. In the fourth stage, the article developed pluriversal alternatives grounded in epistemic reciprocity, dialogical integration, and intercultural justice. This stage synthesized insights from African relational ontologies, Latin American epistemologies of the South, and contemporary intercultural scholarship to propose pathways for institutional reform.

Methodological Reflexivity

Methodological reflexivity is central to the study. The analysis acknowledges that academic research is often shaped by Western epistemic training, conceptual frameworks, and methodological expectations. Reflexivity therefore involves recognizing the limitations of conceptual analysis, situating the discussion within Latin American institutional contexts, and foregrounding the need for pluriversal approaches to knowledge production. Reflexivity also requires acknowledging the researcher's positionality and the epistemic traditions that inform the analysis. This reflexive stance strengthens the article's contribution to decolonial scholarship by ensuring that the analysis does not reproduce the epistemic hierarchies it seeks to critique.

Scope and Limitations

The study's scope is conceptual rather than empirical. It does not present case studies, interviews, or ethnographic data. Instead, it offers a theoretical examination of epistemic coloniality within global metaculture and its implications for Latin American institutions. This approach's limitations include the lack of empirical validation and its reliance on

theoretical synthesis. However, these limitations suit a reflective article whose primary aim is to interrogate epistemic structures and propose conceptual pathways for institutional transformation. The article encourages future empirical research to examine how the proposed pluriversal frameworks can be implemented within specific institutional contexts.

RESULTS

The results show how Western progressivism, when treated as a universal ethical horizon, interacts with and is challenged by relational ontologies that foreground communal forms of personhood and moral reasoning.

1. Western Progressivism as Selective Universalism

Recognizing the culturally situated nature of progressivism makes it possible to examine how alternative epistemic traditions, particularly relational ontologies, challenge the autonomy-centered ethical assumptions that progressivism universalizes.

Progressivism as a Culturally Situated Ethical Framework

In this article, progressivism refers not to a broad political orientation but to a Western epistemological and ethical framework grounded in autonomy-centered norms, individual rights, and boundary-based interpersonal ethics (Mignolo, 2011; Ndlovu Gatsheni, 2020). Within global metaculture, this form of progressivism presents itself as a universal moral horizon, framing individual self-determination, personal autonomy, and rights-based protections as culturally neutral standards of ethical legitimacy (Walsh, 2007). Yet progressivism is internally marked by tensions: while it seeks to expand inclusion and protect vulnerable groups, it simultaneously relies on interpretive categories rooted in Western modernity that may conflict with relational, communal, and dignity-based epistemologies prevalent in Indigenous, Afro-Latin, and other non-Western traditions (Santos, 2014; Núñez Henao, 2025). These tensions reveal that Western progressivism operates as a form of selective universalism, elevating culturally situated norms as globally applicable while lacking the conceptual tools to recognize relational ethics, communal responsibility, or socially embedded personhood as equally valid expressions of human flourishing (Fricker, 2007; Medina, 2013). By foregrounding these internal contradictions, the analysis clarifies that the critique developed in this article concerns progressivism as a Western ethical paradigm, not as a general political stance (Mato, 2008).

Relational Ontologies as a Challenge to Autonomy-Centered Ethics

African relational ontologies offer a significant challenge to autonomy-centered ethics. John Mbiti's (1969) well-known formulation, "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am" (pp. 108–109), emphasizes interdependence, communal responsibility, and relational personhood. Menkiti (1984) similarly argues that personhood is not an inherent attribute of the individual, but an achievement realized through participation in community life. These relational ontologies conceptualize ethics as grounded in social embeddedness rather than individual autonomy.

Latin American epistemologies of the South articulate parallel critiques. Indigenous frameworks such as Buen Vivir (Sumak Kawsay) and Tekó Porã emphasize collective wellbeing, relational dignity, and harmony with community and environment. Afro-Latin communal philosophies similarly prioritize solidarity, reciprocity, and socially embedded personhood. These epistemologies challenge the assumption that autonomy-centered ethics represent universal moral standards. Instead, they show that ethical frameworks are culturally situated and that relational ethics offer legitimate, coherent alternatives.

Progressivism as a Mechanism of Selective Universalism

Progressivism becomes a mechanism of selective universalism when it elevates its own culturally specific norms as global standards while rejecting or misinterpreting alternative epistemic traditions. Selective universalism operates by presenting autonomy-centered ethics as universally applicable, thereby obscuring the cultural specificity of Western moral frameworks. This dynamic is particularly visible in institutional contexts where progressivism informs policy design, organizational norms, and governance structures.

In Latin America, selective universalism manifests when institutions interpret relational or communal practices through autonomy-centered categories. Relational expressions of care may be interpreted as boundary violations, communal decision-making as inefficiency, and collective responsibility as a lack of individual initiative. These interpretations reflect the

epistemic dominance of Western progressivism rather than deficiencies in relational cultural practices.

Institutional Effects of Selective Universalism in Latin America

The institutional effects of selective universalism are extensive. First, selective universalism shapes organizational cultures by privileging communication norms, performance metrics, and professionalism standards rooted in Western autonomy-centered ethics. Second, selective universalism influences educational systems by prioritizing individualistic learning models and Eurocentric curricula while marginalizing relational pedagogies. Third, selective universalism informs intercultural policies that emphasize symbolic recognition rather than structural transformation, thereby maintaining Western categories of citizenship and rights as universal baselines. Fourth, selective universalism shapes gender equality frameworks that prioritize autonomy and boundary-centered ethics while overlooking relational gender logics present in Indigenous and Afro-Latin communities. These institutional effects reveal that progressivism, when treated as a universal ethical horizon, contributes to epistemic coloniality by embedding Western categories of meaning within institutional structures across Latin America.

Toward a Pluriversal Understanding of Progressivism

A pluriversal understanding of progressivism requires recognizing that ethical frameworks are culturally situated and that autonomy-centered ethics represent only one epistemic tradition among many. This perspective challenges the assumption that Western progressivism constitutes a universal moral trajectory. Instead, it proposes that ethical frameworks should be understood as diverse, relational, and contextually grounded.

A pluriversal approach encourages institutions to engage with relational and communal epistemologies as legitimate sources of ethical insight. It invites a rethinking of policy design, organizational culture, and governance frameworks to reflect epistemic diversity. By decentering autonomy-centered ethics and recognizing the plurality of moral frameworks, a

pluriversal understanding of progressivism opens pathways for constructing intercultural policies and institutional practices that reflect the epistemic diversity of Latin America.

2. Epistemic Misrecognition and Institutional Blindness

Understanding epistemic misrecognition as a structural phenomenon clarifies that it does not emerge randomly but is sustained through identifiable institutional processes. These processes reveal how epistemic distortions become operationalized within everyday organizational practices, making it necessary to examine the mechanisms through which misrecognition is reproduced in institutional contexts.

Epistemic misrecognition constitutes one of the most pervasive mechanisms through which epistemic coloniality is reproduced. It occurs when institutions interpret cultural practices through categories incompatible with the epistemic logic of those practices, producing distortions that reflect entrenched epistemic hierarchies (Fricker, 2007; Medina, 2013). Rather than a superficial misunderstanding, misrecognition is embedded in the coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000; Mignolo, 2011), shaping how institutions perceive, classify, and respond to cultural difference. When relational, communal, or dignity-based practices are interpreted through autonomy-centered categories, they are pathologized or rendered unintelligible, revealing the dominance of Western interpretive frameworks within global metaculture (Walsh, 2007; Santos, 2014). This dynamic is particularly visible in Latin America, where Indigenous, Afro-Latin, and communal epistemologies coexist with institutional systems that continue to privilege Western norms (Mato, 2008; Núñez Henao, 2025).

Misrecognition emerges through several institutional mechanisms. Institutions frequently rely on autonomy-centered interpretive categories that treat individual choice, personal boundaries, and rights-based ethics as universal standards, leading to systematic misclassification of relational practices (Medina, 2013). They also often lack conceptual frameworks capable of interpreting relational ethics, communal responsibility, or socially embedded personhood, resulting in epistemic blindness and an inability to perceive

alternative cultural logics as legitimate (Santos, 2014). Furthermore, institutional procedures and evaluation systems are frequently designed around Western assumptions, limiting their capacity to recognize relational epistemologies as valid forms of knowledge (Walsh, 2007). These mechanisms demonstrate that misrecognition is not incidental but structurally embedded within institutional practice.

Documented Latin American cases illustrate how epistemic misrecognition and institutional blindness operate. In Bolivia's Plurinational Education Reform, communal learning practices rooted in Aymara and Quechua epistemologies were initially classified as "informal" or "non-technical" within standardized curricular frameworks (Pérez Hernández, 2016; Villafán Apaza, 2024). In Ecuador's Buen Vivir constitutional model, relational ethics grounded in Indigenous cosmologies faced institutional resistance because they conflicted with liberal rights-based interpretations of development (Le Quang, 2027). In Chile's intercultural health programs, Mapuche relational healing practices were dismissed as "non-scientific" despite documented efficacy in community-based care (Valenzuela Toledo & Arias Ortega, 2023). Similar dynamics appear in Mexico's Indigenous community policing systems, such as Cherán, where communal governance structures were long deemed incompatible with Western liberal models of citizenship (Lariagon & Piceno, 2022), and in Brazil's quilombola educational initiatives, where Afro-communal pedagogies were marginalized by standardized performance metrics (González-González, 2023). These cases demonstrate that misrecognition and institutional blindness are central mechanisms through which epistemic coloniality is reproduced across Latin American institutions.

The epistemic consequences of misrecognition and blindness are significant. They produce hierarchies of intelligibility in which Western norms are treated as universal baselines, delegitimizing relational and communal epistemologies by forcing them into autonomy centered interpretive frameworks (Fricker, 2007; Santos, 2014). They also limit the ability of applied social sciences to engage with epistemic diversity, constraining the development of pluriversal institutional frameworks (Walsh, 2007; Mato, 2008). Understanding these mechanisms is therefore essential for constructing pluriversal alternatives grounded in epistemic reciprocity and intercultural justice.

Epistemic Misrecognition as a Structural Phenomenon

Epistemic misrecognition is a structural mechanism through which epistemic coloniality is reproduced. It occurs when institutions interpret cultural practices through categories incompatible with their epistemic logic. When relational, communal, or dignity based practices are interpreted through autonomy-centered categories, they are distorted, pathologized, or rendered unintelligible. This reflects the epistemic dominance of Western interpretive frameworks within global metaculture and reveals how institutional norms continue to privilege Western categories of meaning.

Mechanisms of Misrecognition in Institutional Contexts

Misrecognition emerges through several institutional mechanisms. Institutions frequently rely on autonomy-centered interpretive categories that treat individual choice, personal boundaries, and rights-based ethics as universal standards. When relational or communal practices do not conform to these categories, they are misinterpreted as dependency, inefficiency, or lack of professionalism. Institutions also lack conceptual frameworks capable of interpreting relational ethics, communal responsibility, or socially embedded personhood, reinforcing epistemic hierarchies. Additionally, institutional procedures, policies, and evaluation systems are designed around Western assumptions, limiting their ability to recognize alternative cultural logics as legitimate. These mechanisms demonstrate that misrecognition is embedded within institutional structures.

Misrecognition in Latin American Institutions

In Latin America, epistemic misrecognition manifests across multiple institutional domains. Educational systems often interpret Indigenous communal learning practices as informal or unstructured because they do not align with individualistic pedagogical models. Organizational cultures may interpret relational communication styles as unprofessional or inefficient, reflecting Western professionalism standards. Intercultural policies frequently

interpret Indigenous governance structures as incompatible with liberal citizenship models, marginalizing relational political organization. Social services may interpret communal caregiving networks as dependency or lack of development, overlooking the relational ethics that underpin these practices. Gender policies sometimes interpret relational expressions of care as reinforcing stereotypes rather than as culturally grounded ethical frameworks. These examples demonstrate that misrecognition is a structural phenomenon rooted in epistemic coloniality.

Institutional Blindness and Epistemic Incommensurability

Institutional blindness refers to institutions' inability to perceive alternative cultural logics as legitimate or intelligible. It emerges when autonomy-centered categories are treated as universal standards, obscuring the epistemic foundations of relational practices. In Latin America, institutional blindness is especially visible because of the region's deep epistemic diversity. Indigenous, Afro-Latin, and communal epistemologies coexist with Western institutional frameworks, producing tensions across education, governance, organizational culture, social policy, and intercultural programs. When institutions interpret relational practices through autonomy-centered categories, they reinforce colonial hierarchies. Institutional blindness is therefore not a failure of cultural sensitivity but a structural consequence of epistemic coloniality.

Epistemic Consequences of Misrecognition and Blindness

The epistemic consequences of misrecognition and institutional blindness are profound. They produce hierarchies of intelligibility in which Western norms serve as universal baselines for interpreting cultural behavior. They delegitimize relational and communal epistemologies by forcing them into autonomy-centered interpretive frameworks. They reproduce epistemic coloniality by embedding Western categories of meaning within institutional structures across Latin America. They also limit applied social sciences' ability to engage with epistemic diversity, constraining the development of pluriversal institutional frameworks.

Understanding these consequences is essential for developing alternatives grounded in epistemic reciprocity and intercultural justice.

Toward Epistemic Recognition and Institutional Transformation

Addressing epistemic misrecognition and institutional blindness requires transforming institutional interpretive frameworks. Institutions must develop conceptual tools that recognize relational and communal epistemologies as legitimate sources of knowledge. This transformation involves rethinking policy design, organizational culture, educational curricula, and governance frameworks to reflect epistemic diversity. It also requires adopting pluriversal approaches that decenter Western categories of meaning and promote dialogical engagement with multiple epistemic traditions. When institutions confront misrecognition and institutional blindness, they can begin constructing intercultural policies and practices that reflect Latin America's epistemic diversity.

3. Institutional Blindness and Epistemic Incommensurability

Understanding institutional blindness as an epistemic condition reveals that its roots lie not in isolated interpretive failures but in the normative frameworks that structure institutional reasoning. This recognition makes it necessary to examine the ethical foundations that sustain such blindness, particularly the autonomy-centered models that shape Western institutional practice and constrain their ability to engage relational or communal epistemologies.

Institutional Blindness as an Epistemic Condition

Institutional blindness refers to institutions' inability to perceive alternative cultural logics as legitimate, coherent, or intelligible. It is an epistemic condition produced by the dominance of Western categories of meaning within institutional frameworks. When institutions rely exclusively on autonomy-centered ethics, rights-based frameworks, and individualistic models of personhood, they lose the conceptual capacity to interpret relational or communal

practices on their own terms. Institutional blindness therefore emerges as a structural consequence of epistemic coloniality, shaping how institutions understand cultural behavior, design policies, and evaluate social interaction.

Limits of Autonomy-Centered Institutional Ethics

Western institutions are structured around autonomy-centered ethics that prioritize individual choice, personal boundaries, self-determination, and risk avoidance. These categories shape how institutions interpret behavior, construct norms, and enforce regulations. Yet autonomy-centered ethics are not universally applicable. In relational or communal cultures, ethics are grounded in interdependence, communal responsibility, relational dignity, and socially embedded personhood. When institutions interpret relational practices through autonomy-centered categories, they produce epistemic distortions that obscure those practices' cultural logic. These distortions become particularly visible in contexts where relational practices are central to social life, revealing the insufficiency of autonomy-centered ethics for interpreting relational cultural practices.

Institutional Blindness in Latin American Contexts

Institutional blindness is especially pronounced in Latin America due to the region's deep epistemic diversity. Indigenous, Afro-Latin, and communal epistemologies coexist with Western institutional frameworks, producing tensions across education, governance, organizational culture, social policy, and intercultural programs. Educational systems often interpret relational learning practices as informal or unstructured because they do not align with individualistic pedagogical models. Governance frameworks may interpret Indigenous communal decision-making structures as incompatible with liberal democratic norms. Organizational cultures frequently interpret relational communication styles as unprofessional or overly emotional, reflecting Western professionalism standards. Social services may interpret communal caregiving networks as dependency or lack of development, overlooking the relational ethics that underpin these practices. These examples

demonstrate that institutional blindness is a structural consequence of epistemic coloniality, producing epistemic distortions that marginalize relational and communal epistemologies.

Epistemic Incommensurability and Interpretive Rupture

Epistemic incommensurability refers to institutions' inability to translate relational or communal practices into autonomy-centered interpretive frameworks without distortion. When institutions rely exclusively on Western categories of meaning, they encounter practices that those frameworks cannot adequately interpret. This interpretive rupture reveals the limits of autonomy-centered ethics and highlights the need for epistemic plurality.

In Latin America, epistemic incommensurability becomes visible when institutions attempt to interpret Indigenous governance structures, Afro-Latin communal solidarity, collective land stewardship, relational communication styles, or community-based conflict resolution through Western categories of citizenship, professionalism, property rights, or legalistic procedures. These interpretive ruptures reveal that institutional frameworks are not equipped to engage with epistemic diversity and that epistemic incommensurability is a structural consequence of epistemic coloniality.

Institutional Consequences of Blindness and Incommensurability

The institutional consequences of blindness and incommensurability are significant. First, they produce policies, curricula, and organizational norms that fail to reflect Latin America's epistemic diversity. Second, they reinforce epistemic hierarchies by privileging Western categories of meaning and marginalizing relational and communal epistemologies. Third, they limit applied social sciences' ability to engage with epistemic diversity, constraining the development of pluriversal institutional frameworks. Fourth, they reproduce epistemic coloniality by embedding Western categories of meaning within institutional structures across education, governance, organizational culture, and social policy. These consequences reveal that institutional blindness and epistemic incommensurability are central mechanisms through which epistemic coloniality is reproduced. Understanding these mechanisms is

essential for developing pluriversal alternatives grounded in epistemic reciprocity and intercultural justice.

Toward Institutional Reflexivity and Epistemic Plurality

Addressing institutional blindness and epistemic incommensurability requires developing institutional reflexivity. Institutions must examine their own epistemic assumptions, identify the categories of meaning that shape their interpretive frameworks, and recognize the limitations of autonomy-centered ethics. Institutional reflexivity involves engaging with relational and communal epistemologies as legitimate sources of knowledge, revising policy design to reflect epistemic diversity, and integrating interpretive frameworks that promote epistemic reciprocity.

A pluriversal approach to institutional practice requires recognizing that multiple epistemic traditions coexist within Latin America and that institutional frameworks must reflect this diversity. By adopting epistemic plurality and promoting dialogical engagement with multiple epistemic traditions, institutions can begin to construct intercultural policies and practices that reflect Latin America's epistemic diversity and challenge the epistemic dominance of Western categories of meaning.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The dynamics outlined in the preceding analysis converge in ways that reveal a deeper epistemic pattern, and at this juncture the discussion of results becomes essential for interpreting how these structures manifest as institutional blindness and epistemic incommensurability across Latin American contexts.

1. Institutional Blindness and Epistemic Incommensurability

Institutional blindness arises when organizations interpret relational, communal, or dignity-based cultural practices through Western autonomy-centered categories. This blindness is not simply a failure of observation, but a structural limitation embedded in institutional epistemic frameworks. When institutions rely exclusively on Western interpretive norms, they lose the ability to perceive alternative cultural logics as legitimate or intelligible. Epistemic incommensurability deepens this challenge, as relational ontologies and communal ethics do not align neatly with Western assumptions about autonomy, individualism, or boundary-centered interaction. As a result, relational practices are frequently misread as inefficiency, dependency, or lack of professionalism. This misalignment demonstrates how deeply Western epistemic assumptions shape institutional interpretation across Latin America.

Structural Reproduction of Epistemic Coloniality

The results show that epistemic coloniality is reproduced not only through explicit policies but through the structural design of institutional frameworks. Educational systems, organizational cultures, governance models, and social programs often embed Western categories of meaning as universal baselines. Curricular structures privilege Eurocentric knowledge, managerial norms enforce autonomy-centered professionalism, governance models assume liberal individualism, and intercultural programs emphasize symbolic recognition rather than epistemic reciprocity. These structures perpetuate epistemic hierarchies by normalizing Western interpretive categories and marginalizing Indigenous, Afro-Latin, and communal epistemologies.

Intercultural Policies and Epistemic Coloniality

Intercultural policies frequently reproduce coloniality by focusing on cultural celebration rather than epistemic transformation. Symbolic interculturality, such as festivals, recognition events, and cultural branding, creates visibility without changing institutions' epistemic foundations. Structural interculturality, however, requires redistributing epistemic authority, integrating relational ethics, and co-designing policies with communities. The results indicate that most Latin American institutions remain confined to symbolic approaches, thereby reinforcing Western epistemic dominance even while claiming intercultural inclusion.

Implications for Applied Social Sciences

The findings carry significant implications for applied social sciences in Latin America. Fields such as education, governance, organizational studies, and intercultural policy continue to rely on Western theoretical foundations that limit their ability to engage with epistemic diversity. These disciplines must confront the epistemic assumptions embedded in their methodologies, conceptual categories, and institutional applications. Without embracing epistemic plurality, applied social sciences risk reproducing misrecognition and institutional blindness. The results highlight the need for pluriversal frameworks that integrate relational ontologies, communal epistemologies, and dignity-based ethics.

Institutional Reform: Toward Epistemic Reciprocity

Institutional reform requires more than incremental policy adjustments; it demands epistemic restructuring. The results suggest that institutions must decenter Western categories of meaning, adopt relational and communal epistemologies as legitimate sources of knowledge, develop reflexive practices that examine epistemic biases, and share epistemic authority with Indigenous and Afro-Latin communities. Epistemic reciprocity becomes the foundation for pluriversal institutional transformation, shifting reform efforts from inclusion toward genuine epistemic coexistence.

Organizational Transformation

Organizational cultures across Latin America often enforce Western managerial norms such as individual performance metrics, boundary-centered communication, and autonomy-based professionalism. These norms conflict with relational cultural practices, leading to misinterpretation and exclusion. The results show that organizational transformation requires rethinking professionalism through relational ethics, redesigning human resource policies to accommodate communal responsibilities, adopting culturally grounded communication norms, and recognizing relational expressions of care as legitimate rather than problematic. Organizations must transition from autonomy-centered models to pluriversal cultural frameworks.

Intercultural Policy Design

Effective intercultural policy design must move beyond consultation toward genuine co-design. The results demonstrate that policies fail when they impose Western categories of citizenship, rights, and governance onto relational communities. Pluriversal policy design requires integrating community-based governance structures, adopting relational ethics as policy foundations, recognizing communal personhood as legitimate, and developing policies that reflect epistemic diversity rather than Western universality. Intercultural policy must become a site of epistemic negotiation rather than assimilation.

Pluriversal Futures

The results point toward the possibility of pluriversal futures, social, institutional, and cultural systems grounded in epistemic plurality rather than Western universality. Constructing pluriversal futures requires embracing multiple epistemic traditions, developing intercultural governance models, redesigning institutions around relational ethics, and

promoting epistemic justice and reciprocity. Latin America's epistemic diversity positions the region uniquely to lead global pluriversal transformations.

2. Structural Reproduction of Epistemic Coloniality

Recognizing epistemic coloniality as an institutional structure makes clear that its reproduction depends on the specific domains through which Western categories of meaning are operationalized. Among these domains, legal and policy frameworks play a particularly decisive role, translating epistemic assumptions into binding norms, regulatory practices, and classificatory systems. Examining these frameworks therefore reveals how epistemic coloniality becomes materially embedded in institutional governance across Latin America.

Epistemic Coloniality as an Institutional Structure

Epistemic coloniality is reproduced not only through cultural interpretation but through the institutional structures that organize social life. These structures embed Western categories of meaning within legal frameworks, educational systems, organizational policies, gender-equality programs, and compliance cultures. As a result, epistemic coloniality becomes a systemic condition rather than an isolated phenomenon. Institutions across Latin America often adopt Western epistemic assumptions as universal standards, reinforcing epistemic hierarchies and limiting recognition of relational and communal epistemologies. Understanding how these structures operate is essential for analyzing the mechanisms through which epistemic coloniality persists.

Legal and Policy Frameworks as Sites of Epistemic Reproduction

Legal and policy frameworks in Latin America often adopt Western categories of rights, autonomy, and citizenship as foundational principles. These frameworks prioritize individual rights over collective responsibilities, interpret communal practices through liberal categories, and enforce autonomy-centered norms. For example, Indigenous communal land

stewardship is frequently interpreted as incompatible with Western property rights, and Afro-Latin communal governance structures are often classified as informal or insufficiently democratic. These interpretations reveal that legal and policy frameworks reproduce epistemic coloniality by embedding Western categories of meaning within institutional structures.

The reproduction of epistemic coloniality within legal frameworks has significant consequences. It limits Indigenous and Afro-Latin communities' ability to assert relational forms of governance, constrains the development of intercultural policies that reflect epistemic diversity, and reinforces the dominance of Western categories of citizenship and rights. As a result, legal and policy frameworks become central mechanisms for reproducing epistemic coloniality.

Educational Systems and Epistemic Hierarchies

Educational systems constitute another domain in which epistemic coloniality is structurally reproduced. Curricula often prioritize Eurocentric knowledge, individualistic learning models, and autonomy-centered pedagogical frameworks. These systems frequently interpret relational learning practices as informal or unstructured, thereby marginalizing Indigenous and Afro-descendant epistemologies. Evaluation systems that prioritize individual achievement reinforce epistemic hierarchies by privileging Western categories of meaning and marginalizing relational and communal forms of knowledge.

The reproduction of epistemic coloniality within educational systems has far-reaching implications. It shapes how students understand social reality, influences how professionals design policies, and affects how institutions interpret cultural behavior. By embedding Western epistemic assumptions within curricula and pedagogical models, educational systems contribute to the structural reproduction of epistemic coloniality across Latin America.

Organizational Culture and Managerial Models

Organizational culture constitutes a third domain in which epistemic coloniality is reproduced. Managerial models often adopt Western frameworks that prioritize autonomy, individual performance, risk avoidance, and compliance. These models shape how organizations interpret communication, professionalism, and workplace behavior. Relational communication styles may be interpreted as unprofessional, communal decision-making as inefficient, and collective responsibility as a lack of initiative. These interpretations reveal that organizational culture reproduces epistemic coloniality by privileging Western categories of meaning and marginalizing relational and communal epistemologies.

Human-resource policies further reinforce these dynamics. Policies that interpret relational expressions of care as boundary violations, communal caregiving responsibilities as lack of commitment, or warm interpersonal gestures as harassment risk reflect the dominance of Western professionalism standards. These policies embed autonomy-centered ethics within organizational structures, thereby reproducing epistemic coloniality.

Gender-Equality Frameworks and Epistemic Assumptions

Gender-equality frameworks often adopt Western feminist categories that prioritize autonomy, individual rights, and boundary-centered ethics. These frameworks may misinterpret relational expressions of care as reinforcing stereotypes, even when they are culturally grounded in relational ethics. Latin American feminist scholars have argued that Western feminist frameworks frequently overlook relational and communal gender logics, thereby reproducing epistemic coloniality within gender-policy design.

The reproduction of epistemic coloniality within gender-equality frameworks has significant implications. It limits the recognition of relational gender practices, constrains the development of intercultural gender policies, and reinforces the dominance of Western categories of gender and ethics. As a result, gender-equality frameworks become another domain in which epistemic coloniality is structurally reproduced.

Compliance Systems and Risk-Avoidance Cultures

Compliance systems and risk-avoidance cultures constitute additional mechanisms through which epistemic coloniality is reproduced. These systems often adopt Western categories of professionalism, communication, and behavior, thereby enforcing autonomy-centered norms. Compliance systems that interpret relational practices as risk or boundary violations reflect the dominance of Western categories of meaning. These systems embed autonomy-centered ethics within institutional structures, thereby reproducing epistemic coloniality.

Risk-avoidance cultures further reinforce these dynamics by prioritizing individual responsibility, personal boundaries, and autonomy-centered ethics. These cultures interpret relational practices as potential risks, thereby marginalizing relational and communal epistemologies. As a result, compliance systems and risk-avoidance cultures become central mechanisms for reproducing epistemic coloniality.

Toward Structural Transformation and Epistemic Plurality

Addressing the structural reproduction of epistemic coloniality requires institutional transformation. Institutions must revise legal frameworks, educational systems, organizational policies, gender-equality programs, and compliance cultures to reflect epistemic diversity. This transformation involves decentering Western categories of meaning, adopting relational and communal epistemologies as legitimate sources of knowledge, and developing interpretive frameworks that promote epistemic reciprocity.

Structural transformation requires recognizing that multiple epistemic traditions coexist within Latin America and that institutional frameworks must reflect this diversity. By adopting pluriversal approaches to institutional practice, institutions can begin to develop intercultural policies and practices that reflect Latin America's epistemic diversity and challenge the epistemic dominance of Western categories of meaning.

Intercultural Policies and Epistemic Coloniality

Recognizing intercultural policies as instruments of symbolic recognition reveals that their limitations are not incidental but inherent to their epistemic design. Because these policies operate within Western interpretive frameworks, they can acknowledge cultural diversity only superficially, without engaging the relational or communal epistemologies that underpin Indigenous and Afro-Latin practices. This recognition makes it necessary to examine the specific limits of symbolic interculturality and how these limits contribute to the ongoing reproduction of epistemic coloniality.

3. Intercultural Policies as Instruments of Symbolic Recognition

Intercultural policies in Latin America are frequently framed as mechanisms for promoting cultural diversity, inclusion, and respect for Indigenous and Afro-Latin communities. Although these policies often emphasize recognition, representation, and cultural celebration, they rarely address the epistemic foundations of institutional practice. As a result, intercultural policies tend to operate at the level of symbolic recognition rather than structural transformation. Symbolic recognition allows institutions to acknowledge cultural diversity without revising the Western categories of meaning that shape policy design, governance frameworks, and institutional norms. This dynamic reinforces epistemic coloniality by maintaining Western interpretive categories as universal baselines.

The Limits of Symbolic Interculturality

Symbolic interculturality is characterized by initiatives that celebrate cultural diversity without altering the epistemic structures that govern institutional practice. Cultural festivals, recognition of traditional practices, inclusion of Indigenous symbols, and multicultural rhetoric are common features of symbolic interculturality. Although these initiatives may promote visibility and cultural pride, they do not challenge the epistemic dominance of Western categories of meaning.

The limits of symbolic interculturality become evident when institutions attempt to interpret relational or communal practices through Western categories. Institutions may recognize Indigenous governance structures symbolically but interpret them as incompatible with liberal democratic norms. Afro-Latin communal solidarity may be celebrated rhetorically but classified as informal or insufficiently modern. These interpretive distortions show that symbolic interculturality is insufficient to address epistemic coloniality.

Structural Interculturality and Epistemic Transformation

Structural interculturality requires transforming the epistemic foundations of institutional practice. It involves revising the categories of meaning that shape policy design, governance frameworks, and institutional norms. Structural interculturality recognizes that multiple epistemic traditions coexist within Latin America and that institutional frameworks must reflect this diversity.

It requires adopting relational and communal ethics as legitimate sources of knowledge, recognizing Indigenous and Afro-Latin governance structures as coherent political systems, and co-designing policies with communities. Structural interculturality challenges the epistemic dominance of Western categories of meaning by promoting epistemic reciprocity and intercultural justice.

Intercultural Governance and Epistemic Plurality

Intercultural governance involves shared decision-making between institutions and communities. It requires recognizing Indigenous and Afro-Latin governance structures as legitimate political systems and incorporating relational ethics into governance frameworks. Intercultural governance challenges the assumption that liberal democratic norms represent universal standards. Instead, it argues that governance frameworks should reflect Latin America's epistemic diversity.

Intercultural governance requires institutional reflexivity. Institutions must examine their own epistemic assumptions, identify the categories of meaning that shape their interpretive

frameworks, and recognize the limitations of autonomy-centered ethics. Reflexivity involves engaging with relational and communal epistemologies as legitimate sources of knowledge, revising governance frameworks to reflect epistemic diversity, and adopting interpretive frameworks that promote epistemic reciprocity.

The Reproduction of Epistemic Coloniality within Intercultural Policy Design

Intercultural policy design often reproduces epistemic coloniality by adopting Western categories of citizenship, rights, and governance as universal standards. Policies that emphasize assimilation rather than reciprocity reinforce colonial hierarchies by requiring communities to conform to Western interpretive frameworks. Policies that interpret relational practices through autonomy-centered categories produce epistemic distortions that marginalize relational and communal epistemologies.

The reproduction of epistemic coloniality within intercultural policy design has significant implications. It limits the recognition of relational and communal epistemologies, constrains the development of intercultural policies that reflect epistemic diversity, and reinforces the dominance of Western categories of meaning. As a result, intercultural policy design becomes a central domain in which epistemic coloniality is reproduced.

Toward Pluriversal Intercultural Policy Frameworks

Constructing pluriversal intercultural policy frameworks requires adopting epistemic plurality as a foundational principle. Institutions must recognize that multiple epistemic traditions coexist within Latin America and that policy frameworks must reflect this diversity. Pluriversal policy design involves co-designing policies with communities, adopting relational and communal ethics as legitimate sources of knowledge, and revising governance frameworks to reflect epistemic diversity.

Pluriversal intercultural policy frameworks challenge the epistemic dominance of Western categories of meaning by promoting epistemic reciprocity, dialogical integration, and intercultural justice. They open pathways for constructing institutional frameworks that

reflect the epistemic diversity of Latin America and contribute to pluriversal transformations within global metaculture.

4. Implications for Applied Social Sciences in Latin America

Positioning applied social sciences as epistemic fields makes clear that their interpretive power depends on the theoretical frameworks they adopt. This recognition directs attention to the epistemic foundations that structure these fields, particularly the Western categories of meaning that shape how social reality is conceptualized, classified, and governed. Examining these foundations reveals how Western epistemic assumptions become embedded within applied social sciences in Latin America, thereby influencing their capacity to engage relational, communal, and dignity-based epistemologies.

Applied Social Sciences as Epistemic Fields

Applied social sciences in Latin America, including sociology, anthropology, public administration, organizational studies, education, and social policy, operate at the intersection of institutional practice, community engagement, and cultural interpretation. These fields shape how societies organize themselves, how institutions understand cultural behavior, and how policies are designed and implemented. Because applied social sciences rely on theoretical frameworks to interpret social reality, they play a central role in reproducing or challenging epistemic coloniality.

When these fields adopt Western categories of meaning as universal standards, they reinforce epistemic hierarchies that marginalize relational and communal epistemologies. Conversely, when they engage with epistemic plurality, they open pathways for pluriversal institutional transformation.

Western Epistemic Foundations in Applied Social Sciences

Applied social sciences in Latin America frequently rely on Western theoretical frameworks as their foundational epistemic base. These frameworks emphasize individual agency, rational choice, autonomy-centered ethics, liberal citizenship, rights-based governance, and managerial efficiency. Although these categories have analytical value, they do not fully capture the relational, communal, and dignity-based epistemologies that shape Latin American social life.

As a result, applied social sciences often misinterpret relational practices, communal governance structures, and socially embedded forms of personhood. This misinterpretation reinforces epistemic coloniality by privileging Western categories of meaning and marginalizing alternative epistemic traditions.

Epistemic Contestation within Academic and Professional Training

Universities, research centers, and professional training programs constitute key sites where epistemic hierarchies are reproduced. Curricula often prioritize Western theorists, methodologies, and frameworks while treating Indigenous and Afro-Latin knowledge systems as supplementary or peripheral. This epistemic imbalance shapes how students understand social reality, how professionals design policies, and how institutions interpret cultural behavior.

Epistemic contestation emerges when relational and communal epistemologies challenge autonomy-centered frameworks. This contestation reveals the limitations of Western categories of meaning and highlights the need for epistemic plurality within academic and professional training.

Addressing epistemic contestation requires revising curricula, adopting pluriversal theoretical frameworks, and integrating relational and communal epistemologies into academic programs.

Implications for Policy Design and Institutional Practice

The epistemic foundations of applied social sciences have significant implications for policy design and institutional practice. Policies that rely exclusively on autonomy-centered ethics may misinterpret relational practices, marginalize communal governance structures, and reinforce epistemic coloniality.

For example, policies that prioritize individual rights over collective responsibilities may conflict with Indigenous and Afro-Latin epistemologies that emphasize communal wellbeing. Policies that interpret relational communication styles through Western professionalism standards may produce epistemic distortions that marginalize relational practices. Addressing these implications requires adopting pluriversal approaches to policy design. Pluriversal policy design recognizes that multiple epistemic traditions coexist within Latin America and that policies must reflect this diversity. It involves engaging with relational and communal epistemologies as legitimate sources of knowledge, revising policy frameworks to reflect epistemic plurality, and adopting interpretive frameworks that promote epistemic reciprocity.

Implications for Organizational Culture and Management

Organizational culture and management practices are significantly influenced by the epistemic foundations of applied social sciences. Managerial models that prioritize autonomy, individual performance, and risk avoidance may conflict with relational and communal cultural practices. When organizations interpret relational communication styles as unprofessional or communal decision-making as inefficiency, they reproduce epistemic coloniality within workplace culture.

Addressing these implications requires adopting pluriversal approaches to organizational culture and management. Pluriversal organizational practices recognize relational and communal epistemologies as legitimate sources of knowledge, revise managerial models to reflect epistemic diversity, and adopt interpretive frameworks that promote epistemic reciprocity.

Implications for Intercultural Policy and Governance

Intercultural policy and governance frameworks are significantly influenced by the epistemic foundations of applied social sciences. Policies that rely exclusively on Western categories of citizenship, rights, and governance may misinterpret Indigenous and Afro-Latin governance structures and reinforce epistemic coloniality.

Addressing these implications requires adopting pluriversal approaches to intercultural policy and governance. Pluriversal governance frameworks recognize multiple epistemic traditions as legitimate, engage with communities through dialogical processes, and adopt interpretive frameworks that reflect relational and communal epistemologies.

Toward a Pluriversal Reframing of Applied Social Sciences

Reframing applied social sciences through epistemic plurality requires recognizing that multiple epistemic traditions coexist within Latin America and that academic and professional frameworks must reflect this diversity. A pluriversal reframing involves integrating Indigenous, Afro-Latin, and communal epistemologies into theoretical foundations, adopting relational ontologies as legitimate sources of knowledge, and challenging the assumption that Western categories of meaning represent universal standards. This reframing opens pathways for constructing institutional frameworks that reflect the epistemic diversity of Latin America and contribute to pluriversal transformations within global metaculture.

5. Institutional Reform: Toward Epistemic Reciprocity

Once Western categories are decentered, institutions are better positioned to engage relational and communal epistemologies through practices of epistemic reciprocity, the next step in the reform process.

Decentering Western Categories of Meaning

Institutional reform in Latin America requires a deliberate effort to decenter Western categories of meaning long treated as universal standards. Autonomy-centered ethics, individualistic models of citizenship, rights-based frameworks, and boundary-centered interpersonal norms have shaped institutional practice across education, governance, organizational culture, and social policy. These categories reflect culturally specific assumptions rooted in Western modernity, yet they are frequently applied as if they were universally valid.

Decentering Western categories involves recognizing that these assumptions constitute only one epistemic tradition among many and that relational and communal epistemologies offer equally coherent frameworks for understanding social life. This process requires institutions to examine the epistemic foundations of their interpretive frameworks, identify the assumptions embedded within policy design and organizational norms, and acknowledge how these assumptions shape institutional responses to cultural diversity. By situating Western categories of meaning as one epistemic tradition rather than as universal standards, institutions can begin to construct interpretive frameworks that reflect epistemic plurality.

Institutional Reflexivity and Epistemic Self-Examination

Institutional reflexivity is essential for addressing epistemic coloniality. Reflexivity involves examining the epistemic assumptions that shape institutional practice, recognizing the limitations of autonomy-centered ethics, and engaging with relational and communal epistemologies as legitimate sources of knowledge. It requires institutions to analyze how their norms interpret cultural behavior, how their policies reflect epistemic hierarchies, and how their governance structures reproduce colonial categories of meaning.

Institutional reflexivity also involves acknowledging institutional actors' positionality and the epistemic traditions that shape their perspectives. This acknowledgment is necessary for developing interpretive frameworks that reflect epistemic diversity and promote intercultural justice. Reflexivity is not a one-time exercise but an ongoing process requiring continuous

engagement with multiple epistemic traditions and sustained examination of institutional assumptions.

Codesigning Policies with Indigenous and Afro-Latin Communities

Codesign represents a transformative approach to intercultural policy development. Unlike consultation, which often positions communities as passive recipients of institutional decisions, codesign involves sharing epistemic authority with Indigenous and Afro-Latin communities. Codesign requires institutions to engage with communities as equal partners in policy development, recognizing relational and communal epistemologies as legitimate sources of knowledge.

Codesign involves incorporating relational and communal ethics into policy frameworks, recognizing community-based governance structures as coherent political systems, and adopting interpretive frameworks that reflect epistemic diversity. It also requires revising policy development processes to ensure community perspectives shape policy design, implementation, and evaluation. By adopting codesign, institutions can begin constructing intercultural policies that reflect Latin America's epistemic diversity and challenge the epistemic dominance of Western categories of meaning.

Transforming Governance Frameworks through Epistemic Plurality

Governance frameworks in Latin America are frequently structured around Western categories of citizenship, rights, and political participation. These frameworks often interpret Indigenous and Afro-Latin governance structures as informal, insufficiently democratic, or incompatible with liberal norms. Transforming governance frameworks requires recognizing that multiple epistemic traditions coexist within Latin America and that governance structures must reflect this diversity.

Epistemic plurality involves adopting interpretive frameworks that recognize relational and communal governance structures as legitimate political systems. It requires revising governance frameworks to incorporate relational ethics, communal responsibility, and socially embedded forms of personhood. Epistemic plurality also involves developing

governance structures that promote dialogical engagement between institutions and communities, recognizing that governance is a shared process rather than a unilateral institutional function.

Revising Organizational Culture and Management Practices

Organizational culture and management practices constitute central domains in which institutional reform must occur. Managerial models that prioritize autonomy, individual performance, and risk avoidance often conflict with relational and communal cultural practices. Revising organizational culture requires adopting interpretive frameworks that recognize relational communication styles, communal decision-making, and collective responsibility as legitimate organizational practices.

Reform involves revising performance metrics to reflect relational and communal contributions, adopting communication norms that recognize relational ethics, and developing management practices that promote epistemic reciprocity. Revising organizational culture also requires training institutional actors in intercultural interpretation and recognizing that organizational norms must reflect epistemic diversity.

Reframing Educational Systems through Pluriversal Pedagogies

Educational systems constitute another domain in which institutional reform must occur. Curricula that prioritize Eurocentric knowledge and individualistic learning models reproduce epistemic coloniality by marginalizing relational and communal epistemologies. Reframing educational systems requires adopting pluriversal pedagogies that reflect epistemic diversity.

Pluriversal pedagogies involve integrating Indigenous and Afro-Latin epistemologies into curricula, adopting relational learning models, and revising evaluation systems to reflect communal contributions. They require recognizing relational and communal epistemologies as legitimate sources of knowledge and adopting pedagogical frameworks that promote epistemic reciprocity. Reframing educational systems also involves training educators in

pluriversal pedagogical practices and revising institutional norms to reflect epistemic diversity.

Toward Epistemic Reciprocity and Pluriversal Institutional Futures

Epistemic reciprocity underpins pluriversal institutional reform. Reciprocity involves recognizing multiple epistemic traditions as legitimate, engaging with communities through dialogical processes, and adopting interpretive frameworks that reflect relational and communal epistemologies. Epistemic reciprocity challenges the epistemic dominance of Western categories of meaning and opens pathways for constructing institutional frameworks that reflect the epistemic diversity of Latin America.

Pluriversal institutional futures require sustained commitment to epistemic plurality, institutional reflexivity, and intercultural justice. They involve revising legal frameworks, educational systems, organizational policies, governance structures, and compliance cultures to reflect epistemic diversity. When institutions embrace epistemic reciprocity as a foundational principle, they can begin to construct pluriversal frameworks that challenge epistemic coloniality and contribute to pluriversal transformations within global metaculture.

6. Organizational Transformation: Rethinking Culture, Management, and HR Practices

As institutions begin to decenter Western categories of meaning and adopt epistemic reciprocity as a guiding principle, the implications of this transformation necessarily extend into the organizational sphere, where everyday cultural practices, managerial models, and human resource norms continue to reproduce the very epistemic hierarchies that institutional reform seeks to dismantle.

Organizations as Sites of Epistemic Reproduction

Organizations in the public, private, and civil society constitute central sites where epistemic coloniality is reproduced. Organizational culture, managerial models, and human-resource practices often adopt Western epistemic assumptions as universal standards. These assumptions prioritize autonomy, individual performance, risk avoidance, and compliance as markers of professionalism and organizational effectiveness. When these categories are applied to relational or communal cultural practices, they produce epistemic distortions that marginalize alternative epistemologies. Understanding organizations as epistemic sites is therefore essential for analyzing how institutional norms reproduce colonial categories of meaning.

Rethinking Organizational Culture through Epistemic Plurality

Organizational culture in Latin America frequently reflects Western managerial models that emphasize individual performance metrics, autonomy-centered professionalism, boundary-centered communication norms, and risk-avoidance frameworks. These models shape how organizations interpret communication, decision-making, and workplace behavior. Relational communication styles may be interpreted as unprofessional, communal decision-making as inefficient, and collective responsibility as a lack of initiative.

These interpretations reveal that organizational culture reproduces epistemic coloniality by privileging Western categories of meaning and marginalizing relational and communal epistemologies. Rethinking organizational culture requires adopting interpretive frameworks that recognize relational and communal epistemologies as legitimate sources of organizational knowledge. This transformation involves revising communication norms to reflect relational ethics, adopting decision-making models that incorporate communal responsibility, and developing organizational practices that promote epistemic reciprocity.

Transforming Management Models and Leadership Practices

Management models and leadership practices constitute central domains in which organizational transformation must occur. Western managerial models often prioritize autonomy, individual performance, and risk avoidance, reflecting the epistemic assumptions of Western modernity. These models may conflict with relational and communal cultural practices that emphasize interdependence, collective responsibility, and socially embedded forms of leadership.

Transforming management models requires adopting interpretive frameworks that recognize relational leadership practices as legitimate organizational strategies. Leadership practices must reflect epistemic plurality. Relational leadership practices that emphasize communal responsibility, collective decision-making, and socially embedded personhood must be recognized as legitimate forms of organizational leadership. Transforming leadership practices involves revising leadership-development programs, adopting interpretive frameworks that reflect relational ethics, and developing leadership models that promote epistemic reciprocity.

Revising Human-Resource Policies and Professional Norms

Human-resource policies constitute another domain in which organizational transformation must occur. HR policies often adopt Western categories of professionalism, communication, and behavior, thereby enforcing autonomy-centered norms. Policies that interpret relational expressions of care as boundary violations, communal caregiving responsibilities as lack of commitment, or warm interpersonal gestures as harassment risk reflect the dominance of Western professionalism standards. These policies embed autonomy-centered ethics within organizational structures, thereby reproducing epistemic coloniality.

Revising HR policies requires adopting interpretive frameworks that recognize relational and communal epistemologies as legitimate sources of organizational knowledge. This transformation involves revising performance-evaluation systems to reflect relational contributions, adopting communication norms that recognize relational ethics, and

developing HR policies that promote epistemic reciprocity. Revising HR policies also requires training HR professionals in intercultural interpretation and revising professional norms to reflect epistemic diversity.

Organizational Learning and Intercultural Competence

Organizational learning constitutes a central mechanism through which organizations can address epistemic coloniality. Intercultural-competence training must go beyond superficial diversity awareness and address the epistemic foundations of organizational practice. Effective intercultural-competence training involves examining the epistemic assumptions that shape organizational norms, recognizing the limitations of autonomy-centered ethics, and engaging with relational and communal epistemologies as legitimate sources of organizational knowledge.

Organizational learning requires adopting interpretive frameworks that promote epistemic reciprocity, developing training programs that reflect epistemic diversity, and revising organizational norms to reflect relational and communal epistemologies. It also involves building skills to interpret cultural behavior through multiple epistemic lenses and adopting organizational practices that promote intercultural justice.

Toward Pluriversal Organizational Frameworks

Constructing pluriversal organizational frameworks requires adopting epistemic plurality as a foundational principle. Organizations must recognize that multiple epistemic traditions coexist within Latin America and that organizational practices must reflect this diversity. Pluriversal organizational frameworks involve revising managerial models, leadership practices, HR policies, and organizational norms to reflect relational and communal epistemologies.

They require adopting interpretive frameworks that promote epistemic reciprocity, developing organizational practices that reflect epistemic diversity, and constructing organizational cultures that challenge the epistemic dominance of Western categories of

meaning. Pluriversal organizational frameworks open pathways for constructing organizational cultures that reflect the epistemic diversity of Latin America and contribute to pluriversal transformations within global metaculture.

7. Intercultural Policy Design: From Recognition to Transformation

As organizations begin to confront and transform the epistemic assumptions embedded in their cultures, management models, and human resource practices, the need for broader structural change becomes evident, particularly in the realm of intercultural policy design, where institutional frameworks continue to reproduce symbolic recognition rather than substantive epistemic transformation.

The Persistence of Symbolic Interculturality

Intercultural policy design in Latin America has historically emphasized symbolic recognition rather than structural transformation. Symbolic interculturality refers to policy approaches that celebrate cultural diversity through gestures of acknowledgment, representation, and inclusion without altering the epistemic foundations of institutional practice. These approaches often manifest in cultural festivals, ceremonial recognition of Indigenous traditions, and rhetorical commitments to diversity.

Although symbolic interculturality may enhance visibility and cultural pride, it does not challenge the Western categories of meaning that shape policy design, governance frameworks, and institutional norms. As a result, symbolic interculturality reinforces epistemic coloniality by allowing institutions to celebrate diversity while maintaining autonomy-centered ethics, rights-based frameworks, and individualistic models of citizenship as universal standards.

The Epistemic Limits of Recognition-Based Policies

Recognition-based policies operate within a framework that assumes Western categories of meaning as the baseline for interpreting cultural practices. These policies often interpret relational or communal practices through autonomy-centered categories, producing epistemic distortions that marginalize alternative epistemologies. For example, Indigenous governance structures may be recognized symbolically but interpreted as incompatible with liberal democratic norms. Afro-Latin communal solidarity may be acknowledged rhetorically but classified as informal or insufficiently modern. These interpretive distortions show that recognition-based policies are insufficient to address epistemic coloniality because they do not challenge the epistemic assumptions embedded in institutional frameworks.

Recognition-based policies also limit institutions' ability to engage with relational and communal epistemologies as legitimate sources of knowledge. When policies rely exclusively on Western categories of citizenship, rights, and governance, they constrain the development of intercultural frameworks that reflect epistemic diversity.

Structural Interculturality as an Epistemic Alternative

Structural interculturality represents a transformative approach to intercultural policy design. Unlike symbolic interculturality, which operates at the level of representation, structural interculturality seeks to revise the epistemic foundations of institutional practice.

Structural interculturality requires adopting interpretive frameworks that recognize relational and communal epistemologies as legitimate sources of knowledge, revising policy design to reflect epistemic diversity, and transforming governance structures to incorporate relational ethics. It requires recognizing that multiple epistemic traditions coexist within Latin America and that institutional frameworks must reflect this diversity. Structural interculturality challenges the epistemic dominance of Western categories of meaning by promoting epistemic reciprocity and intercultural justice.

Intercultural Governance and Shared Epistemic Authority

Intercultural governance involves shared decision-making between institutions and communities. It requires recognizing Indigenous and Afro-Latin governance structures as legitimate political systems and incorporating relational ethics into governance frameworks. Intercultural governance challenges the assumption that liberal democratic norms represent universal standards and proposes that governance frameworks should reflect the epistemic diversity of Latin America.

Shared epistemic authority is central to intercultural governance. Institutions must engage with communities as equal partners in policy development, recognizing relational and communal epistemologies as legitimate sources of knowledge. Shared epistemic authority requires revising governance frameworks to incorporate relational ethics, communal responsibility, and socially embedded forms of personhood.

The Reproduction of Epistemic Coloniality in Policy Design

Intercultural policy design often reproduces epistemic coloniality by adopting Western categories of citizenship, rights, and governance as universal standards. Policies that emphasize assimilation rather than reciprocity reinforce colonial hierarchies by requiring communities to conform to Western interpretive frameworks. Policies that interpret relational practices through autonomy-centered categories produce epistemic distortions that marginalize relational and communal epistemologies.

Reproducing epistemic coloniality in policy design has significant implications. It limits the recognition of relational and communal epistemologies, constrains the development of intercultural policies that reflect epistemic diversity, and reinforces the dominance of Western categories of meaning. As a result, policy design becomes a central domain in which epistemic coloniality is reproduced.

Toward Pluriversal Intercultural Policy Frameworks

Constructing pluriversal intercultural policy frameworks requires adopting epistemic plurality as a foundational principle. Institutions must recognize that multiple epistemic traditions coexist within Latin America and that policy frameworks must reflect this diversity. Pluriversal policy design involves co-designing policies with communities, adopting relational and communal ethics as legitimate sources of knowledge, and revising governance frameworks to reflect epistemic diversity. Pluriversal intercultural policy frameworks challenge the epistemic dominance of Western categories of meaning by promoting epistemic reciprocity, dialogical integration, and intercultural justice. They create conditions for constructing institutional frameworks that reflect Latin America's epistemic diversity and contribute to pluriversal transformations within global metaculture.

8. Pluriversal Futures: Beyond Western Selective Universalism

As intercultural policy design moves from symbolic recognition toward structural transformation, the broader implications of this shift become visible, opening the conceptual space needed to imagine pluriversal futures that move beyond the epistemic horizon of Western modernity.

Moving Beyond the Epistemic Horizon of Western Modernity

Imagining pluriversal futures requires moving beyond the epistemic horizon of Western modernity, which has long positioned its categories of meaning as universal standards. Autonomy-centered ethics, rights-based frameworks, individualistic models of citizenship, and boundary-centered interpersonal norms have shaped global metaculture and institutional practice across Latin America. These categories reflect culturally specific assumptions rooted in Western historical trajectories, yet they are frequently applied as if they were universally valid.

Pluriversal futures require recognizing that Western modernity constitutes only one epistemic tradition among many and that relational and communal epistemologies offer equally

coherent frameworks for organizing social life. Moving beyond Western selective universalism involves challenging the assumption that Western categories of meaning represent the natural endpoint of social evolution. It requires adopting interpretive frameworks that reflect epistemic plurality, recognizing relational and communal epistemologies as legitimate sources of knowledge, and constructing institutional frameworks that reflect the epistemic diversity of Latin America.

Pluriversality as an Epistemic Principle

Pluriversality constitutes the epistemic foundation of decolonial futures. It refers to the coexistence of multiple epistemic traditions, each offering distinct ways of understanding personhood, ethics, governance, and social organization. Pluriversality challenges the epistemic dominance of Western categories of meaning by recognizing that no single epistemic tradition can claim universal validity.

Pluriversality requires adopting interpretive frameworks that reflect relational and communal epistemologies, recognizing Indigenous and Afro-Latin governance structures as legitimate political systems, and co-designing policies with communities. It also requires revising institutional norms to reflect epistemic diversity and adopting governance frameworks that promote epistemic reciprocity.

Relational Futures and Communal Ethics

Relational futures emphasize the centrality of interdependence, communal responsibility, relational dignity, and socially embedded personhood. These futures challenge autonomy-centered ethics by proposing that ethical frameworks should reflect relational and communal epistemologies. Relational futures require adopting interpretive frameworks that recognize relational ethics as legitimate sources of knowledge, revising policy design to reflect communal responsibility, and constructing governance frameworks that incorporate relational forms of political organization.

Communal ethics offer a foundation for constructing pluriversal futures. They emphasize solidarity, reciprocity, and collective wellbeing, challenging the individualistic assumptions embedded within Western modernity. Communal ethics require revising organizational culture, policy design, and governance frameworks to reflect relational and communal epistemologies.

Intercultural Futures and Epistemic Reciprocity

Intercultural futures require adopting epistemic reciprocity as a foundational principle. Reciprocity involves recognizing multiple epistemic traditions as legitimate, engaging with communities through dialogical processes, and adopting interpretive frameworks that reflect relational and communal epistemologies. Intercultural futures challenge the epistemic dominance of Western categories of meaning and open pathways for constructing institutional frameworks that reflect the epistemic diversity of Latin America.

Intercultural futures require revising legal frameworks, educational systems, organizational policies, governance structures, and compliance cultures to reflect epistemic diversity. They involve adopting pluriversal approaches to institutional practice, recognizing relational and communal epistemologies as legitimate sources of knowledge, and constructing governance frameworks that promote intercultural justice.

Institutional Futures and Pluriversal Transformation

Institutional futures require sustained commitment to epistemic plurality, institutional reflexivity, and intercultural justice. They involve revising policy design, organizational culture, governance frameworks, and educational systems to reflect epistemic diversity. Institutional futures require adopting interpretive frameworks that recognize relational and communal epistemologies as legitimate sources of knowledge, revising institutional norms to reflect epistemic plurality, and constructing governance frameworks that promote epistemic reciprocity.

Pluriversal institutional futures challenge the epistemic dominance of Western categories of meaning and open pathways for constructing institutional frameworks that reflect the epistemic diversity of Latin America. They require sustained engagement with relational and communal epistemologies, adopting interpretive frameworks that promote epistemic reciprocity, and constructing governance frameworks that reflect epistemic plurality.

Toward a Pluriversal Metaculture

Constructing a pluriversal metaculture requires revising the epistemic foundations of global cultural flows. It involves recognizing that global metaculture is not a neutral space of cultural convergence, but a terrain structured by epistemic hierarchies. Pluriversal metaculture requires adopting interpretive frameworks that reflect epistemic plurality, recognizing relational and communal epistemologies as legitimate sources of global cultural meaning, and constructing cultural frameworks that promote epistemic reciprocity.

Pluriversal metaculture challenges the epistemic dominance of Western categories of meaning and opens pathways for constructing global cultural frameworks that reflect the epistemic diversity of Latin America. It requires sustained commitment to epistemic plurality, intercultural justice, and relational ethics.

9. Integrative Discussion of Results

The results show that global metaculture operates as an epistemic structure that continues to privilege Western categories of meaning. This finding aligns with the work of (Quijano,2000; Mignolo ,2011; Ndlovu-Gatsheni,2020), who argue that the coloniality of power and knowledge persists beyond formal decolonization and continues to shape global cultural interpretation. In the Latin American context, this structure manifests through institutional interpretations of relational and communal practices using autonomy-centered, individualistic, and rights-based categories.

Three central patterns emerge from the results. First, the universalization of Western categories produces epistemic misalignment, as institutions interpret relational practices as

inefficiency, informality, or lack of professionalism. This dynamic reflects what the literature identifies as symbolic interculturality, where cultural diversity is acknowledged rhetorically but institutional interpretive frameworks remain unchanged.

Second, the results show that Western progressivism functions as selective universalism, elevating culturally specific norms as global standards. This mechanism generates institutional blindness, as institutions lack the conceptual tools needed to interpret relational ethics, communal responsibility, or socially embedded personhood. The analysis demonstrates that this blindness is structural: it emerges when institutions adopt Western categories as universal interpretive baselines.

Third, the results indicate that relational epistemologies, including African relational ontologies, Indigenous frameworks such as Buen Vivir and Tekó Porã, and Afro-Latin communal philosophies, constitute coherent alternatives to autonomy-centered ethics. These epistemologies emphasize interdependence, collective wellbeing, relational dignity, and socially embedded personhood. Their integration into the analysis confirms that epistemic plurality is not only possible but necessary for constructing pluriversal institutional frameworks.

The results of this study show that the reproduction of epistemic coloniality in Latin America is not due to the absence of alternative epistemologies, but to the persistence of Western interpretive frameworks that limit their recognition. The discussion highlights that advancing pluriversal futures requires transforming these interpretive frameworks, adopting epistemic reciprocity as an organizing principle, and recognizing the legitimacy of multiple epistemic traditions.

This interpretation sets the stage for the Conclusions, where the theoretical and institutional implications of the study are synthesized and the foundational principles for constructing pluriversal futures in the region are articulated.

CONCLUSIONES

The findings from this study establish the conceptual basis for the concluding reflections, enabling the analysis to shift from interpreting the results to synthesizing their broader theoretical and institutional implications for pluriversal futures in Latin America.

Reframing Metaculture through Epistemic Plurality

This article has argued that global metaculture, often perceived as a neutral space of cultural convergence, is structured by epistemic hierarchies that privilege Western categories of meaning. Autonomy-centered ethics, rights-based frameworks, and individualistic models of citizenship have been naturalized as universal standards, shaping how institutions interpret cultural behavior across Latin America. These categories reflect culturally specific assumptions rooted in Western modernity, yet they are frequently applied as if they were universally valid. The result is a form of epistemic coloniality that distorts relational and communal cultural practices, marginalizes alternative epistemologies, and limits the ability of institutions to engage with epistemic diversity.

Reframing metaculture through epistemic plurality requires recognizing that multiple epistemic traditions coexist within Latin America and constitute legitimate sources of knowledge. It requires adopting interpretive frameworks that reflect relational and communal epistemologies, revising institutional norms to reflect epistemic diversity, and constructing governance frameworks that promote epistemic reciprocity. By decentering Western categories of meaning and recognizing the plurality of cultural logics, institutions can begin to construct intercultural policies and organizational practices that reflect the epistemic diversity of Latin America.

Challenging Selective Universalism

Western progressivism often operates as a form of selective universalism, elevating autonomy-centered ethics as global standards while marginalizing relational and communal epistemologies. This dynamic contributes to epistemic coloniality by embedding Western

categories of meaning within institutional structures across education, governance, organizational culture, and social policy. Challenging selective universalism requires adopting pluriversal approaches to institutional practice, recognizing relational and communal epistemologies as legitimate sources of knowledge, and revising policy frameworks to reflect epistemic diversity.

Addressing Epistemic Misrecognition and Institutional Blindness

Epistemic misrecognition and institutional blindness constitute central mechanisms through which epistemic coloniality is reproduced. Misrecognition occurs when institutions interpret relational or communal practices through autonomy-centered categories, producing epistemic distortions that marginalize alternative epistemologies. Institutional blindness emerges when institutions lack the conceptual tools necessary to interpret relational and communal practices on their own terms. Addressing these mechanisms requires adopting interpretive frameworks that reflect epistemic plurality, revising institutional norms to reflect relational and communal epistemologies, and developing governance frameworks that promote epistemic reciprocity.

Constructing Pluriversal Institutional Futures

Pluriversal institutional futures require sustained commitment to epistemic plurality, institutional reflexivity, and intercultural justice. They involve revising legal frameworks, educational systems, organizational policies, governance structures, and compliance cultures to reflect epistemic diversity. Pluriversal futures require adopting interpretive frameworks that recognize relational and communal epistemologies as legitimate sources of knowledge, revising institutional norms to reflect epistemic plurality, and constructing governance frameworks that promote epistemic reciprocity.

Constructing pluriversal futures also requires adopting relational and communal ethics as foundational principles, recognizing Indigenous and Afro-Latin governance structures as legitimate political systems, and co-designing policies with communities. Pluriversal futures

challenge the epistemic dominance of Western categories of meaning and open pathways for constructing institutional frameworks that reflect the epistemic diversity of Latin America.

Toward a Pluriversal Metaculture

A pluriversal metaculture requires revising the epistemic foundations of global cultural flows. It involves recognizing that global metaculture is not a neutral space of cultural convergence, but a terrain structured by epistemic hierarchies. Pluriversal metaculture requires adopting interpretive frameworks that reflect epistemic plurality, recognizing relational and communal epistemologies as legitimate sources of global cultural meaning, and constructing cultural frameworks that promote epistemic reciprocity.

The adopting of pluriversal approaches to institutional practice, policy design, organizational culture, and governance frameworks, Latin America can contribute to pluriversal transformations within global metaculture. These transformations require sustained commitment to epistemic plurality, intercultural justice, and relational ethics. Pluriversal metaculture offers a foundation for constructing global cultural frameworks that reflect the epistemic diversity of Latin America and challenge the epistemic dominance of Western categories of meaning.

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