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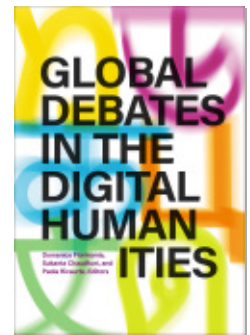
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Digital Social Sciences and Digital Humanities of the South *Materials for a Critical Discussion*

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A Horizon from Which to Think about Digital Social Sciences and Digital Humanities of the South

This chapter has its origin in a post whose title translates as “The Digital Humanities: A Framework for Critical Reflection about Culture” (Rodríguez-Ortega, “Humanidades digitales”), published in March 2016. The post also reflects the deliberations of a conference at the University of Granada for the launch of the project “Digital Social Sciences and Digital Humanities of the South” (#CSHDSUR: <http://medialab.ugr.es/proyectos/ciencias-sociales-humanidades-digitales-sur/>). The aim was to explore how the interaction of digital social sciences with digital humanities in the South could be defined and constructed. That is also the objective of this text. To my main ideas in the post, I have now added some other thoughts on which I have had the opportunity to reflect over the intervening years. My ultimate aim is to provide material for debate and critical discussion.

I would like to start by specifying the perspective from which I view digital humanities (DH). This horizon of thought must be charted to understand how I conceive the topic in my title. First of all, we need to focus on the term “digital humanities” itself. What are we referring to when we talk about the digital humanities? What do we really mean when we use this term? What does it include? Asking these questions in the year 2021 may seem superfluous, because finding a definition has been one of the most widely addressed topics almost since the concept came into being. And yet an ambiguity persists in our understanding of the term.

The question is further complicated by the fact that in our postdigital society, the boundaries between the digital and the nondigital have become fuzzy, and digitality has become a natural feature of our daily lives. Where, then, lies the value of the adjective “digital”? Isn’t this label somewhat redundant, and therefore dispensable, in our contemporary world? It becomes even more diffuse on account of the expansion of DH into so many disciplinary and geographical areas, which heightens the

problem of its legibility by multiplying the ways in which it is practiced and understood. This situation confronts us with the need, first, to establish a prior definition as a common basis of understanding and second, to invest the term with new meaning, so that it offers some differentiating value to justify its continuing use.

In my previous writings, I adhered to the well-known designation of digital humanities as the outcome of a convergence between computational languages, computer technology, digital media, and the humanistic disciplines. Now that we have entered the third decade of the twenty-first century, I feel this view needs updating. I would now prefer to situate DH within a broader framework of thought, linked to the long-standing critical discussion of the complex relationship between culture, society, human knowledge, and technology—this last being understood as a cultural factor, having a reciprocal relationship to the biological, cognitive, social, and cultural development of the human beings who produce it.

Within this framework, as I see it, digital humanities represents the space of thought, criticism, and action that allows us to problematize the techno-episteme that defines our current era and the sociotechnological ecology of our time, in relation to the processes of production, representation, communication, and dissemination of knowledge about the cultural facets of humanity (Rodríguez-Ortega, “Five Central Concepts to Think”). Hence the pivotal issue around which the digital humanities revolves is not what technology we apply or what resources we build. Rather, the challenge lies in thinking how to reformulate the fundamental questions about the cultural and historical development of humanity that have been posed until now and how to address the problems and circumstances of our past, present, and future evolution, beyond the techno-epistemic and sociotechnological paradigms that define the current era.

Yet thinking differently implies questioning the current state of affairs: that is, performing a critical deconstruction of what we have been doing and thinking until now. This critical dimension is consubstantial with the digital humanities, as it makes up that essential substratum without which we would advance toward only a technologization of the humanistic disciplines. In fact, there is already a long tradition of critical thinking about the field. It is founded on a number of internal problems about the institutional configuration of digital humanities as an independent disciplinary field. Especially important issues have been the detection of imbalances of representation at every level and the incorporation of approaches such as the critical theory of culture, postcolonial and feminist theories, and the decolonial methodology. All these were led by an awareness of the role that DH can play as a critical discourse and an instrument allowing emancipation from the single, hegemonic, and legitimizing way of accepting technology as unidimensionally shaping the world, culture, and humanity.

The idea of a Digital Social Sciences and Digital Humanities of the South (DSSDHS) thus fits, first of all, into this consubstantial critical dimension of DH. In fact, it arises from the recognition of two realities: first, an imbalance in the

processes of access, production, and distribution of knowledge and culture, with the consequent prevalence of certain political-cultural models over others; and second, a dynamic by which these models are imposed (often by highly localized and naturalized means), even though they are not always best suited to local contexts and territories or do not fit at all.

CONVERGENCES IN A MULTIPLE CONTEXT OF REDEFINING THE HUMANITIES

In order to gain a wider understanding of the field, I believe that DH must be considered as part of a complex scenario in which various reformulations of the humanities and their role in the world are being proposed.

Without a doubt, mention must be made of the so-called new humanities. As defined and practiced by a research group at the Università di Roma Tre (Bergonzi et al., “New Humanities Project”), the new humanities addresses the concepts of interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity from a critical standpoint. From this perspective, which delves deeper into the constellated nature of the new order of knowledge (for indeed it forms a constellation rather than a grid), the new humanities seeks to explore unprecedented models that connect knowledge produced by disciplines that are traditionally very distant, at least in the knowledge system we inherited from modern times. Thus, continuously crossing the usual disciplinary borders and coming up with new interpretations of the world impel us to reconsider the artificiality of the current order of scientific-academic disciplines, and to reevaluate the cognitive and epistemic potential of the frontier territories.

The “public humanities,” in the sense of being open to citizens at large, emerges from undoing the hierarchical organization of knowledge and asserting its own legitimacy in all its different forms. Public humanities proposes to build spaces in which academic and nonacademic communities can collaborate to elaborate a common knowledge that is valid and meaningful for all. Logically, this approach redefines the role of academia as a social and cultural agent, so as to ensure that the knowledge produced in universities permeates the whole of society in a milieu of transversality. It is important to emphasize this term “transversality,” as it implies a substantial difference from the policies of dissemination that form part of our academic tradition. Dissemination involves transferring expert knowledge to a nonexpert audience, in a single direction. Public humanities dispenses with this one-way movement in favor of a productive, dialogic, horizontal, and collaborative exchange.

The notion of “generative humanities,” as proposed by Anne Burdick and her colleagues (*Digital Humanities*), refers to the contemporary transformation of the humanities into a generative enterprise in which students and teachers “make things” when they study or conduct research, producing not only texts in the traditional sense (analyses, comments, narratives, critiques, etc.), but also images, interactions, cross-media stories, web platforms, applications, and so forth. In this sense,

Alejandro Piscitelli (“Humanidades digitales”) urges us to reconceptualize humanists, to stop thinking of them as simply “publishers” and to understand them also to be “makers.”

This idea of generative humanities connects with the emergence of fab labs and the maker culture, where emphasis is placed on the materialities of the creative and/or research process and on the conditions that define the processes of producing, constructing, and distributing knowledge. This approach, within the framework of digital culture, is particularly important because it helps us to dismantle the fallacy that digital objects are immaterial simply because we cannot touch them. In other words, it helps to undo the epistemological error of the immateriality of the internet. Aware of the material conditions and productive processes underlying the construction and distribution of knowledge allows us to expand the critical dimension of DH toward other aspects that have so far gone unnoticed and that imply the reconsideration of certain practices relating to labor, economics, politics, ecology, and other matters.

In my opinion, the idea of DSSDHS must be situated at the intersection of these reformulations, integrating their approaches in a new synthesis.

THE SOUTH

If, as we have said, the idea of DSSDHS is not alien to the critical side of DH, neither is it alien to contemporary discourses on the Global South and theories of globality. For this reason, thinking about what DSSDHS could be cannot be separated from the problematization of the term “South,” investing it with new meaning and placing it in another order of understanding and a new space of critical discussion.

It is not possible here to examine the idea of the “South” in detail, but I will put down a few ideas that I consider to be essential in this context. I expect I would be stating the obvious if I said that the South is a complex notion that cannot be reduced to a monolithic, homogeneous concept. There are many Souths, just as there are many Norths. In fact, the North-South logic is like a fractal, a structure that is repeated on different scales. Thus Europe—the North in certain geopolitical contexts—has its own South, while in this European South the North-South structure is replicated within the different nation-states. I think the comparison with the fractal helps us to understand the North-South tension beyond the “West vs. non-West” binary axis.

However, there is clearly a link between the idea of the South and a particular physical territoriality. Hence the need for a digital pluralism is associated from the start with geographic and geopolitical diversity, as an argument in favor of the decentralization and decolonization of the idea of DH that would result from the visibility of other practices, approaches, concepts, and representations occurring in nonhegemonic spaces.

Yet this decentralization, linked to the physical territoriality of multiple local contexts, must be complemented by decentralization of a mental, cognitive, and subjective nature—that is to say, the mind and consciousness of the subject as the primary territory must be decolonized to show up subalternity and hegemony as states of subjective interiorization, shared by a collective group and often operating from the unconscious.

At the same time, this approach implies that if we can think of “locality” and “situatedness” as a mental space, we can also think of “place” as something that can be constructed in the subjective consciousness, as a state of consciousness that can stem from a reflexive standpoint. It can therefore emerge as an autonomous, free, and independent decision by the subject, to be withdrawn or revealed as it encounters various contextual determinations and internalized discourses—in short, rooted in the possible choices that we as humans can make in exercising our freedom. In this sense, the notion of the South, as a “place” from which to think or act, is expanded beyond a geographical or geopolitical space (a factor that irremediably shapes the way we are and think) to a state of mind and consciousness that is adopted or constructed as part of a political decision.¹

As I see it, this is the chief perspective from which we can think about the idea of DSSDHS, and this would be its first mission: to create the conditions that make it possible to achieve a mental emancipation that allows us to access real freedom of action. I believe that this idea of the South can be a fitting basis to define a common horizon of understanding. It can prevent us from getting lost in the debate on the legitimacy of the different Souths or on the legitimacy of actors speaking from a Southern horizon—debates that turn the South into a new battlefield for its control. It can also alert us to the merely territorial use of the term to designate initiatives that arise in the “geographical south” but which still do not incorporate the idea of the South as a point of critical discussion and political action. In such contexts, “South” is a deactivated term, devoid of the technopolitical and critical tension that, in my opinion, it must have.

DSSDHS carries the recognition that other digital practices, ways of understanding the technological processes of our era other than the current and dominant ones are possible. But it is important that this condition of otherness should not be understood in confrontation with the models of the North or of English-speaking countries: a state of confrontation would only return us to a binary logic of antagonistic thinking, which is precisely one of the set patterns to be overcome. Likewise, it is necessary to prevent the Southern perspective from ending up as a new totalitarian way of thinking, simply a new seizure of power by other actors. On the contrary, what we are trying to achieve is a space for symmetry, rebalance, horizontality, and productive dialogue, because the big issue we have to deal with is: How do we all live together in a global space? How do we build a common space in which we all feel represented, where all of us find ourselves on an equal footing?

PRAXIS AS AN ETHICAL COMMITMENT OF THEORY

The critical dimension of DSSDHS, and of digital humanities in general, should not be confined to thought. Digital humanities must also involve action, since the objective of seeking disruption entails “acting” in such a way that the disruption occurs and has a real impact on the fields of knowledge, society, politics, and culture. Hence digital humanities must also be “active” humanities, adopting an activist research paradigm that measures the quality of the knowledge produced by its effect on reality and its capacity to transform the world into a more rebalanced, fair, and equitable place.

This hybridization of thinking and acting—that is, the transition from pure critical analysis to action—is also part of a new paradigm of knowledge. This, in fact, is the idea put forward by Mikhail Epstein in *The Transformative Humanities*: “Are the humanities a purely scholarly field, or should they have some active, constructive supplement? . . . Every humanistic discipline needs its practical extension in order to convert knowledge into constructive thinking and creative action” (12).

As I have already pointed out (Rodríguez Ortega, “*Design Thinking y metodologías*”), the introduction of critical perspectives—with their emphasis (inter alia) on the unveiling of power relations, the dismantling of the underlying discourses, the deconstruction of meanings, the awareness of institutional and contextual mediations in knowledge production processes, and so on—has made an important contribution to the development of critical thinking. It has contributed no less to cognitive and emotional understanding of the meanings linked to socio-cultural agents, products, and systems, as well as to the epistemologies produced by them. Critical deconstruction alone, however, runs the risk of limiting itself to simply dismantling systems without building or producing anything new. It is true that new themes of theories and concepts that provide critical ways of understanding is a necessary condition for any process of transformation to begin. It is also true that constructing something new implies a critical awareness of what already exists; but at some point, one must proceed to action—that is, to validate that critical interpretation by producing relevant and transforming actions: “taking the qualitative leap translated into action so that research can radically transform the world” (D’Souza, “*Cárceles del conocimiento*,” 122).

Adherence to praxis as an ethical commitment of theory is therefore indispensable for an agenda of DSSDHS. In other words, it is not only a question of making a series of statements and/or pronouncements but also of pledging a real commitment to them. If DSSDHS aspires to become an agent of social, political, cultural, and epistemic transformation, it needs to adopt this paradigm of thinking and action based on a genuine ethical commitment. And that, without a doubt, is problematic, because it entails more than a few personal sacrifices. For example, there is no point

in writing incisive articles on the hegemonies exercised by publishing companies that capitalize and privatize knowledge today while, at the same time, striving hard so that our scientific-academic production appears to be integrated within these clear structures of hegemonic power.

Adopting the action-research paradigm is not trivial, because it confronts us with ourselves. It compels us to reevaluate what our aspirations are. It challenges us to revise our personal ambitions within the framework of the ideals we defend, thus revealing our contradictions: in short, it makes us rethink why we do what we do, and to what end. It is true that “academic suicide,” or placing oneself completely outside the system, might be unrewarding today. It is, therefore, a matter of developing alternative structures that afford us the confidence that by losing some of the contemporary narcissistic individuality discussed by Bauman (*Retrotopia*), which can be extrapolated to the academic domain, we will reap greater collective benefit.

Dimensions of Action

To take action, it is necessary to have a program. DSSDHS has therefore to be programmatic and, as I have already observed, proactive and purposeful. It has to put forward concrete models as alternatives to those felt to be hegemonic and asymmetric, while at the same time developing an intensified critical awareness: that is to say, a state of alert against, first, the naturalization of certain processes of interiorized subalternity, in order to become aware of the nonneutral mechanisms that operate in our subconscious; and second, unawareness of the aggregate consequences of our particular acts as cogs in the very system that we aim to subvert (Parselis, “Banalidad de la alienación tecnológica”).

But where does this action originate? Who are the actors involved? These questions are important, because action cannot come only from critical intellectuals and committed researchers, following the model of the messianic narrative where a select few can save all the others. As Parselis points out, on the one hand, we also have to consider (despite its limitations and resistances) the action of the state itself, which must exercise political regulation to promote technological processes and structures that are more democratic and beneficial for all. On the other hand, we must take into account the technological agents, whose actions should be guided by an ethics based on the principles of honesty and solidarity which alone can trigger a change of attitude in the internal processes of technological development toward more transparent, horizontal, and equitable proposals. Another factor to be considered is the citizenry as a whole, since, with greater knowledge and greater critical awareness, citizens can initiate demands and take action. Guided by this total perspective, the transformation to which we aspire would be the result of a common conquest based on collective action.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL COLONIALISMS AND COGNITIVE-LINGUISTIC HEGEMONIES

There are a number of spaces for action. Naturally, the problem of epistemological colonialisms and cognitive-linguistic hegemonies calls for a priority line of action that has to do with imbalances in the systems of access, production, distribution, and validation of knowledge. This polycephalous problem confronts us, in turn, with a multitude of conflicts. The following are just a few of them:

- (1) The academic systems in which DH has traditionally been located are strongly affected by asymmetries, as they are based on a hierarchical structure that needs endorsement from the hegemonic discourses of legitimation for them to take their place as “relevant” actors in the global knowledge system. The uncritical incorporation of methodologies, strategic lines of research, models for measurement and evaluation, and so on is the most obvious consequence. It is therefore necessary to look for a new institutional framework in which the actors work toward a dialogical and horizontal community of interests and not only on the basis of strategic policies imposed from above. This community of interests must be open to a variety of knowledge that is not hierarchical and is in a constant state of flux.
- (2) The privatization, capitalization, and commodification of knowledge by large publishing monopolies is among the most pressing concerns. Moreover, these processes often happen with the explicit connivance of the state, which has no qualms about paying large sums of money to access the results of research that they themselves have funded, in a perverse cycle of expenditure of public money.
- (3) Mechanisms of control, and appropriation of the systems and means of knowledge production and distribution, must be another major focus of attention. In this sense, the consubstantial dependence between technological materialities and the mere *possibility* of producing and circulating knowledge compels us to relocate power relations in a new framework, to rethink cultural hegemony and subalternity from a new perspective. In other words, it obliges us to ask ourselves who holds control over the materials that make the production and distribution of knowledge possible today; who is in possession of the economic resources and knowledge required to manufacture and build those resources; who decides the processes of circulation of knowledge; how can they determine who may and who may not participate; what cultural representations and ideological assumptions are embedded in these structures imposed upon us (Rodríguez-Ortega, “Five Central Concepts to Think”). This inquiry must include all the processes involved, because all of them, from the decision about what to digitize to those related

to cataloging, recording, encoding, and structuring, are political statements (either implicit or explicit) with epistemological consequences, conditioning the digital representation that we construct of our cultural legacy.

As actors directly involved in constructing and developing these technological materials, the practitioners of digital humanities bear a special responsibility, allowing us new opportunities for intervention: for example, by developing formal models of the cultural reality that can express its full diversity and complexity or by advocating technological models that are horizontal and transversal, honest and transparent.

POLITICAL-CULTURAL AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF POSTDIGITAL SOCIETIES

Owing to its very *raison d'être*, DSSDHS must maintain an effective commitment to the political-cultural and social problems of postdigital societies. It is crucial to investigate, first of all, the real or potential inequalities and imbalances of geopolitical, socioeconomic, gender-related, and other factors, as well as the new peripheries, exclusions, and marginalities being created on both large and small scales. Taking these factors together, the shift toward the social that we are experiencing in all spheres also pushes us to expand the field of action of DH through projects and initiatives that use the digital and the computational to promote processes of social transformation and innovation whereby we can advance toward more inclusive, equitable, sustainable, creative, and emancipated societies.

This inquiry and these initiatives must be based on technological solutions that are appropriate to the territory where they are generated, so that they can be used locally and incorporated into local knowledge systems (Peyloubet et al., “Desarrollo local a partir”). It is therefore important to distinguish between initiatives of this kind and projects of “technological philanthropy” that are flaunted by some actors in the digital industry, turning the access factor (through the infrastructures they provide) into the “principle” of equality and rebalance. We should not fool ourselves: the problem of the digital divide lies not only in the conditions of access but also, as I said earlier, in the monopolistic control of the means and systems of production and distribution. There is no point in achieving global access to the internet if it is necessary to buy materials from third countries, pay for knowledge, use proprietary platforms, consume their digital content, and so on. Access does not guarantee territorial and social rebalance; on the contrary, if poorly managed, it can become a factor in perpetuating the dependence of some countries on others.

It is also necessary to look at the processes of social appropriation of technology outside the strictly academic sphere of the digital humanities, since they can be good sources from which to draw inspiration. For this purpose, I recommend exploring, among others, the projects “From the Center” (<https://vimeo.com/user7696400>),

“Map Kibera” (<http://mapkibera.org/>), and “El Cabanyal” (<http://www.cabanyalarchivovivo.es/index.html>), in which, respectively, a collective group of individuals (imprisoned women), a territorial community (Kibera), and a site steeped in memory and cultural heritage (El Cabanyal) find a place in which to remember and experience their heritage. That heritage is reconstructed, made visible, and validated in a hybrid context where the socialization of technology assumes an essential role and the social community takes control of its own process of transformation.

There is also an urgent need to focus on the processes giving rise to a new alienation of the subject in contemporary postindustrial societies. The subject is isolated and distanced from reality owing to constant digital hyperconnection: a subject deprived of its own life project by the dissociation between personal vocation and labor. The latter is determined by the bureaucratic powers of the system, responding to the strategic lines defined by the dominant actors. The subject is also alienated from the benefits produced by its work, owing to the precarious regimes induced by the neoliberal agenda and the networked world. The subject is thereby instrumentalized in its main mechanisms of action, vocation, and enthusiasm, by “a system that favours anxiety, conflict and dependence to the benefit of competitive hyperproduction and speed” (Zafra, *Entusiasmo*, 17). It is therefore necessary to conceive and propose new logics that reconnect human beings with their own interests and needs, with aspirations and expectations modeled by an honest pact between individuals and the conditions in which they lead their lives: not by external markets, whether academic, financial, or technological.

Further, and in relation to the above, it is necessary to seek alternative models to the discourse of the currently prevalent quantified axiology: that is, the construction and imposition of value systems based on rankings and metrics, more often than not developed using nontransparent algorithms designed by the dominant technological actors. We cannot forget that metrics and rankings are legitimating discourses that have a direct effect on people’s lives, which end up being planned to comply with the value parameters ratified by those algorithmic hierarchies. Our aspirations, expectations, and frustrations are marked by them.

This discussion is not trivial, for it involves asking ourselves essential questions about what is relevant and for whom it is relevant; what the impact is, what it is for, and who it is for; what “value” means for contemporary society; how that value is generated and created, reused and expanded; and also, of course, how it comes to be capitalized, commodified, and instrumentalized. Asking these questions implies confronting ourselves with the crucial question of what the axiological project of the humanities and cultural practice in general should be in the twenty-first century.

Discourses about the Future

The transformations that humankind is undergoing in the twenty-first century prompt us to pose a new question: How can digital humanities (as the space for

problematizing the *techne* that defines our historical time) be transformed into a project to construct a new humanism that corresponds to the human condition in our world? I take “humanism” in the sense of placing the human being at the center of the problem, not at the center of the world: the latter stance would make us repeat an anthropocentric mode of thinking that is no longer operational. In other words, it is a question of thinking of DH as an actor or agent that helps us to imagine and shape the humanity we want to build and the future world to which we aspire (Rodríguez-Ortega, “Humanidades digitales”).

Naturally, a new notion of humanity cannot be constructed by ignoring or subordinating the diversity of epistemologies, cultures, ethics, identities, and axiologies that define our global village. Although this idea is present in the way we imagine and project possible futures, and we all seem to agree that the future can be modeled only on the basis of diversity, we nevertheless run the risk of deactivating this principle if the discourse on the future starts to be capitalized by certain geopolitical, institutional, epistemological, and cultural contexts defined by their technological hegemony. That is why the development of DSSDHS makes more sense than ever. One of its main objectives must be to have an effective voice in elaborating these discourses, shifting the attention from technology as a problem (how do we make a beneficial technology for humanity?) to the human subject as a project (how do we educate human beings to cope with the ethical challenges of our hypertechnologized future?).

New Pedagogies and Formative Structures for a New Attitude

The exploration and establishment of new pedagogies is the logical conclusion to what I have been saying until now. The processes of social, cognitive, and epistemological disruption can emerge only from profound reforms of the educational system. In the 1960s, Paulo Freire stated that “teaching is not transferring knowledge, but creating the possibilities for its production or construction” (Freire, *Pedagogía de la autonomía*, 8). Our responsibility is to create those contexts in which it is possible to produce and construct the knowledge needed to address the challenges facing humanity in the twenty-first century, in accord with the conditions of our current era.

This transformation, however, cannot emerge from technological solutions alone, such as distributing laptops among school students (to the joy of the IT companies), making the use of virtual campuses mandatory in universities, increasing connection speeds, multiplying the number of computer classrooms, and so on (Ricaurte, “Aprender en el siglo XXI”). Technology by itself does not transform anything: it is the interdependent relationship between culture, society, and technological development that transforms the world and humanity itself. It is therefore necessary to turn the problem around because the challenge is not only to provide the citizens of the twenty-first century with a plethora of technological skills but also to provide them with an adequate education, so that they can become critical and competent actors in the noble task of achieving a better world in the conditions of a hypertechnological society.

This entails, first, favoring notions such as creative experimentation, the cognitive fertility of error, cross-culturality, transdisciplinarity, the hybridization of learning spaces, collaboration at the edges of disciplines, diversity as the articulator of a worldview, and critical thinking. All these will help to expand the narrow-mindedness produced by a monoculture of thought in a state of intellectual, technological, and cultural dependence on foreign markets.

Second, it implies educating us in a new relationship with technology that allows us to abandon the neoliberal capitalist model that understands technological innovation as a market “product” based on economic profitability and the dynamics of extractive logics, as defined by Saskia Sassen (Torino, “Age of Extraction”). Let us exchange this for a social model that understands technological innovation as part of a process of sociocultural and economic development that is nonexclusive, supportive, horizontal, and beneficial for all, and in which all can participate. It is difficult, however, for this mental shift to prosper if, for most universities, Silicon Valley is still the model to follow.

That is why this perspective requires a profound reflection on the role of education in our society and on our reasons for learning: it demands that we ask ourselves why and for what purpose we learn what we learn. However, given the slowness with which the structures of the state move, and given their link with the political-economic ideologies of conjunctural governments, the outlook appears rather bleak if we wait for this transformation of education and learning to take place within the framework of state bodies. The good news is that we do not have to wait: each of us, within our own sphere of action, can carry out more or less radical, more or less transitional initiatives that allow us to walk toward a new horizon.

As Antonio Rodríguez de las Heras told us at the first Digital Social Sciences and Digital Humanities meeting held in Granada in December 2013, “Let us be damp!—that invisible damp that silently eats away at the walls until one day, without warning, they just end up collapsing in plain view of everyone” (De las Heras, “Humanidades Digitales”).

Notes

I wish to dedicate this article to the memory of our colleague Antonio Rodríguez de las Heras, one of the European pioneers of Digital Humanities. This work is part of the innovative education project “TransUMA Lab: Imagining Possible Futures” (PIE 19–178), supported by the University of Málaga, Spain.

1. This conceptual distinction between a geographical South and a metaphorical one has already been addressed by Boaventura de Sousa Santos in relation to his notion of “epistemologies of the South” (Santos and Meneses, *Epistemologías del Sur*, 10–11).

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