

Information Systems Journal: Special Issue Call for Papers

Decoloniality in Information Systems Research

Special Issue Guest Editors

Hameed Chughtai, Lancaster University, UK (h.chughtai@lancaster.ac.uk)

Amber Grace Young, University of Arkansas, USA (ayoung@walton.uark.edu)

The information systems field emerged in the West and is advanced by Western philosophies, but research is not always conducted in modern Western contexts (Chughtai, 2023; Young, 2018). The non-Western contexts have their own philosophies and ways of being and doing things (Masiero, 2022b). Some of these contexts are situated in geographic areas that were once under the colonial rule of the West (e.g., India, South Africa, and large parts of South America), and others are situated in the West but were subjected to control (e.g., First Nations of Canada and the USA and Australia/New Zealand). Doing research in a postcolonial (or colonial) context requires us to be sensitive to what Quijano (2007, 2000) and Mignolo (2011, 2000) refer to as the colonial matrix of power. It describes the ways in which colonial power is articulated. These are more than physical control over the population but also constitute a form of control on the production and transmission of knowledge, suppressing critical consciousness, promoting the dominant (colonial) epistemologies, and rejecting the marginal (local or Indigenous) perspectives.

Qualitative IS researchers are most likely to be trained in Western epistemological frameworks and expected to use and contribute to Western-based theories. Researchers working in non-Western contexts often, willingly or unwillingly, ignore the local epistemologies and apply Western theories to examine a local issue. Jimenez *et al.* (2021) show that by ignoring the Indigenous knowledge of the research setting, the researchers contribute to reinforcing the dominance of the colonial past and upholding inequalities. Masiero (2022a) says that this form of ignorance is an example of epistemic violence. What shall we do? Shall we continue to apply Western methods to understand the local customs, norms, and philosophies in non-Western contexts and expect that the other should *know like we do and act as we do*; or shall we begin to address the colonial roots of the field and advance research towards a more inclusive world? We argue that the latter provides tremendous opportunities for new discoveries and knowledge innovations; for example, the postcolonial theories of Paulo Freire inspired a design theory for emancipatory assistants, that is machine learning digital systems that can help users navigate oppressive information environments (Kane et al. 2021) and a normative organizing theory for how humans and machine learning tools should be partnered in work contexts to promote emancipatory outcomes (Young et al. 2021).

Our field has always been acutely aware of the relevance of postcolonial dynamics to critical research (Lin *et al.*, 2015; Ravishankar *et al.*, 2013). However, critical research in IS has been mainly focused on the traditional postcolonial theory

perspectives. A common criticism of the classic postcolonial theory is that it still operates within and is controlled by the thinkers operating within the Western theoretical apparatus (Mignolo, 2021; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018; Young 2023). The debates in critical theory are often primarily between or about Western philosophies (e.g., Gayatri Spivak and Jacques Derrida, Homi Bhabha and Frantz Fanon, and Edward Saïd and Michel Foucault). Another criticism of the traditional postcolonial approach is that it does not identify the colonizer or the one who is colonized. Instead, the colonial dynamic is discussed in a general sense without engaging with the coloniality of the context (Tuck and Yang, 2012).

In contrast, decolonial scholarship championed by thinkers such as Walter Mignolo (2021, 2011), Anibal Quijano (2007, 2000), Arturo Escobar (2020, 2018), and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) ask us to engage with local philosophies, develop a pluriversal view of research, and challenge the Eurocentric hegemony of theories and methodology in research. The decolonial project is a step beyond the postcolonial critical theory. Decoloniality is primarily about addressing the colonial matrix of power, delinking coloniality from modernity and, in so doing, attempting to reconstitute epistemologies of the local. Thus, the decolonial approach does not necessarily need to be extended through classic critical theory. We should also develop research using local ways of being and doing. One example is offered by Xiao *et al.* (2020), which shows how the Chinese concept of *Qinghuai* can inform the study of digital entrepreneurship. Another example is using Japanese *Animism* as a way to develop cyber governance strategies (Kokuryo, 2022). Woods *et al.* (2022) show how the Māori Indigenous concept of *ako* reveals new ways of knowing in everyday digital interactions. By embracing under-represented approaches to research, we can answer questions not easily addressed through traditional methods of scientific inquiry.

Information systems researchers have started to be more aware of colonial power lines active within the research and how these power lines tend to sway the field in a particular direction (Myers *et al.* 2020). To that end, we amplify the call for a 'decolonial turn' in our field (Chughtai *et al.*, 2020). Qualitative researchers in our field and sister fields have begun to engage with practical decolonial issues, including those related to Indigenous Maori communities (Díaz Andrade *et al.*, 2021), information practices in Indigenous communities of Amazon (Leal *et al.*, 2021), decolonization of the universities (Bhambra *et al.*, 2018), and decolonial approaches to design (Taboada *et al.*, 2020) and data colonialism (Couldry and Mejias, 2021; Singh, 2021). Researchers have also started to examine the theoretical and methodological implications of settler-scholar (Held, 2019), the nature of colonial difference (Kerr, 2020) and gendered colonial difference using decolonial feminist theory (Manning, 2021), and implications of epistemic violence (Kearney, 2021). These are early examples, and there is room for much more IS research in this vein.

Scope and Expectations

For the special issue, researchers are invited to engage deeply with decoloniality and go beyond the application of a postcolonial, anticolonial, or critical theory more generally. While a postcolonial lens (e.g., Spivak or Bhabha) can provide a good

starting point to build a decolonial work, a simple application of the postcolonial concept (e.g., third space, subaltern) is not recommended. Research promoting traditional critical theory (e.g., the works that emerged from the Frankfurt school) goes against the decolonial spirit and will be considered out of the scope of this special issue. Researchers should resist using Western philosophies to analyze non-Western contexts. Global dominance of Western ideas has fueled universality in research objectives and processes. Our hope is that this special issue will collect a range of diverse, local epistemologies and perspectives on information systems and promote novel research objectives and processes. By taking local contexts into account, researchers can move beyond global prescriptions to account for the nuances of specific contexts and cultures. Researchers are strongly encouraged to use local epistemologies from their research context, and indigenous knowledge (See Mignolo 2021 for further guidance). We stress here that there is no one universal way to think about decoloniality.

Topics of Interest

We welcome all topics and methods related to decoloniality in the context of information systems research. The main topic of research should be decoloniality and a paper should have a strong IS component. Contributions should be made to both IS research and decolonial research. Some examples of topics that would be appropriate include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Decolonial research that values and extends local and Indigenous philosophies
- Decolonial work that brings a marginalized view to the centre
- Decolonial approaches to design and human-computer interaction
- Decolonial perspectives on sustainability, the natural environment, and technology
- The politics of the digital divide
- Decolonial perspectives on race and oppression (e.g., Black narratives, algorithmic profiling and surveillance)
- Decolonial perspectives on the human body, bodily practices (including disability), and gender
- The production and transmission of technology mediated colonial differences (e.g., socio-digital inequalities)
- New forms of coloniality using data colonialism, and colonial differences in physical, digital, or virtual spaces
- Colonial power differentials in the research setting
- Data justice and injustice
- Digital activism and social movements that push back against or reinforce colonial ideologies (e.g., the Natural Hair Movement, nationalist movements)
- Critical reflective accounts from settler and colonizer perspectives in digital society or organizations
- The presence of *colonial gaze* and how it influences and is influenced by technology
- Epistemic violence and resistance, such as the ways of restoring local knowledge

- The connections between critical theory and conceptual paradigms that are based on the critique of colonialism

For any queries about the suitability of your work for the special issue, please contact the special issue guest editors.

Submission

We welcome all types of original completed research including theoretical, empirical, practitioner, and method papers. Stand-alone reviews and opinion pieces will not be considered. We strongly encourage first-time authors and interdisciplinary teams to submit their work.

Submissions will be made through <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/isj> - please select the relevant special issue and also indicate that the paper is for the special issue in your cover letter. For formatting criteria, authors should refer to the Information Systems Journal website¹. All manuscript submissions will go through an initial round of screening by the special issue editorial board to ensure that they fit the objectives of the special issue and *Information Systems Journal* and can be reasonably improved during the time frame of the special issue. The review process will begin immediately upon receipt of the manuscript, even for manuscripts received prior to the deadline, May 31, 2023.

Manuscripts that pass initial screening will go through the *Information Systems Journal* review process.

Indicative Timeline

The special issue deadlines are below and will not be extended.

Submission of extended abstract (optional): Feb 28, 2023

Submission of manuscript: May 31, 2023

Guest Associate Editors

- Antonio Diaz-Andrade, Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand
- Pitso Tsibolane, University of Cape Town, South Africa
- Andrea Jimenez, University of Sheffield, UK
- Thema Monroe-White, Berry College, USA
- Silvia Masiero, University of Oslo, Norway
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¹ <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/page/journal/13652575/homepage/ForAuthors.html>

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