

Latin American woman speaks about AI extractivism at the Vatican



Tec research professor Paola Ricaurte was the sole Latin American representative invited to analyze AI at the “Preserving Human Dignity in the Age of AI” forum.

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Courtesy of Paola Ricaurte

During the **Preserving Human Dignity in the Age of AI** international conference held by the Vatican in Italy, **Paola Ricaurte Quijano**, a research professor at Tecnológico de Monterrey’s [School of Humanities and Education](#), was one of eight experts convened by the **Dicastery for Communication** and the sole Latin American representative to participate in the forum.

The professor, who was recently listed as one of the [most influential figures in AI globally](#) (according to [TIME](#)), spoke on the **inequalities** panel, condemning the **“extractive” nature** of the current technological model, which fuels the **accumulation of power, wealth, and knowledge** by a select few.

*“If we look at the figures, never before in history has there been such an **accumulation of wealth**. However, the majority of this accumulation is driven by the large-scale extraction and **exploitation of resources** to maximize profits. This is what we call **extractivism**.*

*“**Extractivist logic** is rooted in the **capitalist model** and industrial modernity. In our current era, it has broadened its mechanisms of **dispossession** through **technology**. The entire **AI lifecycle** involves various forms of extractivism, from classic ones such as mining to new ones such as data,” Ricaurte explained.*

This event took place days after the release of **Magnifica Humanitas**, Pope Leo XIV’s first encyclical on **artificial intelligence**. The forum addressed the **ethical, social, and cultural challenges** posed by the development of AI systems.

The researcher is advocating for strict regulations and community projects to ensure that AI functions as a public good and not as a tool for exclusion.

Photo: Courtesy of Paola Ricaurte



Inequality and colonialism in AI

During her speech, Ricaurte highlighted that **algorithmic models** have **social biases**, which means there is a risk of perpetuating colonial and **racist logic**.

*“We have an industry that’s monopolized by a handful of corporations which control the **entire AI value chain**, and AI governance models **are not democratic**. This industry appropriates **user-generated** data. At that level, we’re already discussing the exclusion of countries and their populations.*

*“The models are designed in innovation centers within a **male-dominated** and predominantly **white** industry, which **excludes women** and **racialized** groups. These models are trained on narrow datasets that don’t represent **the diversity of global populations**, their languages, their knowledge, or their experiences,”* she shared with CONECTA.

Ricaurte emphasized that when governments or companies deploy these systems, they often lack the **safeguards** necessary to protect the public from biases and **discriminatory** practices that are being reproduced through these systems.

*“The **implications can be devastating**: not getting a job, going to jail for a crime you didn’t commit, or being denied credit, social benefit or healthcare. **In the context of war**, it could even mean losing your life, such as the tragedy we saw at the **girls’ school in Iran**,”* she warned.

“AI should be a public good, not a geopolitical, military, or social control tool.”

Latin America’s role in against hegemonic AI

For this reason, the expert recommended factoring in **diverse regional, social, and technological** perspectives into the implementation of intelligence systems.

The researcher called for the **regulation of systems** that centralize **human rights** and protect people from corporate abuses.

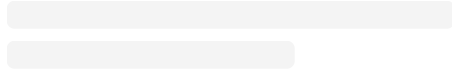
*"We need to act on many levels: establishing **strict regulations**, education, **innovation policies** and **intersectional** technological development; investment for community and social technological innovation projects; capacity building; investment in infrastructure and, above all, understanding that **AI should be a public good**, not a geopolitical, military, or social control tool."*

Finally, Ricaurte highlighted the role that **Latin America** can play in this **technological development**.

This includes the [**Feminist AI Network in Latin America and the Caribbean**](#) initiative, which is coordinated by the professor and addresses the structural issues in AI.



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*“Fortunately, **there are several initiatives** in Latin America that are driving technological innovation aimed at solving the region’s **challenges**.*

*These years have taught us that the region has **enormous potential** and the capacity to conceptualize an artificial intelligence that rejects the logic or the extractive practices of **hegemonic AI**,” she concluded.*

In addition to Ricaurte, ***Preserving Human Dignity in the Age of AI*** included the participation of representatives from the University of Zagreb (Croatia), the University of Witwatersrand (South Africa), organizations such as *New Public* and the League for Algorithmic Justice, newspapers including *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, and the Holy See’s Dicastery for Culture and Education and Dicastery for Communication.

With information from *Vatican News*.

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