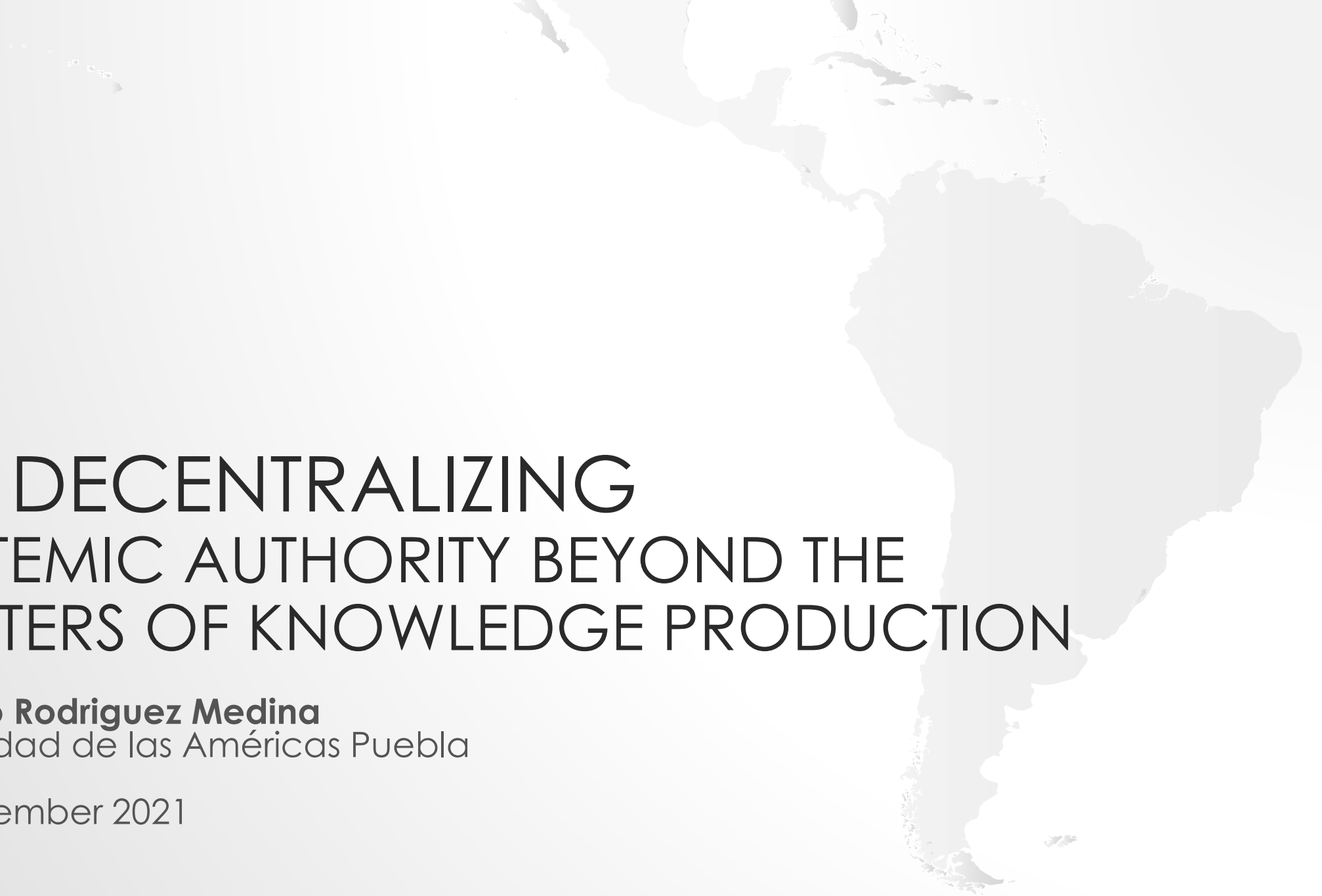# ON DECENTRALIZING
EPISTEMIC AUTHORITY BEYOND THE CENTERS OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

Leandro Rodriguez Medina
Universidad de las Américas Puebla
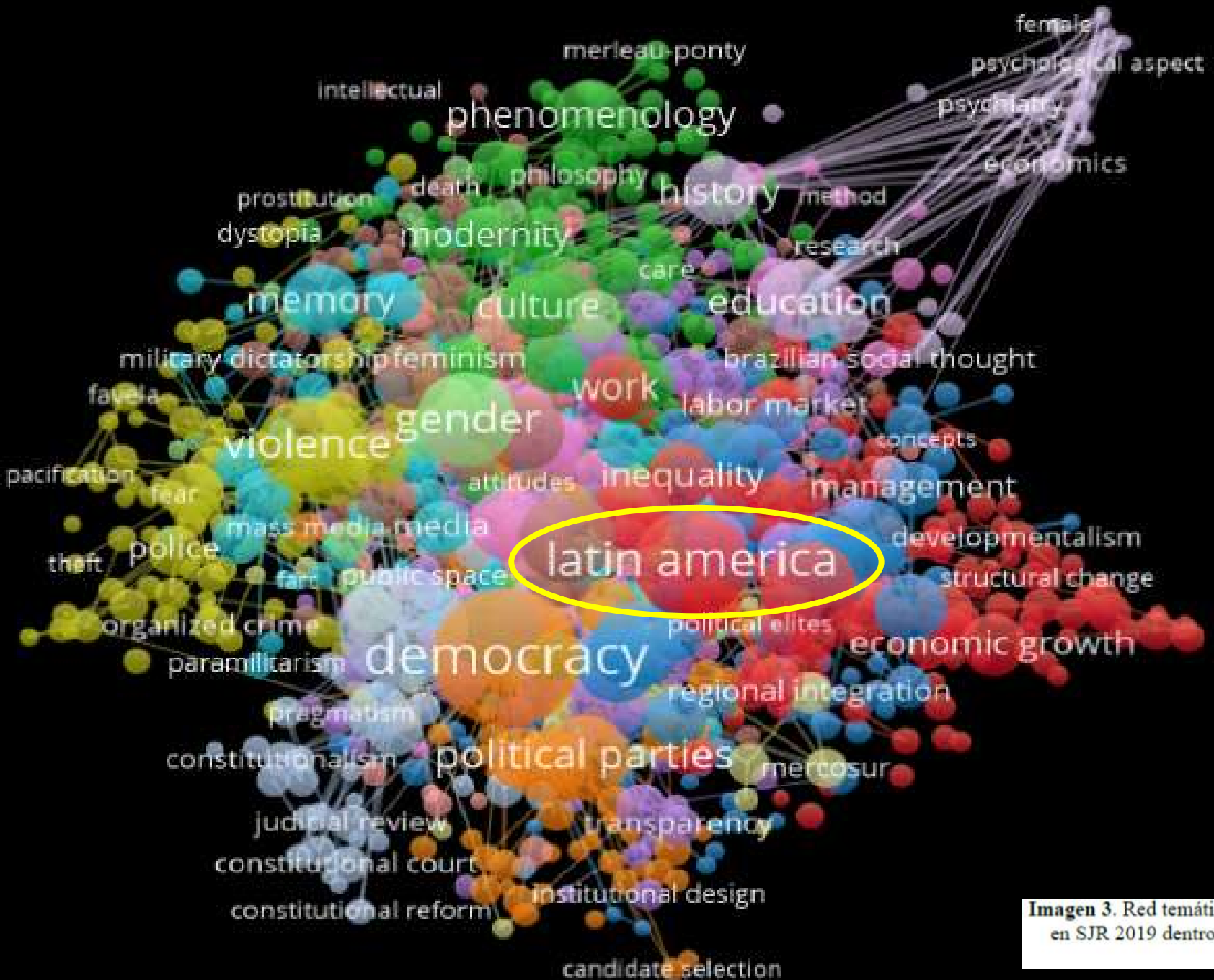
28 September 2021

THE PROBLEM:

WHY CAN'T WE THINK ABOUT OUR SOCIETIES WITH OUR OWN CATEGORIES?

The relevance of "Latin America" as a descriptor concept suggests the need for the articles to contextualise the research with geographical references.
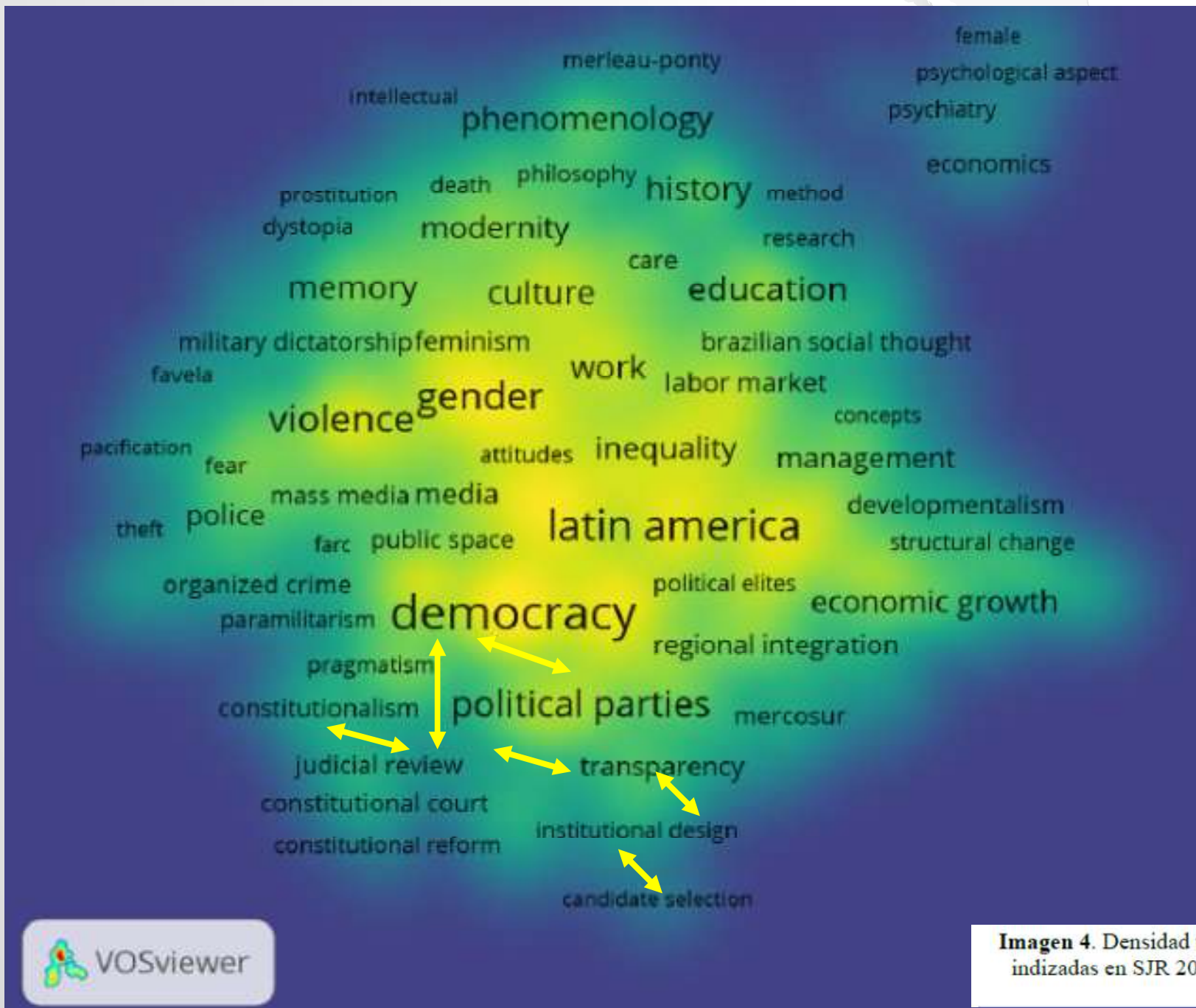The centrality of the concept in the graph is related to its close connection with the thematic clusters that emerge in the journals.

Imagen 3. Red temática de los artículos publicados en revistas latinoamericanas indizadas en SJR 2019 dentro de la categoría "Sociology and Political Science" sin nombres de países[7], 2000-2020.

Cluster 1

Democracy and institutions

Imagen 4. Densidad temática de los artículos publicados en revistas latinoamericanas indizadas en SJR 2019 dentro de la categoría "Sociology and Political Science" sin nombres de países[8], 2000-2020[9].

Cluster 2

Violence

Imagen 4. Densidad temática de los artículos publicados en revistas latinoamericanas indizadas en SJR 2019 dentro de la categoría "Sociology and Political Science" sin nombres de países[8], 2000-2020[9].

Cluster 3

Gender

Imagen 4. Densidad temática de los artículos publicados en revistas latinoamericanas indizadas en SJR 2019 dentro de la categoría "Sociology and Political Science" sin nombres de países[8], 2000-2020[9].
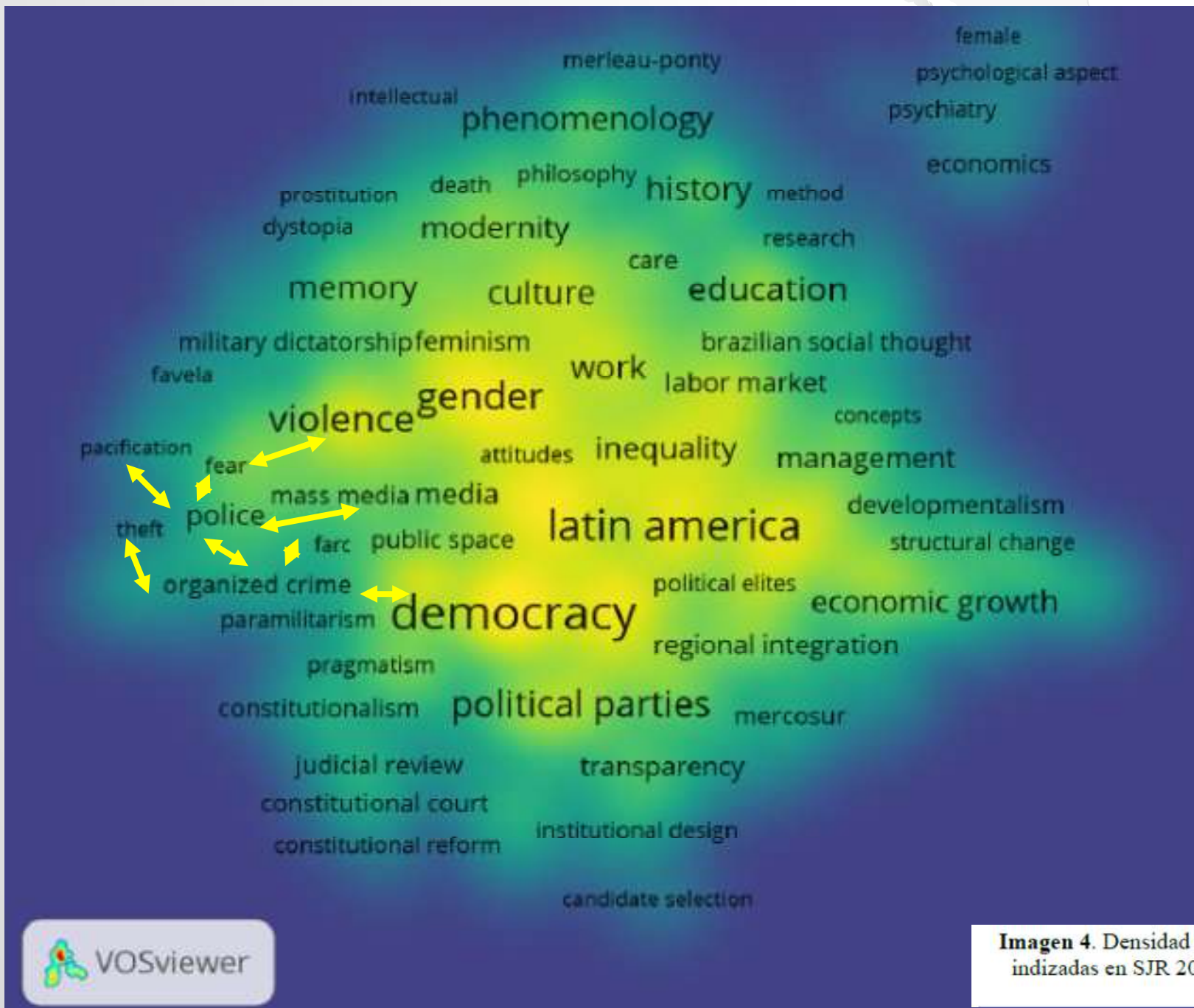
Cluster 4

Memory, truth, justice

Imagen 4. Densidad temática de los artículos publicados en revistas latinoamericanas indizadas en SJR 2019 dentro de la categoría "Sociology and Political Science" sin nombres de países[8], 2000-2020[9].

Cluster 5

Labour

Imagen 4. Densidad temática de los artículos publicados en revistas latinoamericanas indizadas en SJR 2019 dentro de la categoría "Sociology and Political Science" sin nombres de países[8], 2000-2020[9].
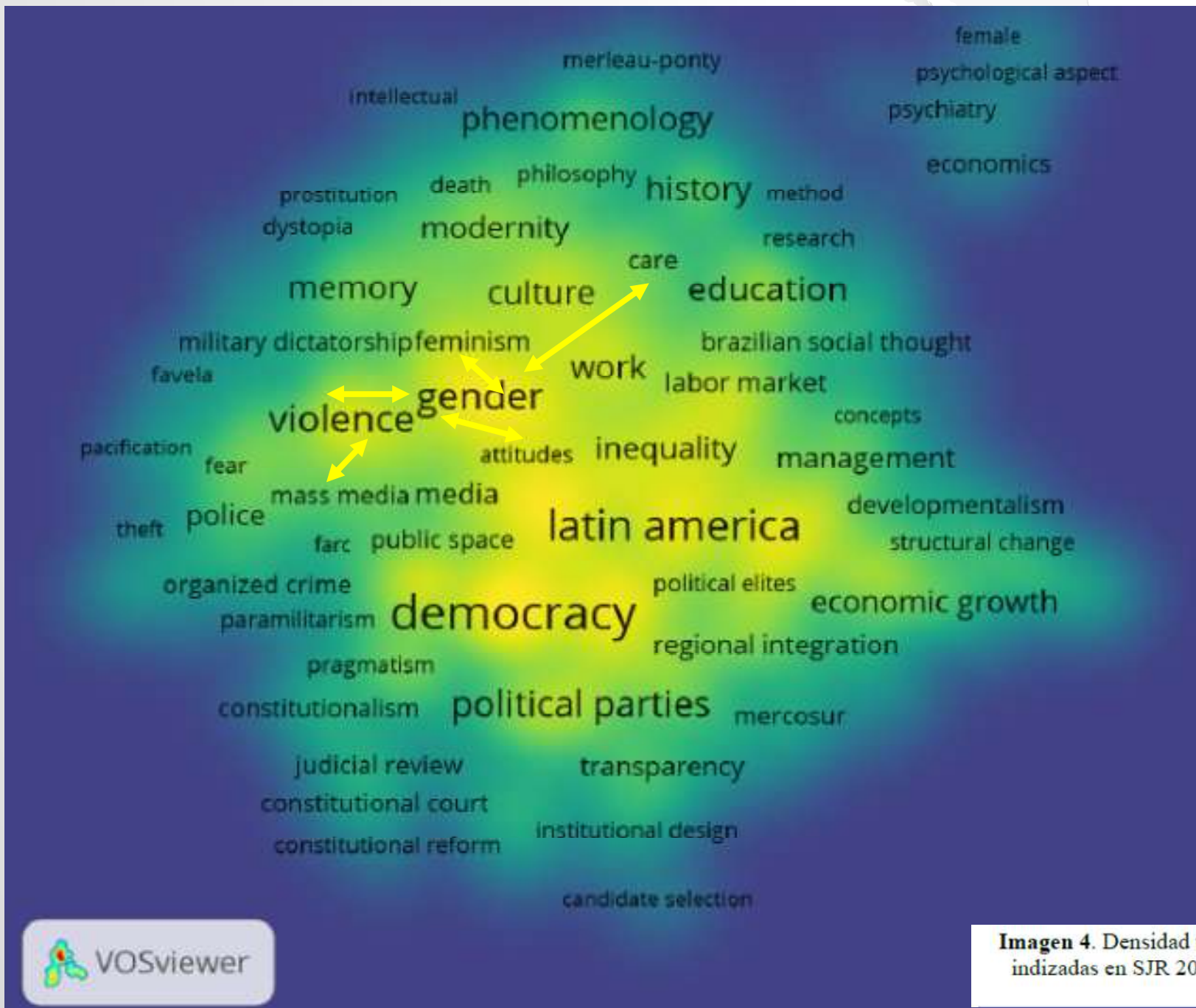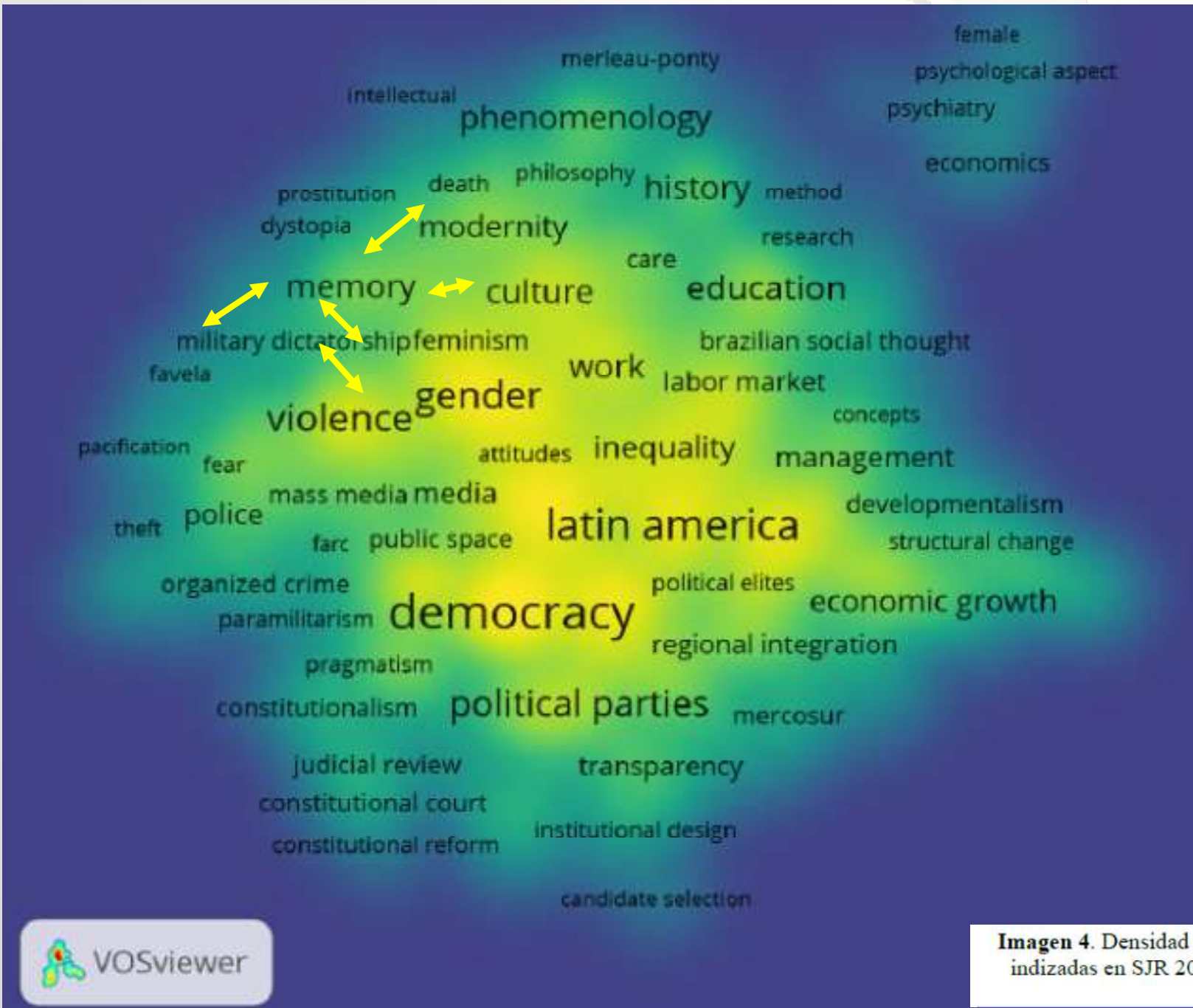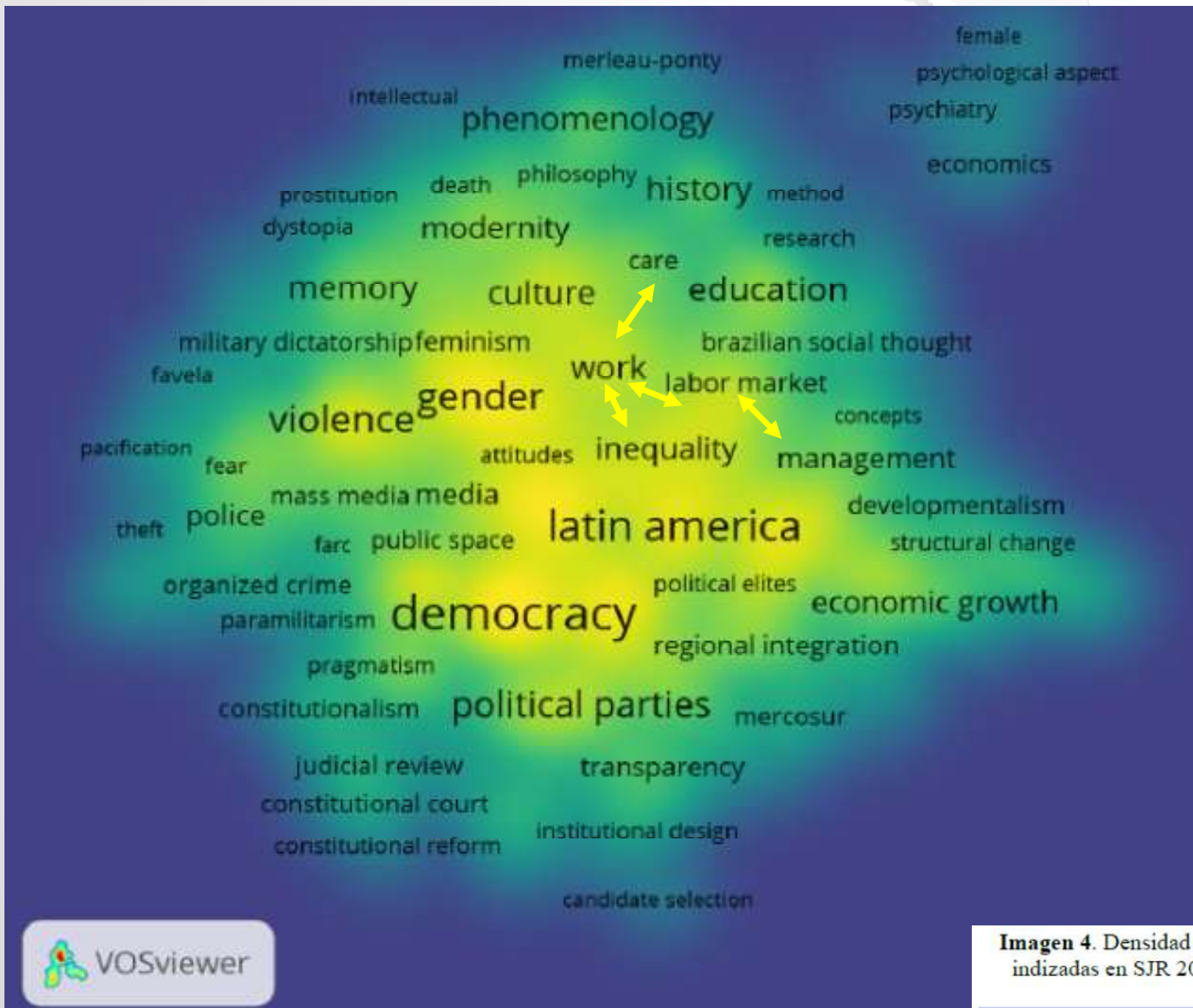
Cluster 6

Inequality and development

Imagen 4. Densidad temática de los artículos publicados en revistas latinoamericanas indizadas en SJR 2019 dentro de la categoría "Sociology and Political Science" sin nombres de países[8], 2000-2020[9].

Cluster 7

Regional integration

Imagen 4. Densidad temática de los artículos publicados en revistas latinoamericanas indizadas en SJR 2019 dentro de la categoría "Sociology and Political Science" sin nombres de países[8], 2000-2020[9].

Cluster 8

Education and pedagogy

Imagen 4. Densidad temática de los artículos publicados en revistas latinoamericanas indizadas en SJR 2019 dentro de la categoría "Sociology and Political Science" sin nombres de países[8], 2000-2020[9].
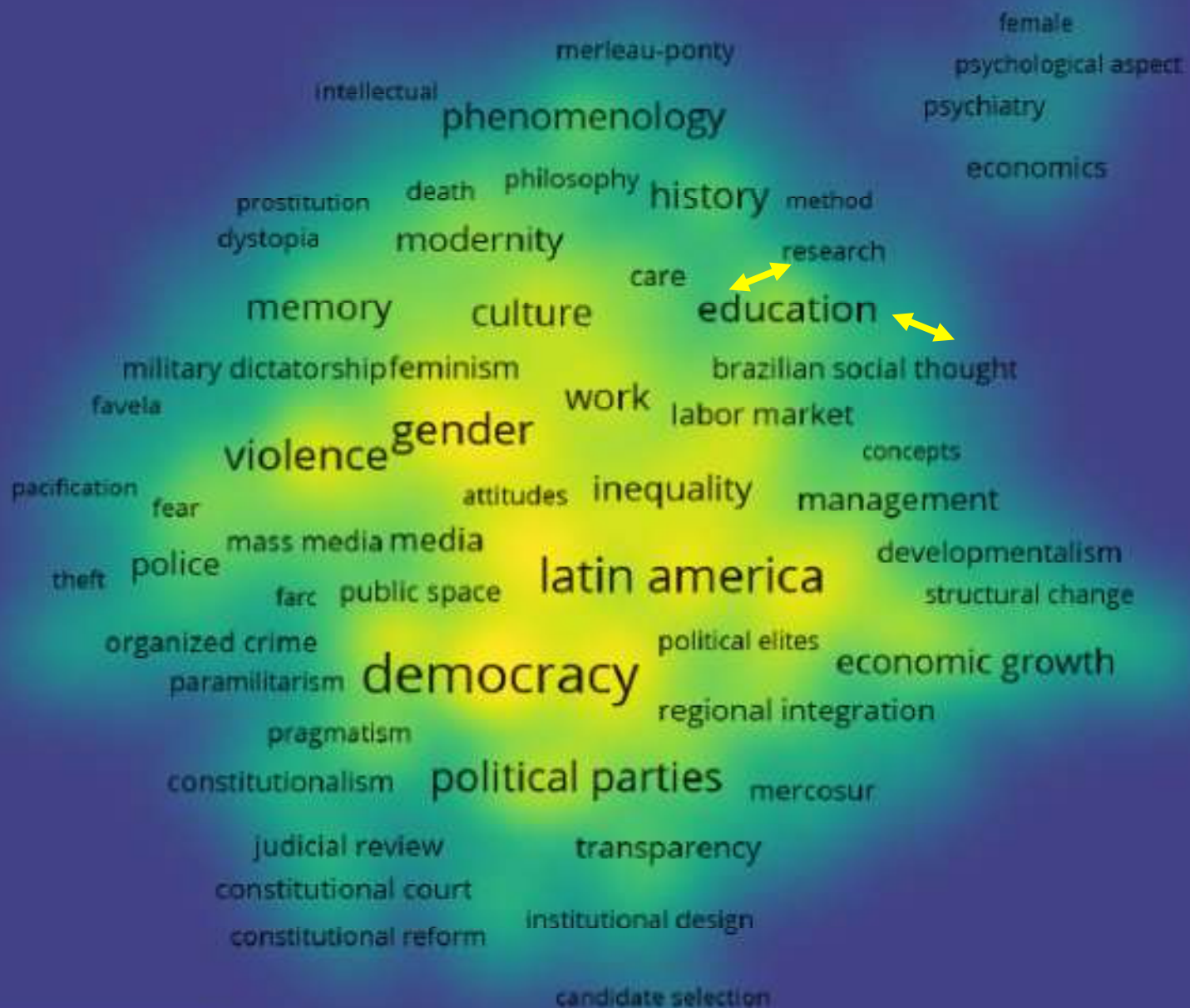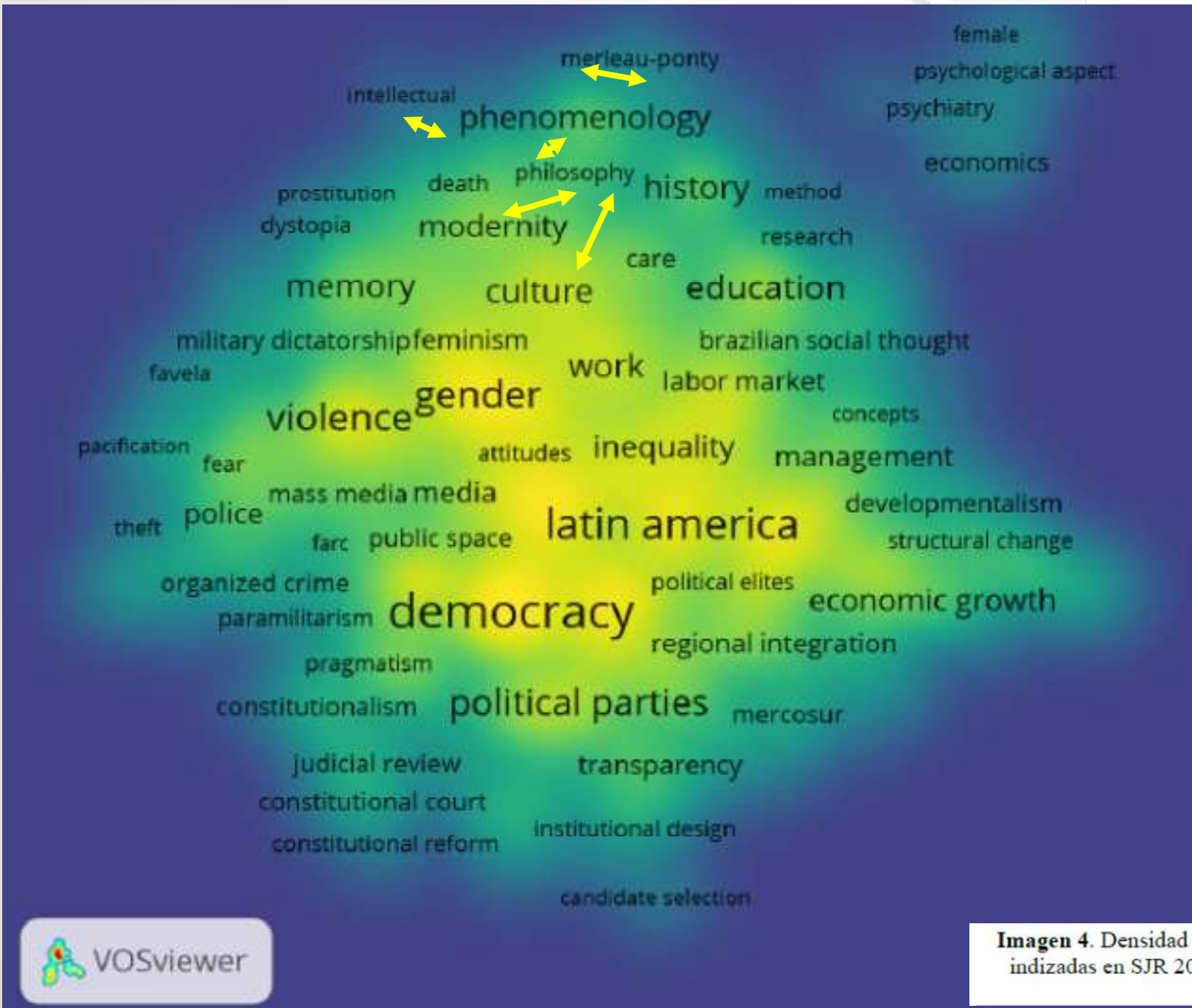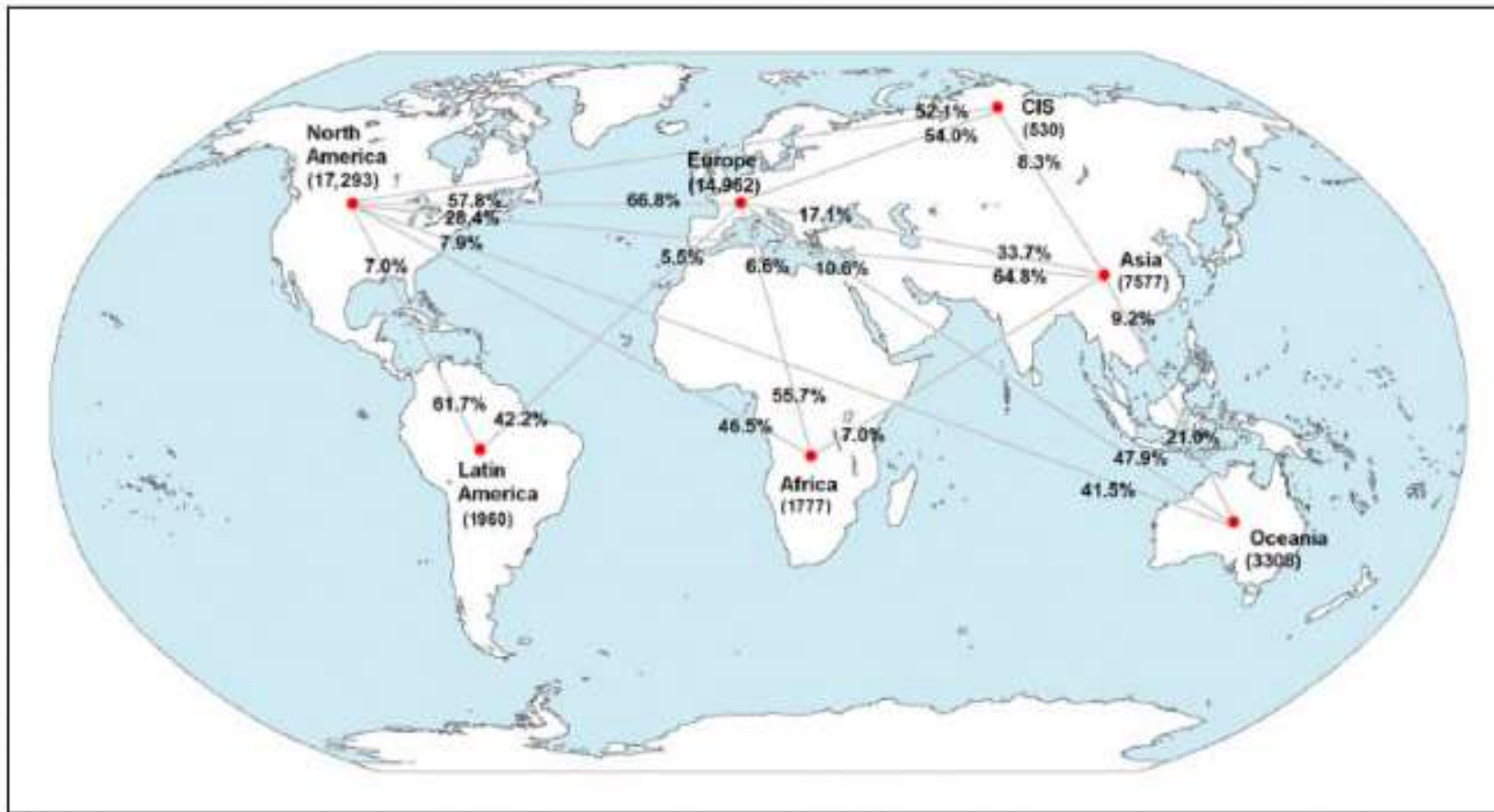
Cluster 9

Phenomenology

Imagen 4. Densidad temática de los artículos publicados en revistas latinoamericanas indizadas en SJR 2019 dentro de la categoría "Sociology and Political Science" sin nombres de países[8], 2000-2020[9].

Figure 4. World distribution of interregional collaborations, 2000–2009.
The figure should be read as follows: the number of interregional collaborative articles for each region are in parentheses; the number close to one region indicates the share of collaboration of that region with the one indicated by the arrow. We represent only interregional collaboration exceeding 5%. The total may exceed 100% due to the fact that a paper can be signed by social scientists from more than two regions and we assign a full paper to each region.

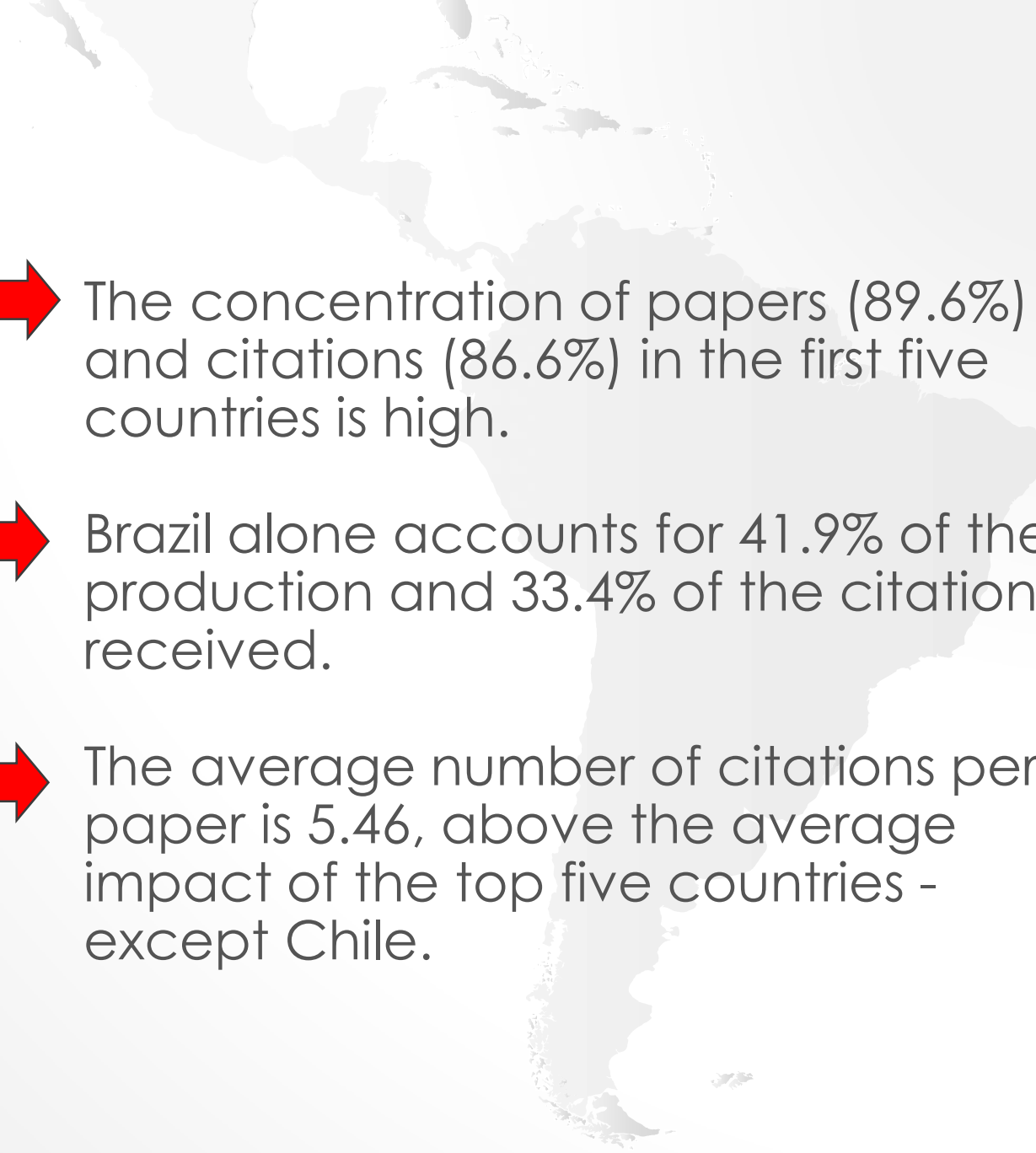Collaboration with academics in L.A. is entirely with North America and Europe.

Mosbah-Natanson, S. y Gingras, Y. (2014) The globalization of social sciences? Evidence from a quantitative analysis of 30 years of production, collaboration and citations in the social sciences (1980–2009). Current Sociology 2014, Vol. 62(5) 626–646.

Latin American production (Scopus), 2010-2019

País	Productos	Citas	Citas/producto
Brazil	7,064.00	23,987.00	3.40
Mexico	2,486.00	12,925.00	5.20
Colombia	2,005.00	7,549.00	3.80
Chile	1,946.00	11,429.00	5.90
Argentina	1,914.00	6,214.00	3.20
Ecuador	489.00	2,056.00	4.20
Venezuela	299.00	845.00	2.80
Peru	292.00	2,389.00	8.20
Uruguay	189.00	717.00	3.80
Costa Rica	117.00	1,211.00	10.40
Cuba	96.00	283.00	2.90
Bolivia	61.00	771.00	12.60
Puerto Rico	60.00	297.00	4.90
El Salvador	41.00	133.00	3.20
Dominican Rep.	27.00	71.00	2.60
Guatemala	23.00	131.00	5.70
Nicaragua	21.00	202.00	9.60
Paraguay	20.00	256.00	12.80
Haïti	15.00	38.00	2.50
Panama	14.00	56.00	4.00
Honduras	9.00	68.00	7.60
French Guiana	4.00	36.00	9.00
Guadeloupe	3.00	5.00	1.70
Martinique	1.00	1.00	1.00

➡ The concentration of papers (89.6%) and citations (86.6%) in the first five countries is high.

➡ Brazil alone accounts for 41.9% of the production and 33.4% of the citations received.

➡ The average number of citations per paper is 5.46, above the average impact of the top five countries - except Chile.

¿Where do Latin American sociologists publish?(Scopus), 2010-2019

Revista	Publicaciones
Estudos Avancados	620
Revista de Administracao Mackenzie	453
Revista Brasileira de Gestao e Desenvolvimento Regional	427
Informacao e Sociedade	389
Caderno CRH	375
Revista de Economia Politica/Brazilian Journal of Political Eco	368
Utopia y Praxis Latinoamericana	360
Revista de Estudios Sociales	349
Izquierdas	326
Revista de Sociologia e Politica	314
Innovar	309
Sociedade e Estado	297
Estudios Constitucionales	273
Lua Nova	264
Revista Brasileira de Historia	264
Analisis Politico	240
Latin American Perspectives	219
Opiniao Publica	217
Cuadernos del Cendes	203
Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Politicas y Sociales	202
World Development	195
Colombia Internacional	186
Dilemas	183
Perfiles Latinoamericanos	181
Revista Mexicana de Sociologia	177

Revista	Publicaciones	Citas
World Development	195	6404
Estudos Avancados	620	1595
Latin American Perspectives	219	1130
Revista de Economia Politica/Brazilian Journal of Political Eco	368	1034
Utopia y Praxis Latinoamericana	360	861
Opiniao Publica	217	853
Revista de Sociologia e Politica	314	780
Revista de Administracao Mackenzie	453	779
Caderno CRH	375	603
Sociedade e Estado	297	572
Innovar	309	563
Estudios Constitucionales	273	538
Revista de Estudios Sociales	349	522
Lua Nova	264	487
Revista Mexicana de Sociologia	177	487
Informacao e Sociedade	389	366
Perfiles Latinoamericanos	181	338
Colombia Internacional	186	299
Izquierdas	326	268
Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Politicas y Sociales	202	260
Analisis Politico	240	255
Revista Brasileira de Gestao e Desenvolvimento Regional	427	246
Dilemas	183	207
Revista Brasileira de Historia	264	192
Cuadernos del Cendes	203	127

Latin American sociologists publish mostly in Latin American journals but, in terms of impact, there is a problem...

¿Where do Latin American sociologists publish when they have more impact?(Scopus), 2010-2019

Título	Autores(as)	Año	Revistas	Citas
Creating something from nothing: Resource construction through entrepreneurial br	Baker, T.| Nelson	2005	Administrative Science Quarterly	1497
The menu of manipulation	Schedler, A.	2002	Journal of Democracy	694
Universal features of personality traits from the observer's perspective: Data from 5(	McCrae, R.R.| Te	2005	Journal of Personality and Social Psychology	644
Beyond prejudice as simple antipathy: Hostile and benevolent sexism across cultu	Glick, P.| Fiske,	2000	Journal of Personality and Social Psychology	623
Recentralizing While Decentralizing: How National Governments Reappropriate For	Ribot, J.C.| Agra\	2006	World Development	487
Livelihoods, forests, and conservation in developing countries: An overview	Sunderlin, W.D.|	2005	World Development	478
Personality profiles of cultures: Aggregate personality traits	McCrae, R.R.| Te	2005	Journal of Personality and Social Psychology	436
From linear fuel switching to multiple cooking strategies: A critique and alternative	Masera, O.R.| Sa	2000	World Development	408
Investigating variation in replicability: A "many labs" replication project	Klein, R.A.| Ratlit	2014	Social Psychology	405
Environmental Income and Rural Livelihoods: A Global-Comparative Analysis	Angelsen, A.| Jac	2014	World Development	387
Prevalence of violence against dating partners by male and female university stude	Straus, M.A.| Alc	2004	Violence Against Women	377
Agrifood Industry Transformation and Small Farmers in Developing Countries	Reardon, T.| Barr	2009	World Development	369
Government 2.0: Making connections between citizens, data and government	Chun, S.A.| Shul	2010	Information Polity	342
Culture, Emotion Regulation, and Adjustment	Matsumoto, D.| Y	2008	Journal of Personality and Social Psychology	330
Fair trade: Quality, market and conventions	Renard, M.-C.	2003	Journal of Rural Studies	323
Coloniality of power and Eurocentrism in Latin America	Quijano, A.	2000	International Sociology	319
Local environmental control and institutional crowding-out	Cardenas, J.C.| S	2000	World Development	290
Social media use by government: From the routine to the critical	Kavanaugh, A.L.|	2012	Government Information Quarterly	290
How can market mechanisms for forest environmental services help the poor? Preli	Grieg-Gran, M.| F	2005	World Development	277
Social research 2.0: Virtual snowball sampling method using Facebook	Baltar, F.| Brunet	2012	Internet Research	273
Universal Sex Differences in the Desire for Sexual Variety: Tests from 52 Nations,	Schmitt, D.P.| Al	2003	Journal of Personality and Social Psychology	273
Collective action for smallholder market access	Markelova, H.| M	2009	Food Policy	265
Mining and Social Movements: Struggles Over Livelihood and Rural Territorial Deve	Bebbington, A.| H	2008	World Development	257
Bad but Bold: Ambivalent Attitudes Toward Men Predict Gender Inequality in 16 Na	Glick, P.| Fiske,	2004	Journal of Personality and Social Psychology	254
Vote buying in Argentina	Brusco, V.| Naza	2004	Latin American Research Review	253

... to have an impact, research results must be published in US and European journals.

No Latin American journal among the top 100 journals with the most cited Latin American articles.

#114
(115 cites)

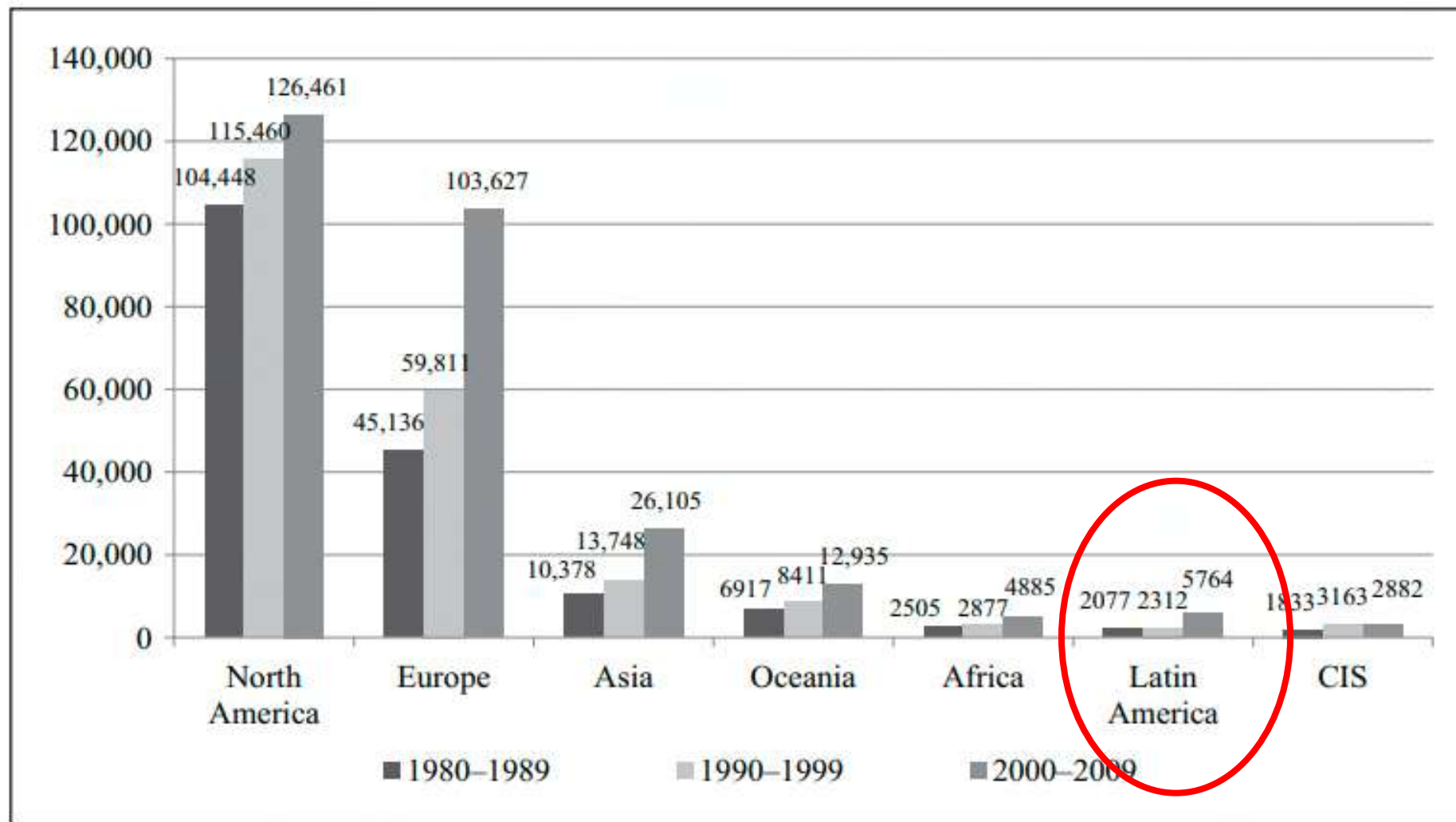| The Dutch disease and its neutralization: A Ricardian approach | Bresser-Pereira, | 2008 | Revista de Economia Politica |

Of the 150 sociology journals indexed in Web of Science (2021), only two are Latin American, ranking #144 (impact factor, 0.3) and #146 (impact factor 0.2).

It is evident that Latin American academics cannot simultaneously publish in Latin American journals and publish in WoS.

	59	0.3
	86	0.3
141 SOCIOLOGISK FORSKNING	294	0.3
142 Deviance et Societe	197	0.3
143 SOCIOLOGIE DU TRAVAIL	121	0.3
144 Tempo Social	79	0.2
145 BERLINER JOURNAL FUR SOZIOLOGIE	99	0.2
146 Telos	212	0.1
147 Polish Sociological Review	114	0.1
148 SOZIALE WELT-ZEITSCHRIFT FUR SOZIALWISSENSCHAFTLICHE FORSCHUNG UND PRAXIS	36	0.0
149 Studies in Symbolic Interaction		
150 Current Perspectives in Social Theory		

Global trends in social sciences production

Figure 1. Production of social sciences publications by region according to the SSCI.

Latin America's social science production is marginal

Mosbah-Natanson, S. y Gingras, Y. (2014) The globalization of social sciences? Evidence from a quantitative analysis of 30 years of production, collaboration and citations in the social sciences (1980–2009). Current Sociology 2014, Vol. 62(5) 626–646.

Table 1. Geographical origins of social sciences journals.[a]

Journals	1980–1989		1990–1999		2000–2009	
North America	375	49.7%	399	48.5%	398	36.5%
Europe	308	40.8%	365	44.4%	561	51.5%
Asia	31	4.1%	21	2.6%	46	4.2%
Oceania	17	2.3%	17	2.1%	27	2.5%
International	12	1.6%	10	1.2%	11	1.0%
Latin America	8	1.1%	5	0.6%	31	2.8%
Africa	3	0.4%	4	0.5%	12	1.1%
CIS	1	0.1%	1	0.1%	3	0.3%

[a]The geographical origin of a journal is identified through the location of its publisher. From the ISSN database, we identified 15 international journals over the whole period (containing about 1% of social sciences articles). There are also 78 journals with 'international' in their title, but which are not classified as 'international' in ISSN. These 78 journals are distributed substantially in the same manner as other journals with regard to the continent where their publisher is located.

Largely because the databases used for analysis hardly take into account journals from the region.

Mosbah-Natanson, S. y Gingras, Y. (2014) The globalization of social sciences? Evidence from a quantitative analysis of 30 years of production, collaboration and citations in the social sciences (1980–2009). Current Sociology 2014, Vol. 62(5) 626–646.

Table 1. Portals, databases and indexes of scientific journals, with special reference to the social sciences/humanities and LA journals.[a]

Portal or database	Seat	Date of creation	Accessibility	Bibliometric reports	Citation reports/IF journal ranking	Indexed journals	Social sciences, humanities and arts journals	LA journals
Web of Science	USA	1956	By subscription	Yes	Yes	13,468[b]	4859	316[b]
SCOPUS[c]	USA-UK	2004	By subscription	Yes	Yes	19,996	6844	586
HAPI-UCLA	USA	1997	By subscription	Yes	No	621	275	207
EBSCO[d]	USA	1997	By subscription	No	No	27,348	6960[f]	No data[g]
JSTOR[e]	USA	1995	By subscription	No	No	28,445	24,995	No data
Google Scholar[h]	USA	1998	Open access	No	Yes[i]	No data	No data	No data
DOAJ[j]	Sweden	2009	Open access	No	No	9943	3787	1879
DIAL-NET	Spain	2001	Open access	No	No	8822	7159	No data
SCIELO	Brazil	1997	Open access	Yes	Yes	1043	489	915
LATINDEX[k]	Mexico	1997	Open access	No	No	5283	3328	4178
REDALYC	Mexico	2002	Open access	Yes	No	827	573	700
CLASE	Mexico	1975	Open access	Yes	No	1500	1500	1500
PERIODICA	Mexico	1978	Open access	Yes	No	1500	0	1500
BANGLAJOL	Bangladesh	2007	Open access	No	No	117	7	0
AJOL	South Africa	1998	Open access	No	No	461	72	0

[a]There are other relevant databases and abstract services such as Ulrich, CSA-ProQuest, etc. This table does not include all of them but instead aims to compare different circuits. The table was updated in July 2013 except in the cases where a different date is indicated.
[b]The SCIE+SSCI+A&HCI journals list in May 2013.
[c]SCOPUS, list of active journals, April 2013.
[d]Includes academic journals, conference proceedings, books, full-text journals and abstract services such as Pascal, Sociological Abstracts, among others.
[e]Includes journals, books, conference proceedings.
[f]The SocIndex+Social Sciences Index Retrospective: 1907–1983 (HW Wilson database) count has only been done for academic journals.
[g]Information on the journal's country is not included in the available coverage lists for EBSCO databases.
[h]Google Scholar collects contents from individual and institutional websites, university repositories, portals, etc. Thus, it is not possible to establish an accurate list of indexed journals.
[i]Impact is measured through the H Index.
[j]DOAJ counts have been done on journals per country. Only 5102 journals are available in full text for article-level searches.
[k]Only journals with electronic access in LATINDEX-Catalogue are considered.

In Scopus (2.9%) or Wos (2.2%), the presence of L.A. journals is residual.

In DOAJ, on the other hand, the presence is stronger (18.9%).

In Latindex (79%) and in Redalyc (84.6%), the presence is largely majority, as they are regional indexes.

Fernanda Beigel (2014) Publishing from the periphery:
Structural heterogeneity and segmented circuits. The evaluation of scientific publications for tenure in Argentina's CONICET.
Current Sociology Vol. 62(5) 743–765.

Table 3. Papers in social sciences and the humanities per region, per index.

Sub-Saharan Africa			Latin America		
SSCI[a]	SCOPUS[b]	AJOL[c]	SSCI[a]	SCOPUS[b]	SCIELO[d]
1998–2007	2000–2009	1999–2007	1998–2007	2000–2009	2000–2010
3728	9823	20,434	3790	24,659	31,809

Sources: [a]Total articles SSCI in: WSSR-UNESCO (2010: 152); [b]citable documents of social sciences, economics and finance, arts and humanities and psychology; [c]Sub-Saharan articles in AJOL+South African journals, in WSSR-UNESCO (2010: 64); [d]articles by LA affiliated authors from applied social sciences, linguistics, the arts and human sciences (excluding collections from Portugal and Spain as well as articles whose affiliation is not stated).

➡ Taking these estimates into account, the visibility of peripheral regions such as Africa and Latin America would be enabled by indexing in regional indexes, which could represent increases of more than 100% (e.g. for Africa, moving from Scopus to AJOL) to 900% (for Latin America, moving from WoS to Scielo).
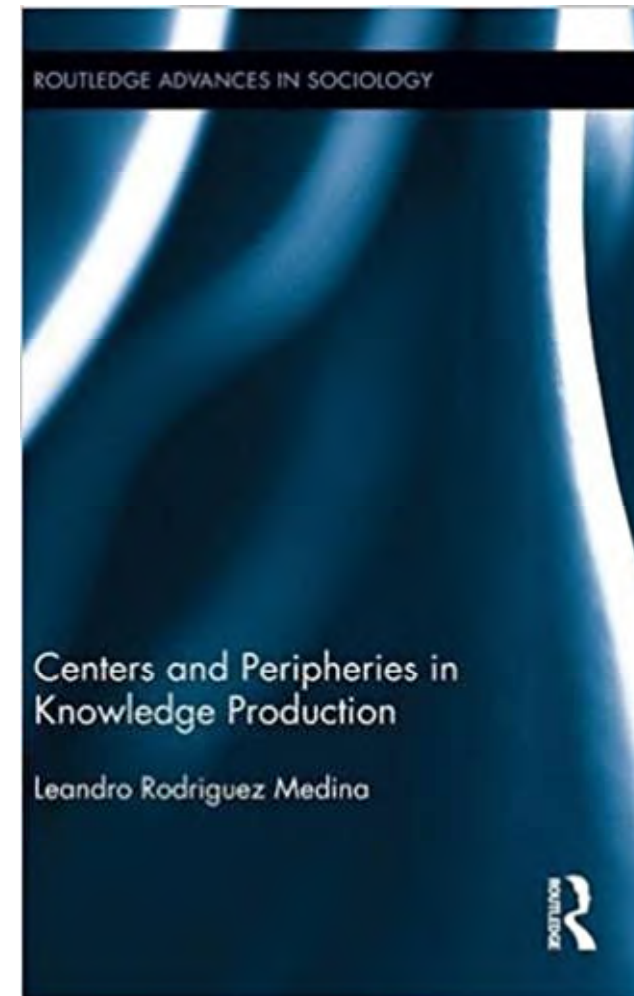
SOME ANSWERS

Peripheral academics use Northern knowledge to organize their scholarly careers in a context of lack of symbolic and material resources.

The most rational thing to do is to reinforce the asymmetrical character of global knowledge production structure by relying on knowledge from the North to organize curriculum, to gather in conferences, to invite colleagues, etc.

The reason to accept knowledge from the North is not necessarily rooted in its inherent value, but in the opportunities that such a knowledge open for peripheral scholars.

ROUTLEDGE ADVANCES IN SOCIOLOGY

Centers and Peripheries in Knowledge Production

Leandro Rodriguez Medina

Subordinating objects

Networked fields

Asymmetrical translations

2006-2013

When zooming into one particular theory produced in the North and appropriated in the South (Luhmann's system theory), I found that peripheral scholars…

… develop a type of boundary work to 'create space' for the arriving knowledge.

… benefited from the structuring effects of the knowledge coming from the North in the form of a subordinating object.

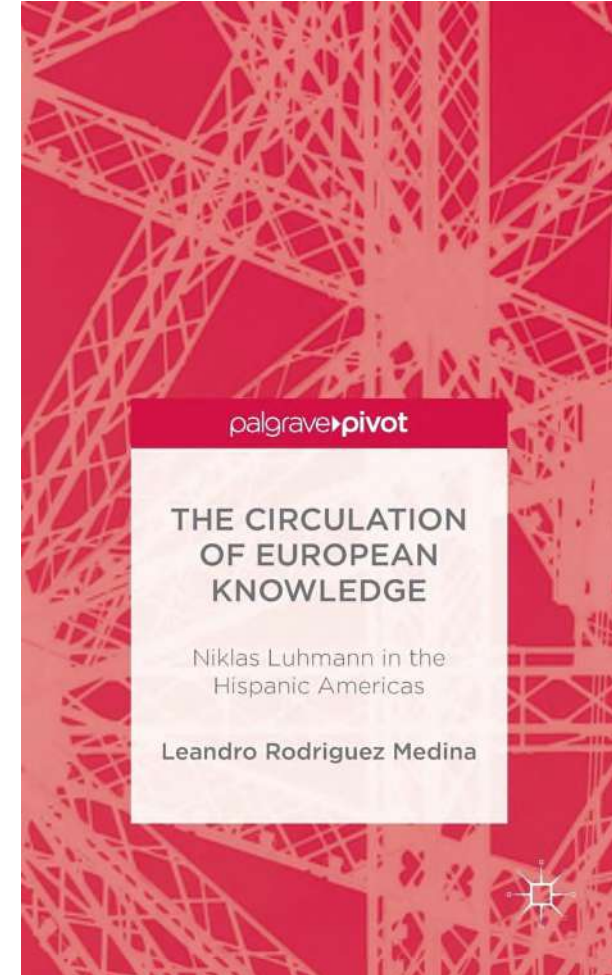… received the theory while transforming it through a series of re-connections, a process that might take decades.

Theoretical reception as intellectual intervention

Situated complexity

Boundary work: theoretical boundaries

Scholars' generations

palgrave▸pivot

THE CIRCULATION OF EUROPEAN KNOWLEDGE

Niklas Luhmann in the Hispanic Americas

Leandro Rodriguez Medina

Boundary work: geographical boundaries

Boundary work: conceptual boundaries

Comprehensive reading

Embodied exegesis

2013-2015

The most interesting dimension of the structure of centers and peripheries is the **circulation of knowledge.**

Knowledge circulation is not a 'natural' phenomenon, although knowledge is usually produced to circulate.

Centers and peripheries are not fixed entities, but they develop relatively **stable patterns of interactions** (regardless the countries or institutions in the centers and the peripheries).

Personal bonds

Knowledge driver

Engaged and strategic networks
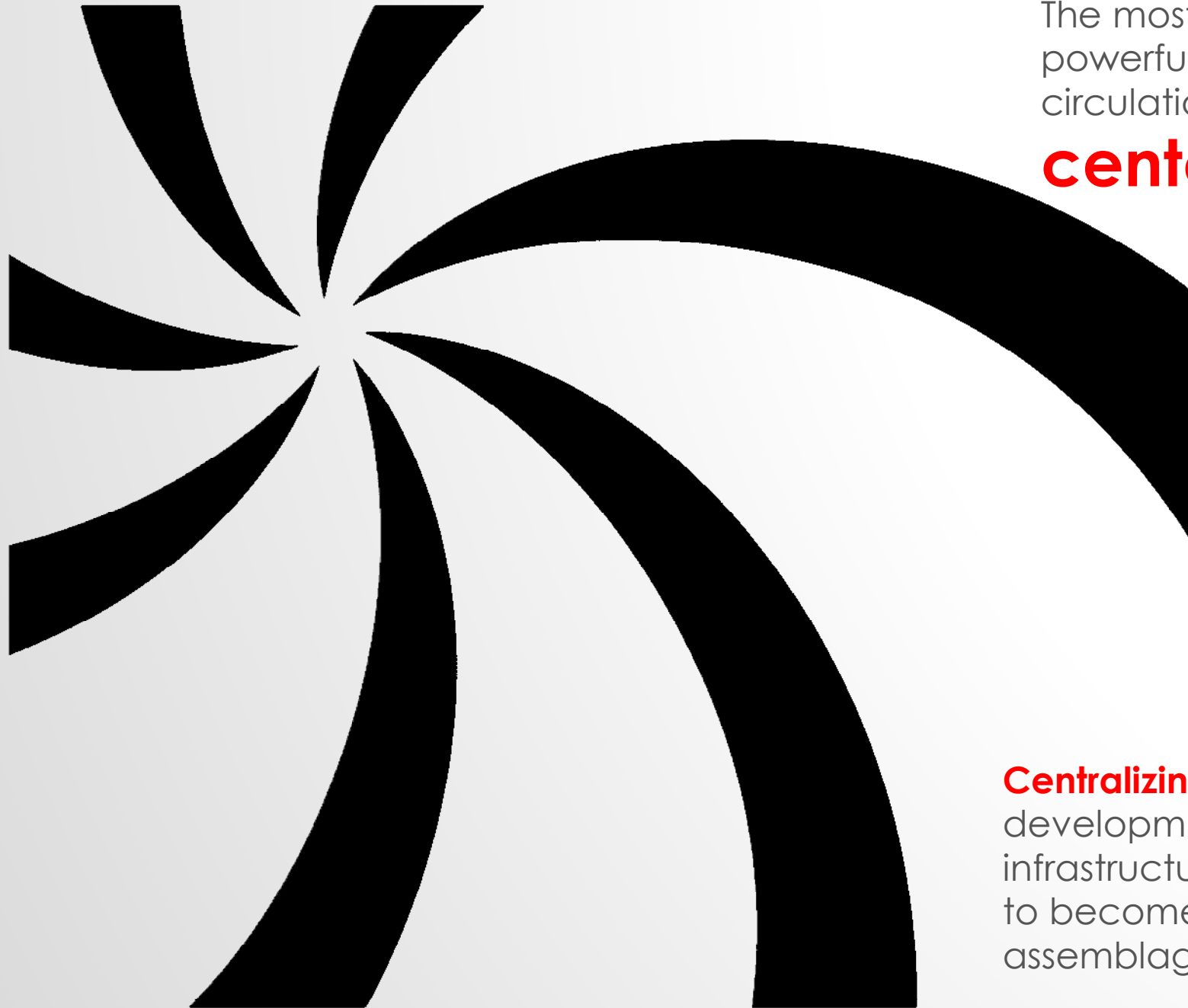
Asymmetrical cooperation

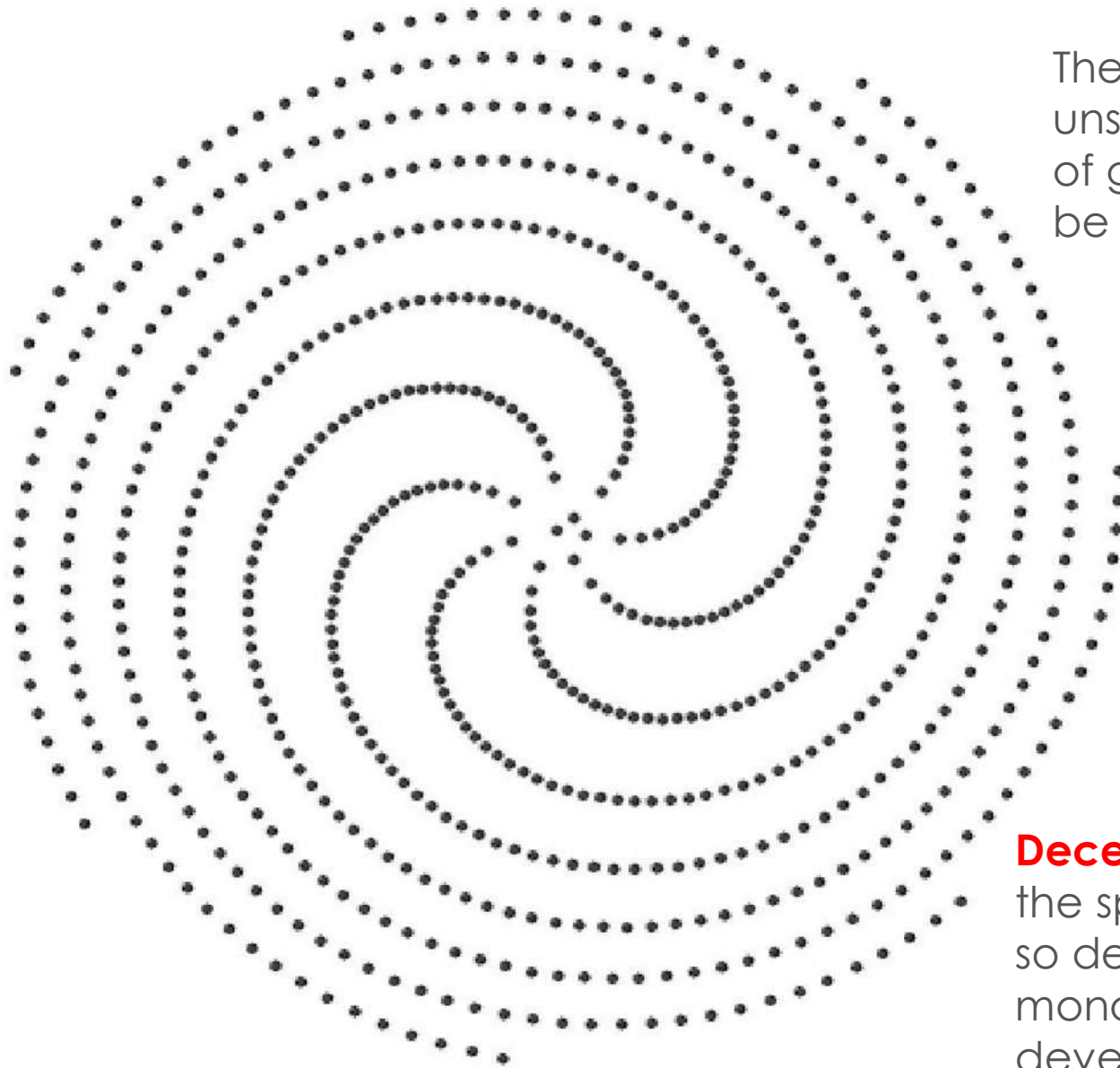Geopolitics of open access

Geopolitics of bad English

2015-2021

The most persistent, resistant, stable, and powerful pattern of global knowledge circulation has been

centering/centralizing.

Centering refers to the emergence, consolidation and diffusion of a naturalized idea that whatever is produced in the centers should be taken as universal and, consequently, can be imposed on any other (peripheral) place.

Centralizing refers to the creation, development and implementation of infrastructure that allowed for some places to become central nodes in global assemblages.

The most difficult, counterhegemonic, unstable, and ethically powerful pattern of global knowledge circulation should be decentering/decentralizing.

Decentering requires to avoid considering some actors (or ideas, or values, or technologies) as central and as parameter from which everything around them is evaluated.

Decentering prevents one actor from performing as the spokesperson for the others, without having been so delegated, and thereby it challenges the monopoly on representation while implying the development of central actors to 'think from the edge'.

Decentralizing requires incorporating into the assemblages, **with equal decision-making powers**, actors that had been marginalized, ignored, underestimated, or directly eliminated.

Epistemic authority, concentrated for centuries in certain places and groups, in specific institutions and practices, can circulate to the margins, be delegated, shared, successfully challenged, and/or reconfigured. At the same time, given that decentralization does not take actors at the margins to be passive appropriators of transferred authority, the analysis of decentralizing forces us to think about the actions, strategies, possibilities and limitations that, from the peripheries, have been articulated in order to acquire full epistemic authority

For epistemic authority is not an inherent quality of individuals or groups, especially when it refers to complex issues such as social or political rights or climate change. For them to acquire it, **material and symbolic processes** that ultimately aim to rebalance asymmetrical epistemic power relations must be created, stabilized and extended.

Decentralizing requires **delegation** to actors on the peripheries as many epistemic processes as possible. It recognizes the permanent situational limitations of both, those who cede power and those who acquire power. Decentralization is the construction of subaltern epistemic standpoints

Epistemic decentralization seeks to complexify heterogeneous assemblages through their expansion, densification, and rearticulation. In short, decentralization will give rise to broader, more interconnected networks--especially at their margins-- in which power has been redistributed.

TAPUYA

LATIN AMERICAN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY

- Funded by private donors and a public University from the North (UCLA)
- Affiliated to professional associations in the North (4S) and the South (ESOCITE)
- Edited by a global Publisher (Taylor&Francis)
- Directed by scholars in the South (Latin America)

THANKS!

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS WELCOME!

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