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*Erasmus*

**Sounds of contestation:  
Urban young fans crossing boundaries  
through *Pop Andino* music**

A Research Paper presented by:

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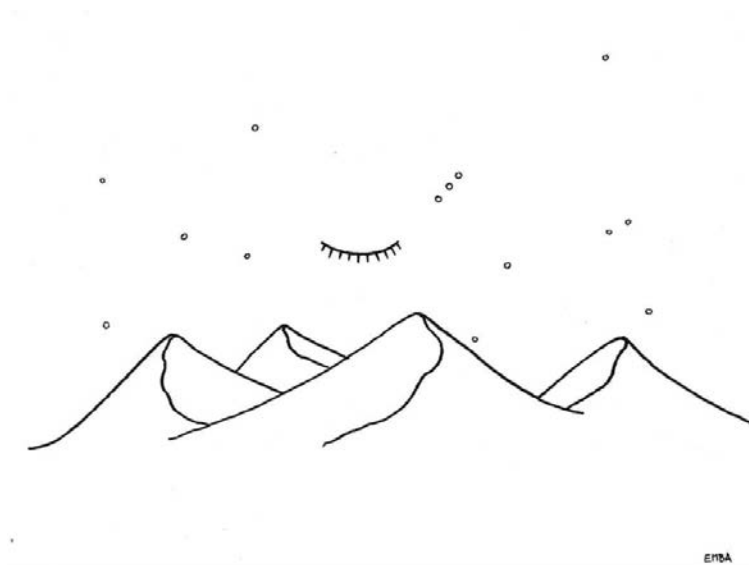
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*A mamá y papá, cuyo amor y soporte me trajeron hasta acá*

*(To mom and dad, whose love and support brought me here)*



Source: Emba Dibujos' Instagram (October 14, 2019)

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## List of Acronyms

AP	Andean Pop
FCO	Official Fanclub
MW	Milena Warthon
WA	WhatsApp

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## Abstract

Popular music in Peru is a domain where the historical tension between the Spanish/Lima/creole and the Andean/Highlands/*cholo* appears to coexist in harmony. Contrarily, social relations follow colonial logics where *lo andino* (Andean-ness) is looked down upon and discrimination is an ongoing issue. In this context, youth have created fusions of Western and traditional Andean music such as *Pop Andino* (Andean Pop) which has an active Fanclub with members mostly from Peru but also other countries of Latin America.

This research paper focuses on the social meaning of Andean Pop music beyond categories like ethnicity and class. From the reflexive and critical perspective of urban young fans, this thesis draws on concepts like Andean-ness, fandom, representation, pride, and recognition. The guiding question explores how fans make sense of Andean Pop and *lo andino* in their contexts. Fieldwork was conducted in the city of Lima deeply rooted in performance and digital ethnography. Based on the findings I argue that Andean Pop is for its young fans not only a source of leisure but a community that is contesting taught boundaries and reflecting on injustices toward *lo andino*.

## Relevance to Development Studies

Honwana and De Boeck (2005, p.3) describe youth as social actors who make and break society but are also constantly being made and broken by it. This means that society's structures and norms shape them, but young people also contribute to or resist these structures and norms. They also speak about creative and innovative expressions of popular culture such as music as "...exclusive domain of the young as they create, re-invent, and domesticate global trends into local forms" (Honwana and De Boeck, 2005, p.1).

Whereas the prevalent discourse about development is rational, individual, economic-growth and goal-oriented, in this thesis I build on Joshua Dankoff's claim (2011, pp.257-258) that brings music to the fore as a cultural practice with expressive and transformative potential. On a micro level, this potential revolves around the expression and impression of values and beliefs that inform social interactions (Dankoff, 2011, p.262). On a macro level, music might help illustrate culture as a field of struggle where injustices are addressed and the politics of recognition can serve to power and wealth redistribution (Fraser, 2000, p.109).

Hence, this research attempts to contribute to the inclusion of music in development studies as a repository of knowledge yet to explore and a means that contributes shaping

ideas, perceptions, and practices (Lewis, Rodgers and Woolcock, 2020, p.1). Furthermore, it aims to do so by articulating the voice, feelings and lived experiences of young fans of Andean Pop music and the author using a lively visual and digital inspired language. Analytically, the research builds on the alternative approach to popular music where music is valued through the “intense emotional experiences” of its fans and its social meaning within specific contexts (Frith, 2007, pp.262-263). Contextually, this thesis includes a decolonial perspective which is critical to understand current social issues in countries like Peru, where there is a legacy of the ‘dominance logic between the colonizers and the colonized’ (Quijano, 1999, p.139-140).

### **Keywords**

Youth, Andean Pop/*Pop andino*, Milena Warthon, Fandom, Peru, Andean-ness/*Lo andino*, Popular culture, Music, Meaning, Digital ethnography, Performance ethnography



## You are worth a Peru

*Milena, vales un Perú!* (Milena, you are worth a Peru!) I heard one of the fans (a man) scream full of excitement during a live performance by the Andean Pop artist Milena Warthon (field-notes July 23, 2022).

The expression ..., *vales un Perú!* is a popular saying used to show affection and/or admiration to someone Peruvian or not. In the case of Milena Warthon (MW hereafter), this scream could be understood as an expression of deep fondness to her performance of national identity that celebrates *lo andino* (Andean-ness). Scholars have argued that performances of popular culture provide a stage for the expression of specific attributes of national identities (e.g., Edensor, 2002, p.69). MW is not the first and nor is she neither unique in using a subnational element in popular culture staged in Peru's capital city Lima. In recent years, young artists born in the Andes or with Andean roots have started to mix our indige-nous Andean language (Quechua) and Andean traditional music with hip hop, electronic and K-pop. Nonetheless, this is occurring in a context where discrimination remains a pressing issue. A recent national survey showed that 53% of the population acknowledge that Peru-vians are racist and close to 60% perceive that Quechua, Aimara<sup>1</sup>, Afro Peruvian and Ama-zon native people experience this racism the most. However only 8% of Peruvians consider themselves racist (Ministerio de Cultura de Perú, 2018, pp.8-11). Against this background, we can see why an artist like MW who celebrates elements of Andean identity on a national stage is indeed highly valued and 'worth a Peru'.

The historical roots of the expression ..., *vales un Perú!* contrast the above and flag the complexity and ambiguity of MWs popular music and Andean Pop (AP hereafter) music at large. Although little known, the origin of the saying goes back to the colonial period (1532 – 1821). According to the Royal Spanish Academy 'you are worth a Peru or a Potosi' means extraordinary wealth and refers to the gold and silver mines in Potosi that belonged to the current territory of Bolivia that was once part of the viceroyalty of Peru (Llorente, 2019). In writing this thesis, I have kept this affectionate scream in mind. This means I have taken seriously the work and presence of MW and what this means to her fans in the context of contemporary Peru. At the same time, I am aware that popular cultural expressions such as MW's work can indeed also be subject to critique from a decolonial perspective. The aim of this thesis is to shed light on popular music as a place of convergence, where fans, as part of

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<sup>1</sup> Quechua and Aimara are indigenous Andean communities from South America

the audience have found in Andean pop a site to reflect their lives and imagination as well as the society where they belong (Kitiarsa, 2006, p.37).

## The Andean presence in Lima

Image 1

Peru's geographic regions: Coast, Andes/Highlands and Jungle



Source: Author's work on Valenzuela (2021)

The anthropologist José Matos Mar (1986, p.25) explains that the XVI century represented a structural change and the encounter of the Andean and the Spanish society as an encounter between two different cultures, populations, and economies. He adds that a domination-subordination dynamic characterized this relationship. Furthermore, Matos Mar (1986, p.25) emphasizes that colonization determined the beginning of a 'creole homeland' because it created in 'the Andean' a need to integrate with 'the Spanish' to construct a nation and a Peruvian identity that was no longer indigenous. Nonetheless, the Andean heritage remained marginalized, which, according to Matos Mar (1986, p.25), has caused an unsolved and prolonged crisis in Peru. The sociologist Anibal Quijano (1999, pp.139-140) contextualizes this marginalization in the construction of the colonality of power in Latin America. As he describes the dominance pattern between the colonizers and the colonized (the others) was based in the idea of 'race'. Therefore, the colonizers, who identified themselves as 'European' or 'white', negatively designated the indigenous people *indios* (indians) and subdued them to erasure and repression of their native identities (Mayas, Aztecas, Incas, Aymaras, etc.).

In the specific case of Peru, as Matos Mar (1986, p.26) narrates, this violent process caused a crack in the national consciousness. Consequently, people from the Highlands, rural areas

and *indios* were constantly discriminated against people from the Coast, urban areas and creoles. Even after the Independence of Peru in 1821, the project of building an independent and republican country was never approached as an equanimous integration of two legacies but the internal domination of ‘the Andean’ (Matos Mar, 1986, p.27). The sociologist and anthropologist Julio Cotler (2021, pp.133-135) illustrates the domination of ‘the Andean’ in economic terms. Since the most productive economic activities<sup>2</sup> are concentrated in the Coast, it is perceived as the developed, modern, and Western region. On the contrary, the Andes are characterized for its low productivity agriculture and livestock and preindustrial ways which has reinforced its perception as the undeveloped, traditional, and indigenous region. From this perspective, Cotler (2021, p.135) asserts that the Andes are situated at the margins of a country represented by the Coast. A visible effect of this contrast can be seen in the territorial location of people living in monetary poverty. According to a recent report (INEI, 2022, p.92) 60,5% of people in extreme poverty live in the Highlands/Andes followed by 21,7% in the Coast and 17,8% in the Jungle.

While the conceptualization of Peru as a nonintegrated country is useful to illustrate structural internal differences, it is necessary to be precise. Following Cotler (2021, p.136) it would be inaccurate to assert that the Andean population is not integrated to the country. Nonetheless it is important to qualify their integration as limited and non-favorable since it is inserted in a framework of dependent social relationships. Something that the sociologist Stavenhagen (cited in Cotler, 2021, p.137) describes as a dynamic of ‘internal colonies’.

Hence, the colonial legacy is one of the reasons why for Peruvians it is so complicated to talk about identity. Indeed, disparate responses<sup>3</sup> to the question ¿How do you consider or self-identified yourself because of your traditions and ancestors? in the last Census of 2017 (INEI, 2018, p.214) confirm this complexity. Nonetheless, MW, who identifies herself as an ‘Andean woman’ embraces this entanglement. She explains Andean pop is the result of an internal journey to find herself to embrace two seemingly divorced worlds: the pop music industry and *lo andino* (TEDx Talks, 2021). The Peruvian journalist Marco Avilés (2017, p.340) who identifies himself as *cholo, serrano* (from the Highlands) and immigrant, made a similar journey. He explains that the history of Peru is like a soap opera where the young character does not know his father. He adds that at school Peruvians are taught we descend from the Incas as well as from the ‘conquerors’ who came from Spain and stole our gold. Nonetheless, despite our mixed origins, racism is the viceroyalty that we carry inside (Avilés,

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<sup>2</sup> Fishing, Agriculture for exportation, Manufacturing and Financing

<sup>3</sup> 60,2% Mestizos, 22,3% Quechuas, 5,9% White, 3,6% Afro Peruvian, 2,4% Aimara, 0,3% Indigenous or native from the Amazonas and others (23 million people surveyed)

2017, p.564). It is a familiar demon that lives with us and instead of confronting it we have learnt to excuse it and accept the discrimination that lives everywhere, including schools, advertising, and television. A national survey (Ministerio de Cultura de Perú, 2018, p.8) about perceptions and attitudes toward cultural diversity and ethnic-racial discrimination showed that skin color (28%), income level (20%), facial or physical features (17%), place of origin (16%), way of speaking (15%), costumes/traditions (14%) and clothing (12%) are the most common reasons for discrimination.

The psychologist and social scientist Walter Twanama (2008, p.1) explains the action of *cholear* as the main form of discrimination in Peru. *Cholear* comes from the word *cholo*, which is used to describe someone mestizo (mixed) with European and Indigenous blood or an 'indian' that adopts Western customs (RAE, 2022). As Twanama (2008, p.1) explains what is paradoxical about *cholear* is that it establishes a distance and a hierarchy, but its use is not exclusive to one group. Learning to *cholear*, he asserts, is part of the Peruvian instruction manual for life and *cholo* is not a fixed category because it is created through interactions. For instance, when two Peruvians meet, they will quickly read (or make up) all the details to determine who discriminates who. *Each of them will comparatively evaluate what role they have through a complex process in which they integrate physical features of the person in front of them with some other indicators: signs of socioeconomic status, command of Spanish or the language they are using, traces of accents regional or rural areas. And this happens because despite its initial appearance, this form of discrimination - the choleo - is not only racial but incorporates various social variables*<sup>4</sup> (Twanama, 2008, p.2).

To this regard, Milena Warthon, has recently (October 22, 2022) debuted in a theatre play titled *Lamentos* (Lamentations) (image 2) that narrates the history of oppression and discrimination in Peru since colonial times through the voice of a female school student. In the play, MW interpreted emblematic songs that narrate the struggles of Andean migrants in the city and racism. The piece showed situations of discrimination and injustices of the past and the present. MW played the role of the internal voice of the student as an Andean Latin American woman. As MW shared, the purpose of this piece is to vindicate the Andean and the Afro Peruvian people and promote respect. *In these four years of my artistic career, people have offended me with discriminatory comments because of the color of my skin, my unusual voice, my short height and because of my English last name. I am a living proof of diversity and that fills me with pride*, she remarks (Del Águila, 2022). Such participation contributes to associate MW's work with the Andean, hybrid identities and antiracism in Peru.

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<sup>4</sup> All quotes originally in Spanish, like this one, has been translated by the author

## Image 2

MW (in the middle) with the cast



Source: Del Águila (October 16, 2022)

To comprehend current racism toward Andean people, we need to go back in time and zoom in when discrimination rose in Lima. As Twanama (2008, p.3) and Mendívil (2015, p.26) narrate, a peak of the *choleo* began in the mid XX century when the constant migration of people from the Andes redefined the creole capital.

The anthropologist Jürgen Golte (2001), who studied the Andean society, asserts that internal migration generated the development of a multiethnic and multicultural urban society. For instance, in 1940 Lima had around 400 thousand inhabitants and by 2001 it had close to 8 million of which 70% were Andean migrants or their descendants (Golte, 2001, pp.107-108). However, the mobility did not lead to a disassociation from their social groups of origin but rather, a deterritorialization. Golte (2001, p.115) adds that wherever Andean migrants arrived, they recreated cohesion between the groups that share the same origin through formal and informal associations. This need to reconnect with their place of origin can be seen through cultural expressions such as music. Anibal Quijano (cited in Mendívil, 2015, pp.30-31) narrates that at first Andean migrants suppressed their cultural origins to adapt to the city context. However, the non-stop migration contributed to the reclaiming of their citizen and cultural rights and presence. On that account, Andean migrants started showing themselves as a ‘thriving new cultural group of *cholos* who arrived at Lima to triumph and change the city's face’ (Quijano, cited in Mendívil, 2015, p.31).

The ethnomusicologist Julio Mendivil (2015, pp.31-32) points out that from the districts where Andean people settled<sup>5</sup> in the 1950s, they started modifying Lima's musical scene. Music festivals took place in sports stadiums or even circus tents where migrants gathered to rememorate regional feelings (Romero, cited in Mendivil, 2015, p.32). Soon, Lima became a center of Andean music production. Next to a 'creole Lima' was now an 'Andean Lima' that sounded like harps, violins, saxophones, and clarinets. Nevertheless, the creole/Andean relationship was characterized by intolerance toward some Highlanders' attributes such as their clothing, bare footedness, coca chewing and Quechua language. Another transformation of the musical scene that Mendivil (2015, p.33) notes occurred by the end of the 1980s when Andean music's popularity declined as Peru's economy reentered the global market. The influence of the international market of pop, rock, and Ibero-American music caused that new generations of migrants produced mixed genres where traditional and modern elements converged.

## **Andean-ness in popular music**

The anthropologist Alexander Huerta-Mercado (2022, p.35) notes that the cosmopolitanism of the urban space provoked a cultural fusion that was designated *chicha* by creole groups. Huerta-Mercado (2022, pp.35-36) adds that this manifestation was the answer of young migrants who were adapting to the modern city of Lima which had a racist and exclusive discourse. *Chicha* artists, like the well-known *Chacalón* shared his difficult experience as a migrant by singing: ...*I'm looking for a new life in this city where everything is money and there is evil*. Thus, this evidences that popular music is not just a reflection or representation of people, but it can produce connections between the ones who produce and consume it (Frith, 1996, p.108).

In the past few decades many fusions like *chicha* have occurred. Efraín Rozas (2007, p.10), and interdisciplinary artist and researcher, argues that Peruvian fusion music did not happen by chance. It responds to a way of building identities from the relationship between the 'first world' and postcolonial countries in the context of globalization. More than that, Rozas affirms the *boom* of fusion music responds to a concern of musicians with the national identity.

One of these musicians is Milena Warthon, a 22-year-old middle-class Peruvian born and raised in the capital city of Lima as a second-generation Andean migrant. MW, who strongly identifies with her Andean family started a project back in 2018 to promote and revalue traditional Latin America Andean music and its cultural identity. She called it *Pop Andino*

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<sup>5</sup> Most migrants from that decade settled down in *asentamientos humanos* (shanty towns)

(Andean Pop), that is also the name of her clothing brand that mixes traditional Andean fabric with urban clothes like jeans. In June 2021, MW became popular when she participated in the TV talent show 'The Voice Peru'. Warthon shared that she had to fight internally to feel proud to sing with her *pollera*<sup>6</sup> (image 3) without fearing what people would say. The media exposure increased the number of 'followers' on social media, who soon became an organized Fanclub (FCO hereafter) named MileWars (an allusion to Star Wars) that is active on Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, Twitter and WhatsApp (WA hereafter). But the media attention also raised *haters* who consider Warthon's fusion a distortion of traditional rhythms or criticize that she calls herself Andean when she has an English last name (Alva, 2021; Bicentenario del Perú, 2021; La República, 2021; Warthon Records, 2022).

However, at present MW's popularity has grown not only in Peru but in neighboring countries too. For instance, according to Spotify (November 3, 2022) she has over 105,000 monthly listeners who are located (in order of relevance) in: Lima, Arequipa (south of Peru), Santiago (Chile), La Paz and Santa Cruz (both in Bolivia).

### Image 3

MW in 'The Voice Peru'



Source: MW's Instagram (December 31, 2021)



Given the above, the way MW embraces Andean-ness through AP exemplifies the scholars Zoomers and Salman's description (2003, pp.3-7) of *lo andino* as a complex, heterogeneous, plural, and non-fixed concept that needs to be studied globally and not as a localized mode

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<sup>6</sup> Skirt that is traditional clothes of native Andean women in Latin America

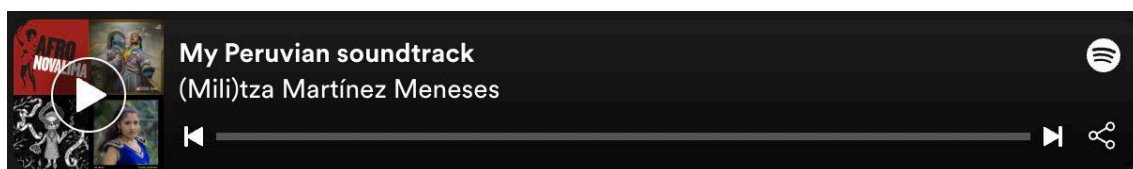
of life. Therefore, is necessary to look more to 'big cities' like Lima where Andean people live and remember that *lo andino* is cross-generational. Even though some young people might reject aspects of their parent's legacy, ancestor's knowledge is still transmitted. As explained before, this is not the case of MW, but the statement remains true for youth who have chosen to disconnect from any Andean root they might have in their family tree. However, for the present research is relevant to keep in mind that "the locus for Andean-ness is not place, but the Andean people" (Zoomers and Salman, 2003, p.7). Besides, three aspects are considered. First, *lo andino*, as Quijano (cited in Yépez del Castillo, 2003, p.50) precises, is a 'vague term' and needs to be situated in its historical context. Second, *andino* seems to be a term used only by 'outsiders' because Andean people identified themselves with location-bound or other labels (Zoomers and Salman, 2003, p.7). Third, *lo andino* is not merely something from the past and is not 'out there'. On the contrary, it is constantly being transformed (Harvey, cited in Zoomers and Salman, 2003, p.8) and MW, Andean Pop music and its fans illustrate this.



## My Peruvian soundtrack

*I cannot research unless I make it personal*, was the subtitle of an essay I wrote as part of my ISS course work. Similarly, this research paper is also an attempt to understand my - sometimes contradictory - country with love and hope in the heart.

I learned about Milena Warthon on April 11, 2022, during a conversation with my dear friend Frida from Peru. As part of my research exploration, I started engaging with MW and Andean Pop music. Her story and the cheerful melodies mixed with sounds of the Andes caught me. I soon became a fan. As the daughter of middle-class Andean migrants and being born and raised in the capital city of Lima, I realized that the Andean-Western fusion was part of the soundtrack of my life. I grew up listening to Peruvian traditional and fusion music because my father is very fond of vernacular music and loves to sing and dance *huaynos*<sup>7</sup>. As a child, my brother and I had to get ready for school to the sounds of *marinera norteña*<sup>8</sup> that our father used to play every morning. At school I sang in Spanish, English and German, learnt how to play the flute and read music. Later, as a teenager, I frequently listened to creole and Andean music because my neighbors and family used to gather to play and sing. The sounds of guitar, piano, accordion, *cajón peruano* (Peruvian box drum), and maraca remind me of my neighbors. The sounds of violin, harp, quena (traditional Andean flute), charango (small guitar) and *marinera norteña* remind me of my father. During my college years, I started going to concerts of Peruvian artists from Lima who mixed different types of music from the Coast, the Andes, and the Jungle with genres like rock and electronic. My interest and knowledge come from my love for music, my Andean roots, and my lived experiences. Therefore, my voice is also present in this research. As part of this sonic journey, I started a playlist to try to gather Peruvian music, including Andean Pop, that I have and will experience (*click on the Spotify player ▶ to open it*).



Being a member of the Fanclub of MW contributed to the present research. However, I was fully aware of my positionality as a 34-year-old middle-class Peruvian who is studying an MA in The Netherlands and was visiting home (Lima) for research. Nonetheless, during

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<sup>7</sup> *Huayno* is the most popular genre from Andean music

<sup>8</sup> Traditional dance from the north Coast of Peru

fieldwork, I noticed that other details, like my phone number, sparked curiosity. This is clear in my experience meeting Patrick (a fan of MW) in the first concert I attended:

I decided to approach and told him about my research. He was very receptive and asked me if I was also a fan and I replied: *yes! researcher and a fan*. We ended up spending the concert next to each other and talking briefly during the pauses. He was curious about what I was studying and excited about the idea of giving me an interview for my research. Despite he was wearing an Andean Pop mask, I could notice he was smiling the whole time. This was the first concert he attended, and he was having a great time. At the end of the concert, we exchange phone numbers to coordinate the interview. Patrick was curious about the country code (+31) and asked me if I was Peruvian, I told him: *yes! but I live in The Netherlands*. We said goodbye and he ran to get in the very long queue to receive MW's autograph. I went home. A few minutes later, he kindly texted me through WhatsApp: *Hi! I am Patrick :) I think I went too fast to make the queue hababa. Let's keep in touch for the interview. It is very nice that you want to talk about all this movement in your thesis 🙌*. I thanked him and called it a night, after being in the mall for four hours I was a bit tired.

(fieldnotes, July 23, 2022)

## Research question

### *Main question*

How do urban young fans make sense of Andean Pop music in their contexts, and how does this respond to or inform their understanding of *lo andino* (Andean-ness)?

### *Sub questions*

- How do young fans build interpersonal relationships through Andean Pop music?
- What does Andean Pop music mean to its young fans?
- How does Andean Pop music relate to the fans' sense of Peruvianess?
- To what extent is Andean Pop music contesting colonial perceptions of Andean people in Peru?

## Methodology and methods

This research takes a multi-sited ethnographic approach (Marcus, 1995) where the main sites are the Fanclub and Andean Pop music in its offline and online environments. The purpose was to explore and understand why fans are engaging with AP and the meanings/reflections

behind this relationship considering the historical position of *lo andino*. During fieldwork I participated overtly and covertly in part of the daily lives of the fans and collected data in natural online and offline settings (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.3). My presence in both sites was sometimes as an observer and some others as a full participant (fan). My involvement began digitally on May 4, 2022, as I joined the public FCO Facebook group that had 97,000 members at that time. Later, on June 2, I joined the private FCO WhatsApp group<sup>9</sup> of 254 members and started engaging in some conversations with the fans. Finally, between July 15 and August 20, I conducted fieldwork in Lima. Having multiple methods has contributed to a rich and sensorial experience that allowed me to build a relationship with the fans and go beneath the surface of digital and in-person observable interactions (Hine, 2017, pp.320-326). Therefore, the empirical data presented in this research is closely intertwined following O'Reilly's understanding (cited in Pink et al., 2016, p.3) of ethnography as an "iterative-inductive research (that evolves in design through the study)."

By conducting **participant observation** in four concerts in Lima (annex A), I immersed myself in the Andean Pop performance as part of the ordinary audience and as a fan. This means, that for the latter I coordinated previously with some fans I interviewed to spend the show together. Observing first-hand artist-audience relations was very important because it subsequently informed other research activities like the interviews. Since my goal was to recruit potential people to interview, I designed and printed some flyers (image 4) to distribute in the concerts to the people I had small conversations with. However, I ended up using the flyers only in the first concert since WhatsApp became the most important platform to connect and coordinate with the fans.

I was able to have individual **in-depth interviews** with 10 FCO members (annex B) after they signed an informed consent form in Spanish<sup>10</sup> (annex C). Nine of the fans were Peruvians (8 from Lima) and one Argentinian. Their ages ranged between 16 and 29 years. Some of them I contacted/met directly and some others I reached through WhatsApp after asking the leaders for recommendations of "young active fans I could interview". Only one interview was conducted in person due to the participant's preference, the rest were online. I developed an interview guide (annex D) to build rapport, collect personal information, understand their relationship with AP and the FCO, and share a 'fan' moment watching three

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<sup>9</sup> I sent a message to one of the mobile numbers that were published in a post on the FCO Facebook page and asked how I can become a fan. One of the leaders replied and after a small conversation she sent me the link to join the WA group

<sup>10</sup> In the case of minors (under 18), I explored if they would rather have their parents sign the form

videoclips. The first four interviews were a pilot. After those I adjusted the guide because concepts were emerging, and I wanted to dig deeper.

#### Image 4

Flyer designed to recruit fans to interview



Source: Author's work (July 23, 2022)

During fieldwork **digital ethnography** became a crucial method that informed my of-line interactions with the fans. For instance, in this research I am including internet-related visual ethnography and daily routines of the virtual community of the FCO (Postill and Pink, 2012, p.127). Besides, I applied the routine described by Postill and Pink (2012, pp.128-129). Hence, I 'followed' the FCO and MW on WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. I 'caught up' with the content they were sharing. I 'explored' the links they shared. I 'interacted' through comments, reactions and sending information about MW shows. And finally, I 'archived' mine and other fan's comments which are now part of this thesis.

Finally, as a very visual person I easily got used to **the language of the FCO** (e.g. emojis and stickers). Consequently, I have tried to capture and include this language throughout this thesis' *look* and *feel* with the aim of *showing* instead of *telling* what I have seen/lived and what the fans have shared with me. All the data generated in this research was in Spanish. In addition, I have drawn on numerous Spanish language work. In this thesis I present the English language translations which I have done myself hoping to be as faithful as possible. Besides, since I conducted performance ethnography, I have attempted to 'recreate my memories vividly on these pages' (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011, p.47) supporting them with TikTok videos I made from the concerts (annex A) and pictures that have the consent of the fans who are part of them. I hope you enjoy reading these pages! 📖

## The MileWars, a family I got to meet 🍷

*Welcome beautiful 🍷 You will see that we are a very united family, if you have any questions ask me or the other leaders ✨* is how Carolina, a 19-year-old Argentinian fan, replied to the first message I sent to the FCO introducing myself when I joined the WhatsApp group (June 2, 2022).

I thanked the kind welcoming message, but it got me thinking. Firstly, I thought that ‘family’ was just a nice word they used and felt like an ‘outsider’ because I was new in the FCO and had never been to a concert. I also assumed I was older than the average and that might be a barrier to connect with the fans (MileWars). Secondly, I was surprised to notice that there were two types of members in the Fanclub: leaders and ordinary fans. Scholars like William Kelly (2004, p.1) explain that fans arise from mass culture audiences looking for intense meanings and enjoyment. He also states that fans and fandoms are inseparable because through their activities and exchanges the fan identity is validated and intensified (Kelly, 2004, p.7).

Hence, this chapter introduces the Fanclub of MW as my main site of research. The aim is to show the interpersonal relationship that the fans are constantly building through virtual and face-to-face interactions to illustrate the notion of ‘fan family’ (Phillips, 2011). Understanding the FCO as a second/chosen family, which cohesion goes beyond frontiers, sets the stage to analyze them as ‘social agents and a community of meaning making’ (Kelly, 2004, p.7). Methodologically speaking, I am showing how my presence (offline and online) in the AP performative scene and with the fans has enable me to weave data from the close and big family to get a better sense of what being a MileWar means.

### A close family

Image 5

‘Welcoming’ and ‘Good morning’ messages



Source: FCO WhatsApp group

*Good morning, family!*

*Family, check what Milena just uploaded [link], let's continue supporting her!*

*Family, who is going to this Saturday's show?*

These are some examples of the many messages posted in the Milena Wharton FCO WhatsApp group (image 5). Such regular messages contribute to generate a sense of shared space and practices that nurture “a feeling of community in digital environments” (Nancy Baym, cited in Phillips, 2011, p.488). Jhordan, a 19-year-old fan from Yungay<sup>11</sup> and president of the Fanclub, is the one who started the FCO because he wanted to be more informed about MW who he discovered on TikTok. He first looked for a community to join but he did not find one. Therefore, he decided to start a Fanclub and send a message to Milena sharing his idea. She loved it. On February 2021 the FCO started as a group on Facebook. Jhordan said smiling: *I first share the link of the group with Milena. At the beginning the two of us were the only members.* But he was committed to bring together more fans and started sharing the link in other groups of music and folklore. He wanted to *call people*. After one month, the group had 1000 members. Later, when MW joined The Voice Peru, her popularity and the number of FCO members rose. The group became so large that Jhordan and Milena decided to expand it to other social media like Instagram and TikTok and created the WA group.

But Jhordan needed help to manage all the platforms. He identified Carolina, the first ‘visible’ active fan outside Peru. Caro is from Jujuy (the north of Argentina, close to Bolivia) and is very used to listen to Andean music. She felt inspired by MW’s fusion and accepted happily when Jhordan asked her to be the ‘world leader’, a role that captures the ambition of MW to cross frontiers and the broadness of AP. What Caro likes the most about the FCO is that they are not just a group but a family. Even though she lives in another country and has never been to Peru, she said she can feel the kindness and love of the other leaders, especially when she is going through difficult times. Caro emphasized that belonging to the FCO is beautiful and shares: *during the recent time I had a lot of problems and they [the fans] have been an enormous support, a pillar. They are family. I want to go to Peru to meet not only Milena but also this family that supports me virtually. They have always been there for me.* Alejandra (Ale), a 16-year-old fan and leader from Lima, feels thankful because she has met a lot of good and kind people. *More than a Fanclub, this is like a second family to me, we are very close,* she said. This closeness is also between MW and the leaders, with whom Ale shares more than the love for Andean Pop. In a private WhatsApp group of leaders, they speak about “their things”. Reyna,

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<sup>11</sup> Yungay is a district of the Andean region of Ancash in Peru

a 17-year-old fan and leader from Lima, explains that they talk about their problems, share when they are feeling down, help each other with their homework and start every day with: *good morning, family!* She adds that physical distance is not an obstacle because she is looking forward to meeting Caro when she visits Peru. *I want to hug her, I love her despite I do not know her yet*, she says and smiles.

The bond of trust and affection that the leaders cultivate through their WA group reflects what the researcher of online fandom Tom Phillips (2011, p.493) defines as the “relative strength and intimacy of the fan family”. For the MileWars, the FCO constitutes a safe space and a support community where their emotional needs are validated and taken care of by peer leader fans. While the Fanclub could be one of the means to cope with stress, the youth studies literature suggests that it also has a role of secondary socialization beyond family and school (Jones, 2009, pp.13-14). Consequently, their belonging to this FCO is about feeling secure, at home and emotionally attached (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p.197). The fan family described so far seems to be restricted to the leaders as the ‘close family’. However, there is also a ‘big family’ where more members (like me) belong.

## A big family

### Image 6

Audience waiting for the concert



Source: Fieldwork (July 27, 2022)

On July 27, I attended my first concert as a fan. The day before, I conducted an online interview with William, a 19-year-old fan and now leader from Lima<sup>12</sup> who told me he was

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<sup>12</sup> Two days after the concert he became a leader of the FCO

going to attend the concert. The show was in the food court of a mall in one of the most populated districts of Lima (*Villa María del Triunfo*). My father drove me to the mall. On the road, I was playing MW's music, which my father enjoyed despite *being non-traditional Andean music*. When we arrived, the food court was already crowded and loud, full of families, young people, and parents with their little girls on their shoulders (image 6). It was my first time in that mall, and I was feeling lost. Suddenly, I saw William (I recognized him from the interview the day before) running towards the other side of where I was standing and texted him asking where to go. He immediately sent me an audio explaining. A few minutes later I found him and waved screaming: *Hi William, I am Mili!* We hugged in a very spontaneous and warm way. He showed me his Andean Pop blue jeans that had patches of a colorful and traditional Andean cloth, which he combined with a white and light-blue sweater and black snickers. I had identified William as a potential participant for an interview a couple of weeks back when he shared a TikTok video dancing to one of MW's songs on the WA group, which is a common practice among fans. MileWars often generate digital content about AP and MW that they disseminate through their social media accounts and then the FCO shares. William W. Kelly (2004, p.7), a sociocultural anthropologist, describes fans as skillful producers instead of passive receptors of commercial entertainment. The sociologist Ritzer and the social media theorist Jurgenson (2010, p.14) explain that due to the growth of social media, 'prosumption' (meaning both the production and consumption) has become central in capitalist economies. Moreover, Zwick et al. (cited in Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010, p.18), argues that consumers' co-creation depends on how it fits their "needs for recognition, freedom and agency." In the case of AP fans, they seem to invest hours of production, recording and sometimes editing to get the material they then share through Instagram and TikTok. However, this time investment is something that the fans find enjoyable and love doing (Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010, p.22) like spending concerts together.

William and I soon run into Ale and other fans. I introduce myself with everyone since I was the 'new face' in the group. William was carrying a poster that he needed to finish. Soon, he placed his white cardboard on the floor and took out a glue stick, a Peruvian flag he made with the name of MW on it (image 7), and red cardboard letters to stick to form the phrase: we love you. We (the fans) bend to reach the floor and help him out. As William was carefully sticking the letters to the white cardboard, he told us that he worked on the poster with his aunt who helped him shape the letters. We replied saying that the poster was well done. They soon started discussing which would be the best spot to enjoy the concert together. Once the poster was ready, one fan suggested to wait for MW at the entrance to be seen by her.



We walked to the back of the stage and stood close to the bars where we knew Milena was going to enter because we saw security guards (bouncers) getting ready. As we were waiting Ale was particularly excited and screaming of joy. She said: *I have seen her 20 times, but I am nervous like the first time.* At 6:05pm Milena arrived and started walking towards the stage while people were screaming *Milena! Mile!* We were waiving enthusiastically so that she could see us, Milena replied by waiving and smiling at us.

### Image 7

Finishing a poster for the concert



Source: Fieldwork (July 27, 2022)

MW stepped onto the stage and was received by an excited crowd. She greeted the audience and got ready to sing. Milena was carrying an ukulele and her musician was sitting on a Peruvian box-drum in front of his battery and other instruments. We immediately run to the main area where the public was waiting to find a good spot to enjoy the concert. William soon raised the poster (image 8). MW sat down on the white chair on the stage and started singing a cappella *Agua de mar* (Seawater), her first own single, which went viral on TikTok in 2021. We were far from the stage and could not see much. Therefore, we decided to go to the other side of the stage (next to the play area for kids). Soon, Reyna and her brother joined us to spend the concert together (Reyna and I recognized each other because I had interviewed her virtually a couple of days before). I was impressed because they knew all the lyrics and were singing passionately for almost one hour. At some point in the concert, one of the fans screamed: *Milena, I want to dance with you!* MW soon called some volunteers to

dance to *Me niego* (I refuse), a cover song in a *saya*<sup>13</sup> version. Immediately William, Alejandra and two other fans ran to the stage. They danced with Milena, while the musician was playing the traditional and happy rhythms of *saya* and we (the audience) were enjoying the show. “Fans both know more and care more” states Kelly (2004, p.8) and argues that it is the passion of commitment and how they feel which differentiates fans from the audience. I was able to understand the passion of AP fans before, during and after the concerts by meeting them in person. Only by observing/listening to their gestures and reactions I could comprehend what they told me previously in our individual online conversations (Phillips, 2011, p.493).

### Image 8

Scenes from the concert. In the first two pictures: William



Source: Fieldwork (July 27, 2022)

Right before the concert ended, one of the fans said: *let's wait for Milena on her way out to meet her and have a picture with her!*. As we were running towards the end of the security bars, an energized William told me: *this is how a MileWar is!*. The whole area was very loud and crowded (around 500 people) and once again we were trying to find ‘the best spot’ to be seen

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<sup>13</sup> Traditional dance and music originated in Bolivia

by MW. But Milena left the floor fast using the emergency stairs surrounded by bodyguards. We could not meet her there, but some leaders were texting with Milena's team and were told that a very small group might be able to meet her in a private office in the parking lot. Since I did not consider myself part of the 'close family' I told them that if it is too many people it was fine for me not to meet her this time. But Reyna kindly told me: *No, you are coming with us!* After almost 20 minutes of wandering around the mall, nine people (including me) managed to enter the room where Milena was resting. She recognized all of them and greeted us warmly. I could tell I was the 'new face' in the room. Everyone said how great the show was and were asking about the upcoming presentations. She took the time to have pictures with everyone. I told her about this research, she was happy about it, and we took a picture together (image 9). After almost 15 minutes, we said goodbye and left the room. Kelly (2004, p.9) explains this need of intimacy with the artist they admire as another characteristic that sets fans aside from the ordinary audience. While most of the public might be satisfied with the performance, fans are not. They seek visual and physical closeness behind the curtains to achieve a "feeling as if of the same body" (Yano, cited in Kelly, 2004, p.9). Hence, familiarity and affection between the fans (especially the leaders) and MW are expressed and cultivated publicly and privately, for instance on the stage and backstage, which seems to strength the family ties.

### Image 9

With MW after the concert



Source: Fieldwork (July 27, 2022)

Almost a month after, on August 20, I attended another concert as a fan. The show was led by a popular Peruvian band that mixes different tropical and Peruvian genres. MW was one of the supporting musicians performing before them. This time the concert was not free,

so I booked my tickets in advance. A few days before the event, Ale sent me a voice note per WhatsApp (August 17, 2022): *Hello Militza, what's up? I read on the group that you are going to this Saturday's concert. I am also going with my mother (in the WA group we were informed that under 18-year-olds were allowed in the bar only if accompanied by an adult). I know Milena is performing at 10pm...a bit late, but it is going to be amazing, you won't regret it! Listening to her with the band is beautiful! Let's meet there so that we are in a group!* I expressed my gratitude and told Alejandra that we will meet for sure. The night of the concert I arrived 30 minutes earlier to the 'Yield Rock Bar' in the historical center of Lima. As soon as I went down the red stairs of the entrance, I texted Ale: *I am here!* The place was not full. It was easy to find her sitting in a table with other people. I hugged her and recognized Roberts (a fan I interviewed in person two weeks earlier). Ale was with her mother and Roberts with a friend. Roberts, a 29-year-old fan from Lima, kindly pulled a chair for me to sit with them. They were sharing fries and offered me some. Ale was texting with some people from MW's team and told us: *They are coming soon!* A few minutes later, MW arrived covered by a thick black jacket and went to the back of the stage. We recognized her and got excited about her presence. Soon, Reyna arrived with her mother and joined us at the table (image 10). Ale went to the washroom, and told us that on her way out, she ran into Milena. She was very happy about it and said: *Everytime I see her, she hypnotizes me!!!* We all smiled and shared her enthusiasm. A few minutes later, MW's father and brother came to our table and greeted us on their way to the backstage.

### Image 10

Reyna, Roberts, me, Ale's mother, Ale, and Robert's friend waiting for the concert



Source: Reyna's digital album (August 20, 2022)

At 10:00 pm Milena's musicians were getting ready to play. There were six of them: two with an electric guitar, one on the battery, one with percussion instruments, one with a

*charango* and one with a *zampoña*<sup>14</sup>. We decided to stand up to enjoy the concert close to the stage. We were in the first two rows next to MW's father and brother. At 10:15 pm the concert started. MW stepped onto the stage wearing a purple outfit with gloves and started singing (image 11). We were around 70 people. The MileWars were the youngest in the room. Alejandra was right, listening to MW with the live band was a very pleasant experience. I was also impressed by her energy. Ale was jumping and singing most of the time next to MW's father. I remember that Roberts told me that Milena's father was the biggest fan because he enjoys every minute of the concerts. That day, I saw it. At some point of the show MW left the stage and comically said: *bye!* The audience started screaming: *one more, one more!* And she returned to sing a festive popular *huayno* song (*Valicha*) which first lines are in Quechua language. Some people were singing the slow intro of the song. But soon, as the rhythm accelerated, the concert became a party, and some people came to the first row to *zapatear* (dance stomping their feet to the cheerful melody).

### Image 11

Milena Warthon on stage



Source: Fieldwork (August 20, 2022)

The concert ended at around 11:10pm. Ale, Reyna and her mother, MW's father and I stayed close to the stage. I briefly spoke with MW's father about my research, and I told him that I have been interviewing some fans (and pointed them). They smiled and replied: *yes!* MW's father thanked me for the interest and returned to his table. I went to meet a friend of mine who joined the concert a bit late and wanted to see the other bands. Reyna, Ale, and Roberts went to get some drinks. A few minutes later, Reyna, Ale, and Roberts came to my table to say goodbye because they were leaving (they had only gone to see MW's show). They wished me the best (they knew I was leaving Peru soon). I thanked them for helping me with

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<sup>14</sup>Traditional Andean panpipe

the research, and we hugged. As I was returning to my table, the idea of ‘feeling like in a family’ struck me. During my weeks in Lima, I got to experience how much they care about this community and how much it means to them. They share news about MW, coordinate before the concerts, go, and enjoy it together, share videos and pictures of the shows in the WA group for those who cannot go, and sometimes they even return home together. In the course of fieldwork, I did some of those things too and realized I was not an ‘outsider’ anymore. The MileWars received me with open arms, kindness, and warmth in a family I now belong too. In this research I am trying to honor those feelings.



Given the above, the MileWars stand out from ordinary listeners of Andean Pop music because their commitment surpasses the digital realm. A MileWar is looking for live collective experiences with other fans but also with Milena Warthon as another peer member of the family. The relationship of the leaders as a ‘close family’ speaks about the FCO as a site of emotional support and socialization for young people. Furthermore, I realized how mistaken I was with my initial assumptions. It was never about nationality, hometown, age, nor the time one belongs to the MileWars family. What brings the MileWars together is their interest and affection to MW and *lo andino*. The FCO is a ‘big welcoming family’ and a borderless community with members from Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, and Ecuador besides Peru in its WA group (October 28, 2022).

## The meanings of Andean Pop ✨

*Milena is doing something I wish I did...I admire her because she focuses her music on something I love: my origins. What could be better than mixing something juvenile with something that identifies us (Peruvians)?* shared a smiling Ninoska, a 26-year-old fan from Lima and folkloric dance schoolteacher (interview August 10, 2022).

Ninoska, who is a frequent listener of Andean folklore from Peru and Bolivia, exemplifies one of the meanings that fans attribute to AP music in their individual and collective realms. Whereas Bennett (2000b, p.44) explains that structures of meanings are imposed in the music industry and frame audiences' utility of popular music, others complicate the signifying process. Scholars like Frith (cited in Bennett, 2000b, p.44) agree to the idea of music as "rule-bound". However, he adds that listening to certain music responds to a specific, familiar logic, that most pop fans cannot control. Lewis (cited in Bennett, 2000a, p.428) sheds light to understand musical taste through three dimensions: demographics, aesthetics, and politics. In the case of Andean Pop fans, as shown in the previous chapter, factors like age or locality are not determinant. Therefore, it seems that the most relevant dimensions are the last two, which Lewis (cited in Bennett, 2000a, p.428) relates to the upbringing and acquired sensibilities of the listeners and their own political values within a dominant power structure. In that sense, it is important to recognize musical taste and choice as a reflexive practice that enables individuals to "construct their identity, lifestyle and even sense of place in late modernity" (Cheney, cited in Bennett, 2000a, p.427).

Hence, this chapter shows the social dimension of Andean Pop music through its plural meanings at a micro and macro level. The aim is to illustrate AP music as a powerful means for its fans to (re)connect and (re)imagine themselves, their kinship and their countries while crossing temporal, geographical, and social boundaries through a new signification of *lo andino*.

### **Andean Pop, a bridge & a revolution**

Fans like Reyna, who is fond of creole music, defines Andean Pop as Milena Warthon's creation and emphasizes: *Andean Pop is Milena, nothing else!* She identifies with MW because her parents are also not from Lima. More than that, AP resonates with her because she likes to 'see things of her country.' Other fans, like Ninoska (Nina), go beyond the artist. For Nina, who says that she was born in Lima 'by accident' because all her family is from *Huancayo*

(city in the Highlands), AP is very close to her heart. *This is part of my live. Nina without her dances, her folklore or something Andean is not Nina. It would be like taking my head off. AP is to revalue Peruvian culture and folklore. It is to promote that young people do not forget that our roots are beautiful besides current music (like reggaetón or hip-hop), which is not bad, no? but as Peruvians we have a cultural background that should be above others. AP is a reminder that we have something very valuable that we should not leave behind us*, she finalized and showed me her AP skirt (image 12) which she purchased a month ago because ‘she loves to use what is ours’.

**Image 12**

Nina with her AP skirt



Source: Interview (August 10, 2022)

In that sense, AP seems to be a musical formula that connects with people who are familiarized with the Andes and/or Peruvian music. Moreover, similarities between MW’s and her fans’ background inform this relationship and exemplify ‘how personal outlook has an effect on people’s aesthetical appreciation of music’ (Bennett, 2000a, p.428). Nonetheless, whereas AP sounded familiar for some fans, for others, like Flavia it was different. She is a 19-year-old fan from Lima who would like to study music one day. She qualifies AP as fluid because it is MW’s brand and identity. *It started like something I just liked, but her music grew on me.* For Flavia, Andean Pop is a bridge. She has never been a fan of Andean music but is fond of creole, pop, and K-pop music. However, listening to AP has been a way to interact with *lo andino* and to learn to like Andean music. Flavia reflects and hopes that one day *lo andino* is more present in young people’s lives. Because she sees a purpose in AP: *to revalue the Andean culture and to acknowledge that people from outside Lima are not less important than people from the city.* This example shows that musical choices can also respond to a critical view of reality. Notably, Flavia’s reflection about Andean people not being considered as equal as people from Lima speaks to the ‘political dimension of music taste’ (Lewis, cited in Bennett, 2000a, p.428).



Hence, despite AP is not protest music, it articulates a political stance of its fans, who are reclaiming the Andean presence and recognition for a more just society. In this same line, Caro, Roberts, and Patrick reflected about the meaning of Andean Pop in the context of Argentina and Peru challenging the prevailing idea that popular music is “simply a reflection of a predetermined social reality” (Chaney, cited in Bennett, 2000a, p.427).

Carolina, who calls herself *Jujeña* (from the province of Jujuy in the north of Argentina), identifies with MW because she is also very proud of her roots. She admires that MW is humble despite being from the capital city, because in Argentina some people from the capital (Buenos Aires) have prejudices towards people from the north. From an individual gaze, Caro sees AP as the dream of a person who has put a lot of effort to create a fusion that two generations can enjoy. Then she also expressed: *Andean Pop to me is union, it is the idea of young people listening to their traditional music, it is union between people and family, it is friendship.*

Roberts understands Andean Pop as a revolution. He describes it as something new and unique that he wants to follow and support. *Besides our Andean roots that MW has titled ‘Andean Pop’, she is giving ‘healthy’ music to the young people. It fills me with pride.! It is something very cultural that I like a lot,* he underlines.

For Patrick, an 18-year-old fan from Lima, Andean Pop is a *social movement*. Patrick remembered he decided to become a fan back in November of 2020 when Peru was going through a difficult political situation that polarized the country, and he was feeling demotivated. For that reason, when he ‘found’ MW in the recommended videos section of The Voice Peru in YouTube, he immediately became a fan. Patrick was fascinated by the mix, but also thought: *I need to listen to more of this...this culture that has been repressed for so long!* Similar as other fans, he believes that MW is trying to revalue the Andean culture and people. *Because ‘the Andean’ has always been looked down upon and there is a lot of discrimination,* he laments. Therefore, he believes that this *movement* (AP) can have an important impact, especially among young people who can lead a drastic change for good in society. Caro, Roberts, and Patrick illustrate popular music’s significance as a contested medium that “issues serious challenges to the hegemonic power” (Garofalo, cited in Bennett, 2000b, p.40). In the case of Peru, this power is represented by a society that claims to embrace diversity but where Andean people are discriminated. While talking about contestation can be problematic because popular music is inserted in the marketplace (Bennett, 2000b, p.35), AP is showing that for its fans it is a *movement* that channels a social struggle of *lo andino*. To explain this in more depth, fan’s perception of Andean-ness requires to be developed.

## Atemporal Andean-ness

The education scientist Anke van Dam and the anthropologist and philosopher Ton Salman (2003, p.15) distinguish three non-dated and non-consecutive moments of Andean-ness that are useful to analyze AP fans' "modes of acting and reflecting."

The first moment: when *lo andino* was considered something of the past, which caused that Andean-ness did not receive any attention as a distinctive characteristic and *lo mestizo* was the main image of national-state identity (Loaiza, cited in van Dam and Salman, 2003, p.16). MW and her fans have crossed this temporal boundary because AP was born and is growing in the contemporary musical scene of Lima. On top of that, MW centers *lo andino* instead of *lo mestizo* to talk about Peruvian roots and identity, which resonates with the broad audience of AP. This embracement of AP leads to the next point.

The second moment: when the awareness that *lo andino* is the present and the future rose and consequently it should be "wholeheartedly into the country's future project" (Yépez, Arze and Montoya, cited in van Dam and Salman, p.17). A noticeable change here is that Andean-ness is articulated as the essence of an ancestral culture; consequently, its 'otherness' comes in cultural terms and this difference raises the need to coexist (van Dam and Salman, 2003, p.17). In this regard, whereas fans do not necessarily identify themselves as Andean (like MW), they feel/think about *lo andino* as the heart of their cultures and not as 'the other'. Moreover, the MileWars are convinced that collective action is needed to end discrimination toward Andean people and culture. Talking about culture could be a complex task especially in countries like Peru where multiculturalism is celebrated as part of the national identity discourse. Therefore, I will be following the scholar Lawrence Grossberg (1996, p.88) who asserts that if multiculturalism is observed through the link between culture and identity, it leads to a discussion about the belonging of a culture to a specific group, which is not applicable for this study. Instead, Grossberg (1996, p.88) examines cultural studies as a "transformative practice" and "a singular becoming of a community" which resonates with the FCO and the meaning of *lo andino* for the fans. This argument takes us to the third moment of Andean-ness where the concept itself is questioned and more frontiers seem to fade.

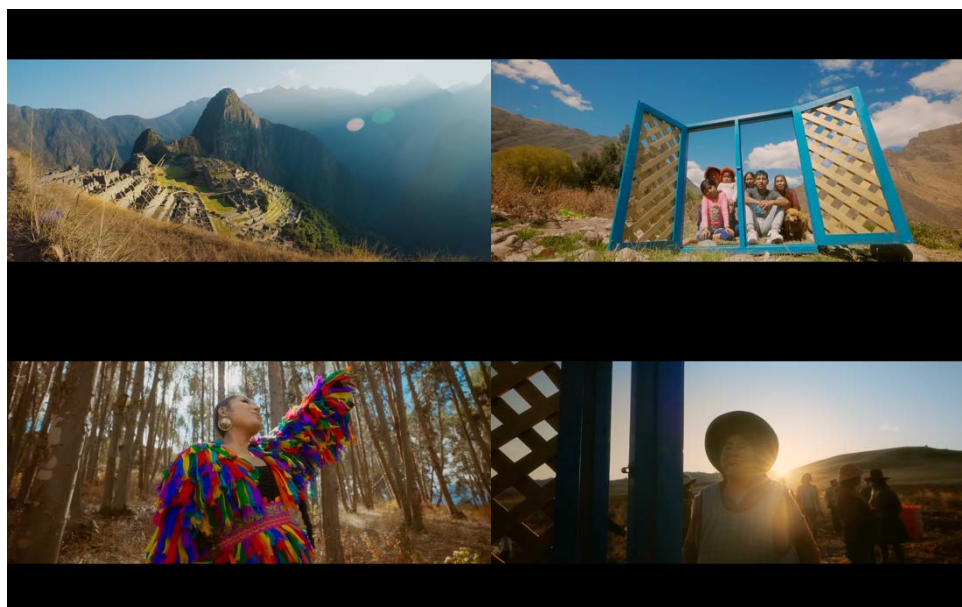
The third moment: when the idea of Andean-ness (identity and ethnicity) is understood as a social construct and authenticity loses ground in a globalized world (Van Dam and Salman, 2003, pp.29-30). Due to migration, *lo andino* has expanded beyond frontiers. Therefore, labels like dispersion, hybridity and de-territorialization become relevant and situate Andean-ness as a "political vehicle or a tourist attraction and ceases to be something of which people are made" (Van Dam and Salman, 2003, p.31). MW and the fans echo with this non-fixed

and fluid understanding of *lo andino* that is not limited to ‘native Andean people’ but anyone who is somehow attached to the Andes. Subsequently, AP could be understood as a “a marker for the young generations” (Ní Mhurchú, 2016, p.39) who differentiate themselves from the rest of a society that does not celebrate *lo andino* as their own. Since fans are (re)connecting with Andean-ness through AP music, it is pertinent to analyze their responses to the lyrics and videoclip of a song. *Maravilloso* (Wonderful), a tune inspired in Machu Picchu, the iconic site of the Inca Empire and one of the ‘new seven wonders of the world’.

## Wonderful, a journey to the Andes

Image 13

Scenes from the *Maravilloso* videoclip



Source: YouTube (July 17, 2022)

*This videoclip is pure magic!*

*I love it! Beautiful!*

*This is a great song!*

These are some of the fans’ spontaneous reactions to the videoclip as we were enjoying it together during the interviews. Such responses speak to the “emotive energy that audiences invest in musical texts” that informs the construction of meaning (Bennett, 2000a, p.425). The videoclip was released on July 17, 2022. By October 19, 2022, it had 1.7 million views and a lyrics-video in Spanish, Quechua, and English. It was recorded in the Andean region

of Cusco and shows different landscapes, including Machu Picchu, and MW in colorful customs (image 13). William, who could not resist singing and dancing along, was particularly excited when MW sings: *The blood that runs through my body, I carry it in the veins of memory. I have colors tattooed on my skin that I wear proudly without fear* and exclaimed: *this part is top!* He remembered taking part of the videoclip where fans danced to this song with MW in a public space (which is a common practice of the FCO). Here, William reminisced the choreography of the song and showed me how they extended their arms and touched their veins while dancing to the soft melody. This anecdote is part of the embodied experiences associated to the creation of meaning where one usually remembers the places, the people, and the activities we were doing while listening to a song (Murphey, 1989, p.190). Furthermore, William shared how sentimental he gets while watching this video because he has never been to the Highlands but would love to go and meet people, be in contact with nature and breath that pure air. *What it [Wonderful] transmits is very magical, the quality of the video is amazing*, he expressed. William, who was transported to the Andes while watching this video, presents himself as a ‘reflexive and creative agent whose process of meaning-making is subjective and inter-textual’ (Hennion, cited in Bennett, 2000a, p.425).

The sociocultural scholar Tim Murphey (1989, p.185) argues there is a similarity in the “identification-mirror-moulding principle” of pop music and advertisement because both are either explicit or vague enough to allow appropriation and personal interpretation. In that sense, whereas some people (like me) identify where the video was recorded, what seems to matter the most is how listeners “complete the message or make sense of the song” by relating it to their own context (Murphey, 1989, p.185). Namely, while talking about this videoclip, William liked that it shows smiling people from the Andes *being themselves* and mentioned that some of them migrated looking for a better future. Moreover, he believes it is important to feel pride of being from the Highlands, like his (great)great-grandparents. *I am from Lima, but I have Afro Peruvian, Coastal and Andean roots. We [Peruvians] are a combination of everything, that is why we are unique. I like to dance to caporales, festejo<sup>15</sup>, marinera, huayno! All my roots are connected. I love to feel and dance to Peruvian music!*, he adds. Here, William is exemplifying music as a bridge to cross cultural differences breaking barriers of ethnicity and claiming a borderless belonging within the nation-state (Clarke, DeNora and Vuoskoski, 2015, p.62; Ní Mhurchú, 2016, p.157). On top of that, through AP he is reminiscing personal memories from his kinship and connecting it with historical events such as internal migration.

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<sup>15</sup> Traditional festive Afro-Peruvian music

While this videoclip sparked William's imagination, empathy and memory, other fans like Patrick emphasized the social issues of *lo andino*. In: *I have colors tattooed on my skin that I wear proudly without fear*, he believes that MW is talking about the south of our country (mostly Andean regions). Patrick likes that the song talks about the importance of feeling pride of where one comes from because in Peru there is a lot of discrimination, and rich or white people feel superior. He adds: *my skin is not white, my skin is not dark. We should stop labeling ourselves, my skin is my skin, it is my body, my identity*. The reflections Patrick is making come from his own lived experiences. However, his thoughts are influenced by a song that has characteristics of an 'idealized community of people' (Clarke, DeNora and Vuoskoski, 2015, p.71) who embrace Andean-ness with pride. This seems to be very important for Patrick, who wishes that Peruvians see each other as part of the same community, the same family. He remembered that when he was doing a family tree for an assignment at school, he started looking at himself differently. He found out he has family in the north and the Jungle of Peru and reflects that if all Peruvians did the same exercise, we might respect each other and do not discriminate because it will be like discriminating someone from our family. To this regard, he adds it is young generations' task to put an end on racism by questioning what they have been taught by a generation who was raised with many prejudices. Then, the reflections made by William and Patrick bring to the fore the importance of looking at youth's choices, such as listening to AP, as an act to "reshape terms and meanings in the interest of self-distinction" (Fernandez-Kelly and Konczal, cited in Ní Mhurchú, 2016, p.161).



Given the above, AP meaning-making is a reflexive process constructed through the direct and indirect lived experiences of its fans. The interwoven relationship between the individual and the collective enables fan's critical views about their own familiar stories and society. In that sense, for its fans, AP means an empathic bridge towards Andean culture and people. Here, acquired sensibilities towards *lo andino* are fostered by MW and AP's lyrics and video-clips. Besides, the empirical data shows that AP represents an ideal community that highly values *lo andino* which resonates with fans' aspirations. In that line, by engaging with AP fans are exercising their agency to differentiate themselves from other citizens who do not question the social position of *lo andino*. Likewise, young fans take responsibility for their role as active social agents and are willing to challenge dominant dynamics that are not aligned with their political values. This last point shows that AP also means for them a personal and communal revolution.

## Warmisitay

*This music [Warmisitay] makes Andean women feel gorgeous...I think that maybe they do not feel valued due to discrimination, because of their clothes. But being shown like this, as they truly are, is beautiful,* shared Kiara after we watched our favorite videoclip together (interview August 20, 2022).

All fans shared a pleasant feeling of surprise to see Andean girls ‘being happy, being themselves.’ Why is this so unexpected? Because since the 1970s Peruvian TV comedy shows have portrayed migrant Andean women through negative stereotypes of their physical appearance and intellectual skills. Most female Andean characters in media lacked ‘beauty’, self-care, hygiene habits, and good manners. Besides, they had low education levels and low ability to comprehend basic information (Alarcón, 2015, pp.19-25). Such parodies were strongly criticized by civil society and some shows have been canceled after being on air for decades. However, as Alarcón (2015, pp.10-11) explains, those representations have contributed to prejudices and discrimination. Furthermore, as Bruce (2007, p.68) asserts, the ‘aesthetic judgment’ is a category of social differentiation in Peru where beauty is valued by Eurocentric patterns and Andean features do not ‘fit’. Against this reality, is understandable why fans celebrate *Warmisitay* (Quechua word for ‘little - young - woman’), a song that MW wrote for her grandmother and as a tribute to Andean women (Warthon Records, 2022).

Hence, this section zooms in the social meaning of *Warmisitay*. The aim is to show a concrete example of AP music as a language (Hall, 2013, p.19) that challenges stereotyped representations of Andean women and meets the fans’ posture toward beauty which does not follow Western beauty standards.

### **The beauty of Andean girls**

*Warmisitay shows us different types of beauty of the girls of that region*

*I love that is a REAL video that shows that Andean girls are beautiful, is not about ‘models’*

*When she [MW] sings “Queen of the Andes” it kills me! it is an allusion to feminine Andean beauty*

These were some of the answers of the fans when I asked what they like most about the videoclip. Fans’ positive reactions draw a line between their and Peru’s general perception of beauty. The psychoanalyst Jorge Bruce (2007, pp.67-68) argues that Peruvian mass media has played a vital role in the dissemination of a racist ideology linked to physical appearance. For instance, he notes the predominance of female models with Nordic looks (white skin, tall, blonde, and light-colored eyes) in advertising which alienates most of the population. Back

in 1993, the sociologist Gonzalo Portocarrero (cited in Bruce, 2007, pp.68-69) explained that typical features of the *cholo/a* such as copper skin tone, medium height, straight black hair, and thick lips have little prestige. On the contrary, white skin, tall height, light hair, and thin lips are more valued. Whereas some changes may have occurred in the past three decades, *Peru is far from having decolonized its imaginary* (Portocarrero, cited in Bruce, 2007, p.11). The feminist philosophy scholar, Stephanie Rivera Berruz (2020, p.240) explains that the racist/colonialist logic has caused nonwhite bodies to depend on the vision of white bodies “for its history, self-construction, and social perception.” Hence, images of Andean girls enjoying themselves, wearing their *polleras* (skirts), running happily and dancing with MW to the festive rhythms of *Warmisitay* (image 14) draw attention. Namely, by November 3, 2022, the video had close to 5 million views on YouTube.

#### Image 14

Scenes from the *Warmisitay* videoclip



Source: YouTube (May 29, 2022)

Flavia thinks *Warmisitay* carries an empowerment message for women who might be struggling to accept themselves because they do not fit into beauty standards. In the same line, Patrick highlights that girls look very natural wearing their everyday clothes (e.g., *pollera*) and likes the video because it *shows the diversity of physical and facial features, skin tones and hairstyles like braids*. Through their comments, fans demonstrate that what they value the most is the naturalness and diversity that challenges Western beauty canons. However, elements that Patrick

highlighted such as braids and *polleras* were part of the denigrating characterizations of Andean women in media, which has reinforced a directionality [of prejudices] toward them (Alarcón, 2015, p.21). Therefore, the role of media needs to be problematized.

The psychologist and market researcher Rolando Arellano (cited in Bruce, 2007, p.71) questions the ‘aspirational factor’ that Peruvian publicists have used for decades to justify the overwhelming presence of ‘white successful people’ in advertising. By contrast, nonwhite people are usually part of ads about the state’s social programs or play housewives’ roles. Here, Arellano (cited in Bruce, 2007, p.72) notes that the limited and non-relatable media representation excludes most of the population just as it happens in other areas of our social pact. Namely, the 88% of Peruvians who identified themselves as nonwhite<sup>16</sup>. To this regard, Manrique (cited in Bruce, 2007, p.33) explains that Peruvians (both the ones who discriminate and the discriminated against) have internalized a racist discourse where indigenous and women are in the lowest ‘imaginary scale’. The feminist philosopher Maria Lugones (cited in Rivera Berruz, 2020, p.241) qualifies internalized racism as harmful to the creation of positive horizontal relationships in a community. In the case of AP fans, despite their inevitable exposure to “racist environments from which none of us are immune” (Rivera Berruz, 2020, p.241), their perception of beauty appears not racialized. Contrarily, they have found in *Warmisitay*, a representation of Andean women that they can celebrate. By genuinely admiring the *Warmisitay* video because is *real* and shows *different types of beauty*, AP fans present themselves as social actors who have deconstructed the racist imaginary of how a beautiful woman in Peru is supposed to ‘look like’. Hence, despite being inserted in the music industry that favors Eurocentric beauty, *Warmisitay* is meaningful for the fans and consequently for this research.

The sociologist and cultural theorist Stuart Hall (2013, pp.15-19) explains that representation is key in the production and exchange of meaning between people who share a culture. In that sense, music, as a complex language of sounds, words, and images helps us make sense of our context. Hall’s constructivist approach to meaning (2013, p.25) recognizes that “things don’t mean: we construct meaning, using representational systems” and differentiates a material and a symbolic world. Following Hall, I argue that AP music is challenging the symbolic practices, in this case, the stereotypes, that have been conveying the message of Andean women as ‘not beautiful’ or ‘less beautiful’ than white women. Furthermore, fans openly talk about discrimination and question dominant beauty standards that exclude most

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<sup>16</sup> Mestizo/a, Andean, Black or Asian



of the population, especially Andean women. With their reflections, fans illustrate that ‘consciousness, and awareness can guide people to confront the ideas transmitted by their culture’ (Anzaldúa, cited in Rivera Berruz, 2020, p.245), in this case, internalized racism.



Given the above, *Warmisitay* shows that MW’s work is contesting colonial representations of Andean females in Peru. By challenging longstanding stereotypes disseminated by the traditional press, AP as a language is contributing to non-racist perceptions of beauty that resonate with the imaginary of the fans. Besides, MW’s representation work of Andean women is significant for the fans because is part of their claims to put an end to discrimination and to revalue *lo andino*.

## From the Andes to the world 🌍

*I've never been to the USA, but my face has appeared very big in Times Square!!!*, declared a happy MW in a Peruvian late-night TV show where she was presented as 'the great Milena'. *Wow! Bravo! Product of exportation!* were some of the reactions of the hosts of the show (fieldnotes August 18, 2022).

Earlier that day, the FCO WhatsApp group was very active because a shared joy had surpassed our phone screens. The reason was the photo of a massive bright billboard of MW on the iconic streets of Times Square in New York. On the top of the sign: the logo of Spotify and Milena Warthon's name. At the bottom: the word Equal between two lines (=). Next to the image, the following message was shared by one Fanclub leader: *Family 🧡 how far we have come, all thanks to you 🥰 Is there a fan or acquaintance who can record themselves there? 🥺❤️*. Many of us reacted immediately to the message using different emojis: 🤯🥺🥺❤️. Surprise, excitement, and pride were the most common emotions shared in the group since all of us (the FCO) felt part of this milestone for MW and AP. Thus, this event shows that, more than other cultural forms, music as a direct experience can both articulate and make groups of people feel valued and proud (Frith, 2007, p.264). Furthermore, it speaks about the recognition of *lo andino* through AP while embracing it as an 'attractive attribute for the international market that resonates with the nation-brand discourse promoted by the Peruvian State since the 1990s' (Silverman, 2015, pp.132-133).

Hence, this chapter analyzes the internationalization of AP music in a dialogue with the globalization of *lo andino* (Ypeij, 2013; Tucker, 2010) and the country brand and builds on concepts like pride (Chakrabarti, 1992) and recognition (Fraser, 2000; Taylor, 1994) including a decolonial perspective (Coulthard, 2014). The aim is to explain and contextualize the reasons behind the reactions to this event while showing what crossing borders means for Peruvians and what fans feel and think about 'being Peruvian'.

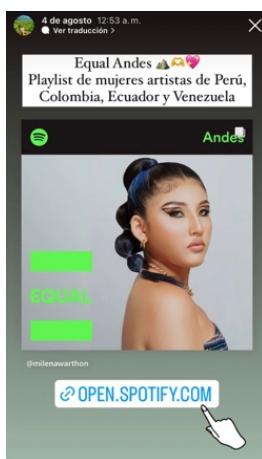
### Andean Pop fans' critical Peruvian pride

The philosopher Arindam Chakrabarti (1992, p.38) explains that pride can be ambivalent since it fluctuates between honor, dignity, and self-respect as well as vanity, arrogance, and self-praise. Nonetheless, he asserts that collective pride can take commendable forms like "patriotism, commitment to one's club or community [and] rootedness in one's culture" (Chakrabarti, 1992, p.38). *Proud of you 🥰🇵🇪🇵🇪; Go conquest the world! ✨ and Let's go Perú 🇵🇪❤️*

were some of the comments on the Instagram’s post (August 4, 2022) MW had previously shared that we (family) were the cover of the ‘Equal Andes’ playlist on Spotify. Milena explained that the playlist was an effort to make visible the work of female artists from Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela. I liked (♥) and shared the post on Instagram and added the link of the playlist because I wanted others to listen to it (image 15). Our reactions (other fans and mine) illustrate Frith’s assertion (2007, p.267) “popular music is something possessed” and Chakrabarti’s explanation (1992, p.37) of pride as something that is never individual because ‘the proud person’ wants to ascribe pride to others. Considering that AP is present in fans’ daily lives, it is not surprise that seeing MW representing Peru in a global platform like Spotify made us feel proud. Besides it awoke the need to share the good news publicly so that others (Peruvians or not) joined us in the emotion that was not limited to fans but all Peruvians.



### Image 15

Screenshot of a story



Source: Author’s Instagram (August 4, 2022)

Hume (cited in Chakrabarti, 1992, pp.36-37) explains pride as an effect of five conditions, which I will be using to analyze fans’ reactions to this event. First, the closeness between ‘the object of appreciation’, in this case Milena, and the fans. Here it is important to mention that this closeness is nurtured through offline and online interactions where language plays an important role. For instance, the fact that MW always talks in plural (we) and express her gratitude to the fans for every achievement in her musical career. Second, the fact that fans consider MW/AP exceptional, unique, and distinctive. As exemplified by Roberts, whose first reaction when he listened to MW was: *that voice...wow, how cool...wow. I have never heard a*

*voice like hers in Peru...I was absolutely impressed by her. I went mad/crazy and started to listen to all her songs.* Third, the constant presence of AP/MW. Here, I underline the role of the leaders and the most active fans on the FCO who are constantly sharing content about MW in the WA group and other FCO social media pages. Similarly, MW is constantly sharing content on her TikTok and Instagram accounts. Through *stories* about her common activities (e.g., getting ready at home); *posts* with her upcoming shows, new songs, dance challenges; or *reposts* of fans' content, MW has a steady online presence. Fourth, the fact that others also recognize AP as something peculiar. To this regard, the FCO's description on Facebook becomes pertinent: *Captivated by her talent and sweet voice we created the Official Fanclub  Tell us if you are feeling the same way and join this beautiful family #MileWars !* This text vividly captures and grounds the membership to the FCO in terms of a shared feeling. Lastly, the fifth condition: the general acceptance in Peru of MW's valuable attribute. As fieldwork has evidenced, AP is appreciated because MW represents our (Andean) identity, culture, and roots in public national and recently international spheres. To contextualize why is representation abroad significant for Peruvians, I will make a brief reference to our country brand.

The creation of the state agency PromPerú<sup>17</sup> in 1993 had the purpose to reinsert the country in the global market to boost investments, exports, and tourism (Boza, cited in Silverman, 2015, p.132). With this on mind, as the anthropologist and archaeologist Helaine Silverman (2015, pp.132-140) narrates, campaigns were launched with a script that initially reinforced the ancestral heritage of the 'Land of the Incas' and Machu Picchu as the incarnation of our history and Andean traditions. However, in 2011 'brand Peru' was launched with a new country logo through an ambitious campaign for the international and domestic market which included elements of our popular culture. This time, the discourse was focused on Peru's multifaceted and captivating nature. The objective was to "generate a strong sense of identification" and pride among Peruvians to promote that people support PromPerú's goals (Silverman, 2015, p.141). On the one hand, the campaign succeeded in performing and developing Peruvian pride. This time not only through our cultural patrimony but also contemporary diverse popular culture such as cuisine, music, dance, handicrafts and the presence of Highland, *Creole*, Afro-Peruvian and Coastal people. On the other hand, this 'imagined community' where people and products were wearing Peru's brand logo and 'being Peruvian became popular' is just a mere valorization of popular culture that is not sufficient "if other promises are not kept" (Silverman, 2015, p.146). What promises could Silverman be talking

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<sup>17</sup> Commission for the Promotion of Peru for Exports and Tourism

about? The anthropologist Annelou Ypeij (2013, p.78) provides some guidance. She explains that in the context of international tourism *lo andino* as an ethnic identity has become a cultural and economic capital. Thus, Ypeij (2013, p.78) questions how Andean people (migrants and not migrants, Spanish and Quechua speakers) are involved in the country brand. Is it only a commercial project far from their daily lives? Or does it have a potential to be meaningful for Andean self-esteem? From a similar critical stand, the MileWars reflected about Peruvian pride.

While all fans were emphatic in saying they feel very proud of being Peruvian, they also have a clear idea of what aspects we should change. For instance, fans have raised the issue of discrimination against Andean people. As shown in the previous chapter, *Warmisitay* is an example of how MW's work is partially addressing this demand. Nonetheless, the MileWars discuss other national issues and reflect on Peruvianess.

Kiara, a 19-year-old fan and FCO leader from Arequipa, describes 'being Peruvian' as being proud of our roots and cultures. *Feeling Peruvian is feeling 'chola' without feeling shame of where we come from!* What Kiara likes the most about being Peruvian is that we are very united, meaning that we always bring our colors (our flag: red and white) wherever we go. Kiara also reflected about what we should change and stated that, besides corruption which *has always been there*, we should not feel shame. *A lot of us (Peruvians) are very focused in learning English, but what about Quechua? Where is our Peruvianess?*, she emphasized. Here, Kiara is stating that some aspects of Peruvianess are not a source of pride, on the contrary they are perceived as shameful. Namely, Quechua, our precolonial language, that is the mother tongue of close to 4 million of the 33 million Peruvians. A 13,9% of the population who live primarily in central and south Andean regions and in the districts of Lima where migrants from the Andes settle down (Andrade Ciudad, 2019, pp.53-58; INEI, 2018, p.198). Hence, the union that Kiara mentioned as a positive quality seems to be apparent because, as she clarified later, it does not include everyone.

For Roberts *feeling Peruvian is something unique* and the best we have is our culture, which foreigners value and that fills him with pride. Nonetheless, as opposite of Kiara, he thinks that we need more union. *We fight too much. I think we have passion (for what is ours), but we are missing union.*

Ale thinks that being Peruvian is to respect our cultures and traditions. She likes that we are hardworking and constantly solving problems. However, she laments that Peruvian society is *machista* (sexist).

Despite their unconditional love for Peru, Kiara, Roberts, and Ale raised issues such as the deeply rooted corruption and the lack of equality and recognition of our indigenous language and women in Peruvian society. Furthermore, it is noticeable that some aspects that generate pride or the opposite about Peru resonate not only with the country brand narrative but the rest of the population. A recent national survey (Ipsos Perú, 2022, pp.4-5) showed that gastronomy (45%), art and culture (38%) and biodiversity/natural resources (31%), Machu Picchu (28%) and landscapes (26%) are the first five reasons why Peruvians feel pride. By contrast, corruption (65%), delinquency (44%), injustice (34%), violence against women (31%) and discrimination (24%) were reasons to feel shame of. Nonetheless, the embracement of attributes that are source of pride does not distract the MileWars from observing reality beyond their own privileges. As exemplified by Kiara, who equates ‘being Peruvian’ with ‘being *chola*.’ Such statement is no small matter because it shows the positive resignification of a word that was and is still used to discriminate. The anthropologist Annelou Ypeij (2013, p.78) explains that some young people from Lima feel connected to the Andes because of their mixed familiar origins but are also developing cosmopolitan identities. As a result, they embrace the *cholificación* (process of becoming *cholo*) as a cultural fusion between the urban, the Andean and the global. Ypeij (2013, p.79) adds that this young generations are part of a new identity beyond ethnic and class categories and are the ones taking a step toward the end of ethnic inequality and discrimination at a microlevel.

## Andean recognition beyond the Andes

### Image 16

Milena Warthon’s post



Source: MW’s Instagram (August 18, 2022)

*Congratulations Milena, you will be not only in the cover. THIS YEAR YOU WILL GET INTERNATIONALIZED. I know you will reach the whole world to bring our Andean music. TQM<sup>18</sup>*  
(I love you so much) 🍌🍌🍌🍌🍌❤❤❤❤❤

*Queen of the Andes* 😍

These were some of the enthusiastic comments left on MW's Instagram post (image 16) where she shared this big accomplishment and thousands of people reacted through likes and replies. The globalization of the Andean is not a new phenomenon. There are various examples of it in the touristic, musical and gastronomy sectors where local and globalized elements coexist and show that *lo andino* is open to redefinitions, reinterpretations, and cultural creativity (Ypeij, 2013, p.77). As narrated at the beginning of this study, *lo andino* has been historically forced to assimilate first to 'the Western Spanish', then to 'the creole Lima' and finally to 'the global modern Lima'. In this latter moment is where young artists like MW are reinterpreting Andean-ness through music borrowing elements from the pop industry. Whereas MW has defined AP as part of her identity journey, building on the ethnomusicologist Joshua Tucker (2010, p.562), AP could also be an attempt to foster alliances, capture new markets and audiences. However, besides the dynamics of a global competitive market, the internationalization of AP was celebrated by fans and non-fans who found this event meaningful. In her Instagram's post (August 18, 2022), MW wrote the following message:

*ANDEAN POP HAS ARRIVED IN NEW YORK* 🇺🇸❤❤❤❤❤🌞

*Thank you @spotifycolombia for the opportunity to represent the entrepreneur woman artist, the Peruvian woman and the Andean woman in this beautiful initiative #EqualAndes* ❤🌸🦋

*Every time one of us is on this cover, it's an achievement for all* 🏰👍

*Thanks to all the Warmisitas (Quechua word for 'little (young) woman') who have influenced my life, my art, for being my inspiration and driving force* ❤🌸🌞

*I want to finish emphasizing that every achievement of mine is also yours, my beautiful community.*

*Thanks to life for the luck of being part of this WONDERFULLL* ❤🌞❤ culture 🌈

*Kausachun* (Quechua word that is used to exalt something/someone. It could be translated as: long live!<sup>19</sup>) *to all my Andes* ✨

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<sup>18</sup> TQM stands for "te quiero mucho" in Spanish

<sup>19</sup> My mother, who speaks some Quechua, helped me translate this expression

MW finished the message thanking a global distributor of music for making this possible. In her text, MW expressed her gratitude to her network in the global music industry, the important women (*Warmisitas*<sup>20</sup>) of her life and her Andean community, which she mentioned broadly and not limited to Peru. In few minutes, thousands of people reacted liking and leaving comments celebrating this event on MW's post. This deep excitement speaks to what Tucker (2010, p.557) describes as a collective subjectivity which emerges first through daily interactions of "...citizens who mutually recognize one another as objects of public discourse" and second through a common culture. In this case, it could be said that Peruvians (fans or not and with Andean background or not) celebrated MW's presence in Times Square because of a collective feeling that recognizes that Peru's culture is deeply Andean, and worth being seen by the world. Why 'being seen' matters and how does this relate to pride?

Reyna loves that Milena says: *I sing with pride*. For her, this means: *we exist!* because *some foreigners think we [Peruvians] are bad and some of them do not know we exist!* I have seen this on TikTok, she adds.

Patrick remembered a moment where all the eyes were in Peru. He narrates that when we get to see the need to feel pride about 'being Peruvian' when the national soccer team plays. *For instance, in the last World cup [that took place in Russia] we won the "Fifa fan award" and all the reactions were: wow that is my country! We did it!* Here, Patrick made a pause and reflected: *Why can we dream about a country with less inequality?*

Fans like Reyna and Patrick illustrate that being recognized by foreigners reaffirms Peruvians pride, sometimes as a vindication to show that not everything is negative and positive things, like AP music, are going on in Peru. And other times as an ephemeral feeling that nurtures pride at a macro level but no critical reflections about the country we would like to (re)built are made. On top of this, what both describe speaks about Hegel's assertion (cited in Coulthard, 2014, p.28) that self-consciousness only exists when we are acknowledged by others.

Another view is brought by Flavia, who shows that pride can also be developed, and popular music can be a means to grow it. *If you would have asked the 9-, 10-or 12-years old Flavia if she felt pride about being Peruvian, I would have say 'not so much', but now I feel VERY proud because I have connected with more Peruvian artists*, she said. Flavia explained that when she was an adolescent she wanted to grow and move out from Peru to live in another country, but that changed with time. Now she believes that despite all the difficulties (mostly political), nice and beautiful things can be expressed and admired, especially by foreigners. *Maybe in Holland*

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<sup>20</sup> After the release of the *Warmisitas* song, MW started referring to females as *Warmisitas*



*you have already heard that people think that Peru is very beautiful, they love our food and want to come to Machu Picchu*, she told me. At the beginning of our conversation, I shared with Flavia that I found out about MW's music when I was living in the Netherlands. At some point, she sounded very pensive and said: *At present I still have the hope to experience living abroad, but I am sure that living in another country will increase my "Peruvianess" and I will listen to our music...like you! because it is part of you!*. Similar as Reyna and Patrick, Flavia shows that recognition and admiration by foreigners adds to the feeling of Peruvianess.

The philosopher Charles Taylor (1994, p.25) explains that recognition is a vital human need because its absence (non-recognition) or distortion (misrecognition) causes harm, oppression and a "reduced mode of being." As a product of colonization, misrecognition can be observed in the projection of the colonized people as inferior or uncivilized (Taylor, 1994, p.26). Therefore, recognition is also a debt. In the context of this study, this debt is with people from the Andes and their cultural expressions, which are partially addressed through popular music, like AP. Musical fusions have been able to bring 'two worlds' (the Western/Spanish and the Andean) together and AP fans seem to embrace it as a vindication of *lo andino*. Nonetheless, as shown in this research, this vindication remains in the discursive sphere and in the subjectivity of the fans and the Fanclub.

A decolonial critique is brought by the scholar of indigenous studies Glen Sean Coulthard (2014, pp.25-26) who claims that the politics of recognition - as Taylor describes it - works for the interests of colonial power. Following Hegel, Coulthard (pp.28-29) argues that recognition needs to move beyond domination patterns and needs to be mutual to set the conditions for freedom. On the contrary, by talking about the traditional "politics of recognition" the discussion is limited to policies where the state mediates relations of recognition through, namely, multiculturalism trends. This latter resonates with the country brand Peru as a project of the Peruvian state. However, the further demand that Taylor (1994, p.64) poses in terms of recognition is that "...we all recognize the equal value of different cultures; that we not only let them survive but acknowledge their worth." Like AP fans, who value and celebrate Andean-ness, which is itself a contestation of the colonial narrative that projected and dominated *lo andino* as inferior. In such way, young hybrid generations, as Ypeij (2013, p.79) mentions, might be contributing to social transformations in their immediate circles through their engagement with AP. A next challenge in recognition following the anticolonial path would be the self-affirmation and empowerment of the 'colonized' to escape from the liberal political tendency that produce 'colonial subjects' (Fanon, cited in Coulthard, 2014, p.26).

The feminist philosopher Nancy Fraser (2000, p.110) contributes to this discussion and proposes to rethink (mis)recognition closely interwoven with institutionalized distributive justice. For instance, if misrecognition is about cultural depreciation, the focus should not be in addressing ‘demeaning representations’ but in the social grounds of this injustice. In other words, Fraser (2000, p.110) is suggesting moving from “free-floating discourses” to “institutionalized significations and norms”. In this same line, recognition should not be equated to identity politics because under this approach, cultural and economic injustices’ links are misunderstood. Namely, contemporary ‘culturalist’ theorists assert that maldistribution is a consequence of misrecognition, meaning “an expression of cultural hierarchies” (Fraser, 2000, p.111). The risk of this equivalence is that no politics of redistribution are considered because of the belief that by revaluing devalued identities, economic inequalities will be addressed, which is misleading. All societies have been pervaded by marketization and the market itself follows its own patterns in a global context that is not subordinated nor limited by culture. From this point, Fraser’s concern (2000, p.109) to redirect struggles for recognition to aid politics of redistribution seems urgent to avoid reproducing power and wealth inequalities and to promote cooperation to achieve this. Furthermore, it allows to rethink recognition not as ‘group-specific identities’ but as “the status of individual group members as full partners in social interaction” (Fraser, 2000, p.113).

Whereas Fraser’s approach (2000) goes beyond the scope of this research, it resonates with the historically subordinated status of *lo andino* described at the beginning of this thesis and is useful to analyze the internationalization of AP. For example, the presence of AP in global platforms is meaningful for the fans and other Peruvians. Yet, it still limited to the discursive realm of recognition of *lo andino*. Moreover, this specific understanding of *lo andino* is attractive for a market where no discussions of economic injustice take place. Hence, Fraser’s work (2000) is useful to acknowledge the limitations of AP music as an arena of struggle of recognition but also to imagine its potential at a macrolevel and its linkages with policy.



Given the above, Andean Pop music was created and is being disseminated in a particular globalized context that facilitates the commercial circulation of popular music. At the local level, AP music is appealing because it resonates with the national brand discourse of Peru, which has eased its recent but growing visibility in the music scene and press. Furthermore, mass media (both traditional and digital) contributes to the presence of AP in the daily lives of young generations. At the global level, AP is associated to a specific style of *lo andino* that

includes both traditional and commercial elements which is both complex and ambiguous. Nonetheless, its visibility in international platforms like Spotify or cities like New York is meaningful for the fans and Peruvians in general. By awakening a national pride rooted in *lo andino* boundaries of what is expected to be valued fade. What is more, the recognition of their Andean and *cholo* roots invites AP fans to a critical exercise of social dynamics at an individual and collective level. In other words, by looking/feeling themselves through AP music, they look/feel Peru and its position in the world differently.

## Final notes

To conclude I will bring the research questions that guided this thesis, starting with: How do urban young fans make sense of Andean Pop music in their contexts, and how does this respond to or inform their understanding of *lo andino* (Andean-ness)? Building on the fans' voices, this research has shown that youth make sense of AP music from a plural and critical standpoint in their individual and collective realms. Celebrating *lo andino* through music moves fans emotionally and situates AP as a source of leisure, reflection, and contestation. The festive rhythms, positive lyrics, captivating landscapes, and strong social media presence facilitate that young people make Andean-ness part of their daily lives. However, fans go beyond leisure and purposefully engage with AP because it resonates with their political values and a demand for recognition of *lo andino*, especially Andean people. From this critical view of their contexts, fans are embracing AP with pride and position themselves as reflexive social actors. Furthermore, fans are building interpersonal relationships with other fans and MW through their belonging and involvement as 'fan family' (FCO) members. On the one hand, fans have found in MW a peer who they admire and support because she is proudly embracing her Andean roots through AP and is representing *lo andino* on national and international platforms. On the other hand, through online and offline environments fans nurture and maintain fulfilling relationships that strengthen the emotional connection of the FCO.

Nonetheless, AP responds to and informs a broad non-fixed understanding of Andean-ness (see Zoomers and Salman, 2003) that fits into the fans' hybrid identities as both local and global citizens and the music industry. Besides, in the case of Peru, AP relates to a sense of Peruvianess that is familiar to the fans because it resonates with the country's brand narrative that has been highly promoted by the state for the past decade for commercial purposes. In that sense, the recognition of *lo andino* in the context of AP could be problematized from a decolonial perspective. As previously mentioned, AP is meaningful for the fans and citizens from Andean countries because it centers *lo andino* as the most valuable attribute while contesting a *mestiza* (mixed) national identity. Through MW's work, colonial perceptions of Andean people as 'backward' or 'the other', and Andean women as 'not beautiful' are contested. However, there is a risk of contributing to the utilization of Andean identity, as part of a long-standing national discourse promoted by the Peruvian state, that overlooks native Andean people (see Ypeij, 2013). Nonetheless, through their sonic and emotional AP journey, fans who participated in this research from Peru and Argentina are crossing geographical, temporal, and social boundaries inherited from past generations. Thus, they are

contesting society's norms that shaped them (see Honwana and De Boeck, 2005). What is more, they do not seem to see/feel boundaries between them and *lo andino*. They celebrate Andean-ness as part of themselves and their countries from a place of pride and social demand for justice. Hence, the meaning of AP as MW's work is complex to define because it is local and global, Peruvian and Latin American, individual and collective, traditional and modern, accepted and criticized, celebration and contestation, part of the music market and identified with a marginalized identity. As ambiguous as it sounds, fans think/feel AP is powerful. Like Patrick expressed: *I think that for us (the fans and people that just heard about her) Milena Warthon is the voice of a generation that is tired of prejudices...In the future I think she will continue capturing international attention (like she is already doing). That is why I think, we [Peruvians] should support her because it's been a long time since I've seen an artist who has this impact and carries a struggle behind her* (interview, July 26, 2022).

As I am finishing this research paper, I would like to share an afterthought. MW's career has recently taken off to other countries like Bolivia (image 17) where Andean music is widely heard by young people. Last October 8, MW released the videoclip of a song recorded with a band of young Bolivians who play Andean music. The YouTube video ([click here to watch it](#)) soon reached 1 million views and was trending in Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina, and Chile. Some people left comments like: *How beautiful that a Peruvian shows the magnificence of the sister culture of Bolivia 🇧🇴. This makes me feel more proud to be Peruvian and to be represented by Milena Warthon 🇵🇪❤️ Congratulations Milena and Chilas!!!* Therefore, it would be interesting to see how the trinomial MW – AP - FCO evolves across time and how this impacts the meaning of *lo andino* for young fans from different countries. After all, it seems like AP is a bridge that is bringing together a broad Andean community.

### Image 17

Screenshot of a video



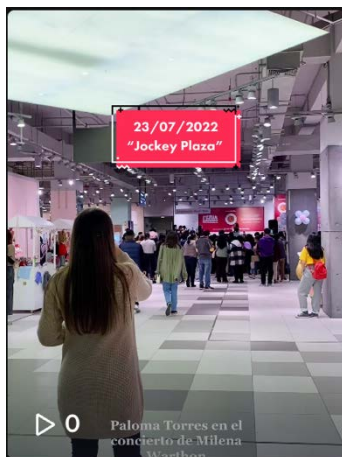
Source: MW's TikTok (September 1, 2022)

## Annexes

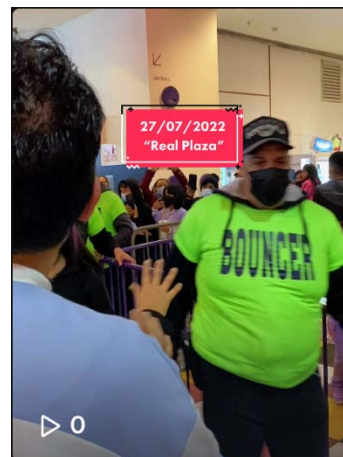
### Annex A: Concerts attended *(click on the images to watch the TikTok videos 📺)*

Date	Place	District <sup>21</sup>	Entrance	My role
July 23, 2022	“Jockey Plaza” Mall	Santiago de Surco	Free	Observer
July 27, 2022	“Real Plaza” Mall	Villa María del Triunfo	Free	Fan
July 29, 2022	“Circuito Mágico del Agua”	Center of Lima	Ticket to the park (4 soles <sup>22</sup> = 1 €)	Observer
August 20, 2022	“Yield Rock Bar”	Center of Lima	Ticket to the concert (59 soles = 15 €)	Fan

“Jockey Plaza” concert



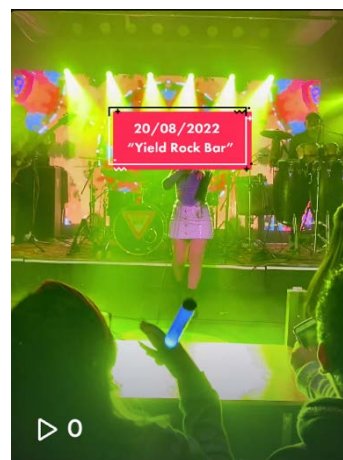
“Real Plaza” concert



“Circuito Mágico del Agua” concert



“Yield Rock Bar” concert



<sup>21</sup> The city of Lima is divided into 43 districts

<sup>22</sup> Official currency of Peru. Referential exchange rate to euros

**Annex B: List of fans who participated (*in the order I interviewed them*)**

Date	Name	Age	Some details
July 21, 2022	Carolina (she/her)	19	World leader of the FCO. Caro was born and lives in the city of Jujuy in the north of Argentina. Her parents are also from Jujuy. The interview was virtual.
July 25, 2022	Reyna (she/her)	17	FCO leader of Lima. Reyna was born and lives in the city of Lima. Her parents are from Ucayali (Jungle region of Peru). The interview was virtual. We met in person at the concerts of July 27 and August 20.
July 26, 2022	Patrick (he/his)	18	Member of the FCO. Patrick was born and lives in the city of Lima. His parents are from Lima and Lambayeque (Coastal region of Peru). The interview was virtual. We met in person at the concert of July 23.
July 26, 2022	William (he/his)	19	Member of the FCO at the time of the interview. Currently a leader of Lima. William was born and lives in the city of Lima. His parents are from a province of Lima and Lambayeque (Coastal region of Peru). The interview was virtual. We met in person at the concert of July 27.
August 2, 2022	Alejandra (she/her)	16	FCO leader of Lima. Ale was born and lives in Lima, Peru. Her parents are from Lima. Her grandparents are from Andean regions of Peru. The interview was virtual. We met in person at the concerts of July 27 and August 20.
August 2, 2022	Jhordan (he/his)	19	President of the FCO. Jhordan was born and lives in Ancash (Coastal-Andean region of Peru). His parents are also from Ancash. The interview was virtual.
August 4, 2022	Roberts (he/his)	29	Member of the FCO. Roberts was born and lives in the city of Lima. His parents are from Ayacucho (Andean region) and Cajamarca (Andean-Jungle region). The interview was in person in a mall. We met again at the concert of August 20.
August 7, 2022	Flavia (she/her)	19	Member of the FCO. Flavia was born and lives in the city of Lima. Her parents are from Lima. Her grandmother is from Ancash (Coastal-Andean region of Peru). The interview was virtual.
August 10, 2022	Ninoska (she/her)	26	Member of the FCO. Nina was born and lives in the city of Lima. Her parents and grandparents are from Junín (Andean-Jungle region of Peru). The interview was virtual. Via the WhatsApp group she guided me to find the stage of the concert of July 29.
August 20, 2022	Kiara (she/her)	19	FCO leader of Arequipa. Kiara was born in the city of Lima and lives in Arequipa (Coastal-Andean region of Peru) since 2018. The interview was virtual.

## Annex C: Consent form (*in Spanish*)

International Institute of Social Studies (ISS), La Haya, Países Bajos  
Maestría en Estudios del Desarrollo (MA in Development Studies) 2021-2022

### Trabajo de investigación sobre jóvenes aficionados (fans) a la música "Pop Andino" de Milena Warthon de Perú

Estudiante: Militza Martínez Meneses

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#### CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

Lugar: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

El objetivo de esta investigación es conocer la relación entre la música "Pop Andino" de la cantante Milena Warthon y las/los jóvenes que la escuchan. Esta investigación es parte de la Maestría en Estudios de Desarrollo del International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) ubicado en la ciudad de la Haya de los Países Bajos. Para la investigación realizaré entrevistas virtuales o presenciales de aproximadamente 1 hora de duración a fans del "Pop Andino".

#### Confidencialidad

La identidad de los/las participantes se incluirá en las transcripciones de la entrevista y en el análisis sólo si ellos/ellas lo permiten. De lo contrario, se tratará la información de manera anónima.

#### Compensación económica

Ninguna.

#### Participación voluntaria

La participación en esta investigación es completamente voluntaria.

Yo, (nombre completo), de nacionalidad (completar), identificado/a con (documento de identidad) acepto participar en la entrevista.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma del/de la entrevistado/a

Yo, **Militza Martínez Meneses**, de nacionalidad Peruana, identificada con DNI [REDACTED], y estudiante de la Maestría en Estudios del Desarrollo en ISS, certifico que esta información sólo será utilizada con fines académicos.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma de la estudiante

Si tiene alguna duda antes o después de participar en la entrevista, por favor no dude en comunicarse conmigo al número [REDACTED] o al correo electrónico [REDACTED] ¡Muchas gracias!



## Annex D: Interview guide (*estimated time: 60 minutes*)<sup>23</sup>

- **Building momentum:** Brief introduction about myself. Short explanation about the flow of the interview and space for any doubts/questions they want to ask about the research or me.
- **Personal information:** Name, age, place they and their parents were born, where do they live, languages they speak and what they do (study, work, etc.).
- **About their role as fans of Andean Pop:** When did you first hear from Milena Warthon (How? Through whom)? What was your initial reaction and impressions of Milena's music? Why did you decided to become a fan? How do you feel by belonging to the Fanclub? Do you participate in the gatherings and activities/contests of the Fanclub and why? Have you gone to MW concerts? How do you feel when you are there? How would you describe in your own words what "Andean Pop" is? Do you have something from the "Andean Pop" clothing brand?
- **About the artist and music:** How often do you listen to MW songs? Do you listen to them on Spotify, YouTube or other social media? Do you listen through a headset or playing aloud (i.e. privately, or allow others to hear what you listen to too, what do others say when they hear you listening to MW)? What is your favorite song and why? What do you like the most about MW? Do you listen to other Peruvian artists? Are you fan of any of them?\*
- **Listening/watching to AP together:**
  - **About the *Peruvian mash-up song***<sup>24</sup>: How do you feel/What do you think about Milena saying: "I am *chola* and do not pity me"? How would you describe "being/feeling Peruvian"? Do you feel pride of being Peruvian? As a Peruvian, what do you think we have as positive and what things should we work on?

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<sup>23</sup> The questions were adapted per participant / situation

<sup>24</sup> This section was added after piloting the interview

(\*) These questions were added after piloting the interview

- **About the *Maravilloso (Wonderful)* song:** When MW says: “I sing with pride, Latin pride” what do you think she is talking about? Do you think “pride” of where we are from is important? When MW says: “I have colors tattooed on my skin that I wear proudly without fear” what do you think she means by “colors tattooed on my skin”? In this song she says “I come from the Andes” ...Do you think other Andean people identify themselves with MW? Who? Do you identify yourself with MW?
  
- **About the *Warmisitay (Little woman)* song:** What do you like the most about the video? Do you feel a connection with the Andes? How would you describe in your own words an Andean woman? What do you think about how Andean woman are treated in Lima? Do you think that is important to talk about where we and our families comes from? Have you done it?
  
- **Closure:** Thank you and space for any doubts/questions they want to ask about the research or me.

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