

Histories of the internationalization of the field of communication studies

THIS SPECIAL ISSUE of **MATRIZes** (its third issue in 2023) is dedicated to a topic that has been of interest to academic researchers and university professors of communication in many regions of the world for decades and that, over time, has grown both in complexity and in the demand for theoretical and practical rigor in the debate: *the internationalization of the field of communication studies and its histories*. Pierre Bourdieu's warning about the reflexive questioning of the *field* from the "inside" is increasingly justified and enlightening:

What scientific profit can there be in attempting to discover what is entailed by the fact of belonging to the academic field, that site of permanent rivalry for the truth of the social world and of the academic world itself, and by the fact of occupying a determined position within it, defined by a certain number of properties, and education and training, qualifications and status, with all their concomitant forms of solidarity and membership? Firstly, it provides an opportunity for conscious neutralization of the probabilities of error which are inherent in a position, understood as a point of view implying a certain angle of vision, hence a particular form of insight and blindness. But above all it reveals the social foundations of the propensity to theorize or to intellectualize, which is inherent in the very posture of the scholar feeling free to withdraw from the game in order to conceptualize it, and assuming the objective, which attracts social recognition as being scientific, of arriving at a sweeping overview of the world, drafted from an external and superior point of view. (Bourdieu, 1984/1988, p. xiii)

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MATRIZes

It follows that the reflections on the *field* of communication studies take place within the practice of research, which is itself a field of forces subjected to certain flows and demands internal and external to knowledge.

Several of the authors included in this issue (starting with those of us who coordinate it) have, for many years, been facing these questions with the greatest rigor and pertinence we have been able to accumulate, trying to situate our *academic fields of studies in communication* in their corresponding local, national, and regional scales and the processes of their institutionalization and development in their respective historical contexts. Beyond the simple consideration of a “field” as an area of study or a discipline, a *champ*, for Bourdieu and his followers, is a sociocultural space with objective positions in which agents struggle for the appropriation of common capital. Thus, to problematize *internationalization* is also to assume an intellectual commitment with broad implications since it emerges from different but converging conditions and beliefs in shared interests of search and not necessarily in accordance with any of the findings.

ANTECEDENTS OF THE PROJECT

For more than 20 years, in view of the development already achieved by communication research in Latin America (but also aware of the complexity and limitations evident in its institutionalization), we have emphasized that “scientific knowledge is always the result of a multiplicity of factors, scientific, institutional, social, which constitute the concrete conditions for the production of any science”, in specific times and places (Lopes & Fuentes-Navarro, 2001, p. 9). At that time, we had already shared several international comparative and collaborative academic projects between Brazil and Mexico, based on the studies that each one of us had developed on their respective histories and national structures. We took advantage of our participation in the Working Group “Communication Theory and Research Methodology”, at the Latin American Association of Communication Researchers (ALAIIC)—a group of which we were successively coordinators—to seek articulations with the research processes other colleagues were carrying out in other countries and in the region as a whole. A sample of these contributions was published in the book *Communication, field and object of study: Latin American reflective perspectives* (*Comunicación, campo y objeto de estudio: Perspectivas reflexivas latinoamericanas*, Lopes & Fuentes-Navarro, 2001). One of the fundamental purposes was to encourage reflective discussion and systematic work to recognize the conditions from which

research on scholarly communication is practiced (Fuentes-Navarro, 1999; Lopes, 1999) in its cognitive, organizational, and sociocultural dimensions, a proposal that can now be recognized as *meta-research in communication* (Fuentes-Navarro, 2019).

In the last two decades, many advances have been made in several Latin American countries on these project, and forums and publications have been consolidated in which these processes and practices converge at different national and international scales. There has been a proliferation of aspects to be explored and proposals to be debated (i.e., those that constitute meta-research), in the academic field of communication but few dilemmas have been resolved with broad agreements and, instead, new debates are continually added to the set of approaches without consensus.

An issue that emerges from this perspective is the concern with the logics or “theories” that actually guide institutionalized and consolidated practices. Instead of generating articulations, the processes of internationalization sometimes seem to multiply the characteristics of differentiation and distancing in the “field” which, despite the efforts of academic associations to combat dispersion, is fragmenting and becoming properly “the fields,” as Rosenberg (1983, 1993), among others, had clearly formulated. For this reason, this special issue of **MATRIZes**, one of the Latin American academic journals that, from its origins in Brazil, has been the most reliable supporter of the development of the reflective study of communication in the region, seeks to contribute to the dissemination and exchange of some of the most significant efforts in the historical analysis of the constitution of the academic field of communication in different times and places, with a special emphasis on Latin America but with a clear awareness of the efforts of articulation and dialogue in the same direction that come from other regions of the continent and the world.

During the last decade, we have been able to contribute to these dialogues with our approaches to the development of the academic field of communication in Brazil, Mexico, and, necessarily, in the complex Latin American context, by attending and participating in international meetings of the research network that was initially part of the History Section of the International Communication Association (ICA). This gave impetus to the formation of an “international history of communication studies” proposed and coordinated by Dave Park, Jeff Pooley, and Pete Simonson but nowadays already articulated by researchers from the five continents. We have participated in several ICA conferences and, with two chapters on

the book *The International History of Communication Study*, referred to by the editors as follows:

The History of Communication study in Latin America has been constituted through deeply transnational lines of intellectual exchange, institutional initiatives, and geopolitics. They cut across a massive and internally varied region that extends from Mexico and the Caribbean to Brazil, Argentina, and Chile. Beyond that, strong lines of influence and interchange extend to the global north, particularly Western Europe and, in a more politically freighted way, the U.S. ... The two superb chapters in this section ... situating the national cases of Mexico and Brazil within the broader contexts of Latin America, [and] draw upon the sociology of knowledge to provide illuminating frameworks for understanding the institutional development of the communication field in the region. (Simonson & Park, 2016, p. 323)

These two chapters (Fuentes-Navarro, 2016; Lopes & Romancini, 2016), along with other collaborations located in national academic spaces, such as Sociedade Brasileira de Estudos Interdisciplinares da Comunicação (Intercom) and Associação Nacional dos Programas de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação (Compós) in Brazil, Consejo Nacional para la Enseñanza y la Investigación de las Ciencias de la Comunicación (Coneicc) and Asociación Mexicana de Investigadores de la Comunicación (AMIC) in Mexico; regional spaces such as ALAIC or Federación Latinoamericana de Facultades de Comunicación Social (FELAFACS); Ibero-American spaces, such as Asociación Iberoamericana de Investigadores de la Comunicación (Assibercom) and Confederación Iberoamericana de Asociaciones Científicas y Académicas de Comunicación (Confibercom); or more broadly international spaces, such as ICA and the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR), all express reflective analyses resulting from studies and debates shared over several decades with many other colleagues in respectful agreement or disagreement, including the most extensive study carried out on graduate programs in Communication in Ibero-America, one of the main institutional supports in the area (Lopes, 2012).

Other relevant antecedents for this issue took place in 2021 and 2022, also at the initiative of Park, Pooley, and Simonson (but then in their capacity as editors of the journal *History of Media Studies*¹) in the form of an online “ICA Pre-conference” (May 2021) on *Exclusions in the History and Historiography of Communication Studies* (with simultaneous translations into English and Spanish) and a “Round Table,” (July 2022), also online and

¹ Available at: <https://hms.mediaudies.press/>. Accessed on: Dec 6, 2023.

with simultaneous translations, on the *History of Communication Studies in the Americas*. This Round Table was jointly convened by the *History of Media Studies* journal and the Latin American journals **MATRIZES**, from Universidade de São Paulo (USP), and *Comunicación y Sociedad*, from the University of Guadalajara (UdeG). By the agreement between the editors of these three journals, participants who agreed to turn their presentations into formal scholarly articles were invited to do so in special thematic sections of each of the journals. Three of the texts included in this issue of **MATRIZES** come from this initiative. However, its Scientific Editorial Committee decided to extend this section to a complete special issue on the subject, inviting other contributors, who accepted with interest and generosity, adding diverse and highly qualified views to an editorial proposal whose general meaning everyone shared. The invitation made to them in January 2023 defined three “axes” or dimensions to be problematized or analyzed within the general theme *Histories of the internationalization of the communication field of studies*, and each author freely chose the one they preferred to emphasize from their point of view:

- a. *Theoretical-methodological structures, diversification and dispersion;*
- b. *Academic programs and associations as institutional supports for the internationalization of the field;*
- c. *Internationalization, inequalities and future challenges.*

The enthusiastic response to our invitation resulted in the 14 texts that make up this thematic dossier. In total, eight were originally written in Spanish; four, in Portuguese; and two, in English; one has three co-authors, and the others are by one author. Overall, three contributions come from Brazil; six, from other Latin American countries; three, from Europe; and two, from the United States. None of the authors was informed of the names of the other collaborators in order to reinforce the reference to each one’s own perspective and avoid positive or negative “biases” to it toward colleagues identified with the positions under debate “from the field about the field.” The composition of the group sought to privilege, above all, the recognized quality of the work of each author, although it is also, to a certain extent, representative from a geographical and epistemological point of view and, to a certain extent, of at least two generations of researchers who have substantially contributed to the international debates on the chosen thematic axes, including, in several cases, the previous production of doctoral theses on the subject, or the concrete experience of presiding or having presided over an association of researchers in the field. The order of presentation and placement in one of the “axes” was decided by the coordinators of the issue and resulted in a somewhat unequal

distribution, which maintained, however, the diversity of perspectives and repetition to a minimum: six texts were placed in the first axis; three, in the second; and five, in the third.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE DEBATES ON THE FIELD

The first article is also the shortest, but perhaps the densest and most essential in this dossier. To begin the debates on the *theoretical-methodological structures* axis, Muniz Sodré (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), states at the outset that the term “communication” points to a human science of the commons, which renders irrelevant the mechanistic and positivist epistemology of the social sciences forged since the end of the European 18th century, and brings together interactionist perspectives such as *autopoiesis*, *endosymbiosis*, *original wisdom*, and *common goods*. The “paradigmatic rupture” of contemporary communication leads, via mediatization and artificial intelligence, to a new structure of invisible interconnection, in which everything is, at the same time, connection and passage on the reticular surface—and in the interiority of people.

Then, Paulo Serra (Universidade da Beira Interior, Portugal), based on a careful historical and conceptual contextualization of the Epistemologies from the South framework (proposed and developed by Boaventura de Sousa Santos) and an exploratory empirical study based on a bibliometric and textual analysis of a significant sample of academic journals, investigates, in the Ibero-american space of Communication Sciences and Epistemologies from the South, how and to what extent research in communication sciences in the Ibero-American space is, in many ways, approaching the concept of a *post-abyssal science*. The results of that study lead to the general conclusion that there are signs of some orientation in this direction, moving significantly away from the epistemologies of the North, especially in terms of their themes, methodologies, and methods.

In the third article, Erick Torrico (Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, Bolivia; former president of ALAIC), based on a historical interpretation of *coloniality of knowledge*, induced toward the internationalization of communication studies in Latin America, analyzes how this implied a transfer channeled through a group of institutions, as well as professors, authors, and works that, in general, acted as a transmission line for the modernization of communication, an expression of the spirit of the modern civilizing project whose episteme claims authority over valid knowledge. From this point of view, the internationalizing dynamic avoids tending toward “cosmopolitanism,”

but is understood as the transfer of values, concepts, methods, and practices by a “developed center,” aiming at their adoption as models reproducible by the “backward periphery.”

Francisco Rüdiger (Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil) denounces, in his article, the persistence of tensions originating in the 1980s, when Political Economy, Cultural Studies, the Sociology of Organizations, Social History, Analytical Psychology, and Materialist Semiotics—in studying communications as business and as means of ideological domination—paved the way for the return of what had been called, four decades earlier, “critical mass communication research.” These tensions are fundamental to understanding why research has not yet freed itself from the damage caused by its reference to stereotyped categories, the use of arbitrary and dogmatic concepts, the maintenance of normative schemes stemming from the Marxist philosophy of history and, more generally, the lack of analytical and hermeneutic flexibility in conducting research.

Carlos Sandoval (Universidad de Costa Rica, Costa Rica) analyzes another “persistence,” that of the issues that generate the analysis of the links between media, power, and society in relation to the communication ecosystems that are now known as traditional, such as the press, radio, and television, and the digital platforms that have been consolidated so far in the 21st century. He draws attention to three perspectives that have dealt with these links: those that “prioritize” the ability of discourses to question the audiences, those that emphasize the activity of audiences, and those that highlight the role of the communication industries, to suggest a critical appropriation of the trajectories of research into these links, so as not to reproduce some of the dead ends that were experienced decades ago.

The article by Gustavo Adolfo León (Universidad de Sonora, Mexico), which closes the *theoretical-methodological structures* axis, explores the argument that many of the contemporary challenges of communication research are due to “interdisciplinary challenges.” He argues that the insurgency of critical cultural studies and political economy against the tradition established by functionalist mass communication research involved, on the one hand, the call for unity in the diversity of communication and, on the other hand, various tensions between the different North American national traditions. The author concludes with reflections on possible domains of applied knowledge, around which a range of communication issues can be anchored without losing what several scholars have called their “(inter) disciplinary” nature and status.

Miquel de Moragas (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain; founding president of the Asociación Española de Investigación de la Comunicación – AE- C), in the first of the articles located in the second axis of analysis, the *institutional supports to the internationalization of the field*, recalls the intention, in the 1970s, of some academic institutions toward claiming a place for communication between disciplines, and the subsequent conviction that “defending the field of study did not mean claiming a new *discipline*, but rather a *post-discipline*.” He points out that more than in the case of other social sciences, scholarly communication associations have played a fundamental role in the development of our field of study, which, in the last decades, had to adapt all its structure to the constant changes characterizing it.

The collaboration by Delia Crovi (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico; former president of ALAIC), aims to review the imbalances and challenges presented by the internationalization of the field of communication studies in Latin America, articulated by two fundamental institutional supports: *undergraduate and graduate teaching programs* and *national and international academic associations*, by a historical process conditioned by the influence of organizations and tendencies, disparities between nations, as well as by the fragmentation and dispersion of research products. She concludes that the path followed by the field of communication in Latin America in terms of education seems to have built its own identity based on the mirror that returns an image that must be adjusted based on others.

“Internationalization and academic reciprocity” are the main terms used by Fernando Oliveira Paulino (Universidade de Brasília, Brazil, president of ALAIC) in his contribution, thus completing the review of the second axis of this edition: *academic programs and associations as institutional supports for the internationalization of the field*. The article systematizes the main actions and the conceptual, political, and academic bases that have guided ALAIC’s cooperation actions, and concludes by emphasizing the existence of an effort for greater dialogue inside and outside Latin America, guided by the idea of horizontality, academic reciprocity, through initiatives that promote the circulation of content in in-person activities that increasingly use contemporary information and communication technologies.

The reflection on the *internationalization, inequalities and future challenges* axis in this issue begins with the text jointly written by the editors of *History of Media Studies*: Peter Simonson (University of Colorado, Boulder, United States), Jefferson Pooley (Muhlenberg College, United States), and David W. Park (Lake Forest College, United States), in which, starting from the contexts

of communication studies in the United States, they consider some of the bases of this country's hegemony in the history and historiography of the field and suggest the importance of works that “on the one hand, provincialize and decentralize the United States” and, on the other, trace the transnational flows and interregional dynamics that have constituted communication studies in all its versions in the Americas.

The article written by Gabriela Cicalese (Universidad Nacional de San Martín, Argentina), on the other hand, questions whether the processes of internationalization institutionalized by the circuits of the “*academic industry*” in Argentina have resulted in a greater diversity of text origins and significant references in the training of communicators, especially in public universities, and seeks to show the international imprint that has emerged from the constitutive roots of the field, while at the same time posing a series of questions about the current naturalization of internationalization programs in academic units and Communication courses. She concludes by noting that when “globalization is seen, the world is thematized,” but it is a sight through the small prism of *hyperspeciality* (the increasingly specific cut-outs in research topics) and *hyperspatiality* (the immediate references).

The article by Stefanie Averbeck-Lietz (Universität Greifswald, Germany), based on the “transnational disconnects” perspective found in research on *mediatization*, develops itself from an analytical structure of the history of the field of communication in terms of its *corpus of ideas* and its *social corpus* and describes how the French and Latin American roots of these studies are ignored in Germany, trying to answer why this disarticulation between different research environments and traditions occurs. However, she recognizes recent initiatives, especially by Latin American scholars, to put the main research environments for the study of mediatization in touch, and how in Germany contributions such as Verón's *semio-pragmatics* or Martín-Barbero's *cultural mediation* are considered.

Eva Da Porta (Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Argentina) analyzes the general trends around the processes of *internationalization of science* that are developing in universities and research centers in Latin America and the Caribbean and examines some of the characteristics of the academic field of communication in Argentina. Then, she critically reviews “the discursive configuration in which these internationalization processes are inscribed,” with the aim of redefining and questioning some processes of knowledge legitimation that follow models that are inappropriate for the field of communication research. Subsequently, the author offers a proposal for

mapping communication studies in the region that recovers Martín-Barbero's notion of a *nocturnal map*.

To close this issue, Silvio Waisbord (George Washington University, United States, president-elect of the ICA) responds to how he proposes to confront the inequalities of the global academy in communication studies given the predominance of traditions, thematic interests, theories, and research from the global North, whether in publications, references and editorial boards of journals, or “the preponderant place of English as the *lingua franca* of the global academy” that show the persistent marginalization and invisibility of scholars and ‘studies from the South.’ Faced with this situation, strategies can be applied, such as consolidating spaces of recognition and support; cultivating networks of collaboration and research with comparative and integrative perspectives; and participating in shared spaces (editorial bodies, leadership of associations, evaluation/criticism of works and proposals), that is, “collaboration, criticism, and curiosity,” as the article’s title points out.

PERSPECTIVES OF CONTINUITY

Several controversial dimensions of the central theme of this special issue of **MATRIZes**, *Histories of the internationalization of the field of communication studies*, have been raised and developed with precision and clarity in the included articles, but it is obvious that practically none has been “resolved” or dismissed as irrelevant nor can it be assumed that these perspectives include all those that would be needed to be recognized as “current.” When the *Journal of Communication* published its famous issue entitled *Ferment in the Field* in 1983, although the field had generally received less critical attention (especially regarding its internationalization) than today, it began to discuss aspects and points of view that were problematized only after they had been formulated there. Thus, in its 1993 version, the number of contributions must have doubled on *The Future of the Field*, although the proportion of articles generated from “marginal” perspectives, such as the Latin American one, increased very little. Among 40 texts, only one, written by José Marques de Melo (1993), marked the presence of the region in the “field,” still spelled in the singular. Then, 35 and 25 years later, the *Journal of Communication* once again called the debate “about the field,” but only then, in 2018, has it started using plural forms: *Ferments in the Field: The Past, Present and Future of Communication Studies*.

Other publications, edited not only in English, have focused on the critical exploration of the evolution of the field (or fields) of academic communication

studies, emphasizing different conceptions and projections in their *histories*. It is to be hoped that the specialized and committed attention to this task, such as that offered in this special edition of **MATRIZes**, will continue to grow. However, just as a suggestion for a more in-depth analysis, we note a characteristic motivated by the experience of preparing this publication: in its set of 14 articles, there are a total of 604 bibliographic references, of which 573 (95%) appear only once, and only one reference is present in more than five texts: Jesús Martín-Barbero's *From Media to Mediations (De los medios a las mediaciones, 1987)*. As for the mentioned authors, excluding self-citations and counting only those included in at least two articles, there are eleven colleagues with five or more frequencies, 10 of whom are Latin American. It would be difficult to find a more eloquent quantitative feature of the *fragmentation* that increasingly characterizes academic research in communication and its historiography as well. It would be very worrying if this meant that the debates in this *field* are indirect, tangential, or completely absent. However, despite this still adverse scenario, the studies gathered here do not cease to pursue change and critically detect rejections, closures, and impositions at a time in which networks and connections also invade and move the academic and research fields forward, *tout court*. ■

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