

Histories of Communication Studies in the Americas

*Historias de los estudios de comunicación
en las Américas*

*Histórias dos estudos de
comunicação nas Américas*

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This special thematic section of the journal responds, in general, to the interest of *Comunicación y Sociedad* in attending at different scales –local, national, regional, and global– to the searching and developmental aspects of academic research related to communication processes and systems and their sociocultural articulations. But also, in particular, it responds to the intention of collaborating with other institutional agents in projects for the generation and dissemination of systematic, critical, and rigorous analysis on emerging issues and lines of knowledge production, such as the histories of communication studies in the Americas. Note, from the outset, the plural formulation of these terms, in recognition of the need to explore and debate the different perspectives of their identification and problematization, as well as the shared interest in advancing in the construction of common understandings.

The initiative in this case came from the editors of the journal *History of Media Studies* (<https://hms.mediastudies.press/>), U.S. scholars Peter Simonson (University of Colorado-Boulder), Jefferson

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Pooley (Muhlenberg College) and David W. Park (Lake Forest College), who as part of their proposal to internationalize the corresponding academic field, convened an online ICA Pre-Conference, in May 2021, on “Exclusions in the History and Historiography of Communication Studies”, and a roundtable, also online, in July 2022, on “History of Communication Studies in the Americas”. Both meetings included simultaneous translations in English and Spanish and called for the participation of researchers from different countries in the Americas, English and Spanish-speaking as well.

The 2022 roundtable was jointly convened by *History of Media Studies* with two Latin American journals: *MATRIZES* of the University of São Paulo, and *Comunicación y Sociedad*, of the University of Guadalajara. Its main purpose was “to promote scholarly dialogue about the history of media studies in the different national and linguistic contexts of the Americas, and to open new perspectives for transnational comparative research”. By agreement among the editors, participants who agreed to transform their presentations into formal scholarly articles were invited to do so for special thematic sections in one of the three journals, according to the procedures of each one. Thus, the three articles intended for *Communication and Society*, now published in this special section, were included in the issue after satisfying the journal’s general evaluation standards, in addition to incorporating the comments of the roundtable participants and organizers. These are three outstanding contributions to the agreed purposes and their authors once again endorse their international academic prestige.

Eliseo Colón Zayas (2023), from the University of Puerto Rico, provides solid and hitherto little recognized arguments and evidence on the development in the Caribbean region of “some of the configurations of knowledge underlying communication and media studies in the Americas” in the 1950s and 1960s, in his article “Communication Studies from the Caribbean thought. Contributions of Luis Ramiro Beltrán, Frantz Fanon and Stuart Hall on development and cultural identity”. He locates with special historiographic care the confluent contexts through which these three authors considered went through the Caribbean spheres. Bolivian Beltrán made a stay in Puerto Rico in

the 1950s, before traveling to the United States for his graduate studies, and from there arose a good part of his interest in understanding the complex political and cultural relations of Hispanic and Anglo-Saxon Americas, which would later be central to his work on development and Latin America's own perspectives on communication and policies in the sector. Frantz Fanon, from Martinique, and Stuart Hall, from Jamaica, when they emigrated to Europe, brought with them the key elements of their Caribbean identities and through them contributed to enriching the theoretical and political perspectives of philosophical and cultural studies of global relevance. Colón's brilliant essay exposes how the contributions of the three authors "provided the tools to deconstruct the hegemonic scenario of the use of communication and media for modernization and progress from the neo-imperial tactics and methodologies of the United States," and "postulate the counter-hegemonic approach of media and communication from colonization and decolonization, in the cultural identity" cultivated in the *diaspora*.

The essay by Mexican press history specialist Celia del Palacio Montiel (2023), researcher at the University of Guadalajara and member of the journal's Editorial Committee, entitled "Reflections on the history of communication studies from the regions in Latin America. Are connected histories an alternative of analysis?", argue that these studies "in Latin America have particular characteristics derived from the diverse cultures and regional historical processes that should not be made invisible within a generalizing continental project", and therefore fosters the convenience of establishing connections, an "exercise much more useful than looking for ways in which the models of Europe and the United States could be adjusted to the realities of the South, as has been happening to a large extent, since the consolidation of the field and, in particular, in recent years". She does follow the methodological proposals of Barbosa and Gutiérrez, done within the Association of Communication Historians (AsHisCom) and the Latin American Network of Media History (RELAHM). This approach, the author emphasizes, deserves to be critically developed and refined, inasmuch as it "coincides with the critique of Western modernity and the need to provincialize Europe", and also in this "with decolonial thought and subaltern studies" (p. 2), which can be useful for thinking

social and cultural processes from the regions of Latin America, without leaving out processes and cultures in other places.

Finally, the Colombian researcher, Jesús Arroyave (2023), from the Universidad del Norte, concerning the histories of the study of communication in the Americas, contributes with his essay “Unveiling the reasons for asymmetrical dialogue: Exploring exclusion in the field of communication” to a much needed reflection on these processes of exclusion, pointing out that it is of great transcendence for several reasons, among which are those adduced by Simonson et al., especially because that “exclusions implied with gender, race, language, colonialism, geopolitical location and institutionally endorsed privilege will be reproduced in the formal and informal accounts made of the pasts of our fields”; the need to break with “provincialism” according to which the only valid theoretical constructs are those of a single geographical context, “in this case the Global North or the North American and European academy”; and, finally, to allow in the logic of inclusion to find ways “to foster a horizontal and equitable dialogue between scholars, different epistemologies and approaches from all geographical corners”. The article declares its objective to “explore some of the reasons why this process of exclusion has occurred in relation to the production of knowledge in Latin America” (p. 3), and to make sense of why, in spite of contributions of great transcendence that have been made from the South of the continent, it is largely unknown in the academy of the United States, which certainly dominates the production of knowledge in both the social sciences and communication.

Each of the analytical and argumentative perspectives developed by the authors of these three articles, as well as those presented by the other participants in this international collective project of critical reflection on the histories of the academic fields for the study of communication in the Americas, in addition to a high degree of rigor and a clear disposition to dialogue, show that in order to counteract the dispersion and fragmentation of the interpretive frameworks of these processes, and consequently of articulated actions to guide their integrated development, the most advisable strategy is not to seek a chimerical and reductive unification of perspectives, but rather, on the contrary, to establish spaces for academic dialogue and debate that

recognize and take advantage of the plurality of contributions supported by systematic and rigorous procedures, explicit and aware of the consequences of the “exclusions” historically accumulated in this field.

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