

Elizabeth Fox: Intellectual Biography and History of a Field of Study

Yamila Heram 

Universidad de Buenos Aires, yaheram@yahoo.com.ar

Santiago Gándara 

Universidad de Buenos Aires, sjgandar@gmail.com

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Translated by William Quinn

Abstract

The aim of this article is to highlight and recognize the contributions of one of the pioneers in Latin American communication studies, Elizabeth Fox, who since the late 1960s in Colombia has investigated media ownership and inequalities in the flow of information in the region. At the same time, the description of her intellectual journey reveals a transnational figure who established relations not only between different countries in the region but also with universities and agencies in the United States and Europe. In order to examine her trajectory, a meta-analysis of her academic publications serves to identify changes, ruptures, and continuities in her research topics and theoretical positions; an interview with the author was also conducted to complement the reconstruction of her trajectory. The main results and conclusions of the article are synthesized in a recovery of the critical traditions of the political economy of communication in her works published in the 1970s.

Resumen

El artículo tiene por objetivo visibilizar y reconocer los aportes de una de las pioneras en los estudios latinoamericanos en comunicación, Elizabeth Fox, quien desde fines de la década de 1960 en

Colombia se ha ocupado de investigar la propiedad de los medios de comunicación y las desigualdades del flujo informativo en la región. Al mismo tiempo, la descripción de su itinerario intelectual nos coloca frente a una figura transnacional que anudó no solo las relaciones entre distintos países de la región sino también con Estados Unidos y Europa, sus universidades y agencias. Para abordar su trayectoria se realiza un meta-análisis de sus producciones académicas, identificamos cambios, rupturas y continuidades en sus temas de investigación y posiciones teóricas; asimismo se realizó una entrevista con la autora que complementa la reconstrucción de su trayectoria. Los principales resultados y conclusiones del artículo se sintetizan en recuperar las tradiciones críticas de la economía política de la comunicación en sus trabajos publicados en los años 70.

Introduction

To advance our understanding of the contributions made by women pioneers in communication studies in Latin America, it is necessary not only to highlight and recognize the place these women have occupied, but also to recover the perspectives and ways of working that gave rise to communication studies in the region. In recent years, a series of works have emerged that examine and reassert the impact of women researchers on the history of the field; this research is situated in the Latin American region in general, and particularly in Argentina, Mexico, and Bolivia.¹ These studies reflect a historical need to recover the intellectual work carried out in the early days of communication studies by many women who have been overlooked, marginalized, or excluded in the reconstruction of the field's history.² From this perspective, this work is part of a larger series of investigations into the trajectories of pioneering women in communication studies in Latin America.³ A public communication of science project is currently being developed in which the voices and recollections of these protagonists will be recovered and presented in the form of a podcast, as part of an effort to reconstruct the history of communication in the region.

The article presented here has a twofold objective: to highlight the contributions of one of the pioneers in Latin American communication studies, Elizabeth Fox, and to recognize and characterize Fox as a transnational figure, whose career has extended throughout South America, North America, and Europe—spanning at least eleven countries (United States, Colombia, Peru, Venezuela, Chile, Mexico, Argentina, France, Canada, Spain, and Germany)—with some of her main collaborators also being transnational figures: Ramiro Beltrán, Schmucler, Waisbord, and in a more limited way, Rose Kohn Goldsen. The article is part of a recent line of collaboration between scholars from North, South, and Central America and the Caribbean on "Exclusions in the History and Historiography of Communication Studies" and "History of Communication Studies in the Americas," the themes of the 2021 ICA conference and July 2022 roundtable, respectively. Two special issues published by the scientific journals *Comunicación y Sociedad* in Mexico and *MATRIZes* in Brazil give an account of this line of research that aims to "promote academic 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."⁴ Or, in the words of Peter Simonson and his co-authors, "to trace transnational flows and interregional dynamics that have constituted communication studies in all its versions throughout the Americas."⁵ In this way, an attempt

¹ Alejandra García Vargas, Nancy Díaz Larrañaga, and Larisa Kejval, *Mujeres de la comunicación: Argentina* (Buenos Aires: FES Comunicación, 2022); Yamila Heram and Santiago Gándara, "Pioneira: As contribuições de Michèle Mattelart para o campo da comunicação," *MATRIZes* 14, vol. 3 (2020); Yamila Heram and Santiago Gándara, *Pioneers in Latin American Communication Studies* (Buenos Aires: Teseo, 2021); Yamila Heram and Santiago Gándara, "Visibility and Recognition of Pioneer Women in the Field of Latin American Communication: An Analysis of the Trajectory of Mabel Piccini," *Revista Mediterránea De Comunicación* 12, no. 2 (2021); Yamila Heram and Santiago Gándara, "Mantener vivo un pensamiento crítico: Entrevista a Elizabeth Fox," *Comunicación*, no. 50 (2024); Claudia Magallanes Blanco and Paola Ricarte Quijano, *Mujeres de la comunicación: México* (Mexico City: FES Comunicación, 2022); Guillermo Mastrini, *Margarita Graziano: Entre la academia y la acción política* (Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento, 2020); Clemencia Rodríguez, Claudia Magallanes Blanco, Amparo Marroquín Parducci, and Omar Rincón, *Mujeres de la comunicación* (Bogotá: FES Comunicación, 2020); Vania Sandoval Arenas, Riglana Portugal Escóbar, and Sandra Villegas Taborga, *Mujeres de la comunicación: Bolivia* (La Paz, Bolivia: FES Comunicación, 2022).

² Jesús Arroyave, "Unveiling the Reasons for Asymmetrical Dialogue: Exploring Exclusion in the Field of Communication," *Comunicación y Sociedad* (2023).

³ Yamila Heram and Santiago Gándara, dirs., "Los estudios en comunicación argentinos en las revistas latinoamericanas: Tendencias y contradicciones de un campo en disputa (2010–2020)" (research project, UBACyT, University of Buenos Aires, 2023–2024).

is made to begin to settle a debt of imbalance in the recognition of South–North interconnections in the Americas, as proposed by Simonson et al.

It is precisely for this reason that we have chosen to focus on the figure of Elizabeth Fox: not only because of her pioneering perspective on the political economy of communication, but also because of the marginal, almost excluded place she has had in the reconstruction of the communication field itself. Very little has been written about Fox; we have found a few limited references that remember her for her work in academic dissemination and publication. For example, Heriberto Muraro highlights “the great task of dissemination of our work carried out by our dear ‘gringa,’ Elizabeth Fox.”⁶ Luis Peirano mentions Fox’s support for “the publication of the first accounts of research in Latin America,”⁷ and Beltrán highlights the outstanding work of Fox, “my partner in work and ideals,”⁸ in the theoretical construction of the National Communication Policies (NCPs). Not only are the references to Fox remarkably scarce, but the first two researchers seem to praise Fox more for her work in supporting them in their tasks than for her own achievements. This article seeks to fill in this gap in the history of the communications field.

In order to give an account of Fox’s trajectory, we conducted a meta-analysis of her academic publications and identified changes, ruptures, and continuities in her research topics and theoretical positions, and we also conducted an interview with the author.⁹ In bringing together the results of this dual approach, we were able to recover the history of a critical intellectual current of the 1970s and the personal trajectory of one of its pioneering figures. The article begins with a methodological section, followed by an overview of major moments in Fox’s intellectual biography, and finally, our conclusions.

Methodology

This work is part of a larger series on major moments and figures in communication research in Latin America, and therefore our techniques and instruments, drawn from that larger project, are not specific to the case of Elizabeth Fox.

In the construction of Fox’s intellectual biography, we postulated three phases: 1) in the seventies, her first studies on the economic structure of the media system and her interventions with respect to the National Communication Policies (NCPs) from the perspective of dependency theory; 2) in the first half of the eighties, the critical balance of the interventions of the previous period and a reconceptualization—from new theoretical-methodological paradigms—of the relationship between communication, culture,

⁴ Raúl Fuentes Navarro, “Presentation: Histories of Communication Studies in the Americas,” *Comunicación y Sociedad* (Fall 2023).

⁵ Peter Simonson, Jefferson Pooley, and David Park, “The History of Communication Studies across the Americas: A View from the United States,” *MA-TRIZes* 17, no. 3 (2023): 191.

⁶ Delia Covi Druetta and Gustavo Cimadevilla, coords., *Del mimeógrafo a las redes digitales: Narrativas, testimonios y análisis del campo comunicacional en el 40 aniversario de ALAIC* (Lima: ALAIC, 2022), 152.

⁷ Covi Druetta and Cimadevilla, 179.

⁸ Luis Ramiro Beltrán, *Comunicología de la liberación, desarrollismo y políticas públicas* (Madrid: Luces de Galibo, 2014), 94.

⁹ We are especially grateful to Elizabeth Fox for granting us the interview and subsequently answering key questions by e-mail.

and civil society; and 3) from the end of the 1980s to the present, when Fox's trajectory shifts towards research and the implementation of communication and health programs. We then situated these phases within the broader context of the field of communication studies in Latin America.¹⁰

In order to produce a comprehensive account of Elizabeth Fox's contributions to Latin American communication studies, we conducted a meta-analysis of her academic publications, which allowed us to identify the main trends in her research, as well as changes, ruptures, and shifts in focus. In addition, we conducted an interview with the author in order to reconstruct her trajectory in greater detail and, crucially, in her own voice. The materials we included in our corpus for analysis ranged from articles in scientific journals and book chapters to reports and books authored or co-authored by Fox, from her first publications to the present. While these selections span her entire career, from her first publications to the present, particular consideration was given to recovering her pioneering contributions. We understand, following Barthes,¹¹ that a corpus is a finite collection of materials whose construction is informed by the analyst's objectives as well as a certain degree of arbitrariness. Nevertheless, we have tried to build a corpus that also includes the scarce secondary sources, and that is broad enough to allow us to reconstruct the author's trajectory. From this meta-analysis of her publications, we can identify changes, ruptures, and continuities in her research topics and theoretical positions.

The technique of interviewing the author was also used both to gather biographical data not present in secondary sources, and to reconstruct her intellectual trajectory on the basis of her own testimony. The interview was conducted by video call since the author lives in Washington, DC. It followed a semi-structured interview model, with issues and questions prepared in advance and additional questions introduced by the interviewer over the course of the seventy-five-minute interview for the purposes of clarification or to obtain more information.¹² Within the category of the semi-structured interview, we chose to conduct a "focused interview": an informal talk that focuses on a single topic and is usually used to collect testimonies about some fact or event—in our case, the interviewee's academic career.¹³ The purpose of the interview was mainly exploratory, since as mentioned above, there is very little literature on the author. Therefore, we focused on getting to know and trying to periodize her academic work from its beginnings to the present, as well as on understanding the institutional and academic relationships that marked her intellectual trajectory.¹⁴

¹⁰ Various periodizations of the history of the field of communication have been proposed. The first, for the regional sphere, was that of Mexican researcher Raúl Fuentes Navarro (1992); and one of the most complete (because it articulates political-economic processes, theoretical matrices, and approaches) is the one formulated by Bolivian researcher Erick Torrico Villa (2004). Here, in order to understand Elizabeth Fox's trajectory, we adopt a periodization that includes a period of autonomization (mid-sixties and seventies), institutionalization (eighties) and professionalization (nineties to 2000). For a justification of this periodization, see Carlos Mangone, "The Bureaucratization of Cultural Analyses," *Zigurat*, no. 4 (2003).

¹¹ Roland Barthes, *Elementos de semiología* (Buenos Aires: Tiempo Contemporáneo, 1971).

¹² Roberto Hernández-Sampieri, Carlos Fernández, and María del Pilar Baptista, *Metodología de la investigación* (Mexico City: McGraw Hill, 2014), 403.

¹³ Robert Merton, Marjorie Fiske, and Patricia Kendall, "Propósitos y criterios de la entrevista focalizada," *EMPIRIA: Revista de Metodología de Ciencias Sociales*, no. 1 (1998).

¹⁴ For more details, see Hiram and Gándara, "Keeping Critical Thinking Alive: An Interview with Elizabeth Fox."

Results

The Beginnings (The Sixties and Seventies)

Elizabeth Fox was born in Ithaca, New York, in 1947, and grew up in Ohio, Massachusetts, and Washington, DC. Her father, Frederic Ewing Fox, was a Congregationalist minister and journalist who in the 1950s served as special assistant to President Dwight Eisenhower. Elizabeth Fox spent most of her teenage years in Washington, but graduated from high school in Princeton, New Jersey, in 1965. Her studies continued at Vassar College. During her first years at Vassar, she had two experiences living in Spanish-speaking countries: in 1966 she worked at a hotel in Spain, and she also lived for a time in Guadalajara, Mexico, in 1967. In her third year of college, she spent six months at the Universidad de Los Andes in Bogotá, Colombia, for the purpose of continuing her studies in political science. There she met her first husband and decided to stay in Colombia but changed her career and discipline, beginning studies in journalism at the Universidad Javeriana.

It is there that the author locates her academic beginnings in the communications field:

I got in touch with a woman who was in Colombia, who came from the Ford Foundation,¹⁵ Rose Kohn Goldsen, a very important figure in the early years of communication studies in the US. She worked at Cornell University and formed a study group on communication, to analyze above all the structure of the media, which was a very important topic and on which, at that time, there was not much research.

Under that umbrella and with Goldsen's guidance, Fox did her undergraduate thesis on "the new media communication policy laws in Colombia, which focused on how television was organized, whether it was public or private, also highlighting the foreign influence." Regarding her graduation as a journalist, Fox comments: "I took a couple of extra years to graduate because I didn't speak Spanish very well. I had to start from scratch, more or less."

According to Fox, Goldsen was very relevant in her early formative years because she organized a communication studies group with some students from Javeriana—in which the later prominent Colombian sociologist and writer Azriel Bibliowicz also participated. This first study group, based in Bogotá, would contribute to the delimitation of one of the key themes of early communication research in Latin America: National Communication Policies (NCPs). Goldsen was also relevant not only because she directed Fox's graduation thesis, but also because she helped both Fox and Bibliowicz to obtain funds from the Ford Foundation to pursue graduate studies in the

¹⁵ The Ford Foundation was one of the private US institutions with the strongest presence in Latin America starting in 1962, when it opened its first office in Colombia. In the context of the Cold War and the revolutionary processes in the region, it increased its contributions to finance research in different fields, particularly in the social sciences. Following the denunciations of the Camelot Project in the mid-sixties—the financing of social science research to identify the causes of possible insurgency processes in Latin America—other institutions of Canadian and German origin gradually took over as a source of funding for communication research.

United States, where Fox returned as a Colombian with a scholarship between 1971 and 1973 to pursue a master's degree in communications at the University of Pennsylvania. There she worked with Canadian policy expert and political economist William H. "Bill" Melody. At the time, she had a son and lived with her husband in Princeton, New Jersey, where her husband was on a scholarship.

Goldsen's mentorship, the Ford Foundation scholarship, the back and forth between Colombia and her country of origin, and that first contact with the Canadians all helped to shape Fox's incipient transnational career. In 1973, at a very young age, she returned to Colombia and made contact with Luis Ramiro Beltrán,¹⁶ who had completed his doctorate in communication at Michigan State University and was the Latin American representative for the Information Sciences division of the International Development Research Centre in Canada.¹⁷

With funding from this Canadian institution, they undertook a series of investigations in the region, as Fox recounts:

[Beltrán] asked me to go to Venezuela to do the same type of research that I had done in Colombia. That was in seventy-three, seventy-four. It was a short stay, a couple of months. Then I came back and joined IDRC working with Luis Ramiro: we started to develop, among other things, a program to apply communication research in different Latin American countries, because Beatriz Solís was already starting in Mexico, Giselle Munizaga was in Chile.

Beltrán and Fox's collaboration is noteworthy, as many of their publications show, and yet Fox is all but absent from existing accounts of the field's history and those which are still being written today, where there remains a tendency to highlight certain figures and neglect others.¹⁸ We share with Simonson and his co-authors the conviction that "exclusions involving gender, race, language, colonialism, geopolitical location, and institutionally endorsed privilege will be reproduced in the formal and informal accounts of our fields' pasts."¹⁹ This is the case of Fox, who, having worked and published numerous articles together with Beltrán, remains an indistinct figure with few mentions. For example, in the book *Comunicología de la liberación, desarrollismo y políticas públicas* (2014) by Luis Ramiro Beltrán, with a foreword by Manuel Chaparro and an introduction by Alejandro Barranquero, Fox is mentioned only briefly. Perhaps Fox, as a figure, has also been marginalized due to her transnational career that has made her an *outsider* in Latin America and also in the United States. After all, she was a native of the United States who wrote from Latin America against the power wielded in the region by her country of origin.

¹⁶ Luis Ramiro Beltrán (1930–2015), a Bolivian-born journalist and researcher, is considered one of the pioneering intellectuals in the field of communication studies in Latin America and a central figure in the debates and proposals for national communication policies in the region. In his doctoral thesis, entitled *Communication in Latin America: Persuasion for Status Quo or for National Development?* (1970), he anticipated his first questioning of the dominant paradigm in US research since the 1950s, which conceived of the mass media as instruments of modernization, development, and social change. Against this perspective, Beltrán would postulate a perspective that was sensitive to socio-economic conditions; he would research and denounce the monopolistic tendencies of the media system in the region and question the relations of dependence with the United States as a decisive factor in the underdevelopment of our countries. He was the author of numerous publications, many of which he co-wrote with Elizabeth Fox. For more information, see José Luis Aguirre Alvis, "La investigación para democratizar la comunicación: Los aportes de Luis Ramiro Beltrán," *Revista Ciencia y Cultura*, no. 1 (1997).

¹⁷ The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is a public corporation created by the Parliament of Canada in 1970, whose statement of purpose was "to initiate, encourage, support and conduct research into the problems of the developing regions of the world and into the means of applying and adapting scientific, technical and other knowledge to the economic and social advancement of those regions." Tahira Gonsalves and Stephen Baranyi, *Research for Policy Influence: A History of IDRC Intent* (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 2003), 5.

Fox participated in the drafting of reports and documents used for the preliminary meetings and debates on National Communication Policies (NCPs) and the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). She also collaborated as an external advisor for the RATELVE project²⁰ and was president of the Colombian Association of Communication Researchers from 1978 to 1980). Her contribution—like that of many other researchers—was decisive in the context of revolutionary processes of social transformation and national liberation in the post-war period, when the entry of countries belonging to what was then known as the “Third World” weakened the US’s defense of the free flow of information as an ideal. Not only was the inequality of flows questioned, but an alternative communicational order was also proposed.

In the period of autonomization of communication studies in the region,²¹ institutional resources played a key role in fostering and contributing to research. In our interview, Fox highlights in particular the role played by the Canadians through the International Development Research Centre (ISDR):

They wanted to support this research because it was a time when Canada was running a different media model than the US. Canada was also supporting NWICO, unlike the US. In fact they were resisting the whole influx of US programming in their own country.

The financing of research projects meant that resources were available to convene researchers from Latin America, Fox explains:

So we financed meetings. We went to Cartagena, to Santa Marta, to Cali, to Peru. We could not do things in Chile, because the dictatorship was already in place, but we did them at ILET²² in Mexico, which was then run by Juan Somavía. ILET became the other focus of critical media studies. Somavía, Rafael Roncagliolo were there. . . . It was fundamental that Luis Ramiro and I had a stable institutional base, that I had a telephone, that I was able to call long distance whenever I wanted, that we had money to finance meetings . . .

Her First Publications (The Seventies)

The articles Fox produced throughout the 1970s—a time when she was primarily based in Bogotá but continued to travel to and concern herself with different sites in Latin America—can be organized around a common diagnostic throughline. By and large, this work called attention to the preponderance of data coming from the United States and decried the disproportionate penetration of that information within the field. The pioneering nature of these investigations is also revealed in the absence of a library—authors, bibliography, theories—that could serve as a general framework. As Fox points out, there was “nothing” in that library. That is why, she recalls:

¹⁸ Arroyave, “Unveiling the Reasons for Asymmetric Dialogue.”

¹⁹ Peter D. Simonson, David Park, and Jefferson Pooley, “Exclusions/Exclusiones: The Role for History in the Field’s Reckoning,” *History of Media Studies* 2 (2022), 1.

²⁰ “The Radio and Television Committee was in charge of preparing a report on mass cultural production. From his position as director of the Committee, Pasquali established dialogues with a range of experts from the cultural, political, and intellectual fields, who, between November 1974 and May 1975, met in twenty-eight working sessions to formulate the broadcasting policy of the Venezuelan State. The Ratelwe Report was finalized in May 1975, and was subsequently published in book form by the bookstore and publishing house SUMA in 1977 under the title *Proyecto Ratelwe*. Emiliano Sánchez Narvarte, “Antonio Pasquali y las políticas de comunicación en Venezuela (1974–1979),” 5.

²¹ Raúl Fuentes Navarro, *Un campo cargado de futuro: El estudio de la comunicación en América Latina* (Mexico City: FELAFACS, 1992).

²² The Latin American Institute for Transnational Studies (ILET, in its initials in Spanish) was founded in 1975 and had an area of communication and development in which the Chileans Juan Somavía (1941) and Fernando Reyes Matta (1938) participated, later to be joined by the Argentines Héctor Schmucler (1931–2018), Sergio Caletti (1947–2015) and Alcira Argumedo (1940–2021), among others. See Facundo Altamirano, “Intelectuales, exilio y comunicación en el Instituto Latinoamericano de Estudios Transnacionales (ILET) (1975–1984),” *Journal of the Red Intercátedras de Historia de América Latina Contemporánea* 7, no. 13 (2020/2021).

Rose Kohn Goldsen's teaching was so important, because there were such studies in the United States, where they began to investigate the media. But there were no studies on Latin America. So my sources were primary, that is, legislation, interviews with congressmen, with businessmen, with people from educational TV.

One of the most representative publications of her stay in Colombia is "La televisión norteamericana en América Latina" (1974), published in the journal *Chasqui*, where she examines the state of the art of television in the region: the profits obtained from the sale of canned programming; the role played by the networks ABC, CBS, NBC, and *Time* in providing capital and technical assistance; the advertising business and the direct sale of programming; as well as the development of and changes in commercial operations. Her conference paper "Políticas Nacionales de Comunicación en América Latina" summarizes the central aspects of the meeting of experts on Communication Policies and Planning in Latin America, held in Bogotá in July 1974. This meeting—together with another held in Quito in 1975 on the exchange of news—provided input for discussion at the Seminar on National Communication Policies in Latin America held by the International Center for Higher Education in Communication in Latin America (CIESPAL),²³ the Center for Democratic Studies for Latin America (CEDAL),²⁴ and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation²⁵ in April 1975 in San José, Costa Rica, in preparation for the following year's conference.

Together with Luis Ramiro Beltrán, Fox published "La influencia de los Estados Unidos en la comunicación masiva en América Latina: desequilibrio en el flujo de información" (1976) for the meeting on Fair Policy in International Information Exchange in Hawaii; this report was then requested by CIESPAL to be used in the seminar "La radio y la televisión" held in San José, Costa Rica, in April 1976, under the auspices of CEDAL and CIESPAL. Fox and Beltrán also published, in 1980, an abridged version of the document, with the title "Medios de comunicación de masas y dominación cultural," which they presented in 1979 at the Symposium on the Role of International Broadcasting, sponsored by Radio Nederland and held in Hilversum, the Netherlands.

The common denominator in all of these articles—among many others published during this period—is the search for data and an explanation of the difficulties in obtaining them, since it is precisely data that are needed to accompany and support the denunciations of inequality in the flow of information and the structure of the media. We share some quotations from these works:

It is difficult to obtain unbiased data on the growth of the US television industry overseas.²⁶

²³ Based in Quito, Ecuador, the International Center for Higher Education in Communication in Latin America (CIESPAL) was created by UNESCO in 1959 to train journalists. By 1970, it had become a center for dissemination and consultation for communication researchers.

²⁴ The Costa Rica-based Center for Democratic Studies for Latin America (CEDAL), founded in 1968, promoted scholarships and publications to undertake communication studies, among other topics.

²⁵ The Friedrich Ebert Foundation, linked to German social democracy, was another key institution in financing the training of journalists and regional meetings, scholarships, and research.

²⁶ Elizabeth Fox de Cardona, "La televisión norteamericana en América Latina," *Chasqui* 6 (1974): 56.

The basic document for this conference asked whether there was any clear evidence of foreign penetration within a country's communication system. It seemed to question whether there was necessarily a communication imbalance between developed and underdeveloped countries.²⁷

The following pages will examine some of these indicators in order to briefly illustrate the situation, with emphasis on Latin America and broadcasting (radio and television), where the available data allow.²⁸

Empirical evidence justifies the dissatisfaction of Third World countries with the international communication situation.²⁹

The pioneering value of these investigations produced in Latin America is that they lay bare the economic and cultural domination of the United States in the region. Fox was among a group of pioneering researchers—which also included Argentina's Margarita Graziano and Mexico's Fátima Fernández—who sought and produced data on the structure of the media in order to support their denunciations and interventions under the imprint of dependency theory and cultural imperialism. Their shared concerns reflect the same hopes and later disappointments with respect to the NCPs and NWICO. Both Graziano and Fox published very similar articles in 1974: the former in the magazine *Comunicación y Cultura*, the latter in *Chasqui*. Both seek data, critique, and promote discussions.

Fox's final work in this stage was the book *Comunicación dominada: Estados Unidos en los medios de América Latina*, co-written with Beltrán, which published in 1980 as Fox left Colombia for Buenos Aires. This was her last publication whose primary focus was the analysis of cultural domination, defined as "a verifiable process of social influence by which a nation imposes on other countries its set of beliefs, values, knowledge and norms of behavior, as well as its general way of life."³⁰ The book compiled "a large part of the information resulting from the systematic verification of the phenomenon of communications in Latin America and its relationship with the United States."³¹ Fox and Beltrán reviewed a mass of research undertaken up to that time in the region, which demonstrated the degree of concentration of the industry (radio, television, advertising, press), the penetration of US capital in local corporations, and the falsity of the thesis of the free flow of information, which provided a flimsy cover for the unilateral diffusion driven by imperialism. Likewise, in the last chapter, they pointed out the need to formulate alternative communication policies.

²⁷ Elizabeth Fox de Cardona and Luis Ramiro Beltrán, "La influencia de Estados Unidos en la comunicación masiva en América Latina," 53.

²⁸ Luis Ramiro Beltrán and Elizabeth Fox de Cardona, "Medios de comunicación de masas y dominación cultural," *Perspectiva* 10 (1980): 88.

²⁹ Beltrán and Fox de Cardona, 91.

³⁰ Luis Ramiro Beltrán and Elizabeth Fox, *La comunicación dominada* (Mexico City: ILET-Nueva Visión, 1980), 20.

³¹ Beltrán and Fox, 21.

*From Bogotá to Buenos Aires: Disenchantment and Balance
(The Eighties)*

In 1980 Fox left Bogotá and moved to Buenos Aires, where she continued working for the International Development Research Center until 1984. We can locate here a second moment in her trajectory based on her disenchantment with the truncated projects of the NCPs. This can be explained by the role played by the governments of the region with respect to the recommendations that they themselves made at the San José de Costa Rica meeting, which proved to be a pious statement of good intentions with no real transformative impact on a continent that, to a large extent, was being governed by military dictatorships. This is how Luis Gonzaga Motta summarized it six years after the declaration:

The proposal of national communication policies, which at the beginning seemed to the progressive sectors a promising path to follow, must now be re-discussed in the light of recent experiences and revised as an alternative for the democratization of communication. The continent's theoretical and practical communication professionals (professors, researchers, journalists, educators, etc.) must reformulate their own positions of the past decade and reorient their attitudes and struggles based on concrete experiences.³²

In line with these and other disenchantments, the introduction to the book *Comunicación y democracia en América Latina* (1982)—written together with Héctor Schmucler and emerging from meetings of the group on communication of the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO)³³—presented a critical assessment of the communication studies of the previous decade:

Dependency theory—which contributed data that had barely been considered until then—became a rigid, restrictive framework . . . the absolute responsibility assigned to the external enemy repeatedly overshadowed the analysis of forces.³⁴

Fox mentions that, in this period, she began to look more at the subject of social movements and the relationship between communication and democracy:

Well, it was a natural evolution. And I also believe that it was the contact with the intellectuals from the Southern Cone, from Uruguay, from Chile, at that time, from Argentina, from Brazil, who were thinking about rebuilding democracy, about the role of civil society, of the State, about the nature of the State . . . because it was the moment when things were beginning, at least in Argentina, to return to democracy.

The book *Comunicación y democracia* proposed other questions and new paradigms:

³² Luis Gonzaga Motta, "Costa Rica: Six Years Later," *Chasqui*, no. 3 (1982): 14–15.

³³ CLACSO is an institution created in 1967 at the initiative of UNESCO, with headquarters in Buenos Aires, Argentina, whose objectives are related to the promotion, dissemination, and exchange of research in the field of social sciences.

³⁴ Elizabeth Fox and Héctor Schmucler, "Introducción," in *Comunicación y democracia en América Latina*, ed. Elizabeth Fox and Héctor Schmucler (Lima: CLACSO, 1982), 18.

History demands the refinement, and often the replacement, of the concepts we use to think about how to redesign society . . . it is not very useful to think about communication theories without alluding to the social practices that condition communicative forms.³⁵

³⁵ Fox and Schmucler, 15.

In this regard, the book advocated the relevance of reception studies:

The contradictory nature of communication phenomena was not always emphasized with sufficient force. The stories of the media were often repeated, and they were interpreted taking into account the way they were managed by the dominant sectors of local societies or by the central countries in the international arena. Little effort was directed at the analysis of the other pole: that of the dominated. In the venerable sender-receiver dichotomy, the concern of scholars was generally directed towards the former variable.³⁶

³⁶ Fox and Schmucler, 12.

Along these lines, Fox and Schmucler questioned the place of Power with a capital P and proposed reflecting in terms of multi-situated power: "Power as a monolithic and singular nucleus that establishes its dominion over society as a whole is now regarded as a concept that needs to be replaced . . . infrequent questions arise about the concept of hegemony."³⁷ In the same sense, the article "Comunicación y sociedad civil: Una temática incipiente" served as a balance and projection. Fox asked why study communications from the perspective of civil society, and the answer situated her in the context of a region subjected to authoritarian regimes:

The suppression or elimination of many of the more traditional forms of communication is the norm in the countries of the region, with few exceptions. The question then becomes: what communication processes continue among the members of society?; how do they receive, send and process information?; and what are the consequences for the social fabric?³⁸

³⁷ Fox and Schmucler, 15.

³⁸ Elizabeth Fox, "Comunicación y sociedad civil: Una temática incipiente," *Crítica & Utopía* 7 (1982): 1.

As can be seen, these reconsiderations and reconceptualizations of communicational processes were in line with the shifts that were taking place in those same years in the field of communication in Latin America. It can be summed up in terms of the most significant theoretical shift: from dependency theory to the theory of hegemony, a re-reading of Gramscian thought which, in turn, connected with the circulation of British cultural studies in our region.³⁹

During this same period, between 1980 and 1984, Fox served as vice-president of ALAIC⁴⁰—with the presidency in the hands of Patricia Anzola. This was a complicated moment for the association: it had emerged in 1978 with the objective of giving "a greater institutional representation of the region before the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the

³⁹ We are aware that we are just pointing out the main changes—which we label as "shifts"—that can be observed in the field of communication in Latin America. We can also note the passage from production to reception, from media to mediations, from mass culture to popular culture and everyday life. To the re-reading of Gramsci and the circulation of British cultural studies we should add the works of Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault, and Michel de Certeau, among others, which also had a widespread reception in the field of communication and social sciences in our region during this period.

International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR),"⁴¹ but the new Latin American political context, the weakening of UNESCO, and "the withdrawal of funds led to the isolation of ALAIC, although it remained alive in a more informal way."⁴²

Different initiatives were developed in the association, and Fox, together with Luis Ramiro Beltrán, Luis Peirano, and Patricia Anzola, worked on a project to make an inventory of academic publications on communication in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, and Peru. Financial support for this initiative came from the International Development Research Centre of Canada.

In 1984 Fox moved to Paris, where she lived until 1990, working as a consultant for different organizations. From then on she gradually moved away from the field of communication and media: in 2002 she edited, together with Silvio Waisbord, *Latin Politics Global Media*, which would be her last book. Fox explains how this project came about:

In 1984 I left Buenos Aires, married an American journalist, and went to Paris. I spent five years there. While I was there, working with Rafael Roncagliolo at ILET, in Peru, the Germans financed a study for me; because I left the IDRC, the Germans financed a study to make comparative policies for Latin America. That was the basis of that book, which is an edited book on communication policies in Latin America, which is more of a historical review. I wrote it in Paris.

Between 1986 and 1987 Fox worked for the Volkswagen Foundation under the Communications Policy in Latin America program, between 1987 and 1988 for UNESCO, and in 1988 for the World Bank. In addition, between 1990 and 1991 she held the UNESCO Chair of Communication at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. Since 1988 she has been involved in the field of communication and health, where she has worked for the last thirty-five years.

Intervention Work Involving Communication and Health (Since the Nineties)

In 1990 Fox moved to Washington, DC, where she worked until 1995 at the Pan American Health Organization and later for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID),⁴³ in different positions and functions: from 1996 to 2004 as Senior Technical Advisor in Health Communications and Behavior Change; from 2004 to 2011 as Deputy Director; from 2011 to 2016 as Director of the Office of Health, Infectious Diseases and Nutrition; and from 2017 to 2019 as Deputy Coordinator for Maternal and Child Survival. She was also Vice President of the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) from 1996 to 2000. Finally, from

⁴⁰ The Latin American Association of Communication Researchers (ALAIC) was founded in 1978, with headquarters in Caracas, Venezuela, on the initiative of Antonio Pasquali, Luis Ramiro Beltrán, Elizabeth Fox, among many others.

⁴¹ Círculo Krohling, "La presencia de ALAIC en la comunidad latinoamericana de Ciencias de la Comunicación," *Telos*, no. 61 (2004): 1.

⁴² María Victoria Martín and Leila Vicentini, "Comunicación y memoria: ALAIC en el contexto latinoamericano," *Oficios Terrestre*, 15/16 (2004): 265.

⁴³ In an interview with Beltrán on the history of communication for development, he explains, "In the 1980s and 1990s, some international organizations took great pains to support the National Communication Program for People's Health and Nutrition, the foundations of development. Unicef and USAID made considerable contributions in this sense and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) made an effort

2007 to 2015 she worked as an adjunct professor of the subject "Communication, Health, and Development" at the American University in Washington, DC. Fox elaborates on this shift in her career:

I started a career at USAID in public health, as a social scientist, studying how tuberculosis and malaria programs are organized, how child and maternal and child health is done, how information is brought to women. In other words, I became much more involved in applied research. I had a twenty-five-year career. I retired four years ago, and I was not going to do anything. However, I went back to work where I am now, at the Pan American Development Foundation, which is a foundation that supports social sciences in Latin America. I'm having fun, working more on democracy programs, transition of democracy, migration, peace and justice, a little bit of health. But more like human rights and democracy.

To close her pioneering career in communication studies in Latin America, in 2007 she was named Doctor Honoris Causa by the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, an academic institution to which she donated her entire library of Latin American authors twenty years ago. This is how Fox remembers it:

With so much moving, when I was widowed, I packed it all up and gave it all to the Catholic University of Lima. So it is in their library, at the Catholic University of Lima, in the School of Communication, because my friend Luis Peirano was dean at that time. That is why I made a donation of about two thousand books to the Catholic University. Because I was not doing research and there were many primary sources.

Conclusions

In this article we have presented the professional and academic trajectory of Elizabeth Fox, with a twofold purpose: on the one hand, to shed light on her pioneering contributions to the Latin American communicational field, "trying to situate our fields in their corresponding local, national and regional scales and the processes of their institutionalization and development in their respective historical contexts"⁴⁴; and on the other hand, to recognize Fox as a transnational figure, since, as mentioned by Simonson and his co-authors,⁴⁵ there has been a pattern of imbalance in the recognition of South–North interconnections in the Americas. This is precisely what sparked our interest in the author: the limited visibility of her contributions both in Latin America—the region where she worked and lived for more than a decade—and also in the United States, the author's country of origin and where she has lived and worked for more than three decades.

to help the ministries of health, giving priority to primary health care and education of the people on the main health problems, so that they would strive to strengthen the goal of 'Health for All in the Year 2000.'" Fanny Patricia Franco Chávez and Ana María López Rojas, "Una mirada a las raíces de la comunicación para el Desarrollo: Entrevista con Luis Ramiro Beltrán Salmón," *Signo y Pensamiento*, no. 58 (2011): 172.

⁴⁴ Maria Immacolata Vassallo de Lopes and Raúl Fuentes Navarro, "Histórias da internacionalização do campo de estudos da comunicação," *MATRIZES* 17, no. 3(2023): 6.

⁴⁵ Simonson, Pooley, and Park, "A história dos estudos de comunicações Américas," 190.

Elizabeth Fox's intellectual biography spans the history of communication studies in Latin America, particularly the last decades of the last century in which she was one of its key figures. What she called "national communication policies" was not only about consolidating what would later become one of the most productive Latin American traditions—that of critical political economy—it also responded to a critical mass of empirical research that was being undertaken in each of the countries of the region. Its results—accumulating data on the US's concentration and penetration in the region's media—allowed the scholarly community to demonstrate and denounce this "dominated communication" in times of cultural imperialism. Fox's history and story reveal both the pioneering nature of this research enterprise—where libraries served as primary sources, to borrow an image from Fox herself—and the collective dimension of this undertaking, which brought together researchers from the region and inaugurated the first institutions where they met to debate and where they had access to financial resources in an international context that, until the 1980s, was still open to the debate about unequal information and cultural flows. Fox not only produced prolific academic literature but also played a central role as an organizer, bringing together many other researchers in the region to participate in the institutions that were beginning to take shape and promoting collaborative interventions in regional and national communication policies. She played a very important role in the beginnings of the field, was able to move around to different countries and continents, and worked alongside other transnational figures such as Beltrán. Despite this, she is only sporadically mentioned in the reconstruction of the history of the communication field, both in the United States and in Latin America.

As early as the 1980s, Fox critically reviewed the perspectives of the foundational period and began to share the theoretical and methodological shifts that were developing in the field of communication in Latin America. Democracy, civil society, and reception were some of the key words in that era of closure of the processes of social transformation, of more or less weak democratic transitions, and of the construction of new consensuses. Even in this context—which would lead in the 1990s to the consolidation of a neoliberal consensus—Fox persisted in placing her trust in the communication practices of civil society.

One fact that stands out in Fox's account is the role played by different institutions that financed work, research, and collective meetings. According to her testimony, she obtained different types of funding from at least eight institutions at the beginning of her career: the Ford Foundation (United States), International Develop-

ment Research Centre (Canada), CIESPAL (Ecuador), CEDAL (Costa Rica), Friedrich Ebert Foundation (Germany), Latin American Institute of Transnational Studies (Mexico), and CLACSO (Argentina), in addition to actively participating in the Latin American Association of Communication Researchers (ALAIC), where she eventually rose to the position of vice-president. Surprisingly, such funding did not limit research that challenged an unequal international order. A series of confluences helped to finance projects and research, pay salaries, and guarantee the necessary conditions for academic production, such as the organization of events and creation of media networks that enabled permanent contact and exchange (as Fox recalled: "We could make long-distance calls."). In the interview, Fox points out at least two converging factors. On the one hand, she highlights the "very liberal" orientation of the Ford Foundation in those early years, which favored criticism of the functioning of mass media in the region and of US cultural domination. On the other hand, she points out that Canadian and German interests coincided with those of the so-called Third World countries, strengthening support for a New World Information and Communication Order and leading to greater promotion of research that worked from that perspective. Canada confronted in a relatively similar way the growing media and cultural influence of the United States in its territory, while at the same time supporting a public communication model opposed to that of its neighbor. Germany, through the Ebert Foundation, recovered the more liberal traditions of social democracy and had a public media system. For our part, we add a third factor: in the 1970s, UNESCO was still receptive to debates on NWICO, to the formulation of national or regional communication policies, and to the denunciation of the unequal North–South flow of information. Only a decade later, in the early 1980s, the withdrawal of the United States and Great Britain from UNESCO would alter the situation of this organization and of the European media landscape, which was beginning a process of privatization of its audiovisual market.

Half a century later, this regional movement that investigated communication policies is part of a history that deserves to be recovered. Researchers in this field today must review these archives in order to avoid crystallizing their exclusions in memory and to instead update these records and make them available again as the basis for a critical perspective of communication studies in Latin America. Celia Del Palacio Montiel proposes not only giving visibility but also advancing in a process of "searching for connections and analyzing from the local space . . . but without taking our eyes off the world."⁴⁶ These "connected histories" of which she speaks create a tension between homogenizing views and particularist pretensions, and also mark the

⁴⁶ Celia Del Palacio Montiel, "History of Communication Studies from the Regions of Latin America," *Comunicación y Sociedad* (2023): 16.

next horizon for this critical project, in part because the processes and demands that gave rise to it are still open: the profound communicational inequality between the global north and south, and the lack of communicational democracy in each of our countries.

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