

CIESPAL and the development of education and research in communication in Latin America

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Abstract

As a regional international organization focused on education and research, the Centro Internacional de Estudios Superiores de Comunicación para América Latina (CIESPAL) played a key role in institutionalizing the field of communication studies in the so-called “Third World” countries. Founded in 1959, in Ecuador, it is an initiative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) with the objective of implementing a set of strategies to improve the training of journalists and academics in the area. Referring to the Cold War context, its development was linked to other international organizations and political-cultural entities, which ended up stimulating the formation of an environment marked by relations of cooperation and cooptation, but also by resistance. By reconstructing the 60-year trajectory of this Latin American center, the aim is to show how its role has been dynamic and is related to the political and social changes that have taken place in the region, notably the rise and fall of military dictatorships in South America.

Keywords

UNESCO, regional international organizations, journalism schools, communication studies, higher education, internationalization of research, Latin American politics

1 Introduction

While most newspaper research institutes that emerged in Europe and Asia were disfigured from their original projects and later even completely closed after World War II (Averbeck-Lietz, 2015; Rüdiger, 2017), it was during this period that the first university programs in journalism began to be implemented in Latin America, starting in Argentina and Brazil. Throughout the second half of the 20th century, these and other Latin American countries such as Mexico, Colombia and Chile saw a progressive expansion in the number of schools for both academic and professional training of journalists. According to a report organized by Nixon (1982), from the 13 journalism schools that were operating in the region in the 1950s, there was a leap to 163 schools in the 1980s.

Their history cannot be properly understood without characterizing the social, political and economic context in which they were born and developed. Amidst the crisis faced by Europe in the post-war period, in

many parts of Latin America there was a late industrialization based on import substitution and then the adoption of a “bureaucratic-authoritarian” model (O’Donnell, 1973). At the same time, economic development was boosted and remained dependent on the numerous stimulus policies created by the United States, in part as a strategic response against communism. Notably after the Cuban Revolution in 1959, North Americans reinforced their surveillance of the region, supporting and interfering in the right-wing dictatorships that rose in the 1960s and 1970s (Schmitz, 2006).

It is not unknown the role that U. S. agencies and their programs have played in different segments of social life, including the university and with regard to the evolution of communication studies at the national and international level. As Simpson (1996) explains, “government psychological warfare programs helped shape mass communication research into a distinct scholarly field, strongly influencing the choice of leaders and determining which of the competing sci-



entific paradigms of communication would be funded, elaborated, and encouraged to prosper” (p. 3). Among the assimilated approaches, it is possible to point out “a positivist reduction of complex phenomena to discrete components; an emphasis on quantitative description of change; and a claimed perspective of ‘objectivity’ toward scientific ‘truth’” (p. 6).

As these U.S.-financed projects have had considerable reach and their leaders, such as Wilbur Schramm, have assumed prominent positions in shaping the academic field of communication, it is not difficult to identify how the informational conception of mass communication and the empirical approaches of the social sciences were transformed into foundations for structuring new research centers in the area, as well as restructuring old newspaper research institutes around the globe. This article will focus on historicizing one of the most expressive cases: the Centro Internacional de Estudios Superiores de Comunicación para América Latina (CIESPAL, International Center for Higher Studies in Communication for Latin America), created by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1959.

2 Justification and considerations for the historical synthesis

As an agency of the United Nations (UN), UNESCO has mobilized efforts, since its formation in 1945, to favor the diffusion of culture and the free circulation of information among nations. Aiming at improving this situation, one of the projects developed was to implement specialized training centers for journalists not only in Europe, but also in the so-called “Third World” countries. In this context of the Cold War, marked by power disputes between the Western and Eastern blocs, the first of these international and non-governmental establishments was the Centre International d’Enseignement Supérieur du Journalisme (CIESJ, International Center for Higher Education in Journalism), opened in France in 1957. To expand its activities, another was opened in Ecuador, which began operating under the auspices

of the local government, providing CIESPAL with material and human resources through the Universidad Central del Ecuador (UCE, Central University of Ecuador).

Our work, which aims to reconstruct its trajectory, matters insofar as it seeks to critically analyze the role of a pioneer center for teaching, documentation, and scientific research on journalism and communication in Latin America. As Fuentes Navarro (2019, p. 40) recognizes, its foundation “allowed a first transnational reference for the dissemination of intra- and extra-Latin American communication projects of different scope and orientation.” And for León Duarte (2012, p. 253), more than that, because from its constitution

the germ and cement of greater weight is established for the development of the academic field of communication in Latin America, which also originates the way to open, on the one hand, the development of institutionalization in its research and, on the other, of the consolidation of teaching.

In better detail, through this, a first definition of the parameters of press research was offered to the countries of the region, while allowing the carrying out of quantitative and comparative transnational investigations on Latin American daily newspapers. Furthermore, the Ecuadorian center played a key role in organizing journalism schools throughout the region and later in their transformation into schools of communication – initially under the adjectives of *comunicación de masas*, then *comunicación colectiva*, and finally *comunicación social* (Feliciano, 1988, p. 56). Still under its influence, the guidelines for pedagogical models of undergraduate programs were developed and put into practice, establishing their minimum time of duration and essential subjects for courses.

With an interest in exploring such topics, the present analysis is based on comprehensive bibliographic research, using mainly three types of sources: books published by CIESPAL since the 1960s, as well as articles and interviews published by the journal *Chasqui*, in circulation since 1972. However, this is not about proceeding with the reproduction of its institutional discourse, since

the selection of works explored includes a diverse set of intellectual actors who participated in the process of constituting the aforementioned center. Based on this documentation, the aim is to examine the genesis and metamorphosis of this institution, focusing on aspects related to teaching and research.

As a work of historical synthesis, the intention is to identify the main trends involved in the development of CIESPAL and place them within a chronological framework, which comprises the decades from 1960 to 2020. Due to the scope of the period, on the one hand, there is a risk of privileging interpretations and revisiting already known discussions on the subject, without delving into specific themes. On the other hand, as a historical synthesis, this is intended to provide a general and informative framework for readers outside Latin America interested in knowing the trajectory of a unique organization, which practically marks the beginning of academic research in communication in this region.

The argument to be explored, throughout the analysis that follows, is that the foundation and development of CIESPAL are closely related to the political and social changes that have taken place on the continent, from the second half of the 20th century onwards. That is, instead of being static, its role has been dynamic and is deeply related to the environment in which it is inserted. To support this, it begins by describing how the center was initially configured as a reception space for theories and methodologies of mass communication research, at the height of the Cold War. Then, it is shown how, instead of being merely assimilated by Latin American researchers, these theoretical-methodological orientations became the object of criticism and gave rise to other trends, which can be read as expressions of the crisis of right-wing authoritarianism and an indication of the turn to the left in the region.

It then goes on to discuss how this turn, paradoxically, coincided with the beginning of CIESPAL's loss of preponderance in an emergency scenario and, subsequently, with the expansion and diversification of the field of communication studies in Latin America. In other words, the examination of the trajectory of this center also addresses the process

of decentralization of its acting role, which is no longer the protagonist as it was between the 1960s and 1980s, although it remains an important reference for the academic community in a regional level.

3 Establishment of CIESPAL as a regional international organization

Attributing importance to the media in the development of nations, but realizing that there was a lack of training among information professionals as well as few investigations into the impact of communication phenomena, UNESCO began to evaluate ways to intervene in this situation. At its house in Paris, meetings were organized with representatives of academic, professional and governmental entities, the main one being held in 1956, with the presence of experts from more than 20 countries (UNESCO, 1956). One of the results of this work was the planning of regional centers that would be responsible for qualifying professional journalists and academic staff for the emerging area.

At the end of the following year, the UN agency promoted the foundation of the first of these centers in the city of Strasbourg. Directed by Jacques Leauté, CIESJ would seek to meet the demands of the European community, although it extended some actions to Africa. In 1958, during the 10th General Conference of UNESCO, the establishment of a center similar to the French one in the Ecuadorian capital was recommended, this time to contemplate the emerging Latin American community.

With this background and the valuable auspices of the Government of Ecuador, UNESCO, and the Central University of Ecuador, CIESPAL was established [...] as a regional, international, non-governmental center, with its own legal status and which has its scope on the study of journalism issues, [whose] immediate objectives are focused on three essential aspects: a) teaching; b) documentation; and, c) scientific research. (CIESPAL, 1960, p. 6)

In the context of teacher training, the performance of this center was notorious for offering seminars on information and com-

munication sciences, with the distribution of scholarships financed by UNESCO, but also by the Ford Foundation and the Organization of American States (OEA). With regard to the documentation service, priority was given to the collection and systematization of data relating to the Latin American periodical press, as well as to the journalism schools that were operating in the region. To carry out this and other tasks, it was necessary to raise multiple resources. The first step took place with the provision of physical infrastructure by the Central University of Ecuador, which gave CIESPAL the status of an autonomous university body from the beginning. However, more than that was needed to create an environment and conditions conducive to academic work.

Contributions were received from various institutions such as the East-West Center (EWC) and the Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), the Instituto Interamericano de Cooperación para a Agricultura (IICA, Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture) and the Instituto de Cultura Hispánica (ICH, Institute of Hispanic Culture), in addition to the Universidad de Navarra (UNAV, University of Navarra), Universidad Veracruzana (UV, University of Veracruz) and Universidade de São Paulo (USP, University of São Paulo), which donated books in Portuguese and Spanish. Among the Anglo-Saxon foundations, there were financial donations from Thomson and mainly from Ford (CIESPAL, 1971, pp. 1–13).

The center's first administration was headed by diplomat Homero Viteri Lafrontera as director and by journalist Jorge Fernández as secretary general, who was soon promoted to the position of director general. In the press, he worked for *El Comercio*, a traditional Ecuadorian newspaper, controlled by the Mantilla family, in which Fernández became a trusted man. At the head of CIESPAL, he was "aware of the theoretical gaps existing in Latin American universities" and sought to align the center "with the theories of development cultivated by CEPAL, in Santiago de Chile, place of birth of dependency theory." After a decade as academic director, "the Government of Ecuador summoned Fernán-

dez to assume new positions; among them, that of ambassador to the United States" (Marques de Melo, 2012, p. 11–12).

His successor was Gonzalo Córdova, who held the position of secretary general during Fernández's administration, and for this reason was considered a continuator of his project. However, during the administration of Córdova a series of significant changes were made, which should be highlighted. One of them was the approach of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES, Friedrich Ebert Foundation) in Germany, which started to financially support CIESPAL events and publications, such as the journal *Chasqui*. Launched in 1972, the choice of its name already denoted the commitment on the part of the new board to value regional culture and move away from the North American ideological zone. On the other hand, its proposal contemplated a wide range of issues in Latin American communication instead of focusing on journalism – which is nevertheless an acquired influence of mass communication research.

Such thematic opening was, in fact, symptomatic of a major change that was underway: the submission of journalism education/research to communication studies. This is evident from the name of the center which was changed after 14 years of activities. Founded as the Centro Internacional de Estudios Superiores de *Periodismo* para América Latina, CIESPAL was renamed the Centro Internacional de Estudios Superiores de *Comunicación* para América Latina. Another notable reform that materialized at that time occurred at the structural level: the construction of its own headquarters, with offices and an auditorium, which was inaugurated under the direction of Marco Ordóñez Andrade, in 1979.

At this time, it should be noted that Ecuador was entering a process of democratic transition, after a period of military intervention that began with the 1972 coup. In this sense, there are reasons that help to understand why this set of changes in CIESPAL found impulses to be carried out in that context. The Ecuadorian dictatorship of the 1970s supported economic modernization and social reforms, while seeking to assert national sovereignty, in contrast to foreign

interests. To put it better, “during an era in which a majority of countries in Latin America were governed by ruthless dictatorships charged with stabilising and resuscitating ailing economies, the Ecuadorian *dictablanda* (milquetoast dictatorship) enjoyed the *fortuna* of overseeing a period of unprecedented economic expansion” (Isaacs, 1993, p. 4).

4 Quantitative and comparative content analysis as a methodological paradigm

Under Fernández’s administration, CIESPAL’s first decade was marked by the reception of the theoretical-methodological premises of mass communication research. This influence can be explained, in part, as a consequence of the resources provided by U.S. foundations and agencies, which stimulated both the hiring of professors from North American universities and the publication of translations of their works (e.g., Deutschmann, 1965). Throughout the 1960s, scholars such as Raymond Nixon led projects and taught seminars at the center, while others such as Wilbur Schramm, Ralph O. Nafziger, and David Manning White had their works elected to be part of the field’s canon.

In the case of Schramm, it is worth noting that he held a privileged position internationally as a special consultant at UNESCO, although he “was not a professor at CIESPAL” (Marques de Melo, 2011, p. 20). His works have been translated, among other languages, into French by UNESCO and into Spanish by the Ecuadorian center (Schramm, 1964, 1965, 1967). Thus, it can be said that this institution mediated the reception of Schramm’s ideas in Latin America. Taught by his disciples, his conceptions and perspectives were little by little assimilated by scholars from other countries.

The translated books express an interest both in transforming journalism schools into communication and in bringing them closer to empirical research in the social sciences. Furthermore, the ideological dimension of his proposition should be noted. It is a functionalist view according to which the role of communication is to be an engine of the eco-

nomical and social development of nations. In his words,

communication research, therefore, is concerned with finding the way to be effective in communication, how to be understood, how to be clear, how people use the media, how nations can understand each other, how society can use the media to achieve maximum well-being [...]. (Schramm, 1965, p. 12)

In turn, Nixon had another type of relationship with CIESPAL, as he was present for a long time on its staff, including as a professor of the center’s inaugural course. His participation was especially important for the internationalization of CIESPAL, since at that time Nixon was president of the recently founded International Association for Mass Communication Research (IAMCR). One of his merits was to systematize material to offer a global understanding of the evolution of the academic field of journalism, since its origins on the European continent (Nixon, 1963). On the other hand, it cannot be ignored that he ended up supporting the project of inserting newspaper research into communication studies. Even because for him, “journalism is that part of communication that is concerned with the function of collecting, preparing, distributing timely information (news and its interpretation) and opinions, also timely (editorials and other forms of comments)” (Nixon, 1963, p. 7).

Among the academic leaders from outside the United States who participated in the structuring phase of the center, it is worth mentioning the name of Jacques Kayser, deputy director of the Institut Français de Presse (IFP, French Press Institute). Despite his death in 1963, the teachings of his seminars on comparative and morphological content analysis of newspapers were quickly assimilated after they were compiled and translated into Spanish (Kayser, 1961, 1963). His defense was that “any comparative press study at the international level allows a better understanding of the problems that arise in other countries, the disconcerting way in which they are treated, the influence that their existence and evolution may have on public opinion” (Kayser, 1961, p. 58).

Used for content classification and quantification purposes, such investigation procedures were introduced in the Ecuadorian center because they were considered “scientific.” Its adherents produced descriptive and measurable incursions around Latin American newspapers. The objective was basically to list the affinities and differences between them, “relating them to the treatment given to the most important events in the region” (CIESPAL, 1967, p. 4). However, given the superficiality of the interpretive analysis, their conclusions were tied to limited findings. For example, it was observed that “South American newspapers generally contain more than twice the volume of foreign news than US newspapers” (Markham, 1962, p. 17). Or that “in almost all the daily newspapers, issues referring to economic and cultural development had limited spaces, while those referring to reporting on crimes, catastrophes and disasters, entertainment and other events of the genre were very wide” (Ordóñez Andrade, 1972, p. 64).

In an overview of the initial phase of CIESPAL, Parente Aragão (2017) summarizes the scenario up to the mid-1960s well by recovering data previously made available by Gonzalo Córdova. First, most of the books published were by authors and institutions from the United States (12 publications) and France (8). Another point concerns the nationality of the professors: 10 were from the United States, 9 from Europe (4 from France and the rest from Belgium, Germany, Poland and Spain), and 8 from Latin America (3 from Ecuador, 3 from Chile, and 2 from Brazil). The predominance of Latin Americans was only among students: there were 366 enrolled coming from 20 countries in the Americas, of which 186 were scholarship holders: 114 from UNESCO, 63 from the OEA, and 9 from the Ford Foundation.

As noted by Parente Aragão (2017, p. 350), “CIESPAL was characterized by being an international center, but its internationalization did not refer to the dissemination of thought from several Latin American countries,” being too limited to the United States and Europe. In other words, the center operated under a colonial vision of teaching and research, since the strategy consisted of summoning foreign professors to transmit their

knowledge to Latin American academics. In turn, they should apply these foreign theoretical-methodological models to the framework of the Latin American press. Upon returning to their home countries, Latin American academics should reproduce this set of ideas and techniques for their students in journalism schools.

This does not mean, however, that the reception of this was passive or that critical reactions did not arise among researchers affiliated with CIESPAL. Armand Mattelart (1970) was one of the first and most powerful critics of the premises spread by mass communication research. In his view, this tradition failed to ignore ideological aspects of the messages, as well as the point of view of the recipients. Because of that, “the results of such content analysis are often very meager.” Adding that this type of approach “whose statistical reiteration is recorded, and whose appearance percentages are calculated, leads, in most cases, only to monotonous and superficial results” (Mattelart, 1970, p. 15).

5 Autonomization and conversion of journalism schools into communication schools

Until the beginning of CIESPAL’s activities, more than 40 journalism schools in Latin America were characterized, for the most part, by a humanistic education, and not by the emphasis on practical teaching and professional training as was common in U.S. schools. This characteristic was due, in general, to the fact that Latin American universities were established under the influence of European models and, specifically, because their first journalism programs were generally created as annexes to the faculties of philosophy or other areas of the humanities. They were not autonomous establishments, with their own academic staff and specialists in press studies. What prevailed was the teaching of subjects such as philosophy and ethics, art history and literary criticism, languages and grammar, taught by professors from the respective fields. Even because hiring specialized personnel and setting up laboratories for journalistic practices required

investments that did not fit into the budget of most universities or were not their priority.

After the installation of the Ecuadorian center, its leaders “convened a group of directors of journalism schools and directors of Latin American newspapers to hold a consultation meeting and establish what the purposes of CIESPAL should be, according to the criteria of the schools and the profession” (Fernández, 1965, p. 1). The consensus – or dominant idea – was that these schools needed “to have a common basic scheme, which would give them a reference to maintain the dialogue and make it possible” (CIESPAL, 1965, p. 27). On the other hand, there was an effort against training with a generic theoretical basis linked to the humanities, as it was believed that this did not meet the requirements for working in the professional press or in other emerging sectors of communication.

The first model for journalism education designed by CIESPAL was submitted for evaluation by representatives of Latin American schools in 1964. This pilot model includes improvements arising from discussions at the regional conferences, which were held in the cities of Medellín, Mexico City, Buenos Aires, and Rio de Janeiro. According to Marco Ordóñez Andrade (1974), one of its former directors, the objective of the model was, firstly, to make journalism schools autonomous within universities and no longer subject to the faculties of philosophy, letters, law, etc. At the same time, there was an insistence on transforming them into collective information science schools and, later, into social communication schools, as they remained. One of the justifications was that, in this way, the excessive emphasis on print journalism would be removed in favor of a vision that included other activities in the media and cultural industry.

CIESPAL defended that communication education should be at university level and that undergraduate programs should have a minimum duration of four years. Recommendations were also made about the courses and subjects to be taught. Courses such as communication theory and communication sociology, which did not exist in the old journalism schools, should be included in the new curricula. Furthermore, it was suggest-

ed that half of the courses offered should be technical-professional, maintaining a balance with the number of theoretical courses. This reformulation was accompanied by the justification that it was necessary to invest in the training of multi-skilled communicators, in line with the demands generated by the expansion of radio and television, of advertising and public relations agencies.

The vision of multi-skilled training, consequently, stimulated a mischaracterization of the professional and academic identity of journalists in favor of the emergence of the generic figure of the “social communicators.” Based on this approach, CIESPAL intended to assign to new schools of communication with multiple roles and make them capable of serving broad objectives, far beyond training for conventional press activities:

Technical assistance and commercial production, so that the University is able to offer its advice to state and private organizations in the field of communication and so that the School can operate as an entity of cultural diffusion, or promote programs by which prepare: newspapers, magazines, radio and television programs, at all levels and for various sectors of the population; and so that, eventually, it can also act, as a commercial production center, to supply the press, radio, television and cinema with adequate materials, both in the general field and in that of advertising; or failing that, offering their facilities so that they can use them – subject to the relevant financial agreements [...]. (Ordóñez Andrade, 1974, p. 22)

Although, since the end of the Cold War, CIESPAL has lost its power to intervene in shaping journalism education (see for an overview Mellado, 2010), communication schools had already become hegemonic when divergences to this project began to increase, especially among journalism scholars. One of its longtime critics, Eduardo Meditsch (1999, p. 72) argues that

CIESPAL was not limited to proposing the creation of a new type of professional: it proposed the extinction and substitution of previously existing professions, [...] since its objective was not to understand the improvement of these existing practices, but rather to replace them with another

er form of practice that is more productive from the point of view of its political objectives.

For him, by diverging from this functionalist approach, the humanism that was the core of training in the old journalism schools would have been rejected by the leaders of the Ecuadorian center, under the influence of the North Americans.

Criticism in this and other directions has not disappeared, on the contrary. So much so that in the case of Brazil, this situation was recently reversed. Since 1969, journalism and others had lost their bachelor's status and been linked to bachelor's programs in communication. However, in 2013, the Ministry of Education responded to demands made by the class and approved national curriculum guidelines for the reestablishment of specific bachelor's programs in all universities in the country. On the other hand, the more than 50 postgraduate programs in the area existing in Brazil continue to be developed under the aegis of communication studies, similarly to other countries on the continent (Vassallo de Lopes, 2012).

Regardless of whether this or that path has been taken – about which there is no space for detailed discussion here – what cannot be ignored is the fact that in times of authoritarianism and centralizing regimes, certain educational reforms, not by chance, were carried out or prioritized over others. Mainly in the case of countries under military dictatorships, curricular reforms took place without a favorable environment to be properly debated by different segments of the academic and professional communities. Likewise, it is not surprising that it was in this context of the 1960s–1980s that CIESPAL found conditions to assume an interventionist character in the field of journalism / communication studies.

6 Against the “dominant paradigm” and the search for a Latin American perspective

If, in academic terms, there was a deepening of this project of converting journalism schools into communication schools and their autonomy in relation to the depart-

ments of philosophy and other humanities, in epistemological terms, there was a transitional movement in another direction: the attempt to move away from the ideological influence zone represented by the models imported from the United States. This movement does not concern only CIESPAL, nor is it limited to the field of communication studies. On the contrary, it forms part of the context in which the strong reception of the ideas of neo-Marxist critical theorists began and, as a whole, left-wing culture gradually conquered ground in the university environment, from the 1970s onwards. Contradictorily, in this period, left-wing parties saw their political influence almost disappear in South America in the midst of right-wing military regimes.

With specific regard to CIESPAL, criticism against the “dominant paradigm” increased after a conference held in the capital of Costa Rica, in 1973, whose objective was to present a preliminary assessment of communication research and define the paths for its development in Latin America. From an organizational point of view, it should be noted that this meeting in San José was organized with funding from the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and with the support of the Centro de Estudios Democráticos de América Latina (CEDAL, Center for Democratic Studies of Latin America). This means that the change in theoretical orientation that took place at CIESPAL, from the 1970s onwards, did not happen by itself, but was related to incentives from Latin American and European organizations, especially from Germany, and to the values linked to social democracy.

The first point discussed at the meeting was about the situation of dependency that was created in the Latin American field due to the uncritical reception of theories and investigation techniques imported from metropolitan centers – and often taught by foreign professors with the aim of reproduction rather than reflective discussion. As reported, these theories and methodologies “do not always correspond to the reality and research needs of backward and dependent countries, but they are applied indiscriminately to situations in the region, with obviously inadequate and sometimes distorting results.” Such use was problematic because “it was

induced under the assumption that social theory is universal and that its validity goes beyond the framework of cultural spaces and historical processes” (CIESPAL, 1973, p. 13).

More than identifying the ideological dimension of mass communication research, academics affiliated with the Latin American center encouraged their colleagues to cultivate propositional attitudes, so that they could design their own approaches and undertake contextual analysis. To elaborate this “much more accurate and critical work instrument, it is necessary to discover all the economic, political, social and cultural interrelations that configure the structures of domination and power that often condition and determine the predominant systems of communication.” In this sense, it came to believe that the “Third World can contain the privileged possibility of developing new paths, both theoretical and methodological, of extreme importance for communication research” (CIESPAL, 1973, p. 14).

This change in strategy adopted by the Ecuadorian center contributed to Latin American scholars not only occupying prominent academic positions, but also assuming roles of theorists, which in the previous decade had been reserved notably to North American and French scholars. However, the changes were not immediate. This is because the initial recommendation was not to abandon the techniques used in quantitative content analysis or morphological analysis, but rather to adapt or reformulate them in favor of qualitative research. The result, in practice, was a shift toward European influences such as semiology and discourse analysis, Frankfurt School critical theory and political economy. Among appropriations and combinations, there was some consensus that quantitative research should be preserved, but it should operate based on the qualitative interpretation of data.

Other criticisms then flourished and reinforced the epistemological shifts that were underway. One of the main critics of North American cultural domination in the field of Latin American communication, Luis Ramiro Beltrán (1976, p. 127), argued that in cases of influence from both Marxism and semiology – or in cases where they are aggregated – what matters is that this “new approach

stems from understanding communication integrally and dynamically as a process,” as well as “from the conviction that such a process is inextricably interwoven with the structure of total society and, particularly, with the economic determinants of this structure.” Adding that, finally, his colleagues would be showing signs of being able to critically analyze the products of mass culture within their own realities:

For the most part, the new communication researchers have focused their efforts on attempting to detect the ideologies of the communicators behind the manifest content of their mass media messages, taking these as expressions of the pro-status quo interests of the power structure that dominates society. They are uncovering latent conservative, mercantilistic, and alienating propositions in the content of verbal and visual messages, particularly in such apparently innocuous formats as comic strips or soap operas. On the other hand, they are accumulating evidence of U.S. domination in Latin America’s “cultural industry,” ranging from fan and women’s magazines through television to advertising, school texts, news agencies, and satellites. (Beltrán, 1976, p. 127)

Amidst the emergence of a movement of denunciations about the increase in the presence of transnational communication companies in Latin America and their power of ideological manipulation over the masses, less dogmatized and mechanical analyzes began to appear. Thus, they sought to provide elements for a critical theorization of the media, considering multiple aspects of the production and consumption of information and images. From the perspective of semiology, one of these contributions was presented by Jesús Martín-Barbero in *Comunicación masiva: discurso y poder* (1978), which was published by CIESPAL with the support of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

While in the 1960s, the Ecuadorian center had prioritized – in part due to financial incentives from U.S. foundations – the translation and publication of works from mass communication research, in the following decades, what was privileged was the promotion of works of a theoretical or practical nature by Latin American authors, such

as Mario Kaplún (1985). Still in the 1970s, CIESPAL inaugurated *Chasqui*, which became a traditional journal for the dissemination of Latin American studies, accepting only manuscripts in Spanish or Portuguese. Furthermore, courses and seminars also diversified, bringing issues such as community media, and were mostly taught by Ibero-American academics and media professionals. In addition to the resources provided by the FES, there were also scholarships provided by other European organizations such as the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS, Konrad Adenauer Foundation) and the Radio Nederland Training Centre (RNTC).

7 CIESPAL's decentralization and the rise of the field of communication studies

After the predominance of the Ecuadorian group belonging to the CIESPAL board – Jorge Fernández, Gonzalo Córdova, Marco Ordóñez Andrade, and later others like Luis Eladio Proaño – the field expanded into Latin America and diversified with the entry of scholars from various other countries. Among the pioneers, in addition to the names mentioned in the sections above, others such as the Chilean Edgardo Henry Ríos, the Brazilian Luiz Beltrão, the Argentinean Eliseo Verón, the Venezuelan Luís Aníbal Gómez, the Paraguayan Juan Díaz Bordenave, the Peruvian Rafael Roncagliolo, as well as scholars from Europe such as Antonio Pasquali and Michèle Mattelart. And still, continuators and renovators of this tradition such as the Brazilian José Marques de Melo, the Argentinean María Cristina Mata, the Ecuadorian Alberto Efendy Maldonado Gómez, and the Mexicans Guillermo Orozco Gómez and Raúl Fuentes Navarro.

Given the diversity of intellectual production and theoretical-methodological issues raised by this group of researchers, it is impossible to carry out a review of the post-1973 literature here, in order to discuss the epistemological trends that prevailed and continue to this day. Otherwise, what matters most here is to realize that, notably over the first three decades of activities, CIESPAL contributed to academic training, supported

the development of research and served as a network of contacts for hundreds of Latin American researchers, who came to occupy prominent positions in universities and organizations in the region or abroad. As these pioneers and their successors established themselves as academics, at the head of new training centers and their own research laboratories, their work began to define the paradigms of the Latin American field and, by extension, of CIESPAL itself.

As a journal maintained by CIESPAL since 1972, *Chasqui* can be considered both an irradiator of themes and approaches that emerged from the Latin American academic community, and an illustrator of the trends that guided the practice of research linked to the Ecuadorian center, after its “critical” turn. In view of this, some topics can be commented only with the aim of indicating the evolution of this scholarship. In the 1970s, examinations of the ideological aspects of media discourses stood out, drawing attention to the relationship between the meanings of texts and their conditions of production (Verón, 1973, 1974); as well as denouncing criticisms of the domination strategies used by the capitalist powers of the North, based on studies that tried to problematize the sale of television programs to Latin American channels (Fox de Cardona, 1974) and the increase in the presence of other foreign content in the region (Ordóñez Andrade & Encalada Reyes, 1976).

Such approaches gained ground with the developments of the New International Information Order (NIIO) and the publication of the MacBride Report by UNESCO at the turn of the 1980s. The concerns raised about the right to information and democratization of communication were embraced by CIESPAL and, therefore, guided a series of reflections beyond cultural policies. Efforts emerged to address the role of popular communication and alternative media in building citizenship and a participatory society (e.g., Díaz Bordenave, 1989; Martín-Barbero, 1983; Mata, 1993). From a theoretical point of view, part of these works was inspired by the understanding of horizontal and dialogic communication by the Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire. As he warned in an interview with *Chasqui*, it should be noted that “lan-

guage is ideological: the sender is the subject who transmits the message: the message is its own personal object. This is deeply dangerous” because it ignores the fact that “there is no ‘receiver’ who is only ‘receiver’ [and not also a ‘producer’]” (Freire, 1982, p. 12).

In addition to the continuity of these investigations – often based on cultural approaches – on the social uses of the media for emancipatory education, there has been a significant increase in review essays on communication studies produced in the region. This was due to the progressive recognition that it is necessary to reflect on the existence of a tradition of thought on Latin American communication and the attempt to identify its epistemological specificities. These claims materialized in a series of dossiers and collections on the trajectory of Ibero-American thinkers and their contributions to the field of journalism, communication, and culture. Since the late 1990s, legacies of figures such as Mario Kaplún, Manuel Calvo Hernando, Eliseo Verón, Jesús Martín-Barbero, and Néstor García Canclini have become objects of tribute – mostly laudatory accounts – and less frequently reflective analyzes with epistemological value (e.g., Maldonado Gómez, 2009).

It is noteworthy that as the Latin American field developed and initiatives to think about its own tradition were strengthened, paradoxically, CIESPAL lost the centrality it played in the region, at least until the turn toward the 1980s. In a way, this is explained by the successful creation of other international regional groups in the area, such as the Asociación Latinoamericana de Investigadores de la Comunicación (ALAIIC, Latin American Association of Communication Researchers), founded in Venezuela in 1978; by the multiplication of postgraduate programs, research networks, and international cooperation projects, mainly from the 1990s onwards (Vassallo de Lopes, 2012); by the establishment of academic careers and other opportunities in countries that, in the not distant past, passed through dictatorial regimes; ultimately, a set of changes that took place in the last decades and that cannot be separated from the circumstances generated since the re-democratization of countries like

Argentina since 1983, Brazil since 1985, and Chile since 1990.

At the same time, however, it became more visible how most Latin American countries remain highly dependent on external financing and with stagnant economies due to crises, which accentuates the environment of political instability and democratic fragility. Within this context, organizations such as CIESPAL have been victims of continuous cuts in investments in education and research made by governments that are not committed to effective policies for national development. In the case of the Ecuadorian center, “this situation has been experienced since 2018, when a budget reduction of 50% is made and the reductions continue year after year, until reaching the current moment in which even workers do not receive” (CIESPAL, 2021), as explained by its leaders in a letter of adhesion addressed to the presidency of the republic.

8 Conclusions

Our efforts in this article have been to show how, throughout its more than 60 years of history, CIESPAL was formed as a regional international organization through the interaction of both foreign and local forces and interests and, thus, was able to perform multiple roles – sometimes as a protagonist and sometimes as a supporting agent – in shaping the field of journalism and communication studies in Latin America. On the one hand, it acted as a proponent of pedagogical models and epistemological shifts, as well as a space for academic training for the pioneer generation of Latin American scholars; on the other hand, it was influenced and renewed by them and their successors: supporting their investigations, embracing their themes, and reflecting their theoretical-methodological tendencies. In short, it was characterized as a mediator and articulator, but also as an intervener.

Its foundation, in 1959, is somehow related to the broader movement of ideological and geopolitical dispute that characterized the Cold War period, as the establishment of the Ecuadorian center “was marked by a large contribution of funds from US foun-

dations, especially the Ford Foundation” (Meditsch, 2021, p. 128), which supported specialized consultancies, scholarships, and translation of works from English. As detailed, in CIESPAL’s first decade of activity, what predominated were the premises imported from mass communication research and the presence of North American professors such as Raymond B. Nixon, who, in addition to “undeniable credentials and great capacity academic,” “had a strong articulation with government agencies of the United States, which started to finance his activities in Latin America” (Meditsch, 2021, p. 128).

Nevertheless, it would be naive to assume that there were no contradictions between the opposing political forces, such as the continuity of projects with similarities. With regard to intervention in education in Latin America, “right and left disputed for several decades, in a reflection of what was happening at the international level, but both” supported common curriculum reforms, such as the conversion of journalism schools into communication schools. In either case of ideological influence, there were attempts of “political instrumentation” of the area, sometimes “without realizing that this compromised its technical-scientific development by separating theoretical production and pedagogical orientation from professional reality.” In the passage between one and another ideological zone, communication education “continued focused on the supposed needs of an alternative communicator who lives on the margins of the media and despises it” (Meditsch, 1999, p. 72).

In the field of research, the shift identified with left-wing culture in the 1970s was represented by a wave of criticism toward functionalist sociology and quantitative approaches. These changes in theoretical-methodological orientation cannot be separated from the material conditions that favored it. In the case of CIESPAL, there was a rapprochement with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, but also with other European foundations and Latin American organizations linked to the promotion of social democracy, which guaranteed its financial support. With this, the Ecuadorian center renewed the offer of training courses and academic publications, reducing the presence of

foreign professors and favoring the participation of Ibero-American researchers.

Although the CIESPAL conference in 1973 was paradigmatic for raising awareness of the situation of dependence on theories and investigation techniques imported from metropolitan centers, the result was not the decolonization of the Latin American field or the elaboration of an autonomous epistemology. Indeed, most critical reactions to mass communication research were grounded in European traditions such as Frankfurt School critical theory and French discourse analysis. Ultimately, it means that a colonization was rejected through the adoption of other Western contributions. From these diverse origins, “the field brought together a hodgepodge of theoretical insights grounded in vastly different experiences, disciplinary backgrounds, and geo-political realities to interpret communication and culture in Latin America in contemporary capitalism” (Waisbord, 2014, p. 4).

Paradoxically, this shift identified with left-wing political forces began amid the rise of military authoritarianism in South America. Since CIESPAL is a regional organization based in Ecuador, the national context in which it operates and the historical circumstances with which it interacts must be taken into account. In this sense, one cannot ignore the peculiarities and contradictions of the regime implemented in the country in the 1970s, which assigned the state a proactive role in economic modernization and social reforms, while its government called itself a “revolutionary, nationalist and humanist character” (Isaacs, 1993, p. 55). On the other hand, attention should be paid to the consequences of this political experience, which “since the transition to civilian rule in 1979, has revealed the difficulties inherent in any attempt to draft into existence a set of rules and an institutional framework that can sustain democratic governance” (Isaacs, 1993, p. 124).

It means that, in addition to the international situation, national and regional contexts have contributed to the formation of cooperative and co-opting relationships between the various historical actors – government officials, foreign agencies, professional, and academic leaders, among others. As

shown, this took place at CIESPAL initially by hiring foreign researchers to hold seminars and translate their works, as well as offering scholarships for Latin American scholars, who later gained prominent positions and were awarded numerous other academic opportunities.

The game of influences and re-appropriation is, however, always more complex when trajectories are analyzed individually. Just to illustrate this, the case of José Marques de Melo can be mentioned, who saw the UNESCO / CIESPAL scholarship as an opportunity to leave Brazil, after the military coup of 1964. Upon his return, he spread functionalist and developmental approaches, but he went far beyond the role of recipient of foreign influences (Rüdiger & Daros, 2020). Inspired by the work of North American scholars such as Nixon, the Brazilian became an international academic leader and pioneer in the study of what he and others used to call “Latin American communication thinking” (Marques de Melo, 2009).

The formation of a multifaceted pioneer generation, which has been succeeded by others, through which the Latin American academic field has developed and expanded, with its own schools, associations and many other initiatives with an international reach; ultimately, all of this provides elements to understand the significance of CIESPAL's decentralization process in recent decades. As a result of this dispersion of powers and pluralism of approaches, new challenges arise to be faced, including the need for discussion and formulation of regional public policies for the area (Kunsch, 2013). But there are also many others, such as the opening of research fronts, still unexplored, to rethink the role of the Latin American tradition in the global field and its potential for contributing to new communication and media studies.

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Conflict of interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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