

The Communications Research in Spain: the Political Economy Epistemological Approach

Núria Almiron and Ramón Reig

Keywords: *Political economy of communication and information; critical research; communications; Spain.*

Although communications research in Spain produces a voluminous output and shows a great dynamism through a vast number of conferences and symposia, publications, books and articles, and doctoral dissertations, does this vast quantity show the same richness in terms of quality and diversity? In order to answer this question, and starting from the hypothesis that certain critical perspectives, mainly the political economy one, are deeply in the minority in the communications research field, the authors of this paper have carried out a study on the scholarly communications research presented or published in Spain during 2006. This paper presents the major results of it.

Núria Almiron, is a professor of Journalism at Autonomous University of Barcelona and Ramon Reig is a professor of Journalism at the University of Seville. Correspondence: Department of Journalism, University of Barcelona. Email: Nuria.Almiron@uab.cat.

Research capacity for communication research has greatly increased in Spain during the last 30 years and, consequently, the production of such research is greater than before — particularly as there was almost no research tradition in this area before the recovery of democracy in 1976. Since then, communication (or communication science) faculties have consolidated their position and their number has grown up considerably. While at the end of General Franco's dictatorship (1975) there were only four faculties of information science — Madrid, Bellaterra (Barcelona), Pamplona (Navarra) and Lejona (Bilbao) —, by the end of the 1990s there were already about 20. Today there are 55 centres in Spain where journalism, audiovisual communication, documentation, advertising and public relations can be studied (35 centres at public universities and 20 at private universities [\(1\)](#)).

However, the rising of research capacity in this field does not automatically mean that the usefulness of the research, linked to society's specific needs for knowledge, has undergone a proportional transformation. That is, not only a more plural research, but also an increase of epistemological approaches fundamental for democratic structures — such as the critical perspective — is needed.

Taking into account the concentration of the Spanish communications research in areas such as the history of communication, (newspaper) journalism and semiotics, or, more recently, information and communication technologies, it was not at all unreasonable to consider that, although the expanded capacity of this research, increasing the range of approaches or perspectives in communication research in Spain still is a necessity. The central point of our starting hypothesis was that the Spanish communication research focus, centred only on certain fields, has been achieved at the expense of other epistemological approaches that could make Western democracies healthier and more vigorous.

To test this hypothesis we choose to analyse the research output in Spain of one of the critical perspectives with a more developed and consistent theoretical approach: the political economy of communication (PEC). PEC combines historical perspective, the shape of power structures (mainly economy), media structure and the message and approach to research that Habermas has called 'liberation with the aid of reflection' ([Habermas 1963](#)). PEC involves the contribution of a set of critical and heterodox approaches essential for understanding modern reality providing an important analytical instrument for looking in depth at the actions of social agents in the sphere of communication and information.

Consequently, the presence or absence of PEC research can be considered a good measure to assess the pluralism in respect of fields and approaches of the Spanish communications scholar research. The results of this study carried out on communication research in Spain for the year 2006 – with the aid of the analysis of the scholar research production on communication in Spain that year – are presented here.

Methodology

This paper presents an overview of the political economy of communication (PEC) research in Spain in 2006. To accomplish this, we shall define the criteria that lead a certain production to be regarded as scientific (or academic), followed by the criteria that allow it to be defined as

falling within the PEC approach. Finally, these criteria will be applied to the empirical corpus, which is made up of the scientific output examined.

1.1. Research criteria

First of all, a research study has been deemed scientific when it pursues the application of scientific criteria in both its formulation and implementation. That is, when it formulates the problem precisely by proposing well-founded, specific conjectures as opposed to generalities or unfounded assumptions ([Bunge 1980](#)), and when it simultaneously implements a study methodology, that is, a set of scientific techniques that strive to demonstrate whether it is possible to discern the reality, how much of the reality can be discerned, and via what means it can be discerned ([Lucas 2002](#)).

To define the criteria that enable us to determine when we can claim that a specific study falls within the PEC approach, we first started from Vincent Mosco's farsighted, indeed virtually surgical (so well-defined it is) distinction between PEC and other similar approaches, essentially cultural studies and communication policies: 'The political economy approach to communication is one starting point or gateway among a range of others, such as cultural studies and policy studies, major approaches that reside on the borders of political economy' ([Mosco 1998, 3](#)). Mosco is perhaps the person who has best defined *what PEC is not*. With respect to cultural studies, he has claimed:

'Political Economy diverges from the trend in cultural studies to exaggerate the importance of subjectivity, as well as from its inclination to reject thinking in terms of historical practices and social totalities. Political Economy also diverges from the trend in which the defenders of cultural studies use not very clear language, which contradicts the original vision of this approach in which cultural analysis should be accessible to ordinary individuals, who are the ones responsible for creating culture' ([Mosco 2006, 74](#)).

With respect to policy studies, Mosco points out the differing positions that power has in the policy studies compared to PEC:

'Though, in practice, policy studies and political economy overlap, it is intellectually clarifying to suggest an essential ontological difference in how the two disciplines view power. Policy studies views power as diffused and dispersed, one among many forces at work in the social field. Political economy sees it as congealed and structured, a central force in shaping the social field' ([Mosco 1998, 257](#)).

In the realm of cultural studies, culturalistic perspectives do not ignore the power variable, yet nor do they place it at the core of their way of addressing social relations. What is more, 'their conception of power tends to be rooted in individual subjectivities, their identities, and collective action, rather than, as political economy would have it, structured in the institutions of society' ([Mosco 1998, 258](#)). PEC provides a corrective measure to 'instrumentalists, statist, and economic tendencies within policy studies', as it acknowledges their value yet seeks deeper levels of knowledge, and as it offsets the excessive emphasis on the political and economic dimensions of these studies ([Mosco 1998, 262-263](#)).

Likewise, here we are not interested in the distinction between the North American and European currents in the political economy of communication, which, from our point of view,

are less different than what has often been suggested and are unquestionably complementary. Along these lines, as pointed out by Dallas Smythe himself in his reply to British Graham Murdock in 1978, the former's approach did not exclude ideological reproduction, which is at the core of European research, rather it strove to eliminate 'the simplistic model of direct manipulation' by the state or government 'with the intention to present the process through which awareness industries produce ideology more realistically, although more complexly and indeed more cryptically' ([Smythe 2006, 28](#)).

On the contrary, what we are interested in here is the backbone joining research by political economists of communication and information all over the world, that is, the backbone or common thread that places all of them in that space pointed out by Mosco that is located somewhere between communication policy and cultural studies. This backbone is characterised generically by the features inherent to political economy since its start with the first economists: the quest for understanding of social change and historical transformation, the goal of undertaking global analyses of the totality of what is social (not decontextualised but bearing in mind all the implications) and the assumption of ethical social practices. In specific terms, this common thread encompasses what Mosco defines as going beyond the understanding of *how*, *who* and *what* in order to determine the *why*; all with the overarching goal of contributing to democracy:

'In essence, political economy argues that understanding how requires more than comprehending who does what to whom. Moreover, how alone does not explain the process. This is accomplished by determining why actions take place, and this demands locating communication policy within the general political economy, including historical and contemporary tendencies. Finally, political economy moves beyond instrumentalism by calling for a critical understanding of the policy process, one that connects a structural and historical understanding to a set of values or a moral philosophical standpoint that assesses the process for its contribution to democracy, equality, participation, fairness, and justice' ([Mosco 1998, 263](#)).

The quest for *why* can be regarded as the common denominator of political economists of communication since the very beginning of this approach. Why do media companies in monopoly capitalism work the way they do is what Dallas Smythe strives to document from the very start, and it is what, although he summarises about the audiences, he responds to by going a step further:

'The prime purpose of the mass media complex is to produce people in audiences who work at learning the theory and practice of consumership for civilian goods and who support (with taxes and votes) the military demand management system. The second principal purpose is to produce audiences whose theory and practice confirms the ideology of monopoly capitalism (possessive individualism in an authoritarian political system). The third principal purpose is to produce public opinion supportive of the strategic and tactical policies of the state [...]. [...], the fourth purpose of the mass media complex is to operate itself so profitably as to ensure unrivalled respect for its economic importance in the system' ([Smythe 1977, 20](#)).

The quest for the causes of a certain state of affairs is what prompted the complete work by Herbert I. Schiller, which forges bonds with the military complex and the telecommunications and new technologies industries. This is also clearly what spurred the numerous studies on business concentration, ownership and control in media companies ([Wasco 1984](#); [Herman and](#)

[Chomsky 1988](#); [Bagdikian 1983](#); [McChesney 1993](#); [McChesney et. al 1998](#)) and on the information society ([Mosco 2005](#)) in the United States. In Europe, the political economists, either with more Marxist leanings or falling within the category of critical sociology (2), have studied the links between the financial sector and the new information industry ([Hamelink 1983](#)), the reason behind the failures of and trends in certain communication policies ([Dyson and Humphreys 1990](#)) and also of course concentration (such as [Murdock 1994](#); [Reig 1998](#); [Bustamante 2002, 2003](#); [Doyle 2002](#); [Miège 2005](#) and many more). However, in general, there is no community of PEC researchers as compact as the one in the United States – ‘compact’ in this sense that they regard themselves as members of the same school of thought. Whereas in the United States Smythe and Schiller represent the founding benchmarks of the discipline to the vast majority of political economists, in Europe the main theoretical reference is Marx’s *Das Kapital*, which made it possible for authors who, although they may fall within critical sociology or other Marxist lines, come from fields quite different than communication (such as James Halloran, Kaarle Nordenstreng, Dieter Prokop and Hans Magnus Enzensberger) to contribute to the birth and development of PEC in Europe ([Quirós 2001, 30](#)).

The British authors, for example, who are regarded by many researchers as the ones who laid the programmatic foundations of European PEC ([Murdock and Golding 1974](#); [Curran et. al 1977](#); [Murdock 1978](#); [Garnham 1979](#)), are characterised by having a sweeping vision of the political economy of communication, with diffuse borders that lead PEC to blend with communication policies ([Golding, Murdock and Schlesinger 1986](#); [Curran 2002](#)) and cultural studies ([Ferguson and Golding 1997](#); [Golding and Murdock 1991](#)). In the works by the French authors, this common thread that primarily seeks to document and explain the causes of certain power relationships is more visible ([Flichy 1980, 1991](#); [Mattelart 2001](#)). However, generally speaking, in Europe a theoretical effort is made to situate the political economy within the broader framework of critical theory inspired by Horkheimer, Marcuse and Adorno. ‘For all the European political economists, class relations are a central element of analysis’ ([Quirós 2001, 35](#)), and the perspective of the media as the apparatus of ideological construction ([Mattelart and Siegelau 1979](#); [Garnham 1981, 1990](#); [Hall, 1982, 1986, 1989](#)) emerges precisely from this conception, presumably in contradiction to the pragmatic North American vision (3). Quirós formulates the synthesis between both conceptions when stating that ‘the political economy of communication recognises the importance of the ideological factor, but linked to the idea that the media are first and foremost industrial and commercial organisations that produce and distribute merchandise within capitalism’ ([Quirós 2001, 43](#)). We also take this definition here as a reference, inasmuch as in this study we have *not* deemed that critical analyses of the media form part of PEC when they are totally delinked from, or pay no heed to, economic determination ([Babe 1994](#); [Segovia and Quirós 2006, 179](#)). We share with Mosco the view that political economists are those who generation after generation have been ‘influenced by the perceived need to create alternatives to orthodox economics and, following from this, to develop media policies based on these alternatives’ ([Mosco 1998, 76](#)).

Starting from this aggregate vision between the different visions of PEC, and setting as clear boundaries the ones defined by Mosco, for this study we have deemed scientific studies framed within the PEC approach all productions about the discipline in its broadest sense (press, television, radio, film, publishing, phonographs, Internet, multimedia, advertising, public relations, telecommunications, etc.) whose purpose is to *study power relationships within the framework of political economy*. That is, whose purpose is to study the relations of production, distribution and consumption of resources, in this case communicative, informative and cultural. The studies must take into account the following variables in order to be regarded as being framed within the political economy of communication for the purposes of this study:

1. Critical dimension. Firstly, only studies with critical leanings, with a clear mission to break with the prevailing order of affairs as the only way to overcome its inherent contradictions and inequalities, have been deemed.
2. Economic dimension. Secondly, the studies must include an economic determination, either by studying the economy of the media in general or by examining particular variables such as structure, ownership, concentration or any other form of power relationship within the framework of political economy.
3. Ethical dimension. Thirdly, the studies must implicitly include a philosophical-moral contribution, the ultimate goal of which is a global involvement, that is, a contribution 'to democracy, equality, participation, fairness, and justice,' as Mosco states.

All the studies chosen had to meet these three requirements simultaneously in order to be regarded as PEC, yet at the same time theoretical studies were considered in light of a fourth variable:

4. Theoretical dimension. Logically, scholarly production aimed at theoretically founding the PEC approach was also taken into account.

1.2. Empirical Corpus

The scientific production examined encompasses communications and talks at academic conferences as well as scientific articles, books and doctoral dissertations submitted, published and defended, respectively in Spain during 2006.

For the academic conferences, a database of conferences and symposia from the Communication Portal of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona's Institute of Communication was used. For the scientific articles, we used the ISOC bibliographic database generated by the Information and Documentation Centre (CINDOC) of the Higher Council of Scientific Research (SCIC) and the database of the Consortium of University Libraries of Catalonia (CBUC). For the books catalogue we checked the ISBN (International Standard Book Number) database of the Spanish Ministry of Culture. Finally, for doctoral studies we used the TESEO databases of the Ministry of Education and Science, as well as documentary catalogues from the universities with social communications studies.

2. Antecedents to the Study

A variety of general examinations of research on communication have been undertaken in Spain ([Caffarel, Domínguez and Romano 1989](#); [Desvois and Hibbs 2000](#); [Jones 1995, 1998, 2000](#); [Urubayen 1994](#)), and there are diverse compilations of doctoral dissertations on communication ([Jones and Baró 1997](#), [Landa 1997, 1999](#)), although the most exhaustive bibliometric examination of doctoral theses on communication is most likely the one performed by Jones *et. al* for the period 1926-1998 ([Jones et. al 2000](#)). In 2005 a comprehensive report was published for the autonomous community of Catalonia alone on research into communications and information for the period 1996-2002, which culled from all the scientific production generated ([IEC, 2005](#)). Later, Jones ([2006](#)) also published a bibliographic survey of all the scholarly production on communications, available in the form of a book. In some of these works, the production is quantified according to theoretical fields, including the *information economy*, but no study has been found that specifically assesses PEC research in Spain.

In 2006, Manuel Martínez Nicolás published a political economy article on research into journalism in Spain. Without striving to generalise the results to all communication, it summarises the main trends and shortcomings in this type of research in Spain. In this text, Martínez Nicolás reaches the diagnosis that despite the apparent flourishing of scientific research into communications in Spain, this research is actually enmeshed in a crisis. This crisis is determined by the very historical evolution of the country – in all its aspects: political, social and economic – which has led to a harmful division, in that it is reductionist, between *professionalists* and *communicologists*. The formers, promoters of a ‘descriptive intuitivism’ lack solid foundations ([Martínez Nicolás 2006, 150](#)), while the laterers are utterly disconnected from the professional reality, especially since the virtually exclusive predominance of semiotics for two decades. In the opinion of Martínez Nicolás, these trends have not even begun to be overcome until today, with the third generation of researchers, those who earned their degrees in the late 1980s and early 1990s. They were given a multidisciplinary education in the social sciences that furnished them with a superior methodological training that makes it possible to stop classifying the scientific community into either *practitioners* or *theoreticians*, in order to assess the quality of its production by more rigorous criteria, either theoretical-conception or empirical in nature.

It is in this sense that Martínez Nicolás reveals the absence of researchers who are properly trained in the specialisations of the social sciences – sociology, political science, economics, anthropology, psychology, etc. – as one of the major shortcomings of research into communications in Spain. In this viewpoint, this is complementary theoretical training that rectifies the excessively instrumental or practical nature of *professionalistic* research first, and then undertake research from ‘strong problems from the theoretical realm’, ‘either in the fields of the humanities – rhetoric, pragmatics, argumentation, [...] etc. – or social theory – power, conflict, democracy, interaction, etc.’ ([Ibid. 156](#)), something that is recurrently absent in the realm of *communicology*.

The political economy of communication constitutes an approach of the kind deemed necessary by this and other authors, a far cry from the dichotomies between professional or theoretical research, whose goal is to focus on strong issues taking as the core a field within the social sciences that is utterly in the minority in communications studies: namely critical economics. Below, we shall measure the specific deficit in this field within research into communications in Spain.

3. Results

3.1 Academic conferences

Taking as a source the section on symposia and conferences from the Communication Portal of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona’s Communication Institute (Incom-UAB), which makes exhaustive tallies of all the events related to communications that take place in the world, 324 communication-related events were found for 2006, of which 67 took place in Spain. Of these 67 events, 19 were not academic – they did not present any type of scholarly production as they had a more professional or commercial slant – so that in reality there was a total of 48 conferences or symposia of the kind that we are interested in for 2006.

Of these 48 events, we were unable to obtain information on nine of them; however, this absence was not regarded as a significant loss as most of them were conferences on specific topics in which talks or communications on the political economy of communication would have been highly unlikely (conferences and symposia specialising in semiotics, hypertexting,

corporate communications and strategy, and documentation). The total production analysed for the 39 remaining events is outlined in the table below.

Table 1. Scholarly production analysed presented in conferences or symposia in Spain in 2006	
Paper invitations (keynotes)	253
Paper presentations (communications)	1,970
Total production	2,223
PEC approach (all are papers)	26 (1.17%)

It should be pointed out that most of these 2,223 texts of scholarly production analysed were presented at the following main conferences:

Table 2. Main conferences in terms of number of papers in 2006	
Event	Number of papers
III Congreso ONLINE del Observatorio de la Cibersociedad (online, November 1-30)	515
Congreso Internacional Lusocom 2006 (Santiago de Compostela, April 21-22)	281
IX Congreso IBERCOM (Sevilla, November 15-18)	193
XIII Jornadas Internacionales de Jóvenes Investigadores en Comunicación (Zaragoza, October 26-27)	160
IADIS International Conference WWW/Internet 2006 (Murcia, October 5-8)	131
XII Congreso Internacional de la Asociación Española de Semiótica (Palma de Mallorca, November 2-4)	120
TOTAL	1,400 (62.97% of papers)

As can be seen in Table 1, of the 2,223 scholarly texts presented at conferences and symposia on communications in Spain throughout 2006, only twenty-six of them (a scant 1% of the total) can be regarded as falling within a PEC approach in view of their critical, economic and ethical or theoretical dimensions.

Although they were not prevalent, several different texts that included one of the dimensions of PEC on an isolated basis were identified, yet they can be regarded as falling not within the PEC approach but on the borders of it (common to studies in communication policy or cultural studies): critical texts that did not address the economic dimension of the phenomenon, economic texts that were acritical, and a great deal of production focused on the ethical dimension of the conflicts experienced, yet lacking in critical aspirations and/or economic determination.

As a demonstration of this thematic imbalance at the expense of PEC, one academic event is particularly significant. The 1st National Conference of the Latin Union of the Political Economy of Communication and Culture (I Congreso Nacional de la Unión Latina de la Economía Política de la Comunicación y la Cultura or ULEPIC), held in Seville in November 2006, had only seven contributions from PEC (16.3% of the total). In contrast, up to sixteen of the studies presented in Seville fell within the realm of communications policy (37% of the total), and there were a plethora of texts analysing the content, issuers and receivers of cultural studies – despite the fact that this was an event organised by the association that specifically represents the political economy of communication approach for the Spain-Latin America area. Nevertheless, this conference, along with the 9th IBERCOM Conference – which included a specific working group for political economy, albeit mixed with communication policy – and the International LUSOCOM 2006 Conference concentrated a full 81% of the PEC conferences production analysed for 2006. Thus, it can be stated that production from the PEC standpoint was virtually nonexistent in the Spanish conference scene in 2006 outside the three aforementioned conferences.

In fact, of the 39 events studied, only three conferences were found that specifically classified part of the production presented as falling within one or many of the PEC criteria. In the conferences of the Observatory of the Cybersociety, there was no strand that was entitled ‘Political Economy’, although three of the communications were described as falling within this approach in the keywords defining them. At the IBERCOM conference, there was a working group called ‘Economy and Communication Policies’, and at the ULEPICC-Spain conferences, there was a table called ‘Economics of the Cultural Industries’. Finally, it is remarkable that not all the communications that were self-described or included within this field met the requirements that we have set forth here to regard them as falling within a PEC approach.

3.2. Scientific Articles

To pinpoint the scientific production published in academic journals on communication in Spain in 2006, we checked the population of communication journals with issues published in 2006. To establish this population, we used three different sources: the database of the Information and Documentation Centre (CINDOC) of the Higher Council of Scientific Research (SCIC), the latter being the largest public research body in Spain, depending on the Ministry of Education and Science; the database of the Consortium of University Libraries of Catalonia (CBUC), which publishes summaries of all the communication journals; and the In-RECS database, an index of the impact of Spanish social science journals that is generated by a research group at the Universidad de Granada. Through these sources, a population of thirteen scholarly journals in the realm of communications with issues published in 2006 was found, with the following volume of articles:

Table 4. Scientific articles published in scholarly journals on communication in Spain in 2006	
Journals of communication identified	13
Published articles	349
PEC approach articles	20 (5.73%)

The volume of articles identified is distributed as follows in the population of journals examined:

Table 5. Articles published per journal in 2006	
1. Trípodos (n. 18, n. 19 and extra n. III)	67
2. Comunicar. Revista de Medios de Comunicación y Educación (n. 26 and n. 27)	61
3. Anàlisi: quaderns de comunicació i cultura (n. 33 and n. 34)	35
4. Zer. Revista de Estudios de Comunicación (n. 20 and n. 21)	32
5. Estudios sobre el mensaje periodístico (n. 12)	30
6. Ámbitos. Revista internacional de Comunicación (n. 15)	24
7. Revista Latina de Comunicación Social (n. 61)	21
8. Área Abierta (n. 13, n. 14 and n. 15)	17
9. CIC. Cuadernos de Información y comunicación (n. 11)	16
10. Historia y Comunicación social (n. 11)	13
11. Doxa Comunicación (n. IV)	12
12. Sphera Pública. Revista de Ciencias Sociales y de la Comunicación (n. 6)	11
13. Comunicación y sociedad (vol. XIX, n. 1 and n. 2)	10
TOTAL ARTICLES	349

As seen in Table 4, of the 349 academic texts published in scholarly journals on communication Spain throughout 2006, only twenty of them (barely 5.73% of the total) could be regarded as falling within the PEC approach in light of their critical, economic and ethical or theoretical dimension.

Given the fact that fourteen of the twenty articles identified as falling within PEC correspond to the monograph entitled *Cuadernos de Información y Comunicación*, which is devoted to the political economy of communication and coordinated by Ana I. Segovia, from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, the volume of production in this field is virtually nonexistent outside this volume. The difficulty of identifying the features of the PEC approach in the scholarly production published in journals in Spain even led us to consider articles that only very partially address the three elements of PEC as such and even include them in the list above. One such case is the article by Juan C. Calvi, who is critical only in his final assertions, and another is the one published by Núria Almiron in *Revista Latina*; in this last case, although its analysis does not focus on the economic aspects, they do serve as the predominant backdrop of the analysis undertaken.

3.3. Books

To locate the scientific PEC production on communication published in books in Spain in 2006, we checked the ISBN (International Standard Book Number) database of the Spanish Ministry of Culture. From this source we were unable to build up the complete catalogue of academic books focused on communications published in Spain this year, but we could identify

a few PEC titles from three different search descriptors: ‘comunicación’, ‘periodismo’, and ‘información’ (communication, journalism, information). Each of these category searches gave a 294, 155, and 109 total of book results respectively (being some of the matches coincident), from which only 3 books were found within the PEC criteria.

3.4. Doctoral Dissertations

In order to identify the doctoral dissertations defended in Spain in 2006, we first checked the Database on Doctoral Dissertations (abbreviate TESEO) of the Ministry of Education and Science. There we performed two types of searches: by descriptors (all the dissertations whose title included ‘journalism’, ‘communications’ and/or ‘information’) and by universities (all the dissertations defended at Spanish universities in 2006). Due to the shortcomings of this source (data that had not been updated for 2006 in some cases, and the omission of certain studies in others), the search was complemented by checking research memoranda and library catalogues, and through personal inquiries. All told, 91 doctoral dissertations were found within the realm of social communication, distributed as follows by university:

Universidad Complutense de Madrid	42
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona	13
Universidad de Sevilla	9
Universidad de Navarra	8
Universitat Pompeu Fabra	3
Universidad de Murcia	3
Universitat Ramon Llull	2
Universidad Pontifica de Salamanca	2
Universitat Jaume I de Castelló	1
Universidad de Valencia	1
Universidad Cardenal Herrera CEU	1
Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha	1
Universidad de DEUSTO	1
Universidad de Santiago de Compostela	1
Universidad de Alicante	1
Universidad La Laguna	1
Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia	1
Total	91

Of these 91 doctoral dissertations, two studies with a political economy of communication approach in its perspectives could be found, which accounts for 2.19% of all the dissertations found.

4. Conclusions

As Martínez Nicolás and the authors who have performed bibliometric studies of research into communication in Spain pointed out, the abundance of conferences and symposia, of publications, books and articles published and of doctoral dissertations has turned communications research into one of the most dynamic disciplinary fields within the social sciences and humanities in Spain. Nevertheless, as the few studies that go beyond a quantitative analysis have revealed, qualitative analysis does not show an equally buoyant level of research. Whereas certain fields of study and epistemological perspectives repeatedly prevail on the scene – thus, for example, studies in communication policy and cultural studies have gradually come to take the hegemonic position that the semiotics of mass communications and the history of journalism (the latter still quite prolific) had held for so many years – and even though the methodological spectrum has improved – with the gradual inclusion of researchers with multidisciplinary training in communications hand-in-hand with other fields within the social sciences –, certain subjects of study and approaches remain very much in the minority. Among the approaches that is the most in the minority separately are those that when joined together make up the PEC approach. Thus, if the production from the field of the economy of information and communications is scant, the studies with a global scope are even scander, if possible, and critical studies are hardly to be found. Yet finding these three dimensions – critical, economic and ethical – together in the same study is the greatest exception in Spain, as demonstrated by the 1%, 5.7% and 2.2% of conference papers, articles and doctoral dissertations, respectively, and the three PEC books identified for 2006. These data lead us to three final reflections:

- a) The first is evidence of the erroneous yet widespread assessment of the hypothetical good health of communication research in Spain. The quantitative volume is not only not synonymous with the quality of research, but it can also conceal significant shortcomings, as is clearly the case here.
- b) The second is the claim as to the practical non-existence of research based on a PEC approach within communications research in Spain. This absence becomes even clearer when we dislodge from the PEC field itself approaches that are often confused with PEC yet that share neither its objectives nor its interests.
- c) The third and last reflection dovetails with what Martínez Nicolás points out: the need for performing qualitative as opposed to solely quantitative analyses in communication research in Spain in order to be able to measure not only *what* is researched but also *how* it is researched, and ultimately to study the interests driving certain trends in research. Thus, this requires us also to impose economic criteria (related to power), ethical criteria (towards a global democratic contribution) and critical criteria (with the aim of changing what does not work) on the *research* into communication research. In short, to make political economy of the communication research in Spain.

References

- Babe, Robert E. (1994) *Information and Communication in Economics*. London: Kluwer Academia Publishers.
- Bagdikian, Ben (1983) *The Media Monopoly*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Bunge, Mario (1980) *La investigación científica. Su estrategia y su filosofía*. Barcelona: Ariel.
- Bustamante, Enrique (coord.) (2003) *Hacia un nuevo sistema mundial de comunicación*. Barcelona: Gedisa.
- Bustamante, Enrique (coord.) (2002) *Comunicación y cultura en la era digital*. Barcelona: Gedisa.
- Caffarel, Carmen; Domínguez, Milagros and Romano, Vicente (1989) 'El estado de la investigación de comunicación en España (1978-1987)'. In *CINCO*, n.3, Madrid, AICE, may-august, p. 45-57.
- Curran, James Et al. (1977) *Mass Communication and Society*. London: The Open University Press.
- Curran, James (2002) *Media and Power*. London: Routledge.
- Desvois, Jean Michel and Hibbs, Solange (2000) 'Les recherches des hispanistas sur les médias: 1985-1996'. In Jean Michel Desvois and Solange Hibbs, *La recherche des hispanistas français, 1984-1998*, Paris: Société des Hispanistas Français, p. 225-254.
- Doyle, G. (2002) *Media Ownership: the economics and politics of convergence and concentration in the UK and European media*. London: Sage.
- Dyson, Kenneth and Humphreys, Peter (1990) *The Political Economy of Communications*. London: Routledge.
- Ferguson, Marjorie and Golding, Peter (1999) *Cultural Studies in Question*. London: Sage.
- Flichy, Patrice (1980) *Les industries de l'imaginaire: pour une analyse économique des media*. Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble.
- Flichy, Patrice (1991) *Une histoire de la communication moderne: espace public et vie privée*. Paris: La Découverte.
- Garnham, Nicholas (1979) 'Contribution to a Political Economy of Mass Communication'. In Nicholas Garnham, *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 1, pp. 123-146.
- Garnham, Nicholas (1981) *Subjectivity, Ideology, Class and Historical Materialism*. In *Screen*, Vol. 20, n.1, pp. 121-133.
- Garnham, Nicholas (1990) *Capitalism and Communication: Global Culture and the Economics of Information*. London: Sage.

Golding, Peter and Murdock, Graham (1991) 'Culture, Communication and Political Economy'. In James Curran and Michael Gurevitch. (eds) *Mass Media and Society*. London: Edgard Arnold, pp. 15-32.

Golding, Peter; Murdock, Graham and Schlesinger, Philip. (eds.) (1986) *Communicating Politics: Mass Communication and the Political Process*. New York: Holmes and Meier.

Habermas, Jürgen (1963): *Theorie und praxis: Sozial-Philosophische Studien*, Neuwied am Rhein: Luchterhand.

Hall, Stuart (1982) 'The rediscovery of Ideology: Return of the Repressed in Media Studies'. In Michael Gurevitch, Tony Bennett, James curran, and Jane Woollacott (eds.) *Culture Society, and the Media*. New York: Methuen, pp. 56-90.

Hall, Stuart (1986) 'Media Power and Class Power'. In James Curran (ed.) *Bending Reality. The State of the Media*. London: Pluto Press, pp. 5-14.

Hall, Stuart (1989) 'Ideology and Communication Theory', in Brenda Dervin, Lawrence Grossberg, Barbara J. O'Keefe, and Ellen Wartella (eds.): *Rethinking Communication Paradigm Issues*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, pp. 40-52.

Hamelink, Cees (1983) *Finance and Information: A Studio f Converging Interests*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Herman, Edgard S. and Chomsky, Noam (1988) *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, New York: Panteón.

IEC (2005) *Reports de la recerca a Catalunya. Comunicació i informació (1996-2002)*. Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans.

Jones, Daniel. E (2006) 'La comunicación en el escaparate'. In Bernardo Díaz Nosty (dir.): *Medios de Comunicación, Tendencias 2006*, Madrid: Fundación Telefónica, pp. 447-456.

Jones, Daniel E. et al (2000) *Investigación sobre Comunicación en España. Aproximación bibliométrica a las tesis doctorales (1926-1998)*. Barcelona: COMSAT.

Jones, Daniel. E. (2000) 'Investigaciones en España sobre la comunicación iberoamericana'. In *Comunicación y Sociedad*, Guadalajara (México), Universidad de Guadalajara.

Jones, Daniel E. (1998) 'Investigación sobre comunicación en España: evolución y perspectivas'. In *Zer. Revista de Estudios de Comunicación*, n.5, Leioa, UPV-EHU, November, pp. 13-51.

Jones, Daniel E. (coord.) (1995) *Spanish Directory on Mass Communication Research, 1995*. Barcelona: Centre d'Investigació de la comunicació.

Jones, Daniel E. and Baró, Jaume (1997) 'Tesis doctorals i treballs de recerca universitaris sobre comunicació als Països Catalans, 1954-1996: aproximació bibliomètrica'. In *Anàlisi: Quaderns de Comunciació i Cultura*, n. 20, Bellaterra, UAB, pp. 157-187.

Landa, Carmelo (1997) 'Recopilación de Tesis Doctorales sobre Comunicación en las universidades del País Vasco: una aproximación, 1964-1995'. In *Mediatika: Cuadernos de Medios de Comunicación*, n.6, San Sebastián-Donostia, Sociedad de Estudios Vascos-Eusko Ikaskuntza, pp. 147-179.

Landa, Carmelo (1999) 'Recopilación de Tesis Doctorales sobre Comunicación en las universidades del País Vasco: una aproximación, 1964-1995: 2ª parte'. In *Mediatika: Cuadernos de Medios de Comunicación*, n. 7, San Sebastián-Donostia, Sociedad de Estudios Vascos-Eusko Ikaskuntza, pp. 151-170.

Lucas Marin, Antonio (2002) *Introducción a la Sociología*. Pamplona: Eunsa.

Martínez Nicolás, Manuel (2006) 'Masa (en situación) crítica. La investigación sobre periodismo en España: comunidad científica e intereses de conocimiento'. In *Anàlisi*, n. 33, pp. 135-170.

Mattelart, Armand (2001) *Histoire de la société de l'information*. Paris: La Découverte.

Mattelart, Armand. and Siegelau, Seth (1979) *Communications and class struggle. Vol I: capitalism, imperialism*. New York: International General.

Mcchesney, Robert W. (1993) *Telecommunications, Mass Media and Democracy: The Battle for the Control of U.S. Broadcasting*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Mcchesney, Robert W. Et al. (ed.) (1998) *Capitalism and the information age: the political economy of the global communication revolution*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Miege, Bernard (coord.) (2005): *La concentration dans les industries de contenu*. Paris: Réseaux.

Mosco, Vincent (1998) *The Political Economy of Communication*, California: Sage.

Mosco, Vincent (2005) *The Digital Sublime. Myth, Power and Cyberspace*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.

Mosco, Vincent (2006) 'La economía política de la comunicación: una actualización diez años después'. In *Cuadernos de Información y Comunicación*, Publicaciones Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Vol. 11, pp. 57-79.

Murdock, Graham (1978) 'Blindspot about Western Marxism'. A reply to Dallas Smythe. In *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, II, 2.

Murdock, Graham (1994) 'The new Mogul empires. Media concentration and the control in the age of convergente'. In *Media Development*, 4, pp. 410-419.

Murdock, Graham and Golding, Peter (1974) 'For a Political Economy of Mass Communications'. In Ralph Miliband and John Saville (eds.), *Socialist Register*, London: Merlin Press, pp. 205-234.

Murdock, Graham and Golding, Peter (1977) 'Capitalism, communication, and class relations'. In James Curran Et. al. *Mass Communication and Society*, Londres: The Open University Press, pp. 12-43.

Quiros, Fernando (2001) 'Globalización y pensamiento crítico'. In Fernando Quiros and Francisco Sierra, *Comunicación, globalización y democracia. Crítica de la economía política de la comunicación y la cultura*. Sevilla: Comunicación Social.

Reig, Ramon (1998) *Medios de comunicación y poder en España : prensa, radio, televisión y mundo editorial*. Barcelona: Paidós.

Segovia, Ana I. and Quiros, Fernando (2006) 'Plutocracia y corporaciones de medios en los Estados Unidos'. In *Cuadernos de Información y Comunicación*, Publicaciones Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Vol. 11, pp. 179-205.

Smythe, Dallas W. (1977) 'Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism'. In *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory/Revue canadienne de théorie politique et sociale*, Vol. 1 No. 3 (Fall/Automne).

Smythe, Dallas W. (2006) 'Réplica a Graham Murdock'. In *Cuadernos de Información y Comunicación*, Publicaciones Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Vol. 11, pp. 23-30.

Urabayen, Miguel (1994) 'La investigación sobre comunicación social en España: panorama general'. In *Cultura y comunicación social: América Latina y Europa ibérica*, Barcelona: Centre d'Investigació de la comunicació, pp. 81-86.

Wasco, Janet (1984) 'New Methods in Analyzing Media Concentration'. In Vincent Mosco (ed.), *Policy Research in Telecommunications*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex, pp. 213-219.

NOTES

(1) According to the online database of the Spanish Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia (retrieved August 23, 2007).

(2) Although it is necessary to recall that Herbert I. Schiller also presented himself as a representative of critical theory and heir to the approaches set forth by the Philosophical School of Frankfurt in the study of communication and mass culture.

(3) The Brazilian Cesar Bolaño's critiques (Bolaño 2006, 47-56) of Dallas Smythe's assumptions on the attempt to construct a general Marxist theory of communication is a fine example of the complementarity of both visions – the European-Latin American and the North American – to define a complete paradigm that seeks to answer why before how or who.