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**Repairing Communication. Depatriarchalising,
Decolonising and Ecologising Media Culture**
Reparar a Comunicação. Despatriarcalizar, Descolonizar e
Ecologizar a Cultura Mediática

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Repairing Communication. Depatriarchalising, Decolonising and Ecologising Media Culture

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Chaparro, M., & Andrés, S. de. (2022). *Comunicación radical. Depatriarcalizar, decolonizar y ecologizar la cultura mediática*. Gedisa.

Comunicación Radical. Depatriarcalizar, Decolonizar y Ecologizar la Cultura Mediática (Radical Communication. Depatriarchalising, Decolonising and Ecologising Media Culture; 2022), by Manuel Chaparro Escudero and Susana de Andrés del Campo, offers a feminist, decolonial, and ecologist approach to communication, grounded in an ethical imperative aimed at building fairer and more diverse societies. This work integrates multiple transdisciplinary research strands and advocates for a paradigm shift within communication sciences: a disruptive or insurgent proposition to "re-enchant" communication as a symbolic, political, and economic system. It interconnects various "regenerative keys" replacing the prevailing media culture, characterised by "hyperconnectivity that disconnects", where the suffering of others is commodified into a relentless spectacle, and "algorithms of hate" capture attention while fostering "dismemory".

In clear and incisive language, Manuel Chaparro and Susana de Andrés advocate for holistic communication that engages all the senses, emphasising the potential of orality. They argue that "orality is not just speech; it is listening and thinking with speech" (p. 28). In their assessment,

today, we are witnessing a trend towards the depreciation of listening and speaking. There is less and less listening, no one spends their time just listening, and attention spans are increasingly narrow, leading to shorter lessons and the creation of micro-reports, (...) accelerated practices and utilitarian uses of communication. (p. 64)

In their prologue, Eloísa Nos Aldás and Agustín García Matilla describe this book as a "cradle of essential utopias" (p. 11). The metaphor of the "cradle" alludes to one of the fundamental axes underlying this work: the intrinsic connection between communication and life, between culture and nature. The book's cover — designed by Juan Pablo Venditti with a drawing by Amalfy Fuenmayor Noriega — visually expresses the profound interdependence among various ecosystems and invites reflection on today's communication challenges.

In the introduction to the work, Chaparro and Andrés begin by clarifying that "communication is an end and not just a means. It is essential for vital existence. Without communication, there is no exchange, no learning, no strategies to guarantee survival" (p. 15). Throughout the book, the limitations stemming from a mechanistic and instrumental view of communication are emphasised. Communication is often seen merely as a tool to achieve commercial objectives and exert social control, where "the socio-economic praxis of the media and virtual networks have overshadowed the concept of communication. It is time to repair its meaning" (p. 16). In their view, "[the] miscommunication of our time is related to productivism, stress, disconnection from reality due to the technocentric condition and the absence of close encounters" (p. 16). In this regard, Chaparro and Andrés challenge us "to reclaim communication as a mode of feeling-thinking means rediscovering the connection to understand where, how, and what to convey, and using technologies to interconnect ecosystems and share knowledge. On this path, depatriarchalising and decolonising androcentric imaginaries will be essential" (p. 18). In short, reparation¹ is needed. We acknowledge that this reparation work is too broad to be accomplished solely through academic writing. However, engaging in dialogue with other forms of knowledge and sharing alternative narratives are essential steps.

The book is structured into four interconnected parts: "Radical Communication"; "Decolonising"; "Depatriarchalising"; and "Ecologising". Radical communication entails constructing a fresh perspective that enables us to "disable warlike imaginaries", replacing the "algorithms of hate" with the ethics of care and the common good (p. 25).

This book guides us on a journey through time and space, outlining an alternative history of communication sciences and envisioning different futures. These futures are shaped by the ancestral knowledge of peoples from various corners of

¹The Portuguese verb "reparar" carries dual meanings: it can signify watching carefully and stopping again (re-parar); alternatively, it can denote "to repair", implying actions such as mending, compensating, restoring, making amends, or indemnifying (Barreiros, 2022, p. 116). *Repairing* communication implies *re-assembling*, replacing hasty *fast* communication with *slow* communication (Andrés, 2024).

our planet, often considered peripheral in the realm of science and technology, whose contributions have been erased from the annals of history of science. Beginning with a creative glossary, Chaparro and Andrés present a theoretical framework aimed at transcending the dualisms upon which traditional "Western" science has relied. For instance, they introduce concepts like *corazonar* or *sentirpensar* (feeling-thinking) as alternatives to the dichotomy of reason versus emotion and thinking versus feeling. A *feeling-thinking* approach that challenges androcentrism, elitism, anthropocentrism, and other "isms" shaping our daily lives and contemporary media culture.

This book offers a well-grounded critique of the prevailing order and presents concrete proposals for communication rooted in and aimed at fostering freedom. The proposition to cultivate new paradigms of thought and action entails a journey that encompasses grounding, oralising, degrowth, depatriarchalising, decolonising, decelerating, re-sensitising, pacifying, detoxifying, re-enchanting, and ecologising. This path involves rethinking, redefining, resignifying, recovering, relocating, redistributing, restructuring, reducing, reusing, and recycling — expressions informed by a steadfast eco-feminist conviction.

The vision for the future being presented to us is not an exodus to Mars² but rather a future where everyone can lead a fulfilled and dignified life on this planet. This represents a plausible utopia, which involves realising our deep interdependence with nature and an ethic centred on the well-being of both humans and the other living beings who share the planet with us.

In proposing a "radical" epistemology, Chaparro and Andrés emphasise what they consider essential: transforming the causes of problems is the only way to put an end to them. For example, extractivism, which became widespread with European colonialism and has intensified in the current consumerist vortex, disregards social and environmental impacts. This results in exponential waste production, including *e-waste*, while fuelling and reinforcing systems of servitude and "time poverty". These impacts further entrench exclusionary paradigms based on gender, class, racial and ethnic issues, place of origin, and mother tongue, among others.

In the words of Chaparro and Andrés,

[the] proposal of radical (rhizomatic) communication invites us to recover and fertilise the substrate and foundation of what communication is from its origins. (...) Only by fertilising and restoring the roots of the communication tree can it grow with strong interconnected branches. (p. 26)

Drawing on Hannah Arendt's thought³ — "the past does not lead backwards, it pushes forward and, contrary to what one might think, it is the future that

²With irony, they ask: "conquering Mars — what is the point if the Earth is being 'martyrised'?"

³This review does not include bibliographical references corresponding to those cited from the book under review.

leads us towards the past" — Chaparro and Andrés challenge us to "look to the past to find another future" (p. 33). They emphasise that the concept of future time, as "reinforced by modernity, is a gimmick that has contributed to the destruction of ancestral logics" (p. 33). In this sense, they propose recovering the cosmovisions of Indigenous peoples, providing specific examples of how various collectives are mobilising the recovery of knowledge and cosmovisions of Andean and Amazonian peoples as a strategy of resistance to the imposition of a single history and a single time. As various authors have pointed out, controlling time is one of the main forms of power: the imposition of a single clock, a single calendar, a linear time as a before and after (with the Christian era, before and after Christ; with modernity, before and after the arrival in America⁴; with contemporaneity, before and after the French Revolution).

By revisiting key historical milestones and critically analysing the contemporary operations of international institutions (such as the United Nations) and the "legitimised legality" governing international relations, Chaparro and Andrés underscore the substantial efforts required to address and repair androcolonial violence. Colonial impositions disregarded knowledge and modes of communication, leading to the irreparable extinction of many hundreds of languages. With modernity, the pressures for "progress" and "development" have translated into a desire to surpass what is deemed old and outdated within a homogenising whirlwind that overlooks the perverse effects on people, the environment, and ecosystems.

Contempt for forms deemed "primitive" has led to the intolerant rejection of the "other" and the destruction of the ways of life of Indigenous peoples by hijacking their culture and memory. The "commodification of communication" and the "self-interested amnesia" of major media corporations contribute to "memoricide"⁵, highlighting the urgent need for "a process of anamnesis to recover the knowledge trapped in the digital black hole" (p. 43). Decoloniality starts with recognising the imperative to reclaim the narrative from the bottom and transcend it into another narrative" in order to destabilise the "coloniality of imaginaries" and repair the effects of a "single history" that imposes seemingly unquestionable truths and normalises systems of oppression. Drawing from numerous sources, Chaparro and Andrés highlight that the "epistemicide caused by *androcolonial* reason is an immeasurable loss of knowledge" (p. 90). Invoking Catherine Walsh, they underscore that decoloniality represents "a journey of ongoing struggle", requiring awareness, dissent, and resistance. The decolonial process entails "initiating a process of relearning that will guide us towards reconnecting and engaging in dialogue with nature" (p. 133), which entails

⁴The names commonly used for countries, regions, and cities throughout the American continent (and beyond) are illustrative of colonial legacies. This book provides several examples to elucidate this point.

⁵As the Book of Genesis illustrates, memoricide has a long history, persisting as a "constant practice within colonial and patriarchal contexts. The destruction of cultural ties within women's genealogy and the territory reflects the conqueror's strategy to construct dismemory. The paternal surname and parental authority were imposed, denying women their family tree" (p. 154).

slowing down and embracing degrowth (degrowth should not be confused with austerity). In their view, "[the] fixation on speed neglects vital needs such as care, bodily, illness, or social relationships repair. (...) The capitalist production system thrives on the systematic appropriation of women's (unpaid) time" (p. 102) and through an international division of labour that translates into escalating levels of precarity and social inequality.

Chaparro and Andrés point out that the subjugation of the media and "cultural industries" to colonial principles results in a "communicative coloniality" that serves developmental geostrategic interests, fostering biopolitics with profound impacts on social behaviour and mental health. Data colonialism (Mejías & Couldry, 2019) and the automation of inequality via digital surveillance and control systems have bolstered necropolitics (Mbembe, 2017), which dictates which lives are valued and which can be sacrificed.

Digital networks have turned us into

hunters of information and images, a sport that exhausts us and converts the "captures" into trophy rooms we accumulate in our "gallery" (...). We think we are travelling without moving from our seats; we just row to keep the boat from stopping. (p. 115)

Chained up, "the galley's sentence keeps us in a sedentary, head-down position" (p. 115). Chaparro and Andrés point out that "progress has historically been symbolised by an increase in the capacity for war and domination", meaning "progress" is often associated with the "ability to subjugate others" and to "have more". According to the authors, this "false superiority has been transferred from the military to the religious, economic, and scientific fields" (p. 147), which continues to reinforce androcolonial hierarchies.

Gender inculcation and the deprivation of women's education and freedom have prevented women from knowing their own history. The media worldwide continue to disseminate gender stereotypes and obscure women's historical agency, as evidenced by recent studies on radio, television, newspapers, cinema, and digital networks (e.g., Macharia, 2020). This data calls for a critical review and political transformation of media culture, particularly in how women's contributions to the arts, sports, and science are made invisible⁶. When we talk about invisibility, we are not just referring to numerical representation. More importantly, we are addressing how the dominant media culture continues to propagate and reinforce gender and racial stereotypes and their intersections with issues of class and citizenship.

Chaparro and Andrés point out that language is one of the barricades where the hierarchisation of the masculine as universal is most inertly enacted and that a transition to inclusive communication is essential to challenge the *status quo*. Inclusive communication entails "being aware of what we name, how much and

⁶On the Matilda effect, see, for example, Rajkó et al. (2023).

how we do it, and also being aware of what we do not name and why we do not name it' (Martín Barranco, 2019: 17)" (p. 169). Thus,

it is not just about including, naming and making women visible but also about critically analysing the androcentric weight of language and its consequences. Heritage or patronage are words that exemplify which gender is valued, overshadowing historical realities such as matronage or the inheritance left to us not only by fathers but also by mothers. (p. 169)

It should be noted that inclusive communication means not neglecting context and intersectionalities, both in verbal communication and other forms of communication. Hence, the depatriarchalisation of communication implies not only stating but also performing a commitment to the principles of equality and respect for diversity. It also means challenging the principles embedded in the current attention economy and overcoming the hierarchical dualisms that have marked the history of Western thought, which create "ontological abysses between men and women, between humans and non-humans, between the civilised world and Indigenous peoples, between the hegemonic world and the subordinate world, between the superior world and the inferior world" (p. 195). These hierarchical dualisms are deeply interconnected and tend to reinforce each other, such as male/female, reason/emotion, mind/body, production/reproduction, civilised/barbaric, west/east, urban/rural, public/private, individual/collective, centre/periphery, north/south, universal/particular, subject/object, among others.

Chaparro and Andrés emphasise the urgency of "undoing vertical 'communication', which is merely directed information intended to uphold a single way of thinking" (p. 203). On social networks, "the algorithm is programmed to favour or hate, the latter being more profitable because it receives more public attention" (p. 175). A transition is urgently needed to dismantle the warlike imagery that justifies unjustifiable violence. In this regard, they invoke Silvia Federici's proposal to "re-enchant the world" through the cultivation of communality to counteract a hegemonic culture that glorifies "necrocommunication". Chaparro and Andrés stress that in the "media and in life in general, the important has been sacrificed for the urgent, the lucrative, the sensational" and for a paradoxical "dictatorship of happiness", where happiness means living in the vortex of hyper-consumption. Drawing on Paulo Freire and Beltrán Salmón, Chaparro and Andrés state that "humanity seems to have forgotten that the essence of communication is dialogue", a communication "dedicated to liberation". "Noisy communication" feeds "mute" societies, in which "dominant discourses provoke spirals of silence that manifest in conversations, forums and the media" (p. 287).

The establishment of a "communicative democracy" (p. 155) hinges on communication as a process of sharing. Drawing inspiration from Shiva (2020), Chaparro and Andrés underscore that "simplicity is the foundation of freedom, both personal and political, local and planetary. Being human primarily entails freedom, which is largely constrained in the digital society of surveillance"

(p. 294). In this sense, "returning to the earth and the human potential of communication means shifting the paradigms of having to the paradigms of being, the paradigms of accumulation and appropriation to those of mutuality, commonality, and care" (pp. 294–295). Adapting Latouche's proposal for social transformation within the framework of a degrowth economy, Chaparro and Andrés present a vision for circular communication. This vision seeks to rescue ancestral knowledge and embrace alternative models emerging today in the so-called "margins" and "peripheries", which "by recognising the pluriverse, offer the opportunity to reconcile" (p. 156). Recent studies have highlighted the potential of mnemonic activism (e.g., Cabecinhas, 2022; Giuliani & Pereira, 2023; Macedo et al., 2023) for building the desired communicative democracy. The ecology of knowledge, anti-racist education, critical literacy and media regulation emerge as key areas of social intervention and action research in communication sciences. The academy, schools, the media, the collectives and each of us as a person have a central role to play in repairing communication.

Translation: Anabela Delgado

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Cristina Pereira; 2022).

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