

# The Processes of Contemporary Mediatization

Los procesos de la mediatización contemporánea

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Studies on mediatization have, broadly speaking, two traditions: one that has developed in the North (Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Great Britain, France) and another in the South (mainly in Brazil and Argentina). Focusing on these geographical boundaries is significant because the sociological and cultural variations between the North and the South, as well as those regarding institutional resources, are considerable. However, focusing on this difference does not appear to be sufficient. If attention is limited to what is identified with these distinct locations, we are likely to miss relevant issues concerning the past and present of these studies. This is the reason why what we probably need, without losing sight of the North/South opposition, is to advance both diachronically and synchronically with comparative studies, also seeking transversality, complementarity, and so on<sup>1</sup>.

It is important that we pay attention to the diachronic dimension because the mere emergence, in two distant places, of two developments that call themselves mediatizations obliges us to ask what was happening at that time with the media and media studies in Europe and Latin America. When and how mediatization studies began in both regions and what differentiates them are important questions that deserve further historical research. The moments of emergence do not explain subsequent developments, but understanding them can enable a better comprehension of the different paths each development followed, including their continuities and ruptures, as well as their openings and dialogues with other theoretical frameworks.

This issue of *InMediaciones de la Comunicación* presents some insights into these questions. On the one hand, the publication in the “Miscellanea” section of excerpts from the course taught by Eliseo Verón at the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the University of Buenos Aires (Argentina), published in 1986 under the title “La mediatización,” will be offered as essential material in the history of mediatization studies. The title Verón gave to that course constitutes a “gesture” that perhaps makes it the first global precedent of its kind: it announces the construction of a specific theoretical object in which he distinguishes a mediatic (modern) society from a mediatized (postmodern) one.<sup>2</sup> That is, he explicitly states that these societies are constructed by two different processes of mediatization, and it is one of the texts that explains the historical link between socio-semiotics and mediatizations in Latin America. It also reminds us how a field of study began to emerge that didn’t develop just in Argentina and Brazil, because after the publication of that text, Verón continued writing on the topic<sup>3</sup> and over the years expanded his academic connections, while developing his career—mainly—at the University of San Andrés (UdeSA) in Argentina (where

1 These efforts have already begun. We cite in the References a number of works that, among others, have addressed this issue. Several of these works were also alluded to in the call for papers for this Vol. 21 - No. 1 (January-June 2026) of *InMediaciones de la Comunicación*.

2 It is a text that is based on a previous one (Verón, 1984).

3 Some highlights of his extensive bibliography by decades are: Verón, 1984; 1986; 1997; 1994; 2012.

he directed the Master's Program in Journalism between 2000 and 2006) and in the Communication Department at UdeSA, where he taught "History of Mediatizations" starting in 2011<sup>4</sup>.

This history links Verón to the development of mediatization studies, beyond just his writings, and can also be traced in Brazil, where he participated from its founding in 2009 in the Centro Internacional de Semiótica y Comunicación (CISECO), led by Antonio Fausto Neto, who, in an interview also included in this issue of *InMediaciones de la Comunicación*, with continuous publication, tells us an important part of that history (besides talking about his valuable career path). A history that has continued to this day through another significant institution: the Seminário Internacional de Pesquisa em Midiatização e Processos Sociais, organized by Jairo Ferreira, which is now in its eighth edition.

Another insight into the emergence of mediatization studies, this time in Europe, is provided by Friedrich Krotz, who, in an interview also included in this issue, notes that he began referring to mediatizations in Germany in 1995<sup>5</sup>. This contribution adds to the history of mediatization studies recounted by the Dane Stig Hjarvard (2014), for whom the perspective began in the North with Kent Asp (1986)<sup>6</sup>.

Different emergences and perspectives in different locations in Latin America and Europe? Why not? How many developments, in addition to the widespread Nordic debate between socio-constructivists and institutionalists—see Göran Bolin (2023) and Andreas Hepp (2020)—, should we add?

If questions about historical emergences present challenges, the complexity is even greater when viewed synchronically. It is true that Northern trends have primarily contributed sociological insights, while those from the South have offered an original approach to the circulation of meaning in mediatization (beyond the French semiological approach). However, that is not all, because it

<sup>4</sup> The institutional history of mediatization studies in Argentina has its own specific characteristics. In the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, it is linked to research projects (this applies both to successive UBACYT research projects conducted at the University of Buenos Aires by José Luis Fernández and Mario Carlón, and to the PIACYT project at the National University of the Arts entitled "An Approach to the Personal Working Archive of Eliseo Verón," originally directed by Oscar Traversa (2015) and since 2017 by Gastón Cingolani). Meanwhile, at the University of Rosario, it was formalized in the Center for Research in Mediatizations (CIM), directed until 2025 by Sandra Valdetaro.

<sup>5</sup> According to Krotz, regarding his approach to research on mediatization, two of his texts, one from 1995 and another from 2001, highlighted its importance. Referring to the uses of the term, Krotz says in the interview conducted for this issue of *InMediaciones de la Comunicación*: "The media gained importance not only as a potential force in people's daily lives, but also increasingly influenced social spheres. For example, international football became increasingly dependent on media payments, the economy took control of the internet, and political debates became more frequent on emerging digital networks. I then referred to this as mediatization (Krotz 1995) and called for new social institutions, such as a media testing foundation, to help people deal with all of this (Krotz 2001). This is the extent of the emergence of the term mediatization, as far as I am concerned."

<sup>6</sup> Hjarvard (2014) states: "The Swedish researcher Kent Asp was the first to speak about the mediatization of political life, describing it as a process by which 'a political system is, to a large extent, influenced and adjusted by the needs of the mass media in its political coverage'" (p. 23). This view has not been refuted in other recent texts on mediatization that refer to the importance of this historical moment, as expressed in a major volume on research trends in the South and North—see, for example, Ferreira et al. (2024)—and has also been referenced in other texts that have taken up Hjarvard's ideas, such as an article by Mariano Fernández (2014).

is undeniable that, as a result of the globalization process that characterizes the social sciences today, there are representatives in both the North and the South belonging to the fields of “communication” studies, to the so-called “cultural studies,” “sociology,” “semiotics,” and so on.

This epistemic diversity is therefore present, as one would expect, in the collection of texts gathered in this issue of *InMediaciones de la Comunicación*. It is a clear feature in the North, where, in addition to the well-known distinction between socio-constructivists—Hepp, Couldry, Bolin—and institutionalists—Hjarvard, Winfried Schulz—there are distinct authorial voices. Thus, the techno-semiotics of Göran Bolin, whom we also interviewed, differs from Verón’s socio-semiotics because it draws on the work of Jean Baudrillard, and Krotz’s “communicational” perspective on mediatizations acknowledges the influence, which will surprise many, of Jesús Martín-Barbero, etc.<sup>7</sup> But something similar occurs in the South, where Verón’s perspective on mediatization, originally socio-semiotic, remains significant and has expanded thanks to the notion of *circulation*, although it is no longer necessarily hegemonic, as can be seen in the interview José Luiz Braga granted us.

Within this framework, the call for papers for this issue, structured around the title “Beyond Postmodernity: The Processes of Contemporary Mediatization,” argued that “the progressive restriction of the objects of study in the field of mediatization –both in the North and the South– allows us to consider that increasing attention must be paid to the *processes* that shape contemporary societies, beyond postmodernity.” Hence, a series of questions have been formulated that we consider productive for the field. Such as: What are the processes that characterize these societies in which different human actors (individuals, collectives, media, institutions) and non-human actors (automated devices, algorithms, different types of generative artificial intelligence, bots, etc.) interact at all levels? What do present, past, and future mean within the framework of current mediatization processes? These and other concerns were the initial triggers for this call for papers, which opens up a wide field for each reader to determine whether these concerns were shared by the interviewees and contributors. At the same time, though not explicitly stated in this presentation, a question has been raised here that is essential: beyond the differences, what are the complementarities between the North and the South? Aren’t there many? Don’t we still owe ourselves a deeper reflection on this topic?

In an era where, fortunately, the use of the word “mediatization” is ever expanding, it is interesting to hear what these long-established figures in the

7 Given that in Latin America, since his celebrated book *De los medios a las mediaciones. Comunicación, cultura y hegemonía*, Martín-Barbero (1987) is associated with a specific socio-anthropological perspective, mediations, whose discursive and institutional development has been different from mediatizations, which has been identified with the work and figure of Verón (a fact that has given rise to different positions and debates, even though, as far as we know, the relationship between both authors was one of mutual respect and appreciation), we can ask ourselves whether the interview with Krotz that we publish here will enable another reading of the history of studies on mediatizations in Latin America?

field have to say in their interviews and to explore the contributions of emerging authors specializing in the topic. This is what we set out to do in this issue of *In Mediaciones de la Comunicación*, in which the reader will find, as we have already mentioned, interviews with renowned experts from the South (José Luiz Braga and Antonio Fausto Neto) and the North (Friedrich Krotz and Göran Bolin), in addition to papers by researchers from various countries.

This issue concludes with two interesting contributions in the “Miscellanea” section. On the one hand, as we have already indicated, the publication of excerpts from one of the foundational events internationally for this perspective of study: Verón’s course entitled “La mediatización,” published in 1986, and translated for the first time into English and Portuguese. On the other hand, since not every current research involves mediatization and it is always good to peek into the “other side,” we are publishing an interview with Geert Lovink conducted by our distinguished collaborator Isabel Löfgren, which is a preview of his book *Platform Brutality* that will be published in Spanish and Italian in 2026.

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