

Communication Theory After the Administered Society: The “Total Market” in the Writings of the Departamento Ecu­m­e­n­i­c­o de Investigaciones

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The Departamento Ecu­m­e­n­i­c­o de Investigaciones (DEI) is an independent research institute located in San Jose, Costa Rica, whose members include many notable Latin American social theorists, philosophers, and theologians. Through the institute’s many publications, these scholars have articulated a unique version of critical theory with the aim of fostering a dialogue between philosophy, theology, and the social sciences. The institute’s importance to communication researchers lies both in the sophistication of its social analyses and in its status as a viable model of socially engaged scholarly praxis. Of particular relevance to communication scholars is the DEI’s conceptualization and analysis of the “total market,” a term that refers to the social environment created by neoliberal globalization. The concept of the total market can refocus communication theory in light of contemporary socioeconomic conditions.

Keywords: Departamento Ecu­m­e­n­i­c­o de Investigaciones, Latin American communication research, total market, Frankfurt School, neoliberalism

The upside-down world rewards in reverse: it scorns honesty, punishes work, prizes lack of scruples, and feeds cannibalism. Its professors slander nature: injustice, they say, is a law of nature. Milton Friedman teaches us about the “natural rate of unemployment.” Studying Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray, we learn that blacks remain on the lowest rungs of the social ladder by “natural” law. From John D. Rockefeller’s lectures, we know his success was due to the fact that “nature” rewards the fittest and punishes the useless: more than a century later, the owners of the world continue to believe Charles Darwin wrote his books in their honor.

—Eduardo Galleano, *Upside Down*

The rapid integration of the global neoliberal order in the last quarter of the 20th century has required a refocusing of communication theory along the lines of a de-Westernization and cosmopolitanism of interests (Waisbord & Mellado, 2014). Because communication research examines human experience within the entire range of its social configurations, new concepts have been needed to understand how the contemporary absolutist conception of the market has transformed human life and the presumed trajectory

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Date submitted: 2018-01-18

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of “advanced capitalism.” Topics long assumed fundamental to the political economic approach—such as the status of consumer capitalism as an advanced or “late” form of market society, the industrialization of cultural production through mass media, and the administrative function of the sciences—have lost their centrality as social conditions thought to have been overcome by the mid-20th century reemerge in the 21st. This critical situation opens the door to alternative voices capable of articulating and conceptualizing experiences that had remained marginal in more established schools of thought. As the “upside-down” world of the South begins to offer a prism through which peoples of “advanced societies” can learn about their future, long ignored voices from the margins, often presumed to stand in a relationship of intellectual tutelage with the North, emerge as prescient social analysts (Beltran, 1976). One such group of voices can be found in the Departamento Ecu­m­é­nico de Investigaciones (DEI) in San José, Costa Rica.

As an independent and interdisciplinary research organization composed of a diverse group of philosophers, theologians, and social theorists, Costa Rica’s Departamento Ecu­m­é­nico de Investigaciones is reminiscent of the Frankfurt School’s famed Institute for Social Research. Today, the DEI includes many notable scholars. In addition to the three founding members—Hugo Assmann, Franz Hinkelammert, and Pablo Richard—Elsa Tamez, José Duque, Helio Gallardo, Wim Dierckxsens, Leonardo Boff, and Enrique Dussel number among the center’s affiliated scholars. These scholars have articulated a *critical* project of social analysis and intercession oriented by the regard for what

a people can achieve when they analyze, question, and understand their reality, learn to break with what exists, and discover that they can modify the course of events as they pass from being observers and victims of circumstance to agents of change. (Departamento Ecu­m­é­nico de Investigaciones, n.d., Surgimiento, para. 1)¹

In accordance with their commitment to dialogue among scholars, citizens, and social, cultural, and political leaders, the center’s researchers maintain several in-house publications, including newsletters, magazines, and treatises for scholarly and popular audiences. The most prominent of these outlets is *PASOS*, a journal of scholarly yet accessible writings geared toward critical analysis of social problems. The entire run of *PASOS*, which has been published since 1985, is available online through the DEI website (<http://www.deicr.org/>). DEI researchers have also authored many touchstones of critical scholarship in Latin America, some of which are available in English (Boff, 2006; Dierckxsens, 2000; Dussel, 1995, 2008; Hinkelammert, 1977). As a whole, these writings comprise a dialogue among strands of Continental and Latin American philosophy, the social sciences, and liberation theology.

Given this mix of influences, academicians accustomed to the secular context of university research may question the extent to which theological concerns shape the DEI’s activities. The DEI’s founding members are theologians, and liberation theology has profoundly shaped the center’s institutional fabric and intellectual focus. Originating in the 1950s and 1960s, liberation theology is a global movement of mostly but not exclusively Catholic theologians centered in South America, though numerous offshoots that include

¹ “Habían experimentado lo que puede lograr un pueblo que analiza, cuestiona y entiende su realidad, aprende a partir de lo vivido, descubre que puede modificar el curso de los eventos, cuando pasa de observador y víctima de las circunstancias a agente de cambio.”

Black as well as feminist theologies of liberation have grown worldwide, including in the United States (Floyd-Thomas & Pinn, 2010). As an intellectual movement, liberation theology combines Christian theology with detailed analyses of the social world, thus providing alongside university contexts a site for the unfolding of a contemporary philosophical anthropology aimed at uncovering the significance and championing the value of human life in its depth.

Because of the focal concern with the historical and social conditions of poverty and oppression, some of this work accordingly has been influenced by Marxism. But the Marxist element in liberation theology has often been used to scapegoat the movement and marginalize its proponents while ignoring the range of other influences that mark liberation scholarship as sophisticated articulations of Western philosophy and social analysis. For example, in a passage reflecting on the role lived experience should play in social analysis, Leonardo and Clodovis Boff (1988) write:

The oppressed are more than what social analysts—economists, sociologists, anthropologists—can tell us about them. We need to listen to the oppressed themselves. The poor, in their popular wisdom, in fact “know” much more about poverty than does any economist. Or rather, they know in another way, in much greater depth.

From which we conclude that liberation theologians in contact with the people cannot be content with social analyses but also have to grasp the whole rich interpretation made by the poor of their world, linking the socio-analytical approach with the indispensable understanding provided by folk wisdom. (pp. 30–31)

Here one encounters the methodological concerns that have shaped the social sciences for over a century and that trace to the earliest chapters of the *Methodenstreit* on the role of a subjective understanding of human action in social theory (Dallmayr & McCarthy, 1977). This is a debate that for decades has also shaped the disciplinary terrain of communication studies and Latin American communication research (Calderón, Barranquero, & González Tanco, 2018; Slack, 1983).

DEI scholarship by core and affiliated members, then, is strongly interdisciplinary and reflects founding members' own multidisciplinary training. For example, in addition to being influential theologians, Hinkelammert and Richard have doctorates in economics and sociology, respectively, while Assmann also received advanced training in sociology and is a recognized scholar in the areas of critical pedagogy and communication theory. Accordingly, DEI scholarship ranges from explicit works of theology that are nevertheless grounded in a multidisciplinary literature (such as that by Leonardo Boff and Carlos Gutiérrez) to critical analyses of social life that are principally works of social theory and which apply their findings to theological issues. Some of Hinkelammert's works fall into this latter group. Finally, some researchers associated with the DEI, such as Wim Dierckxsens, write on topics such as the economics of globalization, with no overt connection to liberation theology. A typical issue of *PASOS* will include a mix of these concerns.

Liberation theology has also informed the DEI's institutional structure. The principle most closely identified with this theological movement is that ministry should be oriented around a “preferential option for the poor” (Groody, 2009; Gutiérrez, 1971), meaning that Christians should maintain the oppressed as

their primary focus in efforts to improve human rights. However, as indicated, theologians within this tradition do not reduce people to passive ministerial objects or cajole them into submitting to any form of authoritarianism, including those cultivated by church or state. Rather, in an effort that mirrors Paulo Freire's (1970) *conscientização*, theologians of liberation seek to create conditions for the development of critical agency among vulnerable people. The sites of this activity are decentralized Christian "base communities" that sidestep traditional church structures and doctrinal orthodoxy to create an empowering dialogical space among participants. In short, for decades liberation theology has been a site for the articulation of a sophisticated praxis informed by the critical tradition within the social sciences and Continental philosophy.

This theological background provides the context for understanding DEI activities directed toward diverse groups ranging from lay populations to social activists and academicians. Similarly, the center's affiliations with universities throughout Latin America reflect a networked structure that echoes the decentralization of the base community model. Similar to Frankfurt's Institute for Social Research, the DEI operates as an independent research center. In addition to organizing interdisciplinary symposia and offering occasional programs of study with universities, various forms of community-based research and outreach are considered core to the center's mission. According to Mora (1986), the DEI maintains close relationships with churches, ecumenical institutions, universities, lay organizations, and ecclesial communities throughout the world. Liberation theology, in short, has shaped the DEI, but the forms of community-based outreach and scholarship pursued at the center mirror issues academicians have grappled with in their efforts to develop models of socially engaged research. As a research center, the DEI exemplifies a viable model of critical praxis and theory formation that runs parallel to but is not dependent on the university system or the church.

In addition to the theological background, the DEI has been shaped by political events in a manner reminiscent of how Nazism personally and intellectually impacted Frankfurt School theorists. Officially founded in 1976 in Costa Rica, the center's earlier origins trace to Chile and a series of get-togethers between Hinkelammert, Richard, and Assmann during the tumultuous years of 1972–1973 (Mora, 1986; Pérez & Murphy, 2011). The three founders had been active in leftist intellectual circles in Chile and became exiles following the overthrow of Salvador Allende's government (Assmann had come to Chile as an exile from the military regime in his native Brazil). But the character of the Pinochet police state and the rapid neoliberal reorganization of the Chilean economy would provide key themes for later DEI scholarship.

The brutal Pinochet coup resulted in the suspension of constitutional government and civil liberties and instituted the Pinochet regime's programmatic rule by terror. Approximately 30,000 people from all strata of society were kidnapped. Sexual abuse and other forms of torture were used broadly to maim and humiliate prisoners as well as out of transparent pleasure in causing suffering. By official estimate, more than 3,000 people were eventually executed. An estimated 200,000 Chileans were exiled during this time from a country whose population at the time was about 10 million people, and many thousands had their reentry into Chile restricted and remained vulnerable to arrest through the end of the Pinochet regime (Comisión Nacional, 1991; Wright & Zúñiga, 2007).

There is no clearer expression of the sociopsychological connections between authoritarianism, sadism, and neoliberal market ideology (Fromm, 1941) than the Chilean dictatorship. Its vindictiveness was

communicated quickly to the population in one of Pinochet's earliest official acts, which was to form the Caravana de la Muerte, a helicopter-borne death squad that toured the country for a month tracking down and publicly beating, stabbing, and shooting leaders of the Unidad Popular front that had supported Salvador Allende (Escalante, 2000). Such atrocities, however, do not themselves distinguish the Pinochet regime; similar decades-long acts of murder against so-called subversives that were vigorously pursued with extensive covert support from and overt training by the United States characterized the dirty wars of military dictatorships throughout Latin America (Gill, 2009; Hancock & Wexler, 2015; Lernoux, 1991).

In Pinochet's case, though, political repression cleared the ground for Chile to become a showcase for neoliberal economic policies, which had only marginal status before the coup. Again with U.S. sponsorship and CIA guidance, the Pinochet regime appointed a group of Chicago-trained economists to reorganize the economy on laissez-faire market principles. Sustained by the autocracy's continued crackdown on political resistance and trading on an air of scientific expertise, these "Chicago Boys" pushed through a program of self-described "revolutionary" neoliberal reforms that included extensive cuts to health, education, and other social services; privatization of state holdings; deregulation of financial institutions in pursuit of financial integration within the global economy; and suppression of organized labor. Military expenditures rose and buttressed the regime, while the middle class was eviscerated by declining wages and inflation, even as the liberalization effort was unequivocally embraced by global lending organizations and private banks (Alexander, 2009; Constable & Valenzuela, 1993; Valdés, 2008).

As the population suffered the harsh social and economic consequences of neoliberal restructuring, the program was celebrated by the Chicago Boys' chief mentor, Milton Friedman, on a visit to Santiago in 1975. In a way that has become de rigueur among mainstream economists and that continues to justify global austerity measures, Friedman argued that an economic "shock treatment" to Chilean society was the only viable cure for the "disease" of statism (Constable & Valenzuela, 1993). Foreshadowing the Thatcherite dogma of "there is no alternative," Friedman argued in the Chilean press that laissez-faire liberalism is "the only medicine. Absolutely. There is no other. There is no other long-term solution" (quoted in Letelier, 1976, p. 138).

Thus, Latin America generally and especially the experience of Chile in the 1970s provided the key themes of DEI scholarship in the coming years. These topics include a critical approach to understanding the relationship between global capitalism and violence, particularly from the perspective of Latin American people as victims of imperialist exploitation, analyses of the metaphysics of totalized market society, and the development of a praxis of dialogue and social action oriented in part to the precepts of liberation theology. Seeking a new home in exile and a location that could support their politically charged investigations, the founders of what would become the DEI chose Costa Rica because of the country's relatively small size and human scale of its institutions, its lack of armed forces, and its symbolic location between North and South America (Pérez & Murphy, 2011).

From the Administered Society to the Total Market

One concept of particular relevance to communication scholars is the DEI's conceptualization of the "total market." This theme provides a useful counterpart to the central role of "advanced capitalism," "late

capitalism,” and associated concepts in the development of critical communication theory (Kellner, 1992; Mosco, 2009). By the end of the 20th century, the form of administered consumer capitalism assumed in the writings of the Frankfurt School had been substantially displaced by a global configuration of the market, whose principles were codified in the economic philosophy of neoliberalism. Earlier, postwar theorists had drawn attention to the technocratic mechanisms of modern societies, including a well-managed form of Keynesian economic interventionism. Frankfurt School theorists such as Horkheimer and Adorno (1991), Marcuse (1964), Fromm (1941), and later Habermas (1984) focused their analyses on “administrative” mechanisms that had apparently stabilized capitalism in the postwar period. “This containment of social change,” argued Marcuse (1964, p. xlii), was “perhaps the most singular achievement of advanced industrial society” and had produced, in Fromm’s (1955) words, a form of “super-capitalism” that suppressed class conflict. In *The Sane Society*, Erich Fromm (1955) provides the clearest description of this administered society and the expected trajectory of its development. “Half a century has passed,” writes Fromm, and,

the main demands of the nineteenth-century reformers have been fulfilled. Speaking of the economically most progressive country, the United States, the economic exploitation of the masses has disappeared to a degree which would have sounded fantastic in Marx’s time. The working class, instead of falling behind in the economic development of the whole society, has an increasing share in the national wealth, and it is a perfectly valid assumption that provided no major catastrophe occurs, there will, in about one or two generations, be no more marked poverty in the United States. Closely related to the increasing abolishment of economic suffering is the fact that the human and political situation of the worker has changed drastically. Largely through his unions, he has become a social “partner” of management. He cannot be ordered around, fired, abused, as he was even thirty years ago. (p. 186)

According to Frankfurt School theorists, postwar consumer society had contrived an alienating yet stable order by means of the institutional framework of the welfare state, administrative applications of “instrumental” social science to fields such as industrial psychology and advertising, and, of traditionally special interest to communication research, by developing “culture industries” to inculcate and reinforce consumerism (Jay, 1973; Kellner, 1992). A later or at least parallel development of these themes grew out Ernest Mandel’s concept of “late capitalism” and focused attention on the “postmodern” qualities social life had acquired toward the end of the 20th century. This type of analysis, associated with the cultural studies school, remained explicitly focused on the bewildering “cultural logic” of capitalism within the high centers of consumerism (Jameson, 1991; Poster, 1990). Latin American communication scholars have shown how these commercial logics of mediation interpolate and hybridize cultures around the globe (García-Candini, 1989, 1999; Martín-Barbero, 2006). And in accordance with the emphasis of the cultural studies school, the categories of “reception” and the “popular” have been used to explore creative engagement with media throughout Latin America (García-Candini, 1988; Martín-Barbero, 1987; P. Murphy, 1997)—a focus that complements an earlier concern with imperialistic ideological content (Dorfman & Mattelart, 1991; Fox, 1986; O’Connor, 1991).

Marxian social analysis has contributed “some of the fundamental concepts of cultural and media criticism” (Durham & Kellner, 2006, p. 3), while the related distinction between critical and administrative research figured prominently in communication studies’ disciplinary and methodological debates during the final decades of the 20th century (see Gerbner & Siefert, 1983) and substantially informed the political-economic

approach to the study of communication (Schiller, 1996). Vincent Mosco (2009) has detailed the extensive ways in which the ideas of the Frankfurt theorists remain central to the foundations of political-economic analyses of communication within monopoly capitalism.

The Frankfurt theorists believed capitalism would extend the need for social-scientific administration throughout society to produce a technocratic order in which the capacity for critique, understood as the ability to reflect on and consciously transcend given society, is contained if not extinguished (Habermas, 1984). Oriented by Marxian precepts, these theorists saw that the "problem of production" had been solved by industrial capitalism, which had produced material conditions for people to live peaceful, fulfilling lives free from excessive toil. If rationally reorganized, the resulting society would sustain endlessly ramifying creative activity in which each person is free to develop his or her individuality. One could, in Marx and Engels's (1998) famous depiction, "hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, . . . without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic" (p. 53). These social possibilities, though, had been blocked by a broad program of social control that transformed the population into an object of technocratic administration—the mass, whose experiences and categories of thought are dictated by industrialized mass culture and other instruments of rationalized socialization. "Mass society" is an integrated social order in which broad segments of the population, alienated but fed and entertained, are reconciled to the existing order.

In contrast to the model of advanced capitalism analyzed by Frankfurt theorists, the role of administrative practices has changed with the growth of the global neoliberal order. Market society continues to rely on instrumental reasoning because the drive for efficiency, calculability, and control is fundamental to scientifically inscribed production processes. Technique consequently remains in place even under monopoly conditions. Furthermore, the administrative ethos cannot be discarded because the social order continues to be based on antagonistic class relations that must be managed to ensure order and the realization of profit. Processes ranging from the fashion cycle to resource exploitation and the generation of industrial waste have also grown to a scale that threatens the biosphere and must be instrumentally managed to ensure the reproduction of life.

Nevertheless, neoliberal globalization has opened new avenues of exploitation that undermine the centrality of instrumental administration as a source of order. Whereas postwar consumer society was administered within a broad managerial framework whose goal was social integration, neoliberalism pursues an antiregulatory agenda seeking simultaneously to pare back welfare-state policies in the core countries while exploiting labor conditions in market-friendly "export processing zones" located throughout the globe (Sassen, 1988, 2006). The resulting network society is one of rapidly shifting and complex assemblages of elements that obviate centralized control of state economies, transect national sovereignty, and are beyond the ability of individual governments to manage.

Saskia Sassen (2014) describes how the social logic of this period of capitalist exploitation is based on a "savage sorting" in which the integrated and compliant masses of the welfare state are subjected to a global dynamic of "radical expulsion" that jettisons huge numbers of people from social, economic, and even biospheric systems (p. 4). The neoliberal order is based on the reversal of the integrative logic of the Keynesian era, which focused on linking mass production and mass consumption. By contrast, she argues that "the move from Keynesianism to the global, era of privatizations, deregulation, and open borders for some, entailed a switch

from dynamics that brought people in to dynamics that push people out" (p. 212). Accordingly, such a transition leads technocratic administration to recede in some spheres of life in favor of cruder and openly brutal mechanisms of control, including state-based surveillance, prisons, and warfare (McChesney, 2013). The character of late capitalism has thus changed qualitatively from what was assumed by earlier theorists.

Additionally, as Enrique Dussel (1995) argues, the term *late capitalism* itself reflects an ethnocentric bias that corresponds to the experience only a minority of humanity. The term, so often taken for granted and serving to anchor a range of social analyses, reflects, according to Dussel, a "developmentalist fallacy" in which the world's populations are arrayed along a time line separating before and after—points that correspond to whether a people are recognized as fully human. But, argues Dussel in regard to Latin America,

What is not taken into account, in this Eurocentric ideology, is that there is no such "before." Since 1492, the periphery is not a "before," but an "underneath": the exploited, the dominated, the origin of stolen wealth, accumulated in the dominating, exploiting "center." We repeat: the developmentalist fallacy thinks that the "slave" is a "free lord" in his youthful stage, and like a child ("crude or barbarian"). It does not understand that the slave is the dialectical "other face" of domination: the as-always, the "other-part" of the exploitative relation. The peripheral world will never be able to be "developed," nor "center," nor "late." Its path is another. Its path is different. (p. 5)

The DEI's concept of the total market is thus not only a label for the distinctive social configuration that has emerged with the advent of neoliberal globalization but one that refocuses analyses on the experience of capitalism's marginalized other and rearticulates theory grounded on those experiences.

DEI theorists use the metaphor of flattening to describe how the total market transforms the meaningful social environment. This concern with human experience and meaning is one aspect of the concept's relevance to communication theory, and a contrast with the Frankfurt School is again useful at this point. Frankfurt theorists focused extensive attention on the increasing inability of reason to transcend and thereby critique existing social conditions (Habermas, 1976; Horkheimer, 1947). As Habermas (1973) detailed, once technocratic rationalism is equated with reason as such, one cannot legitimately oppose existing society with a more utopian ideal. Marcuse's (1964) "one-dimensional man," where one-dimensionality refers to the "comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom" (p. 1) of life in advanced industrial civilization, is an evocative image of this administrative paring down of subjectivity within technocratic society. One-dimensionality, though, is produced by a sophisticated apparatus of technocratic social control that establishes semantic closure; the flattening of the human subject to which DEI theorists draw attention, by contrast, refers to how the deterritorializing processes of global capitalism disarticulate the social field. In this sense, the concept is more closely related to the logic of brutal expulsion identified by Sasken than with technocratic capitalism.

Communication researchers in the interpretivist tradition take as their starting point the idea that social action can only be understood from the point of view of people who engage their world as a meaningful environment (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Campos, 2009; Delia, O'Keefe, & O'Keefe, 1982; Watzlawick, Bavelas, & Jackson, 1967). The world's topography offers people horizons for action, includes a multitude of significant objects, and is an expression of tacit rules for how such things can be exchanged or transformed (Schutz, 1967).

Even in alternative renditions of social order where the human subject is understood to emerge as an effect of discursive formations, the social environment is still seen as a complexly articulated latticework of elements (Best & Kellner, 1991; Foucault, 1980; Smart, 2004).

The centrality of money within market society profoundly transforms this meaningful environment. For Hinkelammert, Marx's well-known discussion of the development of money points the way to understanding this aspect of the market (Hinkelammert, 1977). At first, the exchange of goods is integrated into each society's meaningful order by customs that dictate what things can be exchanged and under what conditions and ratios. Even as the market developed, commodity exchange was still shaped by and remained constrained by these customary frameworks for proper behavior. Marx refers to this stage of exchange as the "The Simple, Isolated, or Accidental Form of Value" (1976, p. 139) and then sketches a series of transformations of the principle of exchange that culminates in the emergence of money. The money-form radically abstracts exchange by establishing equivalences among all objects in terms of a monetary system's quanta of value.

The development of the money form effects a radical transformation in how people relate to the objects that comprise their social environment and to themselves (Goux, 1990). Abstract exchange of this kind becomes the motor of social production within capitalism because goods are produced solely to be exchanged for money and only secondarily as use-values. Human labor becomes commodified as well, uprooted from concrete social contexts and turned into a calculated expense. Thus, human labor power is reduced to one among many commodities, and the field of generalized equivalence subsumes human labor as just another component of the market.

A system of exchange based on generalized equivalences tends to collapse a society's meaningful environment into interchangeable units. Capitalism therefore advances by "deterritorializing" the social environment (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004). This process is key to understanding the total market, for it has proven difficult to propagate a competing framework of meanings that can arrest capitalist deterritorialization and humanize the market. Such an effort, as Nick Couldry (2010) argues, requires the ability to "voice" an alternative to the absolutist conception of the market that orients neoliberal policies, while the thrust of neoliberal privatization is to bring in all noncommodified areas of life within the field of the market. Once subsumed within the market, these domains are subjected to the ultimate criterion of profitability and transformed accordingly.

DEI theorists repeatedly use the metaphor of flattening to describe the character of social life in contemporary capitalism (e.g., Gutiérrez, 2003). According to these authors, the absolutist conception of the market tends to flatten or crush human subjectivity (Hinkelammert, 1995; Richard, 2002). Phrases such as "sujeto aplastado" and "pueblo aplastado" connote a sense of being pressed down, crushed, and overwhelmed as well as a debasing of the human element. In contrast to Marcuse's technocratic one-dimensionality or the decentered subject of postmodernity, the flattened subjectivity of the total market refers to the experience of people outside the core of consumer capitalist nations whose social and natural environments have been disrupted by a centuries-long process of market-centered exploitation. More intensely than populations of the developed core, they have long been objects of capitalist violence, and even as their environments continue to be centers of resource exploitation, there are no serious proposals to integrate them as consumers within an ecumenical mass market.

In this sense, they are exemplars of Sassen's "great expulsion" and portents of what awaits large segments of the population in the developed core. Only a few such people enter the calculations of global capital as sources of toss-away wage labor or as thin strata of consumers reorganized as global "market segments" (Golumbia, 2009; Klein, 2010), while the rest remain either invisible to the market or appear as impediments to capitalist development of the natural environment. As such they experience the violence of globalization in the form of environmental exploitation, economic destabilization, warfare, and societal disintegration. This broad "monetary attack" (Dierckxsens, 1999) results in an "aplastamiento" (flattening, crushing) of human beings. According to Germán Gutierrez (1999), the character of human life is remade into a

replica of this totalization of the market that tries to destroy all instances of cooperation, solidarity and unity of effort among human beings. Increasing fragmentation and exclusion leads to the situation of a subject flattened by the total market, with no other social and organizational support to rely upon. It is pure denuded corporeality, in isolation, in submission, and under the temptation of an ever more elusive consumerism. (p. 20)²

The total market, then, refers in part to the disarticulation and flattening of the social environment by global capitalism. Monetary deterritorialization flattens the social environment by subsuming all objects within a totalized process of commodification and by expelling millions as the worthless debris of resource exploitation. The total market is an expression of the monetization of all social relations.

Market Metaphysics and the Discourse of the Total Market

Economic discourse is a well-established area of communication research that has proceeded along two main paths: one examining the rhetorics of economic systems and markets (Aune, 2001; McCloskey, 1985) and the other focusing on how market rationality distorts social relations. This critique of market discourse examines the conditions of democratic dialogue (Deetz, 1992; McChesney, 2000, 2013). Researchers interested in either of these themes will benefit from considering the work of the DEI, not only as a successful example of social praxis involving academically trained professionals, theologians, and popular groups but also for their unsurpassed analyses of the absolutist and metaphysical character of neoliberal doctrine.

The status of the total market as a post-utopian form of capitalism is an important theme of DEI scholarship. Neoliberal ideologists argue that the market is uniquely able to resolve competing desires into a harmonious social order consisting solely of neatly interlocking consumers and producers. Milton Friedman (1962), for instance, argued that liberalizing markets will produce a "society without coercion" (pp. 7-17; see also Hayek, 1974), and this identification of the market with freedom, prosperity, and individual dignity was

² "La crisis de los llamados sujetos sociales es simplemente la réplica de esta totalización del Mercado que intenta destruir toda instancia de cooperación, solidaridad y unidad de esfuerzos entre seres humanos. La fragmentación y exclusión crecientes conducen a la situación de un sujeto aplastado por el mercado total, sin ninguna otra mediación social y orgánica bajo la cual pueda ampararse. Es la desnudez pura de la corporalidad en soledad, en sometimiento, y bajo la seducción de un consumo cada vez más esquivo."

cited as a rationale for economic liberalization and the dismemberment of the welfare state in the Thatcher/Reagan era (Harvey, 2011; Klein, 2008).

DEI theorists dissect this emancipatory conception of the market. Although they recognize that a superficial utopianism can still be identified in the discourse of some elites and mass media propagandists, more central to their analyses is a fundamental shift they discern in the economistic vision of the world (Jiménez, 2003). DEI theorists note various ways in which the total market displaces an earlier, more inclusive form of market utopianism traceable to Adam Smith, though they are careful to note that even in Smith's original articulation the market is an insufficient organizing principle for social life. This theme in DEI writings is invaluable to anyone interested in a nuanced critique of the ideology of market rationality and its effects on the contemporary world.

For example, Wim Dierckxsens (2000) argues that Smith's stance toward the market results in a "separation of ethics and politics from economics" (p. 18). In an analysis that echoes Habermas's discussions of technocratic rationality, Dierckxsens notes that because all values have the same status *within* capitalism's field of generalized exchange, none can be cited as legitimately transcending the market. When there is no way legitimately to reflect on and exercise control over the market, a "capitalism without citizens" emerges without a conception of the common good. The generalized welfare is reduced to an inscrutable effect of an "invisible hand" (Smith, 1937, p. 423) operating in and through the market.

Extending this analysis, Hinkelammert notes that the total market propagates a thoroughgoing nihilism because all standards and principles collapse into exchange values. Meanwhile, world governments continually seek to perpetuate some form of robust market order (Hinkelammert, 2002a). Consequently, official discourses that refer to transcendental values are transparently insincere because references to human rights or world peace typically serve only as legitimation strategies that justify violence by economic power blocs. Whereas popular advocates of globalization such as Thomas Friedman (1999) argue that free markets are the sine qua non of a peaceful world, DEI theorists argue that the global market has sought to exterminate all values that would limit capitalism's influence on human life. The key, though, is that profiteering motives for warfare and institutional violence are disguised by reference to values that transcend the market. Within the semantic field of the total market, the highest values are cynically transformed into crude ideologies (Gutiérrez, 2000, 2002; Hinkelammert & Jimenez, 2005).

The Discourse of the Total Market

The connection between warfare and the market is a prominent concern of DEI authors and illustrates the impact of non-Western experience on their social analyses. Violence and warfare correspond not only to the experience of the exiled members of the institute but also to the centuries-long experience of peoples subjected to the violence of the world market and of U.S. interventionism (Dussel, 1995; Hinkelammert, 1987; Tablada & Dierckxsens, 2003). As the biosphere begins to unravel and radically disenfranchise large portions of humanity, this violence becomes more extreme (Klein, 2008). Because economistic policy tries to remove all impediments to realizing total market conditions, it targets institutional and cultural frameworks that have traditionally limited, contextualized, and humanized the market (Acosta, 2002). As McChesney (2013), Aune (2001), and MacArthur (2000) have

detailed, this expansion of market principles into all areas of life must be justified through elaborate ideologies that link free markets to human freedom and dignity. These contemporary discourses extend what Thurman Arnold (1937) long ago characterized as the “folklore of capitalism.” But DEI theorists have proceeded to show that, far from being a narrow set of claims that legitimize economic policies, economism expands the market into an entire cosmology, provides it a metaphysical underpinning, and justifies the ongoing violence experienced by many non-Westerners.

One element of this discourse is a dualistic conception of social order. Neoliberalism reiterates a traditional dualism in which human subjectivity is portrayed as anathema to order (Murphy, 1989). According to Hinkelammert and Jiménez (2005, pp. 100–105; Hinkelammert, 1984), although writers such as Friedman and Hayek celebrate capitalism as essentially anti-authoritarian, their version of the market is simply a new version of foundationalist metaphysics. In accordance with earlier portrayals of “society” as a reality *sui generis* (Murphy, 1989), contemporary idolatry deifies the market as an expression of underlying laws that guarantee harmony and growth. The market automatically optimizes the distribution of social goods, and life remains orderly so long as people humbly submit to its discipline. By contrast, efforts to constrain the market and direct social development in light of alternative ends—that is, any effort to exert agency in the world—are believed to lead to chaos by disrupting the market’s ability to maintain a natural equilibrium between consumers and producers.

In line with the Latin American political experience, Hinkelammert argues that this economic theology provides an entire mythos for marginalizing and scapegoating people who criticize capitalism, for it is ultimate hubris to believe something as complex and transcendent as the market can be effectively controlled by human intervention. The only reasonable attitude given the scale and complexity of capitalist globalization is submission to the market’s autonomous logic. Far from being an expression of economic science, the work of neoclassical economists should be viewed as a modern obscurantism that accords the market a divine status.

This moral of humility and pride leads to a true mysticism of the market, of money and of capital. By means of this mysticism a whole vision of reality is constructed, which replaces immediate reality with commercial relations. Concrete reality appears as a byproduct of commercial relations, and man is what mercantile relations make of him. . . . Liberty is the market, and there can be no state intervention in the market in the name of liberty. Liberty is man’s submission to the laws of the market, and unrecognized is any human right that is not derived from a position in the market. (Hinkelammert, 1984, p. 79)³

³ “Esta moral de la humildad y del orgullo desemboca en una verdadera mística del Mercado, del dinero y del Mercado. Mediante esta mística se construye toda una visión de la realidad, que sustituye la realidad inmediata por las relaciones mercantiles. La realidad concreta aparece como un subproducto de las relaciones mercantiles, y el hombre es lo que las relaciones mercantiles hacen de él. . . . Libertad es mercado, y no puede haber intervención estatal en el mercado en nombre de la libertad. Libertad es el sometimiento del hombre a las leyes del mercado. Libertad es el sometimiento del hombre a las leyes del Mercado, y no se reconoce ningún derecho humano que no se derive de una posición, en el Mercado.”

Reifying the market in this way has consequences beyond providing ideological cover for rapaciousness. Neoliberal discourse also organizes and propels a specific politics of violence that derives from the binary opposition of the market and its other.

This binarism elevates one term in the opposition of market and social life while devaluing the other. As the market gains becomes identified with all that is good and orderly, everything that exists beyond economic exchange is associated with the opposing values of evil and chaos. Economism expands into a broad moral framework for judging people and institutions (Dussel, 1995; Hinkelammert, 1985). This polarized discourse classifies all efforts to place limits on economic activity as a radical expression of antimarket thinking, thereby allowing the categorization of disparate ideologies and groups under the label of “subversives.” The market-centric worldview, argues Hinkelammert (1990),

leads to the thesis of the worldwide conspiracy against the *societas perfecta* of the market. This world conspiracy is seen as the Kingdom of Evil or the kingdom of terror, which has a mundane center called the Kremlin. Behind this visible center of the world conspiracy appears the demon called Lucifer, an apparent light-bearer who disburses darkness behind the appearance of light. The ideology of the market thus becomes political theology, which starts from this demonology. (pp. 192–193)⁴

Economistic discourse is an example of what Fromm (1955) referred to as the “magical function” of words, of the ability of polarized categories to smother reflection by casting complex ideas as unequivocal expressions “of ‘materialism,’ ‘godlessness,’ ‘bloodshed,’ or the like—briefly, of the bad and evil” (p. 447). Economism projects monstrous qualities on its opponents in polar opposition to the immaculateness of market rationality (Hinkelammert, 2002b). The enemy becomes an embodiment of vileness: while the market represents everything that is good, any critique of the market seems propelled by irredeemably evil motives.

Neoliberalism makes social and existential complexities disappear in a Manichean politics that links the market with institutional violence directed against the convenient enemy of the moment. As Hinkelammert (1985, pp. 6–7) argues, the effort to defend the market at all costs propels an “antissubversive total war” with the goal of exterminating anything that constrains market relations. Such efforts are ongoing across the globe. Neoliberal discourse accords the total market moral and religious qualities and eliminates the need to draw distinctions, interpret ambiguities, and judge social

⁴ “Siendo el mercado, el mercado mundial, esta visión del mundo lleva a la tesis de la conspiración mundial en contra de la *societas perfecta* del mercado. Esta conspiración mundial es vista como Reino del Mal o reino del terror, que tiene un centro mundano que se llama Kremlin. Detrás de este centro visible de la conspiración mundial aparece el demonio que se llama Lucifer, un aparente portador de luz que distribuye las tinieblas detrás de la apariencia de la luz. La ideología del mercado se transforma por tanto en teología política, que parte de esta demonología.”

alternatives (Hinkelammert, 2002a, pp. 10–12). The market gains divine authority and a total claim on life. The philosophy of the total market, in short, is a religious fundamentalism (Hinkelammert, 2002a).

Significance of the DEI for Communication Research

The DEI's writings on the total market provide sophisticated analyses of neoliberal globalization, and, more centrally for communication researchers, they reveal various ways in which market rationality disintegrates the social environment and marginalizes resistance. These analyses show how market rationality propagates a logic for demonizing enemies and justifying violence. By focusing on the experience of people who live outside the core nations and who therefore have experienced "capitalism from below" (Hinkelammert, 1977, p. 28), the analysis of the total market also moves critical communication research away from a concern with "capitalism from the top"—that is, with the analysis of technocratic administration in areas such as the culture industries and scientifically inflected social control. While critical theorists have certainly recognized the global dimensions of poverty and oppression, the experience of non-Western people living under such conditions has remained marginal to their analyses and irrelevant to discussions of the administrative character of advanced consumer capitalism. Yet developing viable alternatives to the market-centric global order requires the creation of new concepts and types of social analyses contextualized by the experiences of a broader range of the world's people. As news stories illustrate daily, living in conditions that approach a police state and being subjected to its violence because of one's race, class, or beliefs, being kidnapped off the streets of any city in the world and disappearing into a spectral network of prisons dedicated to processing putative subversives, watching public institutions erode under the intertwined assaults of authoritarianism and privatization, neoliberalism has conferred these upside-down experiences to the entire world as the harvest of market absolutism in contrast to the global future augured by advanced capitalism. The analysis of life within total market conditions corrects the ethnocentric focus of some aspects of critical social analysis and provides a language for understanding the increasingly degraded social environment in more developed countries.

Beyond its contribution to theory, the DEI offers communication scholars a model of a contemporary independent research center whose commitments overlap with but also differ from traditional academic institutions. The DEI thus exemplifies an alternative approach to interdisciplinary theory development and application within a Latin American context. In line with the precepts of critical theory and with the popular outreach intrinsic to liberation theology, the institute pursues the constructive task of identifying ways to change the world in solidarity with others. While discussions of the total market clarify the nature of contemporary capitalism and direct attention toward its fundamental problems, the DEI's core mission involves identifying practical alternatives to existing society guided by regard for the intrinsic value of human life. The center provides an alternative model of contemporary praxis by offering an understanding of human agency shaped as much by the critical tradition as by liberation theology. As such, the Departamento Ecueménico de Investigaciones testifies to the continuing vigor of critical theory and its renewal in non-Western settings.

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