

Pluralism, pressure, and partnership: AANZCA and the future of global communication scholarship

Pluralismo, presión y colaboración: AANZCA y el futuro de los estudios globales de Comunicación

Pluralismo, pressão e colaboraç o: AANZCA e o futuro dos estudos globais da comunica  o

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Abstract: This article advances an "archaeology" of academic cooperation in communication research from the standpoint of the Australian and Aotearoa New Zealand Communication Association (AANZCA), in dialogue with ALAIC's Carta de La Paz and the Research traditions in dialogue project. It argues that AANZCA's forty-five-year history is best read as a deliberate experiment in disciplinary pluralism, sustained through trans-Tasman expansion, durable journal and prize infrastructure, and the articulation of eclecticism as a position rather than a deficit. Drawing on Waisbord's post-discipline thesis and bibliometric evidence ranking Australia third and New Zealand twenty-first among 130 countries publishing in Communication, the article positions AANZCA's pluralism as the practical basis for reciprocal, non-hegemonic cooperation with international partners. International cooperation, it concludes, is now a precondition for sustaining critical communication research.

Keywords:

Communication associations; AANZCA; Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand; Academic Cooperation; Decolonial scholarship

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Resumen: Este artículo propone una “arqueología” de la cooperación académica en la investigación en comunicación desde la perspectiva de la Asociación de Comunicación de Australia y Aotearoa Nueva Zelanda (AANZCA), en diálogo con la Carta de La Paz de ALAIC y el proyecto Tradiciones de investigación en diálogo. Se argumenta que los cuarenta y cinco años de historia de la AANZCA pueden entenderse como un experimento deliberado de pluralismo disciplinario, sostenido mediante su expansión trans-Tasman, una sólida infraestructura de revistas y premios académicos, y la articulación del eclecticismo como una posición intelectual y no como una carencia. Basándose en la tesis de la posdisciplina de Waisbord y en evidencia bibliométrica que sitúa a Australia en el tercer lugar y a Nueva Zelanda en el vigésimo primer lugar entre 130 países que publican investigación en comunicación, el artículo sostiene que el pluralismo de la AANZCA constituye la base práctica para una cooperación recíproca y no hegemónica con socios internacionales. Concluye que la cooperación internacional se ha convertido en una condición indispensable para sostener la investigación crítica en comunicación.

Palabras clave:

Asociaciones de comunicación; AANZCA; Australia y Aotearoa Nueva Zelanda; Cooperación académica; estudios decoloniales

Resumo: Este artigo propõe uma “arqueologia” da cooperação acadêmica na pesquisa em comunicação a partir da perspectiva da Associação de Comunicação da Austrália e Aotearoa Nova Zelândia (AANZCA), em diálogo com a Carta de La Paz da ALAIC e o projeto Tradições de pesquisa em diálogo. Argumenta-se que os quarenta e cinco anos de história da AANZCA podem ser compreendidos como um experimento deliberado de pluralismo disciplinar, sustentado por sua expansão trans-Tasmânia, por uma sólida infraestrutura de periódicos e premiações acadêmicas e pela articulação do ecletismo como uma posição intelectual, e não como uma deficiência. Com base na tese da pós-disciplina de Waisbord e em evidências bibliométricas que posicionam a Austrália em terceiro lugar e a Nova Zelândia em vigésimo primeiro entre 130 países que publicam pesquisas em comunicação, o artigo sustenta que o pluralismo da AANZCA constitui a base prática para uma cooperação recíproca e não

hegemônica com parceiros internacionais. Conclui-se que a cooperação internacional tornou-se uma condição indispensável para a sustentação da pesquisa crítica em comunicação.

Palavras-chave:

Associações de comunicação; AANZCA; Austrália e Aotearoa Nova Zelândia; cooperação acadêmica; estudos decoloniais

1. Introduction: Cooperation as a Precondition

The editors of this special issue invite the field to undertake an "archaeology" of academic and scientific cooperation in communication studies. The invitation arrives at a moment of shared structural strain: market-oriented higher-education reforms that price the humanities and social sciences above science and technology; sector-wide restructuring and entrenched casualisation; and the gravitational pull of dominant-language publishing circuits that organises whose work is read, cited, and built upon (Waisbord, 2019; Connell, 2014). Under these conditions, international cooperation is no longer an enhancement of scholarly life. It is a precondition for sustaining critical, public-interest communication research.

This article contributes to the Call's *Colored / White Book* tradition from the standpoint of the Australian and Aotearoa New Zealand Communication Association (AANZCA), in dialogue with ALAIC's *Carta de La Paz* (2013) and the *Research traditions in dialogue* project (Paulino et al., 2020). The argument has three parts. First, AANZCA's forty-five-year history is best read as a deliberate experiment in disciplinary pluralism and that pluralism is itself the practical basis for reciprocal, non-hegemonic cooperation. Second, the difficulties now facing communication scholarship in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand: marketisation, precarity, dominant-language gravity are not regional peculiarities but legible analogues of conditions across many partner regions. Third, this convergence is the empirical ground on which AANZCA can move from episodic exchange to durable cooperative architecture.

2. AANZCA: A Short Archaeology of a Pluralist Association

AANZCA is best read as a long, deliberate effort to hold a heterogeneous field together: trans-Tasman expansion, durable scholarly infrastructure, and the articulation of pluralism as a defining commitment.

2.1 Origins and Trans-Tasman Expansion

The lineage carried by AANZCA begins in March 1970, when representatives from across Australia met at the Adelaide Teachers College to found the Australian Association for Communication Arts and Sciences. A decade later, the inaugural conference of the Australian Communication Association (ACA) at Adelaide's Raywood Conference Centre in May 1980 drafted the constitution. Two milestones at the end of the 1980s mattered for the field's claim to disciplinary standing: the advocacy of Grant Noble, Robyn Penman, and Bruce Molloy that secured *Communication* as a formal Field of Research category in the Australian Research Standards Classification in 1990, and the ACA's role as a founding member of the International Federation of Communication Associations in 1991 (Becker & Mansell, 2023; Maras, 2020; Maras et al., 2023). After a failed 1993 ballot and constitutional work led by Bill Ticehurst, the association was reconstituted in 1994 as the Australian and New Zealand Communication Association (ANZCA) (Maras, 2020). The most recent renaming to the Australian and Aotearoa New Zealand Communication Association (AANZCA) was endorsed in 2024 as the visible step of a longer conversation about the association's responsibilities to *Aotearoa*, the te reo Māori name for New Zealand, and to the Indigenous knowledges and communities of both nations. It should be read alongside the structural questions about Indigenous research ethics and data sovereignty that §3 and §4 take up directly.

2.2 Scholarly Infrastructure: Journals, Prizes, Conferences

AANZCA's contribution is most legible in the infrastructure it has built. Three affiliated journals carry the bulk of that work: *Media International Australia* (adopted as an association journal in 1986), *Communication Research and Practice* (launched 2014), and *Platform* (joined 2024). The career-pipeline infrastructure is equally consequential: the Henry Mayer Prize (from 1991), the Grant Noble Award for postgraduate work (from 1994), the Christopher Newell Prize for scholarship on disability, equity, and social justice (from 2008), and the Anne Dunn Scholar of the Year Award (from 2013) together form a publicly visible lineage of recognition crossing the field's many sub-areas. The annual conference functions as a meeting space where dispersed sub-fields are drawn into the same room (Maras et al., 2023).

2.3 The Pluralism Thesis

The argument of this article is that AANZCA's most exportable contribution to global cooperation is its pluralism and that pluralism is best read not as the absence of a paradigm but as a sustained position. Robert Norton, in his 1992 reflection, described the association as "forced to confront a range of theories and epistemologies and their underlying world views" (cited in Maras et al., 2023). Three decades later, AANZCA's eclecticism continues to span digital media, journalism, public relations, intercultural and Indigenous communication, disability, and environmental communication (Maras et al., 2023).

This eclecticism is most usefully positioned inside Silvio Waisbord's diagnosis that communication has become a post-discipline, internally heterogeneous, externally porous, organised more by problems than by a single paradigm (Waisbord, 2019). The association's own journal infrastructure has engaged this diagnosis directly: a 2019 special issue of *Communication Research and Practice* took Waisbord's post-discipline thesis as its organising provocation (Gray & Simpson, 2019). Read against that backdrop, AANZCA's history is a working demonstration that a heterogeneous field can sustain shared journals, prizes, and a conference culture. The point matters internationally. A bibliometric analysis of the Web of Science Core Collection for 2013-2019 ranks Australia third globally for Communication output, behind only the United States and England, and places New Zealand 21st of 130 countries (Moreno-Delgado, Gorraiz, & Repiso, 2021) a per-capita contribution out of proportion to either country's size, and sustained without consolidating around a single theoretical core. For partners weighing how to cooperate without subordinating their own intellectual traditions, AANZCA's pluralism offers a usable precedent.

3. The Particular Difficulties Facing Our Discipline

This section describes the policy environment communication scholars in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand now work. The policy logics producing these difficulties are recognisable across many partner regions, which is why they constitute a cooperation problem rather than a series of local grievances.

3.1 A Market-Oriented Turn in Higher-Education Policy

The first difficulty is structural. Across several OECD economies, governments have used student-fee structures, performance-based research funding, and "employability" metrics to

redirect enrolments away from the humanities and social sciences toward narrowly defined economic priorities; the latest phase of a longer neoliberal reorientation of universities from public-good institutions to market actors, in which research is evaluated by proximity to commercial application rather than by contribution to critical inquiry (Holmwood, 2014; Morley, 2023; Doidge et al., 2020).

The Australasian instances are striking. In 2020, a federal student-contribution reform in Australia roughly doubled the price paid by domestic students to study communication, media, and other humanities and social-science subjects, framed by government as a "job-readiness" instrument. In Aotearoa New Zealand, a late-2024 decision removed the humanities and social-science panels from the country's flagship investigator-led grant scheme. Both moves fall disproportionately on the same populations. Humanities and social-science programs in Australia enrol the largest share of women, Indigenous, gender-diverse, low-income, and first-in-family students, who under the 2020 reform now pay the highest fees. In Aotearoa, the removal of the affected panels is projected to reduce Māori principal investigators in the scheme from thirteen per cent to under six per cent, with corresponding contraction in the institutional space available for mātauranga Māori (Indigenous Māori knowledge) research (Sarpong, 2025; Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga, 2024). Colleagues working in Latin American, Asian, and African contexts will recognise the pattern: market-oriented policy framed as neutral redirection, with equity costs concentrated on precisely the populations whose absence from the field would impoverish it most.

3.2 Institutional Precarity and The Pandemic Legacy

The second difficulty is the labour structure on which the discipline now depends. Through the pandemic, Australian and Aotearoa New Zealand universities absorbed declines in international-student revenue, exclusion from principal national wage-support schemes (in Australia), large-scale redundancies, and an intensification of casualisation that had been building for two decades, producing a new equilibrium in which casual and short-term contracts are a structural, not transitional, feature of academic labour (Maras et al., 2023). A recent scoping review documents consistent effects across Anglophone higher-education systems: discontinuous research programs, attenuated mentoring pipelines, and reduced capacity to sustain long-form critical inquiry, with disproportionate burdens on women, Indigenous, and culturally

and linguistically diverse early-career staff (Willson et al., 2025). Casual teaching loads compress the time humanities scholars have to read, write, and think (Kadmos & Taylor, 2023), a pattern increasingly entangled with the platformisation of teaching as universities outsource delivery, marking, and student-engagement to third-party providers (Ivancheva & Courtois, 2024). These patterns are recognisable across European, Latin American, African, and Asian systems, and they shape what cooperation can realistically ask of any individual scholar.

3.3 Disciplinary Tensions Specific to Communication

The third difficulty is internal to the field. Communication has long contended with a perception of being applied or vocational, which makes it especially exposed to "employability"-driven reforms (Maras et al., 2023). Global publishing and conference circuits favour English and a relatively narrow canon of Northern theory (Thussu, 2009; Wang, 2010). This is a configuration that reproduces hierarchies marginalising non-English-language scholarship, including work in Spanish, Portuguese, Indigenous, and Asian languages (Glück, 2018; Keightley et al., 2023), and South–South collaboration ties remain weak even among the largest Global South research producers (Comel et al., 2024).

None of these difficulties is Australasian alone. A partnership-oriented response must take seriously the production of theory from Southern locations and the asymmetric circulation of knowledge between centre and periphery (Connell, 2014). Restructuring, austerity, dominant-language gravity, and threats to critical and Indigenous inquiry are recognisable across Latin American associations (Crovi Druetta & Cimadevilla, 2018; Paulino, 2023) and across other regions represented in this special issue. This convergence is the empirical ground for cooperation, not a rhetorical bridge.

4. Dynamic Pathways for Global Cooperation

If §3 establishes shared structural ground, §4 sets out what such cooperation might look like in practice. It responds to the editors' guiding questions on principles of dialogue and reciprocity; decolonial, gender, and Indigenous lenses; open and public communication of science; and mechanisms for cooperation.

Cooperation that begins from shared principles is less likely to reproduce the asymmetries it sets out to address, and naming the legacies of extractive research, colonial

pedagogy, and Anglophone gatekeeping that international communication associations have embedded over their first half-century is part of that work (Becker & Mansell, 2023; Connell, 2014). What follows is offered as a sketch of the principles a durable cooperative architecture might begin from, and of the kinds of concrete actions it might consider. Four broad commitments could form a baseline: reciprocity rather than extraction, including reciprocal authorship and fair indexing of regional journals in the metrics infrastructures that condition academic recognition (Glück, 2018); multilingualism, with cooperative outputs available in languages beyond English including Spanish, Portuguese, and the Indigenous and regional languages of partner communities; decolonial method as shared infrastructure, with frameworks such as the ALAIC Carta de La Paz (2013), the framework of academic reciprocity advanced by Paulino (2023), the AIATSIIS Code of Ethics (2020), and the CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance (Carroll et al., 2020) treated as resources for partnership design rather than checklists (Ruckstuhl, 2022); and reparative citation practice, deliberately recovering Southern and Indigenous scholarship from the citation gap rather than treating its absence as a discovery problem. The 2024 renaming to AANZCA can be read as a signal that this work belongs inside the association's identity, not alongside it.

Three concrete proposals follow from these principles, offered as starting points for inter-association discussion. The first is co-located and shadow conferencing, in which AANZCA, ALAIC, AMIC, IAMCR regional, and ECREA meetings are scheduled with overlapping virtual programs so that early-career researchers who cannot travel can present once and circulate widely. The second is a shared decolonial and multilingual methods school, an annual rotating institute teaching Indigenous research ethics, decolonial epistemologies, and multilingual fieldwork, co-taught by scholars from each partner region. The third is an open multilingual translation commons, a repository of translated abstracts, key terms, and selected articles across member-association journals. Each of these could begin small, a single co-located event, a pilot institute, a curated set of translations and grow on the strength of demonstrated value. A standing forum to develop these and other ideas, comprising representatives of interested associations and rotating among their host cities, would give such proposals a place to be tested and refined.

5. Conclusion

International cooperation is no longer an enhancement of communication scholarship but a precondition for sustaining it. The pressures documented of marketisation framed as employability, entrenched casualisation, dominant-language gravity, and the unfinished work of Indigenisation are shared conditions across the regions represented in this special issue, which is why they require a cooperative rather than a national response.

AANZCA's offer rests on what §2 reconstructed: a forty-five-year archaeology of disciplinary pluralism, durable journal and prize infrastructure, and a trans-Tasman expansion that has, since 2024, named the association's responsibilities to Aotearoa and to Indigenous knowledges as central rather than adjacent. The pluralism is not an absence of position; it is the practical basis on which reciprocal, non-hegemonic partnership can be built with Latin American, Asian, African, and European colleagues. The pathways set out in §4 are concrete and achievable with existing resources; they are the operational content of the *Carta de La Paz* and of academic reciprocity in the sense Paulino has given the term.

AANZCA accepts the editors' invitation to the *Colored Publication* in that spirit. The association stands for a communication field that is critically engaged, socially committed, and globally collaborative and for cooperation understood as a durable architecture rather than an episodic exchange.

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