

## EDITORIAL CROLAR 5 (1)

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### Science, Technology, Society – and the Americas?

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The story behind the production of this volume of CROLAR is extremely biographical. We, the co-authors Laura Kemmer and Raquel Velho, met at a fortuitous occasion at the University of Lancaster (UK) for the annual postgraduate meeting. Curiously, we found that over the course of our doctoral work, we were playing a constant game of trading places: Velho, Brazilian, is based at University College London (UK) and is doing her research on accessibility in public transport in London. Meanwhile, Kemmer, German, though based in the University of Hamburg (Germany), is currently carrying out fieldwork on the last remaining tramway (*bonde*) of Rio de Janeiro. Though we never physically met again, we crossed paths over the Atlantic Ocean having coincidentally booked tickets to visit our respective families in the two continents.

The irony of these exchanged places was not lost on us as it became a point of conversation both at the meeting in Lancaster and throughout the editorial process of this volume. Indeed, it helped shape the call for this volume of CROLAR

since the very first day: the fact that transport technology has developed in such a way that a European and a Latin American swap positions, develop parallel interests on similar topics in cities across an ocean from each other, and have the means to maintain contact during months through digital means... Today, this does not sound remarkable at all. And perhaps this is precisely what is remarkable about it. Yet despite our personal surprise at the situation, our insertion into different academic traditions and worlds led us to ask questions about what we were seeing and the new thought traditions we were now embedded in.

In September 2015 we put out the call for reviews for this edition of CROLAR, "Science, Technology, Society – and the Americas?". The intention was to explore the array of knowledge being produced in Latin America on the topic of science(s) and technology(ies) and how these interact with society, and vice versa. In addition, we wondered whether there was a particular regional approach to the discipline of Science and Technology Studies (STS), given their somewhat different academic origins compared to the global

North. We also wanted to interrogate the potential of these studies for countering social and political inequalities. We are happy to share the result of the call with the readers of CROLAR, and believe it to be an interesting sample of the diversity and breadth of the Latin American field of social studies of science and technology while simultaneously demonstrating some regional tendencies.

In the Focus section of this edition we have a variety of book reviews, in which we have identified three, rather broad, categories. These categories serve primarily as an introductory tool for the editorial, but we do not believe they are particularly binding. Firstly, we have books, which put Latin America at their very core, be it in their choice of case studies or in its comparison with local vs. global themes. The edited volumes *Beyond Imported Magic* (Medina et al.) and *Perspectivas Latinoamericanas en el Estudio Social de la Ciencia, la Tecnología y la Sociedad* (Kreimer et al.) are both extraordinary in their breadth and worth a category in themselves as, through numerous chapters they contrast and compare sciences and technologies produced in Latin America, as well as the field of STS. Meanwhile, Adriana Feld's historical overview of science policy in Argentina through the 1940s-1980s (*Ciencia y política(s) en Argentina (1943-1983)*) shows how important local socio-historical contexts and ideologies are in the development of institutions. A fruitful confrontation of regional with global

processes can be found in the edited volume *Made in Latin America* (Alperin and Fischman), which contextualizes the specific challenges, but also accomplishments of Open Access publications through Latin-American platforms and journals.

A second group of books focuses on policy, politics, technologies and resistance (of various kinds). In Shirley Franco's book, *Sobrevivendo ao Mito da Destruição Total*, the author explores how, despite government officials claiming its destruction, archives manage to survive through networks created by the authorities themselves in a process she calls "ramification". Despite the different policy fields, the cases in *Risco, Ambiente e Saúde* (Di Giulio) and *Assembling Policy* shine light on how moments of risk, failure and disruption reassemble the social and the political in a variety of ways.

The last group explores technology and social inclusion, innovation and quality of life. The edited volume *Políticas Tecnológicas y Tecnologías Políticas* (Hernán et al.) concentrates on the marked disparity in Latin American between investment in research and development of technologies and the population's lack of access to this modernity. In a similar manner, *Tecnología Social* (Dagnino) uses a Marxist approach to analyze technology and proposes that new forms of innovation need to be proposed, based on solidarity and self-management. Alberto Nieto's book (*La ciencia no puede ser sin pecado un*

*adorno*) covers a similar topic, provoking discussions on the role of innovation in improving citizens' quality of life.

We are pleased to present Renato Dagnino's review of Amílcar Herrera's classic book *Ciencia y Política en América Latina* in the section of Classics Revisited. Herrera is a pioneer in Latin American social studies of science, this book in particular having been published over 40 years ago, it still proves to be a relevant read. Herrera was unapologetically a leftist who perceived Latin America as still subjugated to an imperialist role in which it still played a feudal role to the global North. As Dagnino discusses, Herrera's work on science policy and many of his ideas on technological innovation anticipates work then developed in the North, particularly in his resistance to simplistic notions such as the linear model of innovation – in which scientific research results in technological development and therefore a market product.

The Interventions section in this volume proposes two interesting cases, both about the introduction of foreign programs or developments into a Brazilian context and how they are translated/transformed in the process of being imported. The first case is that of *Masterclass*, a science engagement program developed by CERN (Switzerland) which proposes to teach children about particle physics. The second example takes on *Uber* (USA), a taxi dispatch application, which has been making waves the world over. In both cases, the Brazilian

reaction towards these programs has caused resistance to or subversion of their original application.

An exciting addition to this volume is the new model of review articles with a thematic focus, in which several books on a given topic are reviewed together on a current topic. Debuting this novel way of joining both discussion and reviews are Nils Brock, revisiting current debates on networks, media and communication in light of technological changes and power shifts, as well as Fernanda Rosa and Diego Vicentin, who cover three books on the subject of internet governance and science policy, particularly in its relation to privacy and cybersecurity.

We have also been fortunate enough to have secured interviews with two prominent academics from Brazil who have seen the development of the social studies of science in Brazil: Dr Márcia Regina Barros da Silva and Prof Léa Maria Leme Strini Velho. The same questions were asked to each of them concerning their interests in the field, how they perceive it, whether they perceive differences and inequalities between national and international approaches, and their perspectives on being women within the discipline.

The Current Debates section of this volume deals with the novel approach of understanding the city through its sounds, elaborated on in Torsten Wissman's *Geographies of Urban Sound*. With *Punishment in Paradise* (Beattie), a rich

historiographical account of how mass imprisonment in 19th century Brazil sheds light on current debates around racial discrimination in the country.

The editing of this volume was nothing short of a challenge, as it was constantly caught somewhere over the Atlantic and between faltering internet connection (unexpectedly, primarily on the European side). It served as a constant reminder of the society we live in, with its technological innovations constantly shifting our perceptions of time, distance, and each other. More important, this volume has a joining thread woven through the books reviewed and stories told – a story of politics, and a story of impact. Despite the diversity in the works presented here, the origins of Latin American STS are political ones, as Dagnino describes in his review of Herrera and both Dr da Silva and Prof Velho discuss in their interviews. These are stories, which discuss beyond the sciences or the technologies, they discuss the limits, what goes wrong, how subversion and resistance happen to reshape and reform things imported from the global North. The Latin American STS can be an act of resistance itself.

As editors, we hope this volume provides a new door through which you might venture into this world of society, politics, technologies and science. One which challenges simplistic tales of inventions and creators and that prizes the battles underneath, opening spaces and crossing oceans.