

Introduction: Intersections of Activism and Academia

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The focus of this Special Section stems from research presented in the 2019 PILAS Conference held at the University of York. The conference theme ‘Communities of Knowledge, Communities of Action’ sought to bridge the gap between scholarly research and Latin American activism. The collegial exchange of ideas between a new generation of engaged and innovative researchers at the conference represented a critical alternative to the traditional isolation of academia – a reality that has since been exacerbated and magnified by the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. This Special Section of the *Bulletin of Latin American Research* seeks to offer a platform that will advance these new epistemologies and propel the voices of a new generation of engaged scholars.

It is organised around the theme of ‘Intersections of Activism and Academia’. The theme further develops the efforts of the 2019 PILAS Conference in emphasising interdisciplinary and intersectional approaches that will promote new forms of scholarly activism. In turn, this Special Section actively engages with the movement to decolonise academia at research and curriculum level, and across university campuses. Different decolonial approaches are adopted by the contributors. Some are grounded in Latin American scholarship and others materialise the intersection of this approach with global understanding of decolonial methodologies, especially by focusing on the transindigenous dialogue necessary today. Our focus on decolonisation is prompted by the fact that we cannot possibly see our current world as a ‘postcolonial’ one in speaking about social developments even in the twenty-first century. Indeed, while formal colonialism comes to an end, imperial practices do not; they are maintained socio-politically and economically through racial and structural inequalities across the globe. Hence, we engage with the concept of decoloniality as defined by a wide range of authors including Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1992), Quijano (1999), Fanon (2002),

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Mignolo (2008) and Tuhiwai Smith (2012), among many others to emphasise the necessary processes to decolonise our world not only politically and economically, but also intellectually and culturally.

This Special Section is divided into two main sections. The first considers the intersections between *artivism* and academic discourse and the second engages with social sciences and historical approaches to activism, policymaking and academia. The first section opens with Jennifer Cooper's article entitled "No Soy un Activista, Soy un Artista": Representations of the Femicide at the Intersections of Art and Activism'. It opens crucial discussions, continued throughout the Special Section, to interrogate public spaces and their relationship to artistic interventions by comparing the work of artist Teresa Margolles with the grassroots activist *Voces Sin Eco* Cross Campaign and Humberto Macías Martínez's Muralist Movement. Cooper offers an important examination of the creation and techniques of an art display, and how the artists' subject matters are fused to the social and historic conjecture of neoliberal Mexico.

In Giulia Champion and Jessica Wax-Edwards's article, entitled 'Decolonising Responses to "Engaged Art": Disposability and Neoimperialism in Art, Activism and Academia', the authors explore the limits of 'engaged art', seen in two exemplary photoserries – Vik Muniz's *Pictures of Garbage* (2008, Brazil) and Alejandro Cartagena's *Carpoolers* (2011–2012, Mexico) – both of which highlight an ongoing need to decolonise the process of artistic creation and the scholarship/viewership that responds to engaged art.

Mariana Perry's article, entitled 'British Academia's Response to the *coup d'état* in Chile: The Case of Academics for Chile', commences part two of this Special Section. Her article focuses on British academic discourse about the 1973 Chilean military coup, which removed President Allende from office. This contribution considers how different academic institutions and funding bodies' interest in the fate of Chilean scholars prompted a wider interest in Latin American studies in British Academia.

The next article is collaboratively authored by Omaira Bolaños Cárdenas, Johana Herrera Arango, Cristiam Guerrero Lovera and Eliás Helo Molina and considers the long-lasting alliance between the Afro-Colombian movement, academia and international organisations, which triggered the government's commitment to a nationwide formalisation of collective territories. This group of scholars and practitioners discuss strategies that bridge research and activism in the co-production of knowledge to influence public policy implementation. Entitled 'Bridging Research and Practice to Influence National Policy: Afro-Colombians Territorial Rights, from Stagnation to Implementation', this contribution combines Participatory Action Research, cartographic research, historical and legal analysis, and purposeful political advocacy.

"Family, God, Brazil, Guns...": The State of Criminal Governance in Contemporary Brazil', by Gabriel Funari, mobilises the social science literature on criminal governance groups to reflect on how the extra-legality and official violence of the Bolsonaro administration are creating new modes of authoritarian militancy in Brazil. In combining theory with primary data to tackle an urgent – and constantly evolving – social issue, the author aims to dispel disciplinary rifts between Political Sciences and Criminology that prevent anyone, whether scholar, activist or both, from glimpsing the embedded forms of deviance and extra-legality of institutions of power.

By concluding thus, this Special Section challenges the conception of academia as an 'ivory tower' and shows how scholarship engages with crucial past and contemporary issues of the world in which it exists. In making these conceptual challenges, we seek to generate new modes of scholarly engagement, in which long-held assumptions are

always questioned and in which elementary forms of exclusion are disputed. With that in mind, we hope to open new pathways of dialogue, empathy and collaboration between scholars and activists to create the possibilities for new ways of understanding complex features of our shared lived realities.

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