

---

## In memoriam: Enrique Bustamante Ramírez

Media, Culture & Society

2021, Vol. 43(6) 981–983

© The Author(s) 2021

Article reuse guidelines:

[sagepub.com/journals-permissions](https://sagepub.com/journals-permissions)

DOI: 10.1177/01634437211040526

[journals.sagepub.com/home/mcs](https://journals.sagepub.com/home/mcs)



A long-standing corresponding editor of our journal, Professor Enrique Bustamante Ramírez, passed away on 20 June 2021. Affiliated with us since 1987, he was as proud of his connection with us as we were honoured by it. This short appreciation is written on behalf of the Editorial Board of *Media, Culture & Society*. However, this is also an act of personal homage, contributed by a longstanding friend of Enrique who laments both a contemporary's all-too-early loss and who remains an enduring admirer of an engaged scholar's major contribution to our field.

Enrique was a towering figure in media and communication research and institution-building in Spain, as well as in the wider Hispanic and Lusophone worlds. In Europe, his work was also especially well-known and appreciated in France, Italy and Portugal. He was an assiduous bridge-builder who engendered a regular flow of significant research and exchanges of academics between Europe and Latin America. Little of his substantial corpus of work was published in English. I well recall his wry attempts to master the language and, consequently perhaps, his particular pleasure at having his work translated on several occasions by *Media, Culture & Society*.<sup>1</sup>

The range and style of Enrique's contributions to this journal were typical of some of his interests and commitments. He combined his political and ethical stances with a deep respect for empirical evidence and clear expression. We published a piece of his on TV and public service in Spain as well as a critique of right-wing communication policy in that country, and also gave space to his reflections on the cultural industries in the digital age. These articles afford a glimpse of his range and they are typical of his thinking. Growing up in a dictatorship, he made a lifetime's commitment to democratic and pluralistic communication. For Enrique, public service media were indispensable to the realisation of that ideal. With his imperative sense of history and his day-to-day encounters with the continuing challenges posed to Spain's democratic culture after the transition from the Franco era. He was wise to the regrouping of the post-Franco right and wary of its continuing power and influence. Ever-alert to change, he quickly focused on the transformative impact of the shift to a digital communications order. Not surprisingly, too, he was a critic of the new global state theology surrounding the creative industries.

Enrique Bustamante was an exemplary figure in academia. Yet his first career was as a journalist so like others he made a transition from media work to media analysis. Working under the dictatorship, he became an active trade unionist and a key figure in oppositional writing and organisation.<sup>2</sup> He decided to pursue an academic career and was awarded his PhD in 1980. His doctoral work combined Enrique's intellectual formation in sociology, politics and economics, resulting in one of his landmark studies.<sup>3</sup> Enrique

rapidly thereafter became Spain's outstanding political economist of the media and the cultural industries. Committed to public intellectuality and collaboration, he sought to bridge academic work and the wide range of professional practices involved in communication and, not least, to try to influence government policy-making.

In 1985, still relatively early in his new academic career, Enrique Bustamante founded what became the premier Spanish-language journal, *Revista Telos*, from whose editorial direction he finally retired in 2017. The journal's grounding focus was on the relations between technology, media and society. In its heyday, it became a major platform for work not just from Spain but also from Latin America and was, in addition, a home to cognate currents of research and scholarship in in France, Italy and the UK. We are glad to know that Enrique saw *Media, Culture & Society*, launched in 1979, as a kindred spirit. I was delighted when, after discussing his ideas for *Telos*, Enrique asked me to be an associate editor.

Enrique was a founder and, at the time of his passing, the incumbent President of the Spanish Association of Communication Research (*la Asociación Española de Investigación de la Comunicación, AE-IC*). He had a compelling sense of the need to pass things on by organising well. He contributed greatly to the creation of this new space for reflection and exchange: AE-IC has grown rapidly as a multifaceted learned society and its international reputation is on the rise. Enrique Bustamante was deeply committed to building up the quality of Spain's research capacity in our field and a generous facilitator of the careers of young academics, many of whom have come to develop notable careers in their own right. Enrique was alive to the contemporary challenges faced by those working in universities, not least the perverse incentives of systems of research assessment and their effects on those struggling for a foothold as well as those seeking advancement in early- to mid-career. The wide impact of Enrique's death on those academic communities and individuals to whom he was most closely linked may be judged from the fulsome tributes posted on his association's website as well as tributes collected elsewhere.<sup>4</sup>

Enrique was highly principled in his university work, which sometimes won him no favours. His most noteworthy contribution to public policy was the advice he gave as one of the five-member committee of 'sages' set up to reform Spain's national broadcaster, then still called *Radiotelevisión Española*. In 2005, he was awarded a national honour by the government, the Gran Cruz de Alfonso X el Sabio. This award recognised Enrique's influential contribution as a committee member to a far-reaching report whose reform proposals were crucial for the future evolution of Spain's public service broadcaster. The implementation of the committee's ideas was hardly uncontested, given the changing winds of national policy-making. Yet Enrique did not give up on continuing his struggle for far-reaching reform, and with his allies kept open key debates regarding the secure funding of the public service along with pressure for wider representation in an organisation whose decision-making was routinely subject to far-reaching political intervention.

The Editorial Board of *Media, Culture & Society* is grateful for our journal's long association with one of Spain's most distinguished and internationally-minded researchers, whose untimely loss we lament. Enrique Bustamante Ramírez has left his mark and his signal impact on generations of his successors will endure. Those who were fortunate enough to have the warmth of his friendship and his respect for their work feel a deep

sense of loss. But we can take comfort in the fact that Enrique is well remembered by so many of those whose paths he crossed. We extend our sincere condolences to his family.

**Philip Schlesinger**

## Notes

1. Enrique Bustamante, TV and public service in Spain: A difficult encounter. *Media, Culture & Society* 1989 11:1, 67-87; Spain's interventionist and authoritarian communication policy: Telefónica as political battering ram of the Spanish right. *Media, Culture & Society* 2000 22:4, 433-445; Cultural industries in the digital age: Some provisional conclusions. *Media, Culture & Society* 2004 26:6, 803-820.
2. For a detailed profile of Enrique Bustamante's work see Guillermo Mastrini, 'Enrique Bustamante, perfil', <https://ae-ic.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Enrique-Bustamante-perfil-por-Guillermo-Mastrini---Portal-de-la-Comunicaci3n.pdf> (accessed 21 July 2021).
3. *Los amos de la información en España*. Madrid: AKAL, 1982. Other major works by Enrique Bustamante include: *Fabricar noticias* (with J. Villafañé and E. Prado). Barcelona: Mitre, 1988; *La televisión económica*. Barcelona: Gedisa, 1999; 2nd edn 2005. As editor, *Comunicación y cultura en la era digital: industrias, mercados y diversidad en España*. Barcelona: Gedisa, 2002; 2nd edn 2004; *Radio y televisión en España: historia de una asignatura pendiente de la democracia*. Barcelona: Gedisa, 2006. As editor, *Las industrias creativas*. Barcelona: Gedisa, 2011.
4. <https://ae-ic.org/fallecimiento-de-enrique-bustamante/> (accessed 21 July 2021).