

ICA 2025 PRECONFERENCE CFP

Non-Aligned Disruptions: Global Media Histories in the Wake of Decolonization

With the emergence of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in the 1960s, newly independent nations from across the Global South sought to generate channels and protocols for international collaboration that would bypass centuries-old colonial extractive dynamics. What began as a political project of high level diplomacy soon expanded into an ethos that inspired and guided numerous initiatives in the fields of scientific research, cultural production, architecture, and so on. In short, the Non-Aligned Movement was a major disruptor of the political, economic, and cultural status quo of the mid-20th century, and media and communication practices were key to this disruption. Projects like New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), Broadcasting Organization on Non-Aligned Countries (BONAC), and Non-Aligned News Agency Pool (NANAP) aimed to reconfigure the international arena of communication, from reimagining networks and technology exchange to forging new collaborative practices to respond to unique and shifting on-the-ground situations of decolonizing countries in the Global South. These projects troubled and challenged established logics of the existing institutional apparatuses and research paradigms they relied on. However, the histories of these disruptions have mostly remained unwritten or been forgotten by contemporary scholarship.

This preconference aims to examine the conceptual implications and epistemic challenges that NAM disruptions (as well as other forms of disruptions that emerged in media and communication systems of the Global South and are aligned to the spirit and objectives of NAM) continue to pose for media and communication research. How do we account for the varied projects that were simultaneously initiated in and carried out from locations such as India, Iraq, Algiers and Cuba? How does such a fundamentally transnational character of collaborative initiatives expand our grasp of global media histories? What do we make of institutional collaborations that unsettle our understandings of top-down and bottom-up activities? How should we frame the persistence of racial logics that NAM actors faced in the realm of international media governance? And how do NAM's failures, alongside the simultaneous persistence of its legacies, trouble existing conceptions of media temporalities? We will bring together scholars who are tackling these and other questions to provide a greater depth and geographical scope to media and communication studies' understanding of the long history of global connectivity. By centering historical projects of media decolonization, we also aim to advance the field's contemporary efforts to decolonize and de-canonize knowledge production.

This ICA preconference continues from two previous preconferences held in Canada and Australia respectively: "Media and Communication Studies in Global Contexts: A Critical History" and "Repressed Histories of Communication and Media Studies."

The preconference will be organized as a set of four roundtables and we invite submissions that address one of the following roundtable topics:

- Develop critical histories of the disruptions and consolidations of media industries in postcolonial and non-aligned contexts, with a particular emphasis on institutional and political economic analysis.
- (Re)Assess the role of popular icons in the Non-Aligned Movement (e.g. from Nasser and Nehru to Mariam Makeba and Bruce Lee) across various media forms including but not limited to films and newsreels, radio, television, posters and pamphlets, music.
- Consider Non-Aligned media practices as forms of anti-colonial worldmaking and knowledge production, especially in their relation to transnational feminist, queer, disability, and other justice movements.
- Explore contemporary re-activations of nonaligned visions in response to renewed pressures to align with or against regimes of power in the context of contemporary geopolitics.

Information about submissions

Authors should submit an extended abstract of 350-400 words (excluding references) to cargc@asc.upenn.edu. In a single PDF, please include: your name, institutional affiliation, email address, title of your proposed presentation, and abstract.

The deadline for submissions is December 15th, 2025, 23:59 GMT.

Authors will be notified by January 30, 2025 if their abstract has been accepted.

Attendance to the preconference has a general USD 50.00 fee. Please note that we will be able to defray registration costs and provide some travel funding for panelists.

Organizers:

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Sima Kokotovic, University of Pennsylvania

Aswin Punathambekar, University of Pennsylvania

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